

# AGING IN ATLANTA

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Tess Snipes consults with airport stakeholders and managers on negotiations, administration, strategic planning and more. COURTESY

ENTREPRENEUR

## Consultant specializes in aviation industry

Her business based in Stone Mountain built on years of expertise.

By Elizabeth Crumbly  
for the AJC

Tess Snipes’ consulting business left the ground at an unusual time for the aviation industry. It was just after 9/11, and airports were undergoing massive change. “There was planning – a lot of new things – a lot of changes in airport security,” she told the AJC. “Airports were needing to change their layout, increasing things behind the checkpoints. New facilities were being built. There was a need to bring back traffic, and so airports were needing to market for air service.” Snipes had already spent over a decade in the corporate world – first at a bank and then at an airline. She worked at a small aviation consulting company for seven years before 9/11. When the business downsized, she went out on her own. “I had been working from home already,” she said. “And so, I basically got my business plan together, set up a phone line and bank account and a fax line at that time, and I started working my network to generate revenue, and I’ve been doing it for 20 years.”

**Business of consulting**  
Two decades in, Above & Beyond Consulting LLC, the Stone Mountain-based consulting and mediation firm 66-year-old Snipes founded, represents her commitment to education, hard work, connection and faith. Today, she consults with airport stakeholders and managers on negotiations and administration and issues like strategic planning, budget reviews, problem-solving, research, and business development. She also represents airport managers and concessions operators on matters involving facilities. Presently, she works specifically on issues with international airlines at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. Her other airport associations have included

Snipes continued on S3



Judy and Robert Port of Dunwoody added high-performance vinyl flooring but kept treasured pieces like art deco-style tables.

HOME

## Redesigned for a new life chapter

Seniors’ strategic design decisions allow them to age in their own homes.

By Elizabeth Crumbly  
For the AJC

A year and a half ago, Judy and Robert Port made a decision about their Dunwoody home of 36 years. They didn’t want to leave – at least not anytime soon. So they decided to make adjustments that would allow them to stay put as they got older, surrounded by treasured belongings and a neighborhood they loved. The result – new, more functional furniture; a navigable layout; and easy-to-clean flooring – has brought relief and peace of mind. “It’s great. It was the best change ever,” Judy Port told the AJC. “I wish we’d done it 30 years ago.” The Ports worked with Cathy Morrow, owner of Room Reflections in metro Atlanta, to streamline their living area while incorporating items they’d owned and cherished for years. “It feels better when there’s a little bit of space around things,” Morrow said of her process. “If a room breathes a little bit, usually, we breathe better in it without being a minimalist.” For older adults looking to stay in homes, which they’ve sometimes owned for decades, changes to make a dwelling safer and more

Home continued on S2



Medina Jett, co-founder of Atlanta-based TDS Builders, says widened doorways are great for people looking to age in place, as they may need to fit wheelchairs or walkers through. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PORTS

OUTDOORS

## A relaxing trip: Georgia River Network paddling

Upcoming two-day fall adventures will include Okefenokee Swamp, Flint River.

By Severo Avila  
For the AJC

Eight and Eighty-two. That’s how many paddling trips Camm Swift has been on with Georgia River Network and how old he is. He’s just one of several metro Atlanta older adults who have found adventure

and enjoyment on Georgia’s rivers through paddling trips with GRN, an organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of the state’s waterways. The group is hosting two-day paddle camping adventures in the fall on the Flint River and the Okefenokee Swamp. A Cumming resident, Swift was a fishery biologist for many years and moved here from California in 2011. His first paddle with GRN was on the Flint River in 2015 and he

was hooked. “They design these paddle trips so everyone can do it, seniors, families with smaller children, younger adults, everyone,” Swift said. He loves the paddles from a naturalist’s point of view. He likes to see how our rivers are being treated and what kinds of fish live there. He wants other Atlanta seniors to know how much enjoyment they might get from a paddling trip. Paddle continued on S3




Georgia River Network has a fleet of boats for rent, or you can bring your own. COURTESY



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# AGING IN ATLANTA



A remodel of Judy and Robert Port’s Dunwoody home of 36 years included reclining sofas with performance fabric. PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE PORTS

## Home

continued from S1

functional can range from small shifts in the kitchen or bathroom to top-to-bottom adjustments. This is a tour of the possibilities for homes that need to accommodate their senior occupants for the long haul.

### Kitchen adjustments

In the kitchen, it’s easier to unload pots and pans with pullout shelves in lower cabinets.

“They give you so much more mobility and ease of use than you think,” Morrow said.

A renovation might include eliminating squatting altogether by installing wider cabinets at a higher height with drawers big enough for pans, she said.

Medina Jett, co-founder of Atlanta-based TDS Builders, agrees about easier-to-reach cabinets, especially for people using wheelchairs. She includes floor-to-ceiling pantries in the dwellings she purchases and then rents out as short-term accommodations – many times to older adults.

“I always make sure that we have pantries that start at the floor, and it’s sort of a floor cabinet that makes it easy to access things that they need on a daily basis,” she said.

### Bathroom considerations

Bathrooms can be hazardous places as homeowners’ mobility and flexibility diminish.

For showers, Morrow recommends smaller tiles with more grout for grip. Prefabbed, nonslip shower floors, she pointed out, actually eliminate leaks around grout and the need to clean grout; prefabbed shower walls are easier to clean for the same reason.

Floors should be matte, unpolished tile no bigger than 12 inches by 24 inches so there’s a decent amount of grout for grip, she said. And key in preserving safety in a place where it’s easy to slip are strategically placed grab bars, but they should be correctly sited against the underlying structure to support a person’s weight, Morrow cautioned.

“If someone is slipping and accidentally just grabs a towel bar, it’s going to come out of the wall and come down with them,” she said.

She said vertical grab bars where the tile or shower door

ends are also helpful.

