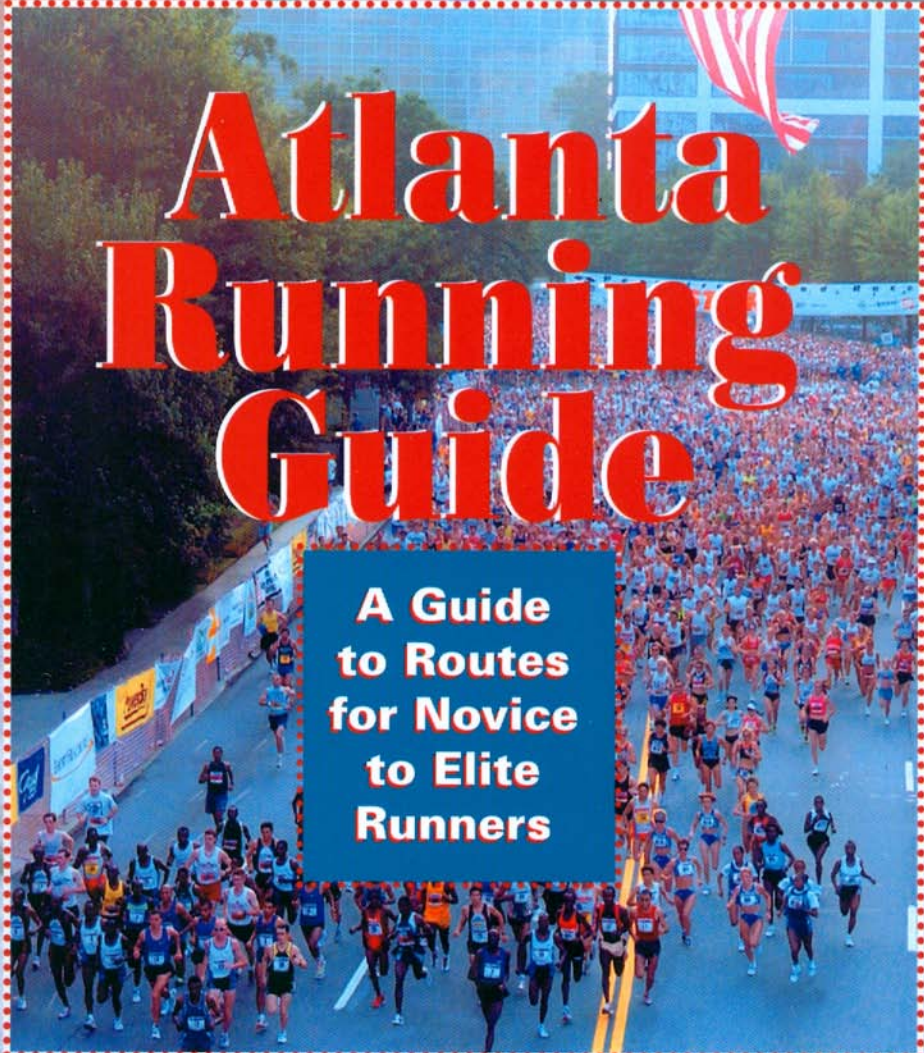


**MIKE  
COSENTINO**

**OVER 50 ROUTES WITH DETAILED MAPS  
COVERING MORE THAN 300 MILES**



# Atlanta Running Guide

**A Guide  
to Routes  
for Novice  
to Elite  
Runners**

# Atlanta Running Guide



**MIKE  
COSENTINO**

  
**PEACHTREE**  
ATLANTA

FOR INGE

The best miles are the ones we cover together.  
They are also the source of my inspiration for all of the others.

—M.C.



Published by  
PEACHTREE PUBLISHERS, LTD.  
1700 Chattahoochee Avenue  
Atlanta, Georgia 30318-2112

*www.peachtree-online.com*

Text © 2003 by Michael Cosentino

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Book and cover design by Loraine M. Joyner  
Composition by Robin Sherman  
Photographs: Ren Davis, Mike Cosentino,  
and MarathonFoto for the Atlanta Track Club

Manufactured in the United States of America  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
First Edition

ISBN 1-56145-205-X

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Cosentino, Mike.

Atlanta running guide / Mike Cosentino -- 1st ed.  
p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 1-56145-205-X

1. Running--Georgia--Atlanta Metropolitan Area--Guidebooks. 2. Atlanta Metropolitan Area (Ga.)--Guidebooks. I. Title.

GV1061.22 .C68 2003

796.42'09758'231--dc21

2002153456

PREFACE . . . . .viii  
 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . .x  
 INTRODUCTION . . . . .xii  
 ROUTE LOCATOR MAP . . . . .1

