

# Awesome

By Kathleen Walls  
Managing Editor/  
American Roads & Global Highways

**A**lpharetta is the perfect spot for a girlfriend getaway. It's in Fulton County just north of Atlanta where you can experience the best of middle Georgia without the traffic and congestion. This is a natural fit for you if you love good food, comfortable lodging, entertainment, lots of shopping, and a touch of nature.

A day in Alpharetta is a pampered treat. Breakfast at Bantam and Bidly is home-style Southern food perfected. Chef Shaun Doty has cooked at some of the most upscale restaurants in this country and Europe but when he opened Bantam and Bidly, he opted for the simple bistro fare he always loved. Co-owner and director of operations of Bantam and Bidly, Lance Gummere, keeps the day to day end running smoothly so service is always flawless. My choice is divided between the three egg scramble with a side of fresh fruit and the simple biscuits and gravy.

Nothing like a little shopping afterwards to start the day right. You can start with North Point Mall where you can find the only American Girl Boutique and Bistro in Georgia. If your inner child

wants to play, you can ride the carousel or the train in the mall. If you prefer serious shopping there is a store for any need. Some you may not have thought of like Build-A-Bear Workshop, where you can literally build your own furry friend. For beach lovers, there is a store that specializes in flip flops, Flip Flop Shops. While you are wading in the water with your new flip flops, you will need a hat to shade your face. You can find up any kind of hat at Hat Shack.

You can even improve your cooking skills with a cooking class at Sur La Table. They offer a huge variety of classes. The day I visited it was a Tour of Italy Cooking Class. Our chef, Nealey Dozier, went to culinary school in Los Angeles, California. As resident chef, she favors the Southern California style. She and her competent staff set us up with an apron and the utensils we would be using.

She made it such a fun experience. We got to hand crush the stewed tomatoes for the sauce, mix the egg, flour, cheese, and other ingredients for a different style of gnocchi. We chopped dried figs to add to our olives, capers, olive oil, vinegar and seasonings to create our tapenade to spread on our

brochette. For our salad we made an arugula, artichoke dish topped with our hand-made vinaigrette.

We topped our lunch off with a Panna Cotta that we created from yogurt, gelatin, lemon, cream, sugar, a real vanilla bean and a bit of lemon zest and seasoning. We all enjoyed that lunch more because we had made it ourselves.

If cooking is not your thing, you can head over to the El Felix where the dynamic duo, Chef Ford Fry and Chef Kevin Maxey, offer you genuine "Mex-Tex" menu. Their menu takes you back to the 1930s when Mexican cooks added Americanized elements to create a new style of food, Tex-Mex. Both chefs hail from Texas originally so this is a natural for them and a super treat for diners.

My tip for best choice is their weekday "Todos \$10.99" where you can choose any two from nachos, tacos, enchilada, salad or soup plus rice and beans. Of course, there are dozens of other interesting choices on the menu.

All that food calls for a bit of exercise. What better way to get it is along the Big Creek Greenway? We walked it but there is a partly free bike concession called

# Alpharetta



Biker on Big Creek Greenway

Zagster where you can get an app and enjoy the first three hours free then a low payment per hour



Three egg scramble at Bantam and Biddies

afterwards. The bikes can be picked up and dropped off at several spots throughout Alpharetta.

The greenway runs eight miles through Alpharetta and ties in with another trail down the line. We started at the YMCA and hiked a short ways. The trail is beautiful; there is a canopy of trees overhead, greenery and woods all around and many views of Big Creek. There are restrooms and call boxes along the route. The

nice thing is that it is about eight feet wide and completely paved so bikers, roller bladders, inline skaters, or even wheelchairs

can navigate with ease.