Comfort-height toilets at 17 to 19 inches high are nice for older adults with knee and hip issues, and specially designed and installed toilet paper holders can double as grab bars there, she said.

Retrofitting a shower unit, depending on the adaptability of existing plumbing, with a removable wand can let users shower or wash a pet more easily. Magnetized versions are also easy to put back. Built-out corner triangle seats can relieve fatigue and prevent falls, she said, and there are folding seats for newer showers, but they must be mounted properly to hold an adult’s weight.

### Lighting details

Morrow puts extra focus on lighting.

“Most older kitchens absolutely do not have enough light in them, especially the task lighting shining right down on the counters,” she said.

She recommends installing strip LED lighting and hardwiring it into outlets or a switch so a wire isn’t visible, but users can cut or chop confidently. In bathrooms, homeowners can have lights on a dimmer – sometimes recessed with an exhaust fan – that can get very bright if necessary, or they can add a fixture that gives them another bulb.

“Like, who doesn’t want to be able to find the soap? I don’t need ambience of being in the darkness when I take a shower,” Morrow said.

### Easy transitions

Jett pays particular attention to transition areas. It’s important to make sure key doorways are wider to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers. She makes sure to have at least one wheelchair-accessible bathroom with a widened doorway and possibly a roll-in shower. Having one or even two bedrooms on the main floor to eliminate the challenge of stairs is great, too, she said. She’s added bedrooms onto older homes for this purpose, and she’s even turned one main-floor bedroom into two.

“I’ve heard people’s stories of their family trying to bring ramps so that they could get into the house with the wheelchair, whereas with our rental properties, it’s an easy wheel right in from the ground level, and they don’t have to deal with all of that,” she said.

And for those looking to age in place, adding accommodations for live-in care-



Widened walkways and doorways will allow Judy and Robert Port to maneuver in their home more easily.

takers is a great step to take earlier than later, Jett said.

“They can easily call for help if they’re in their room and need help for something,” she said.

She sees a lot of these shifts as commonsense solutions, and she gets overwhelmingly positive feedback from a population she feels sometimes has to forgo travel opportunities because of a lack of accommodation.

“The comments that I get from the elderly who rent our Airbnbs are, ‘Thank you, thank you, thank you! You made our trip so much more enjoyable. I felt like I could do what I needed to do,’” she said.

### Upgrades put into practice

In Dunwoody, the Ports are enjoying lots of the upgrades both designers espouse.

At Morrow’s urging, they added a washable rug in their dining room to ensure easier cleanup of spills. They’ve lowered the chance of tripping owing to a high-quality rug pad underneath. The luxury vinyl flooring they went with is low-maintenance and easy to clean, and the new performance fabrics on their sofas will hold up to grandkids, Judy Port said.

Past health challenges led the couple to install a chair lift, which proved helpful in transporting laundry between floors. And a surgery earlier this year, which put Judy Port temporarily on a walker, made them appreciate the widened doorways and pathways Morrow advocated for, along with an outdoor ramp. Swiveling chairs have allowed Judy Port to maintain conversations with others that she would have had trouble with in the past because of her health.

The changes have come just in time, as the couple have a son who plans to stay local after marrying early next year. They’re hoping for grandkids to play eventually on those rugs and couches.

“We wanted a space where everybody could sit together and be comfortable,” Judy Port said.

Morrow made sure treasured pieces, such as art deco-style glass tables, stayed, along with lots of memorabilia on the couple’s bookcases. Keeping

personal aesthetics at the forefront helps during transitions, she said.

“I think we all have different chapters in our life, and when you’re in between

those chapters is when you’re more unsure of yourself,” she said. “You don’t want to start to feel not relevant. You want to know you’ve still got it.”



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# AGING IN ATLANTA

ASK THE EXPERT

## 5 things you can do to improve mental health

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Since the start of the pandemic, there’s no denying stress and anxiety have been on the rise. Social and political unrest has also put additional strain on an already uncertain climate. According to the American Psychological Association, 47% of adults have felt an increase in stress since the beginning of 2020. If you have not experienced it, chances are someone close to you has.

In the last year, 75% of parents said they needed more emotional support but only 32% sought help. But it’s not just adults that are feeling stress and anxiety. According to University of Michigan Health, one in three teen girls and one in five teen boys report experiencing new or worsening anxiety in



**OUR EXPERT**  
Dr. Lateefah Watford, a psychiatrist in the Behavioral Health Department at Kaiser Permanente of Georgia

the past year. As we see increased need for support, it is crucial to focus on factors we can control to keep ourselves mentally healthy. These include but

are not limited to:

### Focusing on things that bring you joy

Getting back to the things in life that bring us joy and create a sense of grounding and stability is imperative. Capturing moments of simple pleasure like gardening, hiking or baking can positively impact your outlook during difficult times. These moments ultimately help you gain a sense of normalcy and alleviate anxiety.

### Spending time with friends and family

While not as popular these days, writing letters to friends and family is an effective tool to build deep emotional connections from a distance. Maintaining social plans is also more important than ever, whether it’s lunch with friends or a stroll through the park. With precau-

tionary measures available, like masks, social distancing, sitting outside or meeting in smaller groups, preserving deep relationships is now more feasible.

### Turning off the news

In our stressed political and social climate, turning off the news can provide separation from the chaos of around the clock news. According to the American Psychological Association, significant stressors are equated with 24-hour access to news and social media, which has been compounded from exposure to COVID-related news. Turning off these proven stressors allows space for your mind to relax and encourages a healthier mental state.

### Engaging in hobbies

Throughout the pandemic, many lost a significant stress reliever when

they had to give up hobbies and clubs. Activities like running and book clubs or other leisurely activities can decrease stress and anxiety, according to a study published by the American Psychosomatic Society. Through lowering stress hormones, these leisurely activities provide a positive focus and offer relief from anxious thoughts and feelings.

