

Jacksonville is the largest city by population in the U.S. state of Florida, and the largest city by area in the contiguous United States. It is the county seat of Duval County, with which the city government consolidated in 1968. Consolidation gave Jacksonville its great size and placed most of its metropolitan population within the city limits; with an estimated population of 853,382 in 2014, it is the most populous city proper in Florida and the Southeast, and the 12th most populous in the United States. Jacksonville is the principal city in the Jacksonville metropolitan area, with a population of 1,345,596 in 2010.

Jacksonville is in the First Coast region of northeast Florida and is centered on the banks of the St. Johns River, about 25 miles (40 km) south of the Georgia state line and about 340 miles (550 km) north of Miami. The Jacksonville Beaches communities are along the adjacent Atlantic coast. The area was originally inhabited by the Timucua people, and in 1564 was the site of the French colony of Fort Caroline, one of the earliest European settlements in what is now the continental United States. Under British rule, settlement grew at the narrow point in the river where cattle crossed, known as Wacca Pilatka to the Seminole and the Cow Ford to the British. A platted town was established there in 1822, a year after the United States gained Florida from Spain; it was named after Andrew Jackson, the first military governor of the Florida Territory and seventh President of the United States.

Harbor improvements since the late 19th century have made Jacksonville a major military and civilian deep-water port. Its riverine location facilitates two United States Navy bases and the Port of Jacksonville, Florida's third largest seaport. The two US Navy bases, Blount Island Command and the nearby Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay form the third largest military presence in the United States. Significant factors in the local economy include services such as banking, insurance, healthcare and logistics. As with much of Florida, tourism is also important to the Jacksonville area, particularly tourism related to golf. People from Jacksonville may be called "Jacksonvillians" or "Jaxsons" (also spelled "Jaxons").

The area of the modern city of Jacksonville has been inhabited for thousands of years. On Black Hammock Island in the national Timucuan Ecological and Historic Preserve, a University of North Florida team discovered some of the oldest remnants of pottery in the United States, dating to 2500 BC. In the 16th century, the beginning of the historical era, the region was inhabited by the Mocama, a coastal subgroup of the Timucua people. At the time of contact with Europeans, all Mocama villages in present-day Jacksonville were part of the powerful chiefdom known as the Saturiwa, centered around the mouth of the St. Johns River. One early map shows a village called Ossachite at the site of what is now downtown Jacksonville; this may be the earliest recorded name for that area.

French Huguenot explorer Jean Ribault charted the St. Johns River in 1562 calling it the River of May because he discovered it in May. Ribault erected a stone column near present-day Jacksonville claiming the newly discovered land for France. In 1564, René Goulaine de Laudonnière established the first European settlement, Fort Caroline, on the St. Johns near the main village of the Saturiwa. Philip II of Spain ordered Pedro Menéndez de Avilés to protect the interest of Spain by attacking the French presence at Fort Caroline. On September 20, 1565, a Spanish force from the nearby Spanish settlement of St. Augustine attacked Fort Caroline, and killed nearly all the French soldiers defending it. The Spanish renamed the fort San Mateo, and following the ejection of the French, St. Augustine's position as the most important settlement in Florida was solidified. The location of Fort Caroline is subject to debate but a reconstruction of the fort was established on the St. Johns River in 1964.

Spain ceded Florida to the British in 1763 after the French and Indian War, and the British soon constructed the King's Road connecting St. Augustine to Georgia. The road crossed the St. Johns River at a narrow point, which the Seminole called Wacca Pilatka and the British called the Cow Ford or Cowford; these names ostensibly reflect the fact that cattle were brought across the river there. The British introduced the cultivation of sugar cane, indigo and fruits as well the export of lumber. As a result, the northeastern Florida area prospered economically more than it had under the Spanish. Britain ceded control of the territory back to Spain in 1783, after its defeat in the American

Revolutionary War, and the settlement at the Cow Ford continued to grow. After Spain ceded the Florida Territory to the United States in 1821, American settlers on the north side of the Cow Ford decided to plan a town, laying out the streets and plats. They soon named the town Jacksonville, after Andrew Jackson. Led by Isaiah D. Hart, residents wrote a charter for a town government, which was approved by the Florida Legislative Council on February 9, 1832.

During the American Civil War, Jacksonville was a key supply point for hogs and cattle being shipped from Florida to aid the Confederate cause. The city was blockaded by Union forces, who gained control of the nearby Fort Clinch. Though no battles were fought in Jacksonville proper, the city changed hands several times between Union and Confederate forces. The Skirmish of the Brick Church in 1862 just outside Jacksonville proper resulted in the first Confederate victory in Florida. In February 1864 Union forces left Jacksonville and confronted a Confederate Army at the Battle of Olustee resulting in a Confederate victory. Union forces then retreated to Jacksonville and held the city for the remainder of the war. In March 1864 a Confederate cavalry confronted a Union expedition resulting in the Battle of Cedar Creek. Warfare and the long occupation left the city disrupted after the war.