**ATLANTA WEST**

**1** VININGS *Putting You through the Paces* . . . . .4  
**2** MOUNT PARAN *Runnin' on the Ridge* . . . . .7  
**3** CHASTAIN PARK *More Than a Walk in the Park* . . . . .11  
**4** WIEUCA ROAD *Where the Running Is Easy* . . . . .14  
**5** WEST PACES FERRY ROAD *A Run with a View* . . . . .17  
**6** BUCKHEAD *Tracing the Battle Lines* . . . . .20  
**7** GARDEN HILLS AND PEACHTREE HILLS  
*Zigzagging through the Neighborhoods* . . . . .24  
**8** GRANT PARK/OAKLAND CEMETERY  
*Following in the Footsteps* . . . . .27  
**9** WESTVIEW CEMETERY *Running in Peace* . . . . .31

**ATLANTA EAST**

**10** PEACHTREE DUNWOODY *Pushing Pill Hill* . . . . .36  
**11** SAGAMORE HILLS *More Ups and Downs* . . . . .39  
**12** BROOKHAVEN *Playing through the Course* . . . . .42  
**13** MASON MILL *Magnificent Miles* . . . . .45  
**14** EMORY/DRUID HILLS *Climbing Clifton* . . . . .48  
**15** DREW VALLEY *High Grades without Studying* . . . . .51  
**16** ANSLEY PARK AND MORNINGSIDE  
*Going for the Glory* . . . . .54  
**17** VIRGINIA-HIGHLAND *High Times in the Highlands* . . .57  
**18** THE FREEDOM PARKWAY TRAIL  
*Five Little Miles Near Little Five Points* . . . . .60  
**19** PONCE DE LEON CORRIDOR  
*The Long and Winding Road* . . . . .63

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ATLANTA RUNNING GUIDE

<b>20</b>	PEACHTREE ROAD <i>Exploring the Big Peach</i> . . . . .	67
<b>21</b>	PIEDMONT PARK/MIDTOWN <i>Where the Action Is</i> . . . . .	73
<b>22</b>	DOWNTOWN ATLANTA <i>The Heart of the City</i> . . . . .	77

### AROUND ATLANTA

<b>23</b>	THE SILVER COMET TRAIL <i>Runnin' the Rails</i> . . . . .	85
<b>24</b>	MARIETTA <i>A Run That's Right on Track</i> . . . . .	90
<b>25</b>	EAST COBB <i>Shootin' the 'Hooch on Foot</i> . . . . .	93
<b>26</b>	ROSWELL <i>A Run through the Past</i> . . . . .	96
<b>27</b>	ALPHARETTA <i>Blazing a Path Along Big Creek</i> . . . . .	100
<b>28</b>	SANDY SPRINGS <i>Heading Up the Hills</i> . . . . .	103
<b>29</b>	LILBURN <i>A Run Back in Time</i> . . . . .	106
<b>30</b>	STONE MOUNTAIN <i>Runnin' around the Rock</i> . . . . .	109
<b>31</b>	AVONDALE ESTATES <i>A Quick and Quiet Quest</i> . . . . .	112
<b>32</b>	DECATUR <i>Where the Running is Greater</i> . . . . .	115
<b>33</b>	NORTH FAYETTE <i>The Runner's Place for Open Space</i> . . . . .	119
<b>34</b>	PEACHTREE CITY <i>Pedestrian Paradise</i> . . . . .	122

### THE TRAILBLAZERS

<b>35</b>	SWEETWATER CREEK . . . . .	128
<b>36</b>	RED TOP MOUNTAIN . . . . .	132
<b>37</b>	KENNESAW MOUNTAIN . . . . .	135
<b>38</b>	CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER NATIONAL RECREATION AREA . . . . .	139
<b>39</b>	MURPHEY CANDLER PARK . . . . .	166
<b>40</b>	REYNOLDS NATURE PRESERVE . . . . .	169
<b>41</b>	COCHRAN MILL NATURE CENTER AND PARK . . . . .	172

## HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

42 PEACHTREE ROAD RACE . . . . .	178
43 US 10K CLASSIC . . . . .	182
44 ATLANTA MARATHON & HALF MARATHON . . . . .	185

## APPENDIX

APPENDIX A <i>Alphabetical Listing</i> . . . . .	191
APPENDIX B <i>Distances</i> . . . . .	192
APPENDIX C <i>Hill Factor</i> . . . . .	194
APPENDIX D <i>Routes by Type</i> . . . . .	195
APPENDIX E <i>Author's Top Picks</i> . . . . .	197
APPENDIX F <i>Running Clubs</i> . . . . .	199
APPENDIX G <i>Pace Chart</i> . . . . .	200

*Textile mill ruins  
along Sweetwater Creek  
in Sweetwater Creek  
State Park.*



# Preface

**T**he idea for this book came to me as I was preparing for a friend and fellow runner to visit me in Atlanta. Planning to introduce him to running routes here, I realized there were too many wonderful places to run during a short visit. Since I knew this dilemma would arise again, I thought a guide to all of the great running places might be useful, both for me and for others.