### Protecting personal time

As the kitchen table shifted to the board room and the classroom and the ‘9 to 5’ became the ‘whatever time you get around to it,’ parents are juggling more than ever. With a recent shift to telework, for many, boundaries for maintaining work-life balance have been blurred, making mentally detaching from work very difficult. As stress infringes on time meant for decom-

pressing, mental health is forced to take a back seat. By honoring vacation days and providing structure to workdays, you can help relieve stressors and better protect your overall well-being.

While it’s been a rough year, and the loss and pain we’ve experienced won’t go away as precautions ease and normalcy returns, there are ways to combat our struggles and find new strength and hope. Today’s mental health offerings are as numerous as the people they serve, with a unique type and level of care for each person. If you are experiencing any mental health issues or know someone that is, it’s important to connect with a professional who can recommend support groups, therapists, or psychiatrists to best accommodate you or your loved one’s level of need.

## Snipes

continued from S1

Augusta Regional Airport and Raleigh-Durham International Airport.

Entrepreneurship, she said, has appealed to her since her days at The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania where she earned a Master of Business Administration. In fact, her two favorite classes during that portion of her education were entrepreneurship and real estate law.

“I’ve included both of those fields in the work that I do now,” she said.

### Making connections

Connecting with other professionals has served her well over the years, whether she’s been broadening her business horizons or just reaching out to support other professionals.

“Really, all of my opportunities have come through networking and relationships that I established with people in the industry,” she said.

She’s developed contacts and gained contracts through acquaintances she’s met at conferences. She cited the Airport Minority Advisory Council as an especially beneficial organization – its relatively small size, she said, has allowed her to network with industry members and gain information about upcoming opportunities. Venues like this have also allowed her to work on teams where she could pursue project proposals or develop relationships with those looking to pass along existing airport-related contracts.

**“I was starting after a downturn, but fortunately, I had established a really good network and was able to keep the business going, but this last downturn with COVID – it really was the most difficult.”**

**Tess Snipes,**  
owner of Above & Beyond Consulting, LLC

She got into the off-airport car rental business this way and had a contract to manage a rental operation for five years.

### The challenges

As with many small businesses, challenges have mainly come in the form of economic downturns, including the 2008 recession. Snipes is candid about those difficulties and what it’s taken to work her way back each time.

“I was starting after a downturn, but fortunately, I had established a really good network and was able to keep the business going, but this last downturn with COVID – it really was the most difficult,” she said.

Although she estimates she lost 50% of her revenue during COVID-19, the business survived, and she’s building back up again. She’s put off retirement for now.

“It’s also been challenging for me in terms of being ready for retirement, so I kind of feel like I’m starting that process all over again,” she said. “I just see new opportunities coming, and I’ve got to keep the faith.”

Regular meetings with other professionals help her with that faith. She’s a lifetime member of the National Black MBA Association, and she’s met with a six-person mastermind group on a weekly call for the past 18 years. The other members, she said, represent different industries all over the country.

“We talk about our past weeks, our successes, our challenges, and we do a prayer,” she said.

### Looking forward

As she looks forward, she hopes to grow the mediation portion of her business and advocate for affordable senior housing and health care locally.

“Mediation is conflict resolution – solving problems – and I think that’s so important in how I conduct my business – to operate from a win-win perspective and to help people work through issues,” she said. To that end, she’s served on the DeKalb County planning commission, and she’s advocated through political representatives for affordable health care and more variety in senior housing options.

“As a businessperson and entrepreneur, one of my challenges was affordable health care, and so, fortunately, I thank President Obama for coming up with the Affordable Health Care (Act) – that really helped me, especially as I was getting older and having to deal with health care expenses,” she said. “And, so, I’m also now concerned about what I’m seeing happen with the hospitals, and so I don’t just restrict my business to the aviation side but also making sure that I’m a positive influence in my community.”



Georgia River Network hosted the first Paddle Georgia 2023 trip on the Savannah River from June 24 to July 1.

## Paddle

continued from S1

He and his wife are considering a fall paddle on the Flint River.

“I would say to anyone who’s never done it, to do one of the smaller paddles, a one-day or two-day paddle,” he said. “That would be a good way to see if you’d like it. The Flint River, in particular, is very pretty.”

Ann Hill has her sights set on a trip into the Okefenokee Swamp in November.

The 60-year-old Kennesaw resident is a recent retiree and said GRN hosts several paddle adventures each year including trips coming up in October and November. She recently paddled with them and can’t wait to get back on the water. She hopes other Atlanta seniors will give it a shot as well.

A nature enthusiast, she’s always loved the water. She’s done day trips with GNR before, and recently undertook a bigger adventure, Paddle Georgia, which is a week-long group trip.

“I was very impressed with the organization of it and the safety,” Hill said. “Not only that, but each trip is fun and educational.”

Whether they’re nature lovers, paddling enthusiasts, or simply those hoping to connect with others on a fun adventure, Hill recommends at least considering a paddling trip with GRN.

The first of two upcoming trips is a two-day trip covering 36 miles on the Flint River Oct. 6-8. The trip will feature sights such as limestone bluffs, blue hole springs, and of course, an abundance of wildlife. On Nov. 10-12, participants can explore 22 miles of the Okefenokee Swamp and Suwannee River. The trip will take paddlers through some of the most scenic stretches of the famous swamp filled with birds, turtles, and alligators as well as a myriad of other wildlife.

Joe Cook with Georgia



Atlanta seniors are many of the participants in paddle trips with Georgia River Network.



Participants in Paddle Georgia 2023 explored the Savannah River. COURTESY PHOTOS

River Network said those trips will feature campsites with restrooms and showers, catered meals, and educational programs.

“The adventures are more than just paddle trips,” he said. “Our goal is to connect people with our state’s rivers and help them understand the importance of these waterways. And we have a great time doing it too.”

