

A Tricycle Pilot's Guide



To Visiting Washington DC's National Mall



Barry Ivan Silber

BARRY IVAN SILBER

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Editing by Jack Hardy

Editing by Amy Goldstein

Editing by David E. Silber

Editing by Trixia Daquil

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Dedication and Thanks

Dedicated to the Tricycle Pilots on the National Mall, past and present, who taught and inspired me: Shaun Hogan who invited me in; Danny Cochrane who showed me the ropes; Alex Goddard who set the example of tour professionalism; Robert Hart who entrusted me to run his business; Joe Brophy who knew how to run a shop; Johnny Love who showed everyone how to hustle; Isaac Silber and Steph Compton who helped found Adventure DC Tricycle Tours.

“A good way to begin sight-seeing when limited as to time, and perhaps when not limited, is to take a carriage with an intelligent driver, or one of the many hansom cabs, and leisurely ride through the centre of the city – the northwest quarter. A ride like this will enable a stranger to obtain a general view of the prominent localities in a short time, and serve to fix them in the memory.”

Picturesque Washington,
Joseph West Moore, 1887

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The 250th Anniversary of the Independence of the United States from British Rule

There are many reasons to study history. But there's one seldom discussed reason for knowing history: to help inform our future actions. Ideally, organizations and even countries could put the past to work. Imagine a concept I'll call Operational History, where the lessons of history guide operational decisions. In the United States, this concept could be especially important in the executive branch, as well as in the legislature and the judiciary. The judicial system, by its very nature, is required to lean on history much more than the other two branches. But imagine if the other two branches did the same?

History is not important for history's sake alone. History should be known so that it can inform future decisions, future actions, and future results. If we're going to learn anything from the 250th anniversary of US independence, the purpose shouldn't be merely academic. It should be to help inform how we think about our future actions as a nation. Some of the people celebrating this anniversary will go on to be leaders of this country, and hopefully, they'll be

able to use some of the lessons of our history in shaping the decisions they eventually make.

When it comes to visiting Washington, DC, and the National Mall, certain luminaries are highlighted. And others are important, but no memorial stands for them. Take, for example, the Founding Fathers. That term was first popularized by Warren G. Harding – used in a 1916 speech and again in his 1921 inaugural address – and it captured the idea that many important people helped shape the United States. Who were those people? We could think of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence. We could also think of the 55 participants in the convention that led to the Constitution, though there were only 39 actual signers, including George Washington, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. But there's also a smaller group of key figures, usually counted as seven: George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay. The historian Richard B. Morris popularized this particular set.

Of those seven, if you're visiting Washington, DC and looking for a physical representation that connects you to these people, I'd suggest the top five would be George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Alexander Hamilton. George Washington has the Washington Monument. John Adams has his own building, which is part of the Library of Congress, as well as a replica of his signature on Signers Island – a hidden memorial on an island in the middle of a lake in Washington, DC. Thomas Jefferson has the Jefferson Memorial. Benjamin Franklin not only has his signature replicated on

Signers Island, but also his own statue at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and 12th Street. Alexander Hamilton has his own statue on the south side of the Department of the Treasury. If there were five to focus on, I'd focus on those. Of those, Washington and Jefferson would be the highlights, if for no other reason than they have large memorials in their honor.

How many Founding Fathers were there? You could say 56, you could say 39, you could say seven. Regardless, the Founding Fathers are only one aspect of the United States' founding. For example, there's Crispus Attucks, a Black and Native American man, said by some to have been the first person killed in the Boston Massacre. A large funeral was held in Boston, and the five victims of the Massacre were buried together in a common grave. Attucks eventually became a symbol of the abolitionist movement – in a way, the first martyr in the cause of American liberty. Frederick Douglass later used his memory to support the end of slavery in the United States.

There were also women. The American public has heard of Betsy Ross, who is credited with making the first US flag (though it's worth mentioning that this story comes from her grandson, told almost a century later, and historians have never been able to confirm it). But have you heard of Mary Katharine Goddard, who printed the first edition of the Declaration to carry the names of its signers? The first printed Declarations (the Dunlap broadside of July 1776 and the newspaper versions) didn't list any signers – they showed only two names, John Hancock and Charles Thomson, the president and secretary of Congress, because the delegates

hadn't physically signed yet. The famous signed parchment was signed mostly in August, but the signers' identities were kept quiet, since putting your name to it was treason. Then, after the wins at Trenton and Princeton, Congress ordered on January 18, 1777, that "an authenticated copy of the Declaration... with the names of the members of Congress subscribing the same, be sent to each of the United States." Mary Katharine Goddard printed those broadsides in Baltimore, where Congress had relocated to escape the British, and it was the first time the signers' names were made public. (It listed 55 of the 56 – Thomas McKean's name was missing, since he likely signed after January 1777.) What she put on it was her printer's imprint at the bottom: "Baltimore, in Maryland: Printed by Mary Katharine Goddard." She identified herself. That was the bold part: associating her name with the document was treasonous in British eyes, so by printing her own name she took on the same personal risk as the signers.

Historian Eric Foner argues that the true America started later – that the country was re-founded on equal terms only with the Civil War and the adoption of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. This echoes ideas of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass – who argued the nation's promise wasn't truly kept until slavery was abolished.

Others would say that the Founding Fathers, at least some of them, really did want a more equal home for all who lived in it – including Thomas Jefferson, whose original draft of the Declaration of Independence went into great detail about why the King of Great Britain was so wrong for carrying on the slave trade, calling it a cruel war against human nature

itself. That passage was struck out before the Declaration was adopted (it's also worth remembering that Jefferson himself enslaved hundreds of people), mainly to satisfy South Carolina and Georgia. So the disagreement comes down to one question: was the idea of equality built into the country at its founding – aspirational and unmet, but present – or did it only truly arrive generations later, with Lincoln and Douglass?

What we cannot forget is the Indigenous population of America. Theirs is the oldest American story of all – peoples who had been here for more than twelve thousand years before any founder's ancestor stepped off a boat – and it is the one most easily rewritten, depending on who is telling it and what they need it to say. It is also the story the Mall waited longest to tell: the National Museum of the American Indian, designed from the ground up around a Native point of view, didn't open until 2004. The broad record is one of treaties made and broken, forced removal, and episodes like the Dakota War.

And there's so much of this country that has already been forgotten. People don't remember entire wars. Take the Mexican-American War, which carried the US border to the Pacific and, by reopening the question of slavery in the newly won territory, helped set the table for the Civil War – its justification was doubted even at the time, by, among others, a young congressman named Lincoln. There are also so many smaller turning points that people don't know about or have forgotten. From the founding decades alone, there's Shays' Rebellion, the XYZ Affair, the Virginia Plan, the Fauchet Affair. And this forgetting runs the whole length of

US history. There's the Dakota War of 1862, whose aftermath produced the largest mass execution in American history. There's the Philippine-American War, the brutal conflict that followed the Spanish-American War. There's the time, in 1918, when American troops actually fought the Red Army on Russian soil, in what came to be called the Polar Bear Expedition. There's the Bonus Army of 1932, when the US government turned the Army on its own veterans in Washington, DC. There's the Korean War, fought to a bloody stalemate and then so thoroughly forgotten that it earned the nickname "the Forgotten War." And we're just scratching the surface.

It's worth pausing on Lincoln, because he keeps moving through this chapter wearing different faces. He is the man some credit with America's truer founding, the one who freed the enslaved. He is the young congressman who doubted the Mexican-American War out loud. And he is the president who approved the hanging of those thirty-eight Dakota men – even as he spared two hundred and sixty-five others from the same gallows. None of these cancels the others. That is the point: the people we carve into marble were whole, capable of the courageous and the terrible in the same season, and operational history means holding both in view instead of keeping only the half that flatters the story we wanted.

We've marked this kind of anniversary before. In 1826 there was the Jubilee, the 50-year anniversary of the founding, with a national focus in Washington, DC, but also in Quincy, Massachusetts, and at Monticello. In 1876 the Centennial – the 100-year anniversary – was celebrated in Philadelphia.

President Ulysses S. Grant presided over the opening ceremonies, and much of the exhibition showcased American industrial power and invention; the telephone, the typewriter, and Heinz ketchup were all on show there – the telephone making its first great public demonstration. Approximately 10 million people attended over six months. One artifact from that fair still stands here in Washington: the Fountain of Light and Water by Bartholdi, the same sculptor who made the Statue of Liberty. You'll find it in the Botanic Garden's Bartholdi Park – a hidden gem, beautiful at night, especially when it's warm.

In 1926, the Sesquicentennial – the 150-year anniversary – was again celebrated in Philadelphia. Calvin Coolidge gave a major address. An 80-foot replica of the Liberty Bell, covered in 26,000 light bulbs, stood at the entrance. A massive stadium, later known as JFK Stadium, was built for the event. But the fair was a financial failure – dogged by poor weather and thin crowds – and that is the one worth remembering, because it's the cautionary note in the series: patriotism poorly planned amounts to little more than an empty, rained-out field.

In 1976 there was the Bicentennial, the 200-year anniversary, which was nationwide, with major focal points in Philadelphia, New York City, Washington, DC, and Valley Forge. It was a year-long series of events with a "Spirit of '76" theme. Queen Elizabeth II visited and presented a bicentennial bell to Philadelphia, where it remains. And during that year in Washington, DC, the National Air and Space Museum opened its doors on July 1

– so that, like the Bartholdi fountain from 1876, two of these celebrations left something you can still walk to on the Mall.

Now, here we are in 2026: the Semiquincentennial, the 250th anniversary, with celebrations in Washington, DC, and Philadelphia and events nationwide, organized by the America250 Commission. But the United States is on a precipice – a moment that could make or break the nation and the world.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been considered the only major superpower, and in that time it has done a great deal to maintain not only its dominance but a measure of peace throughout the world. One thing that helps explain how a single country could hold that position is something most people never think about: aerial refueling. A fighter or a bomber can only go as far as the fuel in its tanks, but a flying tanker removes that limit. The United States operates roughly three-quarters of the world's military refueling aircraft. That's not quite a monopoly – a few other nations keep a handful – but it's close to one at the scale that matters, and it's a big part of why America, almost alone, can put military force just about anywhere in the world on short notice. Like any great capability, though, it's neither good nor bad in itself; it's good or bad depending on how it's deployed.

The largest forces facing the world now are a rise in dictatorship and a drift toward authoritarianism – often dressed in the language of democracy, with elections still held and courts still standing even as the rules are hollowed out from within. At home, the rule of law can feel less settled

than it once did. But this is a strain the republic has met before – and the first time may have been the most dangerous.

In the spring of 1783, the Revolutionary War was all but won, and the Continental Army sat camped at Newburgh, New York, waiting on a peace treaty. The soldiers and their officers had gone unpaid for years, and the pensions they'd been promised were in doubt, because Congress under the Articles of Confederation had no reliable power to tax. Resentment hardened into something dangerous. An anonymous letter began moving through the camp, urging the officers not to disband until their demands were met – and hinting that they might turn on Congress itself. It was the closest the young nation would come to rule by the sword instead of the vote. Washington stopped it in person. He appeared, unannounced, at the officers' meeting on March 15, and asked them to reject the letter and trust the civilian government they had fought to create. Then came the moment still remembered two centuries later: pausing to read a letter aloud, he reached for a pair of spectacles almost no one had seen him wear, and remarked that he had grown gray, and now nearly blind, in the service of his country. The room, by several accounts, was moved to tears. The conspiracy collapsed. By restraint rather than force, Washington had set the precedent that in America the Army answers to the elected government, and not the other way around – the habit we still lean on today. (How close it truly came is debated: some historians see a genuine coup in the making, others suspect it was partly stoked by nationalists in Congress hoping to frighten the states into funding the government. Either way, the lesson held.)

Other dangers are newer. Artificial intelligence raises two at once: in the near term, that it concentrates wealth and power in the hands of those who own it; further out, the colder prospect of machines operating beyond human control. That inequality is not new – the gap between the haves and the have-nots has been widening for decades – but it is sharpening, even though, across these 250 years, the average standard of living has generally risen.

There's also a quieter danger that comes with technology: the information explosion. We used to think that more information would make everything clearer to the world – that if facts could only travel freely, falsehood would have nowhere left to hide. Unfortunately, we've discovered that information alone won't save us. Falsehood, misinformation, and outright propaganda can now be deployed exponentially, spreading just as fast as the truth, and sometimes faster.

So if there's a call to action in this chapter, it is this: learn the history, and then use it – to make better decisions and take stronger action, especially in the work of carrying this country forward. The past won't hand us a clean map; some of what we face now is so new that the old analogies break down. But where the lessons of these 250 years can still guide us, we should let them.

And to anyone reading this who thinks they could do nothing: remember the people who came before you, who found the courage to act without any guarantee that where they placed their feet there would be firm ground. They did not know – and yet they stepped forward anyway. We will need that courage, too.

What You Should Know

When you're planning your trip, you should know a few things. Sometimes it's the basics of why you're taking a trip to monuments and memorials in Washington DC. Other times it's about planning your trip and getting in and out of the city. Ultimately, how you approach your visit will make all the difference.

My goal is to help give you the information you need so you can make the best decisions for all aspects of your visit, both large and small.

Introduction

This book is designed and structured to help you make the most out of your trip to Washington DC. The chapters in this book are laid out by category and lists over 125 individual memorials, buildings, points of interest, and locations along with lots of practical advice and information (see contents). You can find what you need in this book. Chapters address the issues you might have, and they discuss the problems you might face when planning your trip to Washington DC – or while you are already here.

If you need information about a particular topic, just look in the related chapter. There is no need to read this book from beginning to the end. You can use this book and its content to plan your trip, or you can use it as needed while you are in Washington DC.

This book is meant for you to use as a simple and easy-to-use reference guide. I tried to answer the most important questions people have asked me over the years while giving tours on the National Mall.

These include issues with transportation, food consumption, what to see, and what to do when faced with logistical challenges like traveling with kids, pets, special dietary requirements, or if you or people in your group have mobility impairments. In the section about memorials, I tried to include information about each memorial without giving you so much information that it bogs you down. I have also

included a section on hidden gems you can find in Washington DC.

I approached writing this book hoping that it will be helpful for you to fully enjoy your time in Washington DC and on the National Mall. It may not happen all the time, but my sincere hope is that you will find some experiences on the National Mall that will be memorable and transformative for you and your family. If you have kids, I hope they are inspired by the stories of the imperfect humans embodied in stone on the National Mall.

You may find some rare treasures, things off the beaten track that will excite you and your group. Some of the most exciting discoveries that I've found are things that are not considered major memorials but would have remained unknown to me unless I found them by happenstance or unless someone showed me years ago.

My goal is to give you the insider's look as best I can at the most remarkable things you'll find on the National Mall.

Regardless of how you envision your trip to Washington DC, or how you use this book, I am hopeful it will be helpful to you. And if you desire a tour, please consider using one of Adventure DC Tricycle Tour's expert guides on tricycle or other conveyance. If you do, we look forward to giving you the once-in-a-lifetime experience you deserve.

Eye-Level Exploration

After many years giving private tours using many different types of transportation, I believe that *Eye-Level Exploration* is the best way to get around to see everything. *Eye-Level Exploration* is exploring and traveling at eye level. That could mean on foot, a scooter, a bicycle, or a tricycle. *Eye-Level Exploration* means you're traveling slower than a car, bus, or van. You can see things you wouldn't see in a motorized vehicle because you're at the right level, and you're going slow enough to view everything and long enough to really see them. Motorized tours can't get close to things when they are going fast. *Eye-Level Exploration* means you can go where cars can't.

Sometimes *Eye-Level Exploration* just doesn't seem possible. If you have people in your group who move slowly, a walking tour may be out. A bike tour may be out of the question for some people. Scooters can be great, but not everyone can ride one. If you have a dog with you, most regular tours won't cut it (although there are select walking tours and golf cart tours which do allow for pets).

That's where tricycle tours come in. On our DC tours, your guide does the pedaling. The guide is in the front, and you are in the back, taking in the sights. A tricycle can also help people who cannot get around easily any other way. It can be helpful for those with mobility difficulties, small children who cannot walk, or people who have pets with them.



Beyond this, sometimes people like tricycles because they can provide a slow relaxing romantic tour. I have joked that the difference between our standard monuments and memorials tour and the romantic tour is that on the romantic tour, *the guides keep their mouths shut*. On any private and customized tours, ours included, if you want a more romantic atmosphere with less talk, simply let your guide know in advance.

But even with all this in mind, sometimes *Eye-Level Exploration* is not the best fit. If you're short on time or want to save money, a tour on a bus can be a better bet. However, if you look at the online ratings for most bus tours, they tend to come in last in terms of visitor satisfaction. Many times, the experience you will get doing *Eye-Level Exploration* is much better than getting on a bus tour, but every situation is different.

A Tricycle Pilot's Perspective

In this chapter I write about how I got to know Washington DC's National Mall by carrying out the duties of what I somewhat tongue-in-cheek refer to as a *Tricycle Pilot*.

I am a DC native, born and raised in the District of Columbia. I have been giving pedicab tours since 2010, when I started piloting a tricycle. Since that time, I've had the opportunity to explore every nook and cranny of this city's most famous landmark – The National Mall.

It has always been one of my favorite parts of the city to be in because it is so colorful and architecturally interesting. You can see so many different people from all parts of the world enjoying themselves here. In addition to DC visitors, there are joggers, dog owners, picnickers, cyclists, government workers, and kickball players.

I have seen all kinds of locals and visitors on the National Mall: young tourists from around the world, elderly veterans looking for a glimpse of a memorial honoring their fallen comrades, locals just walking to get some fresh air, and joggers getting some exercise.

The National Mall is an important part of this city, country, and world: it's where the United States celebrates its nation's birthday every July 4th; it has memorials that pay tribute to national (and world) leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.,

Presidents Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln; its museums are places for us – as citizens and visitors – to learn more about the world around us and how it works.

The National Mall also connects many other parts of DC – Georgetown to the west, Capitol Hill to the east, Dupont, Chinatown & Penn Quarter to the North, and Waterfront & Navy Yard to the South. As I navigate through these streets these days (on tricycle), I sometimes wonder what future generations will think when they have a chance to visit.

Of course, as a resident of this city, my insights and observations into this rich national treasure may be biased, but hopefully, these thoughts will help you get more than just a ride. That said, it seems every day something new happens on The National Mall: a new President in office, a new memorial dedicated, a new photo-op to be had, or a new souvenir to be acquired. It's easy to feel like you're witnessing history (both grandiose and personal) on The National Mall.

In particular, my observations from being “on the ground” every day lead me to notice the little things: the flow of the crowds of tourists, the questions tourists have, the peaceful silence at night (yet still buzzing with that electric feeling), the joy of those celebrating a holiday, graduation or wedding.

