



# ESSENTIAL RV GEORGIA: AN INSIDER'S HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PEACH STATE

by Suzanne Wright

The Peach State's varied, juicy charms could be summed up in the many songs penned to her. Ray Charles crooned *Georgia on My Mind* as a wistful love letter; *The Devil Went Down to Georgia* is a fiery fiddle ode made famous by The Charlie Daniels Band; and Brook Benton's *Rainy Night*, is a soulful paean to Georgia's sultry climate.

Georgia, the largest state east of the Mississippi, offers motorists endless possibilities to recreate, captivating with its diverse topography and lush scenery.



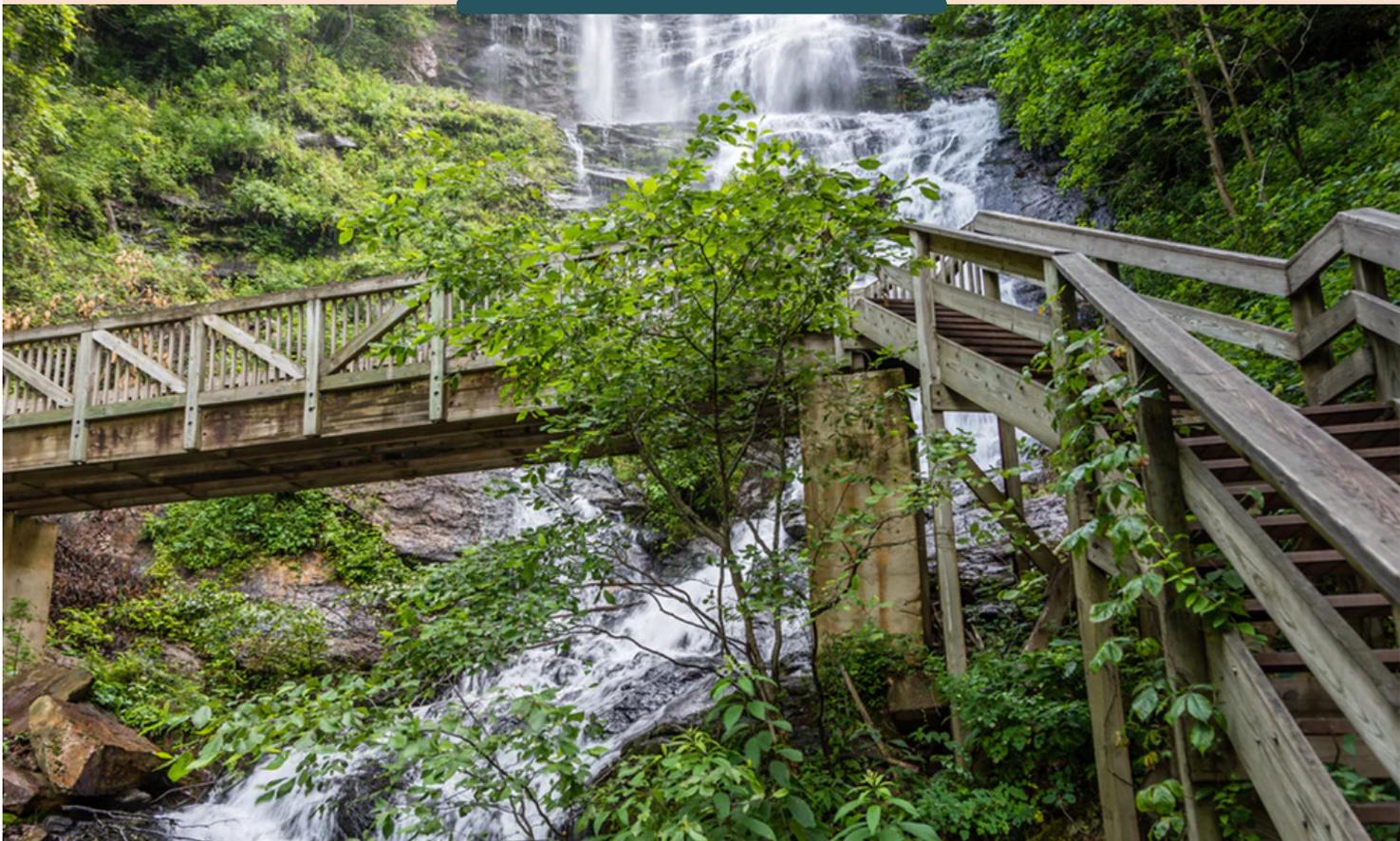
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## NORTH GEORGIA

