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terren in Virginia

# Weekend in Washington: A Two-Day Crash Course in some of DC's Greatest Hits

## Washington DC, 2 Days

### Table of contents:

Guide Description 2

Itinerary Overview 3

Daily Itineraries 4

Washington DC Snapshot 9

# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** In a perfect world, you'd have many days (or even weeks) to explore Washington and all that it has to offer. But as we all know, the world isn't perfect, and things like jobs, family obligations, and finances get in the way. If you do manage to carve out a weekend to visit the Nation's Capital, here are some ideas to make the most of your relatively brief visit. Note that these tips are bit more focused on exploring neighborhoods rather than specific places, and that some of them are more family-oriented than others; all of them, however, offer interesting insight into the District and its environs.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Washington DC

**DAY NOTE:** Maximize your time in DC by choosing a hotel that provides easy walking/Metro access to different parts of the city. Foggy Bottom is a good choice in that regard, and the George Washington University Inn is good value for money. Start your day by wandering into Georgetown for coffee and some window shopping. Georgetown is arguably Washington's most famous neighborhood; if you're feeling intellectual, you can tour the grounds of Georgetown University. If it's a nice day, you can cross the key Bridge into Arlington and hop on the Metro downtown to the National Mall. You can't really say you've visited DC if you haven't visited the Mall and all it has to offer. The monuments! The museums! The cherry blossoms (in the springtime)! The relative proximity of everything makes it easy for you to pick and choose which attractions interest you most; be prepared for crowds, however, especially on weekends in the summer months. From the Mall, make your way to Capitol Hill for a stroll and a nice dinner at Belga Cafe. This is one of the few Belgian restaurants in DC, and it doesn't disappoint. From its scrumptious brunch to its extensive beer list, Belga is a great place for delicious and reasonably priced European fare. If you're in the mood to party, there are several bars and clubs in Georgetown from which to choose. Jazz aficionados have been singing the praises (pardon the pun) of hip little club Blues Alley for years. It's a perfect spot to unwind at the end of the evening and listen to some world-class live music. Be away that there is a cover charge.

|   |  |
|---|--|
|  | <b>George Washington University Inn</b><br>Colonial atmosphere                             |
|  | <b>Georgetown</b><br>Washington's oldest neighborhood                                      |
|  | <b>Georgetown University</b><br>Academic Excellence  |
|  | <b>National Mall</b><br>The Nation's front yard - and home to DC's most notable monuments. |
|  | <b>Belga Café</b><br>Brunch is tops at this Belgian and Euro-fusion spot                   |
|  | <b>Blues Alley</b><br>Top jazz and blues artists   |

**DAY NOTE:** Now that you've fulfilled your tourist obligations, you can spend your second day in DC soaking up the atmosphere of two of its more interesting neighborhoods. Dupont Circle and Adams Morgan are lively, diverse areas with a great vibe and lots of culture. Many consider Dupont Circle (so named after the busy roundabout that defines it) to be the most culturally exciting neighborhood in the city. Art galleries thrive and restaurants of every conceivable cuisine can be found in Dupont, and it's recognized as being the unofficial hub of Washington's LGBT community. If you visit in June, you might be lucky enough to catch the annual "Pride of Pets" Dog Show (<http://www.petsdc.org/dogshow1.htm>), hosted at the Circle itself. Grab a coffee and a book at Kramerbooks and Afterwards, then wander up to Adams Morgan along 18th Street. Adams Morgan is home to an active Ethiopian community; sample delicious Ethiopian fare at Meskerem before heading back to Dupont for a (strong) martini at Russia House. This slick little bar/restaurant provides an opportunity to mingle fun-minded folks from all over the globe, and you'll enjoy the fun, Euro atmosphere.

|   |   |
|---|---|
|    | <b>Dupont Circle</b><br>Lively, artsy neighborhood  |
|   | <b>Kramerbooks and Afterwards</b><br>Lattes and literature  |
|  | <b>Adams-Morgan</b><br>Explore this vibrant neighborhood with great food, boutiques, nightlife  |
|  | <b>Meskerem</b><br>Eat with your fingers  |
|  | <b>Russia House Restaurant and Lounge (The)</b><br>This is more than a restaurant and bar - it's an experience. Sip vodka martinis and enjoy the buzzy, multicultural atmosphere. |

