

Laurel Baker and Southern Living

ANCHOR BOUTIQUE



TRAVELER the scenic route

HAVE YOU TAKEN ONE OF OUR DRIVES? Share your photos and feedback in our e-survey Report at southernliving.com/reviews

Rediscovering Old Florida

The Sunshine State's 500th anniversary is the perfect excuse to take a picturesque 110-mile drive from Fernandina to Flagler.

CALL HIM THE ORIGINAL Florida tourist: This year marks the 500th anniversary of Juan Ponce de León's arrival to the land he called *La Florida*, "the Land of Flowers." Launch an exploration of your own down State AIA with this 110-mile coastal drive flanked by palm trees and expansive views of the Atlantic Ocean. With stops in St. Augustine (right), the nation's oldest city, and the iconic town of Flagler Beach, you'll feel like you're going back in time. But there are plenty of trendy tapas joints and chic boutiques to keep you grounded in the 21st century.



1 BEST FISHING VILLAGE WITH FLAIR

Downtown Fernandina Beach offers historic brick-lined streets alongside new eateries. Try the Camerones at Don Quixote's (37 don-quixotes.com) and lobster cup dogs at 29 South (\$12.29southrestaurant.com)

2 BEST AARRR-PERITIF

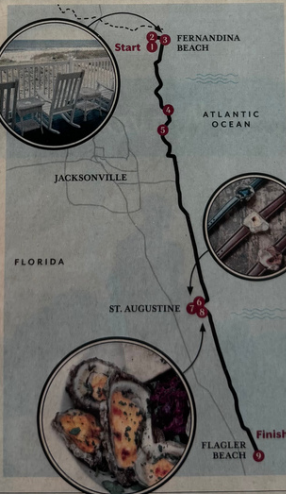
On Amelia Island since 1903, the oldest continuously operating bar in Florida, serves a mean Pirates Punch. thepalacesaloon.com

3 BEST READER DEAL

The cozy Elizabeth Pointe Lodge is offering readers 20% off a stay Friday-Thursday and 15% off Sunday-Saturday the month of January. (Use code SLDEAL) elizabethpointelodge.com

4 BEST GLIMPSE OF OLD-OLD FLORIDA

Hunt for shells during low tide at Little Talbot Island State Park, one of Northeast Florida's last undeveloped barrier islands. floridastateparks.org



5 BEST FERRY TALE

The 10-minute ride on the St. Johns River Ferry takes visitors between Fort George Island and Mayport Village. A one-way trip costs \$6. stjohnsriverferry.com

6 BEST OLD-WORLD FLAVOR

St. Augustine's Bon Ami Confections serves made-daily macarons (\$1.85 each). bonamiconfections.com

7 BEST TREASURE HUNT

Take home a bracelet made with gemstones found only in Florida by artist Laurel Baker (\$68). anchorboutique.com

8 BEST NEW FLORIDA FARE

The Floridian's Cheddar crab bread topped with fresh catch and pickled veggies (market price) proves to skeptics that Florida is indeed Southern. thefloridianstaug.com

9 BEST PHOTO OP

Sure, the sun sets over the land, but locals still flock to the Flagler Beach pier to celebrate sundown. cityofflaglerbeach.com

LOCALS

MAKER

WEIGHING ANCHOR

A HERITAGE OF TREASURE HUNTING AND TRAVEL BY SEA HELPED INSPIRE THE ADVENTURE LAUREL BAKER EMBARKED UPON NINE YEARS AGO.

By Teddy Regis | Photography by David Steele

To live in a bayside city is to be the recipient of a myriad perks. High on the list is easy access to ships setting sail at dusk or under a moonlit sky. Oftentimes, the water is calm and glassy. Once in a while, it is agitated and merciless. Enter a time-tested symbol of stability and steadfastness—the anchor. When jeweler Laurel Baker founded **Anchor Boutique** in 2010, it was with appreciation for the name's versatile meaning. "It kind of encompasses a lot of things," reflects Laurel as she explains what went into the name.

Family ties played a role. After serving in Vietnam, Laurel's father bought a boat and became a treasure hunter. His nautical excursions took him to the waters of South and Central America where he found artifacts that were later donated to museums. He had a special interest in cutting gemstones—particularly agatized coral (Florida's official state stone). "I use it in my jewelry today," shares Laurel as pale light from an overcast sky soaks the sun room in which we sit. Laurel's mother has a background in hospital administration and is known for her tenacity. Laurel chuckles, "She won't let me give up." This comes as no surprise after learning how Laurel's mom spearheaded the recovery of a hospital's reputation with several hurdles along the way.

In her early days, Laurel shared retail

In her early days, Laurel shared retail space with fellow vendors and learned the value of collaboration. This 'community over competition' ethos continued to play out during expansion into a larger space.

space with fellow vendors and learned the value of collaboration.

This 'community over competition' ethos continued to play out during expansion into a larger space. Despite being the sole occupant of her shop now, she still hosts events involving fellow business owners. "Now I can move the shop forward...I do repairs, I do custom work." Anchor Boutique has become a mainstay jewelry shop. But Laurel isn't quick to accept full credit for her growth. On the importance of delegating, she notes, "Some people can take the heavy lifting off your shoulders...to grow, you have to trust other people." So when it comes to web hosting, Laurel is willing to trust her team so she can better tackle responsibilities unique to business ownership. These include customizing engagement rings and repairing jewelry often rich in sentimental

value. These transactions connect her to people in ways that last for decades.

The boutique's presence caught the attention of the environmental community when The Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience approached Laurel about commissioning a necklace series. This will be in conjunction with an oyster reef restoration project that combats flooding and erosion. Proceeds from the sales of this oyster-inspired piece will help fund the initiative. "That's a way I can use my craft to give back," relates Laurel.

As she contemplates the future, Laurel has her sights set on innovation. "I've always wanted to invent something and patent it." It will be no surprise when once again, our nautical community buzzes with news of Anchor Boutique's latest adventure.

www.anchorboutique.com