



Beautifully restored historic homes in the heart of St. Augustine now welcome guests for overnight stays as The Collector Luxury Inn & Gardens.

THE COLLECTOR LUXURY INN & GARDENS, ST. AUGUSTINE

Take one city block, add nine historic houses, and you have the formula for a memorable lodging experience. A private enclave in downtown St. Augustine, the houses, dating from 1790-1906, were once part of the Dow Museum. Before that, they were owned by Kenneth Worcester Dow, a world traveler and fervent collector. Today, after a multi-year renovation, The Collector Luxury Inn & Gardens is ready to delight a new generation of explorers.

Best for ▶ Discerning travelers who have an appreciation for history, luxury and privacy.

The Room ▶ In reinventing the houses for modern travelers, local designer Valerie Lee hit the suite spot. Each guest suite balances historic sensibility — original heart pine floors, windows and fireplaces — with contemporary comforts — fully equipped kitchens and rain shower heads in oversized bathrooms. Her deft hand balances sense of place with fresh sophistication. No dusty doilies here, thank you. The clean color palette contrasts beautifully with the pleasing patina of vintage-inspired furnishings. In the Murat House, circa 1790, a painstaking renovation uncovered original interior coquina walls.

Serene Scene ▶ Sitting among fountains and ferns inside the courtyard, you feel more like a neighborhood resident than a tourist. Plan



The Collector's historic cottages and courtyard setting offer a new way to experience St. Augustine.

your day while sipping locally roasted Third Wave coffee on your private balcony. As Cathedral Basilica's bells ring over the rooftops, set off to explore the city on one of the complimentary bicycles. Afterwards, cool off in the saltwater pool or treat yourself to a horse and carriage ride along 16th-century lanes. Only a curmudgeon could resist the romance.

Fabled Footsteps ▶ Local historian Melissa Stuart's weekly walking tours of the property reveal its storied past. A "freedom bell" marks the spot where slaves first heard the Emancipation Proclamation. Napoleon's nephew, Prince Achille Murat, boarded at the Murat House; respected writers Mark Twain and Sinclair Lewis once visited the Howells House. If only those walls could talk.

Your Well-Being ▶ Master mixologist Sonny Wallace presides over nightly social hours at the popular Well Bar, a pleasing reincarna-

tion of St. Augustine's first two-car garage. His customized cocktails, made to match your particular palate, are accented by fresh ingredients handpicked at Rype & Readi, a downtown farm market. Eager to create your own concoctions? The private mixology class will have you shaking and stirring like a pro.

Thoughtful Touches ▶ As befits a boutique inn called The Collector, the guest experience is thoughtfully curated. Case in point: Each suite is outfitted with its own iPad mini, complete with a charging station and programmed with local menus and sight-seeing suggestions.

Local Flavor ▶ Hometown pride is evident throughout the inn — from St. Augustine Distillery's spirits enjoyed at The Well to Claude's Chocolate shop's bonbons at turn-down. thecollectorinn.com

—Nancy Moreland



A mix of colonial America and British pub, The Well is the resort's watering hole.

Photos: courtesy of The Collector Luxury Inn & Gardens