I have been doing this for a long time, and one of the things I love to see is the National Mall, past the reflecting pool, from the Lincoln Memorial. Just thinking of the history that has happened in that spot, the strength of character of the persons we're honoring, but perhaps most emotionally for

me, the glorious view of the National Mall all the way down to the Capitol Building from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

Your Transformational Visit

Here is my thesis regarding a visit to Washington DC: It can and should be a transformational and enjoyable experience. If not for you, for your group or family. Even if it's *old hat* to you, there is the possibility your kids may learn something that truly changes their lives for the better.

Many visitors come to DC as they would any other “important” destination, as if they were checking a box off a checklist, then leave feeling that they filled their requirement – almost duty – as a visitor. Sure, their kids may not be too excited, perhaps even bored.

But is there the possibility that visiting Washington DC could be more? Is it possible that it could somehow result in that pivot point leading to a true transformation in part of your family? There is so much history commemorated in Washington DC it's possible that history may come off very stale if presented in the wrong way.

However, if the hidden but real lessons from Washington DC's National Mall are discovered, and a little bit of excitement is meshed in with the stories that emerge, it is possible that a visit to the National Mall could actually become transformative. Why? When people get excited, they change.

What if a surprising fact made them understand the character of any of the luminaries memorialized on the National Mall?

This goes beyond the bonding that happens from just going on a family vacation or group trip. Because I believe a transformation can be the focus of a visit to Washington DC.

There are many reasons why a person may visit Washington DC: business trip, romantic getaway, or even a short “pit stop” layover. But people visiting for any reason deserve to have a somewhat transformational outcome.

Regardless of the reason, I am hopeful that at least some true transformation will be a part of your visit. All that is required is some learning, some fun, and maybe a little bit of magic.

Why is it called The National Mall?

Before we answer why one of Washington DC's most iconic landmarks – The National Mall – is called “Mall” when there's no food court or shopping store to be found, we should talk about George Washington's idea

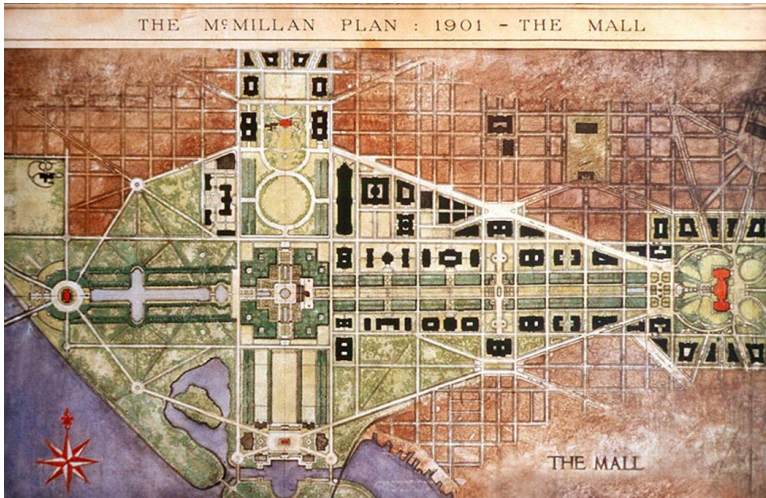
¹. In 1791, Pierre L'Enfant designed the plan for DC under the direction of President Washington and Secretary of State Jefferson. While Jefferson provided L'Enfant with maps of European cities and outlined his task, their relationship was more supervisory than collaborative—Jefferson favored a traditional gridiron city plan while L'Enfant envisioned something far grander, leading to frequent disagreements and L'Enfant's eventual dismissal in 1792.²

So that is the background of the intention. The original meaning of *Mall* meant *long promenade with shade*. The word came from a game that was popular in Europe in the 1600s called *Pall Mall*. The game of pall-mall, which gave the Mall its name, originated in Italy (likely Naples) where it was known as *pallamaglio* and played from the 12th century onward. It later spread to France as *jeu de mail* before reaching England, where it evolved as a precursor to croquet and shared similarities with the Italian lawn game *trucco*.. In Pall-mall, a boxwood ball was struck using a heavy wooden mallet, with the goal being to propel the ball down the alley and through an iron hoop suspended over the

ground at the other end. The player who achieved this with the fewest hits emerged as the winner.³ The word Mall from the name is related to the word “mallet” which was the implement used for hitting balls in this game.⁴ This sport was popular in various countries, including Italy, France, Scotland, and England.

Pierre L’Enfant, the architect of Washington DC, included a ‘Grand Avenue’ in his 1791 master plan—a 400-foot wide promenade extending westward from the Capitol to a planned equestrian statue of George Washington near the Potomac River. Though L’Enfant designed this precursor to the Mall, his vision wasn’t fully implemented as he had imagined it. As envisioned by Pierre L’Enfant, the Grand Avenue would stretch westward from Capitol Hill to the Potomac River, with the White House positioned to the north of this axis. L’Enfant planned for an equestrian statue of Washington to stand at the intersection of two sight lines—one running south from the White House and one running west from the Capitol—though his master plan faced many challenges in implementation.⁵

That was until 1902 when the current plan – the McMillan Plan – for the Mall was envisioned.



The McMillan Plan⁶

It was named after Senator James McMillan, the chairman of a committee focused on beautifying the area that is now known as the National Mall.⁷ He assembled a team of designers and architects to create a plan to restore and amplify Pierre L'Enfant's original vision for the city. The team included architects Daniel Burnham and Charles McKim, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., and sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens.⁸

How to Approach the National Mall

Here are some ways you can approach The National Mall:

As an Individual: For some, it's quite daunting to walk around the National Mall alone – it's a long trek. It is a straight line distance of 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) from the Lincoln Memorial to the Capitol Building. However, the peacefulness and tranquility, especially in off-hours, may be well worth the effort.

As a Couple: Head on over to see some of our nation's most famous monuments and memorials, such as the World War II Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, the Korean War Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall. Some memorials, especially at night, are romantic.

As a Family: Bring the kids over to see some hidden gems, such as The Einstein Memorial, the Kids Sized Island on Constitution Garden, and the Echo Chamber at the Canadian Embassy. They are all quite entertaining for children.

As a Group: Head on over with a group or even a large family reunion to enjoy your visit. You may want to have a tour guide to show you around.

As a Photographer: Bring your camera and capture some of the nation's most famous monuments and memorials,

such as The Korean War Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, or the World War II Memorial. You may want to have transportation so you can focus on taking photographs or videos. Tricycles go at a pace slow enough to catch many great pictures.

As Mobility Impaired or with a Group with Mobility Impaired Participants: Accessibility is a big issue for people with disabilities. Although many memorials are designed or modified with people with mobility impairment in mind, some are not. The Vietnam Wall is fully accessible, and it also offers an audio tour with headphones available at the site. This is also true of the Korean War Memorial. The US Capitol Building has ramps and elevators. All the museums have ramps to allow for easy access for those with mobility impairment.

As a Visitor With Dog(s): Washington DC is a dog-friendly city, and dogs are allowed on the National Mall with some restrictions as to where they can be walked. Most of the memorials allow for service animals, but there are also rules in place about not walking your pet off-leash inside certain buildings, such as museums or federal buildings. The top dog-friendly memorial is the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, and it is also one with great access for those with mobility impairment.

Transportation and Parking

Being a popular destination for tourists and locals alike with its many attractions, monuments, memorials, and museums, the National Mall is a great place to explore. But before you can explore, you need to know how to get there, how to get around, and where to park. This chapter will provide an introduction to transportation to, transportation on, and parking on the National Mall in Washington DC.

Transportation to The National Mall

Let's look at the various options for getting to the Mall, including taxis (as well as Uber and Lyft), public transportation, and driving.

Taxi, Uber, or Lyft to The National Mall

Taxi services are available near many of the main attractions on The National Mall and can be taken from Union Station and the major DC airports – Reagan, Dulles & BWI. Sometimes they will wait at hotels, or respond to calls from hotels. Uber or Lyft will give you advanced pricing information, but you need to have each respective app on your mobile phone.

Metro to The National Mall

If you are staying near a Metro, you can hop on and take it directly to the National Mall. If you're not near a Metro, you can park at the closest Metro station and then take the Metro to The National Mall since parking isn't always easy. Consider getting off at the following Metro Stations: Smithsonian, Federal Triangle, Federal Center, or Metro Center depending on what Metro line you're on and what you'd like to see on the Mall.

There are also Metro stops at Union Station, Reagan National, and Dulles Airport. BWI can be accessed via MARC train or Amtrak to Union Station.

The Metro is safe and clean. You'll need a SmarTrip card for Metro (you can buy one at any station) to get on and off. Unlike NYC, where you don't need to use a card to get off, on DC's Metro you need to. For safety's sake, I recommend trying to avoid looking like a tourist if you can: put your cameras and maps away. If you take an escalator, stand to the right, and "pass" on the left. Blocking the left side will signal you are an unaware tourist.

A scam that is sometimes pulled is where someone who appears to be down on their luck will ask for change and will attempt to get you to believe that you provided only a single dollar as change for a higher bill. Be wary of people needing to exchange money for some reason.

Walking to The National Mall

Walking to the National Mall usually requires staying at one of the close hotels. If you're close, you might as well walk! Bring snacks and water as needed for both you and your group. Also, consider the proper clothing for the weather. Many times, layering is the way to go. One thing to consider is that walking will require you to carry some things, including food, water, and a change of clothes. You may need to do a lot of walking on the Mall itself, so that might not be the best way to go if it means you'll already be tired when you hit the Mall.

Driving to The National Mall

Driving is possible but not usually recommended. If you drive to the National Mall, you may end up being stuck in traffic, and another issue is that you will need to find parking (more on this in "Parking")

Transportation While on The National Mall

Let's look at the various options for getting around the Mall, including hop-on hop-off style buses, private tours, scooters, Taxis/Ubers/Lyfts, and even walking.

Hop-On, Hop-Off Tour Buses

Hop-on hop-off is a type of tour service that allows visitors to explore a city at their own pace. It is one of the main forms of transportation for the masses. It usually involves a tour bus or another form of transportation that allows passengers to get on and off at designated stops throughout the city. Passengers can stay on the bus for the entire tour or hop off and explore each stop before hopping back on the bus. This type of service allows visitors to explore a city on their own terms, allowing them to customize their experience.

These types of buses provide a narrated tour of the area, and they stop at all of the major attractions, including the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, and the Smithsonian Museums. The bus also allows visitors to hop on and off at any of the stops along the route, so they can explore the area as much or as little as they want. One of the main criticisms of the hop-on hop-off tour bus is the potentially long wait times until the next bus comes around. So I like to call them “hope-on hope-off” because it is likely you’ll be hoping for one to come to your location. Another criticism is that sometimes the bus stops are hard to find.

Private Tour

If you’re on a private tour of Washington DC’s National Mall, you’ll either have transportation as part of your tour or your guide will know how to get it and have recommended providers. Although private tours can be expensive and may not give you the freedom to explore the National Mall at your

own pace, the benefit is that you get to see a curated presentation of what Washington DC's National Mall has to offer. Did I mention my company is Adventure DC Tricycle Tours? In case I forgot to mention that, we give private tours on the National Mall via a number of conveyances.

Scooter

Scooters are fast and convenient. They can get you from point A to point B in no time. The scooters you rent using an app have some limitations, though. You can only park them at certain points on the National Mall, and the speed is restricted in some areas (like near the White House). Kids are not allowed to ride scooters.

Alternatively, you could rent from a fleet. Not only are there no restrictions on parking, but they are also speedier than their app-activated counterparts. Additionally, kids are allowed to ride scooters. My favorite scooter rental company is E-Mile: The Electric Ride. We use them for our scooter tours.

Taxi/Uber/Lyft

One of the main advantages of using Uber, Lyft, or a taxi to get around the National Mall is convenience. These services are readily available and can be called upon at any time. Additionally, they are often more affordable than renting a car and more available than taking public transportation.

If you say something to a taxi driver that tips them off that you are not knowledgeable of your environment, there is the chance they may try to overcharge you. For example, I have heard tourists ask how much it is to “take us to the Smithsonian.” This is a clear indication they were not local residents because there are many Smithsonian museums in Washington DC spread over a distance of a mile. There is no one “Smithsonian” museum. Better is to say you went to go to “The Smithsonian Castle” (officially the Smithsonian Institution Building) if that’s where you want to go.

Catch a taxi on the south side of the Lincoln Memorial at the official taxi stand, but I recommend catching the Uber/Lyft on the north side. Ubers and Lyfts are not officially allowed on the south side pull-in, and taxis are not allowed to officially stop on the north side. That being said, taxis are definitely out on the north side. And sometimes you’ll get lucky catching a Lyft or Uber on the south side. It’s just that you might wait a while or have to suffer through multiple cancellations. If they miss the turn-off, they may end up in Virginia, having to travel miles to attempt to get back to you. Many drivers would rather just cancel.

Walking

Walking is a great way to get exercise, stay healthy, and take in the sights and sounds of the National Mall. It allows you to explore on your own and save money on transportation costs. The thing to be aware of is that distances are longer than they appear on the map (about two miles from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial), and walking is not always

the most time-efficient form of transportation. Walking can tire you and your family (or group members) out.

Parking on the National Mall

When you drive to the National Mall, you'll need to find parking. If you want valet parking, I recommend parking at the Willard InterContinental (\$35 all day) at 1401 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC, 20004. You can just show up – you don't need to reserve in advance.

You can also valet park at the Reagan Building (\$25 up to 15 hours). The official address of the Reagan Building is 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20004. You can access the parking garage either at 13 ½ Street off Pennsylvania Avenue or on 14th Street between Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues.

Of the two, my preference is The Willard because it's much less cumbersome when compared to the security you have to go through at the Reagan Building (they search every car coming in). I have also had reports from people with dogs that the dogs were not allowed into the garage, meaning someone had to remove the dog from the car, and then that person had to wait outside with the dog as the car was parked.

If you want to park at a commercial garage – a cheaper option – the best I have found with advanced booking is SpotHero (<http://tinyurl.com/easy-dc-parking>). These are almost all indoor garages. The only thing to watch out for is the height of your vehicle compared to the listed maximum

height of the garage. Some of these garages will not accommodate larger vehicles.

You can pay for metered street parking on both streets alongside the grass of the Mall (Madison and Jefferson Avenues), but depending on how crowded it is, it may be hard to find a spot close by. There's also metered parking on Ohio Drive near the Lincoln Memorial. And be careful parking on Constitution Avenue at the wrong times (usually during rush hour or before/after a parade), when expensive tickets and even towing happens to unsuspecting DC visitors.

Hidden Gems and Secret Places

People can get in a rut when visiting Washington DC or any major city. This chapter aims to give you a number of options to consider, especially for those people who have “seen it all”. Here are the top hidden gems and secret places I like on the National Mall.

Signer’s Island



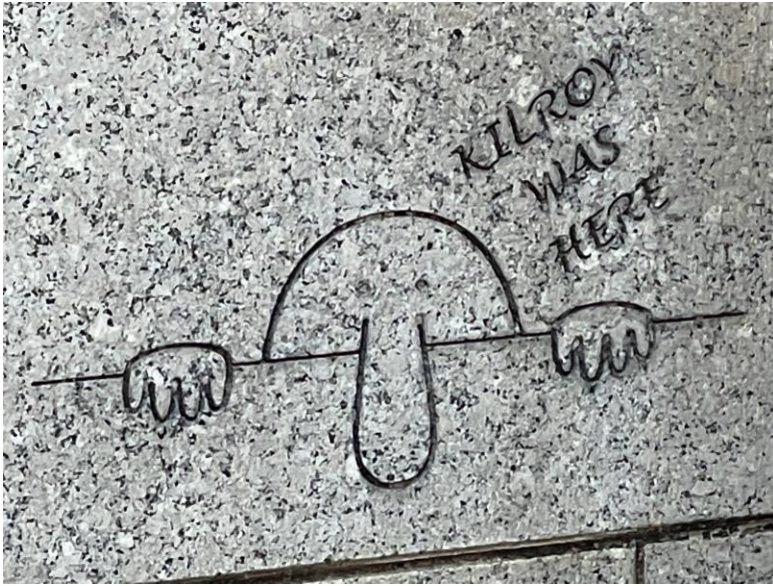
Signer’s Island

Signer's Island is a kid-sized island on a human-made lake in Constitution Gardens. It honors the 56 signers of The Declaration of Independence.⁹

Each signer is honored with their own separate stone, where you'll find his signature embellished in gold leaf, his name, his occupation, the county that he was from, and each is grouped by state in a semicircle.¹⁰

I think it is interesting to look at the jobs of the founders. The legal profession is the most prevalent. Also, some jobs have different names, like *planter* and *farmer*, but are essentially the same – but one occupation is associated with a plantation and the other a farm.

Kilroy Was Here

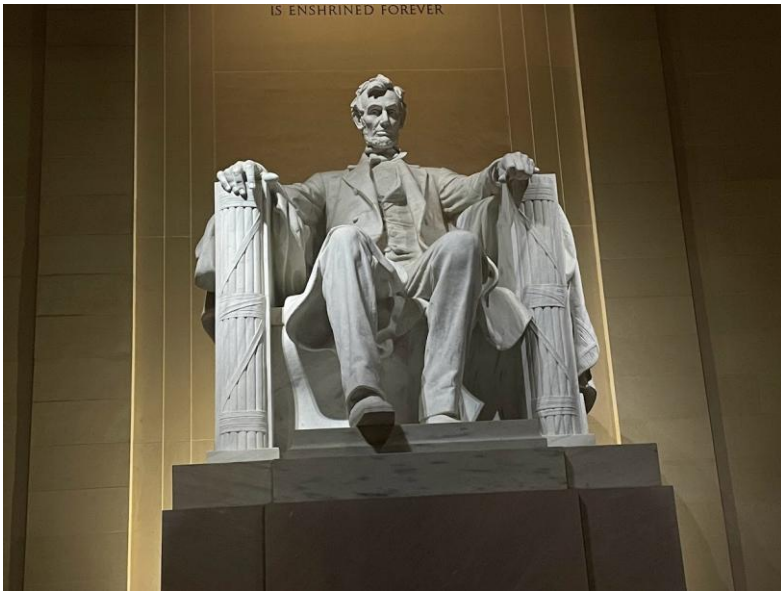


Kilroy Was Here

Kilroy was here is a meme that became popular during World War II. Everywhere that American soldiers would go, they would draw a bald man with a big nose peeking over the wall. Soldiers wrote the words *Kilroy Was Here* with this illustration. This happened so much that there's unsubstantiated and unlikely lore that Hitler put the bounty on the head of the famous spy Kilroy.¹¹

If you go behind columns representing the states on the rear side of the World War II Memorial, you'll see a purposeful etching of the *Kilroy Was here* graffiti.

Abraham Lincoln's Fingers



Abraham Lincoln's Statue

Some people say that the statue of Lincoln's hands form the sign language symbol of "A" (for Abraham) and a very sloppy sign language "L" (for Lincoln), but the National Park Service refutes this.

