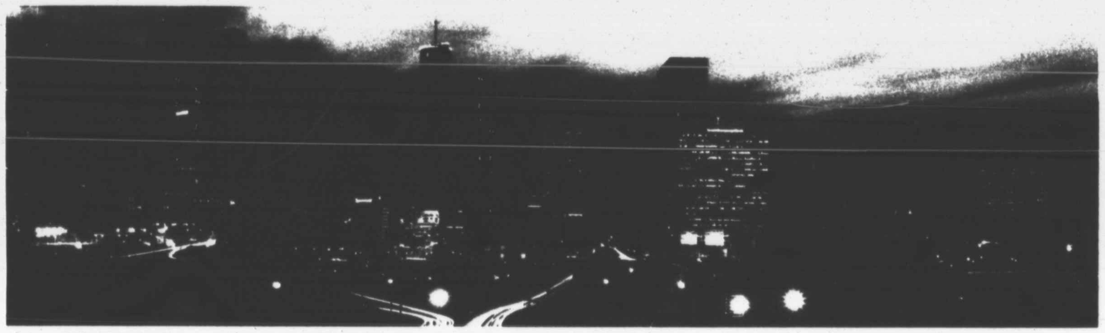
TRAVEL FEATURE

A visit to Atlanta, GA.



Atlanta skyline at dusk taken from the air. The sight gives just a hint of the progressive sophisticated center of the 1980s the city has become.

By Bob Matthews

Atlanta, GA was once declared the seat of black culture in the United States, for there are six black institutions of higher learning in the city, some of which were established before 1885.

Following the end of the Civil War, blacks gradually moved from the country to the cities. Although slavery was officially ended, anti - black feelings were rampant, practically forcing blacks to establish their own.

Thus, black businesses came into being, forming a basis for the cultural enrichment of the black community. While there was a great migration to the north in the years prior to the Great Depression, black entrepreneurs in places like Atlanta where showing the way.

Today, Atlanta, and indeed the State of Georgia, have become a place rich in our heritage, and a region which must be seen to gain the true realization of its place in history.

Arriving in Atlanta by air brings you into Hartsfield International Airport, which currently has the largest passenger terminal in the world.

It is logical to expect a certain amount of confusion in a facility so large, but we were favorably impressed with the ease of finding one's way. Although the terminal is huge — there are over 14,000 rooms in downtown Atlanta alone.

The world's tallest hotel, the Westin Peachtree Plaza, stretches 73 stories into the Georgia sky, while the Marriott Marquis with its 1,674 rooms, is the largest in the Southeast.

Of particular interest is the Hyatt Hotel in downtown Atlanta, for it was here that the first of the hotels featuring elevators which run glass - enclosed cabs, on the outside of a column, rather than the conventional way.

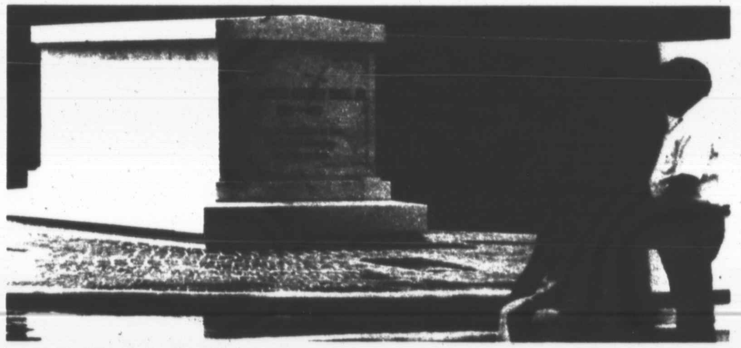
Over the past few months, much attention has been focused on the Martin Luther King National Historical Site, and indeed it has blossomed into one of the top tourist attractions in the city.

The site was established by Congress to commemorate the life and work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and includes the Sweet Auburn neighborhood in which both Dr. King and the civil rights movement were nurtured.

Central in the area, is the birth home of Dr. King, as well as the Ebenezer Baptist Church and the King Center for Non - Violent Social Change.

Most of the buildings in the area are inhabited, many by low income families, and the preservation is being facilitated to maintain the neighborhood just as it was during the beginning struggle for civil rights.

You only have to remember the name of one



The Martin Luther King Jr. Historic District on Auburn Ave. is a two-block area dedicated to his memory. Included is the outdoor crypt at the MLK Center for Non-Violent Social Change.

Andrew Young
Mayor of Atlanta

Street signs designate Peachtree Rd. — a major Atlanta thoroughfare.

street, Peachtree Rd. to find your way around downtown Atlanta. Actually, there are 32 other streets in Atlanta which have the name Peachtree in them, but this major thoroughfare is the heart of the business — and the play area of town.

Dining out can be a surprisingly delicious experience, for despite being in the South where one might expect to find such delicacies as collard greens or grits 'n gravy prominently mentioned on menus — such is not the case.

Case in point, the Savannah Fish Stew restaurant, located on — where else, Peachtree Rd., features fresh - caught seafood, including such things as Baby Boston Scrod, Yellow Tail Flounder, Grouper and scads more.

Kinda liked the way the menu listed the catches of the day, for if the fish is not available, they simply stamp over its name on the menu, "didn't bite."

Then, over in the district of town in which the various colleges are located is a black - owned restaurant known simply as Sun Runners Food Factory. The food here has a Caribbean cast, with all fresh materials used in the preparation.

Located on Ashby St., the restaurant, which also carries health food products, features live music on weekends. The quality of the food was indicated by the huge lunchtime crowd on hand during our visit. The makeup of the lunchers was completely interracial.

Live theatre is represented by the JustUs Theatre, headed up by Byron C. Saunders, who came to Atlanta from Washington, D.C., and celebrates 10 years of bringing live theatre to the area. One of the highlights of last season, was bringing in the road company of "Bubbling Brown Sugar."

History buffs find Atlanta a veritable gold mine, for the entire metropolitan area reeks with preserved historical tidbits. For example, the Herndon Home is a memorial to the founder of the Atlanta Life Insurance Co., Alonzo Franklin Herndon.

The 15-room manse, built mainly by black contractors, contains the original furnishings, and is a part of the Atlanta University Center Historic District.

It is impossible to see all of the notable spots in the city in a short visit. Although the city is replete with history of vital interest to the black community, it is also a repository of memorabilia of the Civil War.

Cyclorama depicts the Battle of Atlanta in its painting - in - the - round. Viewing is from a revolving platform, complete with narration and sound effects.

Stone Mountain Park, a few miles from the city proper, is a full - scale amusement facility, with water cruises aboard a paddle - wheel riverboat as well as an Olympic - sized ice skating rink.

One of the highlights of the park is the carving on the face of the mountain, done by the man who carved the figures on Mt. Rushmore. It depicts three prominent figures of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, and Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson.

Most of the sports fans of the country are familiar with the Atlanta teams, the Braves, baseball; Hawks, basketball, and Falcons, professional football.

And, just to prove that the easy access at the airport was no fluke — return departure was a breeze.

Next time, we hope to visit other parts of the state. Word is that it rivals Florida in scenic wonder, and has great weather.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spent his boyhood in this Victorian home which is a historical preservation site.

Stone Mountain, which contains the world's largest granite monolish, affords visitors a closer look via this Swiss skylift.