



## 8 Great Escapes Near Atlanta



Take your family and get away from it all. Visit deluxe resorts, rustic inns and affordable cottages, all within weekend only driving distance from Atlanta.

### **Wilderness at the Smokies**

1424 Old Knoxville Hwy., Sevierville, Tenn.  
877-325-9453, [wildernessatthesmokies.com](http://wildernessatthesmokies.com)

**From Atlanta:** Approximately a 4-hour drive.

Wilderness at the Smokies is a large water park complex with one indoor and two outdoor water parks. It was awarded the No. 2 spot on Southern Living magazine's Top 10 list of the nation's best water parks. The property holds six restaurants, a deli, gift shop, mini golf, 36-hole champion golf course, an arcade and countless waterslides, including the new Wild Vortex, the Southeast's only near-vertical waterslide. A recent expansion added the Adventure Forest dryplay area with climbing walls, ropes courses, mini golf and laser tag.

**Nearby attractions:** Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies and Dollywood.

### **High Hampton Inn and Country Club**

1525 Highway 107 South, Cashiers, N.C.  
800-334-2551, [highhamptoninn.com](http://highhamptoninn.com)

**From Atlanta:** Approximately a 2½-hour drive.

Situated on 1,400 acres, the High Hampton Inn resort has a private lake for swimming and non-motor boating, climbing tower, hiking trails, golf, tennis and a spa. High Hampton sends your family back in time

—there are no phones or TVs in the rooms. Some cottages are pet-friendly and kennels are available. The Kids' Club program (six days a week for ages 3-9) costs \$7 per hour. Activities include hiking, swimming, nature walks, arts and crafts, and even donkey cart rides. Most evenings from 6-9 p.m. there are events such as hayrides, pajama parties, games and cookouts. For older kids, free activities Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays include geocaching, Frisbee golf, volleyball and nature hikes, plus a supervised teen room for pizza parties and other fun.



### **The Lodge at Buckberry Creek**

961 Campbell Rd., Gatlinburg, Tenn.  
866-305-6343, buckberrylodge.com

**From Atlanta:** Approximately a 5-hour drive.

This retreat is **temporarily closed** as a result of the fires in Tennessee in December. After a day amid the touristy bustle of Gatlinburg or Pigeon Forge, drive just minutes to reach nature and calm. This Adirondacks-style lodge on the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park blends rustic appeal and superb comfort. Families spend hours playing games or just relaxing.

Highlights for kids include storytime in a big teepee and roasting s'mores on the campfire. But the real hidden gem here is a half-mile down. Guests take the trail to Buckberry Creek and a covered pavilion, with tables for enjoying a meal, creek-side hammocks, big rocking chairs, TV, huge stone fireplace, and outhouses with chandeliers. Kids love romping and catching critters in the creek. Best: You won't be hiking back up. Just pick up the phone and staff will come fetch you in a reconditioned Swiss army troop transport vehicle called a Pinzgauer. (An exciting ride in itself!)

The lodge has some 50 suites, with no two alike; all include stone fireplace, private balcony, kitchens, Jacuzzi soaking tub, a separate walk-in shower, and Internet.

**Nearby attractions:** Loads of family fun in Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg, including Dollywood and Cade's Cove (11-mile paved loop within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park).



### **Grove Park Inn**

290 Macon Ave., Asheville, N.C.  
800-438-5800, [groveparkinn.com](http://groveparkinn.com)

**From Atlanta:** Approximately a 3½-hour drive.

Parents can relax and enjoy treatments at one of the nation's top five spa resorts while the children are enjoying a half- or full-day camp on site with swimming, games, sports, and arts and crafts. The resort also has supervised childcare, playground and pools, and a video/game library.

**Nearby:** Take a tour with Adventure America Zipline Canopy Tours or visit the Colburn Earth Science Museum.

### **Great Wolf Lodge**

10175 Weddington Rd., Concord, N.C.  
704-549-8206, [greatwolf.com/concord](http://greatwolf.com/concord)

**From Atlanta:** Approximately a 4-hour drive.

At 80,000 square feet, the Great Wolf Lodge has the Southeast's largest indoor water park. The lodge offers everything from a zero-depth entry pool and spray area for toddlers to wild slides for older children and parents. The resort includes an arcade, a teens' tech center, mini golf, children's spa, children's bowling alley and the Cub Club – a dry activity center for young children. The resort has fun camp- and cave-themed suites and bunk beds.

**Nearby:** Visit Charlotte for family fun at the Discovery Place Science Center and the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

### **Ritz-Carlton Lodge, Reynolds Plantation**

One Lake Oconee Trail, Greensboro, Ga.  
706-467-0600, [ritzcarlton.com](http://ritzcarlton.com)

**From Atlanta:** Approximately a 1½-hour drive.

If expense is not a concern and true luxury close to Atlanta matters, then the elegantly appointed Ritz-Carlton Lodge on Lake Oconee beckons. Parents can enjoy fine dining, golf on a pristine course, and relax in a top-drawer spa. For kids, there's the Ritz-Kids Camp, a supervised program for guests ages 5-12. Kids spend all or half the day enjoying activities such as nature hikes, canoeing and kayaking, arts and crafts, scavenger hunts, and lots more. Kids especially love the "Big Fish" program, in which they learn all the fishing basics. When a child catches a bass or a catfish, that very fish gets to swim around a huge tank in the kids' headquarters until the youngster who caught it checks out with his family. Families with older kids can ask about "teen itineraries," which include golf, tennis and movies.

Families spend time together in the “infinity pool,” on a pontoon boat or jet skis on the lake, at the horseshoe pits or on the trails. The Linger Longer Express, a 26-passenger train, takes visitors around the landscaped property, departing at 3 p.m. for a two-hour experience.  
**Nearby attractions:** Shop and explore historic Greensboro or Madison.

### **The Gaylord Opryland**

2800 Opryland Dr., Nashville, Tenn.  
615-889-1000, [gaylordhotels.com/gaylord-opryland](http://gaylordhotels.com/gaylord-opryland)

**From Atlanta:** Approximately a 4½-hour drive.

Parents can admire the indoor gardens and waterfalls, use the spa and gym, or relax at one of the three pools at the resort. For children, the DreamWorks Experience provides interactive adventures with characters from films such as Kung Fu Panda, Shrek and Madagascar. Activities include the Kung Fu Panda Camp (parent must accompany child), character meals, pool parties with games and music with Shrek and Friends, and Cookie Castles decorating parties with Princess Fiona.  
**Nearby:** Visit the Country Music Hall of Fame’s Instrument Petting Zoo, the Adventure Science Center or the Nashville Zoo at Grassmere.

### **Georgia State Parks**

800-864-7275, [gastateparks.org](http://gastateparks.org)

Cottages and lodge rooms throughout the state, all within a few hours drive from Atlanta.

From the stunning vistas of Cloudland State Park on the western edge of Lookout Mountain, to alligator encounters and dripping Spanish moss at Little Ocmulgee State Park and Lodge in South Georgia, our state parks offer an affordable option for families. Many have fully equipped cabins called cottages. At Hard Labor Creek, sleep well amid the quiet of the woods, wake refreshed and go for a stroll or hike on more than 22 miles of trails. Then hit the 275-acre Lake Rutledge, a popular swimming destination with a wide, sandy beach. State parks offer myriad programs and activities for kids and families, including twilight and moonlight hikes. At Amicalola Falls, enjoy gorgeous waterfalls while staying in cottages that sleep four to 10 at the top or bottom of the falls