Instead, the National Park Service says that sculptor Daniel Chester French used molds of Lincoln's hands, and they happen to be loose and tight, depending on the hand. This might also reflect the ideas of strength (closed hand) and peace (open hand).

However, it's worth noting that there is conjecture that the sculptor had a son and that his son was deaf. Some historians say Daniel Chester French didn't even have a son. But even

if he didn't have a son, French was connected to the deaf community. French also sculpted the sculpture of Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet and Alice Cogswell located on the campus of Gallaudet University (where all programs and services are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing students). Draw your own conclusions.¹²

The Farmer's Market on the National Mall

When it is operating, the Farmer's Market is near the Smithsonian Metro, next to the Department of Agriculture Building. The Farmer's Market is open from 10 am to 2 pm on Fridays from June 2nd through September 29th.¹³

Regional farmers sell their food at this market. Many people who live in DC, plus visitors, can buy food here. You can find organic produce, fresh flowers, homemade bread, and locally made foods. You can also find ready-to-eat meal options.¹⁴

If the market is closed, you may want to consider eating at the Department of Agriculture building cafeteria, which is open to the public. The food is affordable and buffet-style, but my assessment is that the food isn't anything to write home about. It's just an affordable place to eat on the National Mall.

The “First” Lincoln Statue



The “First” Lincoln Statue

It’s easy to miss these days, but the very first statue of Abraham Lincoln in DC is outside the DC Court of Appeals (previously Washington DC’s city hall). This is such an interesting contrast to the grandiosity of the Lincoln Memorial on the west side of the National Mall.¹⁵

On April 15th, 1868, the Lincoln statue was dedicated, and all of Washington’s offices were closed at noon, and all flags were flown at half-staff. Around 20,000 people attended the dedication, including President Andrew Johnson, General Ulysses S. Grant, and General William T. Sherman.¹⁶

Bartholdi Fountain at Night



Bartholdi Fountain at Night

Designed by the same sculptor as the Statue of Liberty, the Bartholdi Fountain, officially called *The Fountain of Light and Water*, is a beauty to behold. It is located just south of the US Botanic Garden, on the south side of Independence Avenue. Not a highly trafficked area, dusk and evening are the most beautiful (and/or romantic) times to see it.

The top of the fountain is supposed to look like the top of an old-timey city wall. Water cascades over three child-like sea-god statues holding seaweed, and then the water falls into the upper basin. Twelve lamps light up around the basin at night.

The pedestal has three nymphs wearing leaves on their heads and standing on their toes in the water with seashells and coral. Below and in between the sea nymphs are fish and turtle-like monsters that spout water from their mouths.¹⁷

The US Botanic Garden



United States Botanic Garden

This is one of my favorite places in all of Washington. It's so beautiful, tranquil, and a respite from the outside elements. The greenhouse is state-of-the-art, and it can hold any flower or any plant from anywhere around the world.

Rooms are divided into geographies – such as the desert, the tropics, the Mediterranean, or Hawaii – and subjects such as plants facing extinction, prehistoric plants, medicinal plants, orchids.¹⁸

On occasion, there are major exhibits. One exhibit I clearly remember is the *Corpse Flower* (Titan Arum a.k.a. *Amorphophallus titanum*) which blossoms seemingly of its own accord (although sometimes Corpse Flowers in different geographic areas blossom at the same time) every number of years.¹⁹

One time I waited in line encircling the grounds of the Botanic Gardens for over an hour to smell the corpse flower, which basically smelled like mild trash.

The Horse Falling Down on the Grant Memorial



The Grant Memorial

While you're at the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial, take a look at the set of statues to the right as you face the National Mall and see that one of the soldiers is actually tumbling off his horse, as his horse is faltering. This sculpture is an amazing work of sculptural vision. It is the first memorial in the United States where there's some sort of action happening in the memorial itself.

The sculpture was Henry Merwin Shrady, the son of one of Grant's consulting physicians during his final years. Shrady spent 20 years working on this memorial, but died two weeks before it was to be dedicated. His assistants finished the memorial after his passing.²⁰

The View from the Speaker's Balcony

If you go on a tour of the Capitol arranged by the staff members of your Senator or Congressional Representative – not through the official visitor's center – you may be able to see the spectacular view of the National Mall from the speaker's balcony.

The balcony itself is outside the Speaker of The House's office. On a clear day, you can see all the way down the Lincoln Memorial, two miles down. In my opinion, this is one of the best views of the National Mall. If you have the chance, I highly recommend the view.

Every Senator and Congressional Representative has a staff where at least one person within the staff is responsible for taking constituents on tours of the Capitol. Don't be afraid to contact your Representative or Senator. Showing constituents the Capitol is the staff member's job, and they are happy to do it. You don't need a title or to have given a generous contribution to a campaign. Giving private tours to constituents is a way for Senators and Representatives to serve their constituents.

One of the Hidden Trains in the US Capitol

The Senate and House of Representatives have separate trains between the Capitol building and their respective office buildings. Each is a small tram-like train and well worth the ride if you are invited (you are more likely to be

invited if you have a tour by a Senator or Representative). The trains were designed to allow members of Congress to travel between their offices and the Capitol building without needing to go outside.²¹

The Glorious View Down the Mall from the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial



Ulysses S. Grant Memorial

The view down the Mall from The Ulysses S. Grant Memorial offers you a beautiful vantage point where you can see all of the National Mall (especially the museums), as well as the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial (which is two miles down).²²

The View from the I Have A Dream Spot at Lincoln during “Golden Hour”

There’s something about the Lincoln Memorial at dusk. During the golden hour, the sun’s rays shine down with warm strands upon the faces of everyone caught in that trance when the shadows are pale, and the air is magic. The illumination follows suit, with each tree lining the reflecting pool all the way down the Mall as the Capitol dome peaks out the other side of the Washington Monument.

The perfect position on the steps? I suggest standing at the last landing before entering the memorial. There is a faint inscription that says, ‘*I Have a Dream.*’ This is where Martin Luther King gave his ‘*I Have A Dream*’ Speech.

Where to Eat on the National Mall

I'm going to break down by area where to eat on the National Mall as follows: Museums, Chinatown (& Penn Quarter), White House, Lincoln Memorial, concession stands, and food trucks. I am also going to list some vegan and Kosher eating options as well.

Museums

Under normal circumstances, I wouldn't recommend that people consider eating in a museum; however, there are three exceptions in Washington DC.

The National Museum of the American Indian has Native American food from North, Central, and South America. People can get food like Indian tacos, ceviche, and bison burgers. The restaurant is called "Mitsitam Cafe" – "Mitsitam" means "Let's Eat!" in the Native language of the Delaware and Piscataway peoples. They have Native-inspired cuisines from five different regions in the Americas. The cafe is open from 11 am to 4 pm daily.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture's "Sweet Home Café" has amazing African-American dishes from all over the United States, with an emphasis on Soul Food and Seafood. They were nominated

for the 2017 James Beard Award. They have amazing food that will knock your socks off (but put them back on, people are trying to eat). The cafeteria servicing area is divided by geographic regions. Open 11 am to 3 pm on days the museum is open. On Mondays, the museum opens at 12:00 pm except during Federal Holidays.

The last museum that has amazingly delicious food is the Bible Museum. The Bible museum has food from the Mediterranean and Israel, somewhat modified for American tastes. The food is fantastic, and I highly recommend it. Museum of the Bible's "Manna" is James Beard-nominated Chef Todd Gray's and his wife Ellen Kassoff Gray's creation. They both traveled to the Mediterranean and Israel to find inspiration for this menu.

Chinatown (& Penn Quarter)

If you're looking for good food near the National Mall, especially if you're near the Capitol or the Museums, consider going to Chinatown. Chinatown in Washington DC is more of a restaurant row than it is anything else. In fact, there are more non-Asian restaurants than there are Asian restaurants.

There are all sorts of delicious places to eat in Chinatown, but a few of them are as follows: Clyde's, China Chilcano, Oyamel, Hill Country Barbecue Market, Jaleo, Rasika, and Zatinya. There are also faster food options like Chipotle.

Clyde's is run by the same restaurant group as Old Ebbitt (we'll talk about this place later in the chapter), but since

they are closer to the Museum area of the Mall, it may be a better option depending on your location.

DC local favorite eating places in Chinatown

Chinatown Express – Horrible name, but hidden DC local secret. Not fancy, they make their noodles fresh in the windows.

New Big Wong – Average food but open late (open to 4 am on the weekend nights).

Zaytinya – Eastern Mediterranean small plates. They know what to do with vegetables and other ingredients. One of my favorites.

China Chilcano – A unique Asian-fusion take on Peruvian cuisine.

Rasika – Some of the best Indian food in DC. Two locations.

Dirty Habit – located inside the Hotel Monaco, it has both indoor and outdoor courtyard seating. This is a great place to sit and enjoy the nightlife. I like the desserts and ambiance there, but I don't have a strong opinion about the rest of the food. Drinks can be very expensive, so if money is an issue, you may want to ask the price of your drink before ordering.

Near the White House



Old Ebbitt Grill – despite being the oldest saloon in Washington DC with lots of history (several Presidents have been patrons, including Ulysses S. Grant, Andrew Johnson, Grover Cleveland, Teddy Roosevelt, and Warren Harding) – you can come however you’re dressed, even if you’re in full tourist regalia. Reservations are recommended (especially on the weekends) but not required. This is a top location to consider if you want to eat near the White House. They locally source their ingredients, and they are known for their American cuisine and seafood.

The Hamilton – around the corner from Old Ebbitt (and run by the same people), the Hamilton boasts similar American fare but has less seafood and more sushi. During certain hours they have reduced-price sushi rolls. The hidden secret is they’re packed on the first floor, and there’s a long wait

for seating: ask if their upstairs bar (“The Loft”) seating is open: quicker service, with tabletop service, and with no wait.

The Bazaar – This restaurant inside the Waldorf Astoria offers a distinctive dining experience created by Michelin-starred chef José Andrés and his team. Guests can enjoy a range of shareable plates, creative cocktails, and theatrical presentations in a fun atmosphere. Guests seem to love this restaurant, one calling it one of the top-5 meals he has ever had.

Central Michel Richard – Really good food, not inexpensive, and not too far from the White House or the center of the National Mall.

The VUE – On top of the Hotel Washington is a restaurant, the VUE. All of the food is very good, and the views of the National Mall and White House are even better. Keep in mind that while kids are welcome earlier in the day, on Fridays and Saturdays everyone must be 21+ after 7 pm, and anyone under 21 will be asked to leave by 9 pm.

Immigrant Food – Serves up dishes from all over the world. The menu includes everything from banh mi sandwiches to falafel. The restaurant was founded by Chef Enrique Limardo, who is originally from Venezuela.

Also (On the Cheap) – If you want something a little cheaper near the White House, there’s District Taco (1309 F Street), and right next to it is Roti which has fast Mediterranean food. One block north (on G Street) is Astro Doughnuts & Fried Chicken which has fried chicken and donuts.

Eating near the Lincoln Memorial

The number one place to eat near the Lincoln Memorial is Founding Farmers. Founding Farmers is majority-owned by American family farmers. Members of the North Dakota Farmers Union (NDFU) showcase their fresh food, making every item in the restaurant from scratch. There are a number of sister restaurants in the DC area, all with the same standards. Vegetarian but love the taste of meat? Try the Impossible Burger. Reservations are recommended.

Concession Stands

Concession stands are all around the major monuments and memorials, both official and unofficial. My recommendation is to use the concession stands on an as-needed basis. Food prices at the official concession stands are inflated, as are the food prices at the unofficial concession stands, although less so. If you need a snack, then it's good to know there's a concession stand around, usually during daytime hours only.

Food trucks

The food trucks are in a couple of key areas near the National Mall. They line up and down 14th Street in between Constitution and Independence Avenues, and they're also on 7th Street from Independence Avenue to Constitution, and then back up in Chinatown as well. Those are the good ones. The more sketchy ones (in my opinion) are on 15th Street, near the White House. My rule of thumb is if they're serving

food like hot dogs, hamburgers, and pizza, I'm a little wary. However, if the food is ethnic (from outside the United States), it's likely the food from that food truck is going to be quite tasty and possibly fantastic tasting.

Kosher, Vegetarian and Vegan Eating

What if you have special dietary needs? So you're aware, in Smithsonian museums, individuals with allergies and special dietary needs may bring in their own food choices. So if you're a vegan or you keep kosher, no worries!

Speaking of kosher, here some kosher restaurants near the National Mall:

Shouk Israeli restaurant – Middle Eastern-inspired vegan sandwiches, dips, salads & snacks.

Char-Bar – Kosher steaks, burgers, deli sandwiches, BBQ.

Soupergirl – Tasty and healthy, the soups are both kosher and vegetarian/vegan friendly.

Chaia Tacos – Completely vegetarian menu of unique and delicious tacos.

No matter what your taste, you're sure to find something to your liking near the National Mall. So next time you're in the area, be sure to explore the many different restaurants that offer immigrant food.

DC's #1 Hidden Treasure

Ambar – Amazingly delicious all-you-can-eat Balkan small plates for one price. What is Balkan food? Find out. It's delicious. On weekends and dinner, add unlimited drinks for one price at the DC locations, either on the West side of the Capitol near the Barracks Row section of DC or in the Shaw neighborhood. I definitely recommend getting a reservation since they fill up fast.

Mobility Impairment or Special Needs

If you are mobility impaired or your group has someone with a mobility-impairment, there are a couple of things you should think about.

First of all, you may want your hotel or Airbnb to be closer to the National Mall. Also, you should be aware that most monuments and memorials are handicap accessible these days. One thing they won't tell you is that some of the major memorials may have wheelchairs that are at the park ranger stations.

You should also know that sometimes the elevators, especially at the Lincoln Memorial and the Jefferson Memorial, are inoperative. It's hard to tell when they will be working or not. If they're working, then there's no reason to be intimidated by the steps. For example, the Lincoln Memorial has a series of ramps on both sides that go up to the left side of the steps, and then through the entrance, there's an elevator that goes to the main platform. This is somewhat similar to the Jefferson Memorial. All the stairs in all the pictures are mostly wheelchair-accessible and suitable for anybody with mobility impairment.

What You Should Do

When you're in Washington DC, there are many things to do. Don't be concerned if you can't do all of them. Pick the things that seem most interesting to you. Here are a few of the options for what you can do when visiting Washington DC's National Mall.

The National Mall

Washington DC is a city of many monuments, memorials, and historic sites. Here is the breakdown of the monuments, memorials, and buildings on the National Mall:

Library of Congress



Library of Congress

The Library of Congress is the research arm of Congress. It officially started on April 24th, 1800, but it was burned down in 1814 (during the War of 1812). Congress authorized the purchase of Thomas Jefferson's largest-in-the-country

library of 6000+ books for \$23,950. Currently, the Library of Congress is the world's largest library, with over 170 million items.²³

Anyone who is 16 years or older with a proper ID can obtain a library card from the Library of Congress, also called a Readers Identification Card. They can't take books out of the building, but they can view books brought to them within the building itself (when this happens, books are said to be brought "from the stacks").

A significant criticism of the main building – The Thomas Jefferson Building – received when it was dedicated in 1897 was that it was so beautiful that critics thought it would upstage the beauty of the Capitol building.²⁴

Currently, there are three Library of Congress buildings on Capitol Hill. In addition to the main Jefferson Building, there is the John Adams Building (1939) behind it and the James Madison Memorial Building (1981) across Independence Avenue from the Jefferson Building.²⁵

Outside of the locations in DC, there are two other facilities: the High-Density Storage Facility (2002) in Fort Meade, Maryland, and the Packard Campus for Audio Visual Conservation (2007) in Culpeper, Virginia. The library includes facilities in Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.²⁶

Supreme Court Building



Supreme Court Building

The United States Supreme Court is the highest court in the country. They have the final say over all laws and cases. If there's a question about whether something is constitutional, they make that decision.²⁷

The Supreme Court's authority comes from The United States Constitution, which was put in place ("ratified") on June 21, 1788, the day the ninth state (out of thirteen states) accepted the proposed Constitution.²⁸

The Supreme Court is the only federal court specified by the Constitution (which gives Congress the right to create other "inferior" federal courts). The Constitution created the Supreme Court, and later legislation—the Judiciary Act of

1789, signed by George Washington on September 24, 1789—put it into operation by defining its structure, setting the number of Justices, and establishing how the Court would function.²⁹

On February 1, 1790, the Supreme Court first met in the Royal Exchange building in New York City. It had nothing to decide, and it did not make any decisions.³⁰ It then met in Philadelphia until the capital of the United States moved to Washington DC in 1800, when the Court did not have its own courtroom. It met in several different locations over the years (11 locations), mostly in the Senate area of the Capitol, depending on the year. During the War of 1812, the Supreme Court met in a private residence in Washington DC. However, it never had a permanent home until 1935, when the new Supreme Court Building was dedicated.³¹

The Supreme Court term begins on the first Monday in October and runs nine months.

The Capitol Building



The Capitol Building

Construction of the Capitol building began in 1793 and was designed by Dr. William Thornton, a physician and amateur architect living in Philadelphia during that time. The Capitol building is divided: the Senate Building is on the north side, and the House of Representatives Building is on the south side. On each side of the Capitol Dome, you will see seemingly windowed turrets above what might look like hallways that connect to the Senate and House Buildings. But those aren't hallways. Those are the original House and Senate Buildings. There was also a much smaller dome.³²

But when new States become part of the Union, not only do we need more stars on the flag, but with new Senators and more Representatives, we need bigger chambers. In the late

1850s, larger chambers for both the Senate and House of Representatives were completed. The larger chambers on each side of the Capitol Building made the dome look small, so the Architect of the Capitol asked to be allowed to build a new dome, which he was permitted to complete. This dome you see was completed during the Civil War and was made of cast iron. It is painted to look like the rest of the building.³³

On top of the Capitol dome is the Statue of Freedom, a female form wearing Stars and Stripes carrying a sword and a shield. Aside from that, she's wearing an eagle with 9 stars as a helmet and facing east, which is officially the front of the Capitol. For many people, including myself, the west side of the Capitol looks like the front. This is the side we usually see as we're visiting museums. All the swearing-ins of the Presidents of the United States since Ronald Reagan have occurred on the west side. Prior to that (from 1829 to 1977), those swearing-ins occurred on the east side, with some minor exceptions because of inclement weather (Taft's 1909 inauguration) or war in combination with the President's poor health (FDR's 4th inauguration).³⁴

Every four years, approximately four months before the inauguration, construction of a stage where the new president's swearing-in will occur. It is built out of wood and painted to look like the rest of the Capitol Building.

