



Navigating the Area

Make sure to print out a map before you go. Your hotel will have one, but it will be helpful to have one handy because you'll be staying in the same general area for the whole trip. There are many options for transport in DC. While walking can get you where you need to go, I recommend hailing a cab (or getting an Uber) if your destination is more than 4-5 blocks away. Sometimes places seem nearer on a map than they are in real life. I always recommend finding a hotel either close to the National Mall or close to a metro stop. In nice weather, renting bikes or segways is a great way to get around for an afternoon. Some routes can be taxing to walk, but a bike or a segway can help you get around more easily.

<http://www.bikethesites.com/>
<http://www.capitalsegway.com/>

Riding the metro

It's clean and safe (although not always on time!). I encourage taking this if younger travelers have never ridden the subway before.

Tours

Of the tour options, trolleys have been here the longest. There are also double-decker bus hop-on/hop-off tours. They have an established list of stops and you can get off, tour the stops at your leisure, and then get back on when you're ready.

You might consider touring at night for the DC monuments if the weather is good. They are really pretty at night, but plan according to the weather (pretty sights are not as pretty when you're chilly!).

<https://www.trolleytours.com/washington-dc>

Favorite Sites

Monuments take less time to view than museums. You can usually see everything within 2-3 hours. The Capitol or White House usually takes a longer period of time. You can view which buildings you are able to see through your hop-on/hop-off arrangement. Walk around, take your time looking, and learn some history from brochures provided by the National Park Service.

Some Tips about traveling to DC with your kids: http://www.fodors.com/news/story_3021.html

- Jefferson Memorial
- Lincoln Memorial
- Vietnam Wall (on the North side of Lincoln)
- Korean Memorial (on the South side of Lincoln)
- WWII Memorial
- FDR Memorial
- MLK Memorial
- Iwo Jima Memorial - Consider pairing this memorial with the Arlington Cemetery (both in Arlington)



Arlington Cemetery

There is nothing like it. The cemetery is very hilly, so be prepared to walk. You can visit the Tomb of the Unknowns. The grave sites of JFK, Bobby and Ted Kennedy are in Arlington Cemetery. For more information about ceremonies, or requesting ceremonies, visit:

<https://www.arlingtoncemetery.mil/Visit/Events-and-Ceremonies/Request-a-Ceremony>

White House

While planning your White House visit, check the tour details ahead of time for tours with your senator/representative. Understandably, the White House is very strict about who they let in. If you can't do the tour, take pictures outside. The South Lawn is very pretty, and many people like to take pictures on that side.

Capitol Building

Again, check with your senator/representative. There is a great Visitor Center here and you can tour the building on your own. It is an absolutely amazing building—even seeing the Rotunda is worth the visit.

Right by the Capitol is the Supreme Court and Library of Congress. They are both beautiful buildings, but they are secondary options to tour when considering the amount of time available.

<http://www.supremecourt.gov/visiting/visitorservices.aspx>

<http://www.loc.gov/visit/>

Ford's Theater

You can reserve tickets ahead of time, which is recommended (see link below). There is the theater (where they still show plays), you can see the balcony where Lincoln sat as he was shot, and in the basement is a small museum area with artifacts from that night. Also note the Petersen house where he died, across the street.

<https://www.fords.org/>



There is also a Hard Rock Café near this, which is fun for kids and serves pretty good food as well.

Sculpture Garden (free)

This is right on the National Mall and you can walk around at your leisure. The Sculpture Garden is a good place to take a break from indoor museums. In the winter there is a lovely ice-skating rink in the middle (you can rent skates – I think this closes mid-March), which is fun to do and really pretty with white lights at night. In warmer weather, there is a fountain in place of the rink. There is a nice café here, so it's a good place to get lunch or a snack (but the American Indian museum, which is very close, has a cafeteria that is highly recommended, so you may want to do that instead).

<https://www.nga.gov/visit/sculpture-garden.html>

National Archives (free)

The National Archives are right across the street from the Sculpture Garden and great to see, especially if you've seen Night at the Museum. The Declaration of Independence and Constitution are on display, along



with many other historical documents (Nixon's resignation, etc). The central area takes about 20-30 minutes to walk through, and there are other libraries close by if they peak your interest. You can make a reservation time in advance for \$1.50 per person (I highly recommended this).

<http://www.archives.gov/nae/visit/>

US Mint (the Bureau of Engraving and Printing)



This tour is especially fun for kids. You get to see how money is made and piles of millions! Tickets are given away for free on a first-come first-serve basis at the ticket booth at 8am every morning. In peak season, the line starts early, so you should be there by 7 to get tickets. I think it's worth it, especially if someone is an early riser and doesn't mind getting tickets. You'll have the timed entry later that day on your tickets and then come back to visit. The US Mint is right next to the Holocaust museum.

<http://www.moneyfactory.gov/>

Museums (all of these on the National Mall)

Holocaust Museum



This museum is packed with artifacts and a rich, sobering history. Timed-entry tickets are available online (highly recommended), or you can go into the main exhibit area. In the main exhibit area, there is a very touching area for kids, and interactive exhibit called Daniel's story.

<http://www.ushmm.org/visit/>

Air and Space



This museum is great for kids and science-lovers, and there is an IMAX theatre showing flight-related educational films.

Natural History



This museum is also great for kids. There are bones, fossils, gems, etc., and an IMAX theatre showing amazing scenes from around the world.

American History



This museum is fun for young girls especially. There are some of the First Ladies' clothes, the Hope Diamond, and the flag that inspired the Star Spangled Banner among other things. You can also visit an old-fashioned ice cream parlor.

Gallery of Art

With many rich art viewing opportunities, the Gallery of Art offers a new, contemplative experience. There is an impressionist room with works by Monet, Van Gogh, Manet, and Degas.



Newseum

The Newseum is unique in many ways, one being that everything is told from the point of view of the newscasters covering events. There is a 9/11 exhibit with part of the antenna from the top of the World Trade Center, and there is also a part of the Berlin Wall. This is not part of the Smithsonians, so admission is not free (around \$30).

Spy Museum

The Spy Museum is a little ways off the mall, and it is also not part of the Smithsonian (around \$15). While this is not a particular hot go-to place for time in DC, it is a unique museum about a unique topic.

American Indian Museum

This museum holds one of the world's largest collections of Native American culture across history. The architecture and landscaping of the museum are very artful and unique.

African American History Museum

This museum presents broad themes of history, culture, and community in relation to America's history and culture.

Udvar Hazy Air and Space Museum

This museum is about 45 minutes driving west of the city. It can be described as an expansion of the Air and Space Museum, with much larger rooms for full-sized planes, rocket pieces, etc.

<http://airandspace.si.edu/udvarhazy/>

National Zoo

The zoo is free, fun, and hilly. As with any zoo, plan according to the weather.

Neighborhoods/Restaurants

In this area, most restaurants are near hotels on the Mall or accessible through stops on the trolley tour and a short walk. You can look into the Opentable app for planning reservations ahead of time.