The serene slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains—the oldest range in America—distinguish the uppermost third of the state with inspiring vistas. Travel the winding Russell-Brasstown Scenic Highway through the verdant [Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forests](#), through fog-shrouded hollows (sheltered valleys) and treasured mountain towns. Helen, modeled after an alpine village, is the lively center of the action, and boasts more than 200 shops and restaurants. There are abundant adventure opportunities in the Appalachian foothills, including hiking, tubing, and ziplining. [Brasstown Bald](#), the state's highest point, delivers a lofty view of the rolling hills, especially showy when autumn leaves blaze the ridges. [Tallulah Gorge State Park](#), on the South Carolina border, features a suspension bridge that spans the two-mile long, 1,000-foot deep gorge with spectacular views. In Dawsonville, [Amicalola Falls State Park](#) has the tallest cascading waterfall east of the Mississippi, and 24 RV sites with water, power, grills, and fire rings. The area is blessed with numerous lakes including Burton, Hartwell, and Rabun, all popular for boating, fishing, and swimming. Possibly the most picturesque is [Lake Chatigue](#), in Hiawassee, with 132 miles of shoreline, an RV campsite and glorious views of the Georgia and North Carolina mountains. Near the Tennessee border, is the breathtaking [Cloudland Canyon State Park](#). It vies with Alabama's Little River Canyon as the deepest canyon east of the Mighty Mississippi, and features cliffs, caves, and waterfalls. Want to get above the treetops? Try hang gliding at [Lookout Mountain Flight Park](#). In Clayton, the [Nantahala Outdoor Center](#) arranges exciting whitewater rafting trips on the Chattooga River for every skill level. If you're an REM fan or simply curious about how Howard Finster's religious obsession spurred a worldwide folk art collecting frenzy, visit Paradise Garden in Summerville. In Blue Ridge, Mercier Apple Orchards and R&A Orchards reign supreme for apple cider donuts. North Georgia is also known for its many wineries. If you want to splurge, spend the night at a luxury cottage at [Kaya Vineyards](#) in Dahlonega, then pan for gold with the whole family. The [Etowah Indian Mounds](#), the most intact Mississippian site in the U.S., makes for a final stop in Cartersville as you work your way down to the ATL.

**Where to Stay:** Centrally located in Cleveland, [Yonah Mountain Campground](#) has pull-through and back-up sites, a picnic pavilion, bath house, and pet park, and is conveniently located 3.5 miles south of Helen. Just an hour from the Blue Ridge Parkway in Dillard, the [River Vista RV Park](#) earns high marks for its resort-like village setting, free WiFi, fitness center, and sauna.





