



[editorial]



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PROFILE: ATLANTA



CITY OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Where to go, what to see and what to do in Atlanta. By Christine Van Dusen

Clicks from lower left: Fourth Ward Park, Atlanta Botanical Garden, Renovation of National Center for Civil and Human Rights, Children's Museum; The Fox Theatre; Fourth Ward Park splash pad; The Book of Mormon at the Fox Theatre; The Pickle food truck.

A man in a pink tutu hurries through the crowd with his streamer-festooned trombone, just in time to join his similarly bedazzled cohorts in a community band called Seed & Feed Marching Abominable that is performing in the Inman Park Festival parade. This motley crew toots and shimmies down the street, playing "Louie Louie" as throngs of festivalgoers line the parade route, slurping chocolate-and-sea salt frozen treats from King of Pops or chowing on crab cake sandwiches from The Pickle food truck. A gaggle of zombies in full make-up stumble by, followed by a waving politician perched atop a convertible.

BRAGGING RIGHTS
Atlanta hosted a record 40.4 million visitors in 2012.

Children in butterfly costumes toddle and dance down the street while a unicyclist tosses candy and beaded necklaces to the spectators. As the parade makes its way into neighboring Little Five Points, hipsters shop for vintage T-shirts and tattoos while street musicians slow their strumming and day-drinkers peer out of Euclid Avenue Yacht Club to get a glimpse of the rowing party.

The Inman Park Festival draws thousands of locals and tourists every spring to watch the parade, listen to music and peruse more than 450 vendors. It's a perfect illustration of what is so great about Atlanta. Like the city itself, the event is all about food, drink, music, family, community pride and a big helping of Southern hospitality.

Inman Park, a 124-year-old neighborhood of old mansions and green space about four miles east of downtown Atlanta—is a great place to visit year-around for a walk under the trees and into world-class bistros. But it's only one of many unique communities in this city of neighborhoods—from gritty and eclectic Little Five Points to sleek Midtown, from the slowly transitioning East Atlanta to chichi Buckhead—that give Atlanta a distinctly old-South-meets-new-South flavor.

Downtown

Where once downtown Atlanta was only busy during the day, populated by office workers who skedaddled as soon as quitting time arrived, the neighborhood is now hop-

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ping all day and most of the night thanks to several attractions that keep both locals and visitors coming back.

Phillips Arena, with more than 20,000 seats, is the place to go for big-name concerts and Atlanta Hawks basketball games. From here, it's an easy stroll to **CNN Center**, a 14-floor tower that houses the control rooms, newsrooms and broadcast studios of the global news station. Down the street is **The Children's Museum of Atlanta**, with hands-on exhibits, a paint wall and daily programs. Make sure you walk a few blocks to **Centennial Olympic Park**, built for the 1996 Olympic Games, and dart through the jets of dancing water at the Fountain of Rings.

From here, head to the famous **Georgia Aquarium**, the biggest in the world, with 10 million gallons of water in a 600,000-square-foot building with more than 80,000 in- and above-water animals. Wander through the Ocean Voyager exhibit's 100-foot-long acrylic tunnel and see fish swim overhead, then take a break in front of the second-largest viewing window in the world to watch whale sharks, manta rays and other species.

Next door is the **World of Coca-Cola**, a giant tribute to the fizzy drink, featuring displays of more than 1,000 artifacts, collectibles and merchandise not seen anywhere else. There's also a room where you can try the dozens of Coca-Cola flavors from around the world.

For lunch, a great bet is **Blossom Tree** on Peachtree Street, which sells cheap, fresh and delicious Korean tacos at a walk-up counter. There's also **Ted's Montana Grill** on Luckie

Street, a burgers-and-bison eatery with a country club ambience (it boasts more bison entrées than any other restaurant in the world). It was created by CNN founder Ted Turner, who lives upstairs.

Castleberry Hill

This historic neighborhood south of downtown Atlanta and the central business district has emerged as a hub for artists, with dozens of galleries housed in early 20th-century warehouse buildings along with lofts and restaurants.

