

The Washington you see today had its birth two centuries ago in a rational yet visionary design unprecedented in its scale. Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan for the city and its core mall area was influenced by urban planning then current in Europe and neoclassical landscape design exemplified by Versailles. Brilliantly adapting those ideas to Washington's terrain, L'Enfant placed the Capitol on Jenkins Hill and the "President's House" on a lower terrace then overlooking the Potomac River. Between them ran Pennsylvania Avenue, to symbolize the connection between the branches of government. The spirit of that plan lives in the city still.

Present-day shoreline
Shoreline in L'Enfant's 1791 plan
Map courtesy Library of Congress

1790

The result of a compromise between northern and southern interests, the Residence Act authorizes President Washington to choose a site for the capital on the Potomac River. Andrew Ellicott, aided by Benjamin Banneker, surveys a ten-mile square encompassing parts of Maryland and Virginia. The core of L'Enfant's 1791 plan is the triangle

created by the Capitol, the White House, and the Mall. The plan calls for grand avenues radiating from a number of plazas. The cornerstone for the White House is laid October 13, 1792; it is the oldest federal structure in Washington.

1800

The Senate chamber of the Capitol, designed by Dr. William Thornton, is completed and Congress moves

from Philadelphia to Washington. The House chamber is completed in 1807, with a covered walkway between the buildings. President John Adams and Abigail Adams move into the just-completed President's House in 1800.

1810

Work begins on converting Tiber Creek into L'Enfant's planned canal. It follows what is now Constitution Avenue, then turns in front of the Capitol.

1814

After the British burn the Capitol during the War of 1812, Benjamin Latrobe begins rebuilding. William Bulfinch completes the restoration by 1829, sheathing in copper the dome designed by William Thornton.

1836

Robert Mills' winning design for a monument to George Washington calls for a great obelisk with a colonnaded base. His Treasury building, begun the same year, obstructs the line-of-sight L'Enfant had wanted between the Capitol and White House.

1848

The portion of the District of Columbia that had been annexed from Virginia is ceded back to the state.

1861

Construction of the Washington Monument begins. Because of sandy soil where L'Enfant had specified a monument, it is not built at the exact intersection of the axes. Work on the monument ceases in 1854 after the anti-foreign Know-Nothing party seizes the monument to protest the contribution of a memorial stone by Pope Pius IX. Rising sectional-

ism prevents the resumption of work.

1851

Landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing submits a plan for a "national park" on the mall, calling for a series of natural gardens. Only his plan for the Smithsonian gardens is adopted, although his influence is felt in the Department of Agriculture's garden and other parts of

the Mall. Downing's curving paths and varied foliage are quite different from L'Enfant's rational, geometric plan with a "Grand Avenue" lined with imposing residences, although L'Enfant's well-defined axes remain intact.

1861

During the Civil War Washington is transformed from a quiet town into a thriving wartime capital with

a booming population. In the decades after the war the city's continuing vitality is evident in ambitious projects that bring new life to the Mall area.

1872

The Washington Canal is filled in. The Baltimore & Potomac Railroad builds a station on the Mall where the canal had run between 6th and 7th streets and lays tracks across the Mall. The

National Gallery now stands at the site of the station, which was demolished in 1907 when Union Station was completed.

1874

Frederick Law Olmsted's landscape plan for the Capitol calls for terraces that enhance the building's setting on Capitol Hill.

1879

Work is resumed on the

Washington Monument. It is dedicated in 1885.

1884

The mudflats from the Washington Monument to today's Potomac shoreline are reclaimed to form what is now East and West Potomac Parks.

1902

The Senate Park Commission—the "McMillan Commission"—proposes

a reflecting pool west of the Washington Monument, a memorial to Lincoln, another major memorial south of the Washington Monument, a bridge between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery, government buildings in the area between Pennsylvania Avenue and the Mall (the "Federal Triangle"), and restoration of the open, geometric

quality L'Enfant had wanted for the Mall.

1932

Having used borrowed quarters for 143 years, the Supreme Court finally moves to its own building.