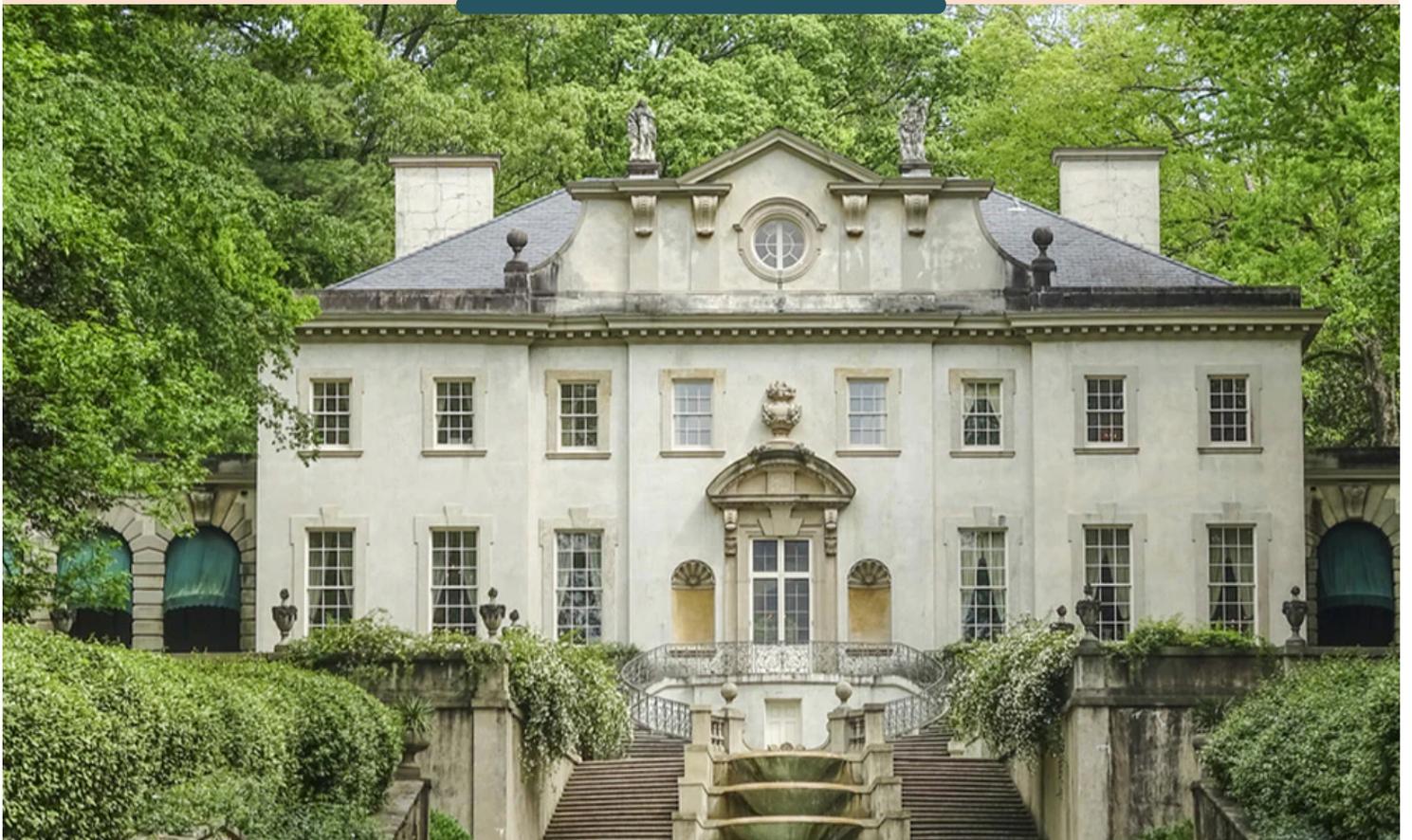
