



FileAtlas

Manual for the macOS app

Find, compare, organize, back up, and export files.

For this version

This manual describes FileAtlas 1.10.0.

The app works locally on your Mac.

It has no external dependencies.

macOS 26.5+ | Swift 6 | GPLv3

Contents

1	Overview and navigation
2	Getting started: locations and scans
3	Finding, filtering, and viewing files
4	Tags, duplicates, snapshots, and folder comparison
5	Storage analysis and cleanup queue
6	Rules and smart collections
7	Backups and restoration
8	Export, settings, and updates
9	Practical workflows
10	Privacy, limitations, and help

In short

FileAtlas does not modify files while scanning, filtering, comparing, or exporting. Only the cleanup queue can move items to the macOS Trash, and only after explicit confirmation.

1. Overview and navigation

FileAtlas is a local file analysis and management app. Add folders as scan locations; FileAtlas scans them recursively and presents results as a table or compact list.

The main areas

Area	Purpose	Where
Left sidebar	Locations, subfolders, quick access, filter sets, smart collections, and the duplicate filter.	Left side of the main window.
Center	File list or table with name, type, status, tags, size, and modified date.	Table/list switcher at top right.
Right	Metadata and QuickLook preview for the selected file or folder.	Select an item in the center.
Toolbar	Search, scan, analysis, cleanup queue, settings, and export.	Top of the window.

Key controls

- Discord and GitHub buttons sit next to FileAtlas in the toolbar.
- The central search field searches the current index. Its scope control can include all indexed folders.
- The circular arrow scans the selected location again; while scanning, it becomes a cancel button.
- The gear opens Settings. The share icon opens Excel, PDF, and CSV export.

Tip

The sidebar is intentionally transparent. It is for navigation; select items in the center list to work with them.

2. Getting started: locations and scans

Where to find it: Sidebar -> Locations -> Add Folder...

When you choose a folder, FileAtlas stores a Security-Scoped Bookmark. It lets FileAtlas reopen the folder after a restart without asking for it again.

Run a scan

Step	Action
1	Click Add Folder... in the Locations section and choose a folder.
2	Select the location in the sidebar. It is scanned the first time you open it.
3	Wait for progress to finish; FileAtlas displays item count and indexed size.
4	Use Rescan in the toolbar later to update the index.

Subfolders in the sidebar

Use the disclosure arrow to expand a folder. Children are loaded only when opened. Clicking a subfolder makes it the active view. Right-click a subfolder to add it to Quick Access or back it up directly.

What scanning handles

- Folders are scanned recursively, and several locations can be managed at once.
- Bundles such as .app, .framework, and .xcodeproj are recognized as single items.
- Ignored folders are not scanned recursively, but appear as a single entry with their total size.
- Extension whitelist and ignored-folder rules apply on the next scan.

If results are missing

Settings -> Scan Settings -> Clear Cache removes only cached scan results, never files on disk. Scan the location again afterward.

3. Finding, filtering, and viewing files

Search

Where to find it: Toolbar -> Search field

- Search by name, for example Invoice or .dmg.
- Search by extension, for example dmg, pdf, or app.
- Filter by size with > 10 MB, < 500 KB, or similar expressions.
- Enable all-folder search in the search field to include all indexed locations.

Sort and change view

In table view, click a column heading to sort by Name, Type, Status, Tags, Size, or Modified date. Columns can be reordered. The segmented control in the toolbar switches between table and compact list view.

Filters and filter sets

Where to find it: Settings -> Filter, or Sidebar -> Filter Sets

Filter by modified date, duplicates, and tags. Saved filter sets store include and exclude lists for recurring searches. The sidebar lets you activate, edit, or delete a filter set.

Details and QuickLook

Select an item in the center list to show metadata on the right. App bundles also show bundle ID, version, and developer information. Press Space for QuickLook; supported files also show an inline preview.

Tags

Right-click a file or folder to apply predefined or custom color-coded tags. Tags can later be used as a filter.

