

Atlanta's Parks, Green Spaces and Trails

Atlanta has an abundance of trees and green spaces that add natural beauty to metropolitan cityscapes.

The privately-funded, state-owned \$78 million **Centennial Olympic Park**, a 21-acre green space located downtown adjacent to the Georgia World Congress Center (GWCC), Georgia Dome and CNN Center, served as a central gathering place during the Olympic Games. The park, the largest center-city park developed in the U.S. in 20 years, became a permanent civic symbol and community focal point as well as a long-term catalyst and anchor for new residential and commercial development.

The park connects the GWCC and the Georgia Dome to the downtown hotel district, and the park's distinctive features captivate guests. The Fountain of Rings is the world's largest fountain utilizing the Olympic symbol of five interconnecting rings. Other park features include a court of 24 flags, one Olympic flag and 23 flags honoring the host countries of the modern Games; the Southern Company Amphitheater, a natural amphitheater seating 1,200; a six-acre great lawn; and pathways of commemorative bricks that stitch together pieces of the park's quilt-like landscape. Centennial Plaza, which comprises the amphitheater and the fountain, features daily, musical water shows.

Right next door to Centennial Olympic Park sits **Georgia International Plaza**, a six-acre landscaped urban park with walkways, park-type lighting and a stately fountain. The plaza, which the state of Georgia and parking revenues finance, is an attractive front door to the GWCC and Georgia Dome campus. The pedestrian plaza serves as a gathering place for visitors and conventioners and is home to "Flair Across America," a fantastic sculpture.

The third of Atlanta's downtown parks, **Woodruff Park**, underwent a \$5 million facelift, courtesy of a grant from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, and became a landmark spot in the heart of downtown Atlanta. Located on Peachtree Street between Edgewood and Auburn avenues, the park's designers built the park around a 30-foot fountain, a waterfall, benches and a music pavilion. In the park's western corner, officials erected a bronze statue, "Phoenix Rising from the Ashes," a figure of a woman and a bird, which represented Atlanta's comeback after the Civil War.

In southeast Atlanta, adjacent to Freedom Parkway near the Carter Center, is **Freedom Park**, a 45-acre park with biking and jogging paths. The park underwent a \$13 million, federally-funded renovation making it the city's arboreal getaway with pedestrian and

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bicycle trails and access to the Atlanta/Stone Mountain Trail. Freedom Parkway – owned by the state of Georgia and located on the site of the former Presidential Parkway – created the Freedom Trail, which provides access to all facilities in and around Freedom Park and a trail that connects the Atlanta/Stone Mountain loop to downtown Atlanta.

The famous 180-acre **Piedmont Park** in midtown Atlanta recently completed a \$66 million renovation and has become an area for urban recreation, hosting 2 million visitors each year. Improvements include restored entrances, landscape improvements, a refurbished playground, new sewer overflow facilities, bike paths, a promenade and a new visitors' center.

Hardy Ivy Park, not far from Piedmont Park, rests at the point where Peachtree and West Peachtree streets split. The park serves as a small reminder of the city's first permanent settler, Hardy Ivy. Pieces of the city's old Carnegie Library now make up a beautiful pavilion in the center of the park.

The city of Atlanta, the PATH Foundation and the Turner Foundation sponsor nine miles along the Chattahoochee River – an area known as **Chattahoochee Park**, an extension of the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area. The park serves as a natural resource conservation area for the protection of the river's floodplains, wetlands, creeks and mature forests and also as a wildlife corridor for migrating birds and the movement of regional wildlife.

Recent renovations to the state's historic and cultural resources included the restoration of fortifications from the War of 1812, the Civil War and Cherokee Indian villages dating back 12,000 years. Other renovations included a riverside park with foot trails through the woods and meadows and interpretive exhibits.

In recent years, the nonprofit PATH Foundation, in cooperation with the city of Atlanta and DeKalb County, constructed a system of multi-use greenway trails in metropolitan Atlanta. Urban designers kept the needs of walkers, joggers, roller-bladers, cyclists and others in mind and designed hard-surface, off-street trails that composed more than 18 miles of greenways and more than 22 miles of on-street bike routes.

The 18-mile **Stone Mountain/Atlanta Trail** connects the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) to Stone Mountain Park, the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, the Carter Center and the Fernbank Museum of Natural History. And, the Georgia Department of Transportation generously funded portions of the project.

The seven-mile **Trolley Lane Trail** connects, via Georgia State University, downtown Atlanta to Agnes Scott College in Decatur, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Historic Site and the historic Cabbagetown, East Lake and Reynoldstown neighborhoods.

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The 10.6-mile **Westside Trail** connects, via the Hightower MARTA station, the Greenbriar Mall in southwest Atlanta to downtown Atlanta. This route connects all of the MARTA stations on the west line and passes the Atlanta University complex and the GWCC/Georgia Dome/ Philips Arena complex.

The PATH Foundation and the city of Atlanta recently constructed **Chastain Greenway Trail**, a 3.3-mile loop around Chastain Park in northwest Atlanta, and plan to develop more trails throughout the metropolitan area. The project will build upon existing on- and off-street routes and comprise some of the approximately 350 miles of on-street bike routes to be constructed in Atlanta during the next 15 years.

The city also has a new **Bicycle Parking Program**, and there are now nearly 400 bike racks in public spaces throughout the city. The city of Atlanta has also begun the **Sidewalk Construction Program**, which anticipates the construction of more than 100 miles of new sidewalks in the city over the next 15 years. Currently, Atlanta is constructing sidewalks that extend from the intersection of Peachtree and Roswell out to the Atlanta city limits. Of the 136 projects now included in this program, more than 100 are located adjacent to bus routes and 10 links to transit stations. By linking residences to schools, shopping opportunities and mass transit, these projects intend to improve the safety and accessibility of the pedestrian network throughout Atlanta.

Established in 1913, the ACVB is a private, nonprofit organization created exclusively to market metro Atlanta and Georgia as premier conventions, meetings and leisure destinations in the regional, national and international marketplace and to favorably impact the Atlanta economy through conventions and tourism.

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