When I began, I saw this book as an extension to my favorite hobby. Ultimately it proved to be the marriage of *two* of my interests—running and writing. The book provided the necessary extra motivation as I trained for the Western States 100-Mile Endurance Race. And writing about something I enjoyed was an ideal substitute for time I would have spent consuming ice cream or cold beer.

Then it happened. An evolution occurred. My project began to take on a life of its own. All of a sudden, I was getting up earlier than ever to re-run routes before work. During the early morning and evening hours of business trips, I was editing text instead of reading the newspaper or catching a few winks. On a cruise to South and Central America, I took my laptop out by the pool and studied maps of Atlanta. As with previous projects,

I refused to neglect my family and friends or my *real* job. Outside of those parameters, however, all bets were off.

It took more than 1500 miles on foot (and goodness knows how many more in the car and on my bike) before I finalized the 300 or more miles covered in this book. Believe me, not every mile you *can* run is a quality mile—visually or physically. Many more routes were considered than were included.

This book is by no means a complete listing of great runs in our city. Many people feel that the best runs are those where they discover something new on their own, an idea I fully understand. This guide is intended to turn you—whether you are a visitor, or new or longtime resident—on to places you may not have previously considered.

One of the benefits of running is that you can do it anywhere. I hope you will keep this guide near your shoes or in your car. If you do, you can increase your miles and your familiarity with our urban playground, often referred to as “Hot-Lanta,” “The Big Peach,” or “Capital of the South,” and appropriately regarded as a runner’s mecca. Enjoy!



*The Peachtree Road Race ends in  
Piedmont Park.*



# Introduction

**T**his book was written for all runners in Atlanta, whether the newest participants or the most seasoned of harriers. Of course, not every suggestion is for everyone. That is why this guide tells you what lies ahead. You can choose what suits you, your time, your needs, and your mood.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The table of contents categorizes all of the runs by their location within or outside of the city of Atlanta, with the exception of the last two sections that describe trail running options and Atlanta's most popular races. While each route is different, they are all organized in the same manner, making it easy to match a route to your current skills and mindset. Further classification is available in the appendix.



Each entry contains the following information:

## **DISTANCE**

Given in miles and kilometers.

## **HILL FACTOR**

Atlanta is a city of hills, from rolling to steep. We've employed the following grading system:

NON-EXISTENT:

stretches flat as the local track

MILD:

requires a carpenter's level to detect

MODERATE:

proves variety is the spice of life

SIGNIFICANT:

needs oxygen supplements

EXTREME:

attracts those more stable physically than mentally

## **GETTING THERE**

Directions to the recommended starting point or trailhead.

## **PARKING**

Self-explanatory locations, usually at a church, shopping center, school, or other free space.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Public rail and bus transportation to the route, if available.

## **OVERVIEW**

An explanation of why the entry made the *Atlanta Running Guide*. A brief history of the area, interesting facts, or a glimpse as to why the conditions are ideal for runners.

## **THE COURSE**

The recommended running route, terrain, surface, and specific directions. Popular landmarks and notable obstacles are also included.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

Key visual, safety, and educational information and potential training benefits.

## **KEEP IN MIND**

Information to help you determine if this run is for you, as well as hints for starting or finishing the run.

## **NEARBY NOTABLES**

Pre- or post-run sites for hydration, food, rest-room visits, or rituals. Also offers ideas for places to meet your family or friends or to participate in area activities.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

At the time of publication, no comprehensive local running book was available. There are, however, numerous publications and websites that address other running considerations, including training, diet, running clubs, races, apparel, and footwear suggestions. Although I recommend that you seek further information as needed, a few relevant topics are addressed here to help ensure that you get the most out of this guide.

## **GETTING STARTED**

You've already heard this before: Before starting any new exercise program, consult your physician. It just makes sense that you'll enjoy the benefits of running more if you are sure it's conducive to your physical well-being.

After you get the green light from your doctor, you can increase your enjoyment of running by getting the right shoes *for you*. There is more to choosing the right shoes than just getting the same size as your Birkenstocks. You should also consider factors such as your foot shape, running mechanics, weekly mileage, and requirements for stability. The first time or two, you

may wish to visit a running specialty store or a podiatrist to get an expert opinion on the right shoes.

## **VISITORS AND NEWCOMERS TO ATLANTA**

Many visitors and new residents see runners everywhere in Atlanta. Almost 25 percent of the population consider themselves to be runners or joggers. In addition to the *quantity* of runners, Atlanta is also recognized for its *quality* of running. Longtime running residents were proud, but hardly surprised, to learn that in 2002, *Runner's World* magazine named Atlanta one of the "10 Best Cities To Be a Runner." Atlanta was the largest city to earn this distinction.

Many factors contribute to enjoyable running in Atlanta; some become increasingly evident the longer you run. Other factors bear mentioning before you start out.

**This is the Sunbelt.** We have plenty of sunny days that are warm or hot. Perspiration accelerates the effects of sun on your skin, so be sure to wear sunscreen. It might also be worth investing in a pair of sunglasses designed for runners.