4. Tags, duplicates, snapshots, and folder comparison

Find duplicates

Where to find it: Sidebar -> Duplicates -> Only duplicates

FileAtlas groups candidates by size and verifies matching candidates with SHA-256. Identical items show a gold badge. The Only duplicates switch limits the center list to verified duplicates.

Important

Matching names do not make files duplicates. The content hash is what verifies a duplicate.

Snapshots and changes

Where to find it: Settings -> Snapshots

- Later scans can display a summary of new, changed, and removed items.
- You can save, compare, and delete snapshots in Settings.
- A snapshot stores index information only. Deleting one never deletes files on your Mac.
- FileAtlas keeps up to ten snapshots in its history.

Compare two folders

Where to find it: Toolbar / comparison action -> Compare Folders

Choose Folder A and Folder B, then click Compare. Results show relative paths available in both folders, only in A, or only in B. Ignored-folder rules are applied here as well.

5. Storage analysis and cleanup queue

Storage Analysis

Where to find it: Toolbar -> bar chart icon -> Storage Analysis

Storage Analysis summarizes item count, indexed size, and duplicates. It lists the largest indexed items and file-type totals. Click an item to reveal it in Finder.

Cleanup Queue

Where to find it: File list -> right-click item -> Add to Cleanup Queue; then Toolbar -> trash icon

The queue is a review step. It does not move anything until you confirm the final action. You can remove individual entries or clear the entire queue.

Action	Effect
Add to Cleanup Queue	Marks an item in FileAtlas only; no file is moved.
Open queue	Review every marked item with path and size.
Move to Trash	After confirmation, items are moved to the macOS Trash.
Empty Queue	Removes FileAtlas queue entries only.

Safety principle
FileAtlas does not permanently delete items through this feature. They are moved to macOS Trash and can be restored according to macOS rules.

6. Rules and smart collections

Rules

Where to find it: Settings -> Rules -> New Rule...

Rules are checked after a completed scan. They can evaluate file type, minimum size, and file age and report matching items. Rules never move, hide, or delete files.

- Give the rule a name.
- Optionally define extensions, a minimum size, and an age condition.
- Enable the rule and inspect its report after the next scan.
- Use Run Rules Now to evaluate it against the current index immediately.

Smart Collections

Where to find it: Sidebar -> Smart Collections -> New Smart Collection..., or Settings -> Smart Collections

A smart collection is a saved dynamic view. It can filter by extension, minimum size, recently modified items, and duplicates. It changes no files and updates from the current index.

Example	Configuration
DMG archive	Extension: dmg
Large downloads	Minimum size, for example 1 GB
Recent files	Modified within the last 7 or 30 days
Duplicate review	Duplicates only enabled

7. Backups and restoration

FileAtlas deliberately separates configured backups for scan locations from quick backups of your current selection. A large scheduled full backup can therefore remain in place while small targeted archives are created quickly.

A. Configure a scan-location backup

Where to find it: Sidebar -> right-click a top-level location -> Backup Settings..., or Settings -> Backup -> Settings

Option	Meaning
Index only	Writes a JSON file list. Fast and small, but without file contents.
Full backup (ZIP)	Backs up the selected source recursively as a ZIP archive.
Both	Creates both index JSON and full backup.
Source	For a full backup, choose a folder or one file as the source.
Compress files	Compresses suitable files. Large already-compressed files are streamed for speed.
SHA-256 manifest	Writes a hash-manifest file next to the ZIP for later verification.
AES-256 password	Encrypts the ZIP. The password is stored in macOS Keychain. Use Keka, 7-Zip, or WinZip to open it; Finder does not support this encryption.
Schedule	Off, daily, or weekly. Due scheduled backups run when FileAtlas launches, only while it is running.

B. Back up files, multiple items, or a subfolder

Where to find it: Center file list -> select one or more items -> right-click -> Back Up Selected Items...

A selection backup creates one ZIP containing only the chosen sources. Multi-selection is supported. If a parent folder and one of its children are both selected, the child is not added twice.

Where to find it: Left sidebar -> right-click a subfolder -> Back Up This Folder...

