

= Atlanta =

Atlanta is the capital of and the most populous city in the U.S. state of Georgia , with an estimated 2015 population of 463 @, @ 878 . Atlanta is the cultural and economic center of the Atlanta metropolitan area , home to 5 @, @ 522 @, @ 942 people and the ninth largest metropolitan area in the United States . Atlanta is the county seat of Fulton County , and a small portion of the city extends eastward into DeKalb County .

Atlanta was established in 1837 at the intersection of two railroad lines , and the city rose from the ashes of the American Civil War to become a national center of commerce . In the decades following the Civil Rights Movement , during which the city earned a reputation as " too busy to hate " for the progressive views of its citizens and leaders , Atlanta attained international prominence . Atlanta is the primary transportation hub of the Southeastern United States , via highway , railroad , and air , with Hartsfield ? Jackson Atlanta International Airport being the world 's busiest airport since 1998 .

Atlanta is an " alpha- " or " world city " , exerting a significant impact upon commerce , finance , research , technology , education , media , art , and entertainment . It ranks 36th among world cities and 8th in the nation with a gross domestic product of \$ 270 billion . Atlanta 's economy is considered diverse , with dominant sectors including logistics , professional and business services , media operations , and information technology . Topographically , Atlanta is marked by rolling hills and dense tree coverage . Revitalization of Atlanta 's neighborhoods , initially spurred by the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta , has intensified in the 21st century , altering the city 's demographics , politics , and culture .

= = History = =

Prior to the arrival of European settlers in north Georgia , Creek and Cherokee Indians inhabited the area . Standing Peachtree , a Creek village located where Peachtree Creek flows into the Chattahoochee River , was the closest Indian settlement to what is now Atlanta . As part of the systematic removal of Native Americans from northern Georgia from 1802 to 1825 , the Creek ceded the area in 1821 , and white settlers arrived the following year .

In 1836 , the Georgia General Assembly voted to build the Western and Atlantic Railroad in order to provide a link between the port of Savannah and the Midwest . The initial route was to run southward from Chattanooga to a terminus east of the Chattahoochee River , which would then be linked to Savannah . After engineers surveyed various possible locations for the terminus , the " zero milepost " was driven into the ground in what is now Five Points . A year later , the area around the milepost had developed into a settlement , first known as " Terminus " , and later as " Thrasherville " after a local merchant who built homes and a general store in the area . By 1842 , the town had six buildings and 30 residents , and was renamed " Marthasville " to honor the Governor 's daughter . J. Edgar Thomson , Chief Engineer of the Georgia Railroad , suggested the town be renamed " Atlantica @-@ Pacifica , " which was shortened to " Atlanta " . The residents approved , and the town was incorporated as Atlanta on December 29 , 1847 .

By 1860 , Atlanta 's population had grown to 9 @, @ 554 . During the Civil War , the nexus of multiple railroads in Atlanta made the city a hub for the distribution of military supplies . In 1864 , following the capture of Chattanooga , the Union Army moved southward and began its invasion of north Georgia . The region surrounding Atlanta was the location of several major army battles , culminating with the Battle of Atlanta and a four @-@ month @-@ long siege of the city by the Union Army under the command of General William Tecumseh Sherman . On September 1 , 1864 , Confederate General John Bell Hood made the decision to retreat from Atlanta , ordering all public buildings and possible assets to the Union Army destroyed . On the next day , Mayor James Calhoun surrendered Atlanta to the Union Army , and on September 7 , General Sherman ordered the city 's civilian population to evacuate . On November 11 , 1864 , in preparation of the Union Army 's march to Savannah , Sherman ordered Atlanta to be burned to the ground , sparing only the city 's churches and hospitals .

After the Civil War ended in 1865, Atlanta was gradually rebuilt. Due to the city's superior rail transportation network, the state capital was moved to Atlanta from Milledgeville in 1868. In the 1880 Census, Atlanta surpassed Savannah as Georgia's largest city. Beginning in the 1880s, Henry W. Grady, the editor of the Atlanta Constitution newspaper, promoted Atlanta to potential investors as a city of the "New South" that would be based upon a modern economy and less reliant on agriculture. By 1885, the founding of the Georgia School of Technology (now Georgia Tech) and the city's black colleges had established the city as a center for higher education. In 1895, Atlanta hosted the Cotton States and International Exposition, which attracted nearly 800,000 attendees and successfully promoted the New South's development to the world.

During the first decades of the 20th century, Atlanta experienced a period of unprecedented growth. In three decades' time, Atlanta's population tripled as the city limits expanded to include nearby streetcar suburbs; the city's skyline emerged with the construction of the Equitable, Flatiron, Empire, and Candler buildings; and Sweet Auburn emerged as a center of black commerce. However, the period was also marked by strife and tragedy. Increased racial tensions led to the Atlanta Race Riot of 1906, which left at least 27 people dead and over 70 injured. In 1915, Leo Frank, a Jewish-American factory superintendent, convicted of murder, was hanged by a lynch mob, drawing attention to antisemitism in the United States. On May 21, 1917, the Great Atlanta Fire destroyed 1,938 buildings in what is now the Old Fourth Ward, resulting in one fatality and the displacement of 10,000 people.

On December 15, 1939, Atlanta hosted the film premiere of *Gone with the Wind*, the epic film based on the best-selling novel by Atlanta's Margaret Mitchell. The film's legendary producer, David O. Selznick, as well as the film's stars Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh, and Olivia de Havilland attended the gala event at Loew's Grand Theatre, but Oscar winner Hattie McDaniel, an African American, was barred from the event due to racial segregation laws and policies.

