

October 2017 *Wingfoot* Spotlight: 25 Reasons Atlanta is "Running City, USA"

By Jay Holder

We have not been shy about our ambitions. We are not afraid to brag about our city. In fact, you might say we have a little bit of a chip on our shoulders about where Atlanta fits in the continuing conversation about the best places to run in United States. Despite what Runner's World might say (they ranked us 38th), we think we are THE best place for runners. We believe Atlanta can be, will be and already is "Running City, USA". The rest of the country just might not know it yet. So, when your favorite running friend visits from out-of-town, here – in no particular order - are 25 reasons you can give them to prove that Atlanta is where it's at!

25. Shop Local: Metro Atlanta has no fewer than 15 locally-owned and operated run specialty stores. To put that in comparison, New York City has two (not that we are competing). Local run specialty stores are not just a great place to buy shoes and apparel from knowledgeable runners, but they are also the perfect spot to meet a new running buddy, learn about local races or go for a group run.

24. Beer: There is nothing better after a run than a cold beer. In fact, some experts say a post-run low-ABV beer can aid in recovery thanks to its carbohydrates. Atlanta is getting national attention for its growing craft beer scene. Several local breweries host monthly or even weekly runs that are followed by a tasting of their fine beverages.

23. Coffee: If beer isn't your thing, or if it's too early for suds, Atlanta's coffee scene is pretty hot, too! With locally-owned shops in almost every neighborhood, there's always a spot to stop at the end of your run.

22. Masters of Masters: For masters athletes, you can't argue with the facts. There is no more competitive city in the country for track and field athletes over 30. In 2017, Atlanta Track Club Elite's masters team won national titles in indoor and outdoor track.

21. Jackson Street Bridge: Is there a better place to see a sunset in the city? Sure, you can drive over it, but it's so much easier to take in the perfect view of Atlanta's skyline when you're on foot.



20. We Go Big on Global Running Day: No one celebrates Global Running Day (the first Wednesday in June) like Atlanta. Since 2015, our running community has been the first in the nation to venture out on Global Running Day to celebrate the sport. Atlanta Track Club's annual midnight run draws dozens of runners willing to stay up late on a weeknight – and there are more group runs throughout the day.

19. Silver Comet Trail: There aren't many flat running routes here, but the Silver Comet is one of them. This 94-mile trail runs from Smyrna, GA, to Anniston, AL. While you might not be running quite that far, there are lots of places to hop on and off of the trail.

18. Jeff Galloway: He's consistently the most recognized American runner and he lives right here in Atlanta. In fact, the 1972 Olympian and winner of the inaugural AJC Peachtree Road Race is an Atlanta native. For more than four decades, Galloway has been using his Olympic success to further the sport around the country and at home.

17. [PNC Atlanta 10 Miler](#): The 10 miler is a unique distance and no one does it quite like Atlanta. Starting and ending with a party at Atlantic Station, this fall favorite includes just the right amount of uphill and downhill.

16. [Black Men Run](#) and [Black Girls Run](#): The nation's leading running groups for African American runners were founded right here in Atlanta. Since its founding in 2009, Black Girls Run has grown to more than 160,000 members while Black Men Run lists group runs in 55 cities in the United States and abroad on its website.

15. [Kilometer Kids](#): Each year, more than 8,000 kids sign up to run 26.2 miles during the spring or fall season. This free program, which turned 10 this year, introduces kids to running and walking and instills healthy habits meant to last a lifetime. And now kids can run 19 events for free each year in the Kilometer Kids Youth Running Series.

14. [Publix Georgia Marathon & Half Marathon](#): Atlanta only has one marathon, so Atlanta Track Club makes sure runners who visit in March get to see the entire city on foot – hills and all! The Publix Georgia Marathon winds through more than a dozen neighborhoods, four college campuses and the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site.



13. [Free Track Meets](#): Whether you are a sub-four minute miler or a first-time shot putter, there is something for everyone at Atlanta Track Club's All Comers Track & Field Meets. They are held every Tuesday in May and during the first two Tuesdays in June and are free to everyone. You might even witness a world record. Betty Lindberg, 91, set a world record in the 800m for women 90 and older in 2016. In 2017, she set the American record in the 400m.

12. Olympic Runners: Not only are the Olympians of the future here – Olympic legends are too. The aforementioned Jeff Galloway, Gail Devers, Gwen Torrence, Hazel Clark and three Atlanta Track Club staffers, to name a few, call Atlanta home.

11. Future Olympians: Atlanta Track Club Elite is committed to sending at least one athlete to the 2020 games. The metro Atlanta area is also a hotbed of talent for high school track athletes. Look no further than sprinter Christian Coleman. The 2014 Our Lady of Mercy graduate recently won two silver medals at this summer's IAAF World Championships in London.

10. Humidity is Altitude: Flagstaff is 8,000 feet above sea level. Boulder is 6,500 feet. Atlanta is 1,050 feet. As cities east of the Mississippi River go, that's pretty high, but it doesn't necessarily have the training benefits of higher altitudes. What Atlanta lacks in elevation, it makes up for in humidity. Studies have found that consistent training in humidity increases a runner's VO2 max and lowers overall core temperature. Some even suggest that heat acclimation may be better than altitude training. Take that, Colorado!