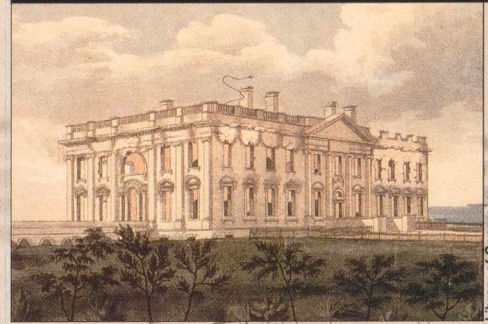
1971

The Mall's World War II temporary structures are removed to make room for Constitution Gardens, completed in time for the Bicentennial.

1998

The National Capital Planning Commission recommends developing North and South Capitol streets, removing railroad tracks and a freeway that divide the city, reinforcing the connection between the Capitol and the Anacostia River, improving the Anacostia waterfront, and linking waterfront areas from Georgetown to the National Arboretum.

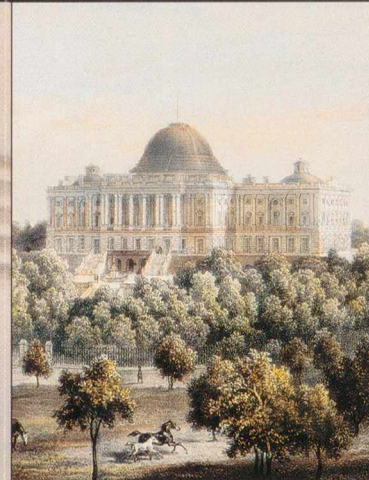
1814



Library of Congress

James Hoban designed the White House in the style of an 18th-century manor house. As shown here, the British in 1814 reduced the building to a burned-out shell during the War of 1812. Under Hoban's direction it was rebuilt by 1817.

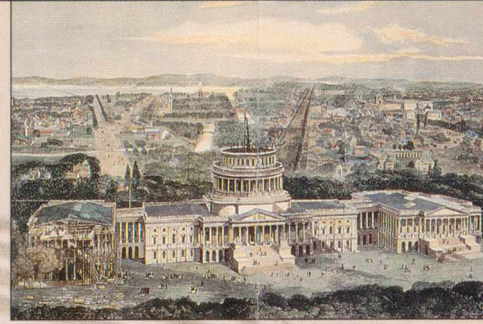
1848



Kunstmuseum Washington Collection

The Capitol as it appeared with its early copper dome, before work on the extended wings and the current dome began in the 1850s.

1861



Kunstmuseum Washington Collection

President Lincoln insisted that work on the new Capitol dome continue during the Civil War. It was completed in 1863. This view also shows the Washington Canal, the

1902



Smithsonian building on the Mall, and the unfinished Washington Monument in the distance.

1998



National Capital Planning Commission

This painting (left), used in the presentation of the McMillan Commission plan, shows the proposed memorial to Lincoln and the bridge linking the memorial to Arlington National Cemetery.

The plan for Washington in the 21st century by the National Capital Planning Commission would enhance the Capitol's role as the visual focus of Washington, linking it to the rest of the city and to

an improved riverfront via the landscaped and revitalized Capitol Streets. The plan builds on the legacy of the L'Enfant and McMillan Commission plans that had shaped the city.

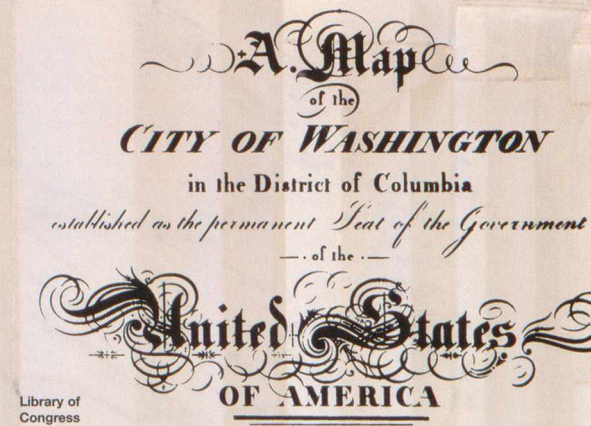
A place created and planned as the seat of government; a young city that powerfully evokes the past; treasury of a nation's heritage; home to hundreds of thousands of people. The nation's capital can be seen from a number of perspectives, all of which are better understood after a visit to the heart of Washington, D.C.—the National Mall area. The Mall's formal structures, ceremonial spaces, and carefully planned vistas have their roots in earlier European capitals designed to showcase autocratic regimes. But these are, in Walt Whitman's words, democratic vistas, where the American people can freely assemble to play, attend cultural events, or petition the government for change. In 1933 stewardship of the Mall area

