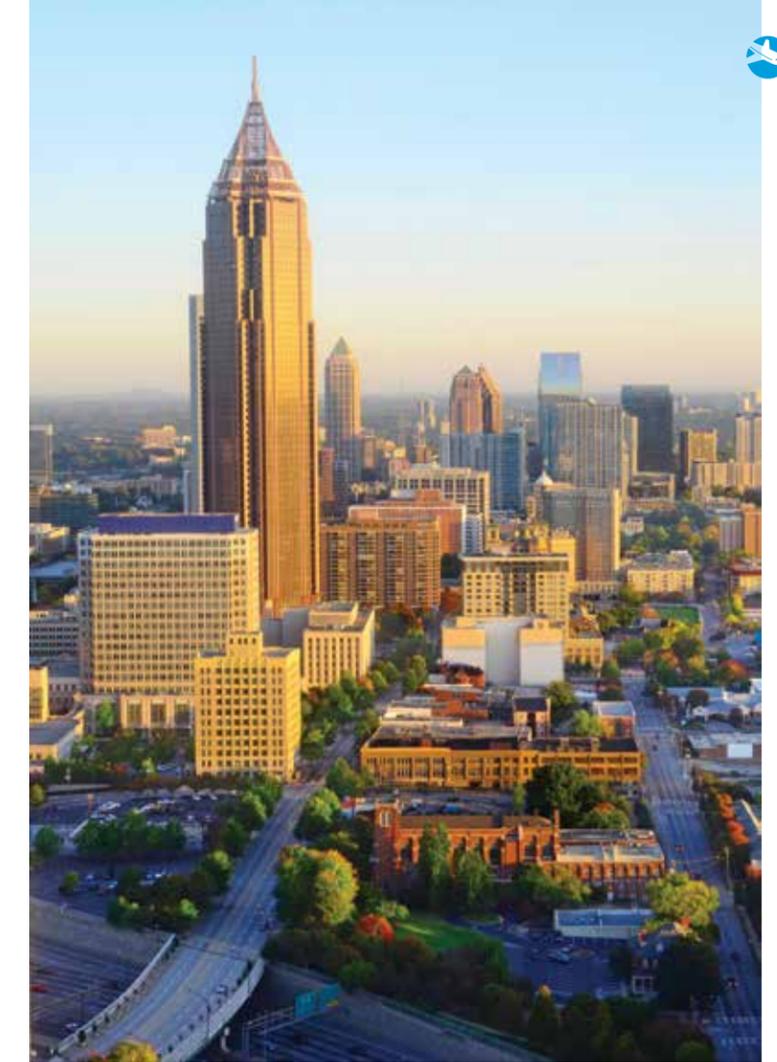


Atlanta

By Panamera

The city in the forest comes into its own as a global travel hub.
See it in style behind the wheel of a sleek Porsche.

By Robert La Bua



It is the surprises that make Atlanta such an interesting place to visit. A global city whose airport is the busiest in the world, Atlanta somehow retains its historical roots even after having grown into a metropolis famous for the millions of trees that make it one of America's leafiest cities. All the clichés of the South are present: ladies with beehive hairdos, gentlemen whom y'all would think very charming, all with accents thicker than molasses, yet there is much more than tradition meets the eye in the capital of the New South.

The quintessential modern Southern gentleman is personified in Owen Halpern, a native Atlantan whose knowledge about his hometown is so vast that he decided to start a tour company for well-heeled visitors looking for something more than a superficial tour of the mainstream tourist

attractions. What better way to see Atlanta's impressive High Museum of Art than with a former docent of the institution? Mr Halpern's professional and personal connections open doors otherwise closed to other people, allowing for personalised insight into the stories behind Atlanta's finest buildings, greatest assets, and wealthiest families. His OH! Atlanta Tours offer a variety of themed tours to appreciate Atlanta on a deeper level; for people with specific interests or preferences, tours can be customised to suit.

Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport is credited as being the economic locomotive that moves the city's entire economy, demonstrating the crucial importance of having a modern, functional facility for the twenty-first century. Just as river and coastal ports were the economic forces in times when ships were the only option for >



transport of goods, the fast pace of modern life accords aerial connections the place of importance formerly occupied by sea links, especially in a city with no navigable waterways. These air links have attracted an increasing number of business and leisure visitors as well as residents relocating from other parts of America and the world, making Atlanta a surprisingly diverse city.

An indication of Atlanta's international appeal is the success of the elegant Mandarin Oriental Atlanta, a haven of excellence where Asian-level service so rarely found in the US is thriving in a convenient location on Peachtree Road. The main artery of Atlanta's upscale Buckhead neighbourhood, Peachtree Road is lined with shiny, glass office buildings that share real estate with the city's most exclusive restaurants and shopping malls such as Phipps Plaza and Lenox Square, which is just across the street diagonally from the Mandarin Oriental. The hotel therefore makes a perfect base for going out to enjoy the appeal of Buckhead before returning for a relaxing treatment at the spa, where the signature Peaches and

Cream treatment brings a local touch to the experience that is just as revitalising after a round of meetings and appointments.