9. [Thanksgiving Day Half Marathon & 5K](#): Everyone has a turkey trot. Atlanta ups the ante on pre-feast exercise with a half marathon. Held annually on Thanksgiving morning, you could say this event is our Macy's Day Parade, except it's faster, sweatier and hillier. It's also the largest half marathon held on Thanksgiving anywhere in the United States. And if you're in a hurry to get home to your turkey, try the 5K, One Mile or 50m Dash.

8. The 'Hooch: If you get to Cochran Shoals after sunrise, good luck finding a parking spot. Runners from all over the area come to the banks of the Chattahoochee River each weekend to run the three-mile dirt loop, the winding trails in the woods or the flat stretch of roads near the Atlanta Country Club.



7. **Piedmont Park**: Some call it the Central Park of the South. In fact, it was designed by the sons of Central Park's famous visionary, Frederick Law Olmstead. Piedmont Park has miles of trails on both dirt and asphalt. It even has the 868-meter Active Oval for interval workouts. On any given weekend, you might run by and/or through one of Atlanta's popular festivals.

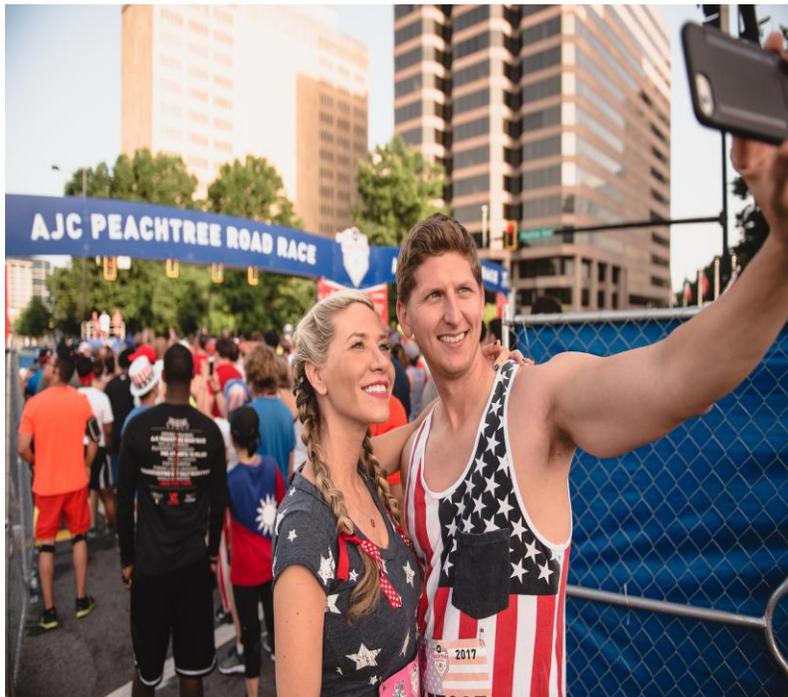
6. **The BeltLine**: When you're finished looping Piedmont Park, hop on the nearby Eastside Trail of the BeltLine and follow the path all the way to Reynoldstown. You can also venture over to the Westside Trail, which stretches 2.4 miles. The brainchild of a Georgia Tech student, the BeltLine will eventually encompass the entire city, linking neighborhoods, trails and parks.

5. **Mizuno**: Not only is Mizuno the official footwear and apparel partner of Atlanta Track Club, it is Atlanta's hometown brand. Mizuno USA's headquarters are just up the road in Norcross. That means when they need feedback on an upcoming shoe or clothing release, they turn to Atlanta runners. Besides a partnership with the Club, Mizuno partners with the Atlanta Braves and the brand new Lake Point Sporting Facility.

4. Local Running Clubs: Whether you are looking for an informal running group or an organized weekend long run, Atlanta has a strong running club scene. From clubs like the Tucker Run Club, which brings huge groups of yellow-singlet clad runners to Atlanta Track Club events, to the Kirkwood Runners & Walkers, which meets three-times a week in the parking lot of a neighborhood library, you'll never have to run alone.

3. Olympic History: Atlanta is one of only three U.S. cities to host a summer Olympic Games, and the running community embraces its Olympic history. The Publix Georgia Marathon starts and ends in Centennial Olympic Park. The Thanksgiving Day Half Marathon finishes under the Olympic rings just feet from the torch famously ignited by Mohammed Ali in 1996.

2. Atlanta Track Club Volunteers: Talk about dedication to the sport! It takes nearly 10,000 volunteer positions to put on Atlanta Track Club's events and programs each year. Those positions log nearly 30,000 hours of work. That's more than three years of work completed in one calendar year!



1. [The AJC Peachtree Road Race](#): No other city in the world can say it hosts a bigger 10K. No other city in the United States can say it hosts a bigger road race of

any distance. 60,000 runners flood Atlanta's busiest streets on the Fourth of July, and those who aren't running are cheering. For 48 years, this race has made Atlanta a running destination. On that day, it's indisputable that Atlanta IS "Running City, USA."

Photos: Blais Hickey, Dan McCauley, Dan McCauley, Paul Kim