## Day 2 - Washington DC

# Day 1 - Washington DC

## QUICK NOTE

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### contact:

tel: +1 800 426 4455

fax: +1 202 298 7499

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

### location:

824 New Hampshire Ave Nw  
Washington DC 20037

## 1 George Washington University Inn

**DESCRIPTION:** Kennedy Center performers, corporate folks, visiting professors, and parents of GW students are frequent guests at this hotel owned by George Washington University. Rooms are a little larger and corridors are a tad narrower than those in a typical hotel, and each room includes a roomy dressing chamber. More than one-third of the units are one-bedroom suites. These are especially spacious, with living rooms that hold a sleeper sofa and a TV hidden in an armoire (there's another in the bedroom). The suites, plus the 16 efficiencies, have kitchens. The spaciousness and the kitchen facilities make this a popular choice for families and for long-term guests. The hotel is located in a lovely neighborhood, close to Georgetown, the Kennedy Center, and downtown. Mention your affiliation with George Washington University, if you have one, and you may receive a special "GWU" rate. © Frommer's



Hotels.com

### contact:

tel: +1 202 789 7000 (Tourist Information)

fax: +1 202 789 7037 (Tourist Information)

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

### location:

M Street and Wisconsin Avenue  
Washington DC 20007

### hours:

## 2 Georgetown

**DESCRIPTION:** Georgetown is one of the most historically significant areas of DC. It is a great place to spend the afternoon shopping or just strolling along the tree-lined streets, looking at the expansive homes and mansions. "M" street in Georgetown is the main upscale shopping area in DC. There are numerous historical sights mixed throughout the area, including the Old Stone House on M street, the oldest building in DC, and Dumbarton Oaks, where the United Nations was outlined in 1944. Georgetown is also one of DC's best places for eating, drinking, and nightlife. Local favorites include such places as Mr. Smiths, a piano bar, J. Pauls, and Old Glory Bar-



Call for details

B-Que. The Georgetown Waterfront is also a popular place to spend the afternoon. The restaurants that line the Potomac make for a great venue for drinks, although the food is better a couple of blocks north on M street. Recently, there has also been a proliferation of new, upscale restaurants in Georgetown including Hook and Mendocino Grille & Wine Bar. © NileGuide

contact:

tel: +1 202 687 3600  
http://www.georgetown.edu/

location:

37th and O St.  
Washington DC 20057

**3** Georgetown University

**DESCRIPTION:** One of the world's foremost universities, Georgetown University offers much more than lectures and books. Famous speakers from around the globe make a point of stopping at this renowned institution to give a speech, sit in on panels, or simply meet students and answer questions. The grounds of the university also offer a spectacular setting for an afternoon stroll. Healy Hall, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987, is one of the finest examples of Collegiate Gothic architecture in the nation. The oldest building on campus, Old North, has acted as a soap box for multiple presidents, including George Washington and Bill Clinton. Not too far off M Street, Georgetown is a must if you find yourself in the neighborhood. © wcities.com



contact:

tel: +1 202 426 6841  
fax: +1 202 737 3400  
http://www.nps.gov/nama/

location:

900 Ohio Drive, Southwest  
Washington DC 20024

hours:

Call for details

**4** National Mall

**DESCRIPTION:** Many visits to Washington DC center around the expansive National Mall & Memorial Parks. Public park space was one of the cornerstones of the original plan for the District of Columbia and today the National Mall helps fulfill that vision. At 1,000 square acres, and roughly 2.4 miles long, the Mall & Memorials provides open space for relaxation, reflection, celebration, and national expressions of First Amendment rights. Annual festivals and events held on the Mall: National Cherry Blossom Festival, National Black Family Reunion and Smithsonian Folklife Festival. The National Park Service offers walking and bike tours a few days a week and Military Band Concerts are held during the summer. The national museums line the eastern side of the Mall and the monuments occupy the west end (Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Ward War II Memorial, Korean War and Vietnam Memorial to name a few). Parking spaces are sparse and driving around the west end of the Mall is extremely confusing (it's easy to end up in Virginia and not know how to return). Various Metro stations service the Mall. Tourmobile Sightseeing provides a convenient option and it's authorized by the National Park Service. Tickets and tours vary (\$7.50 - \$20) but you can get on and off the busses at will. The Mall & Monuments are free and open 24 hours. Dramatic lighting makes nighttime monument viewing breathtaking (less crowds too!).