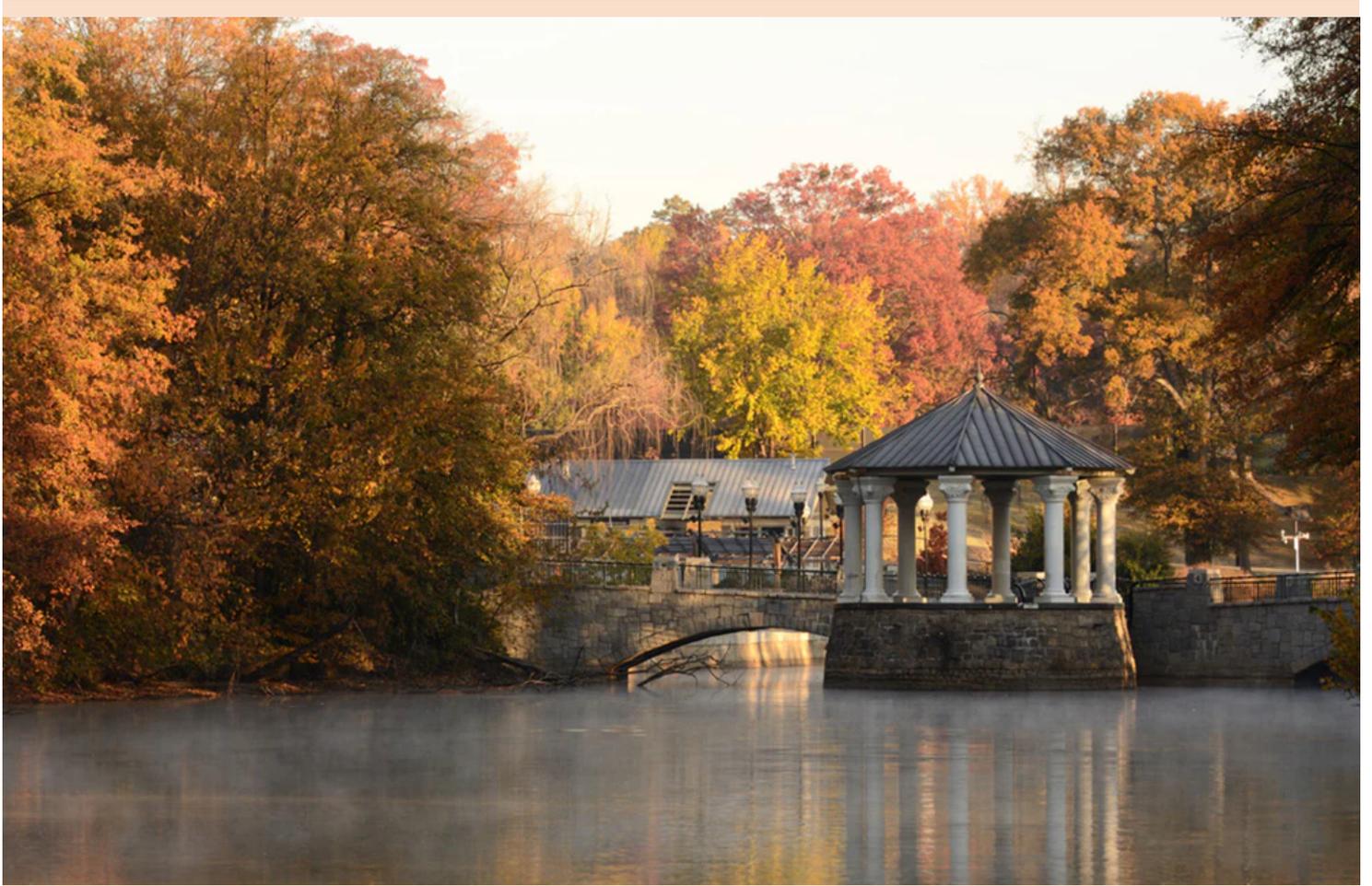