You'll appreciate not squinting the entire way or having to wipe the sweat out of your eyes. Most importantly, remember that many days are very humid—and not just the sunny ones. The humidity can be more than 80 or 90 percent in the summer, so be sure to keep well hydrated. Finally, choose the time of the day to run based on your heat tolerance.

**This is the South.** In addition to the weather, people enjoy two other things about Atlanta: friendly people and the lush, green environment. As a runner in Atlanta, you can contribute to both traditions. Unless you are sucking wind terribly, offer a smile and greeting to those you pass. And when you take consumables with you on the run, please discard all refuse—water bottles, energy bar wrappers, gel containers—in trash receptacles. As the posted signs say, “Help keep Atlanta peachy clean!”

**This is Appalachia.** Actually, Atlanta is a bit southeast of Appalachia, but its topography is similarly diverse. There are rewards and challenges to running here. If you run the hills of Atlanta consistently and regularly, your body will learn

to process oxygen more efficiently. The muscles in your calves and thighs will develop more quickly and noticeably. When planning a run, be sure to consider not only the distance, but also the hill factor. And don't count on running the same pace per mile on the streets as you do at the local track. If you are like many longtime Atlanta runners, you will eventually come to appreciate—rather than be intimidated by—the uneven layout.

## TRAIL RUNNING

Trail running is an increasingly popular discipline within the sport of running, as demonstrated by the development of specific footwear and courses. Atlanta is not like the West when it comes to off-road running; there are not as many options available. But trail runners are not out of luck. Atlanta is ahead of most cities of its size in the availability and convenience of spacious and scenic trails. The Trailblazers section of this guide offers a wide range of options to get you started or keep you interested in this alternative. Keep the following in mind when running trails.

**Trail Etiquette.** As you come upon others, remember that they are prob-

ably moving more slowly than you. They may be out for a walk or a hike, more interested in the surroundings than you are, or with children or canine companions. *They have the right-of-way.* A friendly smile or polite “excuse me” is all you’ll need to encourage most to step aside and let you by. You may need to use the side of the trail to get around a select few.

**Mountain Bikers.** You, as a trail runner, have the right-of-way. This doesn’t do you much good, however, if you’re lying on your back underneath a bike tire. Mountain bikes are not allowed on many trails in this guide. Use caution and common sense on those that are multiuse.

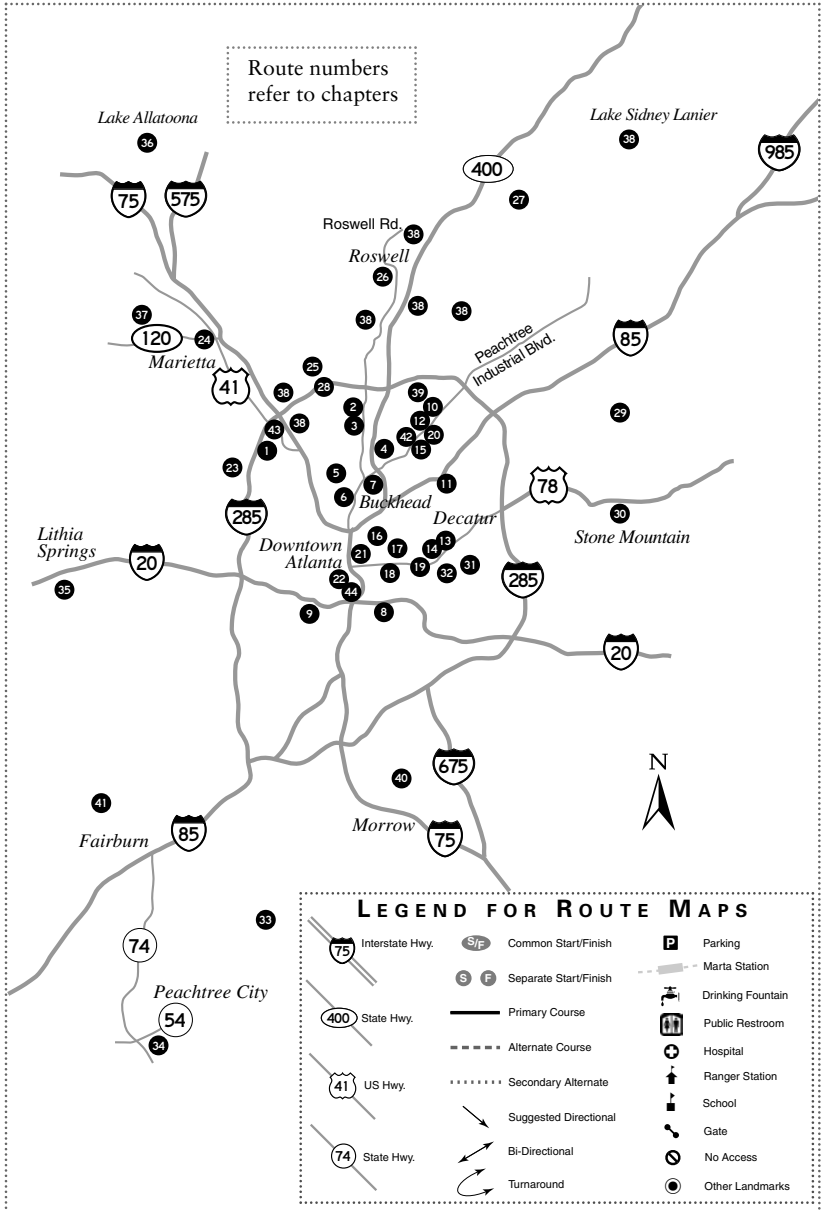
**Sightseeing.** The opportunity to see great natural beauty is one of the biggest benefits of trail running. Much can be absorbed whether you’re on a leisurely stroll or clicking off six-minute miles. But if you are interested in looking more closely—really scrutinizing the environment—trail running is *not* the way to do it. Most injuries during trail running are the result of the runner taking his eyes off of the trail. If you spot something irresistible, take a breather.