photo courtesy of National Mall

**contact:**

tel: 1 202 544 0100  
www.belgacafe.com

**location:**

514 8th Street, SE  
Washington DC 20003

**hours:**

Monday - Thursday 11:00am - 10:00pm  
Friday: 11:00am - 11:00pm, Saturday: -Brunch 9:00am - 4:00pm -Dinner 4:00pm - 11:00pm  
Sunday -Brunch 9:00am - 4:00pm - Dinner 4:00pm - 9:30pm

**5 Belga Café**

**DESCRIPTION:** If you're planning to spend some time on the Hill, Belga Cafe is a great spot to take a break and enjoy some artfully prepared Belgian fare. Steak and frites are the most commonly ordered dish here - and you have several different steak sauces available from which to choose. If you stop in for brunch, be prepared to leave with a VERY full stomach - the Belgian waffles are to die for.  
© NileGuide



Photo courtesy of Belga Cafe

**contact:**

tel: 202/337-4141  
fax: +1 202 337 7946  
www.bluesalley.com

**location:**

1073 Wisconsin Ave. NW  
Washington DC 20007

**hours:**

Daily 6p-12:30a

**6 Blues Alley**

**DESCRIPTION:** Blues Alley, in Georgetown, has been Washington's top jazz club since 1965, featuring such artists as Karrin Allyson, Ahmad Jamal, Sonny Rollins, Wynton Marsalis, Rachelle Ferrell, and Maynard Ferguson. There are usually two shows nightly at 8 and 10pm; some performers also do midnight shows on weekends. Reservations are essential (call after noon); since seating is on a first-come, first-served basis, it's best to arrive no later than 7pm and have dinner. Entrees on the steak and Creole seafood menu are in the \$17 to \$23 range, snacks and sandwiches are \$5.25 to \$10, and drinks are \$5.35 to \$9. The decor is "classic dive": exposed-brick walls; beamed ceiling; small, candlelit tables; and a very worn look about it. Sometimes well-known visiting musicians get up and jam with performers. © Frommer's



# Day 2 - Washington DC

## QUICK NOTE

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### contact:

tel: +1 202 789 7000 (Tourist Information)

fax: +1 202 789 7037 (Tourist Information)

<http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/dc50.htm>

### location:

Connecticut Avenue  
Washington DC 20036

### hours:

Call for details

## 1 Dupont Circle

**DESCRIPTION:** DuPont circle is one of Washington's hubs of nightlife, shopping, and dining. The circle itself is filled with Washingtonians day and night, relaxing on the benches, snacking, or playing music or a game of chess. Around the circle, the neighborhood is filled with interesting museums, shops, restaurants and bars. DuPont, and more specifically 17th street off of DuPont, is considered the center of Washington DC's gay and lesbian community. The Brickseller, home of the world largest beer list, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, is located in DuPont. DuPont is also home to a large number of embassies, and one can easily access Embassy Row by simply walking north-west on Massachusetts Avenue, which intersects the circle. DuPont is also home to some of the most important think-tanks in the country, including the Brookings Institution and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Johns Hopkins University's Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). © NileGuide



### contact:

tel: 1 202 387 1400

(Bookstore)

fax: 1 202 232 6777 (Cafe)

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

### location:

1517 Connecticut Avenue,  
Northwest  
Washington DC 20036

### hours:

Su-Th: 7:30a-1a; F-Sa 24 hrs

## 2 Kramerbooks and Afterwards

**DESCRIPTION:** This bookstore-cafe was the first to set up shop in Dupont Circle. It is always crowded, particularly on weekends when singles who would rather skip the bar scene flock to this surprising hot spot. Live music is featured nightly, Wednesday through Saturday. The cafe is a full-service restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Draft beer and wines by the glass are available. The entrees are not fancy— chicken and lamb chops are among your choices— but they are tasty. © wcities.com



**contact:**

tel: +1 202 789 7000 (Tourist Information)  
fax: +1 202 789 7037 (Tourist Information)  
<http://www.adamsmorgan.net/>

