

ATLANTA: SCENES BEYOND THE MALL

The city has small, quirky pleasures for those who know where to look.

By PETER APPELHOM

ATLANTA, it must be said, isn't New Orleans. Rather than cherishing and building an identity around eccentricity, the city usually defines its personality by the glitzy commercial spine of Peachtree Street beginning downtown, running north to the designer office towers of midtown and culminating in the state-of-the-art malls — Phipps Plaza and Lenox Square — that are to Atlanta what Fifth Avenue is to New York.

But if the face the city shows to the outside world suggests designer labels, the real appeal of Atlanta is elsewhere — in its dense greenery, lovely neighborhoods and its relaxed, amiable pace.

So when the visitor gets away from Peachtree and its main tributary, Piedmont Road, and beyond the shops and malls of Buckhead, the upscale, overwhelmingly white area that is often a magnet for visitors, Atlanta offers a number of small, quirky and accessible pleasures. Some are distinctly Southern. Others are as Southern as a June blizzard.

The best way to get a sense of the Atlanta that is off Peachtree and outside the imaginary Olympic Ring is to leave the center and drive through some of the loveliest residential neighborhoods you'll find anywhere. The most impressive is Buckhead, the upscale neighborhood of stately Georgian estates and more modest homes nestled amid rolling hills of magnolia, pine, dogwood and oak north and west of Peachtree. West Paces Ferry Road, home of the Governors Mansion, a red brick Greek Revival style building on 18 wooded acres, and Habersham, Andrews and Tuxedo Roads are among the most spectacular.

Just as lovely on the east side of town near Emory University is the Druid Hills area, where the film "Driving Miss Daisy" was shot and the real Miss Daisy lived. Frederick Law Olmsted designed some of the small parks in the area, with their rolling hills and manicured greenery. Druid Hills meanders off Ponce de Leon Avenue and is best exemplified by its grand, rambling houses built near the beginning of the century on shady streets such as Lullwater, Oakdale and Springdale Roads.

But the truth is there are alluring in-town neighborhoods throughout Atlanta. Virgin



Thomas S. England for The New York Times (LEFT-FIVE POINTS); Alan S. Wexler for The New York Times (MIDDLE); Michael A. Schwarz for The New York Times

ABOVE: Little Five Points, a funky neighborhood populated by college students and skateboarders.

MIDDLE: A picnic in Grant Park; nearby are some of



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The best way to get a sense of the Atlanta that is off Peachtree and outside the imaginary Olympic Ring is to leave the center and drive through some of the loveliest residential neighborhoods you'll find anywhere. The most impressive is Buckhead, the upscale neighborhoods of stately Georgian estates and more modest homes nestled amid rolling hills of magnolia, blue dogwood and oak north and west of Peachtree West. Paces Ferry Road, home of the Governors Mansion, a red-brick Greek Revival style building on its wooded acres, and Habersham, Andrews and Lakewood Roads are among the most spectacular.

Just as lovely on the east side of town near Emory University is the Druid Hills area, where the film "Driving Miss Daisy" was shot and the real Miss Daisy lived. Frederick Law Olmsted designed some of the small parks in the area, with their rolling hills and manicured greenery. Druid Hills meanders off Ponce de Leon Avenue and is best exemplified by its grand, rambling houses built near the beginning of the century on shady streets such as "Lullwater," Oakdale and Springdale Roads.

But the truth is there are alluring all-weather neighborhoods throughout Atlanta. Virginia-Highland, between Druid Hills and Peachtree, Candler Park and Inman Park south of that and Grant Park farther south. Still.

Not offering quite the same visual pleasures, but an intriguing and revealing slice of American life, is the Buford Highway area just northeast of the city limits. Nicknamed "Chambodia" because much of it runs through suburban Chamblee, the area was once a yuppie-looking stretch of strip shopping centers and low-rise offices that has been transformed in recent years by Asian and Central American immigrants, whose signs and billboards in Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese and Spanish are a reminder that there is a lot more to Atlanta these days than Scarlett and Rhett.

