

Welcome to the City: Atlanta

A Crowdsourced Guide by Davidson Alumni and Parents

Top “Must Do” Items in the City

- Walk, run, skate or bike the Atlanta Beltline’s Eastside Trail. Arguably the most exciting urban redevelopment project in the country, the BeltLine is a long-term plan to connect 22 miles of former rail lines to create paved paths for pedestrians, bikes and—eventually—public transit. At present, a few sections of the BeltLine are already finished—most notably, the Eastside Trail that runs from Inman Park to Midtown.
- Ride the SkyView ferris wheel towering over Centennial Park.
- Hike to the top of Stone Mountain. Great views, worth the steep climb. Buy a year pass if you think you might go two or more times in a year.
- Go to the Georgia Aquarium.
- Visit the College Football Hall of Fame. A remarkable, well-executed new version of what could've been a tired idea. Plus, it’s a neighbor of the Aquarium.
- Run in, or spectate at, the Peachtree Road Race.
- Take a twilight tour of Oakland Historical Cemetery.
- See the gorillas at the Atlanta Zoo.
- Go to neighborhood/park festivals. Inman Park Festival, Piedmont Park Dogwood Festival, or Jazz festival in Piedmont on Memorial Day.
- Shoot the Hooch. Tube, canoe, raft, kayak or paddleboard down the Chattahoochee River.
- Read *A Man in Full* by Tom Wolfe and *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell.
- Attend Falcons/Braves/Hawks Games.
- Check out The Varsity—the world’s largest drive-in restaurant.
- Have breakfast at a Waffle House.
- Visit The World of Coke.
- Go to Lake Lanier—any day but Sunday in the summer.
- Explore craft beer in the area. Visit a brewery! One of Atlanta's coolest growing industries is craft beer, and there are so many to visit! I recommend Monday Night Brewing and Orpheus.
- Do a Grant Park home tour in the spring.
- Hike the Chattahoochee Palisades trails off Whitewater Creek Road NW.
- Hang out in East Atlanta.
- Watch the trains go by from the JCT Kitchen rooftop bar.
- Visit Lullwater Park, Emory. A great place to walk/run in the Emory/Decatur area.
- Visit the Carlos Museum at Emory. Small in size, but impressive collection, especially if you are into mummies.
- Attend the Botanical Gardens summer concert series. Great outdoor music venue.
- Attend the many Atlanta music festivals, including Chantlanta.
- Go to / see the Atlanta Ballet, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, 7 Stages Theater, Out of Hand Theater, and Georgia Shakespeare.
- See great improv (Whole World Theater, Dad's Garage).

- Visit the High Museum of Art.
- Hang out in Decatur Square—great coffee shops, restaurants, and people-watching, and sometimes live, free music.
- Run, walk or bike at George Pierce Park/Suwanee Greenway or the Silver Comet Trail.
- Grab a late night (or early AM) meal at The Majestic.
- Have drinks at the Sundial and Polaris with a 360 view.
- Ride the Streetcar.
- Watch a movie at Fernbank Museum of Natural History Imax.
- Drive above Vinings Village for the best view of the city.
- Watch the planes take off beside the runway of PDK at 57th Fighter Group restaurant.
- Dine beside the Chattahoochee at Rays on the River or Canoe.
- Go to the Carter Presidential Library & Museum.
- Check out the Columbia Theological Seminary. Outstanding resources for life, faith, and world awareness.
- Go to the Sandy Springs Heritage Green. Fun concerts, festivals, community networks.
- Go to Chomp and Stomp. Unique festival: a chili and bluegrass festival held annually in Cabbagetown, a historic cotton mill neighborhood downtown.
- See a Broadway in Atlanta performance.
- Visit the Center for Civil and Human Rights.