**location:**

18th Street Northwest & Columbia Road Northwest  
Washington DC 20009

**hours:**

Call for details

**3 Adams-Morgan**

**DESCRIPTION:** A true melting pot of DC culture, Adams Morgan offers a little bit of something for everyone. Centered at 18th street and Columbia Road, by day, it is the one of city's most interesting neighborhoods, with a large variety of unusual stores. By night, the true character of Adams Morgan emerges. Traffic comes to a near standstill as 18th street turns into one of the hubs of DC's nightlife scene. Adams Morgan has a wide variety of restaurants serving food from a variety of countries such as Ethiopia, Turkey, Mexico, El Salvador, Brazil, Italy, Vietnam, and Ghana. Almost every restaurant transforms into a bar or nightclub come sundown. At 3 AM, partiers flood the street again, looking for late night food including falafel and DC's famous "Jumbo Slice" pizza. Adams Morgan is a must-visit for those that want to experience one of the most diverse dining and nightlife areas of DC. © NileGuide



**contact:**

tel: 1 202 462 4100  
<http://www.meskeremonline.com>

**location:**

2434 18th Street NorthWest  
Washington DC 20009

**hours:**

M-Th noon-midnight, F-Su noon-3a

**4 Meskerem**

**DESCRIPTION:** In the past few years, Washington has seen an explosion of Ethiopian restaurants, notably in the 9th and U streets area, where you will find at least 10 cafes offering authentic Ethiopian cuisine backed up by traditional or contemporary musical entertainment. But Meskerem in Adams-Morgan was one of the first Ethiopian restaurants to open in Washington and remains among the best, especially for newcomers to the food. It's attractive; the three-level, high-ceilinged dining room has an oval skylight girded by a painted sunburst and yellow-washed walls hung with African art and musical instruments. On the mezzanine level, you sit at messobs (basket tables) on low, carved Ethiopian chairs or upholstered leather poufs. Diners share large platters of food, which they scoop up with a sourdough crepelike pancake called injera (no silverware here). You'll notice a lot of watt dishes, which refers to the traditional Ethiopian stew, made with your choice of beef, chicken, lamb, or vegetables, in varying degrees of hot and spicy; the alicha watts are milder and more delicately flavored. You might share an entree -- perhaps yegeb kay watt (succulent lamb in thick, hot berbere sauce) -- along with a sampler platter of five vegetarian dishes, served with tomato and potato salads. Some combination platters comprise an array of beef, chicken, lamb, and vegetables. There's a full bar, and the wine list includes Ethiopian honey wine and beer. © Frommer's

**contact:**

tel: 1 202 234 9433  
[www.russiahougelounge.com](http://www.russiahougelounge.com)

**location:**

1800 Connecticut Avenue, NW  
Washington DC 20009

**hours:**

Dinner: Sunday - Thursday:  
5:00pm - 10:00pm Friday -  
Saturday: 5:00pm - 11:00pm

**5 Russia House Restaurant and Lounge (The)**

**DESCRIPTION:** This Russian restaurant is located at the meeting point of Connecticut and Florida Avenues. The menu is essentially Russian with an ambience to match. The warm and cozy environment is perfect for socializing. The inter-continental menu, having Russian influences, includes an eclectic range of salads and Russian delicacies such as Beef Stroganoff. If you are a seafood fan, choose from the caviar selection - go ahead or gorge on the Salmon Kulebyaka. Pair your meal with a pick from the House Drinks. Don't forget to end your meal with one of the sumptuous desserts on offer. © wcities.com