Atlanta played a vital role in the Allied effort during World War II due to the city's war-related manufacturing companies, railroad network, and military bases, leading to rapid growth in the city's population and economy. In the 1950s, the city's newly constructed freeway system allowed middle class Atlantans the ability to relocate to the suburbs. As a result, the city began to make up an ever smaller proportion of the metropolitan area's population.

During the 1960s, Atlanta was a major organizing center of the Civil Rights Movement, with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph David Abernathy, and students from Atlanta's historically black colleges and universities playing major roles in the movement's leadership. While minimal compared to other cities, Atlanta was not completely free of racial strife. In 1961, the city attempted to thwart blockbusting by erecting road barriers in Cascade Heights, countering the efforts of civic and business leaders to foster Atlanta as the "city too busy to hate". Desegregation of the public sphere came in stages, with public transportation desegregated by 1959, the restaurant at Rich's department store by 1961, movie theaters by 1963, and public schools by 1973.

In 1960, whites comprised 61.7% of the city's population. By 1970, African Americans were a majority of the city's population and exercised new-found political influence by electing Atlanta's first black mayor, Maynard Jackson, in 1973. Under Mayor Jackson's tenure, Atlanta's airport was modernized, solidifying the city's role as a transportation center. The opening of the Georgia World Congress Center in 1976 heralded Atlanta's rise as a convention city. Construction of the city's subway system began in 1975, with rail service commencing in 1979. However, despite these improvements, Atlanta lost over 100,000 residents between 1970 and 1990, over 20% of its population.

In 1990, Atlanta was selected as the site for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games. Following the announcement, the city government undertook several major construction projects to improve Atlanta's parks, sporting venues, and transportation infrastructure. While the games themselves were marred by numerous organizational inefficiencies, as well as the Centennial Olympic Park bombing, they were a watershed event in Atlanta's history, initiating a fundamental transformation of the city in the decade that followed.

During the 2000s, Atlanta underwent a profound transformation demographically, physically, and

culturally . Suburbanization , a booming economy , and new migrants decreased the city 's black percentage from a high of 67 % in 1990 to 54 % in 2010 . From 2000 to 2010 , Atlanta gained 22 @, @ 763 white residents , 5 @, @ 142 Asian residents , and 3 @, @ 095 Hispanic residents , while the city 's black population decreased by 31 @, @ 678 . Much of the city 's demographic change during the decade was driven by young , college @- @ educated professionals : from 2000 to 2009 , the three @- @ mile radius surrounding Downtown Atlanta gained 9 @, @ 722 residents aged 25 to 34 holding at least a four @- @ year degree , an increase of 61 % . Between the mid @- @ 1990s and 2010 , stimulated by funding from the HOPE VI program , Atlanta demolished nearly all of its public housing , a total of 17 @, @ 000 units and about 10 % of all housing units in the city . In 2005 , the \$ 2 @. @ 8 billion BeltLine project was adopted , with the stated goals of converting a disused 22 @- @ mile freight railroad loop that surrounds the central city into an art @- @ filled multi @- @ use trail and increasing the city 's park space by 40 % . Lastly , Atlanta 's cultural offerings expanded during the 2000s : the High Museum of Art doubled in size ; the Alliance Theatre won a Tony Award ; and numerous art galleries were established on the once @- @ industrial Westside .

= = Geography = =

Atlanta encompasses 134 @. @ 0 square miles (347 @. @ 1 km²) , of which 133 @. @ 2 square miles (344 @. @ 9 km²) is land and 0 @. @ 85 square miles (2 @. @ 2 km²) is water . The city is situated among the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains , and at 1 @, @ 050 feet (320 m) above mean sea level , Atlanta has the highest elevation of major cities east of the Mississippi River . Atlanta straddles the Eastern Continental Divide , such that rainwater that falls on the south and east side of the divide flows into the Atlantic Ocean , while rainwater on the north and west side of the divide flows into the Gulf of Mexico . Atlanta sits atop a ridge south of the Chattahoochee River , which is part of the ACF River Basin . Located at the far northwestern edge of the city , much of the river 's natural habitat is preserved , in part by the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area .

= = = Cityscape = = =

Most of Atlanta was burned during the Civil War , depleting the city of a large stock of its historic architecture . Yet architecturally , the city had never been particularly " southern " ? because Atlanta originated as a railroad town , rather than a patrician southern seaport like Savannah or Charleston , many of the city 's landmarks could have easily been erected in the Northeast or Midwest .

During the Cold War era , Atlanta embraced global modernist trends , especially regarding commercial and institutional architecture . Examples of modernist architecture include the Westin Peachtree Plaza (1976) , Georgia @- @ Pacific Tower (1982) , the State of Georgia Building (1966) , and the Atlanta Marriott Marquis (1985) . In the latter half of the 1980s , Atlanta became one of the early adopters of postmodern designs that reintroduced classical elements to the cityscape . Many of Atlanta 's tallest skyscrapers were built in the late 1980s and early 1990s , with most displaying tapering spires or otherwise ornamented crowns , such as One Atlantic Center (1987) , 191 Peachtree Tower (1991) , and the Four Seasons Hotel Atlanta (1992) . Also completed during the era is Atlanta 's tallest skyscraper , the Bank of America Plaza (1992) , which , at 1 @, @ 023 feet (312 m) , is the 61st @- @ tallest building in the world and the 9th @- @ tallest building in the United States . The Bank of America Plaza is the tallest building outside of New York City and Chicago , and was the last building built in the United States to be in the top 10 tallest buildings in the world until One World Trade Center was completed externally in May 2013 . The city 's embrace of modern architecture , however , translated into an ambivalent approach toward historic preservation , leading to the destruction of notable architectural landmarks , including the Equitable Building (1892 ? 1971) , Terminal Station (1905 ? 1972) , and the Carnegie Library (1902 ? 1977) . The Fox Theatre (1929) ? Atlanta 's cultural icon ? would have met the same fate had it not been for a grassroots effort to save it in the mid @- @ 1970s .