The best way to take all this in is to join in the **Castleberry Hill Art Stroll**, held the second Friday of each month from 7 to 10 p.m. when participating art galleries, artist spaces and restaurants stay open late. Wander through the collection of contemporary paintings, sculpture and photography at **Marcia Wood Gallery**, then pop into **ZuCot Gallery**.

For live music and simple eats, check out the charmingly dive-y **Elliott Street Deli & Pub**, which has a tiny bar and patio upstairs and a music venue downstairs. Another great dining option: the gigantic Mexican restaurant **No Mas! Hacienda & Cantina**, where the margaritas are strong and the salsa is smoky. Nearly all the decorations are available for sale next door at its gallery.

Sweet Auburn

Atlanta's legacy as a center for African-American history and civil rights—and as the home of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—is best explored along this one-and-a-half-mile stretch of Auburn Avenue.

From the 1890s to the 1930s, it was the center of prosperity for black business owners, politicians and entertainers. The Depression sent Sweet Auburn's economy downhill, but the process of revitalization began in 1976 when the neighborhood was declared a National Historic Landmark.

This is where you can see the **Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change** and the **Martin Luther King Jr. Historic National Site and Birth Home**. For guided tours of the birth home, visit the **National Park Service Visitor Center** on Auburn Avenue. Or take a self-guided walk around the district, and visit King's white-marble tomb inscribed with his famous words: "Free at last, free at last, thank God almighty I'm free at last."

Stop by **The APEX Museum**, with exhibits describing the experience and history of African Americans, and be sure to visit **Ebenezer Baptist Church**, where King was baptized and where he and his family preached for three

MY ATLANTA

Sara Blakely

Founder of Spanx

LOCAL ROOTS: "I grew up on Clearwater Beach. After graduating from Florida State, I moved back home and quickly realized everyone around me was either married or in their 80s! Friends convinced me that the dating scene was much better in Atlanta. It was in Atlanta that I had the idea for footless body-shaping pantyhose and launched Spanx out of my apartment in Virginia Highland. I now live in Atlanta—happily married to a New Yorker—and Spanx is headquartered in Buckhead."

EATING: Hbachi at Nakato. "I'm there so often they know me by name."

TIP: "For a fun night of laughter, I recommend Whole World Theater, an improv theater in Midtown. I've been going there for years."

WHERE SHE SHOPS: "Tootsies and Jeffrey's in Atlanta for designer pieces and I mix them with more affordable pieces from fun stores like Range Clothing. For home décor and furniture, Anthony/Wolf in Buckhead is my go-to."

WHY ATLANTA: "I appreciate the eclectic mix of people—where else can you go to a cocktail party and see Ludacris and Ted Turner?"



PHOTOS: (TOP) BOVANNI PHOTOGRAPHY; (MIDDLE) MIDDLE OF ATLANTA; (BOTTOM LEFT) MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. CENTER; (BOTTOM RIGHT) JEFFREY'S; (MIDDLE) DAVID ROZENDI/SHUTTERSTOCK

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The Earl

generations. Another local landmark: **Sweet Auburn Curb Market**, which has stood in its current location since 1924. Expect a variety of eateries, including **Arepa Mia**, **Grindhouse Killer Burgers**, **High Road Ice Cream** and **Rawesome Juicery**, plus flower and produce stands.

Old Fourth Ward

The Old Fourth Ward is a pocket east of downtown with several restaurants, offices and apartments in converted industrial spaces. Meander through **Historic Fourth Ward Park**, the first complete urban park in the **Atlanta BeltLine Project**, which aims to better connect Atlanta by turning abandoned

rail tracks into a system of trails and green spaces. The park includes an event lawn, skate park, shade structure with solar panels and a playground with a splash pad.

Nearby is **Masquerade**, a live-music venue with three indoor event spaces—Hell, Purgatory, Heaven—and an outdoor music park. Expect everything from electronica DJs to heavy metal bands and singer-songwriters. For a great dinner in the neighborhood, try **Serpas** from a native New Orleans chef.

PHOTO: EASTSIDE TRAILS / THE EARL

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le Leon and North Highland avenues, Poncey-Highland is home to the offbeat **Plaza Theatre** and

its Friday night productions of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* acted out on stage in front of the projected film. Also in the neighborhood and worth visiting: the long-standing **Majestic Diner** and other notable restaurants, including the cozy two-floor bistro **Top Fir**.