# Washington DC Snapshot

## Local Info

Politics have helped to shape Washington, but they don't define it. It's the nation's capital, and arguably one of the most powerful places in the world, yet DC is often overlooked in favor of seemingly more glamorous US cities. But scratch the ostensibly dry surface and you'll find a city far more diverse than one might think; not surprising, considering that all of the embassies and consulates are here. It's impossible to list Washington's must-see sights in a paragraph, but certain places simply cannot be missed. The Smithsonian Institution, with its myriad museums and galleries, provides something of interest for every visitor, from the arts to aerospace engineering and everything in between. Beyond the majesty of the National Mall, plenty of lesser-known DC institutions lie a bit off the beaten track. Washington's music scene has long been lauded for its originality (everything from go-go funk to hardcore punk has heavy DC roots; Fort Reno's outdoor concerts are a summer tradition). Changing administrations make for prevalent transience (it's actually quite difficult to find many people in DC who are born-and-bred natives), yet there are certain venerable city establishments – like Ben's Chili Bowl, where Presidents have been known to dine – that stand the test of time. And Washington continues to grow and evolve – visitors can sample exquisite Ethiopian cuisine in the city's revitalized U Street Corridor neighborhood, wander through small, privately owned art galleries in Dupont Circle, or sip ale at Columbia Height's new Commonwealth Pub. One of the many things that DC has in its favor is that it's a very walkable town, so visitors can fill their days with activities in several different neighborhoods without traveling unreasonable distances. And Washington is imminently family-friendly, with plenty of events and activities that will please kids of all ages.

© NileGuide

## History

Native American settlements existed in current-day Washington DC for thousands of years before the area was first explored by Europeans in the early 1600s; the Potomac River, on which the city is located,

derived its name from an Algonquin tribe.

While the Native Americans were initially accommodating to the arriving Colonists, relations became strained due to land ownership disputes, and most members of the DC-area tribes eventually sought refuge further afield.

It was not until 1790, with the signing of the Residence Act, that the states of Maryland and Virginia officially ceded the 10-mile square of land (including Alexandria, Virginia) on which DC was to be built. Pierre L'Enfant, a French-born architect, was commissioned to develop a plan for the new city; though L'Enfant was eventually de-commissioned and his plans superseded by the updated engravings of Andrew Ellicott, his is the name most commonly associated with the original planning of Washington.

The 19th century was one of great change in Washington- from the burning of the city by the British during the War of 1812, to Alexandria's "retrocession" from the District and return to Virginia in the mid-century, to the Civil War and Reconstruction. Slavery was abolished in Washington almost a full year before President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. This paved the way for the growth of a vibrant African-American community in Washington, the benefits of which have played an integral part in shaping the city's cultural and political history.

The last hundred years have witnessed DC's establishment as one of the most powerful cities in the world. It was also one of the foremost cities in the American Civil Rights movement. Washington public schools were the first to integrate in the mid-1950s; the National Mall was the site of Martin Luther King Jr.'s historic 1963 "I have a dream" speech. When King was assassinated in 1968, riots erupted in Washington, among other places; the U Street Corridor in particular was a scene of massive unrest. Forty years later, crowds gathered in this same neighborhood- near U and 14th Streets, NW- in a spontaneous, peaceful celebration of the election of America's first African-American President.

Considering the amount of attention that DC receives every four years during election time, it's quite surprising that Washingtonians themselves were only granted the right to vote in Presidential

elections in the mid-1960s. Washington is not a state, nor is it part of a state; it's a free-standing federal territory, under complete jurisdiction of Congress.

Unsurprisingly, this perceived lack of governing control is cause for much controversy. District residents still lament the lack of Senatorial representation, and the argument for "Home Rule" and distancing from Congressional control has been debated for years.

© NileGuide

## Hotel Insights

There are hundreds of hotels, inns, B&Bs, and other types of accommodation in and around Washington. Any number of these places will suit just about any traveler's needs; since Washington is a thoroughly manageable city (many of the main neighborhoods are walkable and/or accessible by bus or Metro), staying in the most central location isn't too big of a concern. Instead, you can focus on finding a hotel that suits your personal style.

**Hip and trendy** Visitors who like being in the middle of the action have several different hotel options at their disposal. There are lots of funky boutique hotels in Dupont Circle, like Hotel Rouge or the Topaz Hotel; if Georgetown is more your scene, try Hotel Monticello.

**Family-friendly** Convenience is probably at the top of the list of hotel criteria for families traveling with children. In this instance, it might make more sense to choose a location that's a little less chaotic; hotels in nearby Arlington, Virginia or Bethesda, Maryland offer easy access to the center of Washington while also allowing for a slightly quieter (and likely less expensive) home base.

**Old School** The big-name hotels downtown, like the St. Regis or the Renaissance Mayflower, are the best bet for a classic, glamorous hotel experience.

