

crazy airport.2. Wow, that traffic really sucked.Maybe you got to spend a little time downtown for a convention or ballgame.And, sure, there were the highlights like the Georgia Aquarium, the College Football Hall of Fame and the World of Coca-Cola.But after that, unless you knew exactly where to look, you probably saw a lot of concrete, a lot of places that closed at 6 p.m., and culinary and entertainment options just like the other roughly 430 Hooters or 175 Hard Rock Cafes.Here's the good news: You've been to Atlanta. But you haven't really been to Atlanta.Get away from that street named Peachtree (or one of the dozens of other streets we named Peachtree for your convenience), and there's a city with a lot more to offer.The capital of the New South has been called a small town trapped in a big city.In fact, it's a lot of small towns, coexisting, for the most part, inside and alongside the borders of that big city.And like the long list of Southern storytellers who have called Atlanta home, if you spend enough time with it, it will share its secrets with you.

Good eatsAs a food-lover friend recently said, in Atlanta, you can go to dinner and a show, or you can just go to dinner.Gourmands the land over have noticed that the ATL (please, never call it "Hotlanta") is quietly becoming a destination for high-quality dining, with everything from schmancy white-tablecloth affairs to traditional soul-food and meat-and-three spots drawing crowds.Gunshow, the latest by "Top Chef" alum and Atlanta native Kevin Gillespie, was recently named one of Esquire's best new restaurants and marries Brazilian churrascari and Chinese dim sum-style dining with Gillespie's love of all things meat.Celebrity chef Richard Blais has FLIP Burger and The Spence. Empire State South is one of Hugh Acheson's four restaurants in Georgia; it serves three meals a day that focus heavily on local ingredients.Perhaps tickling the most taste buds lately is chef Ford Fry, whose seven spots range from seafood (The Optimist) to Italian-inspired (No. 246) as well as stretching from Atlanta's re-emerging Westside to its commuter-heavy northern suburbs.And all of that's not even to mention Buford Highway's ridiculously rich array of traditional Asian cuisine; tradition-rich Mary Mac's Tea Room; no-frills Ann's Snack Bar, home of the massive Ghetto Burger; and Palookaville Fine Foods, the carny sideshow-themed bastion of guilty pleasures evolved from a corn dog cart by Jim Stacy, host of the Cooking Channel's "Offbeat Eats."

Songs of the SouthIt's been decades since the Allman Bros. made the short drive up from Macon to conquer Atlanta with tunes like "Melissa" and "Hot'lanta." (Again ... please don't call it that.)Now, it's all about the Dirty South.The New York Times has called Atlanta "hip-hop's center of gravity," and aside from New York and Los Angeles, it's hard to argue for another city being as influential in the form's evolution.A recent three-day stand by native sons Outkast in Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park turned into a joyous homecoming weekend of sorts, bringing together everyone from hip young urbanites to suburban soccer moms to shake it like a Polaroid picture to a group that's helped define hip-hop since emerging from Atlanta's neighbor East Point in 1992.Cee Lo Green, Lil Jon, T.I., Ludacris and Usher are just a few of the other artists who call Atlanta home, where a new generation of MCs and DJs are bubbling up at venues like Apache Cafe, T.I.'s Club Crucial and MJQ Concourse.The presence of Usher, and his Vanity record label, has even been responsible for drawing Justin Bieber to the city.But don't hold that against us.If hip-hop isn't your thing, Atlanta has a thriving underground rock scene, spawning such current acts as sludge rockers Mastodon, power-pop stars-in-waiting The Biters and indie darlings Deerhunter.And Eddie's Attic is one of the most highly regarded acoustic music venues in the United States.Performers from across the country are on the months-long waiting list for the