Emory Cross Country Running Trails Official Guide

This official Emory trail guide is intended for both current and prospective Emory XC/TF Eagles. The running options in Atlanta may seem limitless, but hopefully this guide serves as an overview of what is out there as well as a starting point for finding the perfect spot to get those miles in. All runs that are listed here were found by a curious Eagle flying slightly farther out from the nest, so we encourage further exploration as more and more trails are built and blazed.

Lullwater Preserve

Commonly referred to as “Lull,” Lullwater is located on Emory’s campus. Chances are that most of your runs will go through Lullwater at some point. Emory XC/TF often does workouts in “Lull” on the Lake Loop section, a slightly less than a mile loop around Lullwater Lake. When combined with Hahn Woods, an out and back trail along the South Fork of Peachtree Creek, you can put together a nice 5-7 miles of soft surface. Lullwater also has a few hill loops which we will utilize for workouts.

Thompson Park

Thompson Park is a great, albeit a tad hilly, addition to the Hahn Woods trail in Lullwater. If you are looking to go 8+ miles and don’t want to do too many Lake Loops, this is the spot to add on. This park has single track trails and often lots of dogs.
“Boardwalk”

Boardwalk is the run that we do that has the most possible permutations and combinations. Officially known as the PATH Foundation South Peachtree Creek Trail, this bike path like trail accessible via Lullwater (or a sneaky side entrance shortcut via Clarimont Campus), connects Emory’s Campus with Medlock Park and, further out, Clyde Shepherd Park. Large portions of the North and South Forks, what we refer to as “New Boardwalk” and “Old Boardwalk” respectively, are raised wood boardwalks, providing some nice views of the creek and a softer surface on the legs. Boardwalk is great for runs as short as 6 to as long as 10-12.

Clyde Shepherd

Previously only accessible by a 10+ mile run, the new section of the South Peachtree Creek Trail, referred to as “New, Old Boardwalk,” makes this park much more available for an 8-9 mile run. To get to Clyde Shepherd Park, you first run to Medlock Park (which has bathrooms and a water fountain!), and continue through the neighborhood for about a mile. Clyde Shepherd has a few different trails, the most popular of which is the loop around the outside. All the trails are soft surface dirt trails or a raised boardwalk.
Lower Fields

Emory’s Intramural Athletic Fields, located on campus about .75 miles from the Woodruff PE Center, is a great shakeout spot. A full lap around the fields measures out to around 600 meters of flat grass. Lower Fields is also frequently used for track workout warmups and cooldowns and can be a great spot to add on to a longer run for a few extra miles.

“Vultureville”

How Daniel Johnson Nature Preserve got this name is unclear. Nonetheless, this run is a good option if you are looking to switch things up from Lullwater/Boardwalk. Located just off of Johnson Road on a side street that no one ever remembers the name of, “Vultureville” is a nice dirt trail loop of a little less than a mile. “Vultureville,” at which you must run at least two laps as tradition dictates, is a 6-mile run on its own, but to reach Vultureville you must run through Lower Fields. This means that you can combo with Lower Fields or nearby Zonolite Park to get some more mileage. Side note: There are often lots of dogs in this park.

Morningside Nature Preserve

Affectionately known as “The Cyst” by the first brave Eagles that found it, this rather large park is located Northwest of campus, accessible by Johnson Road to Lenox Road. Although it is a bit hilly to reach the park, once inside the trail loops are well worth it. Great for longer runs of 8+, “The Cyst” is the perfect midweek change of pace.
Linear Park / Deepdene Park

Linear Park, designed by Fredrick Olmsted, of NYC Central Park fame, is a park that follows alongside Ponce de Leon Avenue. Great for 6-9 mile runs, you can run along the grass or the asphalt trails to reach The Frazier Center Nature Loop (1 mile) and Deepdene Park, which has about 2 miles of beautiful trails alongside a creek.