In particular, he said, seniors make up a bulk of their participants on each trip. There’s something about the ease of travel and the camaraderie that appeals to adventurers in that age group.

“One of the things we do in the evening programs of our big trips is we give awards to the oldest and youngest

paddler,” he said. “When we do that, the vast majority of the people are over 50. That 55-70 age group is the demographic we seem to hit.”

In fact, Cook joked, some of the paddlers on their trips have an easier time navigating their canoes and kayaks than they do walking.

“Some people have mobility issues,” he said. “Some have bad knees or hips. But once you get in the boat things even out and you realize it’s enjoyable, recreational paddling. It’s not strenuous and it’s something you can enjoy well into your later years.”

Hill has her own kayak, but GNR has provided her with one in the past. There are boats available for rent

for trips, or you can bring your own.

“The rivers we’re on are calm rivers,” she said. “I just love being outside. It’s a good way to look at nature, birds, turtles, deer, trees, and rock formations. I would say give it a try. You can look on the website and try a shorter trip. I find there are a lot of people my age that are doing this. They are gentle paddles.”

She knew one other participant before her Paddle Georgia trip. But surrounded by other paddlers, that quickly changed.

“I didn’t know anybody but that one friend,” Hill said. “But within a day I had five new best friends. They showed me what to do and made sure I had a great time. I made a lot of friendships I want to continue growing and people I want to continue paddling with.”

And if you enjoy the ease of paddling but don’t feel like camping, Hill said there are other options when you get off the river.

“I’m not a big camper,” she said. “There were a lot of people who camped in tents but you had the option to stay in a cabin or bunk room. Just because you go on these trips doesn’t mean you have to sleep in a tent all the time. You can be more comfortable. And (Georgia River Network) provides you with phenomenal food and fun activities.”

Registration fees for the trips range from \$205 to \$360 for Fall Flot on the Flint and \$325 to \$475 for the Okefenokee-Suwannee River Adventure. To learn more about particular trips or to sign up, visit [garnet.org/events](https://garnet.org/events).

“A lot of people are intimidated by getting out on the river,” Cook said.

“Rivers can be dangerous. But our trips are designed to be safe and to help novice paddlers experience the river in an environment where they’re surrounded by other people who have more experience and are willing to help.”



# AGING IN ATLANTA

THE DATING GAME

## How to get out of a dating rut when you're over 50

Try to stay positive, avoid adding too much pressure.

By Rose Kennedy  
For the AJC

It's difficult to work up the courage to join the dating scene, especially when you're over 50 and haven't gone out in decades. Once you do, it can be easy to fall into a rut.

Maybe you're in constant "swipe left, swipe right" mode on a dating site but you never find anyone interested in the type of relationship you would like. Or you've had so many first dates they're a blur. Or you're seeing someone new – once again – but it's not going anywhere. Does this sound familiar?

Monte Kuykendall, a licensed professional counselor who practices in Augusta, says it's valid to feel like throwing in the towel.

"There's that problem with online dating where it's just a cattle call," he told the AJC. "You can have multiple bad dates, run into unkind people – that's common."

He's experienced similar frustrations as a 52-year-old divorced man trying to meet women, but Kuykendall said altering your attitude about the dating process beats giving up.

The first step to breaking a bad dating pattern is to turn inward, according to Priya Lakhi, a life coach, reiki master, board-certified hypnotherapy trainer, and founder of Atlanta-based Awaken Ananda, an online support option for women.

"Our relationship with ourselves is the foundation from which we can give and be in love," she told the AJC. "For many of us, even if love knocked on our door, we wouldn't know what to do with it. We might push it

away or sabotage it in some way."

When you recognize you keep hitting a roadblock in your dating life, "this is a sign that you are not pursuing love from a place of fulfillment but rather a place of abandoning your own needs" she said.

Kuykendall, who works online with couples and individuals, offered a few tactics based in part on his dating experience:

### Scale back expectations

"Sometimes you get stuck on the end result and worrying about whether it's a successful date or not and put too much pressure on yourself," Kuykendall said. "In dating, it's easy to pressure the other person, too – you expect them to conform to your desires and what you want from a girlfriend or boyfriend."

Kuykendall said he tells himself, "Well, maybe I will make a friend," ahead of a date.

### Make the first date low stakes

One of Kuykendall's heart-felt issues is daters who make the first get-together an extravagant affair.

"I've had at least two women do this, where I spent \$100 or more for an overly elaborate first date and we were both nervous. I was too reserved to say anything about the plans ahead of time, but I felt taken advantage of."

He said some people feel they're "setting a standard" with an expensive first date. Instead, it's unnecessary pressure on both people.

To break out of a pattern of awkward first encounters, Kuykendall said to think back to high school dates, where you didn't spend much and went out

for something like burgers.

### Give yourself permission to bail

If you encounter unkind people – even those who were sweet on your first couple of dates – allow yourself to move beyond dating them, Kuykendall said.

"In all fairness, they may be as jaded as you feel or have been doggedly pursuing dating and feel worn out. But if they are unkind, they are not ready to date – or not ready to date you."

### Don't agonize over what went wrong

This is crucial when you want to avoid getting stuck in a negative dating cycle, Kuykendall said. "If you liked the person but they didn't respond, try not to take it personally. Instead of asking yourself over and over, 'What did I do?' and thinking that person is upset with something you said or did or didn't do, recognize that they're upset because of what they're going through. It has nothing to do with you."

No longer focusing on a person whose actions are beyond your control will help you concentrate on yourself, Lakhi said. "It also requires mourning the fairy tale that the right person will make us happy. That idea helps to create the rut in the first place. There is no perfect person out there."