## **ORGANIZED RUNNING AND RACING EVENTS**

The vigor of Atlanta’s running scene can be attributed to numerous factors, including a wide variety of organized events. In fact, there are more running events every year in Atlanta than in any other city in the United States. Exact dates and course layouts can change from year to year, so check regularly updated sources for the best information. The Atlanta Track Club website ([www.atlantatrackclub.org](http://www.atlantatrackclub.org)) and the free local publications, *Atlanta Sports & Fitness* and *Georgia Athlete* magazines, are some of the best places to check.

The three most famous events—all held on major holidays—are the Peachtree Road Race, the U.S. 10K Classic, and the Atlanta Marathon & Half Marathon. Any runner that completes all of them has had a good year indeed. The Holiday Traditions section provides the race dates, course descriptions, and other pertinent information needed to get you started with your preparations.

# ROUTE LOCATOR MAP ATLANTA RUNNING GUIDE





*Swan House at the Atlanta History Center.*

(West Paces Ferry Route)

VININGS *Putting You through the Paces*

MOUNT PARAN *Runnin' on the Ridge*

CHASTAIN PARK *More Than a Walk in the Park*

WIEUCA ROAD *Where the Running is Easy*

WEST PACES FERRY ROAD *A Run with a View*

BUCKHEAD *Tracing the Battle Lines*

GARDEN HILLS AND PEACHTREE HILLS

*Zigzagging through the Neighborhoods*

GRANT PARK/OAKLAND CEMETERY

*Following in the Footsteps*

WESTVIEW CEMETERY *Running in Peace*



# VININGS

## *Putting You through the Paces*

### **DISTANCE**

**6.0 miles, 9.6 kilometers (loop)**

### **HILL FACTOR**

**Significant**

### **GETTING THERE**

Approximately 9.0 miles northwest of downtown. Take I-285 to Paces Ferry Road (exit 18) and go east to Cumberland Parkway.

### **PARKING**

Plenty of parking is available in the Paces Ferry Shopping Center at the intersection of Cumberland Parkway and Paces Ferry Road. Parking is also available along some of the side streets off Woodland Brook Drive.

### **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The area is served by the #70 Cobb County Transit (CCT) bus, which departs from the Hamilton E. Holmes MARTA Station.