A few blocks north, the stately Watergate Hotel benefits from a super-central location in addition to its famous historical connotations. Smaller inns like the Latham Hotel in Georgetown, the Henley Park Hotel near the Verizon Center, or the Hay-Adams near the White House provide more intimate (but equally sophisticated) settings.

## Washington DC Snapshot continued

**Star spotting** Those hoping to see a famous face will have the most luck at The Ritz Carlton in Georgetown. Hollywood types often bunk there when they're in town for special events. On a more local note, politicians can often be seen in and around the Omni Shoreham in Woodley Park- notable also because of its proximity to Adams Morgan.

**On the Cheap** For many, vacation accommodations don't need to be more than a nice, clean place to crash after a long day of sightseeing and exploring.

Thankfully, it's not too difficult to find perfectly adequate, cheap lodging in Washington. The Quincy is centrally located in Foggy Bottom, and its prices are tough to beat. If you don't mind sharing your room with other travelers, check out some of DC's hostels, such as the Gallery Inn.

© NileGuide

### Restaurants Insights

Washington has always had a lively dining scene, but a recent, steady influx of exciting new restaurants has forced some of the old standbys to take notice and stop resting on their laurels. As specific neighborhoods change and grow, so do their culinary offerings. As a result, areas that were virtually bereft of dining options as little as ten years ago are now crammed with restaurants and cafes catering to all tastes and budgets.

Many of DC's traditionally fancy restaurants are located downtown, presumably because they cater to the lawyers, politicians, and various other movers and shakers who work around there. Stalwarts like Old Ebbitt Grill and The Prime Rib are still solid establishments; they've been joined by stylish newer spots like Cafe Atlantico and The Source, Wolfgang Puck's gorgeous bistro in the Newseum building. Rasika is consistently included among the top Indian restaurants in the city. And Obelisk has been known to host a political dignitary or two, given its closeness to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Adams Morgan offers wide-ranging and eclectic food choices befitting its funky atmosphere. Among the many options are Ethiopian, South American, and even Cajun restaurants. You can dine on the cheap at Mixtec, gorge on delicious vegetarian food at Amsterdam Falafelshop (bonus:

they're open late on weekends!), or sip whiskey at Bourbon. The neighborhood's main thoroughfare provides lots of lazy Sunday brunch options as well.

The revitalized U Street Corridor is constantly adding new culinary feathers in its cap. And patrons benefit from the neighborhood's dense concentration of outstanding restaurants- with so many choices, everyone is bound to find something to satisfy his or her appetite.

Eatonville serves funky Southern cooking; Cork has a great wine list and tasty small plates to balance it.

Dupont Circle is a perennial dining favorite, and nearby Logan Circle is fast becoming a go-to restaurant destination as well. Dupont is host to Komi, arguably one of the most spectacular restaurants in the city; appealing and less expensive options like Circa, Zorba's and Pizzeria Paradiso abound as well. In Logan, stop by Posto for traditional Florentine fare in a modern atmosphere. Just down the road, Rice serves up Asian-inspired food that both vegetarians and meat-eaters can enjoy.

Georgetown's moneyed streets are home to posh restaurants like the venerable 1789 and chic Citronelle. Newer restaurants like Agraria, which specializes in organic and locally grown food, are a nice addition to the Waterfront.

Depending on where you are in Capitol Hill, there are some great restaurant choices worth exploring. In Southeast, check out Montmartre or Park Cafe for a romantic meal or Good Stuff Eatery for heavenly burgers. On the Southwest Waterfront, the Mandarin Oriental Hotel offers both swanky CityZen and laid-back Sou'Wester. In Northeast, head to Union Pub to watch college football or sip a beer on the outdoor patio.

DC's top restaurants aren't limited to within the city limits. In the Maryland and Virginia suburbs, there's a huge array of great eateries from which to choose. The area's diverse demographics are reflected in its vast array of cuisines (everything from Vietnamese to Afghan to Austrian).

Try Vermilion in Old Town Alexandria, or Cafe Asia in the Rosslyn section of Arlington. Further afield, restaurants like L'Auberge Chez Francois and The Inn at Little Washington are great "special event" locations (though your wallet will feel a lot lighter after dining there).