The Capitol Building was burned by British troops on August 24, 1814, during the War of 1812. While the fire gutted the interior spaces, the exterior walls survived the attack, allowing for the building's reconstruction rather than complete replacement. At the time, the building was

constructed of wood, with copper plating covering the wood over the dome.³⁵

Ulysses S. Grant Memorial



Ulysses S. Grant Memorial

This memorial honors Ulysses S. Grant. By the end of the Civil War, he was the top general of the Union. Ulysses S. Grant later became President of the United States. In this monument, he looks down the National Mall past the Washington Monument towards his old Commander-in-Chief, Abraham Lincoln. Four lions surround the statue of Grant.³⁶

Two action scenes are happening, one of the artillery and the other of the cavalry – this is the first memorial in the United

States where there's some moving action happening. It's the largest equestrian statue in the United States and ranks among the largest in the world.³⁷

There was a contest to determine the sculptor, in which there were twenty-seven designs submitted. This memorial was sculpted by Henry Merwin Shrady – son of one of Grant's physicians – and dedicated in 1922.³⁸

Beyond this, the location of the sculpture also offers a great view of the National Mall, and on a clear day, you can see all the way down to the other end of the Mall, two miles down to the Lincoln Memorial.

Garfield Memorial



Garfield Memorial

On the west side of the Capitol stands the Garfield Memorial. The Garfield statue honors James A. Garfield, a Senator, a Major General in the Civil War, and President of the United States for just a few months before being shot. He didn't die of the bullet itself but sepsis (blood infection) 89 days later. He was shot by a former supporter who believed that he had done political work on Garfield's behalf and deserved an ambassador appointment. He confronted Garfield at a train station, which is now the National Gallery of Art (East Building), and shot him.³⁹

Monument of Peace



Monument of Peace

This is my favorite statue in all of Washington DC. It's the first monument in the country where some sort of remorse is shown about war. Admiral David D. Porter commissioned it after the Civil War in honor of all the Union Sailors and Marines who fought and died in that war. It was carved in Italy by American sculptor Franklin Simmons. It was supposed to end up at Annapolis, Maryland (not too far from Washington DC) where the Naval Academy is. However, it ended up on the Capitol grounds, which is great because we get to see it on the National Mall.⁴⁰

The symbolism is as follows: on the left, crying, is *Grief*. *Grief* is crying on the shoulders of *History*, or some say *America*. Below holding the wreath is *Victory*. And at *Victory's* feet are the little baby gods of *war* (holding the Scabbard) and the *sea* (which held a trident until it disappeared sometime in 2022). *Peace*, possibly in the form of a sea nymph, is on the other side of the Monument facing the Capitol.⁴¹

The Capitol Reflecting Pool



The Capitol Reflecting Pool

Dedicated in 1971, the Capitol Reflecting Pool was created to welcome pedestrians and discourage cars on the Mall. Instead of trees or plants, they made a shallow reflecting pool because there's a highway that goes underneath: Interstate 395's Third Street Tunnel. There was concern that the roots of trees might interfere with the highway below. ⁴²

The pool complements the more iconic reflecting pool at the other end of the Mall between the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument.

Mead Memorial



Mead Memorial

Graduating from West Point in 1835, George Meade was a military officer best known for leading the Northern forces at the Battle of Gettysburg during the Civil War. Meade won and beat General Robert E. Lee's army.

Charles Grafly was the sculptor of this memorial, born in Pennsylvania. The original location of this statue was just west of the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial, which is now the Capitol Reflecting Pool. This memorial was dedicated in 1927 and placed in its current location in 1983.⁴³

A winged male figure is on the rear side of the sculpture, the embodiment of *War*.



War on the Back Side of the Mead Memorial

On the sides, six figures represent the qualities of a military leader, Chivalry, Progress, Loyalty, Military Courage, Energy, and Fame. Some references indicate the state seal of Pennsylvania is on top of the memorial (golden color, held by the wings of *War*). However, an inspection will reveal this adornment looks nothing like the Pennsylvania state seal.

The Presidential Parade Route



The Presidential Parade Route

The Presidential parade route spans from the Capitol Building to the White House down Pennsylvania Avenue. This is the route the president takes after being sworn in on the west side of the Capitol. The President will walk, drive – or both – all the way down until they reach the White House.⁴⁴

Several federal buildings and locations, including the National Archives and the FBI Building, line the route.

The National Archives



The National Archives

Founded in 1934, the National Archives keeps records for the United States. Before it was created, individual agencies and departments were responsible for keeping their records.

The National Archives Building initially opened in 1935 (even before it was fully completed) and was dedicated in 1937. John Russell Pope designed it. One criticism was that the building looked like a crypt.

Inside the National Archives Building are the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, one copy of the Magna Carta, the Louisiana Purchase, and the Emancipation Proclamation. You can enter through the

ground-level entrance on Constitution Avenue (the building is bounded by 7th and 9th Streets), which became the main public entrance following a 2003 renovation that improved accessibility.⁴⁵

The Navy Memorial



The Navy Memorial

This memorial is in honor of all Navy personnel and Marines throughout the years and was dedicated in 1987.⁴⁶ The base of the memorial is a map of the Seven Seas. You will also see a statue of the Lone Sailor.⁴⁷ The statue's sea bag bears the initials and name of William Thompson – the Navy Memorial Foundation's first president and CEO, who championed the memorial – as a tribute to his efforts (the

actual model for the statue was Petty Officer First Class Dan Maloney).⁴⁸

In the back of the Navy Memorial is a small mini Museum on the United States naval military history.

Old Post Office



Old Post Office

Now a hotel, the Old Post Office was originally dedicated as a new post office in 1899.⁴⁹ Since mid-2022, the hotel has been a Waldorf Astoria. Prior to that, it was the Trump International Hotel. The Trump organization paid three million dollars a year to rent the space, which I think is interesting because the building initially cost three million

dollars to build. The Trump Organization sold its lease on the Trump International Hotel for \$375 million to CGI Merchant Group, which reopened the property as a Waldorf Astoria in June 2022.⁵⁰

The rule is that the existing structure cannot be drilled or carved into. Elements or changes can be added to the outside of the existing structure. Originally, the building was built as the central post office for Washington DC. And this is why it's appropriate that a statue of Benjamin Franklin is out front – America's first Postmaster General. The statue was dedicated in 1889, originally located at 10th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, and it moved to its current location in 1980.⁵¹

William Jefferson Clinton Federal Building



William Jefferson Clinton Federal Building

The William Jefferson Clinton Building – running along Constitution Avenue (from the American History Museum), all the way from 14th Street to 12th Street and then along 12th Street until it hits Pennsylvania Avenue – is a very large building. Thirteenth Street would have intersected Constitution Avenue, but the building is now in its place.⁵²

What is this large building? It's the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). My only question is: how much of the environment is needed to keep or cool that thing?

The building was dedicated in 1934.⁵³ The Department of Labor and Interstate Commerce Commission were the original occupants, but the Department of Labor left in 1979 (Customs came to the building in 1979 and left again in the 1990s when they moved to the Reagan Building), and the Interstate Commerce Commission left in 1995. In 2002 after renovations, the EPA came in.

Ronald Reagan Building



Ronald Reagan Building

Opened in 1998, the Reagan Building was championed by a prominent Democratic legislator, Daniel Patrick Moynihan.⁵⁴ He wanted the building built, but he knew that he would not get it done without Republican support. So he

had it named the *Reagan Building* and got the building built.⁵⁵

The government uses about 80% of the space, and about 1200 events happen there every year.⁵⁶

Wilson Office Building



John A. Wilson Office Building

As you go down Pennsylvania Avenue towards the Capitol from the White House, you'll see the Freedom Plaza on the left and the John A. Wilson office building to the right. Sometimes people forget that Washington DC has a mayor and a city council. The Wilson building is where they operate.

Dedicated in 1908 as the District Building, what is now known as The Wilson Building, was named after John Wilson, a DC City Council member. There are two statues on each side of the building: former Mayor Marion Barry stands at the northeast corner, his 8-foot bronze figure captured mid-wave as the city's 'Mayor for Life,' while Alexander 'Boss' Shepherd, the controversial 'Father of Modern Washington,' stands at the northwest corner.⁵⁷

Marion Barry was a member of the District Council and Mayor. He served as Mayor twice, from 1979 to 1991 and then again from 1995 to 1999. In the 1960s, he was involved in the civil rights movement.



Statue of Mayor Marion Barry

Barry was a politician who became infamous in 1990 when he was arrested for smoking crack cocaine.⁵⁸ Despite his

arrest and imprisonment, Barry was popular with DC residents. After being mayor, he served the city's poorest constituents as Ward 8's council member.

Alexander Robey Shepherd ("Boss Shepherd") was a big-city political boss of the Gilded Age (1870's to about 1900) who is known as "The Father of Modern Washington." In 1870, Washington City was suffering from the consequences of war and mismanagement. The Democrats and Republicans felt a drastic change was needed.



Statue of Alexander Robey Shepherd

Shepherd proposed abolishing the elected governments of Washington City and Georgetown. When he was governor, 60,000 trees were planted, and the first public transportation system in the form of horse-drawn streetcars was built. Shepherd was responsible for the demolition of the Northern

Liberties Market, which resulted in the deaths of two people.⁵⁹

Casimir Pulaski Statue



Casimir Pulaski Statue

Pulaski came over from Poland and helped train the Continental Army in the use of horses in battle. He is considered the father of the US Cavalry. Some historians say he saved George Washington's life, and depending on which one you listen to, he saved George Washington's life up to three different times.⁶⁰

He died in battle at 34 years of age, and he became a martyr of the American Revolution. There are *Pulaski* roads, highways, and towns all over the country, as well as ships, a firefighting tool, and even a holiday given his name in Illinois.⁶¹

The statue of Casimir Pulaski is on the east side of Freedom Plaza (across from a 24-hour CVS and a coffee shop) and was dedicated on May 11, 1910.⁶²

Freedom Plaza



Freedom Plaza

The plaza was dedicated in 1980 as Western Plaza but was renamed in 1988 as Freedom Plaza in honor of Martin Luther King Jr., who worked on his *I Have a Dream* speech not too

far from the plaza in the Willard Hotel. Currently, a large map covers the plaza depicting the city as Pierre Charles L'Enfant originally envisioned it.⁶³

Department of Treasury Building



Department of Treasury Building

When looking at the Department of Treasury, you see that it is very long. It's so long that it obstructs the Capitol's view if viewed from the White House.

Why is that? The lore is that President Andrew Jackson had the opportunity to decide where the Treasury Building would go. Since he famously did not get along with Congress, he asked that the building be placed at its current location so he

“would not see those #@!#%! at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.” (Or words to that effect.)⁶⁴

The first stand-alone section of this building was built in 1842. Other sections were added in later years, making it an enclosed structure with courtyards in the middle.⁶⁵

Alexander Hamilton Statue



Alexander Hamilton Statue

On the Department of Treasury’s south side is a statue of Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton was a Founding Father and the first Secretary of the Treasury.⁶⁶ The statue was designed by James Earle Fraser and dedicated in 1923. Charles Atlas (“Hey, quit kicking sand in our faces”) was a model for the statue.⁶⁷

Albert Gallatin Statue



Albert Gallatin Statue

On the north side of the Department of Treasury is a statue representing Albert Gallatin. This statue was designed by James Earle Fraser and dedicated in 1947.⁶⁸

Now, if you look at the statue and think that it looks a little bit like George Washington, that's okay; it just goes to show that so many of the statues in Washington DC look alike.

Gallatin was the fourth Secretary of the Treasury. Why does he have a statue when there's no statue for the second or the third Secretary of the Treasury?

You might know that Jefferson and Hamilton did not always see eye-to-eye, especially when it came to issues of the federal government. _Jefferson was concerned about too

much centralization of power, which he thought would be dangerous.

But Hamilton grew up in Nevis, in the British West Indies under British rule, and he saw that things worked – and he wanted things to work for the United States. Therefore, he was in favor of a more centralized treasury.

Unfortunately for Jefferson's vision, the Department of Treasury was set up under Hamilton, so things were much more centralized.

The lore is that Gallatin turns to him and says something to the effect of, "*It is a perfect system, do not change a thing!*" So Gallatin gets a statue. In actuality, when Gallatin became Treasury Secretary under Jefferson, he maintained much of Hamilton's financial system while successfully reducing the national debt. Though Jefferson and Gallatin had opposed Hamilton politically, Gallatin recognized the value of the existing system and preserved its fundamental structure while implementing his own reforms.

But Gallatin was much more than that. He was a minister to France. He was a minister to England. He served as both a Senator and a Representative, though his Senate tenure was extremely brief – he was elected in 1793 but removed within months due to citizenship requirements. He then won election to the House of Representatives in 1795, where he served with distinction. He ran the entire federal government on behalf of the president when the president was away (which was a lot). But he was born in Geneva, Switzerland – outside the United States – therefore, he could not be President of the United States.⁶⁹

The Willard InterContinental



The Willard InterContinental

This is the oldest hotel in Washington. The Willard's history began with 1816 as a row of six houses built at the corner of 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, but it became a hotel in 1818. The Willard brothers then leased the hotel in 1847, united the buildings, and it was rebuilt in 1901 as the structure seen today.⁷⁰

This is the hotel where they hid President Lincoln before he was sworn in during his first term, as they were worried about his safety. He was there for ten days (February 23 to March 4, 1861), and his family was there with him. They ate there, drank there, had staff do errands for them, and even had staff move things for them, so you can imagine their bill was pretty high – it was \$773.75. Lincoln could not afford to

pay the bill. He had to wait till he got his first presidential paycheck before he could pay.⁷¹

You can still see a copy of Lincoln's itemized bill on display in the History Gallery of the hotel. The History Gallery can be found if you go through the front entrance, down the red carpet all the way to the back of the building, and on the left, before you leave out the other side (or immediately to the right if you come in the F Street entrance).⁷²

The Willard is also where Mrs. Grant sent President Grant every time he would try to smoke cigars. Grant was rumored to have smoked 11 cigars a day. Mrs. Grant didn't want him smoking up the White House, so she would send him to the Willard. Pretty soon, people got to know Grant's habits: when he would eat, drink, and smoke at the Willard – they would wait for him in the lobby to attempt to get special treatment, special jobs, special contracts with the government, etc.⁷³

The Willard says that Grant would sometimes come into the lobby and say something to the effect of "these pesky lobbyists" because they were waiting in the lobby for him. The implication was that the term *lobbyist* was coined at the hotel – which is not true – but the term did become more popular in the United States from Grant using it.⁷⁴

The Willard is also where Martin Luther King finalized the edits to his *I Have a Dream* speech in 1963. The evening before the march, he worked in the lobby with his closest advisors, believing it would be harder for the FBI to wiretap than a hotel room.⁷⁵

If you look at the main hotel, you will see there's a bit of the Willard that connects to the Hotel Washington and that it's a slightly different coloration. This is an addition that was added in the 1980s.⁷⁶

World War I Memorial



World War I Memorial

Across from the Willard is the World War I Memorial. This Memorial was dedicated in early 2021, and it is an add-on to the General Pershing Memorial that was there before. General Pershing was the commander of the American Expeditionary Force in World War I.⁷⁷

The World War I Memorial, which opened in 2021, received its final element—Sabin Howard's '*A Soldier's Journey*'—in

September 2024. This 58-foot-long, 25-ton bronze relief depicting 38 figures was unveiled during a ‘First Illumination’ ceremony on September 13, 2024, completing the memorial at Washington’s Pershing Park.⁷⁸

General William T. Sherman Monument



General William T. Sherman Monument

Just south of the Treasury Building and just west of the World War I memorial is the General William Tecumseh Sherman Monument.

By the end of the Civil War, Sherman was considered the second-highest-ranking General on the Northern side, just below Ulysses S. Grant. He actually graduated West Point before Grant, and at times, he outranked Grant.⁷⁹

Sometimes people from the Southern part of the United States don't like to hear about Sherman so much (depending on who they are and how they were educated). Why? Sherman is the general who burned Atlanta and presented Savannah to Lincoln as a Christmas gift (meaning he didn't destroy Savannah, but he captured it).⁸⁰

Sherman and his troops had a motto, "Make Georgia Howl!" Much of Sherman's focus was on destroying (and capturing) the crops because Georgia was the state that was known for growing crops – including cotton, used for clothing and uniforms –for the rest of the Confederacy.⁸¹

In Sherman's mind, it was all for a good cause. He wanted to end the Civil War quickly. He thought that putting pressure on industry and agriculture outside the battlefield could end the war quicker. Because of this, many historians credit Sherman with a doctrine called *Total War*. Even today, we think about weapons of mass destruction pointed at each other from other countries, many historians credit Sherman with creating this doctrine of *Total War*.⁸²

Before the Civil War, the Governor of Louisiana invited Sherman to help start the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning and Military Academy, the predecessor to LSU. As Superintendent of the school, Sherman got the money together, organized the institution, and recruited the cadets. They loved his gruff and grumpy ways – this is the school that eventually became Louisiana State University, but pretty soon, Sherman realized he was training the future officer corps for what would become the Confederate Army, and he got out of there. However, there is currently no

indication on the LSU campus itself that Sherman was such an instrumental part of its creation.⁸³

The memorial commemorating Sherman was designed by Carl Rohl-Smith, and it was dedicated in 1903. The Memorial's location is where Sherman reviewed the Army of the Potomac on May 23, 1865 (and the same spot where he led the parade of the Army of the Tennessee one day later).⁸⁴

Department of Commerce



Department of Commerce

The department was initially created as the United States Department of Commerce and Labor on February 14, 1903.⁸⁵

The Department of Commerce building, finished in 1932, is very long and stretches from Constitution Avenue to Pennsylvania Avenue (between 14th Street and 15th Street). At one point, it was considered the largest office building in the world (until the Pentagon was dedicated in the 1940s).⁸⁶

But what *is* the Department of Commerce? I say it's the place the US government puts the agencies they don't know where else to put. A few of the current offices that are part of the Department of Commerce:⁸⁷

- Census Bureau (1790)
- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) (1901)
- NOAA (1970)
- Patent and Trademark Office (1952)

If you look carefully between each pair of flags on the west side of the building, you will see shields representing existing, defunct, transferred, or merged functions of the Department of Commerce, including:

- Lighthouse Service (1789)
- Coast & Geodetic Survey (1807)
- Steamboat Inspection (1838)
- Bureau of Fisheries (1871)
- The Radio Division (1911)
- The Patent Office (1802)⁸⁸

Despite my earlier jest, I think there's at least a thread of connection between each related to the idea of commerce.