There is something new in Alpharetta called Avalon. It's a cross between a shopping, dining and entertainment venue and a chic town with more than 500,000 square feet of retail, a 12-screen all premium theater, homes and apartments and a full-service hotel currently under construction. Naturally, there is great shopping. I found pants and a blouse at one store at an 80% discount. It brought the price down to consignment level. But there is so

much more. Fashion meccas like Anthropologie that caters to the 30 to 40 age women and offers a personalized sort of chic and at the other end of the spectrum Free People caters to the twenty-something who creates her own fashion. She can schedule one-on-one appointments with a store stylist and emerge with an eclectic look. Want to set your own vintage-Bohemian look? Try JOHNNY WAS.

Sculpted squirrels are artfully arranged around the development to give a whimsical touch. As you enter you spot a large open space with a fountain, bocce court, swings, and a fire pit. This is Avalon's Living Room. To the front of the 86-acre development there are tons of restaurants and lounges with more coming. Venture deeper into the development to Regal Cinemas, there is an the indoor/outdoor Play

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Chef and her assistant prepare food at Sur La Table.

Area for youngsters under six where parents can relax while children enjoy the custom play area and a family lounge complete with a spot of nursing mothers. The playground has its own soft play squirrels in keeping with the theme of Avalon.

There are events with music and entertainment at different times during the year such as their Cinco de Mayo and Kentucky Derby events. Of course, many of their lounges and nightclubs have live music. In winter, Avalon opens their replica of Rockefeller Center outdoor ice skating rink.

A good choice for dinner is South Main Kitchen in Alpharetta's quaint downtown area. It's housed on a 1902 building with an open kitchen and bar area. The interior is created out of wood reclaimed from an old mill. The seating is rustic and has a "come on in, sit right down...." feel echoed by Alex, our waiter. The menu is very local and food driven.

Do not be surprised if a choice is not available. Since

everything is local, that happens. I was set for the Sea Scallops but had to go with second choice, Smoked Pork Chop. It was so good, I was glad it had worked that way. The fat juicy chop was served with pineapple chili sauce, farrotto, asparagus, carrot, pineapple salsa. South Main Kitchen has a nice bar selection of brews, wines and cocktails.

Smokejack's BBQ is another good choice if you are a barbeque lover. Co-owner Dave Filipowic bills his dishes as "barbeque plus." He has maintained much of the old-industrial feel for both the downstairs dining area and the upstairs blues bar. Smokejack's BBQ is housed in an 1847 building that was once a morgue. No wonder it has a ghost story. We could not find out the actual story but there is a ghost tour in Alpharetta if you are visiting in October.

Downtown is a wonderful place to just roam. There are historic marker signs telling the history of some of the buildings, many dating back

to the turn of the century.

If you are visiting on a weekend there is a good chance you can catch a concert in Verizon Amphitheater. They host shows like Luke Bryan, Zac Brown and Steve Miller Band with Peter Frampton just for starters.

For a great nights rest after all the day's activities, check into the Hampton Inn/Alpharetta-Roswell for a room close to all the fun activities. Sleep tight; there's more waiting for you tomorrow in Awesome Alpharetta



## If you go:

Welcome Center:

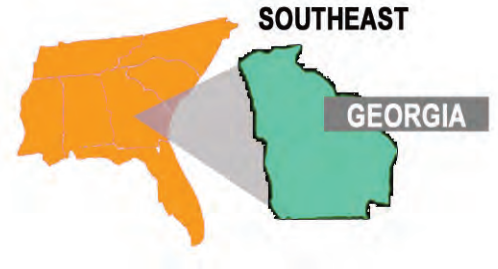
[www.awesomealpharetta.com/about-alpharetta/welcome-center](http://www.awesomealpharetta.com/about-alpharetta/welcome-center)

Bike share info: [www.awesomealpharetta.com/what-to-do/alpharettas-bike-share-program](http://www.awesomealpharetta.com/what-to-do/alpharettas-bike-share-program)

More things to do in Alpharetta:

<http://www.awesomealpharetta.com/what-to-do/Avalon>: [www.experienceavalon.com](http://www.experienceavalon.com)

North Point Mall: [www.northpointmall.com/en.html](http://www.northpointmall.com/en.html)



Photos by  
Katy Walls



Open Community Living Room at Avalon.