Atlanta is divided into 242 officially defined neighborhoods . The city contains three major high @- @ rise districts , which form a north @- @ south axis along Peachtree : Downtown , Midtown ,

and Buckhead . Surrounding these high @-@ density districts are leafy , low @-@ density neighborhoods , most of which are dominated by single @-@ family homes .

Downtown Atlanta contains the most office space in the metro area , much of it occupied by government entities . Downtown is also home to the city 's sporting venues and many of its tourist attractions . Midtown Atlanta is the city 's second @-@ largest business district , containing the offices of many of the region 's law firms . Midtown is also known for its art institutions , cultural attractions , institutions of higher education , and dense form . Buckhead , the city 's uptown district , is eight miles (13 km) north of Downtown and the city 's third @-@ largest business district . The district is marked by an urbanized core along Peachtree Road , surrounded by suburban single @-@ family neighborhoods situated among dense forests and rolling hills .

Surrounding Atlanta 's three high @-@ rise districts are the city 's low- and medium @-@ density neighborhoods , where the craftsman bungalow single @-@ family home is dominant . The eastside is marked by historic streetcar suburbs built from the 1890s @-@ 1930s as havens for the upper middle class . These neighborhoods , many of which contain their own villages encircled by shaded , architecturally @-@ distinct residential streets , include the Victorian Inman Park , Bohemian East Atlanta , and eclectic Old Fourth Ward . On the westside , former warehouses and factories have been converted into housing , retail space , and art galleries , transforming the once @-@ industrial West Midtown into a model neighborhood for smart growth , historic rehabilitation , and infill construction . In southwest Atlanta , neighborhoods closer to downtown originated as streetcar suburbs , including the historic West End , while those farther from downtown retain a postwar suburban layout , including Collier Heights and Cascade Heights , home to much of the city 's affluent African American population . Northwest Atlanta contains the areas of the city to west of Marietta Boulevard and to the north of Martin Luther King , Jr . Drive , including those neighborhoods remote to downtown , such as Riverside , Bolton and Whittier Mill , which is one of Atlanta 's designated Landmark Historical Neighborhoods . Vine City , though technically Northwest , adjoins the city 's Downtown area and has recently been the target of community outreach programs and economic development initiatives .

Gentrification of the city 's neighborhoods is one of the more controversial and transformative forces shaping contemporary Atlanta . The gentrification of Atlanta has its origins in the 1970s , after many of Atlanta 's neighborhoods had undergone the urban decay that affected other major American cities in the mid @-@ 20th century . When neighborhood opposition successfully prevented two freeways from being built through city 's the east side in 1975 , the area became the starting point for Atlanta 's gentrification . After Atlanta was awarded the Olympic games in 1990 , gentrification expanded into other parts of the city , stimulated by infrastructure improvements undertaken in preparation for the games . Gentrification was also aided by the Atlanta Housing Authority 's eradication of the city 's public housing .

= = = Climate = = =

Under the Köppen classification , Atlanta has a humid subtropical climate (Cfa) with four distinct seasons and generous precipitation year @-@ round , typical for the inland South . Summers are hot and humid , with temperatures somewhat moderated by the city 's elevation . Winters are cool but variable , with an average of 48 freezing days per year and temperatures dropping to 0 ° F (? 17 @-@ 8 ° C) on rare occasions . Warm air from the Gulf of Mexico can bring spring @-@ like highs while strong Arctic air masses can push lows into the teens (? ? 7 ° C) .

July averages 80 @-@ 2 ° F (26 @-@ 8 ° C) , with high temperatures reaching 90 ° F (32 ° C) on an average 44 days per year , though 100 ° F (38 ° C) readings are not seen most years . January averages 43 @-@ 5 ° F (6 @-@ 4 ° C) , with temperatures in the suburbs slightly cooler due largely to the urban heat island effect . Lows at or below freezing can be expected 40 nights annually , but extended stretches with daily high temperatures below 40 ° F (4 ° C) are very rare , with a recent exception in January 2014 . Extremes range from ? 9 ° F (? 23 ° C) on February 13 , 1899 to 106 ° F (41 ° C) on June 30 , 2012 . Dewpoints in the summer range from 63 @-@ 6 ° F (18 ° C) in June to 67 @-@ 8 ° F (20 ° C) in July .

Typical of the southeastern U.S. , Atlanta receives abundant rainfall that is relatively evenly distributed throughout the year , though spring and early fall are markedly drier . The average annual rainfall is 50 @. @ 2 inches (1 @, @ 280 mm) , while snowfall is typically light at around 2 @. @ 1 inches (5 @. @ 3 cm) per year . The heaviest single snowfall occurred on January 23 , 1940 , with around 10 inches (25 cm) of snow . However , ice storms usually cause more problems than snowfall does , the most severe occurring on January 7 , 1973 . Tornadoes are rare in the city itself , but the March 15 , 2008 EF2 tornado damaged prominent structures in downtown Atlanta .