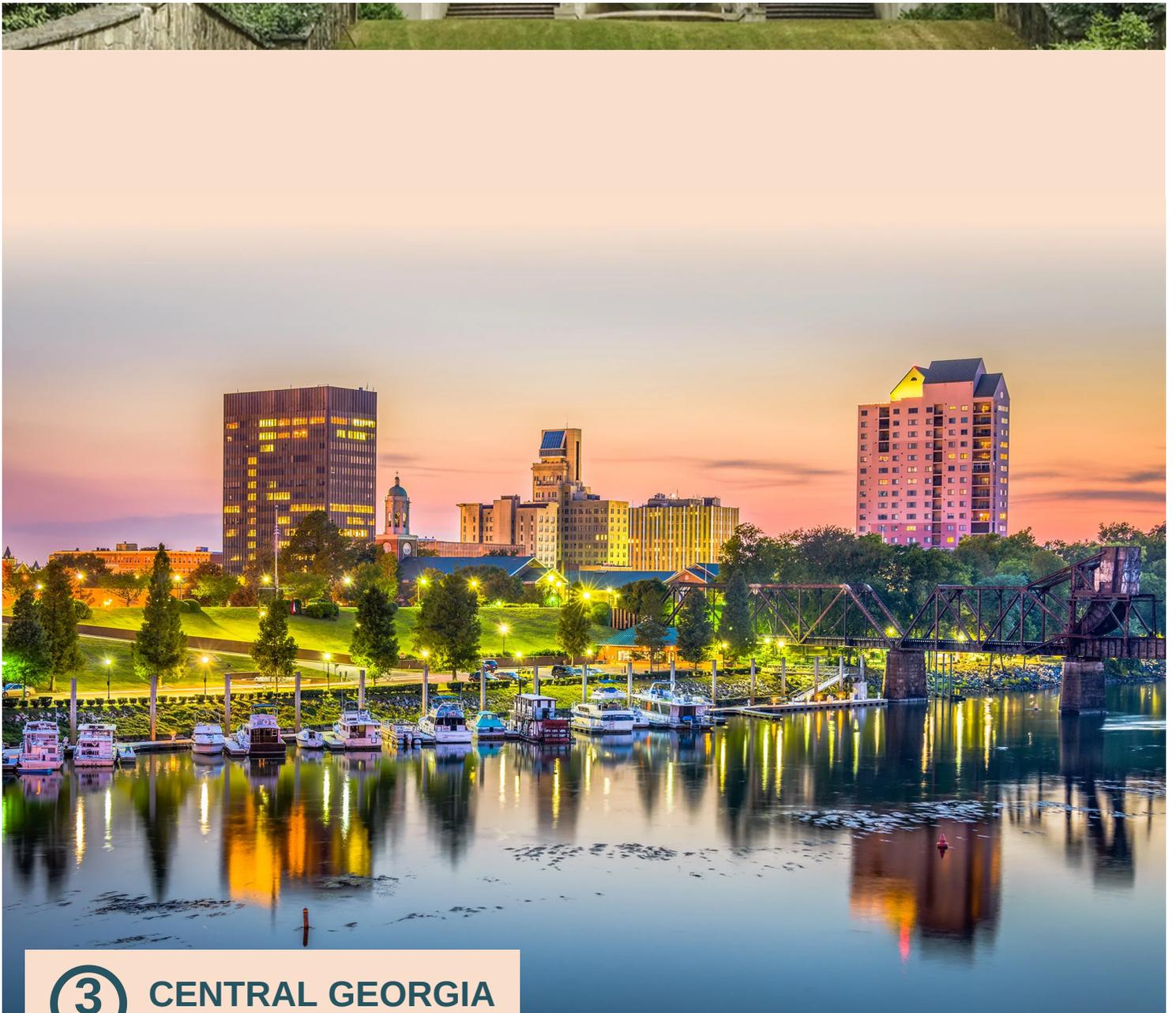
## ② GREATER ATLANTA

The joke is whether you're headed to heaven or hell, you'll change planes in [Atlanta](#), the world's busiest passenger airport. Dubbed 'Hotlanta, for its sizzling nightlife and blistering summer temperatures, the state's capital is a cosmopolitan city of six million, a historical Civil War Center, and an important part of the 1960s Civil Rights movement. Stretch your legs at leafy [Piedmont Park](#), designed by renowned architect Fredrick Law Olmstead, who created Manhattan's Central Park, and admire the glimmering skyline across Clara Meer lake. Don't be surprised if you see a film crew; Atlanta has gained the moniker Y'Allywood, ranking third behind California and New York for film and TV production. Popular attractions are Decatur's [Fernbank Museum](#), home to the world's largest dinosaurs; the [Georgia Aquarium](#), where you can suit up and swim with whale sharks and manta rays; and the [World of Coca-Cola](#), to sample 100 different beverages from across the globe. [Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area](#) in Lithonia, 30 minutes east of Atlanta, is home to early settlers, immigrant rock cutters, freed slaves, and Trappist monks. The park offers 40,000 acres of roaming room, ranger-instructed archery, a 60-foot tree climb, and geocaching. If you're feeling a bit pretzeled from time spent behind the wheel, head a bit further northeast to Duluth and unwind at [Jeju Sauna](#). You need no appointment at this impressive Korean bath house that's open 24/7—including holidays! Pay homage to some of Atlanta's most notable citizens resting in peace under ancient magnolias, dogwoods, and camellias at historic [Oakland Cemetery](#), then cross the street to [Six Feet Under](#) for the city's best fried catfish and okra.

**Where to Stay:** Atlanta encompasses 29 (!) counties with predictably epic traffic; reservations are essential. Three close-in options include wooded sites at [Atlanta Marietta RV Resort](#), with laundry and shower facilities; Austell's no-frills [Sweetwater Creek RV Park](#); and the luxe [Pine Mountain RV Resort](#) with a concierge, swimming pool, onsite store, and playground, located near beautiful Callaway Gardens.







