

FAQ – Jacksonville Beach, Florida from the perspective of the Iron Butt Association motorcyclist

Updated 5-29-2008

What do you call this area?

“Jacksonville” is a combined city/county government. This is actually the largest city in the USA in terms of landmass. Jacksonville is often abbreviated as JAX.

The area along the Atlantic Ocean is referred to locally as The Beaches. You may actually see some signs on I-95 and elsewhere directing you to the Jacksonville Beaches.

The Beaches are composed of three small towns that have effectively grown into each other: Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach, and Atlantic Beach.

Streets in the Beaches area are, by and large, laid out in a grid pattern. Avenues run east and west and streets run north and south. In Jacksonville Beach an Avenue or Street designated as “South” means that it is south of Beach Blvd., a/k/a Rt. 90.

If you are looking on a mapping program make sure that it hasn't confused Jacksonville with Jacksonville Beach. Downtown Jacksonville is also laid out on a similar grid pattern and there used to be problems with some of these programs sending people to the wrong area. Remember, the St. John's River doesn't run through The Beaches!

What is the best route in or out of Jacksonville Beach if I am doing a coast-to-coast ride?

To get to Jacksonville Beach follow I-10 eastbound (naturally!) until it ends at I-95. Follow I-95 southbound to Rt. 202 a/k/a Butler Blvd. Follow Butler Blvd. eastbound until it too ends. Take the corkscrew ramp at the end and get onto A1A a/k/a 3rd Street and ride north. You are there! Usually folks ride to the Shell Station at 3rd St. South and 16th Avenue South for their fuel receipt, and that will be on your right in a few blocks (N30° 16.398' W81° 23.318').

Needless to say, reverse these directions if you are riding from JAX Beach to the west coast.

Are there any advisories about these routes?

Oh yeah.

There are basically three routes into Jacksonville Beach. Butler Blvd. is the only one that is a divided, limited access road. The others (Rt. 90/Beach Blvd. and Rt. 10 Atlantic Blvd.) are congested, stop and go streets. Avoid them, unless you enjoy sitting in traffic.

Coming into Jacksonville from the west, be aware of a few things:

- It's pretty desolate for many miles after Lake City. You will be running through a national park and late at night there may not be any fuel until you get near Baldwin, Florida. And there are plenty of deer out there. So if you are tired and don't have enough fuel to do the final 100 miles it's a good idea to stop in Lake City to refuel and refresh.
- Watch the area around I-10 and I-295 as you come into Jacksonville. The speed limit drops quickly and there is a nearby State Trooper post, complete with a lot of motorcycle cops. They like to hang around here.
- When I-10 ends the ramp onto southbound I-95 is a bit tight. Be cautious, because you will be merging with a lot of lost tourists on I-95. And be aware that there may be construction on that ramp. If you are heading westbound on your 50cc be aware that the State is working on a giant flyover that will impact your turn from I-95 to I-10; it's not open yet but may be later this year. WATCH FOR ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN THIS AREA!
- There is a joke that the state flower of Florida is the orange traffic cone. Well, Jacksonville is in a constant state of road building right now so be a bit careful. Butler Blvd. has plenty of that construction going on, particularly as you get near 9A (the future I-295 which will some day circle the city). Be cautious of grooved pavement, lanes narrowing and ending, heavy traffic trying to merge, and so forth. The State is trying to widen Butler in stages, so you know what a mess that is. You are almost at the end of your ride so take your time.
- On the Butler Blvd. bridge that crosses the Intracoastal Waterway (it's long and fairly tall so you cannot miss it) be aware that the last several hundred yards before you get off the bridge are unusually bumpy, especially in the go-fast lane. The bridge has a molded-in wave pattern that was never corrected and every so often someone loses control there. You can watch utility trailers bounce all over the place as their owners discover why shock absorbers were invented. Be cautious and be prudent – you don't want to take a tumble within a few miles of your finish.
- When Butler ends you will take a tight ramp that will initially turn to the right (south) but will wind under the overpass and point you northbound on A1A. Watch your speed, because the tiny little community of Jacksonville Beach has about 70 cops and you can often count on one of them being near that off ramp with their radar gun warmed up. That stretch of road actually changes speed several times before you get rolling onto A1A.

What is the best time to ride in and out of Jacksonville Beach?

We have traffic jams during rush hours. The predominant flow of traffic in this area involves living at the Beaches and driving downtown in the morning, but there are always contrary people like ol' John who live in the southern side of town and ride to the Beaches in the AM. Expect that there will be backups on Butler and I-95 during rush hours.

And just for the record lane splitting is NOT legal in Florida.

Where should I stop for sand and my fuel receipt?

There are numerous service stations on A1A (3rd Street). Any of them will do for your fuel receipt, but we usually send riders to the Shell Station at 3rd St. South and 16th Avenue South (N30° 16.398' W81° 23.318'). That's because the beach is at the end of 16th Avenue South and is easily accessible for your sand, and that's not the case at the other stations that you may pass getting to the Shell Station.

