

Nihilist Sour with rye, peach brandy, and cardamom tincture. The small-plates menu goes heavy on pig business, from house salamis to a dish called Head to Tail: fried pig's ears and tails with barbécue sauce. A safer bet might be the great Crunchy Gentleman sandwich—a croque-monsieur with a Southern accent.

Spend the night downtown at the **Ellis Hotel** (176 Peachtree St. NW; 866-841-8822), a year-old boutique operation that packs in modern amenities and design without overdoing the fabulousness. The historic building was previously the Wincoff, site of the nation's worst hotel fire in 1946. One assumes the \$28 million renovation brought it up to code!

Another Day: Shopping and More |

The next morning is the time to visit west midtown—a former warehouse district with a moody streetscape that is home to some of the city's best shopping. Begin with breakfast at the aptly named **Social House** (1663 Howell Mill Rd.; 404-350-1938), which has a friendly communal table. Fuel up: Blueberry pancakes come six to the order and, if you're game, a breakfast shrimp and grits comes topped with andouille sausage, two poached eggs, and a biscuit.

The most stylish shops on the west side sell home furnishings. **Retro Modern** (1168 Howell Mill Rd.; 404-724-0090), recently relocated from midtown, specializes in twentieth-century design classics and iconic mid-century styles in continuous production. **Verde Home** (1000

Cocktail from top: Organic fabrics at Verde Home, on the west side. Colorful furnishings at No Más! Cantina in Castleberry Hill. An installation at Whitespace Gallery.

Marietta St.; 678-927-9113) sells only furniture produced from sustainable forests with organic upholstery. Continue shopping at **Sid Mashburn** (1198 Howell Mill Rd.; 404-350-7135)—a men's

clothing store that makes the case for the retro-geek look and keeps tailors on call for anyone in the market for a bespoke suit. Just next door is **Star Provisions** (1198 Howell Mill Rd.; 404-365-0410), Atlanta's best gourmet market, where you can shop for gifts (chocolates, rare spices, gorgeous oil) or order a fantastic sandwich to eat on the patio.

The west side also manages to tuck away a number of significant galleries on its serpentine streets. The **Atlanta Contemporary Art Center** (535 Means St. NW; 404-688-2970) has spaces that can accommodate four large installations simultaneously. The greatest concentration of galleries lies in nearby **Castleberry Hill**—a transitional neighborhood that seems to have morphed from scuzz to SoHo overnight. Try to time your visit to the fourth Friday of the month for the **Castleberry Hill ArtStroll** (castleberryhill.org/artstroll.html), a night when all the galleries stay open and plastic cups of wine greet you at every turn. On other nights, you can step in for a margarita on the patio at **No Más! Cantina** (180 Walker St.; 404-574-5678), hidden behind a showroom crammed with colorful Mexican furnishings and accessories.

Then again, you may just want to stroll on down to **Maxim Prime** (1130 Marietta St. NW; 404-469-0700), a restaurant next to the CNN Center, and have a drink in its open-air rooftop lounge. The crazy quilt of Atlanta radiates out in every direction. After the last couple of days, it almost begins to make sense. ☐

