

Robb Mapou's 2018 Revised Most Excellent Guide to Visiting Washington, DC  
Focus on Sightseeing and the Arts

I am a native Washingtonian—I was born in DC, but grew up in Maryland and, until August 2017, lived in Silver Spring, within three miles of my childhood home of Adelphi. Having lived in metro DC for most of my life, it is really hard to know where to start, given how much there is to do in our Nation's capital. But, here are my recommendations, as well as some of my favorite places to go. Also, because this is our Nation's Capitol, most of this is FREE! So, take advantage. Because this is a tourist town, pretty much everything is kid friendly. A lot more information about DC can be obtained on this website

[www.tripsavvy.com/washington-d-c-4139664](http://www.tripsavvy.com/washington-d-c-4139664)

### Getting Around

Although Metro is generally one of the easiest ways to get around and although there is a station right near the hotel (Woodley Park/Zoo), the now-frequent maintenance can make travel difficult. It also runs less frequently after rush hour. So, *caveat emptor*. To check schedules, find out about delays, and locate stations, go to the Metro website.

[www.wmata.com/](http://www.wmata.com/)

### Tours

If you would rather not put together your own tour, then you might want to try one of these.

Old Town Trolley has been around a long time and is very popular:

[www.trolleytours.com/washington-dc](http://www.trolleytours.com/washington-dc)

Alternately, you could go by bus or double-decker bus:

[www.citysightsdc.com/](http://www.citysightsdc.com/)

Or, to be more adventurous, by bike or Segway:

[bikeandrolldc.com/tours/](http://bikeandrolldc.com/tours/)

And, for something unique, even if you have been to DC before, Timothy Fratto, of Neuropsychology Associates of Fairfax, recommends night tours of the monuments:

By trolley: [www.trolleytours.com/washington-dc/night-tours](http://www.trolleytours.com/washington-dc/night-tours)

By bus: [www.citysightsdc.com/night-tour-of-washington-dc.html](http://www.citysightsdc.com/night-tour-of-washington-dc.html)

By bike: [bikeandrolldc.com/tour/monuments-nite-bike-tour/](http://bikeandrolldc.com/tour/monuments-nite-bike-tour/)

### Your House of Government (Hopefully it is not shut down....)

Consider a visit to the U.S. Capitol. The underground Visitor Center has gotten rave reviews. It is also new location of many statues from Statuary Hall, including the only monarch from the U.S.: King Kamehameha I, who united the Hawaiian Islands.

[www.visitthecapitol.gov/](http://www.visitthecapitol.gov/)

The White House is obviously another popular destination, but this requires some planning. To get in, you must contact your U.S. Representative or Senator for tickets.

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[www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/)

Close to the U.S. Capitol is the Library of Congress, which is well worth a look-see, especially the interior architectural artwork. There are regular exhibits there, as well. Using the museum, however, requires advanced arrangements.

[www.loc.gov/visit/](http://www.loc.gov/visit/)

You might also want to visit the U.S. Supreme Court.

[www.supremecourt.gov/visiting/visitorservices.aspx](http://www.supremecourt.gov/visiting/visitorservices.aspx)

Two other popular destinations are the U.S. Archives, home to the Declaration of Independence

[www.archives.gov/nae/visit/](http://www.archives.gov/nae/visit/)

and the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing, where you can literally see money being made (note the cool website name).

[www.moneyfactory.gov/washingtondctours.html](http://www.moneyfactory.gov/washingtondctours.html)

### The National Mall

People have been known to visit the Mall and ask, "But where are the stores?" Yes, this is true. The Mall is surrounded by the Smithsonian and other museums (see below), is anchored by the U.S. Capitol at one end and the Lincoln Memorial at the other, and is home to a number of national monuments and memorials. My favorites are the Vietnam Memorial

[www.nps.gov/vive/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/vive/index.htm)

and the National World War II Memorial.

[www.wwiimemorial.com/](http://www.wwiimemorial.com/)

Here are the others, both on the Mall and close by. The National Park Service website ([www.nps.gov/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/index.htm)) is a great resource for other memorials and parks in DC, Maryland, and Virginia.