### 3 CENTRAL GEORGIA

The relaxed pace in Middle Georgia encourages meandering and the small-town hospitality of Mom and Pop stores is authentic and unforced. Thirty miles south of Atlanta, charming [Senioia](#) is the setting for *The Walking Dead*, the most-watched show in basic cable history. The character guides at the [Georgia Tour Company](#) seamlessly weave together the town's history and its present-day filming sites. One of the oldest planned tourist routes in the U.S., the scenic [Woodpecker Trail](#) (AKA Georgia State Route 121) was founded a century ago. Named for the noisy birds that reside in the thick pine forests, the 204-mile road stretches from Augusta to Folkston. Augusta is home to golf's celebrated [Masters Tournament](#) and those beloved pimento cheese sammies served on spongy white bread. Located in the heart of town, [Pendleton King Park](#), a 64-acre bird sanctuary, is a great place to picnic, with an off-leash Bark Park for your pooch. [Providence Canyon State Park](#), known as Georgia's "Little Grand Canyon," is a secret, unexpected wonder just west of the idyllic horse ranches and stunning architecture of Macon that few travelers stumble upon. Massive gullies—the result of farming erosion in the 1800s—sculpted the red and orange walls which echo Southwestern hues. Behold the rim's splendid views and allow time to hike down to the floor. Cordele, which bills itself as the "Watermelon Capital of the World," is a great place to pick up beef jerky, and regional favorites like black-eyed pea relish and muscadine jelly at [Stripling's General Store](#). An easy exit off I-75 in Georgia's heartland is Fort Valley's [Lane Southern](#)

[Orchards](#), a roadside market established in 1908. Savor peach ice cream from a rocking chair while the kids romp on a tractor-themed playground, and grab a bag of pecans for the ride east.

**Where to Stay:** With easy access off I-75 in Elko, [Twin Oaks RV Park](#) is top-rated for its affordability, numerous amenities, and location, as is Perry's family-friendly [Fair Harbor RV Park](#), with its stocked lake and campstore.