Boy Scout Memorial



Boy Scout Memorial

Across from the Department of Commerce on 15th Street is a statue commemorating scouting. There's a Boy Scout in front and two almost parental-like figures a bit behind him on each side. A small pond is in front of the figures. The sculptor is Donald De Lue, and the memorial was dedicated in 1964.⁸⁹

Original Patentees of District of Columbia Memorial



Original Patentees of District of Columbia Memorial

This easy-to-miss memorial was dedicated in 1936. It is a simple stone memorial that honors those whose land eventually became part of the federal city now known as Washington DC. If you're looking for the memorial, remember that it's quite small at just 7 feet tall compared to the other memorials on the National Mall. It is right next to the Boy Scout Memorial. The architect was Delos Smith. Carl Mose carved the symbols in relief on the memorial.⁹⁰

The Washington Monument



The Washington Monument

The Washington Monument was started in 1848, but it wasn't completed until 1884 (It was dedicated in 1885 and opened to the public in 1888).⁹²

If you look at the Washington Monument, you'll see that there's a slight change in color about a third of the way up. This is because a private organization was responsible for building the memorial – they built the monument to that level where we see the change of color – and then they ran out of money: they went bankrupt. It stood at that level for 23 years (through the Civil War). Some people complained to Congress wanting the memorial taken down. But Congress debated it, and they went the other way –they did what some called the first-ever “Congressional bailout” –

and Congress commissioned the Army Corps of Engineers to finish the monument.⁹³

The Army Corps of Engineers went to the first quarry that was used to supply the stone to build the memorial, based in an area called Texas, Maryland (just outside of Baltimore). They couldn't quite match up the stone to the original shade.⁹⁴

They then went to another quarry in Sheffield, Massachusetts, in which case they still couldn't quite match up the stone (three layers come from this quarry).⁹⁵

At that point, they realized they were not going to be able to match up the stone. So they went back to Maryland to a quarry in Cockeysville and finished the monument using stone from this quarry.⁹⁶

The Army Corps of Engineers also changed the design. Initially, there was going to be an eight-sided base highlighting various Revolutionary War heroes. Robert Mills's original 1845 design called for a 600-foot tall structure consisting of a 500-foot obelisk rising from a 100-foot high circular colonnade. The design included a statue of George Washington driving a chariot with six horses, which was to be positioned on top of the colonnade at the base. The colonnade was to have also featured statues of 30 Revolutionary War heroes and the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, but budget constraints led to building only the plain obelisk we see today, which stands at 555 feet.⁹⁷

Instead, the Army Corps of Engineers decided to build a pencil-shaped structure called an obelisk. When they

finished, it was the world's tallest human-made structure, and it kept that record for just a couple of years until the Eiffel Tower surpassed it in height.⁹⁸

The Washington Monument is still the world's tallest freestanding stone structure. Some say it's the world's tallest obelisk, although some disagree because they say that an obelisk should be carved out of one single stone, and the Washington Monument is not carved out of a single stone.⁹⁹

They started building the memorial again in 1879 after the Civil War. In 1886, Otis Brothers & Company installed a steam-powered passenger elevator. It was very powerful because of the pressure from the steam. Since this was the world's tallest human-made structure, it was a bit experimental: there was a safety concern about letting people use this elevator.

They decided males would be the guinea pigs. The women and children could take the 898 steps up to the top (currently 897 steps). And there is conjecture that men may have been served a little bit of alcohol on the way up to calm their nerves. This lasted for about three months. And then they opened it up to everyone. At the time it took 12 minutes to get to the top, and now it only takes just a couple of minutes.

An earthquake in 2011 caused some structural damage to the Monument. It also caused damage to the elevator but this was unknown until 2014, when some visitors got stuck at the top of the Monument. The Monument was shut until mid-September 2019 to repair the damage.¹⁰⁰

During the time they took to repair the elevator, they created a visitor screening facility. The cube-like glass structure at

the bottom near the entrance of the Washington Monument is a visitor's screening facility that opened in 2019 at the cost of \$10.7 million.¹⁰¹

Forest Service

The US Forest Service was founded in 1905 and is part of the Department of Agriculture.¹⁰² The headquarters is housed in the red brick Yates Federal Building, built in 1879. This building used to be the home of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.¹⁰³

Holocaust Memorial Museum



Holocaust Memorial Museum

Dedicated in 1993, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum presents exhibits on Holocaust and human rights topics.¹⁰⁴ The museum is not part of the Smithsonian. On the 14th Street side, there are two sculptures entitled *Loss and Regeneration* by Joel Shapiro. One is seemingly a house turned upside down. The other figure – some say it looks like a crumpled swastika, others say it’s a falling man – is a tree-like form representing renewal. The main entrance is on the 14th side of the museum.¹⁰⁵

Bureau of Engraving and Printing



Bureau of Engraving and Printing

The Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) building is where the paper money is printed. Currently, we’re very

used to using paper money. However, it wasn't until Civil War times that federal paper money was printed, essentially small documents indicating that the government owed the person who held it "real" money in exchange for the document. Congress authorized the issuance of paper money in July 1861 to help fund the Civil War, and the Treasury Department was authorized to engrave and print notes at its facilities by the act of July 11, 1862—the date considered the Bureau's founding. The Bureau of Engraving and Printing was officially recognized as a separate bureau by Congress in 1874.¹⁰⁶

You can actually see the paper money being made by getting advanced free tickets. Pre-pandemic, you could get tickets on the west side of the building, just a little bit north of the main stairs from a little kiosk. At the time of this writing tickets are released from the east side of the building at the visitor center. You should try to get tickets as early as you can in the day, sometime before 10:30 am. The earlier you go, the better your chance of picking your desired entry time and getting tickets.

At the end of the tour, you'll end up in a gift shop where you can buy all sorts of monetary oddities, including sheets of money, shredded money, and money in pens.

If you know anybody who is in the military and they ever complain about how long it takes to physically receive an award, decoration, or medal, part of the reason is that the certificates that accompany that award, decoration, or medal (and commissions too) get engraved at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

There are actually two Bureau of Engraving and Printing buildings; one in Washington DC (1914) and one in Fort Worth, Texas (operations started in 1990, dedicated in 1991). The BEP produces billions of Federal Reserve notes annually. Based on recent Federal Reserve orders, the Bureau produces approximately 5-7 billion notes per year, though specific daily production figures vary based on demand and denomination mix.¹⁰⁷

Tidal Basin



Tidal Basin in foreground with Jefferson Memorial in the background

As you approach the Jefferson Memorial, you will likely see a large lake, the Tidal Basin. The Tidal Basin is a human-made body of water dredged out over 20 years by the Army Corps of Engineers. They created a large bowl that collects water before it floods Washington DC from the Potomac River just on the southwest side.¹⁰⁸

There are three major memorials on the Tidal Basin: the Jefferson Memorial, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial (FDR), and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. The George Mason Memorial is a smaller memorial located on the route between the Jefferson Memorial and the FDR Memorial.¹⁰⁹

If you see some people using paddle boats in the Tidal Basin, know that these are the only watercraft allowed in the Tidal Basin. Paddle boating has been a popular activity at the Tidal Basin since the late 1930s, offering visitors unique views of the surrounding monuments. The activity has become especially beloved during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival when the Tidal Basin's famous cherry trees are in bloom. They can be rented seasonally near the entrance to the parking lot where 15th Street / Raoul Wallenberg Place intersects Maine Avenue near the Tidal Basin (just south of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing).¹¹⁰

The Jefferson Memorial



The Jefferson Memorial

One of three major memorials on the Tidal Basin is the Jefferson Memorial constructed in honor of Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson was the first Secretary of State and the third President of the United States. He spoke four languages, and he was able to read and write two other languages. He was a self-taught architect, a self-taught winemaker, and he wrote the Declaration of Independence on his own (with some help from John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Robert R. Livingston, and Roger Sherman).¹¹¹

Jefferson was also a large slaveholder in Virginia. And he also tried to get rid of slavery in Virginia – unsuccessfully. There was an interest in building a memorial to him for a

long time. But they didn't start this memorial until the late 1930s. In the late 1930s, when people heard about the idea of maybe destroying cherry blossom trees to build the memorial, there was something called the "Cherry Tree Rebellion."¹¹²

The protesters, mostly women students from Georgetown University, presented a petition to the White House and then around 150 protesters came to the future site of the Jefferson Memorial, and they chained themselves to trees.¹¹³

The president at the time was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He did not send in the police; he did not send in the military. He is rumored to have said, "Serve them lemonade!"

And what he did was have the Department of Interior serve them all a meal. And after the meal, lots and lots of coffee. And as nature took its course, the protesters soon had to use the facilities. And when they did, the government was able to gain access to the land and build the Memorial.¹¹⁴

One of the things that FDR promised the protesters is that the government would not destroy any trees. Instead, they would move the trees. But, because FDR knew and the Department of Interior knew that you might lose about 10% or more of the trees when you move trees. So to avoid confrontation, the National Park Service moved the trees in the middle of the night.¹¹⁵

The Jefferson Memorial was dedicated in 1943.¹¹⁶ But because it was during World War II, there were wartime needs for metal. Therefore, the original Jefferson statue was made of plaster.

As you go into the Memorial (If you're starting from the concession stand near E. Basin Drive), go down and to the left around the Memorial until you get to the main stairs. If you go to the right of the stairs (or on the left side of the main stairs as well), there's a little door that will take you to the bathrooms, a mini-museum, two gift shops, and an elevator to get to the main floor if you don't want to (or can't) take the stairs.

John Russell Pope designed the Jefferson Memorial to honor Thomas Jefferson's ideals that all are created equal and should have an inalienable right to life, liberty, and happiness. It's made from granite and marble. The design resembles Monticello, the home he designed. It also looks like one of the main buildings at the University of Virginia, the Rotunda. Thomas Jefferson founded the University of Virginia, and Jefferson stated that this was his main accomplishment in his life.¹¹⁷

Despite concern before construction that few people would visit this memorial on the other side of the Tidal Basin, it has become one of the most iconic monuments in Washington DC. At the time of this writing the memorial is undergoing renovation, so the mini-museum and gift shops are closed. However, temporary bathrooms are operational on the south side entrance to the memorial.

George Mason Memorial



George Mason Memorial

There is a memorial not too far from the Jefferson Memorial called *Forgotten Founder*. It's an honor of George Mason. If you don't know who George Mason is, that's okay because he's America's forgotten founder.¹¹⁸

As you get close to the memorial, you will see an etching that says, "George Mason, the author of America's first Bill of Rights." You actually have to look all the way down inside the enclosed area to see the statue of George Mason. The statue of Mason is sitting there relaxing, reading three books: a book by Locke, a book by Rousseau, and a book by Cicero.

George Mason was a founding father and a mentor to the founding fathers. Thomas Jefferson called him the smartest man of his generation. Mason was a mentor to George Washington. Mason refused to sign the Constitution of the United States for two reasons. First, the Constitution did not guarantee individual liberties – a bill of rights – and secondly, it didn’t end the slave trade.¹¹⁹

James Madison and others said that a bill of rights wasn’t necessary because “The government can only exert the powers specified by the Constitution.” In other words, he was saying something to the effect of “If it doesn’t say that an individual can’t do it, they can do it.”¹²⁰

But George Mason felt that there should be articulated individual liberties. And he insisted on this so much so that he threatened to pull Virginia out of the United States even before the states became the United States (and New York did the same) until a compromise was reached – the Massachusetts Compromise – where the first ten amendments to the Constitution would guarantee individual liberties: freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, etc.¹²¹

The Massachusetts Compromise was a key factor in the ratification of the Constitution. It allowed for amendments, specifically including ones related to individual liberties, to be added (even though some “Federalists” previously insisted that states could make no changes after accepting or rejecting the constitution as written). With this compromise, they agreed to support these proposed amendments, and with them came an increase in popularity among Anti federalist politicians who opposed ratifying.¹²²

Regarding slavery, George Mason wrote on the subject:

*...that slow poison, which is daily contaminating the minds and morals of our people. Every gentleman here is born a petty tyrant. Practiced in acts of despotism and cruelty, we become callous to the dictates of humanity and all the finer feelings of the soul. Taught to regard a part of our own species in the most abject and contemptible degree below us, we lose that idea of the dignity of man, which the hand of nature had implanted in us, for great and useful purposes.*¹²³

And although Mason spoke against slavery, it is interesting that he was a very large slaveholder in Virginia. Some ask how he could be such a fervent abolitionist and yet still be a prominent slaveholder.¹²⁴

The Inlet Bridge



The Inlet Bridge

The Inlet Bridge was dedicated in 1909 and is found between the George Mason Memorial and the FDR Memorial.¹²⁵

From this bridge, you can look over the Potomac River into Virginia to see the Air Force Memorial (designed by James Ingo Freed and dedicated in 2006), the three large spires coming out of the ground. Each one of those spires represents contrails – the smoke that comes out of the back of an aircraft.¹²⁶

Just to the left of the Air Force Memorial, you can see the Navy–Merchant Marine Memorial (aka “Waves and Gulls”), designed by Harvey Wiley Corbett and sculpted by Ernesto

Begni del Piatta. It was dedicated in 1935 but not fully completed until 1939.¹²⁷

To the left of the Navy–Merchant Marine Memorial and rising above the bridge next to it, you will see one side of the Pentagon, the headquarters of the US military.

Everyone knows that the Pentagon is in Washington DC. Orders or letters from the Pentagon memorandums say “The Pentagon, Washington DC,” but if you look around it and see those buildings to the left or the right, they are clearly in Virginia on the other side of the Potomac. However, one renegade historical perspective says the Pentagon was built in Washington DC.

And here’s how this goes. The dividing line between Washington DC and Virginia is not the middle of the Potomac River but is actually the shoreline on the Virginia side. Therefore all the islands between one side and another are all technically part of Washington DC. And although it doesn’t look like much of an island now, the Pentagon was built on an island – Alexander Island – so some historians say that the Pentagon was actually built in Washington DC. Many if not most historians dispute this claim.¹²⁸

On the north side of the bridge, you’ll see two identical gargoyles. I think they look like a cross between Richard Nixon and a whale. But in actuality, each gargoyle is a commemoration of Manus “Jack” Fish, a former head of the National Capital Region’s National Park Service. He was part of the National Park Service for 36 years. His name was Fish, so around 1987, they made him into a fish and made him part of the bridge. The artist was Constantine Seferlis.¹²⁹

Robert E. Lee's Old Home - Arlington National Cemetery



Robert E. Lee's Old Home - Arlington National Cemetery

From across the Potomac from Ohio Drive (or the backside of the Lincoln Memorial looking across Memorial Bridge), you see General Robert E. Lee's old home. Robert E. Lee was the head of the Army of Northern Virginia, and eventually, he was the head of the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Currently, this structure is called Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial.¹³⁰

When the Civil War started, the North decided that they couldn't let Robert E. Lee live in his home just across the river. They felt it was a strategic point. They sent troops over and captured the area unopposed. Lee was elsewhere, and he

instructed his family to leave as well. The North put several people in charge of that area, but eventually, General Montgomery Meigs – a fellow graduate of West Point who at one point served under Lee in the Army Corps of Engineers – took over. Meigs felt that Robert E. Lee was a traitor. Keep in mind who Robert E. Lee was. He was the number two graduate at West Point with zero demerits. Later in his life, he became the person in charge of arguably the most elite unit in the Army, the Army Corps of Engineers.
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Because of his illustrious career, Lincoln asked Lee to lead the Union Army. Lee thought about it, but he decided he did not want to lead an invasion force into the South, which he felt he would have to do if he was in charge of the US Army.
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So Lee declined Lincoln's offer and instead sided with the Confederacy. This might have given the Confederacy a boost because he brought legitimacy to a plan that might not have gone very far if it did not have a few key figures' help. When the Civil War became less civil – and people started dying in various battlefields in the area – Meigs went to the various battlefields and brought back bodies of soldiers and started burying them all over the Lee property, including Mrs. Lee's Rose Garden. This is how Arlington National Cemetery started.¹³³

A little to the left of Arlington House from the Washington DC side, you'll see the Tomb of the Unknowns and The Changing of the Guard. At night when looking across the Potomac, you can see the flicker of John F. Kennedy's

Eternal Flame from Ohio Drive and the point just south of the Lincoln Memorial. ¹³⁴

Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial



Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial

The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial was dedicated in 1997. There are four outdoor “rooms”, each room dedicated to a term FDR had in office. FDR was the United States’ longest-serving President. He was elected four times and served three full terms and a little bit of a fourth term before he passed away. ¹³⁵

In 2001, because of pressure from disability advocacy groups, a statue was added of FDR sitting in a wheelchair. This was not an easy statue to create because there were only

two remaining photographs of FDR sitting in a wheelchair (now there are three, but back then, there were only two).¹³⁶

It was a secret that FDR needed a wheelchair. When he was governor of New York, people knew that he used leg braces to walk. But by the time he became President, he didn't want people to know he needed a wheelchair. He even had the various cars he owned modified such that he could operate them using his hands rather than his legs. Many times when he was standing up, he was braced on each side by another person, concealing the fact that he needed assistance to stand.¹³⁷

The Secret Service helped enforce the secret. But actually, the biggest group who helped the President keep the secret was the press themselves, who had a different relationship with the President than they have today.¹³⁸

There's a story of a mentor photographer telling his mentee to put down the camera when he was about to take a picture of FDR in a wheelchair. Another story is that of the Federal Government going around picking up papers and collecting them when a picture of FDR sitting in a wheelchair was distributed within a local paper.¹³⁹

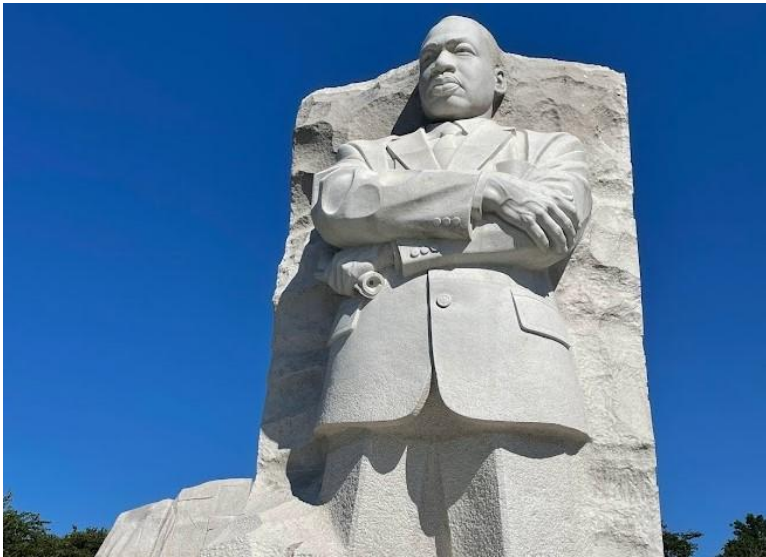
FDR loved his dog. His dog Fala is represented as well when you go inside the memorial. Fala is sitting next to FDR. It is one of the few memorials that welcomes leashed dogs on its grounds and pathways, where visitors can see the statue of Fala, Roosevelt's famous Scottish Terrier.¹⁴⁰

This is also the only Memorial to our President in Washington DC where the first lady is also honored. In addition to her other accomplishments, Eleanor Roosevelt is

considered the first representative to the United Nations on behalf of the United States.¹⁴¹

Bathrooms are found at the start and the end of the memorial.

