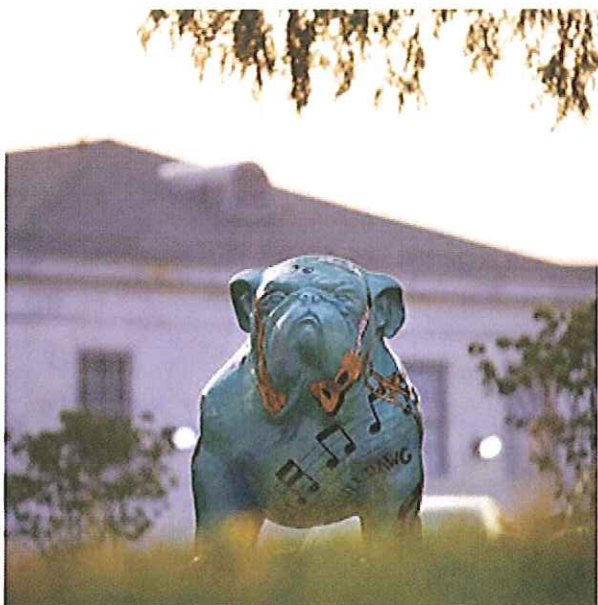


Southern Living

« Return to Athens Spirit

Athens Spirit

One of the best college towns in the South really cranks up in the fall. We'll show you what to see, where to eat, and then tell you where to stay.



Bulldogs grace the UGA campus and downtown.



Athens Spirit
Owner Eric Vaughn named Toula's, his home-decor store, after his mother.



Athens Rocks
Here's a look at some of the places to catch great live music in town.

[more](#)

Hands down, Athens sits atop the list of our favorite mid-size college cities. Why? Vibrancy and walkability. The University of Georgia has always kept Athens current with the younger set, but you'll be pleased to find this town features great shops selling more than futons and restaurants serving more than pizza slices. Most of the action orbits four major streets--Washington, Clayton, Lumpkin, and College--so you're only steps from the next great find.

Shopping

"Southern French" best describes the style of home-decor items--from furniture to bedding to locally made pottery--at Toula's. You'll be impressed by how artistically owner Eric Vaughn displays his items.

"Whoopie cushions have really come a long way," says April McDowell, manager of Junkman's Daughter's Brother. A pop-culture tchotkes catchall, this shop exists as the ultimate alternative department store. You may not actually buy anything in here, but please don't pass it by.

Vintage reigns at Agora, a funky lime green shop on the edge of Clayton. Sift through all the unique jewelry, throwback clothing, and classic antiques until you find something perfect for today.

Even in the lingering heat of September, the tables beneath the trees outside Big City Bread Cafe stay cool. Try one of this adorable breakfast stop's specialties: an omelet or the quiche of the day.

Dining and Entertainment

No surprises with Weaver D's. This neon green-painted, cinder block soul food joint gained popularity long before hometown heroes R.E.M. illuminated its slogan "Automatic for the People" with their album. Dexter Weaver is still piling homemade macaroni and cheese, collards, and sweet potato soufflé on plates with fried chicken as fast as he can. Automatic.

Peek at the Five and Ten menu--bronzed Gulf redfish with lemon emulsion or shiitake risotto with grilled scallions, for example--and you may think stuffy. The dining is fine, for sure, but the atmosphere stays casual in one of the city's most popular restaurants.

Editor's tip: Make reservations, because it gets crowded quickly.

You've probably seen Farm 255 featured in this magazine, and there's a reason. We return every time we're in town for the low-key vibe and delicious organic fare. **Bonus:** The staff pulls double-duty on the farm where the veggies are grown.

When dinner is done, grab a drink or catch a late-night indie movie or documentary at Ciné, a bar and theater occupying a former post office extension built in the 1930s.

Lodging

There are two football games in Athens this month (September 6 and 27) so forget staying overnight on those weekends. On other days, try the Hilton Garden Inn (rates start at \$139) located right downtown. www.hiltongardeninn.com or (706) 353-6800. As an alternative, stay at the Foundry Park Inn & Spa (\$115 week/\$145 weekend). www.foundryparkinn.com or (706) 549-7020.

The Details

Agora: 260 West Clayton; (706) 316-0130

Big City Bread Cafe: 393 North Finley; (706) 353-0029

Ciné: 234 West Hancock Avenue; (706) 353-7377

Farm 255: 255 West Washington Street; (706) 549-4660

Five and Ten: 1653 South Lumpkin; (706) 546-7300

Junkman's: 458 East Clayton; (706) 543-4454

Toula's: 225 West Clayton; (706) 353-7339

Weaver D's: 1016 East Broad Street; (706) 353-7797

A NOTE TO OUR READERS:

"Athens Spirit" is from the September 2008 issue of *Southern Living*. Because prices, dates, and other specifics are subject to change, please check all information to make sure it's still current before making your travel plans.

Tanner C. Latham

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