



# Insider Tips to Washington, D.C.

**A**pril in the nation's capital can bring snow, rain, sun, and anything in between. The daily average temperature hovers around the high-60s, but it may range anywhere between 42°F and 70°F, so be sure to pack your suitcase accordingly.

Bring your most comfortable shoes. Chances are you'll be walking to at least one of Washington's major landmarks: [U.S. Capitol Building](#), [Washington Monument](#), and [Lincoln Memorial](#). The most direct way to get from one to the other is on foot, so make sure your feet feel good, especially since you'll be walking around no matter how you arrive at your destination.

Consider visiting some of the lesser-known locations to avoid huge crowds: [FDR Memorial](#), [American Indian Museum](#), and [National Building Museum](#).

Think pink! The conference takes place in the middle of the [National Cherry Blossom Festival](#), which is good and bad. The city will look extra pretty enveloped in millions of pink blossoms. What's so bad? The crowds! The traffic! The annual [Cherry Blossom Parade](#) on the morning of April 14 will close Constitution Avenue from 7<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Streets NW.

## **Riding the Metro**

[When you're planning a trip via the Metro](#) to the National Mall, you can avoid the crowds at the Smithsonian and L'Enfant Plaza stations. Instead, get off at the Federal Triangle, Capitol South, or Archives stations. They're just as close to the Mall and you'll have more time to explore.

Each Metro rider must have an individual [farecard](#), which holds between \$1.60 and \$45. You can purchase one at the fare-vending machines in every station and [online](#). Try to put enough money on your farecard to avoid waiting in line every time you travel.

**Note:** You need to swipe your Metro card to get in **and out** of each station, so hang onto it.

## **Know Your Quadrant**

Every address in Washington is followed by a compass direction (NE, NW, SE, SW) that tells you which quadrant the location is in. Always include your quadrant when giving or receiving directions because the same address can appear in two different quadrants. It's important to know that 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE is not the address of the White House: The correct address is 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW.

Although the quadrant design may seem confusing, it's actually pretty simple. Within each quadrant numbered streets run north and south, and lettered streets run east and west, all forming a grid. So 900 M Street NW is the intersection of 9<sup>th</sup> and M Streets in the northwest quadrant of the city.

Avenues named after U.S. states run on the diagonal, and you can determine addresses the same way you do using the grid system. For example, 1500 Wisconsin Avenue NW is the intersection of Wisconsin and P Street, since P is the 15th letter of the alphabet after omitting J (to avoid confusion with I).

## A Night at the Theatre

Drama takes place on the city's many stages, not just on Capitol Hill. Check out these theatres for their live performances while you're in town for the conference.

*(Fees charged unless otherwise noted. All details below subject to change; please check all details, including dates and times.)*

- [Shakespeare Theatre Company](#) — *Strange Interlude* by Eugene O'Neill and *The Taming of the Shrew*
- [Folger Shakespeare Library](#) — The Musical World of 15th-Century Burgundy (4/13; free); Family Program, Shake Up Your Saturdays: Shakespeare in Action (4/14)
- [Signature Theatre](#) — *Brother Russia*, by John Dempsey and *God of Carnage*, by Yasmina Reza (in Arlington, Virginia)
- [Arena Stage](#) — *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, by Eugene O'Neill
- [Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company](#) — *Arias With a Twist*, by Joey Arias and Basil Twist
- [John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#) — Since 1971 the city's largest arts complex has been home to the National Symphony Orchestra, Washington Opera, and Washington Ballet, and it hosts many touring productions. Free tours take place every ten minutes. Opera, ballet, jazz, and comedy productions are scheduled for mid-April.
- [Ford's Theatre](#) — *1776*; *Investigation: Detective McDevitt*; *One Destiny*

## Food, Glorious Food

If museum cafeterias and street vendor hot dogs don't appeal to the tourist in you, more exciting options are easy to come by. [Union Station](#) and the [Old Post Office Pavilion](#) serve up a little bit of everything in their food courts, and the trendy [Penn Quarter](#) and [Chinatown](#) neighborhoods offer a variety places to get a quick sandwich or authentic Asian cuisine.