Note

= = Demographics = =

The 2010 United States Census reported that Atlanta had a population of 420 @, @ 003 . The population density was 3 @, @ 154 per square mile (1232 / km²) . The racial makeup and population of Atlanta was 54 @. @ 0 % Black or African American , 38 @. @ 4 % White , 3 @. @ 1 % Asian and 0 @. @ 2 % Native American . Those from some other race made up 2 @. @ 2 % of the city 's population , while those from two or more races made up 2 @. @ 0 % . Hispanics of any race made up 5 @. @ 2 % of the city 's population . The median income for a household in the city was \$ 45 @, @ 171 . The per capita income for the city was \$ 35 @, @ 453 . 22 @. @ 6 % percent of the population was living below the poverty line . However , compared to the rest of the country , Atlanta 's cost of living is 6 @. @ 00 % lower than the U.S. average . Atlanta has one of the highest LGBT populations per capita , ranking third among major American cities , behind San Francisco and slightly behind Seattle , with 12 @. @ 8 % of the city 's total population identifying as gay , lesbian , or bisexual . 7 @. @ 3 % of Atlantans were born abroad .

In the 2010 Census , Atlanta was recorded as the nation 's fourth @-@ largest majority @-@ black city . It has long been known as a center of African @-@ American political power , education , and culture , often called a black mecca . African @-@ American residents of Atlanta have followed whites to newer housing in the suburbs in the early 21st century . From 2000 to 2010 , the city 's black population decreased by 31 @, @ 678 people , shrinking from 61 @. @ 4 % of the city 's population in 2000 to 54 @. @ 0 % in 2010 .

At the same time , the white population of Atlanta has increased . Between 2000 and 2010 , the proportion of whites in the city 's population grew faster than that of any other U.S. city . In that decade , Atlanta 's white population grew from 31 % to 38 % of the city 's population , an absolute increase of 22 @, @ 753 people , more than triple the increase that occurred between 1990 and 2000 .

Out of the total population five years and older , 83 @. @ 3 % spoke only English at home , while 8 @. @ 8 % spoke Spanish , 3 @. @ 9 % another Indo @-@ European language , and 2 @. @ 8 % an Asian language . Atlanta 's dialect has traditionally been a variation of Southern American English . The Chattahoochee River long formed a border between the Coastal Southern and Southern Appalachian dialects . Because of the development of corporate headquarters in the region , attracting migrants from other areas of the country , by 2003 , Atlanta magazine concluded that Atlanta had become significantly " de @-@ Southernized . " A Southern accent was considered a handicap in some circumstances . In general , Southern accents are less prevalent among residents of the city and inner suburbs and among younger people ; they are more common in the outer suburbs and among older people . At the same time , residents of the city express Southern variations of African American Vernacular English .

Religion in Atlanta , while historically centered on Protestant Christianity , now involves many faiths as a result of the city and metro area 's increasingly international population . Protestant Christianity still maintains a strong presence in the city (63 %) , but in recent decades the Catholic Church has increased in numbers and influence because of new migrants in the region . Metro Atlanta also has numerous ethnic or national Christian congregations , including Korean and Indian churches . The larger non @-@ Christian faiths are Judaism , Islam and Hinduism . Overall , there are over 1 @, @ 000 places of worship within Atlanta .

= = Economy = =

Encompassing \$ 304 billion , the Atlanta metropolitan area is the eighth @-@ largest economy in the country and 17th @-@ largest in the world . Corporate operations comprise a large portion of the Atlanta 's economy , with the city serving as the regional , national , or global headquarters for many corporations . Atlanta contains the country 's third largest concentration of Fortune 500 companies , and the city is the global headquarters of corporations such as The Coca @-@ Cola Company , The Home Depot , Delta Air Lines , AT & T Mobility , Chick @-@ fil @-@ A , UPS , and Newell @-@ Rubbermaid . Over 75 percent of Fortune 1000 companies conduct business operations in the Atlanta metropolitan area , and the region hosts offices of about 1 @,@ 250 multinational corporations . Many corporations are drawn to Atlanta on account of the city 's educated workforce ; as of 2010 , nearly 43 % of adults in the city of Atlanta have college degrees , compared to 27 % in the nation as a whole .

Atlanta began as a railroad town and logistics has remained a major component of the city 's economy to this day . Atlanta is an important rail junction and contains major classification yards for Norfolk Southern and CSX . Since its construction in the 1950s , Hartsfield @-@ Jackson Atlanta International Airport has served as a key engine of Atlanta 's economic growth . Delta Air Lines , the city 's largest employer and the metro area 's third largest , operates the world 's largest airline hub at Hartsfield @-@ Jackson and has helped make it the world 's busiest airport , both in terms of passenger traffic and aircraft operations . Partly due to the airport , Atlanta has become a hub for diplomatic missions ; as of 2012 , the city contains 25 general consulates , the seventh @-@ highest concentration of diplomatic missions in the United States .

Media is also an important aspect of Atlanta 's economy . The city is a major cable television programming center . Ted Turner established the headquarters of both the Cable News Network (CNN) and the Turner Broadcasting System (TBS) in Atlanta . Cox Enterprises , the country 's third @-@ largest cable television service and the publisher of over a dozen major American newspapers , is headquartered in the city . The Weather Channel , owned by NBCUniversal , Bain Capital , and The Blackstone Group , is headquartered just outside Atlanta in Cobb County .

Information technology , an economic sector that includes publishing , software development , entertainment and data processing has garnered a larger percentage of Atlanta 's economic output . Indeed , Atlanta has been nicknamed the Silicon peach due to its burgeoning technology sector . As of 2013 , Atlanta contains the fourth @-@ largest concentration of information technology jobs in the United States , numbering 85 @,@ 000 . Atlanta also ranks as the sixth fastest @-@ growing city for information technology jobs , with an employment growth of 4 @.@ 8 % in 2012 and a three @-@ year growth near 9 % , or 16 @,@ 000 jobs . Information technology companies are drawn to Atlanta 's lower costs and educated workforce .