The Beltline

The Beltline is so much more than a great running trail. Atlanta’s infrastructure darling, the Atlanta Beltline Project has reclaimed old railroad corridors that circle the downtown area of the city and turned them into corridors of mobility and urban development. If you love the feel of running through the city, this is the spot for you. After following the Freedom Trail just past the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, you are faced with the monumental decision to run “Beltline Left” or “Beltline Right.” No, these are not official designations, but they are the ones you will use. Beltline Left takes you through Inman Park, past Krog Street Market, through the famous Krog Street Tunnel, and on towards Reynoldstown. Beltline Right will take you towards Ponce City Market and on to Piedmont Park. A team favorite place to run, Beltline is great for people watching and the exhilarating feeling of flying by NARPs. The one downs side of The Beltline is that it is almost all pavement or concrete.
Piedmont Park

Piedmont Park, sometimes referred to as “The Central Park of Atlanta,” is one of the city’s treasures. Nested in Midtown Atlanta, the park spans 185 acres and has a spectacular view of the skyline. You can find miles and miles of trails within the park itself, as well as easy access to the Beltline. We primarily go to Piedmont Park to use the active oval, a slightly more than 800 meters crushed gravel loop installed by the Atlanta Track Club for the city’s runners. The Active Oval is one of the best spots in the city to do workouts, and we will use it often.

Kennesaw

Kennesaw National Battlefield Monument is the staple long run spot for Emory XC/TF. With over 30 miles of dirt trails through the rolling hills of Marietta, Kennesaw is one of the premier venues for getting in some big miles. You will find yourself here many a Sunday morning after only a 45-minute van ride. The main run options are the Kolb Farm loop at 6 miles, Visitor’s Center (which has bathrooms and water) at 11 miles, and Visitor’s Center plus the add on loop for up to 15 miles. For the daring, you can run up the Kennesaw Mountain itself for an incredible view of the city in the distance.

Chattahoochee River

“The Hooch,” as we call it, is a multi-purpose venue for our team. We come here for both workouts and long runs. For workouts, we lap the marked two-mile gravel loop, often doing tempos or 2-mile repeats. For long runs, you can access the back trails, which are mostly single-track trails that can get you up to 15 miles, or you can run “Columns,” our nickname for the out and back run along Columns Drive. The Hooch is only a 20-30 minute drive from campus (assuming light traffic).
Cochran Mill

Cochran Mill is a new long-run spot for our team. Located past the airport, this run traces the gorgeous dirt roads of southern Fulton County. This is best for those running 15+, as the best dirt roads are only accessible via a 15-mile loop. There are options for any distance along an out and back trail, with a 13-mile lollipop run on the end. Getting to Cochran Mill takes about 50 minutes, but you cannot beat the idyllic countryside and the quiet dirt roads with views of cows grazing.

Special Treats Section:

During school breaks such as Fall Break or Early Return in the winter, we will take the vans and go run somewhere different for a change of pace. These runs are often accompanied by team trips to a restaurant or other fun team activity.

Red Top Mountain

Red Top Mountain’s trails wind along the shore of Lake Allatoona. This scenic run is nice and flat and has an amazing 7-mile loop. Best part of going to Red Top Mtn, in the summer at least, is the lake swim at the end.
Stone Mountain

When most Atlantans think of Stone Mountain they think about its history or sunrise hikes. Fun fact: it is also the location where B.o.B. took an infamous selfie captioned, “I don’t see any curves... The Earth is flat y’all!” In all seriousness, Stone Mountain has some awesome trails that circle the mountain and the adjacent lake.

Sweetwater Creek

Sweetwater Creek is a well-known spot for day hikes in Atlanta, and for good reason. The trails run along gorgeous Sweetwater Creek and in the nearby rolling hills.
Westside Park at Bellwood Quarry

Also known as “Westside Reservoir Park,” this venue is still under construction and is set to open in 2019! The park currently has several green spaces and trails, but is undergoing a huge expansion project (over $30 million in efforts to renovate the space). We’re excited about the grand opening in the near future as it will be Atlanta’s largest greenspace; plans are set to double the size of Piedmont Park. In the meantime, plenty of film sets have used the fields for filming including: *The Walking Dead, The Vampire Diaries, Mockingjay Part 1, The Fundamentals of Caring*, and *Stranger Things*. 