© NileGuide

### Nightlife Insights

Everyone has an opinion when it comes to the "perfect night out". A few quiet drinks somewhere off the beaten track, perhaps? Clubbing until the daylight hours? Getting a dose of culture at the theater? All of these things are on offer in Washington- you just need to know where to look.

New York might be known as "the city that never sleeps", but clubbers can indulge their inner insomniacs in DC as well, at one-named clubs like Policy, Ultra, Fur and Glow- all of which offer R&B, house, hip hop, salsa, trance and other dance-worthy music. Patrons need to "dress to impress", and call in advance to reserve a table with bottle service (in order to people-watch in style).

For those craving something a little more low-key, there are many bars, pubs and lounges to suit their mood. Swanky hotels like The Ritz Carlton in Georgetown offer appropriately chic cocktail lounges. Or stop by Russia House near Dupont Circle to drink (strong) vodka martinis and chat with the eclectic clientele. RFD, in Chinatown, has one of the largest beer selections in the city; Dr. Granville Moore's, in the Atlas District, offers great Belgian ales.

There's an active theater and dance community here; depending on the show, it's not too difficult to secure a ticket to see a performance at Arena Stage, Woolly Mammoth, the Shakespeare Theatre, or the Kennedy Center (to name a very few).

Washington has dozens of live music venues, ranging from intimate nightclubs to large stadiums. Nightclub 9:30 is a DC institution, as is the Black Cat; both places skew a bit more heavily toward indie, punk and alternative music, although pop acts have been known to play there as well. Bigger-name acts tend to play at Verizon Center, Nissan Pavilion, or Wolf Trap. In the summertime, visitors bring a picnic to some of these places and camp out on the lawn while listening to the music.

For a family-friendly evening alternative, the Kennedy Center's Family Theater always has great performances geared for kids of all ages. If the weather is nice, book a family walk through Washington Walks; kids will learn cool facts about the

## Washington DC Snapshot continued

city (and get a little exercise as well). Or catch a movie at one of the several IMAX movie theaters in the area, including one on Independence Avenue on the Mall.

© NileGuide

### Things to Do Insights

As befitting a diverse place, Washington offers different activities for different tastes.

And while seasonally varied, DC weather is not overly extreme; it gets very hot in the summer and quite cold in the winter, but neither end of the weather spectrum is so severe that it forces people inside for extended periods.

You probably already know that DC is full of tourist-worthy attractions. Those planning to do the whole sightseeing shebang won't run out of things on their itinerary. Indeed, many of the world's iconic statues, monuments and museums reside in the Nation's Capital and its surrounding areas.

Spend a few hours in quiet reflection at Arlington Cemetery or the various war memorials (Korea, Vietnam, World War II and more) on the Mall. Catch a glimpse of the building that inspired the Watergate scandal.

Take your pick of one of the Smithsonian Institution's many different galleries, or visit some of the lesser-known museums (why not check out the Octagon Museum, for example?). And of course, no first-time visit to Washington is complete without a photo or two of the White House; seeing more of the President's residence, however, requires a fair bit of planning in advance.

People who like the great outdoors love Washington - it's loaded with parks, trails, and gardens, most of which are open to the public. Walking along the quiet, tree-lined paths of Rock Creek Park, you might just forget that you're in the middle of a vibrant city. Wander down from Georgetown's crowded streets to the C&O Canal, which is perfect for jogging, cycling, or strolling with the family. The National Zoo is easily accessible by metro, and always a crowd-pleaser (check the zoo's website to find out about special events, which take place fairly frequently throughout the year). If you have a car, drive out to Glen Echo Park in Maryland and enjoy family-friendly entertainment like puppet shows and story telling, or head down to the United States Arboretum to truly immerse yourself in nature.

Foodies have an ever-increasing array of cafes, restaurants and bistros from which to choose, from critical darlings like Central Michel Richard to up-and-comers like Founding Farmers. The Kennedy Center is perhaps the best known performing arts center in the city, but it's by no means the only one; depending on what you're interested in seeing or hearing, there is always a theater, club or concert hall to fit the bill. Balance steamy days in July with cool performances at the city's annual Capital Fringe Festival, or watch the holiday favorite Nutcracker at The Washington Ballet.

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### Travel Tips

#### Getting Here

Situated more or less in the middle of the east coast, Washington is accessible by pretty much any mode of transport.