Unfortunately, the Washington Monument is closed for repair until the spring of 2019.

[www.nps.gov/wamo/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/wamo/index.htm)

The Lincoln Memorial

[www.nps.gov/linc/planyourvisit/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/linc/planyourvisit/index.htm)

The Jefferson Memorial

[www.nps.gov/thje/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/thje/index.htm)

Another of my favorites, near the Jefferson Memorial, is the FDR Memorial.

[www.nps.gov/frde/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/frde/index.htm)

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### Memorials in Virginia

Consider taking a trip to Arlington National Cemetery, the resting place of our Veterans. You can also visit the Tomb of the Unknowns and the gravesites of John F. and Robert F. Kennedy, and Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. It is accessible via Metro.

[www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Visit](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Visit)

If you go there, you should also stop by the Iwo Jima Memorial (officially the Marine Corps Memorial), which is close by.

[www.nps.gov/gwmp/learn/historyculture/usmcwarmemorial.htm](http://www.nps.gov/gwmp/learn/historyculture/usmcwarmemorial.htm)

### Public Museums

No visit to DC would be complete without a visit to at least one of the Smithsonian Museums. For an introduction, go to the Castle (and its website) first.

[www.si.edu/Museums/smithsonian-institution-building](http://www.si.edu/Museums/smithsonian-institution-building)

Want to see things from the Hope Diamond and a huge stuffed elephant to an insect farm? Check out the National Museum of Natural History.

[www.mnh.si.edu/](http://www.mnh.si.edu/)

For traditional and some contemporary art, go to the National Gallery of Art (although it is not part of the Smithsonian). There is also an outdoor Sculpture Garden next to the museum. On Sundays, there is a concert in the inner courtyard.

[www.nga.gov/](http://www.nga.gov/)

Prefer to focus on modern art? Then visit the Hirshhorn and its Sculpture Garden.

[hirshhorn.si.edu/](http://hirshhorn.si.edu/)

Are Julia Child's Kitchen, First Ladies' Gowns, Dorothy's Ruby Slippers, or old cars and trains your things? What about the original Star Spangled Banner? Then, you need to go to the National Museum of American History.

[americanhistory.si.edu/](http://americanhistory.si.edu/)

Interested in Native Cultures, both here and abroad? Then check out the newest Smithsonian, the National Museum of the American Indian.

[www.nmai.si.edu/](http://www.nmai.si.edu/)

How about the Spirit of St. Louis, John Glenn's space capsule, and all things of space and flying? Then go to the National Air and Space Museum. Make sure you see the movie *To Fly*, if it is showing. Also, there is an even larger center by Dulles airport in Chantilly, Virginia, although you will need a car to get there. I've not seen it, but have heard good things.

[www.nasm.si.edu/](http://www.nasm.si.edu/)

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Asian art of interest? Then go to the Freer Gallery and the underground Sackler Gallery, a short distance away. They were recently renovated and had a grand reopening late last year.

[www.asia.si.edu/](http://www.asia.si.edu/)

And, if you visit the Sackler, go next door to the National Museum of African Art, also underground. The two museums are near the Castle, where we began this tour.

[africa.si.edu/](http://africa.si.edu/)

The newest Smithsonian addition is the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Although I have yet to get there, I have heard that it is remarkable. But, plan ahead. It has been very crowded, and it is best to get a free timed entry pass in advance.

[nmaahc.si.edu/](http://nmaahc.si.edu/)

Away from the Mall (Gallery Place Metro), and definite favorites of mine are the National Portrait Gallery ([www.npg.si.edu/](http://www.npg.si.edu/)) and Smithsonian American Art Museum ([americanart.si.edu/](http://americanart.si.edu/))

Two other off-Mall museums are the Renwick Gallery, a part of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. It was renovated and reopened in 2016 and has been a big hit.

[americanart.si.edu/visit/renwick](http://americanart.si.edu/visit/renwick)

and the National Building Museum, which focuses on building and architecture. However, it is not part of the Smithsonian, and there is an admission fee.