Find a veritable trove of restaurants and bars just across the Potomac via Francis Scott Key Bridge in [Georgetown](#), one of Washington's oldest neighborhoods. It's also chock-full of upscale shops and the home of Georgetown University.

If you find yourself near the Capitol South Metro, stop at [Good Stuff Eatery](#) (303 Pennsylvania Ave SE), or [We, The Pizza](#) (305 Pennsylvania Ave. SE), two casual restaurants opened by former *Top Chef* contestant Spike Mendelsohn.

You can also [search Washingtonian magazine's "Cheap Eats,"](#) which lists 100 spots for great food for \$25 or less.

## Shop One Stop Away

If you feel the need to indulge in some retail therapy, [take the Metro to Pentagon City one stop from Crystal City.](#) There you'll find [Fashion Centre at Pentagon City](#), an upscale mall with more than 170 stores—among them Henri Bendel, Brookstone, Kenneth Cole, Aveda, Coach, Macy's, Nordstrom, Michael Kors, and Apple Computer.

## Timing Is Everything

Popular landmarks are usually very crowded during the day, so try to visit them early in the morning or in the evening. Staffed by U.S. Park Service rangers from 8 a.m. until close to midnight, monuments and memorials look even better as the sun sets. Early risers can take advantage of Smithsonian attractions such as the [Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden](#), which opens at 7:30 a.m., and the [Smithsonian Castle](#), opening at 8:30 a.m. Outdoor exhibits at the [National Zoo](#) also open at 8:30 a.m.

## Free to You and Me

Located on the [National Mall](#), the [museums of the Smithsonian Institution](#) are home to the great artifacts of American history art from all corners of the world. Nowhere else in the world can you view the flag that inspired "The Star Spangled Banner" and an original Disneyland Dumbo car,

visit the command module that brought the *Apollo 11* astronauts home from the moon, then have to make a choice between modern or classical art before you get too tired.

You may know that you can walk into the Smithsonian museums without paying anything, but where else can you go for free in the nation's capital? Try these places:

- The [John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts](#) hosts performances on its [Millennium Stage](#) every night at 6 p.m.; [Washington National Cathedral](#) presents choral and church music daily; and [Ford's Theatre](#) makes a limited number of tickets available every morning.
- View pretty plants indoors and out at the [U.S. Botanic Garden](#), the [National Arboretum](#), and [Rock Creek Park](#), which cost nothing to enter.
- Reserve a [tour of the U.S. Capitol](#) online. The Capitol Visitor Center is open to visitors from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday except for Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Inauguration Day.
- Close by is the [Supreme Court](#). It does not offer guided walking tours, but visitors may tour the building on their own and take advantage of Courtroom Lectures, a visitors' film, and court-related exhibitions.
- A [tour of the White House](#) is available only with tickets secured through a member of Congress, but anyone can visit the [visitor center](#), located at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and E Streets NW. You can walk through the parks surrounding the White House; you probably won't see any White House inhabitants, but if you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of Bo on one of his daily walks.
- Visit [Arlington National Cemetery](#) to pay respects to the thousands of men and women who have defended the nation during wartime. Popular landmarks within the cemetery include eternal flame at the grave of President John F. Kennedy (his wife and brothers Robert and Ted are buried nearby) and the Tomb of the Unknowns, watched constantly by a ceremonial guard.
  - Memorials to the astronauts killed in the *Challenger* and *Columbia* Space Shuttle disasters and the 184 victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the Pentagon are also located on the cemetery grounds.
- Closed for repairs thanks to rare earthquake rattling in August 2011, the [Washington Monument](#) measures just over 555 feet. It's the tallest landmark in the capital and the tallest stone structure in the world. However, even at ground level you'll get a spectacular view because the cherry blossoms are nearby.
- When people think about animals in Washington, one special species comes to mind — giant pandas. But you can see plenty of other interesting animals at the [National Zoological Park](#). Get a view from a bridge over the new elephant exhibit, watch the lion cubs wrestle, get up close and personal with giant apes (behind glass), and learn about the orangutans' language project.
- One of the most somber memorials in the city, the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#) lists the names of the more than 58,000 soldiers killed during the Vietnam War. Built into the ground, its dramatic setting allows full immersion in the experience of the memorial. U.S. Park Service rangers are on duty to answer questions from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. daily.