Largely due to a statewide tax incentive enacted in 2005 , the Georgia Entertainment Industry Investment Act , which awards qualified productions a transferable income tax credit of 20 % of all in @-@ state costs for film and television investments of \$ 500 @,@ 000 or more , Atlanta has become a center for film and television production . Film and television production facilities in Atlanta include Turner Studios , Pinewood Studios (Pinewood Atlanta) , Tyler Perry Studios , Williams Street Productions , and the EUE / Screen Gems soundstages . Film and television production injected \$ 6 billion into Georgia 's economy in 2015 , with Atlanta garnering most of the projects . Atlanta has gained recognition as a center of production of horror and zombie @-@ related productions , with Atlanta magazine dubbing the city the " Zombie Capital of the World " .

Compared to other American cities , Atlanta 's economy has been disproportionately affected by the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent recession , with the city 's economy earning a ranking of 68 among 100 American cities in a September 2014 report due to an elevated unemployment rate , declining real income levels , and a depressed housing market . From 2010 ? 2011 , Atlanta saw a 0 @.@ 9 % contraction in employment and only a 0 @.@ 4 % rise in income . Though unemployment had dropped to 7 % by late 2014 , this was still higher than the national unemployment rate of 5 @.@ 8 % Atlanta 's housing market has also struggled , with home prices falling by 2 @.@ 1 % in January 2012 , reaching levels not seen since 1996 . Compared with a year earlier , the average

home price in Atlanta fell 17 @. @ 3 % in February 2012 , the largest annual drop in the history of the index for any city . The collapse in home prices has led some economists to deem Atlanta the worst housing market in the country . Nevertheless , in August 2013 , Atlanta appeared on Forbes magazine 's list of the Best Places for Business and Careers .

= = Culture = =

Atlanta , while located in the South , has a culture that is no longer strictly Southern . This is due to a large population of migrants from other parts of the U.S. , in addition to many recent immigrants to the U.S. who have made the metropolitan area their home , establishing Atlanta as the cultural and economic hub of an increasingly multi @-@ cultural metropolitan area . Thus , although traditional Southern culture is part of Atlanta 's cultural fabric , it is mostly the backdrop to one of the nation 's most cosmopolitan cities . This unique cultural combination reveals itself in the arts district of Midtown , the quirky neighborhoods on the city 's eastside , and the multi @-@ ethnic enclaves found along Buford Highway .

= = = Arts and theater = = =

Atlanta is one of few United States cities with permanent , professional , resident companies in all major performing arts disciplines : opera (Atlanta Opera) , ballet (Atlanta Ballet) , orchestral music (Atlanta Symphony Orchestra) , and theater (the Alliance Theatre) . Atlanta also attracts many touring Broadway acts , concerts , shows , and exhibitions catering to a variety of interests . Atlanta 's performing arts district is concentrated in Midtown Atlanta at the Woodruff Arts Center , which is home to the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the Alliance Theatre . The city also frequently hosts touring Broadway acts , especially at The Fox Theatre , a historic landmark that is among the highest grossing theatres of its size .

As a national center for the arts , Atlanta is home to significant art museums and institutions . The renowned High Museum of Art is arguably the South 's leading art museum and among the most @-@ visited art museums in the world . The Museum of Design Atlanta (MODA) , a design museum , is the only such museum in the Southeast . Contemporary art museums include the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center and the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia . Institutions of higher education also contribute to Atlanta 's art scene , with the Savannah College of Art and Design 's Atlanta campus providing the city 's arts community with a steady stream of curators , and Emory University 's Michael C. Carlos Museum containing the largest collection of ancient art in the Southeast .

= = = Music = = =

Atlanta has played a major or contributing role in the development of various genres of American music at different points in the city 's history . Beginning as early as the 1920s , Atlanta emerged as a center for country music , which was brought to the city by migrants from Appalachia . During the countercultural 1960s , Atlanta hosted the Atlanta International Pop Festival , with the 1969 festival taking place more than a month before Woodstock and featuring many of the same bands . The city was also a center for Southern rock during its 1970s heyday : the Allman Brothers Band 's hit instrumental " Hot ' Lanta " is an ode to the city , while Lynyrd Skynyrd 's famous live rendition of " Free Bird " was recorded at the Fox Theatre in 1976 , with lead singer Ronnie Van Zant directing the band to " play it pretty for Atlanta " . During the 1980s , Atlanta had an active Punk rock scene that was centered on two of the city 's music venues , 688 Club and the Metroplex , and Atlanta famously played host to the Sex Pistols first U.S. show , which was performed at the Great Southeastern Music Hall . The 1990s saw the birth of Atlanta hip hop , a subgenre that gained relevance following the success of home @-@ grown duo OutKast ; however , it was not until the 2000s that Atlanta moved " from the margins to becoming hip @-@ hop 's center of gravity , part of a larger shift in hip @-@ hop innovation to the South " . Also in the 2000s , Atlanta was recognized by the Brooklyn

@-@ based Vice magazine for its impressive yet under @-@ appreciated Indie rock scene , which revolves around the various live music venues found on the city 's alternative eastside .

= = = Tourism = = =

As of 2010 , Atlanta is the seventh @-@ most visited city in the United States , with over 35 million visitors per year . Although the most popular attraction among visitors to Atlanta is the Georgia Aquarium , the world 's largest indoor aquarium , Atlanta 's tourism industry mostly driven by the city 's history museums and outdoor attractions . Atlanta contains a notable amount of historical museums and sites , including the Martin Luther King , Jr . National Historic Site , which includes the preserved childhood home of Dr. Martin Luther King , Jr . , as well as his final resting place ; the Atlanta Cyclorama & Civil War Museum , which houses a massive painting and diorama in @-@ the @-@ round , with a rotating central audience platform , depicting the Battle of Atlanta in the Civil War ; the World of Coca @-@ Cola , featuring the history of the world famous soft drink brand and its well @-@ known advertising ; the College Football Hall of Fame which honors college football and its athletes ; the National Center for Civil and Human Rights , which explores the Civil Rights Movement and its connection to contemporary human rights movements throughout the world ; the Carter Center and Presidential Library , housing U.S. President Jimmy Carter 's papers and other material relating to the Carter administration and the Carter family 's life ; and the Margaret Mitchell House and Museum , site of the writing of the best @-@ selling novel *Gone with the Wind* .

