

Tips from Washington Convention & Visitors Bureau

INTRODUCTION

When Pierre Charles L'Enfant gazed northward along the banks of the Potomac River in 1791, he envisioned a "pedestal waiting for a monument." Since that day, Washington, DC has evolved into a fascinating, lively city combining grand, neoclassical government buildings, monuments, memorials, museums and the National Mall with colorful neighborhoods, art, theatre, music and culture.

Washington, DC is a powerful symbol not only of our nation but also of democracy and freedom. The District of Columbia's neighborhoods, people, history and culture truly embody the American Experience—from Duke Ellington to John Phillip Sousa and from the Civil War to civil rights. Only in Washington, DC can visitors be inspired by touring the magnificent Capitol Building and Washington Monument by day and be moved by taking in magical performances by the National Symphony Orchestra and world-class opera by night.

During your stay in the nation's capital, we encourage you to discover Washington, DC as more than just a tourist. Become a part of the American Experience. Marvel at the Lincoln Memorial. Show your children the Star-Spangled Banner. Stop in at Eastern Market, an amazing European-style gathering of food vendors and artisans. Explore Jacqueline Kennedy's Washington through a city-wide celebration and discover how her love of the arts and the city transformed Washington. [Back to Top](#)

► GENERAL INFORMATION

Geography

Located midway along the eastern seaboard of the United States, south of Maryland, north of Virginia and 233 miles south of New York City, the Washington, DC metropolitan area refers to the District of Columbia, plus 7 Maryland counties (Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Frederick, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's), 5 Virginia counties (Arlington, Fairfax, Loudon, Prince William and Stafford) and 6 Virginia cities (Arlington, Alexandria, Fairfax City, Falls Church, Manassas and Manassas Park).

The District of Columbia is 67 square miles and is divided into 4 quadrants: Northwest, Southwest, Northeast and Southeast. The U.S. Capitol building marks the center where the quadrants meet. Numbered streets run north

and south. Lettered streets run east and west (there are no J, X, Y or Z streets), becoming two-syllable names, then three-syllable names as you travel farther out from the center. Avenues named for US states run diagonally, often meeting at traffic circles and squares.

Elevation

Highest is 420 feet; lowest is sea level.

Population

The population is approximately 572,000 in Washington, DC proper and 5.4 million for the entire metro area.

For more information, go to the [U.S. Census Bureau](http://www.census.gov).

Industry

Washington DC's primary industry after the federal government is tourism. Other important industries include trade associations, as Washington, DC is home to more associations than any other US city; law; higher education; medicine/medical research; government-related research and publishing. The Washington, DC metropolitan area is also world headquarters for corporations such as US Airways, Marriott, Amtrak, Gannett News, Mobil Oil, MCI Telecommunications and the International Monetary Fund.

Climate

Experience the glory of all four seasons here in Washington, DC. Warm weather usually prevails from April until as late as October. Winters are short here, with more rain than snow. Monthly high and low average temperatures follow (Fahrenheit/Celsius):

<i>Month</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Low</i>
January	44/5	30/-1
February	46/8	29/-1
March	54/12	36/2
April	66/19	46/8

May	76/25	56/14
June	83/29	65/19
July	87/31	69/20
August	85/30	68/20
September	79/26	61/16
October	68/20	50/10
November	57/14	39/4
December	46/8	32/0

Parking

Parking is restricted during rush hours and some weekend hours (check posted hours on street signs). If your vehicle is towed Friday after 7 pm, or any time on weekends, you won't be able to retrieve it until Monday after 9 am For details, contact the DC Dept. of Motor Vehicles, 301 C St. NW, Washington, DC 20001; phone: (202) 727-5000.

Sales Tax

Washington, DC: Sales tax is 5.75%. Total hotel tax including sales tax is 14.5%. Food and beverage tax is 10%.

Maryland: Sales tax is 5%. Hotel tax varies by county with most counties averaging between 5% and 8%.

Virginia: Sales tax is 4.5%. Hotel tax varies by county with most counties averaging between 9.5% and 10%. [Back to Top](#)

DISABLED TRAVELERS

Washington, DC is one of the most accessible cities in the world for physically-challenged visitors. Following are a few resources:

City Scooter Tours - ScootAround offers scooter and wheelchair rentals daily, weekly or longer (serving DC and 500 North American locations). Call our 24 hour toll-free line 888-441-7575 for a free estimate! Tour the DC sites on a comfortable mobility scooter with City Scooter Tours. Visit us online at www.scootaround.com or www.cityscootertours.com

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DisabilityGuide.org - The DisabilityGuide.org is the premier source of disability-related information in the Washington, DC area. Detailed accessibility information for all attractions, restaurants and bars. Call (301) 528-8664 for more information or to order a copy of the guide.

Metro System Guide - A free guide providing information on Metro's bus and rail system for the elderly and physically disabled. For copies call (202) 637-7000 or visit wmata.com.

Senior Citizens Counsel and Delivery Service - Custom-made group tour packages for senior citizens. Handicapped equipment and wheelchair accessible vehicles available for mobility by the day, week and month. (202) 678-2800.

Smithsonian Access Brochure - A free guide that provides an overview of accessibility features, parking entrances, interpreters and special tours at the Smithsonian museums. Available in large print, Braille, audio cassette and from AOL (keyword: Smithsonian). For copies call (202) 357-2700 (voice) or (202) 357-1729 (TTY); info@si.edu. Also available online at si.edu/opa/accessibility.

*** Washington, DC does not recognize out-of-state handicapped tags for free parking in front of meters. For information about parking please call the DC Department of Motor Vehicle at (202) 727-5000 or visit dmv.washingtondc.gov.

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▶ INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS

Washington D.C. is more than just the nation's capital - it is also home to more than 150 embassies, chancelleries and diplomatic residences where colors, cultures and languages mix like nowhere else. The following sections contain some tips and information to make international visitors feel more at home.

New Passport Requirements

- As of October 26, 2005 all countries must issue passports with digital photos or the required chip (e-passport) containing biometric information about the individual.
- However, anyone issued a machine-readable passport prior to October 26, 2005, will be "grandfathered in" and allowed to visit the US until the passport expires.
- International visitors who need a visa to travel to the US must apply for one at an American embassy or consulate. For more information visit travel.state.gov.

Embassies

Many embassies offer guided tours with prior notification. Arrangements can also be made by some embassies to host meeting functions and private parties, offering an unmatched asset for any meeting planner. Embassy phone numbers are available by calling directory assistance at 202.555.1212. A comprehensive listing of embassies is also available online at embassy.org.

Multilingual Services

The White House, Kennedy Center, Library of Congress and other attractions offer brochures in several languages. The Smithsonian Institution provides multilingual information at the visitors center in the Castle Building. Travelers Aid provides language interpretation services at its international arrivals desk at Dulles International Airport. For details call 703-572-2536 or travelersaid.org.

Financial Services

SunTrust Bank
1445 New York Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20005
(202) 879-6000
Fax: (202) 879-6397

Tipping

Tipping is voluntary; gratuities are not automatically added to the bill. Here are a few tipping guidelines: Servers are usually given 15% of the bill. For outstanding service, tip 20%. Taxi drivers usually receive 15% of the fare, and doormen, skycaps and porters are usually tipped \$1 per bag.

Electricity

The electricity used in Washington, DC is standard electricity, which is 110 volts. European appliances will require a voltage transformer.

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