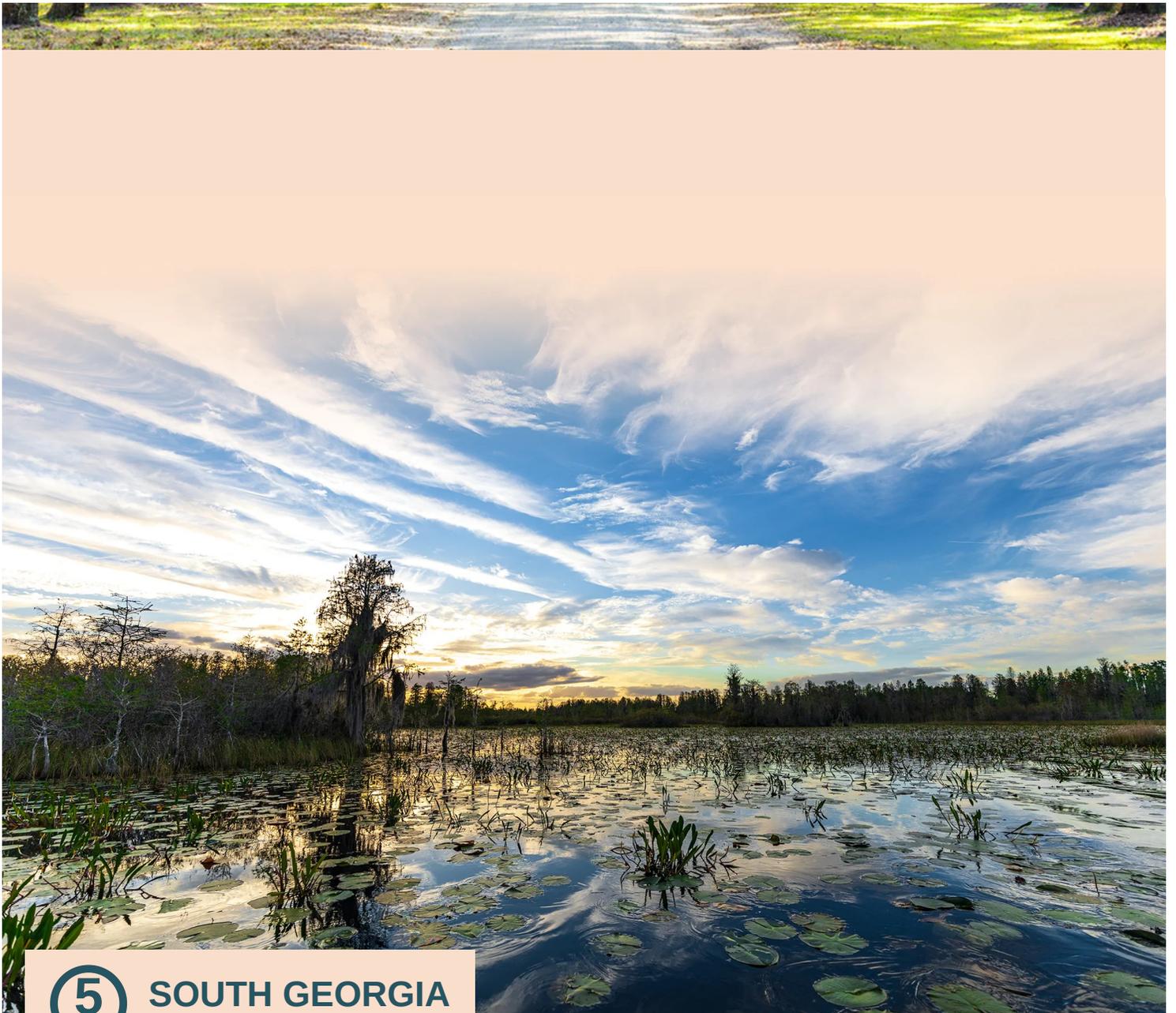
## ④ COASTAL GEORGIA

The [Golden Isles](#) are a 100-mile long chain of barrier islands: Brunswick, Jekyll Island, Little St. Simon's, St. Simon's Island, and Sea Island, each with its own identity. Beginning in [Savannah](#), beautiful U.S. Highway 17 runs parallel to I-95, slicing through the best of the wetlands, maritime forests; vast, sun-dappled marshes; 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century military forts; and cotton, indigo, and rice fields remnants of former plantations. Part of Highway 17 is [Georgia's Colonial Coast Birding Trail](#), a series of 18 sites from which to spy some 300 avian species during migration and nesting seasons. This is a gateway by (reserved) ferry to [Cumberland Island National Seashore](#), a very special destination where wild horses, abandoned by Spanish settlers 500 years ago, roam the rugged island amid palmettos, Spanish-moss draped live oaks, and the ruins of a former Carnegie mansion. Jekyll Island, once the exclusive playground of America's founding tycoons, the Rockefellers, Pulitzers, and Vanderbilts, has 25 miles of paved trails for gentle biking. Boating, fishing, kayaking, paddleboarding, and shelling are popular pastimes along these sun-kissed strands. But perhaps the most unforgettable experience is horseback riding on tawny sands lapped by the Atlantic. The gnarled, weathered trees that dominate [Driftwood Beach](#) are otherworldly, especially during sunrise and sunset. And don't leave these shores without sharing a mountainous plate of just-caught, perfectly fried shrimp at B & J's Steak & Seafood in quaint [Darlen](#). For a rare glimpse into a nearly vanished way of life, reserve a tour of [Sapelo Island](#). Just one percent of the land is still owned by the residents of [Hog Hammock](#), the descendants of enslaved people. It's a fascinating hamlet, generously shared with outsiders.

**Where to Stay:** A great base for exploring the region is the all-motorhome [Coastal Georgia RV Resort](#), featuring 105 spacious sites, two laundromats, a store, and a dock. Additional options are [River's End Campground](#) in Tybee Island, which offers propane refills and laundry facilities, and [Crooked River State Park](#) in St. Mary's, with a floating dock and trails.





