



New Atlanta: The Legacy of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games

During the 17 days of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, the largest Olympic Games ever held and the 100th anniversary of the modern Olympics, two million visitors came to Atlanta and more than three billion people (more than two-thirds of the world's population) saw the city via worldwide television coverage. With more than \$2 billion worth of Olympic-related and other construction completed between the 1990 Olympic announcement and the spring of 1996, Atlanta is a brand-new experience and a more attractive destination than ever for leisure and business travelers and meeting, trade show and convention planners and attendees.

Major capital improvements include new multi-million dollar sports venues, parks, streetscapes, hotel expansions, restaurants, attractions and arts and cultural facilities. The city is launching its new image as an international city and a premier travel destination. The momentum Atlanta gained before and while hosting the Olympics continues, with plenty to remind visitors that Atlanta was, and always will be, an Olympic city.

Legacies of the Games include:

- New and improved parks and plazas, notably Centennial Olympic Park, the \$57 million, privately funded park in downtown Atlanta. The 21-acre park is a centerpiece in downtown Atlanta and connects the Georgia World Congress Center to the hotel district.
- New and enhanced world-class athletic facilities, such as Turner Field, formerly Centennial Olympic Stadium (the present home of the Atlanta Braves baseball team), the 1,440-acre Georgia International Horse Park in Conyers and the Georgia Tech Aquatic Center.
- An enhanced transportation system, with hundreds of millions of dollars in improvements at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport; new miles of rapid rail and three new stations on the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA); and highway expansions, upgrades, beautification projects and a new traffic management system undertaken by the Georgia Department of Transportation.
- Hotel additions and improvements, including new hotel properties; thousands of square feet of new hotel meeting, exhibit, and convention space; 6,000 new rooms added in 1995-96 and millions of dollars in renovations, refurbishments and additions.

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- New and improved meeting facilities such as the Atlanta Meeting Center at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, the Marietta Conference Center and Resort, the Hartsfield Executive Conference Center at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, Chateau Elan and Brasstown Valley.
- New attractions, including the Georgia Aquarium, a new World of Coca-Cola (opening Spring 2007) and most suitably, the Atlanta History Center's new Centennial Olympic Games Museum, which opened in 2006.
- A more visitor-friendly downtown with public artwork, wider sidewalks, streetscape improvements such as new street and way finding signs and lighting, renovated buildings, more downtown residences in new lofts and other types of housing, and improvements to downtown college and university dormitories and campuses.
- The Ambassador Force, a 60-plus, full-time hospitality and public safety group that helps patrol downtown and assists visitors with helpful information about the city. The Force was originally created specifically to be a presence on the street during the Games.
- An enhanced city overall, with new or improved roads, bridges, streets and sewers.
- An incredible economic boost to the city, which added new jobs throughout the entire metropolitan area and benefited from greatly enhanced worldwide visibility.

Atlanta is a young, progressive metropolis; a boomtown whose accomplishments rival those of much older cities. In a little more than 150 years since the it's birth, Atlanta became only one of 21 cities in the world to host the summer Olympic Games, the only one of three American cities to host the Games and the first city east of the Mississippi River to do so. Atlanta was the first city in the South to bid for the games and the first city in history to be awarded the Games on its first attempt. In its relatively short history, Atlanta has become accustomed to accomplishing the improbable with a can-do spirit that has earned it the designation of the "Capital of the New South."

Hosting the Olympics was the latest in Atlanta's long list of achievements, yet the success did not come as a surprise to anyone who knew the city's reputation for getting things done. In 1965, the city built the \$18 million Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium in 364 days "on land we didn't own, with money we didn't have, and for teams we had not signed," according to Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr. But that same year, the Braves moved from Milwaukee to Atlanta and the Atlanta Falcons became a new NFL expansion team. Atlanta faces challenges head-on and makes the impossible a reality.

Atlanta has transformed itself many times throughout its relatively short history. Rising from the ashes of the Civil War, the city, like the phoenix that became its symbol, was reborn, and Atlanta has transformed itself yet again in the new millennium.

Always a city focused on business but with a human touch, Atlanta is now undergoing a second resurgence. A city that began as a railroad crossroads in 1837 has evolved into the driving force of the southeastern United States and an increasingly important international city.

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Before the Games were announced, Atlanta was already the Southeast's center for transportation, finance, retail, industry, communications, education, health care, sports, music and culture. Atlanta now has a new look to go with its same old can-do, progressive attitude. The "Gateway to the South" is becoming the "Gateway to the World."

The impact of the Games on Atlanta began the minute the winning bid was announced in 1990 at Underground Atlanta. The effects on the city before the Games were substantial. The effects on the city during the Games were incredible. The effects on the city after the largest and most important peacetime event of the 20th century will be felt forever. On July 19, 1996, at the Opening Ceremony of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, President Bill Clinton said, "I declare open the Games of Atlanta, celebrating the 26th Olympiad." International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch said, "Let the Games begin." It was a continuation of the momentum that carried the city forward for six years and a celebration of Atlanta's achievements as the Centennial Olympic city.

Established in 1913, ACVB is a private, nonprofit organization created exclusively to market metro Atlanta and Georgia as a premier convention, meeting and leisure destination in the regional, national and international marketplace and to favorably impact the Atlanta economy through conventions and tourism. www.atlanta.net

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