passed to the National Park Service, whose rangers will help you get the most out of your visit, whether you see the President's home, ascend the Washington Monument, or just relax and enjoy the beauty of our national green.

The buildings housing the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government—White House, Capitol, and Supreme Court—are here, open to everyone. Washington is also where the nation commemorates the wars the country has fought and the men and women who served and gave their lives in them. Less well known than some memorials but quite moving is the Gen. Ulysses S. Grant Memorial near the Capitol. The soldiers

flanking Grant show the fear, the fatigue, the strain of battle; they give a haunting face to war. The nation's greatest presidents—those to whom the nation is in debt for their leadership during the republic's formative years or during crisis—are honored here: Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt. Smaller, quieter places such as the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site and the Sewall-Beaumont House commemorate the struggles by African-Americans and women for equality before the law. The National Archives, the Smithsonian, Washington's other great museums—these are the repositories of all the nation holds significant, because it is beautiful, because it is rare, because it is instructive, or because it helps us remember.

Architecturally the buildings and monuments of Washington can be powerful, often handsome, sometimes controversial, but they are most important in what they say about us. We read in each the changing concerns, attitudes, and tastes of the culture that built them. Beyond the sites and structures, beyond the events and people they commemorate, are the truths they embody: justice, equality, courage, honor—the tools of a free society. Just as the Mall is the symbolic heart of Washington, Washington is more than simply the governmental center of the United States. This city gives shape to our common heritage and to the diverse culture that is our source of renewal, making it one of those places that help define us as a people.



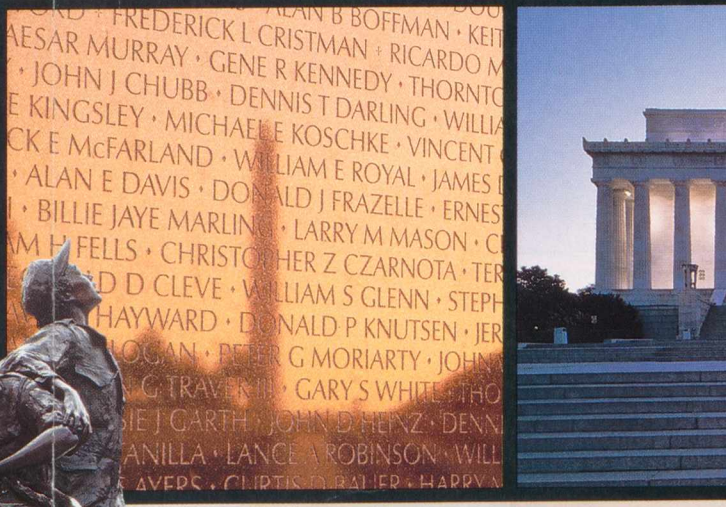
The west front of the Capitol makes a graceful transition down to the Mall in a series of arcades, steps, and terraces. At its base is the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial with its Reflecting Pool.