You'll be able to move forward when you can "look at yourself in the mirror and know you can find someone who checks a lot of your boxes and yet realize every relationship will involve times when you feel disconnected and alone or a lack of attraction," Lakhi said. "It is in these moments that our past no longer has to define us. These ruts can lead to remarkable new beginnings."

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AGING IN ATLANTA

HEALTH

5 steps to take to manage hypertension

High blood pressure often helped by diet, exercise, medication.

By Elizabeth Crumbly  
For the AJC

Hypertension: We’re talking high blood pressure. The word may bring on stress when it’s part of a diagnosis, but some education and proactive shifts can allow those experiencing it to live healthier.

Two local doctors have some advice for that process, and it might help to think of it in a series of steps.

Step 1: Diagnosis

First, simply getting a diagnosis is key. Self-detection of symptoms may be elusive, so seeing a general practitioner yearly is important.

“The one thing that they should certainly do is go at least annually for their checkup – make sure they get their numbers tested – have an idea of where they are with blood pressure and also maybe cholesterol and other routine labs,” Dr. Sanjay Lall, a Georgia Heart Institute cardiologist, told the AJC.

He advises patients to watch for shortness of breath, headaches and nosebleeds. Some symptoms, such as chest pain, are direr and require urgent medical attention at an emergency room, he said.

A diagnosis can be discouraging or overwhelming, but it’s important to swing away from self-blame toward self-understanding and help, according to Dr. Tom Wells, an internist with Hawthorne Medical at Oconee Health Campus.

“It’s not always, ‘Hey, what did I do to myself?’ Sometimes, it’s ‘What did I get?’ And so don’t be frustrated by that,” he said.



When it comes to diet, Dr. Tom Wells recommends focusing on fruits and vegetables, leaner meats and lowering salt intake. Eating plans like the DASH diet or the Mediterranean diet can be a good framework. ADOBESTOCK



“Congratulate patients and applaud them for the efforts they’re making... losing weight and finding the time to take a walk or go to the gym are things that are difficult because there are a billion other things pulling at us every day.”

Dr. Tom Wells, an internist with Hawthorne Medical

Step 2: Education and participation

For Wells and Lall, taking care of hypertension means patient education and participation, and both doctors advise patients to learn to take their own blood pressure.

Patients should make sure they’re seated with back and foot support and that they’re using an appropriate-sized cuff, Wells said, and taking the measurement at rest is key.

“Don’t run in from doing your gardening and then try to take your blood pressure,” he said.

At-home checks may be more representative of a

person’s overall condition.

“Sometimes, folks go to the doctor’s office, their blood pressure may be high from the anxiety of the visit. They may check it at home, and it may be better, so it’s a good way to kind of keep track of your health and be more proactive about it,” Lall said.

**Step 3: A plan**

Once a baseline emerges, a provider can come up with a treatment plan that takes into account other health conditions. The overall goal is usually decreased blood pressure, but the ideal number will vary depending on a patient’s health background, Wells said.

“I think once you’re set-

ting goals for treatment that some patients – it may not be appropriate to get them down as low as you would other patients because they do stand a risk of adverse reactions (to some medications),” he said.

Sometimes meeting goals involves medication. In that case, it’s essential to stick to the prescribed regimen, Wells said, adding that medications can control high blood pressure, but they’re not a cure. Patients experiencing issues with a medication should consult with their doctor before simply stopping it, he said. Establishing 90-day refills, he said, can go a long way toward convenience.

“A lot of insurances will cover that, and therefore, you’re not having to go to the pharmacy every month, and you’re more likely not to miss your medication doses,” he said.

Step 4: Making lasting changes

Sometimes, changes in diet and exercise are enough to bring blood pressure down. Weight loss, Lall said, can occasionally eliminate the need for medicine.

“There are certain things that people can do from a diet and lifestyle perspective that would certainly impact their need to stay on medicine,” he said.

When it comes to diet, Wells recommends focusing on fruits and vegetables, leaner meats and lowering salt intake. Eating plans like the DASH diet or the Mediterranean diet can be a good framework.

Lowering alcohol intake, stress and upping sleep and exercise are also key, Wells said.

For seniors who can handle it, he recommends 30 minutes of light-but-brisk exercise five days a week. People who can manage just 10 minutes should do that, he said.

“We’re not talking about going out and running marathons,” he said. “We’re talking about a good, brisk walk or even some of the articles talk about gardening.”

Step 5: Maintaining

Although significant weight loss and lifestyle changes can sometimes eliminate a need for medication, hypertension will still be a reality.

“I still think they have hypertension, but they’ve done the right things to control it with lifestyle and behavioral modification,” Wells said. “It’s more of a life-



“The one thing that they should certainly do is go at least annually for their checkup – make sure they get their numbers tested – have an idea of where they are with blood pressure and also maybe cholesterol and other routine labs.”

Dr. Sanjay Lall, cardiologist at Georgia Heart Institute

time issue that if you don’t continue to take care of it, it’s going to come back, or it’s going to be out of control.”

And it’s important, he said, for providers to recognize patients’ efforts in this area.

“So I think that’s something to emphasize ... and really congratulate patients and applaud them for the efforts they’re making,” he said. “As we all know, losing weight and finding the time to take a walk or go to the gym are things that are difficult because there are a billion other things pulling at us every day.”

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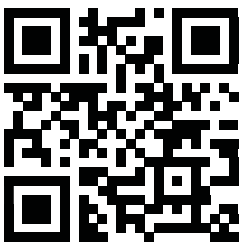
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AGING IN ATLANTA

TRAVEL

# Explore the Colorado mountains hiking trails

Boulder also offers dining, shopping, other attractions.

By Patricia Neligan Barley  
For the AJC

Boulder, Colorado, is the place to be if you're seeking exceptional scenery, mouth-watering food, fun drinks, shopping, and several outdoor options.

When planning getaways with my Californian friend, Amy, finding an easily-accessible midpoint between our time zones can often feel daunting. Thankfully, with Denver's many nonstop flights, we have often frequented the Mile High City.

