

coasting through the CANOPY





There's nothing like flying through a canopy of lush trees at 25 miles per hour. Though it's not quite free as the vine-swinging of Tarzan, ziplining is about as close as one can safely get to the rush of swinging from treetop to treetop. I've been ziplining through the jungles of Costa Rica and over snow at a ski resort in North Carolina, both exhilarating, but my recent visit to North Georgia Canopy Tours in Lula was the best ride overall. The course has its adrenaline-pumping thrill lines, where you're zooming along like a NASCAR driver with the wind in your face, the buzzing of the cable filling your ears, and the trees on the other side approaching way too fast.

But it also has slow and easy lines that allow you to coast along through the air and get lost in the lush surroundings. It's as if you're meant to be floating in the air 70 feet above ground, gentle breezes and patches of sunlight caressing your face, the whirring of the cable joining the chirping birds and rustling leaves in a melodic lullaby.

I was accompanied on my adventure by photographer Erin Gray, and Marietta couple Wes and Susan Breeding, all first-timers in ziplining. The tour is great for first-timers, as it's not too terribly high, the equipment is comfortable, and our guides were well adept at putting us all at ease.

Guide Ty Capistrant, an East Cobb resident, said about one person on each tour is afraid of heights, but they overcome their fear while on the tour.

"They are scared they are going to fall but once you get up there you realize it's sturdy," he said. "They start to feel more comfortable where they are in the trees after a couple of zips. I haven't had one person walking out regretting it. Everyone has loved it, some have even been ecstatic."

Ziplining was a natural choice for the adventurous Breedings, who have been ice-climbing and snowmobiling through Yellowstone, and are frequent marathon runners.

"This had more thrill to it because of speed," Wes said in comparison to other ventures. "I can't wait until the fall when leaves change and there is a little crispness in the air — I'll be back."

Far left, Tour guide Jenna Blakely zips in from one of the longest lines. The dual zip line allows zipliners to race across a pond. Left, Guide Marc Nicklien helps Marietta resident Wes Breeding hop onto the platform after the first official run. The tour includes two sky bridges. Retired fire chief and Marietta resident Wes Breeding and his wife Susan.





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"They have been helpful with social networking. They are promoting us and are on Facebook. A group is trying to get together and come up and see what's hatched from the idea," said Kirk.

Craig has visited the property a few times before the grand opening and plans to take the tour soon.

Two tours are offered:

The Sky Bridge Tour

2 hours
8 ziplines
2 sky bridges
2 nature walks
680-ft dual zip over two-acre pond

Adventure Tour

3 hours
12 ziplines (1 mile of cable)
longest zip of 850 ft
zips over the North Oconee River
2 sky bridges
3 nature walks
rappelling

"The visual should be quite spectacular," he said. "Kirk has done a fantastic job developing from the original plans. It's very well situated off of the highway near Lake Lanier Islands, it's close to Atlanta. When we did demographics on the area we saw that it's located within easy access of several million people. It's a good business concept and something that can appeal to just about anybody from ages 15 to 80 — anyone can go on it and enjoy the experience."

Though a successful business is the goal, Kirk and Leah receive the most pleasure in watching guests enjoy the experience.

"This has just been so much fun. The word [zipliners] use more often than anything is 'awesome.' A lot of people have a fear of heights and when they

finish this they feel a sense of accomplishment. Some are scared but adrenaline is flowing and excitement is in the air," said Kirk.

North Georgia Canopy Tours is in Lula, Ga., about 15 minutes north of Gainesville on I-985/GA Hwy 365
Information: 770 869 7272, www.northgeorgiacanopytours.com



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