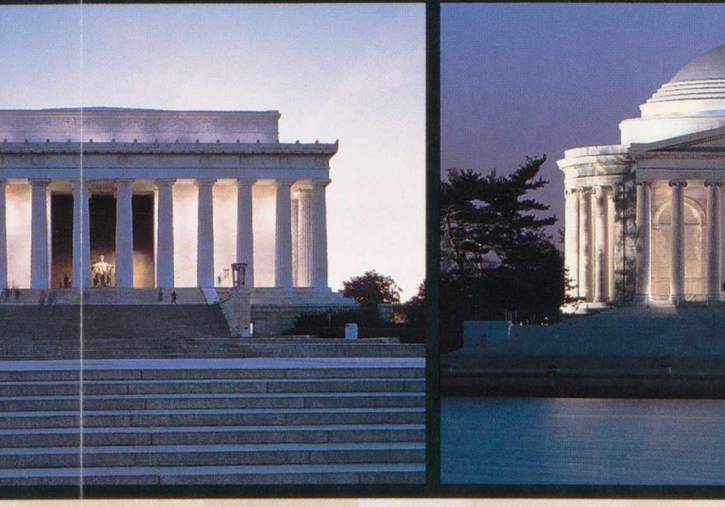
The White House is the President's home and office. It is the center of the Executive Branch of government as well the place where the President receives foreign dignitaries.



The U.S. Marine War Memorial depicts the moment when Marines raised the flag over Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima during World War II.

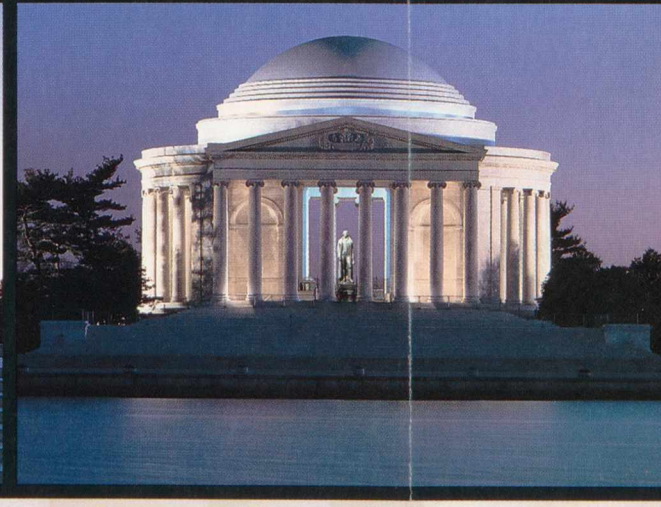


The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, by Maya Ying Lin, lists the names of the servicemen and women who died in the conflict or who remain missing.



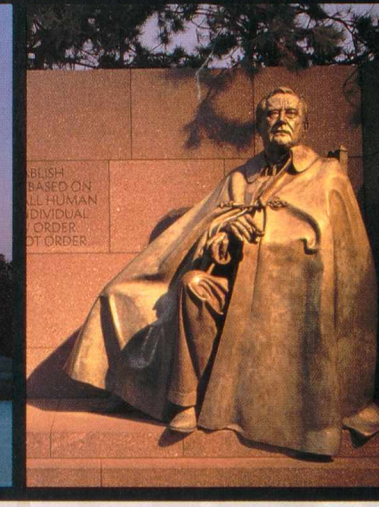
The Lincoln Memorial was designed by Henry Bacon in the style of a classical Greek temple. To make the structure a more effective terminus to

the Mall, he turned it, placing the entrance in one of the long sides. Inside, Daniel Chester French's seated Lincoln faces the Capitol.



As an architect Thomas Jefferson was influenced by classical models typified by the colonnaded, domed Pantheon in Rome—the inspira-

tion for his Rotunda at the University of Virginia. John Russell Pope's design for the Thomas Jefferson Memorial echoes those structures.