This year we wanted to try something different. We set our sights on Boulder, which is reachable in less than an hour from the airport. Boulder offers a more intimate experience – it may sometimes be referred to as a hippie college town, which may be accurate. However, we found it to be a charming town full of energy, great food, beautiful shops, and remarkably well-maintained and organized hikes.

On our first afternoon in Boulder, we sat along Pearl Street, sipping an Affogato and listening to a local artist strum some songs. Pearl Street is the central hub of the historic downtown area, with a few other blocks filled with live music, historical tours, and unique shops.

Amy and I roamed around Pearl Street quite a bit throughout our three-day trip, and the architecture stood out the most. The housing around downtown Boulder is like eye candy. Even the art deco courthouse, built in 1933, was full of activity on a late-April weekend. Families were lunching on the grounds, with several vendors peddling their unique wares.

After living in California in our 20s and 30s, Amy and I continued enjoying hiking, so Boulder checked all of our boxes for a long weekend with plenty of outdoor adventures. The city boasts about 45,000 acres of protected, unspoiled land with access to over 300 miles of bike trails.

Accessibility is a key feature of Boulder's attractions. There are 30 trails suitable for people using mobility aids – including wheelchairs, walkers and scooters. There are also programs like experiential wheelchair hikes and adaptive bike rides that make Denver's landscape an experience for all.

Amy and I chose to rent a car for our three-day weekend, but we could have gotten by without it. Boulder visitors can take a shuttle from the airport, book a place near the central town, and walk to many attractions. We booked the car, hoping to visit Estes Park in Rocky Mountain National Park, about an hour northwest of Boulder. But with plenty to do even closer to our weekend home, we didn't make it there on this trip.

In retrospect, we could have used shuttles that run to all the major trailheads, including Estes Park. They vary depending on the season and day of the week, so I recommend researching this no-cost travel option when planning your Boulder adventures.

As an avid hiker who has navigated several unmarked trails over the years, I appreciated how organized the courses were. The City of Boulder's interactive trail map offers information about hikes, including length and difficulty.

When coming from a sea-level town, remember the elevation will wind you quickly. I load up on water as soon as I get into a town with a higher elevation than my body is used to, which seems to keep altitude sickness at bay.

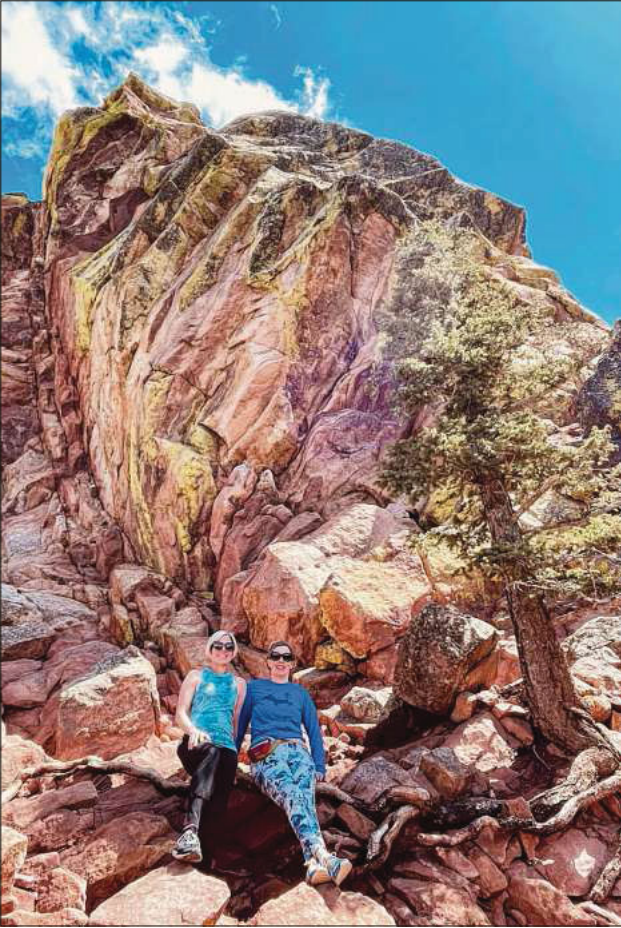
We started at Chautauqua Park, about a five-minute drive from town, and were considering hiking the Chautauqua Loop when a few fellow hikers encouraged us to



The First and Second Flatirons from a view at the top of the hike. COURTESY PHOTOS



The writer, Patricia Neligan Barley, and Amy Romberger are sipping on signature cocktails at The Kitchen, an American Bistro & Bar on Pearl Street.



Patricia Neligan Barley (right) and Amy Romberger make a stop while continuing their hike.

go for a more rigorous route. After grabbing a map from the Chautauqua Ranger Cottage, we decided to go for it.

The jagged rocks in this area are called the Flatirons, so we decided to hike past the First and Second Flatirons and continued looping around to see the Rocky Mountains on the other side. Their recommendation did not disappoint. The Flatirons are an iconic symbol of Boulder that you will see displayed on various souvenirs. Pioneer women helped to name these rocks, saying they thought they looked like flat metal irons used to iron clothes.

The most tedious part was scrambling up the boulder field, navigating several dif-

ferent switchbacks. Coming back down over rocks was even more of a challenge, so we often stopped to sip water, catch our breath and, most importantly, take photos of the fantastic scenery. We stopped so frequently for pictures that we were nearly late for our spa appointments at St. Julien.

If a massage or facial is in your travel budget, the St. Julien experience is highly recommended. It was complete with robes, cucumbers in your water, and macarons to nibble on while you take a break between the steam room, pool, or sauna. The experience was much needed after our exhausting, yet rewarding, hiking adventure.



Boulder Falls is sometimes referred to as the "Yosemite of Boulder Canyon."