Martin Luther King Memorial



Martin Luther King Memorial

The Martin Luther King Memorial is called *Stone of Hope*. There is a representation of a mountain, the *Mountain of Despair*. Of course, it's not a real mountain, but it's carved to look like a mountain. Pulled out of the *Mountain of Despair*, Martin Luther King is carved out of a *Stone of Hope*. This is a metaphor from Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech: *Out of a Mountain of Despair, a Stone of Hope*.¹⁴²

The Martin Luther King statue is directly between the Lincoln Memorial and the Jefferson Memorial.¹⁴³ The statue of King is looking towards the statue of Jefferson. Some ask why Martin Luther King, who was fighting for the rights and freedoms of all people, is looking at Jefferson, a slaveholder. One interpretation seems to be that the statue of Martin Luther King is having a visual conversation with the statue of Jefferson saying to him *I am helping realize this idea you wrote about so long ago of all men being created equal*. After you walk in through the *Mountain of Despair*, look for quotes by Martin Luther King to the right and to the left.

DC War Memorial



DC War Memorial

The DC War Memorial is the only non-Federal Memorial that can be found on the National Mall.¹⁴⁴

It is on the Mall-side of Independence Avenue across from the Martin Luther King memorial. It honors DC residents who fought and died in what was known as The Great War, now known as World War I. It's a rotunda with all 499 inscribed names of those DC residents who perished in World War I. The names on the platform are written out in alphabetical order with no distinction made to rank, race, or gender. It was dedicated on Armistice Day 1931, and the entire Marine Corps band played at the ceremony.¹⁴⁵

The Korean War Memorial



The Korean War Memorial

Just south of the Lincoln Memorial, there is a memorial for Korean War veterans. It was built by private contributions, and it was made for people who served in Korea and the 36,574 Americans who died in the war.¹⁴⁶

There are 19 statues made of stainless steel that Frank Gaylord sculpted. Statues of soldiers are larger than life, each 7 feet tall, sometimes called “hero size.” Each service has at least one statue representing them within those 19 soldiers, including four Marines, one Sailor, and one Airman. The Army represents the majority of them (14). The 19 soldiers reflect in the black granite wall, and the combination of the 19 soldiers plus their reflections makes 38.¹⁴⁷

Why is the number 38 important? Well, 38 is indicative of the 38th parallel, where the Korean conflict occurred. You might know that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall has names, but on the right side of the Korean War memorial, the black granite wall is made of etched faces, over 2,400 faces of photos pulled from the National Archives of those that served in Korea.¹⁴⁸

As you get down to the end of those 19 soldiers, there’s a remembrance Pond in honor of all that gave their lives in Korea protecting South Korea, regardless of which country they came from.¹⁴⁹

United States citizens sometimes think about the Korean War as a loss or a draw, but for South Korean people, it was a big win because they’re not under dictatorial rule, and they are thankful to the United States and the United Nations for

saving their country. Every week a Korean military attache will come and present a wreath of flowers at the memorial.

The John Ericsson Memorial



The John Ericsson Memorial

During the Civil War, the United States Navy recruited Swedish-born engineer John Ericsson to design and build an iron-covered warship (called an '*ironclad*'). His creation, the USS Monitor, was built to counter the Confederate ironclad CSS Virginia.¹⁵⁰

If you look at the statue, you can see the figure representing John Ericsson sitting there, perhaps thinking of his next great idea. There are three characters above him. The woman represents *Vision*, the man represents *Labor*, and the

shielded warrior with helmet sword and shield represents *Adventure*.¹⁵¹

John Ericsson was also the inventor of the modern screw propeller, which he perfected by adding a second propeller spinning the opposite direction of the first propeller. If you've ever been on a big ship of any sort (including a cruise ship), he's the one who perfected the technology to allow that voyage to happen. By having two propellers, each going in different directions, he was able to keep ships from overturning. Ericsson was a controls expert from Sweden, recruited by the Union Navy to help the North during the Civil War.¹⁵²

The sculptor was James Earle Fraser, and the memorial was dedicated in 1926.¹⁵³

The Lincoln Memorial



The Lincoln Memorial

This beautiful monument was built to honor President Abraham Lincoln's legacy as one of America's greatest leaders during one of its most difficult times. The memorial features 36 columns representing each US state at the time of his death and a 19-foot-tall marble statue inside depicting him sitting.¹⁵⁴

Each column represents a state that was in the Union when Lincoln was shot. But by the time they finished the memorial and dedicated it in 1922, there were 12 more States. So what did they do? They inscribed the name of all 48 states on the top outside frieze all the way around. That's 48 states. And some might ask, "What about Alaska and Hawaii?"¹⁵⁵

In 1922 Alaska and Hawaii were not part of the Union yet, but eventually became part of the United States. Both states petitioned, and in the 1980s, they were given a plaque on the first landing as you go up the stairs towards the Lincoln Memorial. On that plaque, there is wording recognizing that Alaska and Hawaii would eventually become part of the United States.¹⁵⁶

One of my favorite things about this Memorial is looking down past the Washington Monument to see the beauty of the National Mall.

As you go up the stairs at the last landing, before you go inside, there's a very small inscription that says, "I HAVE A DREAM" exactly where Martin Luther King gave his *I Have a Dream* speech. This is a great place to turn around and look at the National Mall. Inside to the right is a small bookstore with excellent books and souvenirs related to Lincoln and the National Mall.¹⁵⁷

As you move towards the memorial, on the left-hand side, is a pathway that goes all the way up to the left side of the stairs. Following this pathway will take you to a door. If you go into that door, you will find bathrooms, water fountains, a mini Museum, and an elevator to the main platform if you don't want to take the stairs. There's also a sloping pathway on the right-hand side of the memorial.

When the sculptor, Daniel Chester French, saw the enormous size of the Lincoln Memorial building as it was being built he realized that his original Lincoln statue design would be too small; he redid it to be three times as large as he originally planned.¹⁵⁸

As you walk into the building, inscribed on the left side of the memorial is the Gettysburg Address, and on the right side is Lincoln's second inaugural address.¹⁵⁹

Some say that Lincoln's hands are in the shape of a sign language "A" (for "Abraham") on one hand and a very sloppy sign language "L" (for "Lincoln") the other. The National Park Service refutes that it was purposeful that his hands are in these shapes. The fact that Daniel Chester French was active in the deaf community makes it seem at least a bit plausible.¹⁶⁰

The Lincoln Memorial has become one of the most iconic memorials in Washington DC, and it is certainly the most popular.

Reflecting Pool



Reflecting Pool

The Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool is a rectangular body of water that reflects the Washington Monument from the vantage point of the Lincoln Memorial. It reflects the Lincoln Memorial from the Washington Monument.¹⁶¹

The reflecting pool was dedicated in 1923, one year after the Lincoln Memorial was dedicated. It is shallow; it doesn't go too deep.¹⁶²

The Arts of War and Peace Statues

On the far side of Lincoln Memorial Circle – on the backside of the Lincoln Memorial – are four Golden statues. Two represent the *Arts of War*, and the other two are the *Arts of Peace*.

The Arts of War have *Valor* on one side of the road and *Sacrifice* on the other.¹⁶³

Then a little bit down are the *Arts of Peace*, which includes *Literature and Aspiration* on one side and *Music and Harvest* on the other side.¹⁶⁴ Between the four of these statues, there are over 100 lbs of 24K gold covering these memorials, worth almost \$6 million at the time of this printing.¹⁶⁵

Memorial Bridge



Memorial Bridge

If you look across Memorial Bridge on the other side, you will see what physically connects the...

North to South

The National Mall with Arlington National Cemetery

Washington DC to Virginia

Abraham Lincoln to Robert E. Lee

...two iconic leaders on each side. When the bridge was built and dedicated in the 1930s, veteran soldiers from both sides were alive and met in the middle and shook hands. ¹⁶⁶

The Institute of Peace



The Institute of Peace

On the north side of the Lincoln Memorial, you can see a very interestingly shaped building: the Institute of Peace. The roof of the Institute of Peace is supposed to look like an abstract dove in flight.¹⁶⁷

The Institute of Peace was Chartered by Congress and meant to work with the Department of State to help figure out how the United States should operate around the world (No peace yet, so obviously, there's still work to do).¹⁶⁸

Department of State



Department of State

The Department of State is on the other side of 23rd Street across from the Institute of Peace. Built to house the war department, but by the late 1940s – after the Pentagon was dedicated – the Department of State took over the building.¹⁶⁹

As you keep on going north (uphill) on 23rd Street a few blocks, you'll get to Foggy Bottom, where Washington DC's George Washington University is located.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall



Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall

On the Northeast corner of the Lincoln Memorial is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall. This memorial was designed by Maya Lin and dedicated in 1982.¹⁷⁰

The memorial has two walls that converge in the middle, which is the “start” of the memorial.¹⁷¹ Just to the right of that inside corner, the first names of those US soldiers who died or went missing in Vietnam in 1959 are listed, and the names continue eastward chronologically until mid-1967, where the wall ends. The names then start again on the southwest entrance on the other side, until the last names are listed on the last plate on the inside corner, that plate also having the date of 1975 inscribed.¹⁷²

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall was a very controversial memorial for a couple of reasons. The first issue was that it went below ground rather than being above ground. You actually have to walk down into it. Many veterans didn't understand why this memorial was below ground when every other memorial in Washington was above ground.¹⁷³

Secondly, it had no physical representation of a human being, although most other memorials had some sort of physical representation. Instead, it has over 58,000 names of Killed in Action or Missing in Action. It wasn't until two years after the dedication that a statue by Frederick Hart was added of soldiers looking back at their fallen comrades.¹⁷⁴

In 1982 when the memorial was dedicated, the controversies pretty much went away. People saw the majesty of the memorial: they saw the reflection of themselves at the same time they saw the name of the person they were trying to honor. The memorial became an instant success, not just with civilians but also with combat veterans.

The lore goes that Maya Lin submitted this as a school project and got a "B" on the design (which just goes to show that teachers don't know everything).

For those who want to look up a name on the wall, there are small kiosks with books of names and their location on the wall. Alternatively, there is an app – which may have stories, pictures, or biographies of each person as well – that can be downloaded. Either will let you find the exact location of the name of the person on the wall.

The Three Servicemen



The Three Servicemen

Three Servicemen is a bronze statue by Frederick Hart, unveiled in 1984. The three men reflect European-American, African-American, and Hispanic-American to represent American racial and ethnic diversity serving in Vietnam.¹⁷⁵

The architect of the memorial wrote, “I see the wall as a kind of ocean, a sea of sacrifice that is overwhelming and nearly incomprehensible in the sweep of names. I place these figures upon the shore of that sea, gazing upon it, standing vigil before it, reflecting the human face of it, the human heart.”¹⁷⁶

From the fact sheet passed out during the dedication of the memorial:

Frederick Hart conceived the sculpture with three goals in mind:

- *To preserve and enhance the elegant simplicity and austerity of the existing Memorial design by Maya Ying Lin*
- *To create a work which interacts with the Memorial wall to form a unified totality*
- *To create a sculpture which is in itself a moving evocation of the experience and service of the Vietnam Veteran.*

The fact sheet continues regarding the process to get the subtle colors saying a *unique and rarely used process called 'patina' which will produce a rich variety of subtle color variations. The uniforms will be an olive color; the flesh, a rich bronze, and high polish will be accented on the hair, eyes, buttons and military equipment.*¹⁷⁷

Vietnam Women's Memorial

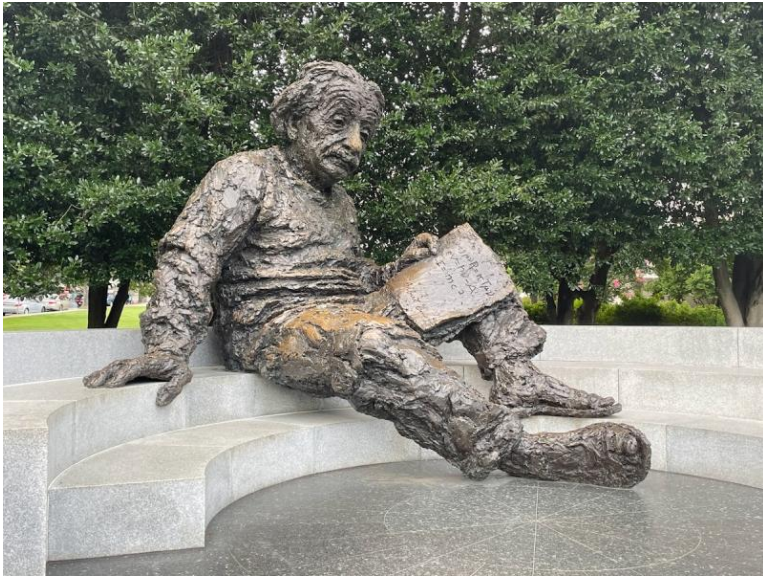


Vietnam Women's Memorial

Just south of the Vietnam Memorial is another sculpture honoring the service of military nurses in Vietnam, including the eight women nurses that died. Their names are also engraved on the wall.

The memorial was dedicated in 1993, and it was designed by Glenna Goodacre, who also designed the Sacagawea depiction on the dollar coin.¹⁷⁸

Einstein Memorial



Einstein Memorial

On the north side of Constitution Avenue, next to the National Academy of Sciences, is the Einstein Memorial.¹⁷⁹ It is one of the few statues on the National Mall that people are allowed to climb on. It has been rumored that if you touch his nose, you get smarter (or luckier), so many people try to touch his nose.

The Einstein Memorial is sitting on a field of rivets representing the various heavenly bodies on the day the memorial was dedicated on noon, April 22nd, 1979. Einstein's statue holds a paper with equations from three papers he wrote that eventually became three different branches of physics. If you stand directly in the middle of

the lines intersecting and speak toward the statue of Einstein, you will hear an interesting audio effect. ¹⁸⁰

Federal Reserve Building



Federal Reserve Building

The Federal Reserve building is where they set the US dollar's interest rates and determine how much money should be printed by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. ¹⁸¹

Department of Interior

The Department of Interior has everything to do with the interior lands within the United States. It includes such agencies as the National Park Service, the US Park Police, the Bureau of Land Management, the Department of Indian Affairs, and the agencies that deal with gas rights and mineral rights within the United States.¹⁸²

Although we can see a prominent building on Constitution Avenue, there are a couple of Department of Interior buildings in the area. One (at 1849 C St NW, Washington, DC 20240), has a small museum in this building, and the public can gain access by going through security coming in from the C Street entrance. This museum is about the department's missions and the building's history, with exhibits of crafts and art.¹⁸³

Constitution Gardens



Constitution Gardens

On the south side of the Department of Interior (across Constitution Avenue) is Constitution Gardens. This is one of my favorite places in Washington DC. Constitution Gardens has subtle rolling grass hills, a beautiful lake, a small kid-sized island called Signer's Island, and a wooden bridge to get to that Island. It has a memorial in honor of all the original signers of the Declaration of Independence. This memorial contains each signer's name, occupation, the county within the state they represent, and their signature in gold leaf. Each stone is grouped by the state they represented in a semicircle.¹⁸⁴

There are a couple of interesting things about this memorial:

- Look at the occupations of those who had signed the Declaration of Independence. The number one occupation is in the legal profession, a lawyer or judge.¹⁸⁵
- It's interesting to see those that had the same job but a different name for the job. So, for example, in the South, the job title would be a *planter* associated with plantations. In the North, the name would be *farmer* associated with farms. Same job, different name. Both occupations can be found associated with different founders on the memorial.
- By signing this document, these people were saying to the world that they knew – if they were unsuccessful – they understood that they would be executed for treason. You can see the prominent example of John Hancock's signature ("There, John Bull can read my name without spectacles, he may double his reward, and I put his at defiance."); The name *John Bull* was commonly used as a personification of Britain) and other signatures like Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Samuel Adams, amongst others.¹⁸⁶

There was a practical reason for having a Declaration of Independence, though. The states wanted the financial support of France. But they could not get support if they were merely a rebellion; they had to be an independent country. They hoped that by declaring independence, they could show that they were a separate country and therefore win the French support.

However, it took more to get the French to support the US. Only after the United States started winning some battles were the French willing to help them.

Constitution Avenue



Constitution Avenue

Constitution Avenue used to be water. It was an offshoot of the Potomac River (called Tiber Creek), and then it went down towards the White House to the Capitol Building.¹⁸⁷ This creek became the Washington City Canal in the mid-1800s.¹⁸⁸

The canal was designed to have no flowing water – it was stagnant, bringing mosquitoes and disease. People began to throw in their trash in the canal and even their dead animals.

Many people, including President Lincoln (whose son arguably died of a waterborne illness associated with the canal), asked for the canal to be either filled in or covered. It was both covered up and filled in, but there is still one last piece of evidence that Constitution Avenue was water.¹⁸⁹

The Lockkeepers House



The Lockkeeper's House

The Lockkeeper's House is the last piece of evidence that Constitution Avenue was water. The lockkeeper was responsible for letting the barges in and out of the canal using the lock system where they would close both sides of the lock (like doors), add or remove water which would cause the barge also to rise or fall, and then the barge would

continue on the other side.¹⁹⁰ The lockkeeper is rumored to have lived there with his wife, his 13 children – and possibly his mother-in-law. As small as it looks, it is said that the house was roomy for its day.

Organization of American States - The Pan American Union Building

There's a cluster of buildings between 17th and 19th Street on Constitution Avenue called the Organization of American States. The Organization of American States is similar to the United Nations, but it is only for North, Central, and South American countries: the Western Hemisphere.¹⁹¹

Buildings include the Office of the General Secretariat for the Organization of American States, The Art Museum of the Americas, and the Pan American Union Building.

Because the Organization of American States is here, we have some intriguing statues. One is Jose Artigas.¹⁹²

Who is Jose Artigas? He's considered one of the fathers of Uruguay.¹⁹³

Question: Why is he here? Answer: The Organization American states.

Just a bit northwest of that statue, you'll see a man sitting on a horse with a sword up in the air. He represents Simon Bolivar, considered by some to be a great Liberator of South America from Colonial Rule.¹⁹⁴



The Pan American Union Building

The Pan American Union Building is part of the Organization of American States. The Pan American Union was a predecessor organization that helped to connect countries culturally and commercially in the Western Hemisphere. The organization was founded in 1890, became the O.A.S. in 1948, and is considered the oldest international organization by some historians.¹⁹⁵

Andrew Carnegie helped to pay for the construction of this building, which started in 1908 and finished in 1910.¹⁹⁶ In my opinion, this building is one of the most beautiful buildings on the National Mall. It's also the first significant installation built according to the McMillan Commission plans for the Mall. It is similar in design to the Andrew Carnegie Library in DC and Union Station; all are Beaux-Arts designs, all built within a few years of each other – and

all inspired by the Columbian Exhibition at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893.

The World War II Memorial



The World War II Memorial

The World War II Memorial was dedicated in 2004. Each of the very boxy columns surrounding it represents a state or territory that had people fight in World War II on behalf of the United States. The order of the placement of the columns is from when they entered the Union, from the back to the front. It starts with Delaware and then goes back and forth between each side, and finally, the last columns in the front are the ones that were territories. ¹⁹⁷

There are two more significant structures. One says Pacific, and one says Atlantic. Those represent the two theaters of war, the areas we fought the war in.