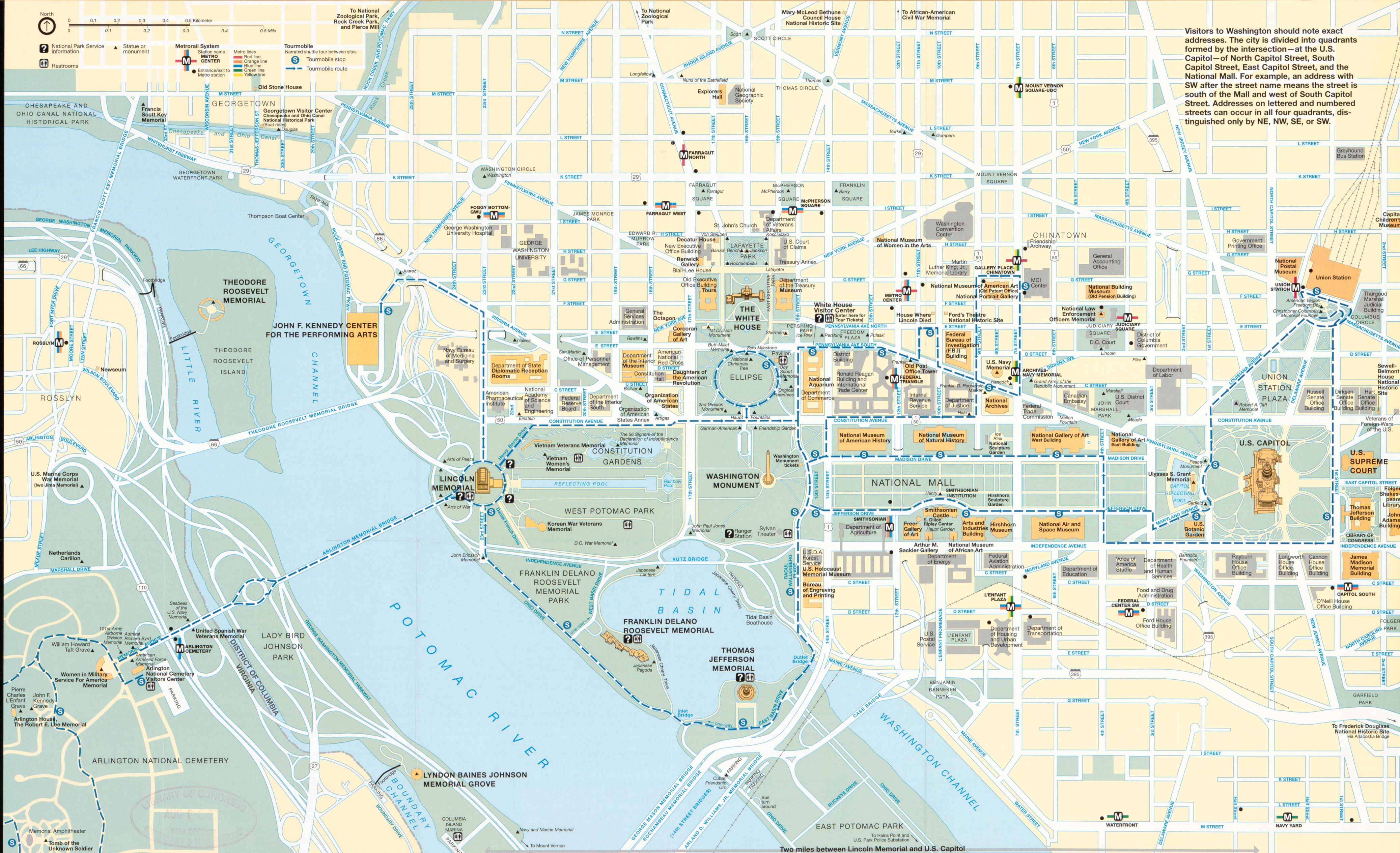


Visitors to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial move through four outdoor rooms, one for each of his terms in office. Sculptures, inscriptions, plantings, and flowing water make this a moving tribute.

Photos of FDR Memorial and U.S. Capitol by Richard T. Nowitz. Photo of Vietnam Veterans Memorial by Robert Shaffer/Photo Inc. Photo of

Vietnam Women's Memorial courtesy NPS. All other photos by e Carol Highsmith.

Seeing Washington



Visitors to Washington should note exact addresses. The city is divided into quadrants formed by the intersection—at the U.S. Capitol—of North Capitol Street, South Capitol Street, East Capitol Street, and the National Mall. For example, an address with SW after the street name means the street is south of the Mall and west of South Capitol Street. Addresses on lettered and numbered streets can occur in all four quadrants, distinguished only by NE, NW, SE, or SW.

