



## ST. AUGUSTINE

*Florida's Hidden Treasure*

by Candy Norton

Most of us who reside in Florida are familiar with St. Augustine as the oldest city in our state and in the United States. As a Florida native, St. Augustine was not the city top on my list for a romantic vacation destination. Well, how things have changed. A recent visit to St. Augustine with my husband has left me wanting more, yearning to return. St. Augustine is a true hidden treasure tucked within the Florida coastline.

The Spanish explorer and treasure hunter, Ponce de Leon landed in St. Augustine in 1513 and indeed he found a treasure. The history of the city is abound and many areas have been restored to its colonial past. The city officials go to great lengths to make sure the city reflects their vast rich history.

Less than a four hour drive from South Florida, when you arrive you will feel as if you are a world away. A taste of a quaint seaside community with a New England flair takes you to a place you have never been before but at the same time, you are as comfortable as visiting an old friend. A perfect getaway for you and that special someone.

When making your plans to visit this beautiful city, make sure you reserve a room at one of the five historic Inns of Elegance. These Inns are recognized as the best of St. Augustine's bed & breakfast inns and all have their own unique charm. Each and everyone are beautiful and quaint. A very romantic way to begin and end your day is at an Inn of Elegance. Go to [www.innsforelegance.com](http://www.innsforelegance.com) to make a reservation and choose the inn which best suits your needs.

Begin your sightseeing tour at The Fountain of Youth and learn how St. Augustine came to be. Here, you will stand on the spot where history

was made almost five centuries ago. Drink the water and you will be destined to stay forever young... that is what they say...anyway.

An old town trolley tour is a must when you are in St. Augustine. The tours are filled with a wealth of information. Since there is so much to see in this charming city, taking the tour will give you an overview of what the city has to offer and then you can choose the places you would like to visit. St. Augustine has it all, from art galleries, antiques, museums, historical tours or just a walking tour of the city taking in the magnificent architecture. While walking the city, do not miss Claude's chocolates, a romantic stop where you will sample chocolates from one of America's premier Chocolatiers, Claude Franques.

There are wonderful restaurants in St. Augustine as well. Make sure you stop in at the Columbia. A Spanish restaurant owned and operated by the fourth and fifth generation of the founding family members. Another must is to make sure you have dinner at Bistro de Leon. Owned and operated by Chef Jean-Stephane Poinard, one of France's top one hundred chefs now calls St. Augustine home. [www.bistrodeleon.com](http://www.bistrodeleon.com)

One unique quality stands out about St. Augustine and the people who live there. I would challenge anyone to find a city where the residents love where they live more than the people of St. Augustine. They are eager to share their rich history with the tourists and are truly happy you have come to visit their remarkable city. They welcome you with open arms and would like you to return again and again.

Next time you are thinking about getting away, I suggest you choose St. Augustine as your destination. For more information you can go to [www.getaway4florida.com](http://www.getaway4florida.com). **LM**