Two fountains rise from a central pool. Much of World War II was fought on the sea. The curved wall in the back has 4,048 golden stars. Each star represents 100 Americans killed in World War II, so that's over 400,000 Americans killed.¹⁹⁸

John Paul Jones



John Paul Jones

Just to the southeast of the World War II Memorial is the John Paul Jones Memorial. John Paul Jones was a sailor since he was 13 years old. He was initially a sailor for the

British Merchant Navy, but he was from Scotland, and he didn't like England so much.

Later in his life, when he heard about the hostilities between the United States and Britain, he petitioned the Continental Congress to become a commissioned officer in the Continental Navy.¹⁹⁹

And they said, “Yes!” They gave him a ship!

And he’s one of the few captains of a ship we know of who went on the offensive. He went over to Great Britain and used the equivalent of hand grenades to capture the ship and brought it back to the States.²⁰⁰

While the British hated him – they lampooned him as a pirate in the papers – Americans loved him because he proved that Naval power could be useful in times of War.

John Paul Jones purportedly said – when asked if he would surrender – “Surrender? I have not yet begun to fight!” He was being cheeky, as they say in Britain. *Like, what? You want me to give up? I haven’t even started fighting yet!*²⁰¹

John Paul Jones is considered one of the two fathers of the United States Navy. Jones was from Scotland (the other father of the Navy is John Berry, from Ireland).²⁰² Some people will ponder. “John Paul Jones, wasn’t he the bass guitarist from Led Zeppelin?” And I have to tell him that this John Paul Jones was a rock star of his day. He was both famous and infamous. He nearly got a court-martial for how tyrannically he put down a mutiny.

If you look at the photographs of John Paul Jones from *Led Zeppelin* and the illustrations of John Paul Jones the Sailor, you will see a remarkable similarity. Why is this?

The John Paul Jones from *Led Zeppelin* picked his name only after seeing a poster for *John Paul Jones*, a movie based on the Sailor. Their features are remarkably similar.²⁰³

John Paul Jones reached the rank of Captain and then was recruited by Russia and became a Russian Admiral. There was no career upward mobility for him in the United States because there was no Admiral rank in the United States in his day. It wasn't until the Civil War times that the first sailor held the rank of Admiral. John Paul Jones's tomb is at the Naval Academy, Annapolis, not too far from DC.²⁰⁴

Second Division Memorial



Second Division Memorial

At the center of the Second Division Memorial is a golden object. Many people think it looks like a feather, but it's not. It's supposed to be a hand holding a flaming sword, and the Memorial is in honor of the Second Division of the United States Army, which was put up after World War I.²⁰⁵

The Second Division was formed in 1917, organized in France, and it's the only division in the United States military history where Marine Corps officers (two of them at different times), Charles A. Doyen and John A. Lejeune, led Army troops at the division level – this is the same Lejeune that Camp Lejeune is named after.²⁰⁶

The second division is now called the Second Infantry Division and has been stationed in Korea for decades. Their motto is “*Second to None.*”²⁰⁷

The White House



The White House

Imagine being the President as sort of the ultimate work-from-home situation. If you were president, you would wake up, drink your morning beverage, tell your people what you want them to do.

But where does everyone who works for the President physically work from? Where are they located? Some work in the White House itself. It is said that 100 to 150 people can work out of the West Wing of the White House.

Marine One will land on the south lawn of the White House, on the lawn itself. Marine One is the presidential helicopter. When the President's helicopter takes off, at least two (but as many as four) other identical helicopters join it, flying in formation as decoys. If you see three white and green helicopters flying in the air, there's a good possibility that the President is on board.²⁰⁸

The Ellipse



The Ellipse

The area just south of the White House is called the ellipse. The ellipse is an elliptical-shaped bit of grass with a path and an elliptical-shaped roadway around it. People can walk and even play intramural games inside the ellipse.²⁰⁹ Before

9/11, anyone could park there. After 9/11 – some call it a security measure; others call it a land grab – only government employees can park inside the ellipse.

Eisenhower Executive Office Building



Eisenhower Executive Office Building

If you're on Constitution Avenue, facing the south front face of the White House, a little to the left of the White House, there is a gray building that looks like it belongs in Disney World or France – this is the Eisenhower Executive Office Building (also called the Old Executive Office Building), built 1871 to 1888. It is where many of the people who work for the President work. The vice president also has a ceremonial office there. The building used to be the

Department of State, Department of War, and Department of Navy Building. All those departments operated in that building before, which (at one point) was considered the largest office building in the world with over 500 separate offices.²¹⁰

New Executive Office Building



New Executive Office Building

The red building behind (north of) the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, both big and rectangular, is the New Executive Office Building dedicated in 1969 with the exhilarating name *Federal Office Building* #7. It's not as

fancy as the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, but they both have the same function: People who work for the President work out of that building.²¹¹

German-American Friendship Garden



German-American Friendship Garden

On the south side of Constitution Avenue (south of the Ellipse on the south side of the White House) is the German-American Friendship Garden. The garden features plants native to both Germany and the United States. This garden was put up during Ronald Reagan's tenure as President. The German-American Friendship Garden symbolizes the positive and cooperative relations between the United States of America and Germany.²¹²

The National Mall at Night

The National Mall takes on a more ethereal feel as night falls and the lights start to glow. My favorite spots at night are the Lincoln Memorial, from afar and up close, the World War II Memorial, the Jefferson from afar, the White House, the Capitol Building, and the Bartholdi Fountain.

The Lincoln Memorial: The Lincoln Memorial is a must-see spot in Washington, DC. It's open during the day, but it transforms into a different beast after dark! After sunset, the light inside turns on and casts a white glow over everything around it. The steps leading up to the memorial transform into a fantastic photo opportunity.



Washington Monument

Washington Monument: The Washington Monument is almost unmissable at night (I hesitate to put it on this list because of that). You'll see the two red blinking "eyes".



Jefferson Memorial

Jefferson Memorial: The night views of the memorial are spectacular, and it's safe to walk around at this time. You'll have fewer crowds in your pictures, so you can take all sorts of artistic shots! This memorial is beautiful at night with wonderful views. It's safe to park your car near the monument for a few hours while you stay close by. It feels so much calmer than during the daytime.



World War II Memorial

World War II Memorial: The reflective water beneath the World War II Memorial glows in an otherworldly way at night. When lit up, this memorial becomes a place of eerie reverence. The memorial frames the illuminated Lincoln Memorial, and you can see the Lincoln statue lit up all the way from the World War II Memorial.



Vietnam Veterans Memorial

Vietnam Veterans Memorial: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a beautiful landmark in the heart of Washington, DC. It's not just a place to honor those who served in the war; it's also an amazing spot for nighttime photography! The monument is lit up from below. And although beautiful at night, it is harder to read the names.



Korean War Veterans Memorial

Korean War Veterans Memorial: The memorial illuminated by the lights from below is stunning and gives it a majestic and other-worldly feel. In 2022 the lighting allowing for illumination from below was refurbished.



Martin Luther King Memorial

Martin Luther King Memorial: The statue of King is lit up by spotlights from all angles. The memorial has an interesting history and holds significance not only for African Americans but for all citizens of America. It can be seen from inside the memorial and almost all points on the Tidal Basin at the Jefferson Memorial. Be aware that the quotes are harder to read at night.



The Capitol Building

The Capitol Building: The building becomes even more beautiful when you can see its facade lit up in warm lights. Although there are plenty of great spots around DC where you can have different views of the Capitol Building, one beautiful view at night is from the west side.



The White House

The White House: If you're in Washington DC after dark, it's worth taking a minute to take in the view. The beauty of the presidential home with all the lights on is as magnificent as you might imagine and worthwhile viewing from either side (north or south). During winter, the National Christmas Tree is surrounded by state trees, and they are also definitely worth visiting as well.



The FDR Memorial

The FDR Memorial: Nighttime is a good time to visit because it is less crowded. You can see the sculptures and the water at night, although the quotes are more difficult to read than in the daytime.



The Bartholdi Fountain

The Bartholdi Fountain: This beautiful fountain is tucked away in Bartholdi Park across Independence Avenue from the back side of the US Botanic Garden. At night the light plays upon the water and the fountain and makes it most majestic and romantic.

You'll love spending time in the National Mall after dark. The National Mall can be so beautiful – especially if you go late!

Museums on the National Mall

National Gallery of Art



National Gallery of Art

The National Gallery of Art has two buildings, the West Building (designed by John Russell Pope), built in the 1930s, which was first opened in 1941, and the East Building (designed by I.M. Pei) which opened in 1978.²¹³ The West building doesn't have a lot of windows. Part of the reason why is to protect the estimated \$1.8 billion worth of art from sunlight damage.

National Museum of African American History and Culture



National Museum of African American History and Culture

The National Museum of African American History and Culture is very interestingly shaped. It was dedicated in September 2016, and it is 60% underground, meaning more space is below ground than it is above.²¹⁴

I saw the building as it was being built. It was a cube-shaped glass building with metal treatment on the outside designed to look like an African headdress of the Yoruba people from Nigeria, who share the same ancestry as many descendants of enslaved African Americans.

If you look, you'll see that this treatment on the outside is purposefully missing some rectangular-shaped pieces. The missing portions frame existing architecture and beauty that is on the outside from the inside. For example, the missing portion that's vertical on the west side of the building actually frames the Washington Monument from the inside.

This is one of three museums on the National Mall that I would recommend people consider eating at. The Sweet Home Café has amazingly delicious food. This cafeteria-style restaurant serves the best version of classic African-American delicacies and uses locally sourced ingredients.

National Museum of the American Indian



National Museum of the American Indian

The National Museum of the American Indian is a place that dedicates itself to the culture and heritage of the Native people of the Western Hemisphere.²¹⁵ There is one specific exhibit entitled “As We Grow: Traditions, Toys, Games” that was first introduced in 2012 and it is a glimpse of how Native American children used to play and continue to play by incorporating their own ball games, shows, and dolls. It has an amazing cafeteria!²¹⁶

National Air and Space Museum



National Air and Space Museum

The National Air and Space Museum gathers more than three million visitors annually and may be the most visited museum in the United States. This museum highlights

artifacts from the history of flight and space travel.²¹⁷ There are flight simulators that will let you experience the ride as if you were actually there (for a fee). The Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, VA serves as a partner facility and it has enough space to include large exhibits including a space shuttle and spy plane.²¹⁸

Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum has over 148 million specimens and artifacts including animals, rocks, minerals, plants, and cultural objects, making it the largest natural history collection in the world. The Hall of Human Origins is also a great exhibit to visit if you want to learn about human survival and extinction.²¹⁹ The museum is one of the most visited natural history museums in the world, welcoming over 4 million visitors annually in recent years.²²⁰

Arts & Industries Museum



Arts & Industries Museum

The Arts and Industries Museum opened in 1881 and it is the second oldest Smithsonian museum. It's next to the Smithsonian Castle. The inaugural ball for President James Garfield was the museum's first event.²²¹ As of this writing, the museum is closed for renovations and is scheduled to reopen in 2028, though it occasionally opens for special events.²²²

Smithsonian Castle



Smithsonian Castle

The Smithsonian Castle was the first Smithsonian Museum. The Smithsonian gets its name from a man named James Smithson.²²³ Smithson gave \$508,318 towards the establishment of an institution devoted to the collection and diffusion of knowledge, which would have been worth by my calculations somewhere between \$54 and \$60 million in 2022 dollars.²²⁴ One might think that Smithson loved the United States. But he never set foot in the United States. He was from Great Britain. In fact, there was a question by Congress about whether they should accept his money (but ultimately they did decide to accept his money).²²⁵

The Smithsonian Castle currently holds the main information center, the main administrative office as well as

example exhibits from other Smithsonian museums.²²⁶ It also has one other feature: the tomb of James Smithson (he finally made it!). One of the regents for the Smithsonian, Alexander Graham Bell, insisted on going over to Europe in the bitter cold in December 1903, personally supervising Smithson's disinterment, and in 1905 Smithson's tomb was dedicated in the Castle.²²⁷

African Art Museum



African Art Museum

The Smithsonian National Museum of African Art is the only national museum located in the United States which is dedicated to the exhibition, collection, conservation, and study of the arts of Africa. Although the exterior may look

small, the museum extends underground allowing 22,000 square feet to be allocated to the exhibitions.²²⁸ This building is found on the back side of the Smithsonian Castle and on the other side of the Enid A. Haupt gardens from the Arthur M. Sackler Art Gallery.²²⁹

Freer Art Museum



Freer Art Museum

The Freer Gallery of Art is dedicated to showcasing Asian art, but also focusing on those artists inspired by Asian art, like James Whistler. Whistler's Peacock Room, also known as "Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room" started its life in London but was dismantled, transported, and reconstructed in Charles Lang Freer's Detroit home, and

then moved to this museum in the early 1920s. In its charter is the directive that there be no touring or visiting exhibits.

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Arthur M. Sackler Art Gallery



Arthur M. Sackler Art Gallery

The Arthur M. Sackler Art Gallery allows for visiting exhibits and exhibits to go on tour. Similar to the Freer Gallery of Art, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery showcases Asian art, but focuses more on contemporary art from Asia and has pieces from international loan exhibitions. It is also physically connected to the African Art Museum underground. Since the Freer Art Museum can have no visiting or touring exhibits, the Sackler allows the

Smithsonian to fulfill this function without violating the charter of the Freer.²³¹

Ripley Center



Ripley Center

The S. Dillon Ripley Center may not look like much from the outside – some say it looks like a gigantic button and others say it looks like a small pagoda – but it actually goes 67 feet underground, has its own ever-changing exhibits and connects to a number of the nearby museums (Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and the African Art Museum).²³² The Ripley Center spearheads programs that sell limited edition signed and numbered prints of artists which in turn helps pay for Smithsonian

educational programs, including some kids-oriented programs.²³³

National Museum of American History



National Museum of American History

Opened in 1964²³⁴, The National Museum of American History has American artifacts such as President Abraham Lincoln’s signature top hat, the original US “star spangled banner” (flag), Archie Bunker’s Chair (TV show), Julia Child’s (chef) entire Kitchen, Elmo and the original version of Kermit the Frog (both from the TV show Sesame Street) and all the dresses worn by the First Ladies at their respective inaugural balls.²³⁵

National Portrait Gallery and American Art Museum



National Portrait Gallery and American Art Museum

There are two museums collocated within the old patent office. The building itself was the third federal building built in Washington DC.²³⁶ Walt Whitman called it the most majestic building in all of Washington.²³⁷

The National Portrait Gallery defines a *portrait* as any representation of a human being.²³⁸ *America's Presidents* exhibition has portraits of all the Presidents of the United States. The introductory image to this exhibition is Gilbert Stuart's "Lansdowne" painting of George Washington.²³⁹

The American Art Museum houses one of the world's greatest and most comprehensive collections of American art, dating from the colonial period to the present. More than 7,000 artists are represented in the museum's collection.²⁴⁰ Although the National Portrait Gallery is more well known, the American Art Museum has roughly 60% of the exhibits within the building.

International Spy Museum



International Spy Museum

There are lots of spy artifacts in The International Spy Museum. Not part of the Smithsonian, it's a private, non-profit museum dedicated to preserving the art and history of espionage, as well as educating the public on past and

current spy functions.²⁴¹ Since 2019 the museum has been hosted in L'Enfant Plaza. It has the world's greatest public collection of international espionage artifacts.²⁴²

National Children's Museum



National Children's Museum

The National Children's Museum is a fun museum with exhibits exploring science, technology, engineering, art, and math for children and their parents too. There's a play area for kids including a kid rock-climbing wall, an indoor garden with fake grass, fun cars to play with and get into, a slide, and more. There are some attractions inspired by well-known kids' shows like Spongebob Squarepants and Paw Patrol.²⁴³

The Museum of the Bible



The Museum of the Bible

Opened in 2017, Museum of the Bible focuses on the Bible and its ongoing impact on the world, showcasing unique items spanning 4,000 years of history. The museum features ‘Washington Revelations,’ a virtual flyover experience where visitors soar over the nation’s capital to discover biblical imagery and verses hidden in iconic landmarks like the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial.²⁴⁴

Hirshhorn Museum



Hirshhorn Museum

The Hirshhorn Museum is part of the Smithsonian and has lots of modern and contemporary art. It was founded by Joseph Hirshhorn, a Jewish immigrant from Latvia. He made money in stocks and uranium. He made so much money that he bought art. And he bought so much art that the museum can't display all the art at one time – it has to rotate the exhibits. The museum was dedicated in 1974.²⁴⁵

Dogs in DC!

If you're coming to DC with your dog, that's great. You love your dog. And obviously, your dog loves you. A couple of things you should consider on your trip to Washington DC.



Dogs at The Lincoln Memorial

First, you'll want to stay in accommodations that are dog-welcoming. The Kimpton Hotels are known for being extraordinarily dog-friendly, including the George, Monaco, the Banneker, and The Lorien (in Alexandria). The Willard InterContinental and the InterContinental The Wharf are also pet-friendly.

Across from the White House on the north side, not too far from Lafayette Square is a Sofitel, which allows small dogs only. There are also several dog-friendly Westins in the DC area along with the Washington Hilton. If you plan to stay a long time and need more living space for you and your dog, then there are a few Residence Inn Extended Stay Hotels.

Other pet-friendly hotels exist, and I recommend you check bringfido.com for details on the best hotel options. You may also want to consider pet-friendly Airbnbs.

When you venture out, you may want to have a pet sitter stay with your pet, or you may wish to bring your pet somewhere else. Unfortunately, some places you may want to venture are not pet-friendly. For example, if you want to go to the museums, you're likely going to have to make other arrangements for your pet.

With a dog, you can see much of DC, including the major monuments, and view the awe-inspiring buildings. Leashed dogs are allowed throughout the National Mall, so you can walk with your dog past the Capitol, Smithsonian museums, National Archives, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Jefferson Memorial, and the White House.

Lincoln and Jefferson don't allow dogs in the inner chambers, but there are ways to get close or work around this (see the next paragraphs). The FDR Memorial is entirely outdoors, and your four-legged friend can take in the whole thing with you.

Some tour companies allow dogs. My company, Adventure DC Tricycle Tours, welcomes – nay, encourages – dogs on

our private tours. However, there are a couple of nuances to ensuring your dog can be with you on all parts of a tour.

One way to get your dog in the inner sanctum of a monument or memorials is to put your dog in a specially designed backpack or carrying case (if your dog will fit). The National Park Service is concerned about when dogs can potentially get close enough to other visitors to bite. If your dog is tucked away, that won't happen, and you should be fine. It's not an official rule that "dogs in backpacks" are okay, so make sure you adhere to directions from officials if directed.

Another way is to leave your dog in the care of your tour guide as you check out the individual memorials (my company will do this, and a few other companies are willing to do this as well).