The art deco-style Boulder County Courthouse was built in 1933.

By our final night in town, there were still so many different restaurants and bars that we still needed to check out, so we decided to visit a few and just get a drink and appetizer at each place. The

advantage of being a party of two is that we could snag seats at the bar, or have a very short wait for a table.

Rosetta Hall is a must-see. It consists of eight restaurants of varying specialties, and

two bars – one on the rooftop with mountain views, and one in the main hall. We had a delicious craft cocktail and enjoyed sitting in the stylish, well-decorated space. At Japango, we had excellent sushi and some fun and fancy drinks.

On the walk back to our hotel, the last stop was a speakeasy, License No. 1, in the basement of Hotel Boulderado and a block away from Pearl Street Mall. The hotel opened in 1909 in the early era of prohibition. Sixty years later, the bar was issued one of the first legal licenses to serve hard liquor in a restaurant, hence the name.

Before heading to the airport, we took a drive up to Boulder Falls per the recommendation of a local store clerk. We didn't have time to hike, but this was worth the 15-minute drive west of downtown. The falls were a pleasant surprise, being so close to the road.

I find that the sign of a great trip is feeling like you want to return. Amy and I parted ways already thinking ahead to our adventures saved for next time, which will include renting bikes!



AGING IN ATLANTA

SHOPPING

# Ways to shop smart on a fixed income

Strategic planning can stretch dollars, avoid overspending.

By Lesly Gregory | For the AJC

Figuring out how to effectively budget for those everyday expenses can be a challenge.

This is true at any stage of life, but it can become much more precise when on a fixed income.

For most, it's about finding a balance between needs and wants to live comfortably while having the ability to save a little for those special occasions.

"Tracking your spending is important of any budget, but it's especially important if you're living on a fixed income to make sure you don't overspend in one area and end up having to do without," Michelle Lam-bright Black, founder of creditwriter.com told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

### Create a budget

Creating a solid budget is often about assigning percentages to certain areas of spending.

"Most experts recommend that individuals spend approximately 10-15% of their monthly budget on food, both dining out and from the grocery," Judy Herbst, executive director of Savvy Ladies, and Julia S. Lilly, MBA, CFP, ABFP, a Savvy Ladies help-line volunteer, told the AJC in a joint email.

Savvy Ladies is a nonprofit that gives women the education tools and personalized financial guidance they need to enhance their financial well-being while reducing facial anxiety.

Approach budgeting with patience as this is the first step to shopping smart. Next, you can decide on what particular shopping strategies



Having a list for grocery shopping can help curb overspending on items that are not needed. Also using a coupon app to keep a store's sales and coupons organized can help in cutting your grocery shopping costs. ADOBE STOCK

will work best for you.

"Smart shopping habits have the potential to stretch your dollars farther," Black said.

### Buy in bulk sometimes

When looking at nonperishable items, Herbst and Lilly suggest heading to your nearest bulk store. While this strategy requires a little extra planning, it's a great way to get a better deal.

"It can be very cost-effective to stock up on canned foods, dry bulk goods, and toiletries from the big box stores," Herbst and Lilly said.

Black also suggests heading to a discount grocery store to check prices.

"Discount grocery stores can offer big savings on produce and nonbrand name products," Black said.

### Have a list

Before heading to any store, though, it's important to make a list.

"Plan for your purchases and avoid impulse buying as

often as possible," Herbst and Lilly said.

### Match the list to coupons

Having a list also makes it easier to use coupons. Align what you need with the brands offering coupons to help plan your spending.

"Avoid the trap of buying unnecessary items due to the presence of a coupon. A good deal doesn't necessarily mean you should buy something you aren't in the market for," Herbst and Lilly said.

### Digital savings

Pamela, from Toco Hills, who's in her 60s, uses a grocery store app to keep coupons close at hand.

The app notifies her when new coupons are available, and tracks what she buys, so these coupons are targeted to her. She also utilizes the QR codes on the shelves in the store that link back to the digital coupons for even more savings.

"The app is something you

have to explore and get comfortable with, and if you're not tech savvy, it's worthwhile to ask a friend or family member who uses it already to do a little training with you," Pamela told the AJC.

### Shopping tricks

When coupons aren't available, there are other tricks that can save you money and help you avoid food waste.

"Ask the fish and meat people to cut you a piece of whatever you want to the size you'll eat. Avoid buying prepackaged meat or fish fillets which typically feed a family of four," Herbst and Lilly said.

"If you're eating for just one or two, buying that portion size can keep the price way down."

You can also keep an eye out for when certain house items, like laundry detergent, go on sale even if you don't need that item right away. Avoiding having to pay full price for any necessary item – that won't go bad – is yet another great way to save.

FUN AT 55 KEEP KIDS ENTERTAINED

# 6 activities to stay busy in September

By Lesly Gregory | For the AJC

Kids are back to school, but there is still plenty to do around Atlanta in September. Whether you're looking for one more special event to bring your grandkids to, or simply want to venture out and sample the local culture, these events will have you covered.

ENTERTAIN THE GRANDKIDS

### Movies on the Square

This complimentary outdoor event puts family-favorite movies up on the jumbo screen. Pending good weather, set out chairs and blankets to enjoy the movie. Seating is first come, and no outside food or beverage is permitted. However, takeout is available from the onsite restaurant. This is a recurring event throughout the late spring and early fall. This month's movie is "Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs."

■ 7-9 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 14. Free admission. The Plaza at Colony Square, 1197 Peachtree St. NE, Atlanta. 404-879-2250. colonysquare.com/events/movies-on-the-square

### Disney on Ice

As part of the Disney100 celebration, this performance features the most Disney characters on ice in a single show ever.

Raya, Elsa, Anna, Tiana, Aladdin and more join Mickey Mouse and his crew on the ice as they sing and skate their way through familiar stories full of dreams coming true. There's even an ice escape, stunts, special effects and acrobatics to complement the figure skating.

