

Travel

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JAMES DUCKWORTH



There is a dream
Martin Luther King Jr National Historic Site;
(below) Tex-Mex cuisine at Superica

Hot 'Lanta

Home of Martin Luther King Jr, CNN, *The Walking Dead* and Outkast, Atlanta is a Southern melting pot. Rob McGovern ventures into the Peach State and finds out what's sweet...

It could have been the shopping bags or the way we dithered trying to work out which MARTA – the Atlantan subway system – exit we needed, but whatever it was, a well-meaning passerby, Reggie,

offered his assistance. We were looking for our hotel only 10 minutes walk away, and across this short distance Reggie managed to divulge some local knowledge, including pointing out a few good places to eat.

Most people have a few general ideas about the American South, some more unsavoury than others, but our personal straw poll, of admittedly gourmandising globetrotters, found that food places highly on what's recommended when in town.

Food for thought

One of Atlanta's most famous daughters – the Empress of Soul – Gladys Knight is probably better known among local millennials for the chain of restaurants that bears her name rather than her glittering musical career. The not-so-snappily named Gladys Knight's Chicken & Waffles Concepts has several branches, including one on Peachtree (529 Peachtree St, +1 404 874 9393; gladysandron.net). Even on a public holiday at 3pm the restaurant is full, which is the best judge of how good an eatery is. The Midnight Train (four Southern fried jumbo chicken wings and one original waffle, \$105), is a permanently recommended special and was decent. Washed down with an Uptown (a house blend of lemonade and sweetened iced tea, \$20), it was a satisfying quick lunch, even though it doesn't top the amazing fried chicken available in Korea. Not world beating, but certainly novel.

For more cutting edge dining, without breaking the bank, visit Krog Street Market (99 Krog St, +1 770 434 2400; krogstreetmarket.com). Laidback locals and foodie writers all agree it's a place to sample some of Atlanta's best food, specifically Tex-Mex restaurant Superica (Suite C, +1 678 791 131; supericaatl.com). For more options, the food hall at Ponce City Market is home to a good mix of local seafood, classic burgers and cold-pressed juice (675 Ponce de Leon Ave NE, +1 404 900 7900; poncecitymarket.com). For something quintessentially American, head to Varsity, the world's largest drive-in, for childdogs, onion rings and a frosted orange (61 North Avenue NW, +1 404 881 1706; thevarsity.com). If it's specifically Southern fare you're after, you can't go wrong with either Mary Mac's (224 Ponce de Leon Ave NE, +1 404 876 1800; marymacs.com) or The Colonnade (1879 Cheshire Bridge Rd NE, +1 404 874 5642; colonnadeatlanta.com), both of which serve huge portions of fried chicken, collards and mac and cheese.

If you're after a bit of live entertainment post dinner, our impromptu tour guide Reggie recommends Publik Draft House (654 Peachtree St NE, +1 404



ERIK MEADOWS



Peachtree Street. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Margaret Mitchell House (979 Crescent Avenue, +1 404 249 7015; atlantahistorycenter.com) is where she lived and wrote *Gone With the Wind*. Informative tours of the apartment (which she apparently called 'the dump') as well as exhibitions about her life and the Hollywood version of her book are available daily.



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Tourist trail

Atlanta has plenty else to offer bona fide tourists. Several of the city's more popular tourist spots are clustered together in Pemberton Place, so it's not hard to navigate to the landmarks.

The legacy, for better or worse, of pharmacist Dr John S Pemberton, who invented what we know now as Coca Cola, can be experienced at World of Coca-Cola (121 Baker St NW, +1 404 676-5151; worldofcoca-cola.com). There are more than 100 beverages at five geographically arranged tasting stations, with beverages unique to those locales, on top of a station dedicated solely to differing types of Coke.

After you're all Coked up, go and have a gander at the whale sharks in their spacious 200,000-tonne tank at the Georgia Aquarium (225 Baker St NW, +1 404 581 4000; georgiaaquarium.org). The recently established National Centre for Civil and Human Rights (100 Ivan Allen Jr Blvd NW, +1 678 999 8990; civilandhumanrights.org) is also a

stone's throw from the aquarium. For a site that's more famous, head east to Martin Luther King Jr National Historic Site (450 Auburn Avenue, +1 404 331 5190; nps.gov/malu). Established by congress in 1980, the site includes Dr King's birth home and his tomb. It's also the location of the Martin Luther King Jr 'I Have a Dream' World Peace Rose Garden, one of five rose gardens around the world part of the International World Peace Rose Gardens, beautiful spaces which promote peace and understanding among nations, cultures and religions.

If you're in need of further greenery, abutting Pemberton Place is the 21-acre Centennial Olympic Park (265 Park Ave NW; centennialpark.com). The park hosts many free events, including the city's Fourth of July celebrations, and is a good place to take a break when tired of traipsing around the city. Finally, if at anytime you manage to get lost in downtown Atlanta, keep an eye out for the Atlanta Ambassador Force (atlantadowntown.com). This is a team 67-strong with the sole purpose of helping dazed and confused out of towners. They're dressed in black and red uniforms and pith helmets and can often be spotted riding Segways or mountain bikes.

How to get there

Return fares from Hong Kong to Atlanta (via Chicago) are currently available at United Airlines (united.com) for a reasonable \$5,500 (including tax).

Where to stay

Atlanta is awash with hotels of all kinds, some more reasonable than others. The historic **Georgian Terrace** has hosted everyone from F Scott Fitzgerald to Charles Lindbergh and Elvis Presley during its 105 year history. It is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Rooms range from 200 sq ft to 1,740sq ft and all are equipped with complimentary Wi-Fi and 37-inch flatscreen TVs. From \$1,500 per night (inc tax). thegeorgianterrace.com

For something a bit more modern, even if it is around 10 miles north of the city centre, try **Le Meridien Atlanta Perimeter**. The upscale lifestyle hotel featuring 275 rooms and suites along with an outdoor pool, fitness centre and 9,700sq ft of event space. From \$2,500 per night (inc tax). lemeridienatlantaperimeter.com

885 7505; publikatl.com) for some laid-back suds and live music on Friday and Saturday nights. If you have more time to kill, get in the queue for Johnny's Hideaway (3771 Roswell Rd NE, +1 404 233 8026; johnnyshideaway.com). A neighbourhood place for local people, Johnny's has been 'spinning all your hits from the 50s to today' for over 40 years. The walls are lined with framed pics of celebs and the ambience is without an ounce of pretension – though there's an endearing degree of kitsch, what with the Elvis jumpsuit and Sinatra memorabilia on display. For an after-Johnny's snack, the nearby Waffle House (3735 Roswell Rd, +1 404 816 2378; wafflehouse.com) satisfies all appetites while keeping the raucous atmosphere going into the AM.

Not giving a damn

Another of Atlanta's famous daughters is Margaret Mitchell, author of *Gone With the Wind*. A Pulitzer-prize winner, an instant bestseller upon release and the inspiration for the even more famous film, it was the only novel Mitchell ever published. She was killed aged just 49 when hit by an off duty cab driver on nearby



KEVIN C ROSE

Full tank
Georgia Aquarium;
(above) World of Coca-Cola



GENE PHILLIPS