

**TRAVEL**

By AILEEN ADAMS  
ST. AUGUSTINE,  
Florida — Florida has gone through many discoveries since 1513 when Ponce de Leon first set foot on its shores to the early years of this century when it was rediscovered by a great influx of tourists seeking the sun.

Strangely enough it was not the Pilgrims who first settled what is now called the United States. Fifty years before they ever saw Plymouth Rock, the Spanish had established a mission in North Florida, just where the St. Johns river meets the Atlantic. Planting cross and flag to establish their claim, they named the site St. Augustine in honor of the saint whose feast day it was.

From the first grew a succession of missions, then hamlets and then a town, making St. Augustine the oldest continuously occupied settlement of European origin in the now United States.

But St. Augustine has by no means a wholly saintly history. Destroyed by pirates, looted by buccaneers, levelled by hurricanes and British gunfire, it passed successively through the control of the Spanish, the British, the Spanish again and finally, 255 years after the first mission was established St. Augustine and all of Florida was sold to the United States.

Because of constant attacks, a great fortress called the Castillo de San Marcos was begun in 1672 and still stands.

The fort is not only interesting as a defence, but because of its structure. It is built of coquina, which in Spanish means shellfish or cockle. The nearby Anastasia Island is built up of vast layers of these half-inch clam shells, this the Spaniards discovered, could be quarried as a golden yellow stone.

Not only the Castillo, but the Cathedral, many of the restored homes in San Agustin Antiquo (Old St. Augustine) and the hotels built by the multi-millionaire Henry M. Flagler, are constructed of coquina.

Flagler, a co-founder of the Standard Oil Company, first discovered St. Augustine in the late 1800s. So impressed was he that he built a magnificent hotel — the Ponce de Leon — then the Alcazar and the Cordova. So grand were these hotels that they became the American Riviera and Vogue of the time wrote gushingly "It is as if some modern Haroun-al-Raschid deserted his own palace and turned it into a hotel."

The prices the elite of the period paid would even stagger an Arab sheik today.

The Ponce de Leon is no longer a hotel but is now Flagler College, while the Alcazar houses in part the City Hall and behind that the Lightner Museum.

For more detailed information write the Chamber of Commerce, 10 Castillo Dr., St. Augustine, Florida 32084.


Fifty miles to the north of St. Augustine is Jacksonville Beach. This is a leisurely paced area whose yearly temperature averages 70 degrees F.

Jacksonville Beach has a white sand, hard-packed beach, where the breakers roar in from the Azores. There is 180 feet of shore at high tide where you can walk and let the wind erase your worries.


Bicycles are the only wheels allowed on the beach and at night there is only the sound of the waves and the lights from the fishing boats offshore — unless, of course, you want to visit one of the many lounges the hotels provide.

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