■ Showtimes vary by date, with multiple shows on certain days. Wednesday, Sept. 20-Sunday, Sept. 23. Tickets start at \$20. State Farm Arena, 1 State Farm Drive, Atlanta. 404-878-3000. statefarmarena.com/events/detail/disney-on-ice-fall-2023



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### Roswell Wine Festival

Spend Sunday sampling over 150 different wines as you walk down Canton Street. Restaurants along and around the strip will also be out with food to try. For those who attend Saturday's VIP event or purchase a VIP ticket for Sunday, you'll have access to the VIP tent. Here you can try over 35 premium wines and sample extra bites from local eateries. Local bands will accompany this event with live music, and you'll also walk away with a commemorative glass.

■ 5-8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 30, and 2-5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 1. \$55 for Sunday wine seminar, \$60 for general admission in advance and \$110 for VIP tickets. Saturday is a VIP-only event, and VIP ticket holders can enter an hour early on Sunday. Attendees must be at least 21. Historic Roswell, along Canton Street, Roswell. roswellwinefestival.com



### Duluth Fall Festival

It's a packed schedule at the Duluth Fall Festival. This community celebration includes opening ceremonies, a parade, a 5K qualifier for the Peachtree Road Race and two stages of performers. There are games, rides and a carnival alongside over 375 booths, food vendors and other entertainment. For those who want to take a piece of the festival home with them, there are custom shirts, memorabilia and an auction for festival decorations on the last day.

■ 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 30, and 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 1. Free admission. Downtown Duluth, 3142 Hill St. NW, Duluth. 1-855-385-8841. duluthfallfestival.org



### Atlanta Food & Wine Festival

Take a culinary trip around the South with 50 different tasting stations that include food and drinks. Meet local chefs and check out special events, demos and entertainment. You can vote in the mixologist competition, dance to live music and even celebrate tailgating cuisine, as the final day culminates with a food and sports theme.

■ 7-10 p.m. Friday, Sept. 22; 4-8 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 23; and 1-5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 24. \$125 per day for general admission or \$300 for general admission, all-weekend pass. VIP tickets are also available. Attendees must be at least 21. Historic Fourth Ward Park, 680 Dallas St. NE, Atlanta. atfoodandwinefestival.com/tasting-tents

EXPLORE AN ATLANTA COMMUNITY

### Peachtree Corners Festival

For a local event that appeals to the whole family, check out the Peachtree Corners Festival. Over a single weekend, you can check out two classic car shows, an arts and crafts fair, and a variety of artists performing on the musical stage. There's also a kids' area with bubbles, sand art, face painting and more. This event is in its 12th year and will also feature food and drinks.

■ Begins 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 23, and begins noon Sunday, Sept. 24. Free admission and free parking. Peachtree Corners Town Green, 5140 Town Center Blvd., Peachtree Corners. peachtreecornersfestival.com

ENTERTAINMENT

# 5 activities to embrace your inner child

By Arielle Robinson | for the AJC

In and around Atlanta, there's no shortage of fun events for you to enjoy

A "Black Panther" concert, a Jurassic World exhibition, and an alpaca farm are just a few places you can go that may help you reconnect to your inner child.

Below are several choices to consider.

### Return to Wakanda with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

From Sept. 15 to 17, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra will perform the music from Marvel's "Black Panther" live as you watch the movie inside Atlanta Symphony Hall.

Anthony Parnter will be conducting. He has headed the Hollywood Studio Symphony for movies and shows like "Star Wars: The Mandalorian," "Fargo," and "American Dad," among several other well-known movies and shows.

Tickets start at \$79.50. Call 404-733-4800 for more information.

### Explore culture with JapanFest

Make Japanese candy, learn the art of karate, participate in pottery, listen to Japanese fusion music, and more at JapanFest, occurring Sept. 16-Sep. 17.

This festival allows you to learn about Japanese culture and traditions in a hands-on and creative way. It will also feature live performances, Japanese food, and the chance to see the Omikoshi ceremony.

It will be at the Gas Convention Center in Duluth. Tickets are \$20 at the door. Call 404-842-0736 for more information.

### 'Jurassic World' exhibition

Inspired by the iconic movie, Fever's "Jurassic



Relive scenes from Marvel's "Black Panther" from Sept. 15 to 17 as the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra will perform the music from the movie live. MARVEL STUDIOS VIA AP



Lost Mountain Alpaca Ranch, a scenic spot in Powder Springs where you can have a 60-minute alpaca experience with these beautiful animals.

World: The Exhibition" at Pullman Yards is a one-of-a-kind experience.

You can walk among giant, menacing dinosaurs such as the T-Rex and Brachiosaurus behind the gates of Jurassic World. The event is also wheelchair accessible, and people of all ages are encouraged to join in on the expedition.

There are several opportunities to catch the exhibition this month, and Fever has extended the exhibition through Nov. 12 due to such popular demand.

Adults over 65, children 3-15, and student tickets start at \$26.99. Tickets start at \$31.99 for people ages 16



Matsuriza Taiko Drummers performs on the Coca Cola Stage during the JapanFest at the Infinite Energy Center Sunday, September 22, 2019. STEVE SCHAEFER / SPECIAL TO THE AJC

and up. Children under 3 get free admission. Contact Pullman Yards at pullmanyards.com/contact for more information.

### Hang out with some alpacas

Yes, really. Just under 25 miles west of Atlanta is Lost Mountain Alpaca Ranch, a scenic spot in Powder Springs where you can have a 60-minute alpaca experience.

Take a guided tour through the barn and learn some history and facts about the fuzzy animals. Experiences start at \$60 for up to four guests. Contact the ranch at 404-360-6030 or email at lostmountainalpacaranch@gmail.com.





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