[www.nbm.org/](http://www.nbm.org/)

### Private Museums

The Phillips Collection, located in Dupont Circle, a short two-block walk from the Dupont Metro (Q Street exit), is probably my favorite DC museum. (My other favorite, The Corcoran, sadly closed due to financial problems a few years ago. Much of its artwork went to the National Gallery of Art.). The Phillips has reciprocal arrangements with many other private galleries across the country. So, if you are a member elsewhere, you may be able to get in for free. Every Sunday afternoon at 4 PM, there is a concert. The museum is also open late on Thursdays and often features music that night.

[www.phillipscollection.org/](http://www.phillipscollection.org/)

I also highly recommend the Newseum, on Pennsylvania Avenue, within viewing distance of the U.S. Capitol. If you go, leave several hours to view it from top to bottom. Also, right next door is The Source by Wolfgang Puck, an excellent restaurant. The Food Court at the Newseum is served by Puck's company.

[www.newseum.org/](http://www.newseum.org/)

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There are other private museums, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, very close to the mall ([www.ushmm.org/](http://www.ushmm.org/)), the National Museum of Women in the Arts ([nmwa.org/](http://nmwa.org/)), the Spy Museum ([www.spymuseum.org/](http://www.spymuseum.org/)), Madame Tussaud's ([www.madametussauds.com/washington/](http://www.madametussauds.com/washington/)), and the recently opened Museum of the Bible, on the Mall ([www.museumofthebible.org/](http://www.museumofthebible.org/)). I have heard the Spy Museum is interesting, but unless you like kitsch, I would avoid Madame Tussaud's. Go see the original in London.

### The National Zoo

Rivalling other top tier zoos, including San Diego, the National Zoo is actually part of the Smithsonian. It is located in Northwest on Connecticut Avenue, halfway between the Woodley Park and Cleveland Park Metro stops. You can easily walk there from the hotel. It is worth a trip if the weather is nice. And, unlike many other zoos, it is free! [nationalzoo.si.edu/](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/)

### Gardens and Parks

Washington is a very green city. By that, I don't necessarily mean eco-friendly but, rather, filled with trees. This is very obvious when you fly over the city. Rock Creek Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, stretches from DC into Maryland. Great for biking and walking.

[www.nps.gov/rocr/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/rocr/index.htm)

Another favorite of mine is U.S. Botanic Garden. It is on the Mall, next to the National Museum of the American Indian and close to the Air and Space Museum. It is worth seeing, especially if you are into flowers and plants.

[www.usbg.gov/](http://www.usbg.gov/)

Further out and requiring a car is the National Arboretum. I have not been there for years, but hear it is wonderful.

[www.usna.usda.gov/](http://www.usna.usda.gov/)

The Hillwood Estate, Museum, and Garden, in Northwest, originally home to Marjorie Merriweather Post (think Post cereal) is another popular destination, where I someday hope to go.

[www.hillwoodmuseum.org/](http://www.hillwoodmuseum.org/)

Similarly Dumbarton Oaks, in Georgetown, is supposed to be gorgeous (although I wouldn't know, having never been there).

[www.doaks.org/gardens/](http://www.doaks.org/gardens/)

### Performing Arts

Frankly, I think DC rivals any city, including New York, for its venues of performing arts. Many theaters have had makeovers in the last several years (or have been relocated to a brand new setting). We even have our own version of the Tonies, the Helen Hayes Awards (<http://www.helenhayes.org/>). But, plan ahead, as tickets can be hard to come by.

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The premier arts center is, of course, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Overlooking the Potomac, home to the National Symphony Orchestra and with three main stages (Opera House, Eisenhower Theater, Concert Hall), several smaller venues (Terrace Theater, KC Jazz Club), a constantly running comedy (Shear Madness), a free venue in the main hall (Millennium Stage), an excellent restaurant (Roof Terrace), and a smaller cafeteria (KC Café) with excellent food, this is a destination in itself and a must-see for any arts fan.