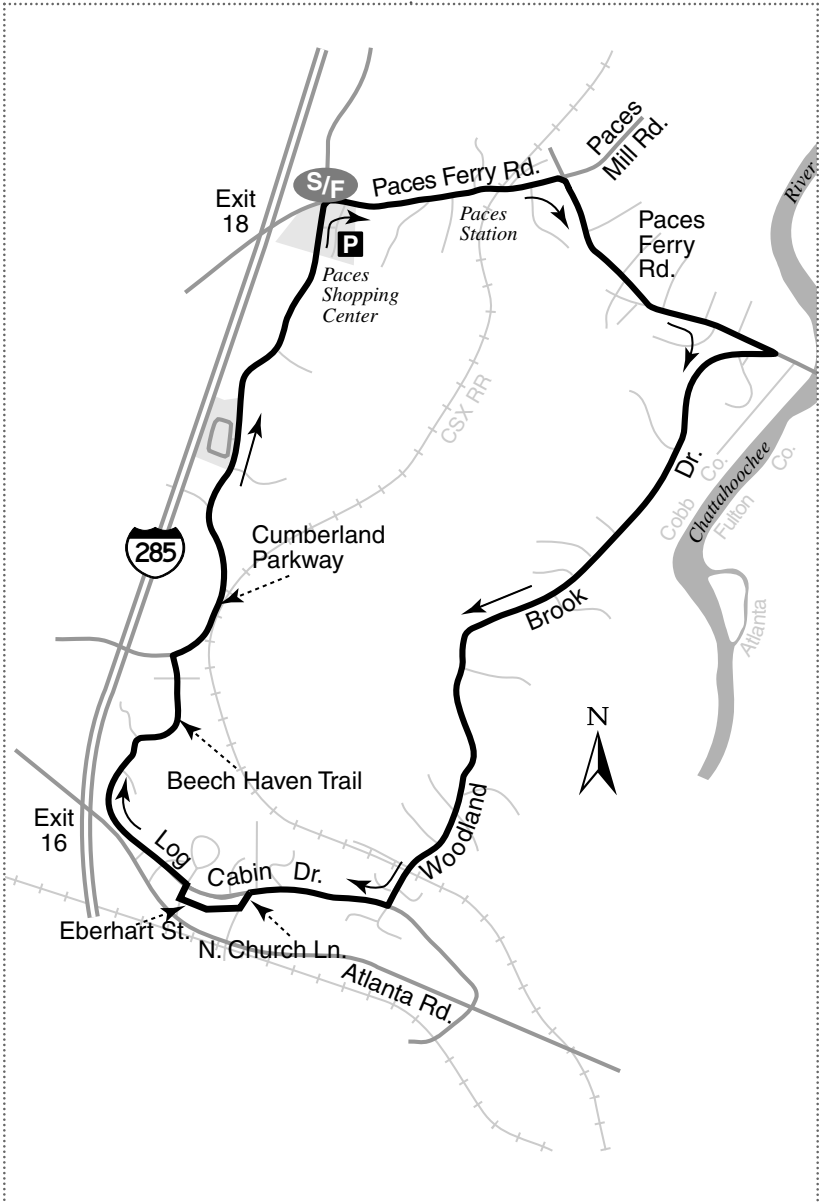
### **OVERVIEW**

“Putting Yourself Through the Paces” is an apt title for this route, as you pass or use streets called Paces Ferry, Paces Mill, Paces Place, and Paces Walk. All are named after an early settler who built the area’s first mill. And you’ll literally feel the paces, as some of the climbs on this course are not for children. Nonetheless, the beauty of the residential portion makes this a run not to be missed for someone willing to—yes, you guessed it—get put through the paces.

The intersection of Paces Ferry Road and Cumberland Parkway is at the center of one of metro Atlanta’s most rapidly expanding areas. Fortunately, the growth has not eroded the endearing characteristics of Vinings, nor has it discouraged the significant foot traffic the area has always enjoyed. Although the amount of activity in the area can be overwhelming at first, this location is actually a great place to run.

### **THE COURSE**

**MAIN ROUTE:** The route begins at the intersection of Cumberland Parkway and Paces Ferry Road. Head east on Paces Ferry away from I-285. Cross the old railroad tracks and pass Paces Station, home to charming boutiques and restaurants. At the second traffic



signal, approximately 0.5 mile from the railroad tracks, Paces Ferry Road makes an abrupt right turn. If you see signs indicating you are now on Paces Mill Road, you have gone too far. Run downhill on Paces Ferry Road for almost another 1.0 mile, past many lovely houses. Turn right on Woodland Brook Drive at the traffic signal.

Follow Woodland Brook for about 2.0 miles and cross another set of railroad tracks. The road deadends at Log Cabin Drive; turn right and cross to the other side of the street to continue running on the sidewalk. The sidewalk ends 0.5 miles later at North Church Road. Turn left on North Church Road and go less than 100 yards to Eberhart Street, an unused road twenty yards south of and parallel to Log Cabin Drive. Eberhart ends all too soon, and Log Cabin Drive fills with automobile traffic. At this point, carefully use the side of the road to run the curves around several apartment complexes.

As you make your way north and back toward the starting point, the road changes name during the next few blocks to Beech Haven Trail and eventually becomes Cumberland Parkway at Gilmore Road.

Proceeding north on Cumberland Parkway, amid the areas obviously targeted for development, you encounter two killer hills. Turn right on Paces Ferry Road at the second apex, near the Paces Ferry Shopping Center, and head for home—but not before conquering another formidable ascent.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

Most of Paces Ferry Road is shaded by beautiful trees. Although many of the neighborhood roads are dead ends or cul-de-sacs, they are worth exploring.

#### **KEEP IN MIND**

Even though sidewalks are available and most drivers in the area are courteous, you should be extra attentive when near the intersection of Paces Ferry Road and Cumberland Parkway.

#### **NEARBY NOTABLES**

The Station at Vinings, near the first railroad crossing, offers plenty to delight local runners, including thin-crust pizza at the New York Pizza Exchange and Chinese cuisine at Uncle Wong's and Orient Express.



# MOUNT PARAN

## *Runnin' on the Ridge*

### **DISTANCE**

11.0 miles, 17.6 kilometers  
(out and back)

### **HILL FACTOR**

Significant

### **GETTING THERE**

Approximately 9.0 miles northwest of downtown.