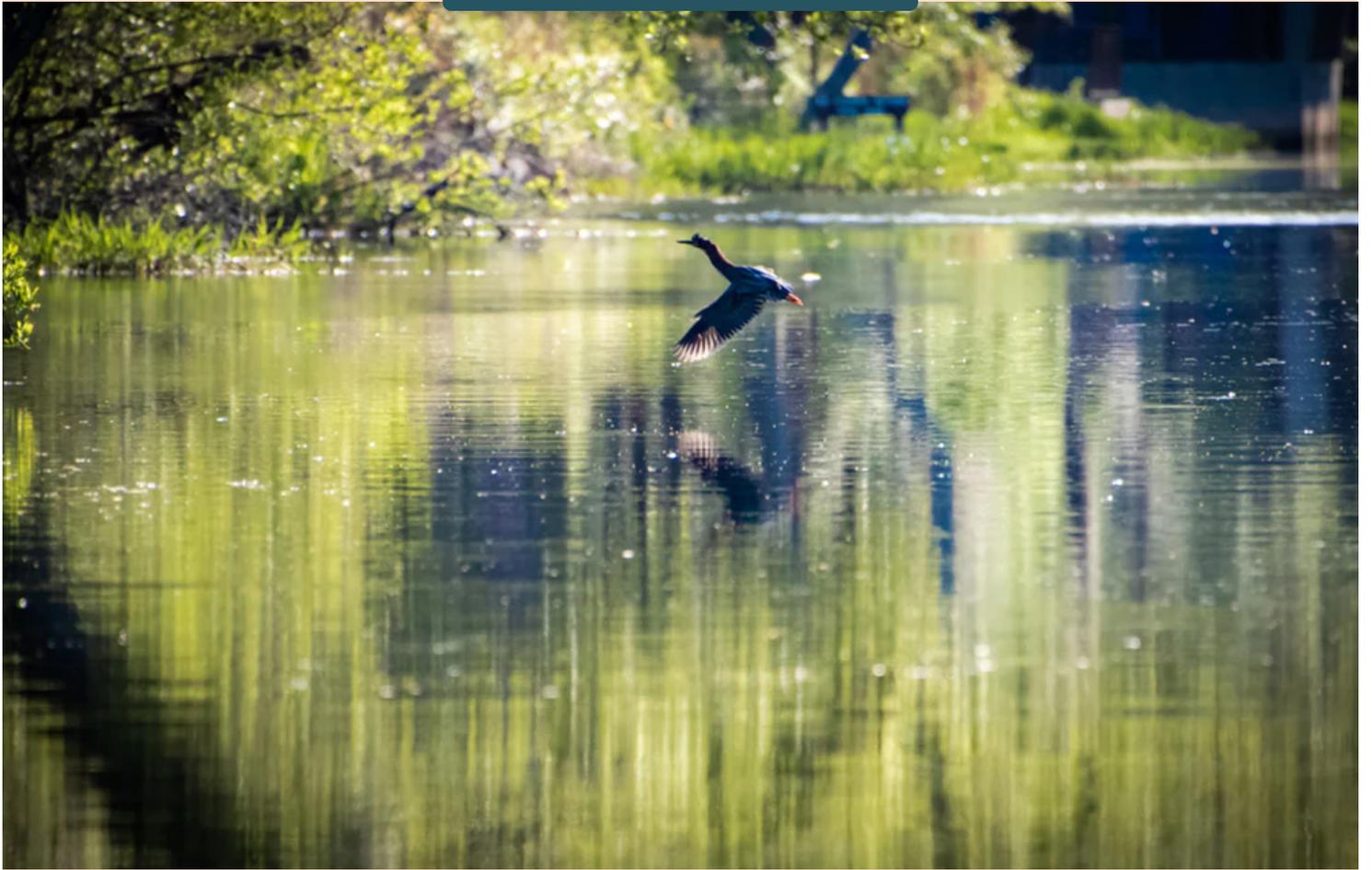


## 5 SOUTH GEORGIA

This part of the state, perhaps more than any other, has retained its rural roots as it inches close to the Florida panhandle. Travel Georgia Highway 177 from Fargo to marvel at the unobstructed views of the largest blackwater swamp in the country, the mysterious—and under-visited—[Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge](#). Stargazers will especially enjoy overnighting at [Stephen Foster State Park in Fargo](#), the main entrance. The 402,000-acre refuge is bliss for photographers and wildlife enthusiasts who might encounter alligators, black bears, deer, heron, racoons, and turtles along with 'gators. Time your visit for winter when temps are mild and bugs are few. Sunset is magical in this primordial paddling paradise. [Okefenokee Adventures](#) offers private, 90-minute guided tours in flat-bottom skiffs that cut through the tangled clutch of bay, cypress, pine, and scrub, emerging into the wide expanse of prairie. You'll never forget the chorus of nocturnal cries that fill the darkening sky as the glistening red eyes of 'gators surface just above the inky waters.

**Where to Stay:** Beyond the park or refuge, the intimate and rustic [Okefenokee Pastimes Cabins & Campgrounds](#) in Folkston, or the lakefront sites at the [Hillbilly Fish Camp/RV Park](#) in Waycross, are solid options.





From rolling hills to low country and miles of unspoiled coastline, South Carolina's highways follow some of the most stunning scenery in the region. And with historic charm, hospitality and world-class recreation around every corner – and during every season – any time is a good time for this classic southern road trip.



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