Another way is to get right up to – but not in – the chamber with your pet and then have another human hold the leash while you check out the memorial. This could be a good option if you're traveling as a couple or a family.

There are pet-friendly restaurants in Washington DC: a number of them are near the National Mall. With outdoor seating, Elephant & Castle is possibly the top very close-to-the-mall restaurant to consider.

Fun Stuff for Kids

This chapter is all about the fun kid stuff to do on the National Mall. The National Mall has a lot to offer families, including allowing them the ability to explore some of DC's best museums and monuments. What makes Washington DC's National Mall so great is there are activities here for everyone! Whether you want to take in nature, learn something new at a museum or have some family time together – there's something for every age group. This chapter will focus on kids though!

Echo Chamber



Echo Chamber

The Rotunda of the Provinces and Territories is a circle of twelve columns at the Canadian Embassy. Each column represents one of Canada's ten provinces and two territories. The rotunda is popular because the dome creates an echo when people talk inside it – a waterfall cascades down the outer walls the rotunda, symbolizing Niagara Falls on the US-Canada border.²⁴⁶

“Secret” Underground Moving Walkway



“Secret” Underground Moving Walkway

This moving walkway is surrounded by a large sculpture that lights up and it is found between the two buildings of the National Gallery of Art. People walk through it to get from one National Gallery of Art building to another. It has about 41,000 LED lights that are programmed such that the patterns never repeat when people walk through it.²⁴⁷

Sensitive (to touch) Plant at Botanic Garden

When kids touch the Sensitive Plant at the US Botanic Garden, it immediately folds its leaves closed. The garden is

a beautiful and informative space that has been around for over 150 years.²⁴⁸ It is filled with many different plants, flowers, and trees from all over the world. One interesting plant in the Botanic Garden is the sensitive plant (*Mimosa pudica*).

The National Sculpture Garden

The National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden is an outdoor addition to the National Gallery of Art. It is located on the National Mall at 7th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, situated between the National Gallery of Art's West Building and the National Museum of Natural History. From December through March, the fountain becomes an ice-skating rink. In the summer there is a periodic event called Jazz in the Garden where live music is played as people relax, picnic and dance.²⁴⁹

Simulator Rides at Air & Space Museum

The museum has many interactive exhibits for all ages to enjoy and experience. These rides are designed with motion simulators that provide an exhilarating simulated ride as though flying in any number of planes or in outer space. Some of the simulators rock up and down, others rotate completely 360 degrees.²⁵⁰

The Kids Adventure Tour

The Kids Adventure Tour by Adventure DC Tricycle Tours includes the echo chamber outside of the Canadian embassy, the secret underground passage between the two National Gallery of Art wings (surrounded by lights, it feels like being in outer space), and the US Botanic Garden. This tour can be a standalone tour or an add-on to another adult-oriented Monuments & Memorials tour.

National Children's Museum



National Children's Museum

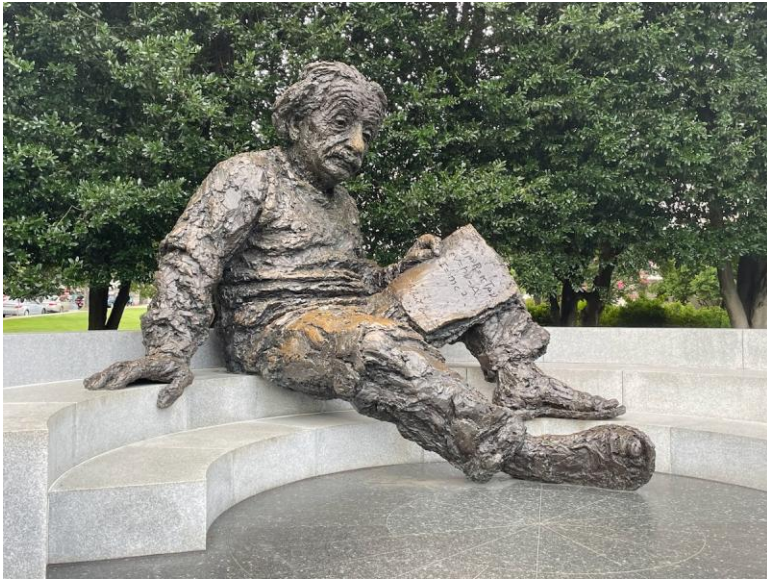
The National Children's Museum is a place for kids and families to learn about science, technology, engineering,

arts, and math. Kids can also play and have fun. The museum wants to inspire children to care about the world by sparking their curiosity so they become passionate about learning things.²⁵¹ The museum has multi-story slides kids can slide down.

Kid-sized Island

In the early 1980s there was a park dedicated to honoring the signers of the Declaration of Independence. It was built on a “kid-sized” island called Signer’s Island within Constitution Gardens. There were 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence. Each signer has a stone with their signature, name, occupation, and county they were from. They are grouped by the state they represented and their respective stones are in a semicircle.²⁵²

Einstein: The Statue Kids Can Climb



Einstein: The Statue Kids Can Climb

A memorial of Albert Einstein. He won a Nobel Prize. There is a 12-foot bronze statue of Albert Einstein sitting on circular steps and he appears to be thinking about the universe in the memorial. There is lore that says if you touch his nose, you get smarter (or luckier). The paper in his left hand has three equations he developed: general relativity, photoelectric effect, and equivalence of energy and matter. Each of these equations became a different branch of physics. The last one, $E = mc^2$, is his most famous equation. A replica of Einstein's signature is at the bottom of the representation of this paper.²⁵³

The Carousel

A childhood favorite that almost never fails to put a smile on a face, this carousel offers an immersive experience with all of its moving horses and unique sea dragon. It is unusual in that it has four horses abreast where all are jumping. Most other carousels, at least one ring of horses is stationary. There is a small charge for riding the Carousel.

This carousel was previously located at Gwynn Oak Amusement Park near Baltimore, where it hosted its first integrated ride on August 28, 1963, the same day Martin Luther King Jr. gave his *I Have A Dream* speech at the Lincoln Memorial.²⁵⁴

The International Spy Museum



The International Spy Museum

Unlike any other, the Spy Museum provides guests with a fun experience. Visitors are invited to take on new identities and be quizzed about their cover throughout the exhibit while testing out spy skills by identifying various objects seen versus what they think they saw during each challenge. Before progressing, guests may go through a virtual maze of all things espionage!²⁵⁵

Gardens and Courtyards

All of the gardens mentioned here are in Washington DC, but not all of them are on the National Mall near the monuments and memorials. The locations located on or near the National Mall are annotated as such.

Anacostia Community Museum Landscape (not on the Mall)

1901 Fort Pl. SE, Washington, DC 20020

The Anacostia Community Museum, originally opened in 1967, moved to its current building and landscape at 1901 Fort Place in 1987.²⁵⁶ It is a live display, designed by Smithsonian Gardens. The exhibit was created with the goal of protecting the waterways and restoring the natural environment. The plants in this garden are local natives that give food and shelter to local birds, insects, and other animals.²⁵⁷

This museum provides fantastic exhibitions and regular events that educate the community about culture, offering a variety of free programs for audiences of all ages and rotating displays that explore different aspects of urban community life. They want you to engage with each exhibit by considering how you define freedom and identity. The idea is to make you reflect and think about how important freedom is in society.

Common Ground: Our American Garden (on the Mall)

1300 Madison Dr. NW, Washington, DC 20004

The Common Ground: Our American Garden, which was installed in 2017 and located by the raised planting beds surrounding the National Museum of American History's south entrance, tells the stories of plants and their significance to people in the United States. Flowers, herbs, and other plants were chosen depending on their significance to Americans as ways of remembering those that contributed to the roots of the nation, offering healing, stimulating discovery, and inspiring ingenuity in the vibrant landscape.²⁵⁸

The garden complements the exhibition *Many Voices, One Nation* at the National Museum of American History. The plants here have been shared and altered by native populations and newcomers for their own personal use. Many plants native to the Americas have been used for food and fiber, as well as being revered as cultural icons. Plants were brought as heirlooms to trigger memories and carry on traditions.²⁵⁹

Enid A. Haupt Garden (on the Mall)

1050 Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC 20024



Enid A. Haupt Garden (on the Mall)

The Enid A. Haupt Garden, since its opening in 1987 as part of the rebuilt Smithsonian Castle quadrangle, has provided a welcome reprieve for Smithsonian visitors. The Haupt Garden's design, which includes the Parterre, Moongate Garden, and Fountain Garden, ties together the cultures and architecture of the neighboring museums and buildings.²⁶⁰

While wandering its brick paths, admiring the parterre and hanging baskets, or enjoying the sound of splashing fountains, visitors to the Haupt Garden hardly ever realize that they are standing on the respective roofs of the National Museum of African Art, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, and the S. The Dillon Ripley Center.²⁶¹

Freer Gallery of Art: Courtyard Garden (on the Mall)

1050 Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC 20024

The Freer Courtyard Garden, located in the heart of the Freer Gallery of Art and opened in 1923, is an elegantly designed outdoor space. Lush vegetation and the courtyard fountain's cascading water, combined with the symmetrical layout of the arches and walkways, create a tranquil space for reflection and rest. Layers of trees, bushes, and low plantings draw the visitor's eye from the classical decorations of the roofline down to the central fountain. Boxwood hedges emphasize the ordered design of the brick and stonework, while Persian ironwood trees and Japanese maples filter shade from the afternoon sun. In winter, the bare branches of the trees cast calligraphic silhouettes, reminiscent of the Asian works of art on view in the surrounding galleries.²⁶²

Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden (on the Mall)

Independence Ave SW and 7th St SW, Washington, DC 20560

The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, which opened in 1974, is made up of two open-air art "galleries": the landscape surrounding the museum and the subterranean sculpture garden embedded on the National Mall across Jefferson Drive. The garden, which sits 14 feet below the surface of the Mall and houses Joseph H. Hirshhorn's world-renowned sculpture collection, provides a serene refuge to watch and contemplate a shifting array of modern art. Plants complement and offer a lush backdrop for the sculptures, separate the garden into distinct "rooms," and provide a

comfortable and beautiful environment for visitors throughout the year. People are fascinated with the different sculptures within the garden as each one gives off a different vibe and ambiance to them.²⁶³

Kathrine Dulin Folger Rose Garden (on the Mall)

900 Jefferson Dr SW, Washington, DC 20560

The Kathrine Dulin Folger Rose Garden which opened in 1998, has been a beloved part of the Smithsonian's landscape ever since. This four-season garden features roses as well as plantings that promote healthy interactions among humans, plants, and insects. The Lee and Juliet Folger Fund generously donated to make this garden possible.²⁶⁴

The garden was enlarged and restored in 2016 to include entirely own-root roses selected for disease resistance, as well as companion plantings targeted to attract and provide for beneficial insects.

The rose family, history, scent, and companion plantings are all highlighted on interpretive signage around the garden.²⁶⁵

Mary Livingston Ripley Garden (on the Mall)

900 Jefferson Dr SW, Washington, DC 20560

Thousands of visitors to the National Mall each year find solace at the Mary Livingston Ripley Garden which opened in 1978. Its unique curved style, which was created by renowned Washington, D.C. architect Hugh Newell Jacobsen, and a profusion of flowers in raised beds, offers a

distinct sense of intimacy and informality. The aim of the garden is to introduce visitors to a wide range of plants and encourage them to broaden their plant horizons. Smithsonian staff transplanted euonymus from Smithsonian Secretary S. Dillon Ripley's family home in Litchfield, Connecticut, to build the east wall's espaliers in the garden's early years. The garden's unique hanging baskets and seasonal plants for the flowerbeds are now produced by Smithsonian greenhouse personnel.²⁶⁶

National Air and Space Museum Landscape (on the Mall)

600 Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC 20024

The gardens around the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum are arranged on various tiers of terraces and illustrate a diverse range of styles, including eastern woodlands and meadows. They provide food and shelter for migrating birds and insects, and they show how native plants may be used in a city public garden to give both beauty and habitat.²⁶⁷

A "Flight Garden" which is part of the Smithsonian Gardens' Habitat display was recently planted to attract birds and pollinators. Birds, insects, and seed dispersion have all encouraged people to create ways to fly, according to interpretive signage. The "Flight Garden" sits next to the museum's west side.²⁶⁸

National Museum of African American History and Culture Landscape (on the Mall)

1400 Constitution Ave NW, Washington, DC 20560

The National Museum of African American History and Culture Landscape was created to blend in with the National Mall and the Washington Monument's surroundings. The pastoral aspect of the Washington Monument grounds is reflected in the museum's large, sweeping walks and open views. Overstory trees native to the Southeast, perennials in purple, blue, and white, and a lawn planted with over 450,000 purple crocuses that put on a beautiful show each spring are among the plants. With powerful symbols of strength, resiliency, and hope, the landscape design echoes the museum's goal. Today, the National Museum of African American History and Culture and its surrounding landscape serve as a memorial recognizing African American history and culture as part of the wider American story as told on the National Mall.²⁶⁹

Native Landscape at the National Museum of the American Indian (on the Mall)

Independence Ave SW & 4th St SW, Washington, DC 20597

The National Museum of the American Indian's native landscape is regarded as an extension of the building and an integral aspect of the museum as a whole. The museum's landscape design emphasizes a fundamental idea of the museum, that of returning to a Native place, by evoking the

natural landscape environment that existed previous to European contact.²⁷⁰

The planted landscape is anchored by four stone cardinal direction markers that run parallel to the building's east-west and north-south axes. The massive rocks came from four different parts of the Western Hemisphere: Hawaii (west), Canada (north), Maryland (east), and Chile (west). Grandfather Rocks, a collection of forty more rocks from Canada, are strewn over the area.²⁷¹

Pioneering Plants at the National Museum of Natural History (on the Mall)

10th St & Constitution Ave NW, Washington, DC 20560

The National Museum of Natural History's Pioneering Plants include land plants that have existed for hundreds of millions of years.²⁷²

Plants have developed some very remarkable adaptations. Such abilities include carrying water to vast heights. They are the ones that turn rock into soil. They grow large, sometimes enormous. They entice animals to assist them in moving and reproducing. They also put the "food" in food webs by producing sugar from water and carbon dioxide utilizing the sun's energy. The pioneering plants in this museum all include such characteristics.²⁷³

Pollinator Garden at the National Museum of Natural History (on the Mall)

10th Constitution Ave NW, Washington DC, 20050

The Pollinator Garden on the National Museum of Natural History's east side emphasizes the interdependence of plants and pollinators. The garden's plants, grasses, and trees are chosen to offer pollinating insects with food and shelter. Smithsonian Gardens invites visitors to participate in pollination research to learn about who, what, when, where, why, and how pollination occurs.²⁷⁴

Pollination is necessary for a healthy ecosystem. Pollination benefits both flowering plants and pollinators and has evolved over millions of years. Pollinators are responsible for one out of every three bites of food consumed. Each year, honeybees and other pollinators add \$24 billion to the value of agricultural products in the United States.²⁷⁵

Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (near the Mall, inside the museum)

8th St and F St NW, Washington DC 20004

The Smithsonian American Art Museum's Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard is a magnificent indoor garden environment filled with natural light located inside the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture in downtown Washington, D.C. The courtyard's beds are rotated periodically to exhibit anything from bulbs and ferns to orchids and poinsettias, and the space is anchored by ficus and black olive trees.²⁷⁶

Urban Bird Habitat at the National Museum of Natural History (on the Mall)

12th Street Northwest & Constitution Ave NW,
Washington, DC 20004

The Urban Bird Habitat at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History extends around the museum's south, west, and north sides, providing a haven for a variety of bird species. Food, water, shelter, and a place to rear their young are all provided by the garden plantings and hardscape features.²⁷⁷

The diversity of plants and animals is a sign of a healthy environment. In DC, over 300 bird species have been documented. Some birds live here year-round, while others come for a season or two, and still others pass through on their way to and from their summer and winter residences. Smithsonian Gardens strives to maintain and increase avian diversity by meeting these birds' basic habitat demands.²⁷⁸

Victory Garden at the National Museum of American History

1200 Constitution Ave NW, Washington, DC 20560

The Victory Garden, located on the National Museum of American History's east side, is a re-created World War II-era garden with "heirloom" vegetable and flower species that were available to gardeners in the 1940s. Throughout the years when war struck, a variety of victory gardens in all kinds and sizes provided plenty of food for the people. Seasonally, the plantings in this re-created garden are rotated.²⁷⁹

Victory gardens were gardens that were cultivated throughout world wars to ensure that people and troops had enough food. Government organizations, private foundations, businesses, schools, and seed companies all collaborated to provide land, instruction, and seeds to everyone who wanted to grow their own food. During WWII, millions of victory gardens of various sizes and designs generated enough food for the civilian population. While the gardens are currently closed for soil remediation, the Smithsonian's Victory Garden still exists as a defined physical space, and posters, seed packets, catalogs, and personal memories continue to convey the narrative of victory gardens.²⁸⁰

By displaying older heirloom varieties and their stories, the Smithsonian's Victory Garden mimics these WWII-style gardens.²⁸¹

The Tour Guide

Your tour guide will make all the difference. Technically, your tour guide's main role is to provide information about places on your tour itinerary, give background knowledge, and facts about each place visited during your journey, as well as answer questions asked by your group.

But when you hire a tour guide, you're not just getting a guide; you're getting a show person. You're getting someone who not only knows the facts but can tell you stories in an engaging way. But not every guide is fun or interesting. The best guides might make you laugh while at the same time addressing the seriousness of the particular subject they're talking about.

This role I have been in has evolved. Almost all guides employed by my company – including myself – were previously transporters, taking people from one museum to another or one memorial to another. But back when I started, there were only a couple of forms of viable transportation: taxi, walking, and what I operated – tricycles – otherwise known as pedicabs.

These days we have Lyft, Uber, scooters, and bicycles for rent – all for use by anyone needing basic transportation. It made economic sense for me to switch away from providing transportation to giving tours. But a passion was also sparked in me – a passion for giving people the best experience they could have while visiting Washington DC.

Guides have different skill levels. A visitor's experience – if presented correctly – is more than just a textbook lesson. A visit to Washington DC under the right circumstances – especially with an enthusiastic guide – can be truly transformational for you and your whole family.

About the Author



Barry Ivan Silber was born and raised in the District of Columbia and he loves showing visitors the best of his native city. He has been a Tricycle Pilot since 2010 and he co-owns Adventure DC Tricycle Tours and National Pedicabs, companies that give private tours of Washington DC and the National Mall.

Barry attended grade and high school in Washington DC, graduating from Wilson High School (now Jackson-Reed High School), and then attending the US Air Force Academy before becoming a commissioned officer in the US Air Force.

Hobbies include reading historical stories, writing to capture ideas, traveling to new and exciting places, and engaging in conversations with friends.

<https://adventuredctours.com>

<https://twitter.com/AdventureDCTour>

<https://www.facebook.com/AdventureDCTours>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/barry-ivan-silber-adventure-dc>

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