To reach the northern starting point, take I-285 to Roswell Road (exit 25), and go south to Mount Paran Road.

To reach the southern starting point, take I-75 to Mount Paran Road (exit 256) and go south to Paces Ferry Road.

### **PARKING**

Parking is available on many of the side streets along Mount Paran and in the lots of several churches along the road.

### **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

The area is served by the Sandy Springs (#5) MARTA bus,

which departs from the Lindbergh Center and Dunwoody Stations.

### **OVERVIEW**

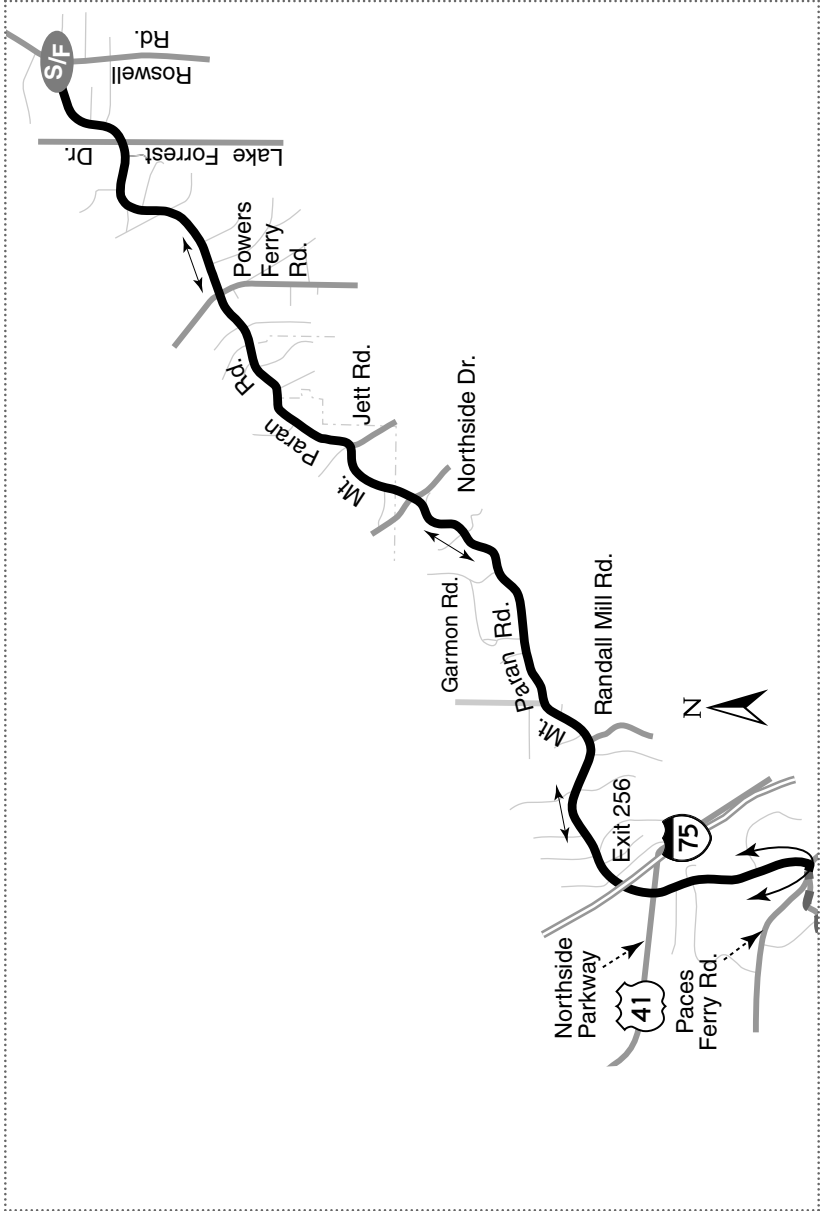
If you are tired of climbing Atlanta's hills, reaching the apex only to begin the descent, this may be your kind of run. Mount Paran Road follows Mount Paran Ridge from Roswell Road to Paces Ferry Road; the ridge was a significant stronghold for Confederate forces during the Civil War. This route gets you to the top quickly, then keeps you there. No matter how appealing the concept of "start on top, stay on top" may be, do not assume that this means the road is flat. The ridge offers consistent, gently rolling terrain with grand houses and estates below.