Restaurants hold an exalted place in the pantheon of Atlanta activities, with dining out surpassed perhaps only by sporting events as a favourite pastime for the city's residents. Buckhead is home to several outstanding establishments such as Aria, where a sophisticated menu as sublime as the decor will have diners singing its praises after the first bite, and Canoe, a beautiful venue in a pastoral setting on the edge of Buckhead where Australian Executive Chef Matthew Basford has been creating inventive dishes for the past 10 years. Delicious food in more casual environments can be enjoyed at the superb Seven Lamps, where Southern flavours with global influences are served by an extraordinarily friendly staff; a similarly outstanding experience can be found at the excellent King + Duke, where an open kitchen is the focal point of this Buckhead hotspot whose private dining room provides a wonderfully comfortable place for a meal. Aria,

There are other things to do in Atlanta besides eating, and the local residents eat up their cultural and recreational opportunities with the same gusto as their grits and fried chicken.



too, has a private place to enjoy dinner: an intimate table set up in the restaurant's impressive wine cellar. The wine table accommodates a maximum of four people and is only available by special request. The city's powerbrokers are often sighted at Bones, a classic and classically discreet steakhouse.

Not that it is necessary to leave the hotel for a hearty meal. A solid choice for accommodation, Grand Hyatt provides a happy option for the business travellers constituting the majority of its guests looking for reliability and familiarity in a convenient location amidst the action. In true American tradition, Grand Hyatt makes a great effort to involve itself in the community; the hotel participates in several programs to encourage local farming that provides fresh ingredients for its Cassis restaurant; it also takes part in a program to encourage Atlanta residents to buy these same foods, further bolstering local support for the farming community. Across the street from Grand Hyatt is Southern Art, the domain of restaurateur Art Smith, former private chef to Oprah Winfrey, whose modern interpretations of classic Southern food are indeed works of art.

There are other things to do in Atlanta besides eating, and the local residents eat up their cultural and recreational opportunities with the same gusto as their grits

and fried chicken. The Buckhead area is home to several places worth visiting, including Swan House, an elegant mansion that is part of the Atlanta History Center, where a multi-themed museum provides a very lucid explanation of the American Civil War and the subsequent repercussions whose lasting effects are felt to this day. Further afield, Atlanta's Midtown area is the location for the city's leading art museum, the High Museum of Art. Just across the street is the Museum of Design, a comparatively small space showcasing interesting temporary exhibits.

In this part of the city, Woodfire Grill stands out as a locale for fine dining in 'casuelegant' surroundings. Cacao Atlanta, an example of Atlanta's growing awareness of food as an art form now thoroughly explored in the city's restaurants, provides a venue to indulge connoisseurs of chocolate in its purest form in the hip Virginia Highland neighbourhood—close to the very friendly Porter Beer Bar, a convivial eatery where an atmospheric beer hall can be reserved for private use.

Atlanta's Westside is the latest neighbourhood to be enjoying a renaissance as old factories and warehouses find new life as offices, theatres, and restaurants. Among the best in this part of the city is Abattoir, where (no surprise) meat takes centre stage; at the nearby Actor's Express Theatre, cutting-edge performances do the same. Abattoir is elbowing in on the turf of Atlanta's leading restaurants to claim a piece for itself as an establishment offering one of the city's most interesting menus. A far larger stage is found at the historical Fox Theatre in Midtown, one of the most beautiful theatres in the United States. A glorious monument to an earlier era, the Fox can be visited on private tours detailing the history and operations of this glamorous Atlanta landmark.

Right next to the Atlanta airport is the new Porsche Experience

Center, the location of automobile maker Porsche's North American headquarters. Porsche joins dozens of other transnational corporations based in Atlanta, though it is the only one to offer a test track for drivers keen to try out the latest model. So advanced is the track that training sessions conducted under the tutelage of Porsche resident experts can simulate a variety of conditions on and off the road. Porsche owners are welcome to drive their own cars on the track to experience the full potential of German engineering that is so often restricted on public roadways. The Porsche Experience Center's on-site facilities for meetings, events, and other functions provide ideal venues for taking care of business and having the opportunity to drive a Porsche in a private environment. Atlanta is spread out over a large area, making a car a necessary tool for getting around town for dinners, concerts, and shopping. Enjoying a Porsche is possible all over Atlanta simply by choosing one of several Porsche model types, including the Cayenne and the Panamera, from Hertz Rent a Car's Dream Cars collection.

Atlanta's airport is the home base for Delta Air Lines, the US powerhouse of passenger travel that is an anchor of the SkyTeam alliance of airlines that also includes Air France-KLM and Korean Airlines. Delta offers service from Australia to Atlanta via its nonstop service from Sydney to Los Angeles, where connections can be made on numerous flights between California and Georgia. The Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau website is a helpful source of information for planning a visit to one of America's most energetic cities. ●

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- porsche.com/atlanta
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