The sheet lets you choose destination, compression, and an optional SHA-256 manifest. This quick backup does not change a configured full-backup source or schedule.

Restore and test

- Find the generated FileAtlas_Backup_....zip in the chosen destination.
- Double-click the ZIP in Finder to extract it.
- Copy only the needed file or folder from the extracted contents to its desired location.
- For a test, back up a small selection, extract it, and open a file.
- With a SHA-256 manifest enabled, compare original and extracted files by their hash values if needed.

Current behavior

FileAtlas creates backups and shows their progress in the lower banner. Restoration currently uses normal extraction in Finder or a suitable ZIP utility.

8. Export, settings, and updates

Export

Where to find it: Toolbar -> export icon, or Settings -> Export

Export the currently visible results as Excel (.xlsx), PDF, or CSV. Your active search, filters, and smart collection determine what is visible.

Settings

Where to find it: Toolbar -> gear icon

Section	What it contains
Appearance	Light, Dark, System; row height; real or fast generic file icons.
Language	Deutsch, English, or System. German is preferred automatically for the DACH region.
Scan Settings	Auto-scan on launch, rescan, and Clear Cache.
Ignored Folders	Names or folders to skip on the next scan.
Filter Sets / Filter	Saved filters, date, duplicate, and tag controls.
Rules / Smart Collections	Automatic reports and dynamic views.
Snapshots	Save, compare, and delete index snapshots.
Backup / Export	Configuration per scan location and the three export formats.
Info & Contact	App version, update check, and a link to report issues.

Updates

Settings -> Info & Contact can run a check for updates. FileAtlas contacts GitHub Releases only; it does not upload indexed data, backups, passwords, or filters.

9. Practical workflows

Find large files quickly

- 1. Scan the relevant location.
- 2. Open Storage Analysis and review the largest items.
- 3. Optionally search for > 1 GB.
- 4. Only after review, add items to the Cleanup Queue.

Organize DMG files

- 1. Create a Smart Collection with extension dmg.
- 2. Sort the collection by size or date.
- 3. Tag important images or back them up as a selection.

Back up before cleanup

- 1. Select affected files or a subfolder.
- 2. Right-click -> Back Up Selected Items... or Back Up This Folder...
- 3. Choose destination and optionally enable a hash manifest.
- 4. Test-extract the ZIP in Finder before cleanup.

Track project changes

- 1. Add and scan the project folder.
- 2. Save a snapshot.
- 3. Rescan after changes and review the change summary or compare the snapshot.

10. Privacy, limitations, and help

Local data and permissions

- Scan data, snapshots, filter sets, tags, and backup configuration are stored locally on your Mac.
- Security-Scoped Bookmarks keep the folder permissions you grant to FileAtlas.
- Passwords for encrypted backups are stored in macOS Keychain, never as plain text.
- The optional update check uses GitHub Releases only and sends no file or backup content.

Important limitations

Topic	Note
Encrypted ZIPs	Finder cannot open AES-256 ZIP files. Use Keka, 7-Zip, or WinZip.
Scheduled backups	They are not a background service. They run at FileAtlas launch when due.
Restoration	The app does not restore files itself yet. Extract the ZIP and copy files back.
Clear Cache	Removes cached index data only. Files on your Mac remain unchanged.
Trash	Cleanup moves items to Trash only after confirmation; permanent deletion follows macOS settings.

When something goes wrong

- If a folder is no longer accessible, add the location again or check its Finder permission.
- If results look stale, rescan the location; use Clear Cache first if necessary.
- If a ZIP has a problem, test a small selection without encryption and extract it in Finder.
- Report problems and suggestions through Settings -> Info & Contact -> GitHub.

End of manual

FileAtlas is a local tool. For cleanup and backup operations, testing first with a small selection keeps each step clear and predictable.

Beta releases

Published stable releases and beta releases are checked.

FileAtlas now detects newer published beta releases as well as stable releases. The version shown in a beta build includes its beta number, so a later beta or the final stable release can be compared correctly.

What this means

The update check now reads the published release list rather than GitHub's stable-only latest-release endpoint. It selects the highest version using stable-versus-beta ordering, so beta releases are offered when they are newer than the installed app.

