



Chatta



Fans and team members celebrate during a Chattanooga FC game at Finley Stadium in downtown Chattanooga.

SOCCER CITY PROFILE



Showing his true colors, a Chattanooga FC fan cheers on his beloved hometown team.

Chattanooga

THIS FAMILY-FRIENDLY TOWN IS HOME to a hotbed of passionate soccer fans who bring their all to the sport, either in person or hanging with other fans at a favorite pub.

For a city without a major — or even a minor — league professional soccer team, Chattanooga is a special case. Home to one of the best amateur teams in the country,

Chattanooga FC (CFC) of the National Premier Soccer League (NPSL), Tennessee's fifth largest city is positively, absolutely, bonkers for soccer.

The city's soccer fans turn out in droves for CFC games. The club leads the NPSL in average attendance (close to 5,000 per game) and single game attendance when a staggering 18,227 people saw Chattanooga

FC host the New York Cosmos B in the NPSL National Championship in 2015. The city has also hosted two U.S. National Team games — one men's and one women's — crowding close to 20,000 fans into Finley Stadium.

Peter Bresee, the vice president of the American Outlaws Chattanooga Chapter, says Chattanooga's soccer scene is very tight but



Members of the Chattahooligans, an independent supporters group for Chattanooga FC, come out in droves for home games.



growing, and he encourages more people to become part of the community — whether you live in Chattanooga, are moving to town, or just visiting. “There’s a very tight-knit soccer community now. A lot of my closest friends are now part of the soccer community and that wasn’t the case before CFC came to town,” Bresee says. “We are, at least right now, one big happy family.

“Chattanooga FC has really kind of turned on the spigot,” Bresee adds. “It’s a town that really shows up for CFC and it’s a town that really shows up for the men’s and women’s national teams.”

Bresee says the best place to be on a game day in Chattanooga is at the stadium,

tailgating. Typically, on a Saturday game day, close to 2,000 people set up to tailgate in spaces around Finley Stadium, usually beginning around 3 p.m. for a 7 p.m. kickoff. Some people, however, start tailgating as early as 11 a.m. “It’s an excuse to get out and drink some cold ones, have some good food, and it’s also really cool when other soccer fans come to town,” he says.

Bresee, who is also a member of the Chattanooga FC supporter group the Chattahooligans, says you don’t have to be a fan of the hometown club to tailgate before a game. All are welcome, regardless of the team a visitor is supporting. “It’s always fun

to hang out with like-minded people who are fans of the sport and let things fly and have a good time,” he says. “If you don’t tailgate with the Chattahooligans, you’ve only had half the experience.”

You can usually find the Chattahooligans tailgating in either the north side parking lot adjacent to Finley Stadium, or the First Tennessee Pavilion, also home to the seasonal Chattanooga Market. “Any Saturday game by 3 p.m. it’s rocking and rolling,” he says.

With only a handful of home games on the CFC NPSL schedule, chances are that a visitor to Chattanooga is going to be in town when the stadium is empty. Not to worry, however.

Chatt's got you covered. Bill Bolen, an avid CFC supporter and also a member of the Chattahooligans, says there are a handful of places around town where you can grab a cold one, a bite to eat, and satisfy your soccer craving. However, one place stands out above the rest – the Chattanooga Brewing Company.

“The home base of the Chattahooligans is the Chattanooga Brewing Company. They're the ones who started Chatthooligan Lager, a beer that they branded around us,” Bolen says.

Chattanooga Brewing Company, on Chestnut Street near Finley Stadium, unveiled this Irish style lager in 2010, touting it as the perfect beer to sip during a CFC game. Games are regularly playing on the restaurant's televisions and they livestream all Chattanooga FC away games as well.

Another place both Bolen and Bresee recommend is The Feed Co. Table & Tavern. Known locally as 'The Feed', this family restaurant and pub located on West Main Street is the hangout for the local Liverpool FC and Atlanta United fan base. Bolen also suggests The Honest Pint, an Irish-themed restaurant and pub frequented by Arsenal fans, and the Brewhaus Pub, a German-American gastropub, complete with schnitzel, sausages, and, of course, beer. They also open early on the weekends to show German Bundesliga games, a perk that is perfect for Bolen. “There is a group of us who are more German fans than other leagues,” he says. “We're in the minority of fans who think the German league is more fun to watch than the English leagues.”

Bresee also says most establishments in Chattanooga will turn a game on for you if you ask. “There are a lot of different places around town and, as long as they're open, they will gladly turn on a soccer game for you,” he says. “Soccer is a pretty well-accepted sport throughout town.”



A sample of the food offered up at a Chattanooga FC tailgate party.

Chattanooga has earned a reputation as a community that appreciates the outdoors, with an abundance of hiking, boating, and rock climbing opportunities to take advantage of if you're so inclined, soccer included. There are several places around town where a visitor can find a friendly pick-up game, so remember to bring your boots when you visit Chattanooga. Bolen and Bresee suggest Highland Park Commons on Union Avenue. Highland Park Commons is a modern soccer complex with an array of soccer fields and futsal fields. Pick-up games are scheduled at various times throughout the week for \$2 per player, with the exception of Tuesdays, which are free to the public. Bresee also recommends the fields at Redoubt Soccer Association and the fields at Camp Jordan in nearby East Ridge, Tennessee.

The bottom line: If you're a soccer fan and find yourself in Chattanooga, you're bound to have a good time. So, put on your favorite team jersey, head into town, and enjoy getting lost in soccer-crazy Chattanooga. 🐾

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WHAT TO BRING TO CAMP

You need to bring an adequate amount of soccer clothes (shorts, shirts, socks, indoor & outdoor shoes, and shin guards) for the week. Also bring a soccer ball, alarm clock, towels, twin sheets (80x36), blanket, pillow, personal toiletries, sunscreen, and casual clothes. Laundry facilities are available but campers are responsible for providing their own laundry detergent.