The strip has storefronts with Korean chiropractors next to Chinese herbalists and Vietnamese noodle joints with big-screen TVs showing Vietnamese music videos next to Mexican restaurants with big-screen TVs showing Mexican game shows.

When boosters talk of Atlanta's becoming an international city, they are usually thinking of Japanese trade missions or branch offices of European pharmaceutical companies, but without much fanfare, Buford



Thomas S. England for The New York Times (Little Five Points); Alan S. Weiner for The New York Times (restaurant); Michael A. Schwarz for The New York Times

above: Little Five Points, a funky neighborhood populated by college students and skateboarders.

right: A picnic in Grant Park, nearby are some of the city's nicest Victorian homes.



A Vietnamese restaurant on Buford Highway, a stretch of road with an international flavor.



Highway is as international as Atlanta gets. A prime slice of the area is the Northwoods Plaza shopping center in the 3000 block of Buford at Shallowford Road. Its shops include a Vietnamese hair salon and a Vietnamese formal wear shop, Vietnamese and Mexican video stores, a ginseng and herb shop and an herbal clinic. For old time's sake, there's also a Pizza Hut and a gun shop.

The highlight is Bien Thuy, a sublime, modestly priced Vietnamese restaurant — one of the best bargains in Atlanta — with expertly prepared dishes such as hu tieu (glass noodle soup with seafood). As at most places in the area, its customers are often working-class people from the neighborhood.

A few doors down are two other terrific restaurants, Little Szechuan and El Pastor. Little Szechuan is regarded as one of the better Chinese restaurants in Atlanta with specialties like eggplant with garlic sauce or stir-fried Szechuan string beans. El Pastor is more typical than outstanding. It is a modest Mexico City style eatery popular with working-class Mexican immigrants where the jukebox tends toward Los Tigres del Norte rather than something more mainstream like Selena. Dishes include bisteec a la Mexicana (Mexican-style steak) and sincronizada (flour tortillas with ham and Mexican cheese). Like most places on the highway it is inexpensive.

Also a far cry from the conventional view

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Atlanta 1996

168 pages. The Atlanta Constitution, 1996. \$14.95.

For sheer convenience, this offering from Atlanta's main daily newspaper is hard to beat. It is pocket-sized, beautifully laid out and easy to read if rather superficial.

Targeted toward the Olympic visitor, about a third of the guide is dedicated to the sports schedule, the venues, and the concurrent Olympic Arts Festival. No hotels are mentioned, and the list of attractions offers nothing out of the ordinary.

The best section is up front, where a dozen staffers at the paper have described what they like about the city. The fare is sometimes standard (nightclubs and restaurants) and at other times unconventional (barbecue, Johnny Mercer and gardens). With the exception of the fold-out map in back, which covers only the downtown

Olympic tickets: how to get the seats that remain

By JERE LONGMAN

ALTHOUGH the situation is obviously in flux, tickets were available in mid-May to every Olympic session of track and field and soccer, as well as most sessions of baseball, field hockey, rowing and yachting, along with limited sessions of basketball and gymnastics. At the same time, Olympic officials released 40,000 tickets to swimming, diving, synchronized swimming, water polo and equestrian events, which had previously been announced as sold out. This reflects in part the large number of tickets

for Washington, D.C., through Ticketmaster at (202) 432-7328 or (800) 551-7328.

Those with deep corporate pockets can still get tickets to high-demand events through the so-called "patron package," which offers two tickets to the opening and closing ceremonies and 30 top events for \$50,000.

Those wanting to see the opening and closing ceremonies, as well as track and field, in the Olympic Stadium, can watch in air-conditioned suites accommodating groups of various sizes, priced from \$445,500 to \$544,500. Under the Georgia Dome, luxury suites for basketball cost \$132,880 to \$199,320, for gymnastics \$255,200 to \$382,800.

