

2024 TOURS USS ESSEX REUNION

FOR ALL TOURS PLEASE BE AT BUS DEPARTURE LOCATION 15 MINUTES BEFORE SCHEDULED TOUR TIMES

Tour #1 ~ ST. Augustine City Tour ~ Friday September 6, 2024 ~ 0930-1630

Welcome to St. Augustine, on this driving tour of the oldest city in the United States! With a nickname like the 'Ancient City, it's a safe bet that, at some point, you'll be touching history that spans almost 500 years! There are many beautifully restored and preserved examples of the city's past everywhere, especially its historic district. We will also visit the oldest store in St. Augustine, where you will be walking amongst all the vintage wears and it is like being on an expedition through time. Watch in amazement as the friendly clerks, butcher and Snake Oil salesman demonstrate the very latest inventions for turn-of-the-century living. Get to know the latest and best time-saving miracles from the rockin' 1900s! Lunch will be on your own at the Cracker Barrel. After lunch our last stop will be at the St. Augustine Distillery for a walk-through tour and a tasting of their spirits.

Tour #2 ~ River Taxi Tour & USS Orleck Naval Museum/Lunch ~ Saturday September 7, 2024 ~ 1100-1530

Take a journey with us along the banks of downtown Jacksonville as we look for dolphins and explore the past, present, and future of Florida's original port city. Discover what makes Jacksonville an important part of Florida's history. See how the brackish waters of the St. John's River provide a home for dolphins, manatees, alligators, and more. After we finish our tour on the river we will visit the USS Orleck and Naval Museum. Jacksonville Naval Museum's goal is to represent a larger part of Jacksonville's Navy history. The USS Orleck, a Gearing Class destroyer with 18 battle stars is one of the most distinguished ships of all time and the most since the end of World War II! As a Gearing Class destroyer, she will represent the 16 past Gearing Class destroyers that called Mayport home. Additionally, having served in the Cold War, Korean War, & Vietnam War she will not only represent the rich Naval Heritage of Jacksonville but also honor all military veterans in the Region. A buffet lunch is included in this tour.

Tour #3 ~ Kingsley Plantation & Lunch ~ Sunday September 8, 2024 ~ 1030-1530

Enjoy a guided tour of Kingsley Plantation. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, many people came to Florida. Some, like Zephaniah Kingsley, sought to make their fortunes by obtaining land and establishing plantations. Others were forced to come to Florida to work on those plantations, their labor providing wealth to the people who owned them. Some of the enslaved would later become free landowners, struggling to keep their footing in a dangerous time of shifting alliances and politics. All of these people played a part in the history of Kingsley Plantation. You can explore the grounds at Kingsley Plantation, which include the slave quarters, barn, waterfront, planter's house, kitchen house, and interpretive garden. After the tour you will enjoy lunch at Sandollar Restaurant on the St. John's River. Be sure to mark your lunch selection on the registration form.