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## Atlanta Alternatives: 7 Other Southeastern Destinations



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**By Avital Binshtock**

May 15, 2009

**Atlanta** is, without a doubt, the starting point to any tour of the South. Still, a complete experience of the region must account for cities and destinations outside of the shadow of the big peach. Given that, here's a succinct guide to seven of the region's most interesting destinations.

**1. Stone Mountain Park, Georgia ([www.stonemountainpark.com](http://www.stonemountainpark.com))**. The nearly 1,700-foot granite-dome peak is a natural wonder whose vistas are complemented by attractions, entertainment, and outdoor-recreation opportunities.

**What to do:** Hike or take the Skyride to the summit for unparalleled panoramas of Atlanta or stand at the base of the mountain to see the bas-relief of Davis, Jackson, and Lee. Also in the park are several amusement rides, a variety of seasonal festivals, and frequent live entertainment.

**Where to stay:** The Hampton Inn Atlanta/Stone Mountain (<http://hamptoninn.hilton.com>) or Country Inns & Suites Stone Mountain ([www.countryinns.com/stonemountainga](http://www.countryinns.com/stonemountainga)).



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**2. Chattanooga, Tennessee** ([www.discoversceniccity.com](http://www.discoversceniccity.com)). "The Scenic City," as it's called, is a Tennessee gem that can be reached by road, but which celebrates all things river and rail.

**What to do:** On the way into town, stop at Georgia's Lookout Mountain. Once there, experience the Tennessee River's beauty and the surrounding environs' history and culture by strolling the river walk, crossing the Walnut Street Bridge, or taking a river cruise.

**Where to stay:** The Chattanooga Choo Choo Holiday Inn ([www.choochoo.com](http://www.choochoo.com)) is a century-old tourist destination.

**3. Columbus, Georgia** ([www.columbusga.com](http://www.columbusga.com)). A historic military and college town that caters to more than just servicemen and students.

**What to do:** Pay tribute to the home of the infantry with a visit to the National Infantry Museum ([www.nationalinfantrymuseum.com](http://www.nationalinfantrymuseum.com)), which is currently being relocated from Fort Benning. If tales of battles on the open water intrigue you more, check out the National Civil War Naval Museum ([www.portcolumbus.org](http://www.portcolumbus.org)). If you're not a military buff, steer clear of the warfare by spending a day in the charming Uptown District.

**Where to stay:** Live like a well-established local at the Gates House B&B ([www.gateshouse.com](http://www.gateshouse.com)), a peaceful downtown retreat with unforgettable home-cooked meals that should power you through a day on your feet.

**4. Charleston, South Carolina** ([www.charlestoncvb.com](http://www.charlestoncvb.com)) is among America's most disarmingly beautiful cities, so it's sure to win you over — no matter who you are.

**What to do:** Start a historical tour by setting foot where the Civil War started, at Fort Sumter ([www.nps.gov/fosu](http://www.nps.gov/fosu)); contemplate the economy in a historical context at a plantation called Middleton Place ([www.middletonplace.org](http://www.middletonplace.org)); and finish with a visit to the Old Exchange and Customs House ([www.oldexchange.com](http://www.oldexchange.com)). To wind down after sightseeing, take a leisurely walk through the romantic streets and shop for souvenirs at the City Market.

**Where to stay:** Charleston Place ([www.charlestonplace.com](http://www.charlestonplace.com)) proffers well-appointed rooms, an excellent location, and superb service.

**5. Savannah, Georgia** ([www.savannahvisit.com](http://www.savannahvisit.com)). A worthy alternative to Charleston, the pretty river town has left the world with a number of indelible images, including Forrest Gump's bus stop.

**What to do:** The downtown area is a registered National Historic Landmark District, and a perfect place to get lost for the day. Many of the buildings are adorned with plaques describing their place in history. When you get hungry, head to the cobblestone waterfront.

**Where to stay:** Just outside town, the Inn at Palmetto Bluff ([www.palmettobluffresort.com](http://www.palmettobluffresort.com)) is an impressive resort replete with southern comforts and natural beauty.

**6. Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area** ([www.nps.gov/chat/](http://www.nps.gov/chat/)). The river, which comprises the state's backbone, is also a lush paradise to those looking to beat the city's heat.

**What to do:** Get in a watercraft and let the river tour you through the park. Landlubbers can hike along the banks.

**Where to stay:** Relax at the Renaissance Marriott after a long day outdoors ([www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)).

**7. Augusta, Georgia** ([www.augustaga.org](http://www.augustaga.org)). With much more than world-class golf, this town is worth a weekend.

**What to do:** If golfing or touring James Brown's old stomping grounds aren't in the mix, visit the Morris Museum of Art ([www.themorris.org](http://www.themorris.org)) and the educational, recreational Augusta Canal Interpretive Center ([www.augustacanal.com](http://www.augustacanal.com)).

**Where to stay:** The Partridge Inn ([www.partridgeinn.com](http://www.partridgeinn.com)) has provided distinguished accommodations for more than a century. Otherwise, the Marriott ([www.marriott.com](http://www.marriott.com)) is well-situated on the Savannah River.

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**InnkeeperVA** wrote:

There is a bed and breakfast in Columbus GA that is a par above all the others - The Argyle Bed and Breakfast. It is a lovely home and cottage in the Historic District within walking distance to the River and restaurants and museums.

The innkeeper serves the ultimate in delicious gourmet breakfasts and has amenities to meet your every need. Check out their Trip Advisor reviews and see what others say about this excellent BnB in Columbus!

I highly recommend The Argyle Inn, and can't wait to go back for a second visit. Here is the website: <http://www.argyleinn.com/>

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**K Warnock** wrote:

There's also Milledgeville, GA, as profiled in this recent blog post:

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