[www.kennedy-center.org/](http://www.kennedy-center.org/)

Arena Stage, in Southwest, not far from our baseball stadium and the new Southwest Waterfront, is an architectural gem and has three stages. It first began when I was growing up, and actors once came to my high school drama class to perform. *Dear Evan Hansen*, now on Broadway and recipient of Tony Awards, debuted here. We were fortunate to have seen it several years ago.

[www.arenastage.org/](http://www.arenastage.org/)

Fans of Shakespeare and other classical works? The Shakespeare Theater, with two stages in Penn Quarter, at the Gallery Place Metro, is worth a visit.

[www.shakespearetheatre.org/](http://www.shakespearetheatre.org/)

If more modern or *avant garde* theater is to your liking, then check out the Woolly Mammoth Theater, also in Penn Quarter.

[www.woollymammoth.net/](http://www.woollymammoth.net/)

or the Studio Theater, on 14<sup>th</sup> Street, which is a reasonable walk from Dupont Circle Metro.

[www.studiotheatre.org/](http://www.studiotheatre.org/)

For a small venue, also in Dupont Circle, check out the Keegan Theater at Church Street.

[keegantheatre.com/](http://keegantheatre.com/)

Another long-time venue for theater is the National Theater, located on Pennsylvania Avenue not far from the White House. They feature tours of many musicals, as well as some concerts.

[thenationaldc.org/](http://thenationaldc.org/)

The historic Ford's Theater, where Lincoln was shot, was renovated a few years ago. Worth a trip, if only for a piece of history. And, across the street, you can visit the house where Lincoln died.

[www.fords.org/](http://www.fords.org/)

The Lincoln Theater, in DC's buzzing U Street area, dates to the early jazz age. Check out what's happening there and, if you go, head to Ben's Chili Bowl, the famous but casual hangout for politicians and celebrities, a few doors down.

[www.thelincolndc.com/](http://www.thelincolndc.com/)

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For jazz, Blues Alley, in Georgetown, has been a mainstay for years.

[www.bluesalley.com/](http://www.bluesalley.com/)

Unfortunately, other jazz venues have closed. However, a relatively new venue, with shows on Saturday night, is The Alex, located in The Graham hotel in Georgetown.

[www.thegrahamgeorgetown.com/dining-georgetown/](http://www.thegrahamgeorgetown.com/dining-georgetown/)

### Sports

From spring to fall, check out a Nationals game at Nationals Park, in Southwest.

[www.mlb.com/nationals/ballpark](http://www.mlb.com/nationals/ballpark)

Of course, if you want to go further, drive up to Ballmer and go to Orioles Park at Camden Yard.

[www.mlb.com/orioles/ballpark](http://www.mlb.com/orioles/ballpark)

Verizon Center, in Penn Quarter, is home to several DC sports teams, including the Washington Wizards. It is also a concert venue. Worth seeing what is happening there.

<http://www.verizoncenter.com/>

### Neighborhoods

Penn Quarter, at the Gallery Place Metro, is chocked full of restaurants, galleries, and theaters.

[www.tripsavvy.com/penn-quarter-washington-dc-neighborhood-1039376](http://www.tripsavvy.com/penn-quarter-washington-dc-neighborhood-1039376)

Take the Metro to DC's Union Station. Filled with shops, bars, and restaurants.

[www.unionstationdc.com/](http://www.unionstationdc.com/)

Walk further up Massachusetts Avenue from Union Station, and you will find a host of restaurants. And, of course, you can walk through and look at homes on Capitol Hill, while you are there.

[www.tripsavvy.com/capitol-hill-washington-dc-neighborhood-guide-1039372](http://www.tripsavvy.com/capitol-hill-washington-dc-neighborhood-guide-1039372)

On Capitol Hill, you will also find DC's Eastern Market. It is DC's only daily produce, meat, and fish market. On weekends, there is an arts and crafts market. Nearby are a host of restaurants.