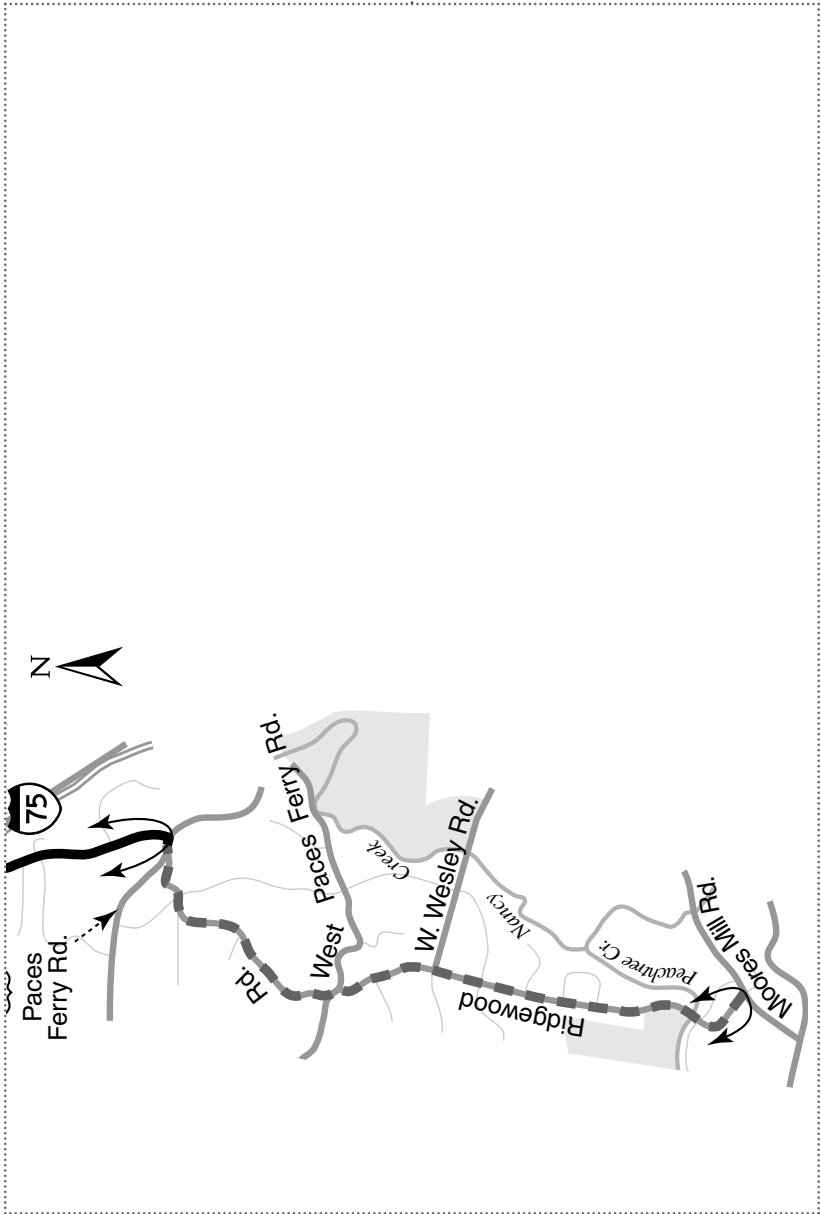
### **THE COURSE**

**MAIN ROUTE:** While you can start this route at either end, I suggest you begin at the intersection of Roswell Road and run southwest on Mount Paran Road; this will allow you to become somewhat familiar with the road before you encounter any significant traffic (unless you run during rush hours). The first mile is lined with very impressive houses. In mile 2.0, the road rolls a bit more and you pass

# ATLANTA WEST ATLANTA RUNNING GUIDE

## MOUNT PARAN





MOUNT PARAN

some more recent residential development and neighborhood churches, as well as the Mount Paran Country Store, which despite its busy suburban location is exactly what it sounds like. Cross under I-75 after 4.5 miles and go to the end of Mount Paran Road at Paces Ferry Road, exactly 1.0 mile later.

**ALTERNATE:** You can gain another pleasant 2.5 miles each way with significantly less traffic and significantly greater elevation by crossing Paces Ferry Road and continuing on Ridgewood (Mount Paran changes name to Ridgewood) to Moores Mill Road, then returning to the starting point.

### HIGHLIGHTS

Despite the lack of provision for pedestrians in the original road design, Mount Paran Road is relatively safe. The winding nature of the road and the presence of many cyclists and pedestrians keep most drivers attentive. The side of the road has ample room to run (or bail out if necessary). A brief glimpse of the Buckhead skyline reminds you of the course's elevation. Many of the houses on this route are spectacular.

### KEEP IN MIND

The course is frustratingly narrow in many areas and devoid of sidewalks or pedestrian/cyclist lanes almost the entire way. During the week, especially during the rush hours, traffic can quickly become bumper-to-bumper. Therefore, I recommend that you incorporate this run into your midday or weekend plans, so you won't have to deal with commuter traffic. The sidewalk under the I-75 entrance ramp can be very muddy; drivers are also much less attentive in this particular location. The steep hill near the intersection of Mount Paran and Paces Ferry Roads is a relatively brief exception to the gently rolling terrain.

### NEARBY NOTABLES

The Mount Paran Country Store is a perfect place to buy a cold beverage or a snack. For more significant post-run sustenance, try any of the eateries in the Fountain Oaks or Chastain Square shopping centers, 0.5 mile and 1.0 mile, respectively, south of the intersection of Mount Paran and Roswell Roads.