What We Wish We'd Known / Advice for Alumni New to the City

- Meet people, get involved in our city, and make it your home.
- Secure a job before moving. Research housing in detail before moving. Costs are going up, even if cheaper than California or the North East.
- Be open-minded; don't believe stereotypes of Atlanta. Be open to meeting people outside of your circles.
- Check out several neighborhoods before deciding where to live. Each has its own personality.
- Try to buy a house in town because the suburban commute is brutal and gets worse all the time.
- Learn traffic patterns & explore all pockets of the city (while researching happy hours/specials).
- Have or get a car with good gas mileage.
- Get involved in something - sports clubs, churches etc. Try many restaurants and go to lots of festivals. The city has a great deal to offer. Don't forget that the mountains are a great day trip.
- Pinpoint helpful back roads.
- Atlanta is built on the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Most of the major roads here used to be trails, which is why none of them are straight.
- I-285 (aka The Perimeter) directional designations change depending on where you are and which direction you're going. Be sure you're pointed the right way or your trip will be MUCH longer than you expected!
- Avoid GA 400, I-75, The Downtown Connector (I-75/85), I-285, I-20, and any other major artery of Atlanta between the hours of 6-9 a.m. and 3-7 p.m. unless you are completely out of your mind and/or simply enjoy traveling at a pace slower than most people can walk backwards with their eyes closed.

- Interstate speed limits are simply a guideline of the absolute minimal speed allowed.
- Any car on the road, at any given moment, will do the one thing you wouldn't expect them to do—so expect that to happen.
- Don't believe what your GPS/map says about the 'time' it takes to drive somewhere. With Atlanta traffic, it will easily double the time your map estimates.
- It's quicker to get around the city if you avoid the highways.
- Don't be discouraged that everyone drives a Mercedes/BMW/Audi in Atlanta because people will spend more on a car than for a house!
- The city is huge and diverse—so explore beyond Buckhead, Midtown, and the Highlands!
- Live close to where you work. Atlanta is a much more enjoyable place if you aren't sitting in traffic all day.
- If there is snow or ice in the weather forecast, go to Australia until Glenn Burns says it's OK to come back.
- Consider the driving, or lack thereof. If you can't live near work and play, go for one. Atlanta neighborhoods are very diverse—if you live in the city you may find an area where you'd really like to hang out, and it's definitely possible to live within walking or biking distance of awesome places.
- If you're new to Atlanta and haven't felt strongly about a particular area, I recommend renting before committing to a home or long-term lease. My quality of life here is directly related to not driving long distances every time I leave my home!
- If you work in a geographic hub such as downtown or the Perimeter area (the junction of 400 and I-285), living near a MARTA rail station might give you way more free time on your work commute. There are lots of great neighborhoods along the MARTA lines.
- Avoid the highways at all cost! Whenever possible take the back-roads, and use the Waze app to learn those short cuts early on.
- Why is everything always 22 miles away (and always takes 1-2 hours to get there!)?
- When it snows (or there's ice on the roads), just stay home. Seriously. Even if you know how to drive in the snow, assume that no one else does.
- Before moving here, I'd had no idea how bad traffic can be. Local surrounding-county leaders have failed for decades to understand basic urban transport needs of a large city—and the Mayberry mentality problem persists into this 21st century.
- Every soft drink is a Coke, so if you order a Dr. Pepper, ask for a Coke with Dr. Pepper.
- SEC Football is a religion.
- Atlanta has one of the highest pollen counts of any cities in the U.S. so be prepared for spring allergies.
- Politics and Public Schools are a spectator sport rivaled only by Louisiana.

What to Read

- Creative Loafing (print and online)
- Atlanta PlanIt
- AJC
- Yelp
- Atlanta Magazine
- Decatur Metro
- Tomorrow's News Today
- The Bitter Southerner: www.bittersoutherner.com
- What Now Atlanta: www.whatnowatlanta.com
- WSB, Fox, NBC
- Variety Playhouse's weekly emails
- Atlanta Journal-Constitution
- Atlanta.net
- World Affairs Council; Meet-ups

Note from Alumni Relations: While we don't keep these guides updated year round, we do ask alumni and parents in our chapters for updates to them each fall when we send out our Welcome to the City invitation. If you'd like to add something, we'd love if you could hold your recommendation until next fall!