

## THE TREASURE CHEST QUEST

Every Saturday at 7 p.m.

# Gold Rush

## THE SWEET SATISFACTION THAT ONLY COMES FROM MEANINGLESS CONTESTS AND BUFFET-STYLE FOOD



### Ahoy, IHOP: Putting the “pie” back in pirate.

Every Saturday, visitors and locals, young and old, are invited to climb aboard the S.S.IHOP and embark on **The Treasure Chest Quest**, a pirate-themed interactive game show and all-you-can-eat buffet. If you think it sounds cheesy, you’re right, it totally does.

Game Show is in the IHOP banquet room at Alhambra Inn, 2600 N. Ponce de Leon Blvd., St. Augustine 377-9500 or 829-3919. <http://www.treasure-chest-quest.com>

Since I was barely old enough to speak, I’ve been a sucker for the allure of a game show. As a toddler, I was mesmerized by the flashing lights and gratuitous smooching on “Family Feud.” In elementary school, I feigned illness to stay home and watch throngs of screeching maniacs “come on down” on “The Price is Right.” And presently, every evening at 7:30, I live vicariously through the contestants on “Jeopardy,” taking immense pleasure when I get the final question right and they don’t.

Basically, I can’t imagine anything I would enjoy more than to show off my superior wit and remarkable capacity for all things trivial before a live studio audience — but I’m willing to settle for a bunch of tourists at a St. Augustine pancake joint. Every Saturday, visitors and locals, young and old, are invited to climb aboard the S.S.IHOP (conveniently “docked” on U.S. 1 just south of the S.R. 16 intersection) and embark on The Treasure Chest Quest, a pirate-themed interactive game show and all-you-can-eat buffet. If you think it sounds cheesy, you’re right, it totally does. But if game shows — not to mention all-you-can-eat buffets — are as universally appealing as they appear to be, I can’t imagine a better way to spend a Saturday evening. As homage to my favorite show as a 2-year-old, I’ve surveyed at least one diehard game-show fan (myself ) to get the top five reasons The Treasure Chest Quest is worth a visit. Survey says ...

### **The Hosts**

Upon entering, patrons are greeted and shown to their seats by a jovial woman who goes by the name of Castaway Connie. Connie has a good memory and proves it by memorizing and reciting every single guest's name — a feat that borders on unbelievable. Once everyone settles, Captain Treasure, the emcee, enters with a kind of piratesque smarm that befits a game show host. He makes subtle bawdy comments but manages to win over the audience with a salesman's charisma. Maybe car sales.

### **The Games**

At the front of the room are three podiums, each with a microphone, a buzzer and fully functioning digital score display. The setup really does resemble a game show, the games themselves ranging from a simplified music-themed trivia game called "Jeoparditty" to a cartoon- theme-song game called "Name That 'Toon." (I won a grueling round of "Name That Popstar.") Appropriate for children as well as adults, the games are chosen according to the audience demographics. Contestants are mainly volunteers, but the occasional guest is picked at random from the crowd.

### **The Prizes**

What fun would winning be if it didn't involve instant gratification? No dinette sets or cars are given away, but the prizes are pretty cool, ranging from purses and digital cameras to bags of snack food and airline vouchers. The ultimate prize: \$1,000.

### **The Food**

The words "all-you-can-eat" have gravity in America. The Treasure Chest Quest and IHOP staffs stress that you really can visit the buffet — with salads, starches, plenty of veggies, at least three meat dishes, a meat-free pasta option and desserts — as many times as you please. I highly recommend the mashed potatoes.

### **The 'Tude**

From referring to St. Augustine as St. ARRRRGustine, to the costumes and piped-in sound effects, these folks take it to the limit, and it works. This game show doesn't skimp on the show, but it's definitely got game. And, of course, pancakes.

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