About Your Visit
Text entries refer to map sites within the same panel (from top to bottom). Many sites are closed on Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Parking in downtown Washington is difficult. Tourmobile, a National Park Service concessioner, offers interpretive tours of the entire Mall area. Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, and Mount Vernon. Tickets can be bought at time of boarding, with unlimited reboarding privileges. 202-554-7950.

U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial
Arlington, Va., via Arlington Memorial Bridge or Roosevelt Bridge. 703-289-2500.
The Netherlands Carillon Arlington, Va., via Arlington Memorial Bridge or Roosevelt Bridge. Concerts are presented on Saturdays and national holidays from 2 to 4 p.m. in May and September and 6 to 8 p.m. in June, July, and August. 703-289-2500.
Arlington National Cemetery Arlington, Va., via Arlington Memorial Bridge. 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. in summer, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in winter.
The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the graves of John F. Kennedy, William Howard Taft, and Pierre Charles L'Enfant are located in the cemetery. 703-607-8052.
Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial Arlington, Va., via Arlington Memorial Bridge. 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. For tours and information on wheel chair lift for the disabled, call 703-557-0613.

Rock Creek Park Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway; open daily during daylight hours. 202-282-1063. **Pierce Mill** is located in the park, and is accessible from Beach Drive; turn west on Tilden St.; 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. 202-426-6908.
The National Zoological Park 3000 Connecticut Ave., NW; grounds open daily at 6 a.m.; buildings open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. in summer, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in winter. 202-673-4800.
The Old Stone House 3051 M Street, NW; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. For information on ranger-led talks and group tours call 202-426-6851.
Francis Scott Key Memorial South of M and 34th Streets in Georgetown near the foot of Key Bridge (in Georgetown Waterfront Park). 202-282-1063.

Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park The Georgetown Visitor Center is at 1057 Thomas Jefferson St., NW (south of M St.); open 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. Boat rides are available. 202-653-5190. **Theodore Roosevelt Island** George Washington Memorial Parkway (northbound only); site of **Theodore Roosevelt Memorial**; dawn to dusk daily. 703-289-2530.
John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts New Hampshire Ave. at F St., NW; guided tours are given from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily. 202-416-8340.
Lady Bird Johnson Park Off George Washington Memorial Parkway (northbound only); open 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. 202-208-4743.
Constitution Gardens Near Constitution Ave. between 17th and 23rd Streets, NW; open year round. For information on ranger programs call 202-426-6841.

Corcoran Gallery of Art 500 17th St., NW; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday through Monday; closed Tuesday; 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday; 8 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-426-6841.
U.S. Department of State 2201 C St., NW; diplomatic reception rooms open for tours (by reservation only) 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 2:45 p.m. Monday through Friday; closed on weekends and holidays and for official functions. 202-647-3241.
Department of the Interior Museum Main Interior Building, 1849 C St., NW; 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. 202-208-4743.
Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial West Potomac Park on Ohio Drive between the Tidal Basin and the Potomac River; rangers are available 8 a.m. to midnight daily except December 25. 202-426-6841.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial 21st St. and Constitution Ave., NW; rangers are available 8 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-426-6841.
Vietnam Women's Memorial 21st St. and Constitution Ave., NW; rangers are available 8 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-426-6841.
Lincoln Memorial Independence Ave. and 23rd St., NW; rangers are available 8 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-426-6841.
Korean War Veterans Memorial Independence Ave. at the Lincoln Memorial; rangers are available 8 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-426-6841.
Thomas Jefferson Memorial 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW; 10 a.m. to noon Tuesday through Saturday. Free, timed-entry tickets are required (available at White House Visitor Center, located at 1450 Pennsylvania Ave., South.) Closed for official functions. Visitors in wheelchairs

may use the visitor entrance on East Executive Ave. 202-208-1631 or 202-456-7041.
The Washington Monument Constitution Ave. at 15th St., NW; 8 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. from first Sunday in April through Labor Day; 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. rest of the year. Closed December 25. Free timed tickets are available at the Ticket Kiosk on 15th Street at the base of the monument. 202-426-6841.
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Entances on 14th St. and Raoul Wallenberg Place just south of Independence Ave., SW; 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily; closed Yom Kippur and December 25. 202-488-0400.
Bureau of Engraving and Printing 14th and C Streets, SW; 9 a.m. to 1:40 p.m. Monday through Friday; continuous tours; closed on all federal holidays. 202-874-3019.
Thomas Jefferson Memorial South Bank of the Tidal Basin; interpretive services available 8 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-426-6841.