The ambitious **Ponce City Market**, the largest adaptive reuse project in Atlanta's history, will soon be part of the mix. The 1.1-million-square-foot historic Sears, Roebuck & Co. building that later served as City Hall East is being redeveloped into a center for retail, restaurants, offices and residential units.

Just down the block is the infamous **Clermont Lounge**. Yes, it's a strip club, but it brings something unique to the table (dance). Most of the performers are older and care very little about how they look and what you think of them—and for that, the crowds love them all the more. But for the most part, patrons go for the strong drinks and the DJ who spins fun dance music.

Virginia Highland and Emory Area

This tree-canopied neighborhood at Virginia and North Highland avenues has a dense collection of bars, music halls, little restaurants and cool boutiques not far from **Emory University**. You'll also spot the **Fernbank Museum of Natural History**, one of the region's biggest natural history museums. It also has an IMAX theater. For a dose of more-recent history, visit the **Jimmy Carter Presidential Library & Museum**, which details the political ups and downs of the former president (and his wife) while also shining a light on his recent endeavors in public health and human rights.

Be sure to grab a croissant and a coffee at **Alon's Bakery** or tuck into the sustainable seafood at **Goin' Coastal**. And if you're itching to listen to the blues, drop by **Blind Willie's**, named for Georgia native and musical pioneer Willie McFell. There's also the **10 High Club**, which is particularly packed on Friday, Saturday and Monday nights when it hosts *Metalsome*, a live-band, rock 'n' roll karaoke show.

East Atlanta

This edgy neighborhood four miles southeast of downtown at the meeting of Flat Shoals and Glenwood avenues has been in a state of slow transition since 1996 but seems to have recently picked up speed with the addition of several new storefronts. New additions **Urban Cannibals**, **We Suki Suki** (a small food stall with amazing and authentic Vietnamese banh mi sandwiches) and gastropub **Argosy** have joined mainstays **Mary's** and **The Earl**, a down-and-dirty tavern and music room that draws indie acts. Down the street, you'll find **Holy Taco**, which seems like your typical Tex-Mex hang-out until you spot the braised bacon, corn relish and black garlic taco on the menu.

Little Five Points and Inman Park

Although the **Inman Park Festival** route connects these two districts, they don't look like close neighbors. Inman Park is full of stately mansions (one of which was owned by the founder of Coca-Cola) and restaurants such as the always-packed **Barcelona Atlanta Wine Bar & Restaurant**, family-friendly **Pure Taqueria**, New Orleans-ian **Parish**, the inventive **One Eared Stag** and well-known **Sotto Sotto**, one of the oldest restaurants in the neighborhood.

Walk about four blocks and you'll be in Little Five Points, where street performers mix with musicians, tattoo artists, baristas, bar patrons, artists and vintage-clothing shoppers in a place that gives off an independent, funky and rough-edged vibe.

One of the city's best music venues is here: **The Variety Playhouse**, a former movie theater that brings major acts to its intimate, two-level space. Great acoustics, friendly bartenders and a lively roster of acts—Adele, Emeli Sandé, Aimee Mann, Phoenix—make the place a true standout. Another landmark in Little Five Points is the **Vortex**, easy to find because its doorway is a giant gaping skull. The wait staff is surly by design and its burgers are divine. No kids allowed here.

West End

This area of Atlanta, settled in 1835, was the city's first to receive historic designation and is best known for its historically African-American institutions of higher education: Spelman College and Morehouse College.

Founded in 1881 as the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary, **Spelman College** is America's oldest historically black college for women. Famous graduates of this 39-acre campus about 10 minutes west of downtown include Audrey Forbes Manley, the former surgeon general of the United States, and Maj. Gen. Marcelite J. Harris, the first black female general in the U.S. Air Force.