During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, Jacksonville and nearby St. Augustine became popular winter resorts for the rich and famous. Visitors arrived by steamboat and later by railroad. President Grover Cleveland attended the Sub-Tropical Exposition in the city on February 22, 1888 during his trip to Florida. This highlighted the visibility of the state as a worthy place for tourism. The city's tourism, however, was dealt major blows in the late 19th century by yellow fever outbreaks. In addition, extension of the Florida East Coast Railway further south drew visitors to other areas. From 1893 to 1938 Jacksonville was the site of the Florida Old Confederate Soldiers and Sailors Home with a nearby cemetery.

On May 3, 1901, downtown Jacksonville was ravaged by a fire that started as a kitchen fire. Spanish moss at a nearby mattress factory was quickly engulfed in flames and enabling the fire to spread rapidly. In just eight hours, it swept through 146 city blocks, destroyed over 2,000 buildings, left about 10,000 homeless and killed 7 residents. The Confederate Monument in Hemming Park was one of the only landmarks to survive the fire. Governor Jennings declare martial law and sent the state militia to maintain order. On May 17 municipal authority resumed in Jacksonville. It is said the glow from the flames could be seen in Savannah, Georgia, and the smoke plumes seen in Raleigh, North Carolina. Known as the "Great Fire of 1901", it was one of the worst disasters in Florida history and the largest urban fire in the southeastern United States. Architect Henry John Klutho was a primary figure in the reconstruction of the city. The first multi-story structure built by Klutho was the Dyal-Upchurch Building in 1902. The St. James Building, built on the previous site of the St. James Hotel that burned down, was built in 1912 as Klutho's crowning achievement.

In the 1910s, New York-based filmmakers were attracted to Jacksonville's warm climate, exotic locations, excellent rail access, and cheap labor. Over the course of the decade, more than 30 silent film studios were established, earning Jacksonville the title of "Winter Film Capital of the World". However, the emergence of Hollywood as a major film production center ended the city's film industry. One converted movie studio site, Norman Studios, remains in Arlington; It has been converted to the Jacksonville Silent Film Museum at Norman Studios.

Jacksonville, like most large cities in the United States, suffered from negative effects of rapid urban sprawl after World War II. The construction of highways led residents to move to newer housing in the suburbs. After World War II, the government of the city of Jacksonville began to increase spending to fund new public building projects in the boom that occurred after the war. Mayor W. Haydon Burns' Jacksonville Story resulted in the construction of a new city hall, civic auditorium, public library and other projects that created a dynamic sense of civic pride. However, the development of suburbs and a subsequent wave of middle class "white flight" left Jacksonville with a much poorer population than before. The city's most populous ethnic group, non-Hispanic white, declined from 75.8% in 1970 to

55.1% by 2010.

Much of the city's tax base dissipated, leading to problems with funding education, sanitation, and traffic control within the city limits. In addition, residents in unincorporated suburbs had difficulty obtaining municipal services, such as sewage and building code enforcement. In 1958, a study recommended that the city of Jacksonville begin annexing outlying communities in order to create the needed tax base to improve services throughout the county. Voters outside the city limits rejected annexation plans in six referendums between 1960 and 1965.

In the mid-1960s, corruption scandals began to arise among many of the city's officials, who were mainly elected through the traditional old boy network. After a grand jury was convened to investigate, 11 officials were indicted and more were forced to resign. Jacksonville Consolidation, led by J. J. Daniel and Claude Yates, began to win more support during this period, from both inner city blacks, who wanted more involvement in government, and whites in the suburbs, who wanted more services and more control over the central city. In 1964 all 15 of Duval County's public high schools lost their accreditation. This added momentum to proposals for government reform. Lower taxes, increased economic development, unification of the community, better public spending and effective administration by a more central authority were all cited as reasons for a new consolidated government.