Atlanta also contains various outdoor attractions . The Atlanta Botanical Garden , adjacent to Piedmont Park , is home to the 600 @-@ foot @-@ long (180 m) Kendeda Canopy Walk , a skywalk that allows visitors to tour one of the city 's last remaining urban forests from 40 @-@ foot @-@ high (12 m) . The Canopy Walk is considered the only canopy @-@ level pathway of its kind in the United States . Zoo Atlanta , located in Grant Park , accommodates over 1 @,@ 300 animals representing more than 220 species . Home to the nation 's largest collections of gorillas and orangutans , the Zoo is also one of only four zoos in the U.S. to house giant pandas . Festivals showcasing arts and crafts , film , and music , including the Atlanta Dogwood Festival , the Atlanta Film Festival , and Music Midtown , respectively , are also popular with tourists .

Tourists are also drawn to the city 's culinary scene , which comprises a mix of urban establishments garnering national attention , ethnic restaurants serving cuisine from every corner of the world , and traditional eateries specializing in Southern dining . Since the turn of the 21st century , Atlanta has emerged as a sophisticated restaurant town . Many restaurants opened in the city 's gentrifying neighborhoods have received praise at the national level , including Bocado , Bacchanalia , and Miller Union in West Midtown , Empire State South in Midtown , and Two Urban Licks and Rathbun 's on the east side . In 2011 , the New York Times characterized Empire State South and Miller Union as reflecting " a new kind of sophisticated Southern sensibility centered on the farm but experienced in the city . " Visitors seeking to sample international Atlanta are directed to Buford Highway , the city 's international corridor . There , the million @-@ plus immigrants that make Atlanta home have established various authentic ethnic restaurants representing virtually every nationality on the globe . For traditional Southern fare , one of the city 's most famous establishments is The Varsity , a long @-@ lived fast food chain and the world 's largest drive @-@ in restaurant . Mary Mac 's Tea Room and Paschal 's are more formal destinations for Southern food .

= = Sports = =

Atlanta is home to professional franchises for three major team sports : the Atlanta Braves of Major League Baseball , the Atlanta Hawks of the National Basketball Association , and the Atlanta Falcons of the National Football League . The Braves , who moved to Atlanta in 1966 , were established as the Boston Red Stockings in 1871 and are the oldest continually operating professional sports franchise in the United States . The Braves won the World Series in 1995 , and had an unprecedented run of 14 straight divisional championships from 1991 to 2005 .

The Atlanta Falcons have played in Atlanta since their inception in 1966 . The Falcons have won the division title five times (1980 , 1998 , 2004 , 2010 , 2012) and the conference championship once , when they finished as the runner @-@ up to the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XXXIII in 1999 . The Atlanta Hawks began in 1946 as the Tri @-@ Cities Blackhawks , playing in Moline , Illinois . The team moved to Atlanta in 1968 , and they currently play their games in Philips Arena . The Atlanta Dream is the city 's Women 's National Basketball Association franchise .

Atlanta has also had its own professional ice hockey and soccer franchises . The National Hockey League (NHL) has had two Atlanta franchises : the Atlanta Flames began play in 1972 before moving to Calgary in 1980 , while the Atlanta Thrashers began play in 1999 before moving to Winnipeg in 2011 . The Atlanta Chiefs was the city 's professional soccer team from 1967 to 1972 , and the team won a national championship in 1968 . In 1998 another professional soccer team was formed , the Atlanta Silverbacks of the North American Soccer League . In April 2014 , a Major League Soccer team , Atlanta United FC , was formed as an expansion team to begin play in 2017 .

Atlanta has been the host city for various international , professional and collegiate sporting events . Most famously , Atlanta hosted the Centennial 1996 Summer Olympics . Atlanta has also hosted Super Bowl XXVIII in 1994 and Super Bowl XXXIV in 2000 . In professional golf , The Tour Championship , the final PGA Tour event of the season , is played annually at East Lake Golf Club . In 2001 and 2011 , Atlanta hosted the PGA Championship , one of the four major championships in men 's professional golf , at the Atlanta Athletic Club . In professional ice hockey , the city hosted the 56th NHL All @-@ Star Game in 2008 , three years before the Thrashers moved . In 2011 , Atlanta hosted professional wrestling 's annual WrestleMania . The city has hosted the NCAA Final Four Men 's Basketball Championship four times , most recently in 2013 . In college football , Atlanta hosts the Chick @-@ fil @-@ A Kickoff Game , the SEC Championship Game , and the Chick @-@ fil @-@ A Peach Bowl .

