



Small Town Charm

MAIN STREET ADVENTURES ARE EASY TO FIND IN SLEEPY SANFORD

BY JEFFREY SPEAR

Intrepid adventurers are discovering the delights of main street communities throughout the South, including places such as the Central Florida town of Sanford. An easy drive from Jacksonville, located on the shores of Lake Monroe (part of the St Johns River), the community's town center has been revitalized, preserving its historic character and charm.

Sanford embraces three districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places—Downtown, Residential and Georgetown—where visitors can enjoy a variety of historical and architectural encounters. The Residential District alone has more than 400 noteworthy homes, while the Georgetown District is an historically African American neighborhood that was founded during the Jim Crow era.

The waterfront, just a few blocks away, is

one of Sanford's most alluring attractions. If you're eager to see the wildlife and natural beauty along the river's edge, enjoy the sights and a mealtime cruise aboard the *Rivership Barbara-Lee*, a sternwheeler operated by the St. Johns Rivership Co. Animal lovers will also enjoy the Central Florida Zoo, a lush, Floridian environment where you can feed the giraffes, have an up-close encounter with "PJ" the rhinoceros, or simply enjoy a leisurely wander.

Of course, no visit is complete without heading into Sanford's compact Downtown District for its culinary attractions. This includes Wondermade, makers of world-class marshmallow treats, The Old Jailhouse Kitchen & Spirits, the perfect combination of historic charm and modern luxury inside a preserved jailhouse, Hollerbach's German Restaurant, especially enjoyable once the

yodeling and accordions get underway, The District, serving contemporary American cuisine, and St. John's River Steak & Seafood with panoramic views of Lake Monroe.

Of note are the surprising number of watering holes concentrated within the commercial district including Suffering Bastard, Wet Spot, Sullivan Public House, Loggerhead Distillery and Dees Brothers Brewery. You can also spend the night aboard a houseboat on Lake Monroe or in a restored fire station in town (both Airbnb), then put on your walking shoes and start exploring.

Whether you come for the day, stay overnight, or spend the weekend, Sanford offers an impressive selection of memorable and undeniably delightful historical, outdoor and culinary adventures that make the two-hour drive south well worth it. ✨