When a consolidation referendum was held in 1967, voters approved the plan. On October 1, 1968, the governments merged to create the Consolidated City of Jacksonville. Fire, police, health & welfare, recreation, public works, and housing & urban development were all combined under the new government. In honor of the occasion, then-Mayor Hans Tanzler posed with actress Lee Meredith behind a sign marking the new border of the "Bold New City of the South" at Florida 13 and Julington Creek. The Better Jacksonville Plan, promoted as a blueprint for Jacksonville's future and approved by Jacksonville voters in 2000, authorized a half-penny sales tax. This would generate most of the revenue required for the \$2.25 billion package of major projects that included road & infrastructure improvements, environmental preservation, targeted economic development and new or improved public facilities.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 874.3 square miles (2,264 km²), making Jacksonville the largest city in land area in the contiguous United States; of this, 86.66% (757.7 sq mi or 1,962 km²) is land and ; 13.34% (116.7 sq mi or 302 km²) is water. Jacksonville surrounds the town of Baldwin. Nassau County lies to the north, Baker County lies to the west, and Clay and St. Johns County lie to the south; the Atlantic Ocean lies to the east, along with the Jacksonville Beaches. The St. Johns River divides the city. The Trout River, a major tributary of the St. Johns River, is located entirely within Jacksonville.

The tallest building in Downtown Jacksonville's skyline is the Bank of America Tower, constructed in 1990 as the Barnett Center. It has a height of 617 ft (188 m) and includes 42 floors. Other notable structures include the 37-story Wells Fargo Center (with its distinctive flared base making it the defining building in the Jacksonville skyline), originally built in 1972-74 by the Independent Life and Accident Insurance Company, and the 28 floor Riverplace Tower which, when completed in 1967, was the tallest precast, post-tensioned concrete structure in the world.

Like much of the south Atlantic region of the United States, Jacksonville has a humid subtropical climate (Köppen Cfa), with mild weather during winters and hot and humid weather during summers. Seasonal rainfall is concentrated in the warmest months from May through September, while the driest months are from November through April. Due to Jacksonville's low latitude and coastal location, the city sees very little cold weather, and winters are typically mild and sunny. Summers can be hot and wet, and summer thunderstorms with torrential but brief downpours are common.

Mean monthly temperatures range from around 53 F in January to 82 F in July. High temperatures average 64 to 92 °F (18 to 33 °C) throughout the year. High heat indices are common for the summer months in the area, with indices above 110 °F (43.3 °C) possible. The highest temperature recorded was 104 °F (40 °C) on July 11, 1879 and July 28, 1872. It is common for thunderstorms to erupt during a typical summer afternoon. These are caused by the rapid heating of the land relative to the water, combined with extremely high humidity.

Jacksonville has suffered less damage from hurricanes than most other east coast cities, although the threat does exist for a direct hit by a major hurricane. The city has only received one direct hit from a hurricane since 1871; however, Jacksonville has experienced hurricane or near-hurricane conditions more than a dozen times due to storms crossing the state from the Gulf of Mexico to the Atlantic Ocean, or passing to the north or south in the Atlantic and brushing past the area. The strongest effect on Jacksonville was from Hurricane Dora in 1964, the only recorded storm to hit the First Coast with sustained hurricane-force winds. The eye crossed St. Augustine with winds that had just barely diminished to 110 mph (180 km/h), making it a strong Category 2 on the Saffir-Simpson Scale. Jacksonville also suffered damage from 2008's Tropical Storm Fay which crisscrossed the state, bringing parts of Jacksonville under darkness for four days. Similarly, four years prior to this, Jacksonville was inundated by Hurricane Frances and Hurricane Jeanne, which made landfall south of the area. These tropical cyclones were the costliest indirect hits to Jacksonville. Hurricane Floyd in 1999 caused damage mainly to Jacksonville Beach. During Floyd, the Jacksonville Beach pier was severely damaged, and later demolished. The rebuilt pier was later damaged by Fay, but not destroyed. Tropical Storm Bonnie would cause minor damage in 2004, spawning a minor tornado in the process. On May 28, 2012, Jacksonville was hit by Tropical Storm Beryl, packing winds up to 70 miles per hour (113 km/h) which made landfall near Jacksonville Beach.

Jacksonville is the most populous city in Florida, and the twelfth most populous city in the United States. As of 2010[update], there were 821,784 people and 366,273 households in the city. Jacksonville has the country's tenth-largest Arab population, with a total population of 5,751 according to the 2000 United States Census. Jacksonville has Florida's largest Filipino American community, with 25,033 in the metropolitan area as of the 2010 Census. Much of Jacksonville's Filipino community served in or has ties to the United States Navy.

As of 2010[update], there were 366,273 households out of which 11.8% were vacant. 23.9% of households had children under the age of 18 living with them, 43.8% were married couples, 15.2% had a female householder with no husband present, and 36.4% were non-families. 29.7% of all households were made up of individuals and 7.9% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.55 and the average family size was 3.21. In the city, the population was spread out with 23.9% under the age of 18, 10.5% from 18 to 24, 28.5% from 25 to 44, 26.2% from 45 to 64, and 10.9% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 35.5 years. For every 100 females there were 94.1 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 91.3 males.