Spelman is part of the Atlanta University Center Consortium, the largest consortium of HBCUs in the world, which also includes **Morehouse College**, also in the neighborhood. The country's leading historically black college for men is the alma mater of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., former Atlanta

Mayor Maynard Jackson and filmmaker Spike Lee. Another notable spot in the West End is **Hammonds House Museum**, a Victorian house formerly owned by Otis Thrash Hammonds that now serves as a museum for works

BRAGGING RIGHTS

Rolling Stone named The Fox Theatre and The Tabernacle in Atlanta to its list of the 20 best large live music clubs and theaters in America.

primarily by artists of African descent. There's also the **Wren's Nest House Museum**, a cottage that was occupied by author Joel Chandler Harris—who wrote the now-polarizing Uncle Remus tales—until his death in 1908. The 1946 Walt

Disney movie, *Song of the South*, based on Harris' books, was filmed on the property.

Grant Park

Many of the Victorian homes in Grant Park share a feature that dates back to the days before indoor plumbing. As the story goes, most of the houses were built on shallow and narrow lots with unpaved alleys behind them in order to allow city sewage wagons easy access to outhouses. This mostly residential area has come a long way since then, with its historic mansions and craftsman bungalows regularly fetching high prices. But there's more to do in

Grant Park than gawk at its architecture or stroll in its park. Visitors also come to the area to see the **Oakland Cemetery**. Established in 1850, it's the city's oldest burial grounds. Approximately 70,000 people are buried here, including golfer Bobby Jones (you'll often find a pile of golf balls on his grave) and *Gone with the Wind* novelist Margaret Mitchell.

Another neighborhood destination, the **Atlanta Cyclorama & Civil War Museum**, includes a gigantic panoramic oil painting of the 1864 Battle of Atlanta, which decimated most of the city. The painting was finished in 1886 and given to the city in 1889. The museum shares the same property and parking lot on Cherokee Avenue as the family favorite **Zoo Atlanta**, which houses more than 1,500 animals from 250+ species. Here you can get up close and personal with a giraffe, and



PHOTOS: BAYMOND/MCCORMACK (THE FOX THEATRE AND TABERNACLE); ERICA GEBRER (THE OAKLAND CEMETERY); WALKER

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watch a tiger napping inches away from you (behind protective glass). The zoo also has playgrounds, a carousel and a train that travels around the site. When it's time to eat, head to **Ria's Bluebird**, great for breakfast or lunch. The tattooed wait staff dishes amazing French toast and also the to-die-for Bluebird burrito made with eggs, skillet potatoes, white cheddar, beans, salsa verde and sour cream.

Midtown

If you're looking for Atlanta's beautiful people, you'll likely find them in Midtown, a mostly urban stretch of the city that features luxury condos, high-rise office buildings and trendy boutiques, clubs and eateries.

The place to go to during the day is **Piedmont Park**, the district's crown jewel, a gigantic plot of peaceful green right in the middle of the city. There are giant lawns for picnics and games of Frisbee, as well as paths for walkers, joggers and bikers. The dog park is particularly popular, as are the pool and tennis courts. Sitting by the pond on a sunny day is a particular treat.

The **Atlanta Botanical Garden** spans 30 acres inside Piedmont Park and includes a children's garden and a conservatory for unusual tropical plants. If you're visiting Atlanta at Christmastime, don't miss the Botanical Garden's lights display and model train show.

Culture abounds in Midtown. Here you'll find the **Woodruff Arts Center**, the largest arts and culture center in the Southeast. It hosts the **Atlanta Symphony Orchestra** and is connected to the **High Museum of Art**. The High stands out in Midtown for its crisp and sleek white architecture. The Stent Family Wing, designed by Richard Meier, is considered among the best works of architecture

in the 1980s. The museum also underwent an expansion in 2005 and the new facilities were designed by the famed Renzo Piano. The High's permanent collection includes an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art and also significant holdings of European paintings. Recent special exhibitions have featured the works of Salvador Dali and Frida Kahlo.

The **Fox Theatre**, built in 1929 in a Moorish-Egyptian style, features a ceiling with twinkling lights and puffy clouds. Today the venue hosts touring comedians, Broadway shows, big-name bands and movie screenings. It serves more than four and a half tons of popcorn a year and was one of the first air-conditioned buildings in the country. A special treat: listening to the "Mighty Mo," the theater's giant Moller theater organ that was built in 1929 and is the world's largest working Moller organ.