= = Parks and recreation = =

Atlanta 's 343 parks , nature preserves , and gardens cover 3 @,@ 622 acres (14 @.@ 66 km2) , which amounts to only 5 @.@ 6 % of the city 's total acreage , compared to the national average of just over 10 % . However , 64 % of Atlantans live within a 10 @-@ minute walk of a park , a percentage equal to the national average . Furthermore , in its 2013 ParkScore ranking , the The Trust for Public Land , a national land conservation organization , reported that among the park systems of the 50 most populous U.S. cities , Atlanta 's park system received a ranking of 31 . Piedmont Park , located in Midtown is Atlanta 's most iconic green space . The park , which has undergone a major renovation and expansion in recent years , attracts visitors from across the region and hosts cultural events throughout the year . Other notable city parks include Centennial Olympic Park , a legacy of the 1996 Summer Olympics that forms the centerpiece of the city 's tourist district ; Woodruff Park , which anchors the campus of Georgia State University ; Grant Park , home to both Zoo Atlanta and the Atlanta Cyclorama & Civil War Museum ; and Chastain Park , which houses an amphitheater used for live music concerts . The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area , located in the northwestern corner of the city , preserves a 48 mi (77 km) stretch of the river for public recreation opportunities . The Atlanta Botanical Garden , adjacent to Piedmont Park , contains formal gardens , including a Japanese garden and a rose garden , woodland areas , and a conservatory that includes indoor exhibits of plants from tropical rainforests and deserts . The BeltLine , a former rail corridor that forms a 22 mi (35 km) loop around Atlanta 's core , will eventually be transformed into a series of parks , connected by a multi @-@ use trail , increasing Atlanta 's park space by 40 % .

Atlanta offers resources and opportunities for amateur and participatory sports and recreation . Jogging is a particularly popular local sport . The Peachtree Road Race , the world 's largest 10 km race , is held annually on Independence Day . The Georgia Marathon , which begins and ends at Centennial Olympic Park , routes through the city 's historic east side neighborhoods . Golf and tennis are also popular in Atlanta , and the city contains six public golf courses and 182 tennis courts . Facilities located along the Chattahoochee River cater to watersports enthusiasts , providing

the opportunity for kayaking , canoeing , fishing , boating , or tubing . The city 's only skate park , a 15 @, @ 000 square feet (1 @, @ 400 m2) facility that offers bowls , curbs , and smooth @-@ rolling concrete mounds , is located at Historic Fourth Ward Park .

= = Government and politics = =

Atlanta is governed by a mayor and the Atlanta City Council . The city council consists of 15 representatives ? one from each of the city 's 12 districts and three at @-@ large positions . The mayor may veto a bill passed by the council , but the council can override the veto with a two @-@ thirds majority . The mayor of Atlanta is Kasim Reed , a Democrat elected on a nonpartisan ballot whose first term in office expired at the end of 2013 . Reed was elected to a second term on November 5 , 2013 . Every mayor elected since 1973 has been black . In 2001 , Shirley Franklin became the first woman to be elected Mayor of Atlanta , and the first African @-@ American woman to serve as mayor of a major southern city . Atlanta city politics suffered from a notorious reputation for corruption during the 1990s administration of Bill Campbell , who was convicted by a federal jury in 2006 on three counts of tax evasion in connection with gambling income he received while Mayor during trips he took with city contractors .

As the state capital , Atlanta is the site of most of Georgia 's state government . The Georgia State Capitol building , located downtown , houses the offices of the governor , lieutenant governor and secretary of state , as well as the General Assembly . The Governor 's Mansion is located in a residential section of Buckhead . Atlanta serves as the regional hub for many arms of the federal bureaucracy , including the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention . Atlanta also plays an important role in federal judiciary system , containing the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit and of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia .

Historically , Atlanta has been a stronghold for the Democratic Party . Although municipal elections are officially nonpartisan , nearly all of the city 's elected officials are registered Democrats . The city is split among 14 state house districts and four state senate districts , all held by Democrats . At the federal level , Atlanta is split between two congressional districts . The northern three @-@ fourths of the city is located in the 5th district , represented by Democrat John Lewis . The southern fourth is in the 13th district , represented by Democrat David Scott .

The city is served by the Atlanta Police Department , which numbers 2 @, @ 000 officers and oversaw a 40 % decrease in the city 's crime rate between 2001 and 2009 . Specifically , homicide decreased by 57 % , rape by 72 % , and violent crime overall by 55 % . Crime is down across the country , but Atlanta 's improvement has occurred at more than twice the national rate . Nevertheless , Forbes ranked Atlanta as the sixth most dangerous city in the United States in 2012 .

= = Education = =

Due to the more than 30 colleges and universities located in the city , Atlanta is considered a center for higher education . Among the most prominent public universities in Atlanta is the Georgia Institute of Technology , a research university located in Midtown that has been consistently ranked among the nation 's top ten public universities for its degree programs in engineering , computing , management , the sciences , architecture , and liberal arts . Georgia State University , a public research university located in Downtown Atlanta , is the largest of the 29 public colleges and universities in the University System of Georgia and a major contributor to the revitalization of the city 's central business district . Atlanta is also home to nationally renowned private colleges and universities , most notably Emory University , a leading liberal arts and research institution that ranks among the top 20 schools in the United States and operates Emory Healthcare , the largest health care system in Georgia . Also located in the city is the Atlanta University Center , the largest contiguous consortium of historically black colleges , comprising Spelman College , Clark Atlanta University , Morehouse College , Morehouse School of Medicine , and Interdenominational

Theological Center . Atlanta also contains a campus of the Savannah College of Art and Design , a private art and design university that has proven to be a major factor in the recent growth of Atlanta 's visual art community .

Atlanta Public Schools enrolls 55 @, @ 000 students in 106 schools , some of which are operated as charter schools . The district has been plagued by a widely publicized cheating scandal exposed in 2009 . Atlanta is also served by many private schools , including parochial Roman Catholic schools operated by the Archdiocese of Atlanta .

= = Media = =

The primary network @-@ affiliated television stations in Atlanta are WXIA @-@ TV (NBC) , WGCL @-@ TV (CBS) , WSB @-@ TV (ABC) , and WAGA @-@ TV (FOX) . The Atlanta metropolitan area is served by two public television stations and one public radio station . WGTV is the flagship station of the statewide Georgia Public Television network and is a PBS member station , while WPBA is owned by Atlanta Public Schools . Georgia Public Radio is listener @-@ funded and comprises one NPR member station , WABE , a classical music station operated by Atlanta Public Schools .