[www.easternmarket-dc.org/](http://www.easternmarket-dc.org/)

Want something a bit more upcoming and edgy? Then check out the growing Atlas District, on H Street, NE. Probably best to take a cab.

[www.atlasdistrict.com/](http://www.atlasdistrict.com/)

You can't go wrong with Dupont Circle, a well established neighborhood of shops, restaurants, and galleries, and home to The Phillips Collection. An easy trip by Metro.

[www.tripsavvy.com/dupont-circle-washington-neighborhood-guide-1039374](http://www.tripsavvy.com/dupont-circle-washington-neighborhood-guide-1039374)

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Foggy Bottom is home to George Washington University and a number of good restaurants. Also, it is close to the Kennedy Center. Easily accessible via Metro. [www.tripsavvy.com/foggy-bottom-dc-1040567](http://www.tripsavvy.com/foggy-bottom-dc-1040567)

Georgetown? Well, if you must. Frankly, I think the neighborhood is overrated. It is not accessible by Metro (this was deliberate when the subway system was planned), and on street parking is very difficult. The architecture is beautiful, but I can't even remember the last time I was there—probably a Blues Alley concert. [www.georgetowndc.com/](http://www.georgetowndc.com/)

The newest area is the Southwest Waterfront, recently opened with restaurants, shops, and an entertainment venue. Accessible by the Southwest Waterfront Metro station. [www.wharfdc.com/](http://www.wharfdc.com/)

In Virginia, Old Town Alexandria is very popular. With historic homes, restaurants, art galleries (the popular Torpedo Factory Art Center is nearby; [www.torpedofactory.org/](http://www.torpedofactory.org/)), this is a great place to start exploring Virginia. [www.visitalexandriava.com/](http://www.visitalexandriava.com/)

My former hometown of Silver Spring offers many restaurants, some cool shops, the flagship theater of the American Film Institute, and the headquarters of Discovery Communications (but they just announced they are leaving). It's an easy trip to the Silver Spring Metro. [www.silverspringcenter.com/](http://www.silverspringcenter.com/)

### Getting Out of the City

Don't want to stay in DC? Want to explore more? Consider a visit to Baltimore, Annapolis, or Maryland's Eastern shore, or Colonial Williamsburg, in Virginia. Of course, you will need a car.

For a great hike, check out Great Falls, a short drive in Maryland. [www.nps.gov/grfa/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/grfa/index.htm)

National Harbor, which is in Maryland and a very short drive from DC, has a host of restaurants and shops and is on the water. There is also a new MGM Casino, if you like to gamble. [www.nationalharbor.com/](http://www.nationalharbor.com/)

And, of course, there is Mount Vernon, the home of George and Martha Washington. [www.mountvernon.org/](http://www.mountvernon.org/)

Want to go even further? Then take a drive to Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. [www.shenandoahvalley.com/](http://www.shenandoahvalley.com/)

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Or, take a trip to Virginia's wine country, now sporting over 250 wineries, many of which are world class and have garnered praise and awards. Our own Napa Valley, just outside DC.

[www.virginiawine.org/](http://www.virginiawine.org/)

And, finally, I invite you to visit my new hometown, Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. It has become a great food town, with one James Beard Award winner last year (Sam Calagione of Dogfish Head Brewing) and several James Beard Award nominees in the past years, including Chef Hari Cameron, at our favorite restaurant, a(muse). In addition to Dogfish Head, one of the first large-scale craft breweries in the U.S., there are many other smaller craft breweries and a few wineries and distilleries. There are also great music venues. In addition, Rehoboth is known for a plethora of outlet stores. There are nearby parks and trails. And the beach is always great in the off season. A short 2.5 hour drive from DC with no traffic. If you come, let me know, and I will treat you to dinner at our home (let's see who actually reads this....)

[www.visitdelaware.com/beaches/rehoboth-beach/](http://www.visitdelaware.com/beaches/rehoboth-beach/)

I could go on even more, but I think this will give you enough to do. Enjoy! Feel free to contact me with questions either before or at the meeting (301 802-0538 or [rmapou@gmail.com](mailto:rmapou@gmail.com)).