African-American Civil War Memorial Vermont Ave. and U Street, NW; not officially open. 202-667-2667.
Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site 1318 Vermont Ave., NW; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday; groups of ten or more by appointment only. 202-673-2402.
Renwick Gallery 17th St. and Pennsylvania Ave., NW; 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-357-2700.
Old Executive Office Building 17th St. and Pennsylvania Ave., NW; advance reservations are required for guided tours on Saturday mornings only. 202-395-5895 9 a.m. to noon; recorded message at other times.
The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.; 10 a.m. to noon Tuesday through Saturday. Free, timed-entry tickets are required (available at 1450 Pennsylvania Ave., South.) Closed for official functions. Visitors in wheelchairs

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Thomas Jefferson Memorial South Bank of the Tidal Basin; interpretive services available 8 a.m. to 11:45 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-426-6841.

National Museum of American Art 8th and G Streets, NW; 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily except December 25; walk-in tours daily. 202-357-2700.
National Portrait Gallery 8th and F Streets, NW; 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-357-2700.
National Building Museum 4th and F Streets, NW; 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. Sundays. 202-272-2448.
Ford's Theatre National Historic Site 511 10th St., NW and The House Where Lincoln Died 516 10th St., NW; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily except December 25. 202-426-6924.
Federal Bureau of Investigation J. Edgar Hoover Building, 10th St. and Pennsylvania Ave., NW (enter on E St. between 9th and 10th Streets, NW); tours 8:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Monday through Friday. Closed on all federal holidays. 202-324-3447.
Old Post Office Tower 12th St. and Pennsylvania Ave. NW; 8 a.m. to 10:45 p.m. in

summer, 10 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. in winter. 202-606-8691.
National Archives Constitution Ave. between 7th and 9th Streets, NW; Exhibition Hall open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. in summer, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in winter; closed December 25. 202-501-5000.
The National Mall and Smithsonian Institution Museums Freer Gallery, Sackler Gallery, African Art, Arts and Industries, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Air and Space, American History, Natural History, and the central Smithsonian Institution building (the Castle). Smithsonian Institution museums are open 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily except December 25. Extended summer hours are determined seasonally. 202-357-2700.
National Gallery of Art and Sculpture Garden 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday. 202-737-4215.

The U.S. Capitol Capitol Hill; open 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; tours begin every few minutes; hours vary seasonally; access for the disabled. 202-225-6827.
The U.S. Supreme Court 1st St. and Maryland Ave., NE; 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday; closed weekends and all federal holidays; access for the disabled. 202-479-3211.
Folger Shakespeare Library 201 East Capitol St., SE; open to the public; for information on exhibit hall hours and tour information, call 202-544-4600.
Library of Congress 1st and East Capitol Streets, SE; open to the public; for information on exhibit hall hours and tour information, call 202-707-8000.
Frederick Douglass National Historic Site 14th and W Streets, SE, via Anacostia Bridge; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in summer; 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in winter. 202-426-5960.
For More Information:
Emergency help: Police: 911; U.S. Park Police: 202-619-7300.
NPS National Capital Region Public Affairs and Tourism Office (information on sites and site accessibility for disabled visitors); 202-619-7222; www.nps.gov/nrcro on the Internet.
Dial-a-park (current events at parks and in the Washington area): 202-619-PARK.
Meridian International Center: Telephone language bank of 45 languages is available 8:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily; call 202-667-6800.
Metrolink and subway schedules: 202-619-7000.
Traveler's Aid Service: 202-546-3120.
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