

Atlanta: Crown Jewel of the Confederacy

“Mine eyes have beheld the promised land,” Major James A. Connelly of the 123rd Illinois wrote to his wife on July 5, 1864, during William T. Sherman’s immortal Atlanta Campaign. “The ‘domes and minarets and spires’ of Atlanta are glittering in the sunlight before us and only 8 miles distant.” Skyscrapers, three major highways and a baseball stadium now dot the Gate City’s skyline, but it remains the “promised land” for Civil War buffs.

One needs to be patient, however, to truly enjoy all the city and northwest Georgia has to offer. Getting around the busy metropolis can be arduous, and a number of important destinations are several miles away in the capital’s sprawling suburbs. Plan to spend at least two to three days exploring the sites. Here are a few of our recommendations.

—Chris Howland

STOP 1: Your tour should begin at the Atlanta History Center in Buckhead. Among the more than 1,500 artifacts displayed in the “Turning Point: The American Civil War” exhibit are the Confederate flag that flew over Atlanta at its surrender on September 2, 1864; a Confederate keg torpedo excavated from Mobile Bay, Ala.; a saber belonging to Union artillery captain Francis DeGress; and voting boxes used by Union soldiers.

STOP 2: The Peace Monument to the Old Guard, dedicated in lovely Piedmont Park in October 1911, is a fitting tribute to a group of former Rebels who embarked on a peace mission to the North after the war. The memorial shows the Angel of Peace, holding an olive branch, and a Confederate soldier preparing to fire his gun. Members of the Old Gate City Guard still meet to rededicate the monument each October.

STOP 3: Historian Gary Gallagher wrote recently that *Gone With the Wind* “has been the single most powerful influence on American perceptions of the Civil War,” and the Margaret Mitchell House provides some perspective on life in Atlanta the first half-century or so after the war, when the memory of Sherman’s “deprivations” of 1864 burned brightest. The home at the corner of Peachtree and 10th streets, affectionately called “the Dump” by Mitchell, has been refurbished and converted into a quaint museum. For a chuckle, check out the museum’s video of early *GWTW* screen tests.

STOP 4: In April 1862, Union spy James Andrews and 21 cohorts stole the locomotive *General* and led it on a daring, quixotic 100-mile raid toward Chattanooga, Tenn., before being caught. At the corner of Juniper and 3rd streets is the site where Andrews was hanged for his role in the venture. Two of the raiders, both Union soldiers, received Medals of Honor for their contributions, but Andrews was ineligible for the honor as a private citizen.

STOP 5: The Atlanta Cyclorama in (Lemuel) Grant Park never seems to get the same attention as its Gettysburg counterpart, but this impressive creation—the

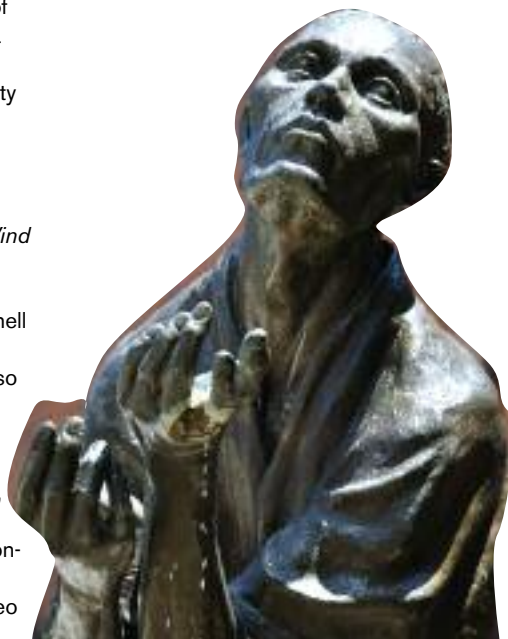
largest oil painting in the world—is worth experiencing. Try to figure out which soldier in the diorama at the base of the cyclorama is only 11 inches tall and which one is the likeness of a famous Hollywood actor—it’s not as easy as you’d guess.

STOP 6: A few miles east of Grant Park are memorials to two beloved commanders killed during the Battle of Atlanta on July 22, 1864: Union Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson, John Bell Hood’s roommate at West Point, and Confederate Maj. Gen. W.H.T. Walker. McPherson’s memorial is at McPherson Avenue and Monument Road; Walker’s is at the intersection of Wilkinson and Glenwood avenues.

STOP 7: One could spend several hours in historic Oakland Cemetery and never get bored. In addition to the famous locals interred there, such as Margaret Mitchell, Maynard Jackson and golfer Bobby Jones, the cemetery’s Confederate Memorial Grounds holds the graves of thousands of former Rebels (and surprisingly 16 Yankees, too). Look for Private Weakley’s headstone in the Confederate plot. There’s a story behind the giant magnolia looming over his grave.

STOP 8: If not for some prudent foresight in the 1980s, the site of the May 27, 1864, Battle of Pickett’s Mill—perhaps Sherman’s biggest blunder in the Atlanta Campaign—might be just another subdivision outside the city today. The park, with no monuments and only a few modern intrusions, is one of the best preserved in the nation. Its woods and field lines are essentially the same as they were in 1864, providing an excellent example of the dense, hilly terrain upon which much of the campaign was fought.

STOP 9: A little farther north is the Allatoona Pass Battlefield. The Federals used the distinctive railroad junction through the Allatoona Mountains as a supply depot during the Atlanta Campaign. In October 1864, Samuel French’s Confederates attacked and nearly overran the Union garrison there. Among the sites to explore are the Mooney-Clayton House, used as a hospi-



Andersonville’s “Price of Freedom Fully Paid” sculp-



PHOTO CREDIT

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Modern Atlanta encroaches on the Margaret Mitchell House.



Texas of the Great Locomotive Chase.



Oakland Cemetery's Confederate Memorial,



PHOTO CREDIT

The Lion of Atlanta was dedicated at Oakland Cemetery on April 26, 1894.

tal during the battle; the well-preserved "star fort" on the west bank of the deep railroad cut; and the Grave of the Unknown Hero.

STOP 10: Leonidas Polk was certainly one of the worst, if not *the* worst, Confederate generals. But the Episcopal-bishop-turned-warrior was very popular with his men, and his death on June 14, 1864, led to widespread mourning in the South. The obelisk marking the spot where he was killed on Pine Mountain, not far from Pickett's Mill (on private property but accessible), includes an amusing hyperbolic tribute.

STOP 11: Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park has several wonderful features (e.g., its well-preserved earthworks and the impressive Illinois Monument), but to get a hint of what the Civil War soldier likely experienced on a daily basis, try hiking up the summit on one of several trails near the park visitor center (you can also get there by car or bus, but it's not as much fun). At the top, enjoy a panoramic view of Sherman's target—Atlanta—20 miles to the south.

STOP 12: It will take much of the day, but

a trip to the Andersonville National Historic Site, about two hours south of Atlanta, is a must for any Civil War buff. The site's bucolic green fields mask the horrors that occurred at the infamous Confederate prison camp, but you'll marvel at how truly small and ill-equipped the camp was for its 33,000 captives. The National Prisoner of War Museum here has several nice Civil War artifacts and exhibits.

Thanks to Gordon Jones and Ann Boutwell of the Atlanta History Center for their help with this guide.