

MORE TOWNS TO EXPLORE

★ ATHENS

You don't have to be a UGA alum to enjoy Athens, our funky, collegiate neighbor to the east. From trendy boutique shopping and award-winning restaurants to free admission to nearly all of its arts attractions, you'll quickly find yourself rallying for that commuter rail line.

Where to Stay

The first hotel of its kind in downtown Athens, **The Foundry Park Inn & Spa** calls itself a "boutique inn" and offers 119 luxurious rooms, an expansive day spa and two onsite restaurants—all within walking distance to shops, restaurants and UGA. (295 East Dougherty St., 706-549-7020, foundry-parkinn.com; from \$106)

Where to Eat

Five and Ten (1653 South Lumpkin St., 706-546-7300, fiveandten.com), lauded by *Food and Wine* and *Bon Appetit* magazines, is the home of self-taught chef Hugh Acheson, known for his Lowcountry Frogmore Stew, \$20 prix fixe dinners and expert wine list.



What to Do

The next R.E.M. or B-52s may be performing at the **40 Watt Club** (285 West Washington St., 706-549-7871, 40watt.com) or the **Georgia Theatre** (215 North Lumpkin St., 706-549-9918, georgiatheatre.com). AthFest (athfest.com) is a huge music and arts festival held every June.

Distance

About 70 miles from Atlanta.

★ MACON

Macon, home of Otis Redding, Little Richard and the Allman Brothers, not only preserves our state's rich musical heritage, but is also home to more historic landmarks than any other city in Georgia.

Where to Stay

The **1842 Inn**, a Greek revival mansion built by former mayor John Gresham, offers grand hotel luxury in country inn comfort. (353 College St., 877-452-6599, 1842inn.com, from \$139)



Where to Eat

For romantic Northern Italian cuisine, head to **Natalia's** (2720 Riverside Drive, 478-741-1380). For a true taste of Macon, stop by **Nu-Way Wieners** (430 Cotton Ave., 478-743-1368), one of America's oldest hot dog stands, or **Len Bergs Restaurant** (240 Post Office Alley, 478-742-9255) for the famous "HFPIC" (home-made fresh peach ice cream).

What to Do

Admire talented players at the **Georgia Music Hall of Fame** (200 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., 888-427-6257, gamusichall.com) and the **Georgia Sports Hall of Fame** (301 Cherry St., 478-752-1585, gshf.org), then hear up-and-comers at the **Tic Toc Room** piano bar (408 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., 478-744-0123).

Distance

About 84 miles from Atlanta.

★ OLDE TOWN AUGUSTA

With nine neighborhoods on the National Register of Historic Places (Sherman bypassed the town) and a history dating back to Georgia's founder, General Oglethorpe, the old river port of Augusta has an architecturally rich downtown ripe for revitalization. Classy museums, below, and a scenic riverwalk are recent civic improvements that offer promise Olde Town will rise again.



Where to Stay

The luxurious **Radisson Riverfront Hotel** (706-722-8900, 2 10th St.; from \$119), as the name implies, has a lovely view of the water. History buffs may prefer **The Partridge Inn** (2110 Walton Way; from \$99), a once-grand historic inn that is a bit tired but still gracious, with verandas offering stunning city views.

Where to Eat

The Partridge's **Bambu**, which serves sophisticated French-Asian fusion cuisine, is run by Philippe Chin, the world's youngest French master chef.

What to Do

The **Augusta Museum of History** (560 Reynolds St., 706-722-8454) has an extensive collection. The elegant **Morris Museum of Art** (1 10th St., at Riverwalk, 706-724-7501) specializes in Southern art. Fun **annual downtown events** include rowing and speedboat races and outdoor concerts.

Distance

About 145 miles from Atlanta.

★ DAHLONEGA

If Jan Karon had written her Mitford books about North Georgia instead of North Carolina, she could've set them here. The town, the site of the nation's first gold rush, even has its own version of Mitford's famous orange-marmalade cake—namely, the sought-after Key lime layer cake at local hangout **Dahlonega Dessertery and Cafe** (30 Public Square, 706-864-1095).

Where to Stay

Dahlonega is an easy day trip. But if you want to stay overnight, rent a cabin. Visit **dahlonega.org** for listings.

Where to Eat

Longtime faves are family-style **Smith House** (84 South Chestnut St., 800-852-9577, smithhouse.com) and the more upscale **Rick's** (47 South Park St., 706-864-9422, ricksdining.com) in a frilly Victorian house.



What to Do

Pan for gold at a local mine or visit **Dahlonega Gold Museum**, above, (1 Public Square, 706-864-2257) on the quaint town square. Bypass touristy "collectibles" shops and head to **Quigley's Rare Books & Antiques** (104 Public Square North, 706-864-0161, quigleys-books.com) or the fun **Dahlonega General Store** (24 Public Square North, 706-864-2005, dahlonegageneralstore.com). Take in a show at the **Holly Theater** (69 West Main St., 706-864-3759, hollytheater.com).

Distance

About 56 miles from Atlanta.