Note

Existing copies of the app receive this behavior with the next beta or stable build.

First-Launch Help

When this view appears

When FileAtlas is opened for the first time without saved locations, recent locations, or indexed entries, it shows a friendly start screen. After a folder is added, or when content already exists, the normal three-column view appears instead.

First useful step

Choose **Add Folder...** to select a local folder. FileAtlas indexes that folder locally. Search, comparisons, backups, and the rest of the normal view are then available.

Open Manual opens the English edition of this manual in the browser.

Optional AI help

The ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude buttons first copy a general getting-started question with the public English manual link to the clipboard, then open only the selected website.

FileAtlas does not transfer files, local paths, catalog contents, health data, license data, credentials, or any other user data. Paste the question into the selected service yourself with **Cmd+V** and decide whether to send it.

FileAtlas Manual | First-launch help addendum

Interface Motion

FileAtlas uses subtle animation to make status changes and navigation easier to follow. It provides feedback without interrupting your work.

Where motion appears

Starting an index highlights the scan status. Entries, details and the sidebar respond smoothly to selection and navigation. Backup progress, storage analysis, snapshot comparison and folder comparison also use short transitions when their content changes.

Why it helps

Motion shows what has loaded, where a selection belongs and when a value has changed. Numbers in progress and analysis views update especially gently.

Reduce motion

Open Settings and choose Appearance. There you can turn on Reduce interface motion. FileAtlas also follows the macOS Reduce Motion accessibility setting. When either option is enabled, all content remains fully usable while non-essential motion is removed.

Motion Details

FileAtlas animations communicate the current state and remain intentionally brief. They never change data, scan contents or backup contents.

While scanning

Before entries are available, subtle loading rows appear. Found files are added to the list in small batches. The status also shows the current path and file count.

Navigation and filters

Subfolders, new locations and the active sidebar location respond smoothly. Filter, rule and collection chips snap in when added and disappear when removed. Duplicate paths in the detail panel can be expanded.

Backups

The status banner transitions between current item names. Cancelling displays a cleanup phase. After success it reports item count, created size and destination folder.

First launch

The start screen appears in stages. All service buttons lift slightly only on pointer hover. Reduce interface motion in Settings > Appearance removes these non-essential effects.

Apple Silicon Performance

FileAtlas uses the shared arm64 architecture of all Apple-silicon Macs. There is no separate version for individual chip generations.

Large scans

New results are presented in balanced batches. This keeps progress visible without burdening the interface with continuous sorting and copying.

Duplicates

Files are still grouped by size first. Only matching candidates are hashed. The number of concurrent hashing tasks follows available processor cores and remains bounded so storage stays responsive.

Icons and backups

System icons are reused and their cache is bounded. For backups, turning off compression and the hash manifest in Backup Settings provides the highest throughput on fast storage.

Color Themes and Glass

In Settings > Appearance, choose a color theme in addition to Light, Dark, or System. Your selection is stored locally and restored the next time you open FileAtlas.

Six color themes



Glass across the whole window

Glass uses a milky translucent surface across the entire app. A colorful glow and small light points always remain behind content and never change selections, search results, or file contents.

Ambience matched to the theme

Retro shows warm dust, Graphite Lime luminous particles, Autumn leaves in several colors, and Winter snowflakes with varied sizes. Midnight Teal keeps its calm teal glow. In Glass, the colorful glow moves continuously across the surface.

Motion, Tooltips and Control

FileAtlas uses motion with purpose: when scan results arrive, navigation expands or collapses, filters change, backups complete, insights appear, and on the first-launch screen. Motion communicates the current state without changing data or controls.

While a scan is running, non-essential ambient effects pause so indexing takes priority. The colorful Glass glow remains visible but becomes static.

Reduce motion

Enable Settings > Appearance > Reduce interface motion or use the matching macOS accessibility setting. Glow and light points remain visible but no longer move.