I might add that Jacksonville Beach is generally very, very safe and you should be fine anywhere in this area if you walk out onto the beach late at night. If you have any concerns about safety on the beach then my suggestion is to ride down to Beach Blvd. and go on to the beach there. That is a well-lit area and there should be people there at all hours.

What motels are nearby?

Most folks wind up at the Best Western Oceanfront, which is on the beach at 305 1st St. North. Call them at 904-249-4949 or just find N30° 17.528' W81° 23.416' They usually have covered parking available for motorcycles, which is a plus.

There are several other motels along the ocean and due north of there, as well as a Quality Suites slightly south at 11 North 1st St. The word is that the Quality Suites is a bit pricey. The local hotels change their affiliations pretty often and there is a lot of construction and demolition going on in that area so your best bet would be to look at the various lodging websites (Days Inn, etc.) for updated information if the Best Western is full.

Best advised that the Days Inn near the Shell Station that we used to recommend has now apparently closed for good. There is another Days Inn in Jacksonville Beach along the beach strand but it is a few miles to the north.

Finally, if you cannot find a motel at The Beaches, which could happen during tourist season, my suggestion would be to look for a room near either I-95 and Butler Blvd. or I-95 at the Baymeadows Rd. interchange (slightly south on I-95 of Butler Blvd.), where there are several bargain-priced motels.

What restaurants and/or pubs would you suggest?

Keep in mind that in Florida you cannot smoke and eat at the same place unless they have outdoor facilities. Or at least that's the theory. So as a consequence many bars have closed their kitchens.

That strip of 1st Street near the Best Western has several places within walking distance. Slightly north of the Best Western but still on 1st Street there are several ocean-themed touristy restaurants and you will find Lynch's Irish Pub, which has quite a following. Lynch's is near 5th Avenue North.

To the south of the Best Western you will find Sneakers, which is a big, shiny sports bar, and Joe's Crab Shack, which is a chain seafood place for families. You can see both of these establishments at the very end of Beach Blvd. (Rt. 90) at 1st Street.

Should you desire fast food there are plenty of places up and down 3rd Street. Bon appetite!

Where can I find the local fire station?

325 2nd Ave South, or about N30° 17.177' W81° 23.491'. Be aware, however, that they aren't usually available after business hours.

Where can I find the police station?

101 S. Penman Rd. This is a little harder to find than the fire station because it's a block off of Beach Blvd. and down a side road that has almost the same name as a major road that is a block away. Got that? Let's put it this way, North Penman and South Penman are separate streets. On top of that, South Penman is currently under construction and completely blocked off so you have to meander around behind a shopping center to get to the police station. If you see North Penman to your right then you have gone about two blocks too far to the west. Look for the police station at N30° 17.173' W81° 24.263'

Who else is available to be my witness?

The official list of Iron Butt Association approved witnesses is at <http://www.saddlesore.com/witness/witness.htm>. Make sure that you look at both the Florida section as well as the East Coast Witness section at the top of the page. There are several approved IBA members in this area.

And if you need ol' John to witness your paperwork just drop me a line at PirateJohn@aol.com or call me at 904/673-0932. I did work a few blocks from the Shell station until fairly recently; alas, I don't anymore so we may have to arrange something since I am usually about 10 miles to the west. .

I will be arriving or departing at 2AM. Will someone be waiting for me to serve as my witness?

It is not necessary that you have a witness waiting for you. Your time will be taken from your fuel receipt. We try to sign off on the paperwork within 24 hours of your arrival or departure, so that should give you some time to get some sleep (and time for your witness to catch up on their sleep as well).

If you absolutely, positively, must have a witness at 2AM (or whatever) and have been unsuccessful getting someone from the approved list (see above) to meet with you, my advice is to go to the police station on South Penman and ask someone there to sign your paperwork. They are usually pretty good about that sort of thing.

I have a question about rules interpretation. Who do I ask?

Email info@IronButt.com . Ira Agins usually answers the mail there but sometimes you'll get a response from Mike Himself. Or even better, check out the IBA website closely starting at <http://www.ironbutt.com/about/default.cfm> as most of your questions will be answered there.

~~~

Disclaimers and typical mumbojumbo: This FAQ ("frequently asked questions") is a product of PirateJohn and Buccaneer Press, Inc. a Florida corporation. Neither PirateJohn nor Buccaneer Press, Inc. represents Lord Michael Kneebone nor the Iron Butt Association although this version of the FAQ has been reviewed by those good folks. PirateJohn seeks to be helpful to those folks doing IBA rides to and from the Jacksonville area but under no circumstances should you assume that PirateJohn's suggestions, advice, or so forth constitute official IBA interpretation of the rules.

Questions about this FAQ? Contact PirateJohn at [BuccaneerPress@aol.com](mailto:BuccaneerPress@aol.com)

Most fundamentally, **have a safe ride!**



**Buccaneer Press, Inc.**  
[www.BuccaneerPress.com](http://www.BuccaneerPress.com)  
[www.PirateJohn.com](http://www.PirateJohn.com)



**Iron Butt Association**  
[www.IronButt.com](http://www.IronButt.com)