



SWEETWATER RETREAT

HIKING TRAILS / DOG BEACH

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Lithia Springs, Georgia

A trail leaves from the driveway. Everything below is inside a 30-minute drive. Times are approximate; hours and fees can change.

RIGHT HERE — UNDER 10 MINUTES

Sweetwater Creek State Park

5 min · \$5 per car · 7am–dusk · dogs on leash

9+ miles of trail. RED/HISTORY 1 mi, easy, to the Civil War mill ruins. RED+WHITE 4.7 mi loop, moderate, ~450 ft climb — the one to do (4.7 stars, 3,300+ reviews). YELLOW 3.3 mi, moderate, crosses the truss bridge. Rocky, rooty footing near the water — wear real shoes. Rabies tag required for dogs.

Lithia Springs Park

7 min · free

Paved loop, playground, shelters. Flat and stroller-friendly. Good 20-minute leg-stretch before dark.

Mt. Carmel Park

8 min · free

Walking path and open field. Quietest on weekday mornings.

SHORT DRIVE — 15 TO 25 MINUTES

Deer Lick Park

15 min · free · Douglasville

66 acres. Easy nature trails and a walking path, plus a 3-acre fishing lake with a pier, disc golf and mini-golf.

Jessie Davis Park

17 min · free · 7775 Malone St, Douglasville

Newly rebuilt city park: a zero-entry pool with a splash pad, an indoor gym with two basketball courts, synthetic turf fields, a multi-use trail system and a senior center. Pool runs Memorial Day to Labor Day. The easiest swim with small children — zero entry means they can walk in.

Boundary Waters Park

18 min · free · Douglasville

492 acres, 12+ miles of multi-use trail for hiking, running, biking and horses, a 10-acre fishing pond and two disc golf courses. Easy to moderate. Trailhead is behind the aquatic center lot.

Silver Comet Trail

20–25 min · free · Hiram or Florence Rd trailhead

61.5 paved miles, easy and nearly flat. Hiram to Florence Road is 7.1 mi out-and-back, ~177 ft of gain. The best surface near here for bikes, runners and long dog walks. Rentals at the Florence Rd trailhead.

Clinton Nature Preserve

22 min · free · dawn–dusk · Villa Rica

200 acres, 4.6 stars from 560+ reviews. BLUE 0.81 mi, easy and flat. YELLOW 1.2 mi, moderate. RED 4.3 mi, strenuous. Full 8.6-mi loop, ~780 ft of gain. Serious mountain biking — rocks, roots and granite slabs; only one true beginner trail. Carnes Cabin, pre-Civil War, is a mile in.

Dog River Park & Trails

24 min · free · south Douglas County

About 900 acres of protected river land, accessible trailhead and pavilion. Easy-moderate walking. Whitewater here is for experienced kayakers only — no rentals or shuttle.

WORTH THE EXTRA FIVE MINUTES

Cochran Mill Park

30 min · \$5 parking · Chattahoochee Hills

800 acres, ~20 miles of trail, three mill ruins and the best waterfalls in the area. EAST SIDE (orange/green): 30 min to the falls, easy; 1.5–2 hrs for three waterfalls, moderate. WEST SIDE (yellow/red): Henry Mill Falls, ~5 mi round trip, moderate to difficult. Shared with bikes and horses — call out on blind corners. Gravel road option when trails are wet.

ON THE WATER

George Sparks Reservoir — Sweetwater Creek

5 min · rentals in season

215 acres of flatwater. Kayak, canoe, paddleboard, pedal boat and fishing boat rentals. The easiest paddle around and the best one for beginners and kids.

Chattahoochee River — Campbellton Park

30 min · free · 8655 Cochran Rd SW, Fairburn

Concrete boat ramp open 24/7, no fees or passes. Flatwater to Class I in normal flows. New Riverlands Park nearby has a floating dock and accessible kayak launch. The river is dam-controlled — check flows before you launch and wear a life jacket.

SWIMMING

Boundary Waters Aquatic Center

18 min · indoor · lifeguarded

8-lane heated competition pool plus a warm teaching pool. Life jackets provided; no floats or water guns. Open Sundays in June and July only, and closed Thursdays for swim meets November–February. Call ahead.

Creek swimming — Sweetwater & Cochran Mill

5–30 min · no lifeguard

The shoals at Sweetwater and the pools below the Cochran Mill falls are popular in summer. Rock is slick, levels rise fast after rain, and no one is watching. Never jump from or stand on a waterfall.

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Before you head out: Leashes required everywhere on this list. · Download offline maps — service is patchy in the creek bottoms. Sweetwater's lots fill by mid-morning on weekends. · Ticks and snakes are active March–October. · Carry water.