Control tooltips

Tooltips explain toolbar, navigation, and action icons when you point at them. Open Settings > Appearance and enable or disable Show tooltips. The preference is stored locally; keyboard navigation and accessibility access remain available at all times.

New Organization and Backup Tools

Backup history and retention

Backup Settings now shows recent archives for each location with date, file count, and size. The folder button reveals an available archive in Finder. Under Retention, choose Keep all, Last 3, Last 5, or Last 10. After a successful backup, FileAtlas removes only older archives it created in the selected destination.

Clean up duplicates safely

Duplicates are detected only within the same saved location by default. In Settings > Scan Settings, you can deliberately enable comparison across all locations, for example iCloud and a local backup. Control-click a duplicate file and choose Keep This Copy and Queue Other Duplicates. The other files are only added to the Cleanup Queue. A separate confirmation there is still required before items move to the macOS Trash.

Rules with actions

In addition to reporting matches, rules can add matching files to the Cleanup Queue. This never deletes files automatically: the queue remains visible and always requires its own confirmation.

Extended Smart Collections

Smart Collections can now be limited by maximum size, tags, saved locations, and excluded file types. Multiple criteria are applied together.

Unavailable locations

A saved location shows a warning in the sidebar when it is currently unavailable. Reconnect the drive, or remove and add the location again if macOS needs new permission.

FileAtlas

Feature Update

Safe Renaming and Verified Backups

Batch Rename. Select files or folders in the list, then choose **Rename Selection...** from the context menu or **File** menu. You can set a prefix, suffix, and sequential numbering. FileAtlas previews every resulting name, prevents collisions, and never overwrites an existing file. Renaming happens only after your explicit confirmation; the index is then scanned again.

Archive Integrity. When inspecting a ZIP backup, FileAtlas continues to validate the ZIP structure. If an optional SHA-256 manifest is stored beside the archive, the app now also checks every archived file against its recorded hash. The result clearly distinguishes verified, failed, and no manifest present.

Note: Batch Rename changes the file system and cannot be undone in FileAtlas.

FileAtlas

Final Update

FileAtlas 1.10.0

- Backup history and retention are available per location, with options to keep all backups or the latest 3, 5, or 10.
- Smart collections, rules, the cleanup queue, and saved-location availability have been expanded.
- Duplicate comparison defaults to the same location and can optionally compare across locations.
- ZIP backups can be incremental after the first full backup. Scheduled backups run while FileAtlas is open or launches, not as a background service.
- The archive inspector lists contents, verifies optional SHA-256 manifests against archive contents, and restores selected entries.
- Batch Rename previews prefix, suffix, and optional sequential numbering, rejects collisions, and requires confirmation.
- Storage Analysis adds a file-type map, health indicators, and on-device similar-image analysis for up to 250 images.
- Settings labels, manuals, and README documentation are complete in English and German; GitHub CI also runs unit tests.

FileAtlas

FileAtlas 1.11.0 Beta 1

This beta improves reliability, scan behavior, and launch restoration.

File formats are recognized from their actual final extension: app bundles and DMG, PKG, ZIP, and ISO files are indexed as single entries.

Restore last cached folders loads the most recently saved index immediately on launch without starting an automatic rescan.

Filter sets can optionally remain active after restart through Restore active filter on launch.

Optional update checks can include final releases only or beta and final releases, and open the GitHub Release page only after a click.

Snapshot comparisons no longer report unchanged files as changed when timestamps are stored with second precision.

Location counts are deferred during an active scan so indexing remains responsive.

FileAtlas

FileAtlas 1.11.0 Beta 2

Separate data for beta, final and dev

Starting with FileAtlas 1.11.0 Beta 2, beta, final and dev builds each have their own settings, saved locations, filter sets, index caches, snapshots and backup passwords.

On its first launch, this beta does not automatically import data from Beta 1, final or dev builds. Add your locations again and scan them once. Your existing data remains intact.

Each channel keeps its data after you quit. Installing another update of the same channel does not automatically reset that data.

To display the saved index immediately on launch, choose Restore last cached folders in the scanner settings. You can still enable Restore active filter on launch separately in the filter set settings.