The **Center for Puppetry Arts**, with more than 350 puppets on display from all over the globe, is certainly a draw for kids. Some of Jim Henson's puppets are here, and there are frequent puppet-making workshops for the little ones. But the place is also fun for teens and adults, with more mature-themed shows on many nights.

Frankly, Scarlett, you may not give a damn, but it still is worthwhile to visit the **Margaret Mitchell House & Museum**, where the author wrote *Gone with the Wind*. For another dose of serious Southern-ness, try the tomato pie covered in Ritz crackers at **Mary Mac's Tea Room**, which routinely serves its classic Southern dishes to 2,000 customers a day. If you're interested in a more modern and upscale take on Southern food, **Empire State South**—helmed by *Top Chef* Masters competitor



Virginia Highland Summerfest

PHOTO: BETHANIE ZELINSKI/PHOTOGRAPHY/ISTOCK

and *Top Chef* judge Hugh Acheson—is a great bet. While you wait for a table, sip on a Streetcar Vision (absinthe, dry vermouth, strawberry, mint, egg white and lemon) and try your hand at a game of bocce in the courtyard.

Westside

This neighborhood has emerged as one of the coolest in Atlanta, with former warehouses now the industrial-chic settings for high-end furniture retailers and restaurants such as the

PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK.COM (ATLANTA); GEORGE A. SANDRIZ (ARIA); BENJAMIN BANCROFT (BAILEY)

wallet-busting **Bacchanalia**, the friendly and fresh **JCT. Kitchen & Bar** and the casual counter-service-spot **Yeah! Burger**.

At the **Westside Urban Market**, you'll find the **Sid Mashburn** men's shop adjacent to his wife's shop, **Ann Mashburn**. The Atlanta-based designer's classic suits and perfectly curated collection of button-downs, shoes and belt buckles have earned him a global following. If you aren't worried about fitting into a pair of Mashburn's slim-fitting chinos, then head over to **Antico Pizza Napoletana**. Talk about a cult following. The cheesy, charred Naples-style slices here nearly bring Atlantans and tourists to tears.

The Westside also benefits from the presence of **Miller Union**, with its small menu of locally sourced foods with a splash of Southern flavor. At lunch, be sure to try one of its mouthwatering ice cream sandwiches in lemon-gingersnap, brown butter almond crumble and other flavors.

Buckhead

Sky-high condominiums, imposing office towers, malls, luxury hotels and grand estates distinguish this 28-square-mile community



Aria

of 44 neighborhoods and 78,000 residents north of downtown. Construction is under way on what's been called the Rodeo Drive of the South, an area expected to draw sought-after retailers, starting in 2014. Already Buckhead beckons shoppers with **Lenox Mall** and the slightly more upscale **Phipps Plaza**. There are also some lovely restaurants, including **Aria**, where the menu includes pan-roasted duck breast and slow-braised pork shoulder.

Before you eat, pop into the **Atlanta History Center**. The museum displays the good and the bad of the city's past, with exhibits on the Civil War and on Southern romanticism. It's also home to the 1928 **Swan House**.

Grab a tabletop candelabra and a rolling cooler and you'll fit right in at the **Delta Classic Chastain Park Amphitheatre**, an outdoor concert venue that hosts the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra's summer series as well as other top acts. Almost everyone brings elaborate picnics to share in the seats, at tables or on the grass. Expect friendly chitchat and the clinking of glasses during the show. //

MY ATLANTA

Radcliffe Bailey

Artist

HOME: Southwest Atlanta. "My parents moved here in the 1970s. Migration at the time was to the North, but they went to the South. I was a product of the public schools in southwest Atlanta and as a kid took classes at the High Museum."

HANGOUTS: Antico Pizza for dinner, Soundtable for music and Sid Mashburn for clothes. "It's beautiful hearing people in New York who work in the fashion industry talk about that place."

ONLY HERE: "Atlanta is the kind of place where things are recreated. People are remaking things their own way. Things are happening under the surface. You have to dig to find them, and that's exciting."



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