For visitors traveling to DC from within the US, Canada, or Mexico, Ronald Reagan National Airport (or "National Airport", as the locals who remember its original name still call it) is the most convenient option. In addition to the standard airport transportation services (cab, Super Shuttle, rental car facilities and bus), Reagan also boasts a Metro station, making it imminently easy (and inexpensive) to travel to and from there.

International flights (and certain airline carriers like JetBlue) come through Washington Dulles International Airport. It's farther away from the center of town, and there is no direct Metro service, but the aforementioned Super Shuttle runs to and from here, and there are several bus services from which to choose, including one operated by the Washington Flyer that travels to Dulles from West Falls Church Metro station.

Baltimore-Washington International Airport is the farthest of the three airports from the center of town; travelers willing to deal with the 30+ mile commute (via a number of options, including buses, trains, cabs, and car services) might get a slightly cheaper fare here than at the other two airports.

All three airports have the prerequisite coffee chains, souvenir stores and news agents; more substantial shopping or

dining options, aside from Duty-Free, are pretty limited.

Amtrak and MARC trains run directly into Union Station, near the Capitol; Greyhound and Peter Pan share a bus terminal close by. Offshoots of these and other large bus companies (like Bolt Bus or Megabus) are generally cheap, clean and reliable; they pick up and drop off their passengers in or near the center of the city.

Finally, anyone up to the challenge of navigating the Capital Beltway (the Washington area's interstate highway, which intersects in the north and the south with I-95) will find several modes of entry into the city via car.

#### Once You've Arrived

Washington is surprisingly navigable.

Divided into four quadrants (NW, NE, SW and SE), the city is planned on a grid (though perhaps not quite as straightforward as, say, New York's). For the most part, lettered streets run east to west, and numbered streets run north to south. The streets are crisscrossed by avenues, named after the country's 50 states. That said, you should certainly invest in a map to get your bearings and prepare yourself for some of the odd streets, alleys and parks that prove exceptions to the grid rule.

The Metro is a fantastic way to get to all of the city's major neighborhoods without the hassle of driving, parking, or spending too much money. WMATA (the overarching transit authority that includes Metrorail and Metrobuses) are generally very reliable.

Cabs are plentiful, and meter-based (a recent change from the zoned system that caused many tourist confusion and frustration).

If driving is a necessity, it's easy to rent a car in DC from any of the major rental agencies - check their individual websites for more information about rates and location. Bear in mind, though, that parking in central Washington can be pricey.

#### Helpful links:

WMATA - <http://www.wmata.com>  
Amtrak - 1-800-872-7245, <http://www.amtrak.com>  
MARC - 1-800-325-7245, <http://www.mtmaryland.com>  
Greyhound - 1-800-231-2222, <http://www.greyhound.com>  
Peter

## Washington DC Snapshot continued

Pan- 1-800-343-9999, <http://www.peterpanbus.com>

Ronald Reagan National Airport- 703-417-8600, <http://www.mwaa.com/national>  
Dulles International Airport- 703-417-8600, <http://www.metwashairports.com/dulles>  
Baltimore-Washington International Airport- 1-800-435-9294, <http://www.bwiairport.com>

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### Fun Facts

#### Washington Stats:

Coordinates: 38°53'42.4"N 77°02'12.0"W

Population: 591,833

Size: 68.3 sq miles

Time Zone: EST(UTC-5)

Temperature averages: 35° F winter, 80° F summer

Rainiest month(on average): May

Did You Know?

The Washington Monument is DC's largest building- it's roughly a tenth of a mile high.

The "DC" in Washington DC stands for "District of Columbia". The phrase "taxation without representation", often heard here, is based on the fact that DC, not being a state, doesn't have any representation in Congress.

Washington was ranked the #1 Most Walkable City in the U.S. by The Brookings Institution in 2007.

DC's area code is 202, but you're also likely to see area codes like 301 and 240 (for nearby Maryland suburbs) and 703 (for Northern Virginia).

L'Enfant Plaza, in the SW quadrant of the city, is named after Pierre L'Enfant, who is credited with creating Washington's first planned street layout in the late 18th century.

DC's current Mayor, Adrian Fenty, was the youngest person ever to assume the post (at age 36). He is also an avid runner who competes regularly in local road races.

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