Atlanta is served by the Atlanta Journal @-@ Constitution , its only major daily newspaper with wide distribution . The Atlanta Journal @-@ Constitution is the result of a 1950 merger between The Atlanta Journal and The Atlanta Constitution , with staff consolidation occurring in 1982 and separate publication of the morning Constitution and afternoon Journal ceasing in 2001 . Alternative weekly newspapers include Creative Loafing , which has a weekly print circulation of 80 @, @ 000 . Atlanta magazine is an award @-@ winning , monthly general @-@ interest magazine based in and covering Atlanta .

= = Transportation = =

Atlanta 's transportation infrastructure comprises a complex network that includes a heavy rail line , a streetcar line , multiple interstate highways , the world 's busiest airport , and over 45 miles (72 kilometres) of bike paths .

With a network of freeways that radiate out from the city , automobiles are the dominant mode of transportation in the region . Three major interstate highways converge in Atlanta : I @-@ 20 (east @-@ west) , I @-@ 75 (northwest @-@ southeast) , and I @-@ 85 (northeast @-@ southwest) . The latter two combine in the middle of the city to form the Downtown Connector (I @-@ 75 / 85) , which carries more than 340 @, @ 000 vehicles per day and is one of the most congested segments of interstate highway in the United States . Atlanta is mostly encircled by Interstate 285 , a beltway locally known as " the Perimeter " that has come to mark the boundary between " Inside the Perimeter " (ITP) , the city and close @-@ in suburbs , and " Outside the Perimeter " (OTP) , the outer suburbs and exurbs . The heavy reliance on automobiles for transportation in Atlanta has resulted in traffic , commute , and air pollution rates that rank among the worst in the country .

The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) provides public transportation in the form of buses and heavy rail . Notwithstanding heavy automotive usage in Atlanta , the city 's subway system is the eighth busiest in the country . MARTA rail lines connect many key destinations , such as the airport , Downtown , Midtown , Buckhead , and Perimeter Center . However , significant destinations , such as Emory University and Cumberland , remain unserved . As a result , a 2012 Brookings Institution study placed Atlanta 87th of 100 metro areas for transit accessibility . Emory University operates its Cliff shuttle buses with 200 @, @ 000 boardings per month , while private minibuses supply Buford Highway . Amtrak , the national rail passenger system , provides service to Atlanta via the Crescent train (New York ? New Orleans) , which stops at Peachtree Station . In 2014 , the Atlanta Streetcar opened to the public . The streetcar 's line , which is also known as the Downtown Loop , runs 2 @. @ 7 miles around the downtown tourist areas of Peachtree Center , Centennial Olympic Park , the Martin Luther King , Jr . National Historic Site , and Sweet Auburn . The Atlanta Streetcar line is also being expanded on in the coming years .

to include a wider range of Atlanta 's neighborhoods and important places of interest , with a total of 66 miles of track being laid in the near future .

Hartsfield @-@ Jackson Atlanta International Airport , the world 's busiest airport as measured by passenger traffic and aircraft traffic , offers air service to over 150 U.S. destinations and more than 80 international destinations in 52 countries , with over 2 @,@ 700 arrivals and departures daily . Delta Air Lines maintains its largest hub at the airport . Situated 10 miles (16 km) south of downtown , the airport covers most of the land inside a wedge formed by Interstate 75 , Interstate 85 , and Interstate 285 .

Cycling is a growing mode of transportation in Atlanta , more than doubling since 2009 , when it comprised 1 @.@ 1 % of all commutes (up from 0 @.@ 3 % in 2000) . Although Atlanta 's lack of bike lanes and hilly topography may deter many residents from cycling , the city 's transportation plan calls for the construction of 226 miles (364 kilometres) of bike lanes by 2020 , with the BeltLine helping to achieve this goal . In 2012 , Atlanta 's first " bike track " was constructed on 10th Street in Midtown . The two lane bike track runs from Monroe Drive west to Charles Allen Drive , with connections to the Beltline and Piedmont Park . Starting in June 2016 , Atlanta received a bike sharing program with 100 bikes in Downtown , with 500 more being expected by the end of the year .

= = Tree canopy = =

Atlanta has a reputation as a " city in a forest " due to an abundance of trees that is rare among major cities . The city 's main street is named after a tree , and beyond the Downtown , Midtown , and Buckhead business districts , the skyline gives way to a dense canopy of woods that spreads into the suburbs . The city is home to the Atlanta Dogwood Festival , an annual arts and crafts festival held one weekend during early April , when the native dogwoods are in bloom . However , the nickname is also factually accurate , as the city 's tree coverage percentage is at 36 % , the highest out of all major American cities , and above the national average of 27 % . Atlanta 's tree coverage does not go unnoticed ? it was the main reason cited by National Geographic in naming Atlanta a " Place of a Lifetime " .

The city 's lush tree canopy , which filters out pollutants and cools sidewalks and buildings , has increasingly been under assault from man and nature due to heavy rains , drought , aged forests , new pests , and urban construction . A 2001 study found that Atlanta 's heavy tree cover declined from 48 % in 1974 to 38 % in 1996 . However , the problem is being addressed by community organizations and city government : Trees Atlanta , a non @-@ profit organization founded in 1985 , has planted and distributed over 75 @,@ 000 shade trees in the city , while Atlanta 's government has awarded \$ 130 @,@ 000 in grants to neighborhood groups to plant trees .

= = Sister cities = =

Atlanta has 18 sister cities , as designated by Sister Cities International , Inc . (SCI) :