

Enjoy Springtime in Our Nation's Capital

BY MARY CORLEY



Need a weekend getaway? Take a trip to Washington, D.C., for world-class museums, culture and history. If you've already visited classic tourist sites like the U.S. Capitol and the White House, try these ideas to discover another side of this destination city that's abloom with beauty every spring.

Some Tips to Get You Started

Time it right. It's the luck of the draw whether you'll catch the famous cherry blossom trees during peak bloom. But you can keep an eye on the National Park Services' Bloom Watch webpage. Schedule your trip right after or just before projected peak bloom. The trees, gifted by Japan in 1912, are at their best for only two weeks. See bit.ly/3aEPOq3.

Travel like a local. Take advantage of the district's affordable public transportation system—the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). Purchase a WMATA SmarTrip card at any Metro station. They have electronic signs inside Metro stations listing time until the next train, along with other information. Lights on the train platform flash a visual cue when a train is approaching or leaving the station. On the newest 7000-series trains, announcements appear on LED screens inside the train. I use Google Maps to find the quickest way via public transportation. And there's always WMATA Trip Planner. Uber or Lyft also can get you where you need to go. See wmata.com and wmata.com/schedules/trip-planner.

Stay in the neighborhood. The most efficient way to explore Washington is one neighborhood or quadrant at a time. Plan to spend most of your day in that area. This allows you to walk between destinations and enjoy chance sightings of cherry blossom trees and historical sites.

Parts of Town to Explore

Georgetown

The Kennedy Center

Start your day with a visit to The REACH—a new expansion at the Kennedy Center. It offers cafes, stages, open rehearsal spaces and outdoor grounds with sculptures on loan from local museums and private collections. Enjoy the art and architecture, or purchase a ticket for any of a variety of events. See bit.ly/2NT8uIV. A free shuttle from the Foggy Bottom Metro Station can get you there. It's also walkable. See kennedy-center.org/visit/faq.

You also can enjoy a free performance at the Millennium Stage every day at 6 p.m. And there's always a performance of interest in the Opera House. See kennedy-center.org/whats-on. For information on assistive listening devices, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, and captioning, see kennedy-center.org/visit/accessibility/hearing.

Dumbarton Oaks

Nestled in Georgetown's residential area, Dumbarton Oaks holds an unexpected oasis of gardens, artifacts and collections of curiosities. Wander through the expansive grounds and research library, or explore the collections of Byzantine and Pre-Columbian artifacts. See doaks.org.

An Evening by the Water

Enjoy your evening meal with a view of the water at Farmers Fishers Bakers. Or catch the sunset while walking in Georgetown Waterfront Park, which curves along the Potomac River shoreline. See georgetownwaterfrontpark.org and farmersfishersbakers.com.

The National Mall

The Smithsonian Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Begin your tour on the museum's third floor. Lounge in the Lerner Room with its panoramic view of the National Mall. Then work your way down to the lower level. In late spring, the museum reopens the interactive installation *Wish Tree for Washington D.C.* by Yoko Ono in its serene subterranean sculpture garden. Write your wish on a tag and tie it to the tree. See hirshhorn.si.edu and hirshhorn.si.edu/explore/accessibility.

Tidal Basin

A springtime trip to Washington isn't complete without a visit to the beautiful Tidal Basin to view the cherry blossoms. See them up close and personal at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson and Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorials. Take public transportation and be prepared to walk a lot within a large crowd. See nps.gov.

Dupont Circle and Adams Morgan

The Phillips Collection

The Dupont Circle neighborhood is home to America's first modern art museum, The Phillips Collection. Find treasured artwork such as Renoir's "Luncheon of the Boating Party." Marinate in the raw emotional color palettes of the Rothko Room. Engage your olfactory senses in the Laib Wax Room—made of beeswax. The museum offers FM assistive listening devices (headsets) for tours, transcripts come with audio guides, gallery videos have on-screen captioning, and service animals are welcome. Request ASL interpretation for programs and tours. See phillipscollection.org.

Around the World Embassy Tour

Once a year along Massachusetts Avenue in the Dupont Circle neighborhood, embassies from around the world open their doors to visitors. Step onto foreign soil and experience the cultures of other countries without needing your passport. This year's tour is Saturday, May 2, 2020. See bit.ly/3aHkg2U.

Local Stores in Adams Morgan

Flavor the district's cultural diversity with a visit to the Adams Morgan neighborhood—popular among millennials for its entertainment, nightlife and eclectic food options. See what treasures you can find in record stores, vintage boutiques and bookshops along 18th Street NW. Take a breather at Songbyrd Music House and Record Café for a snack.

NoMa (North of Massachusetts Avenue)

Union Market

Visit the market that's home to dozens of booths ranging from housewares, to coffee and tea, to ethnic cuisine. Taste the diverse flavors. Whether you feel like barbecue, Ethiopian, Italian or oysters, there's something for everyone. See unionmarketdc.com.

Gallaudet University

After you leave Union Market, head east on Florida Avenue to visit Gallaudet University. Founded in 1864 by an Act of Congress signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln, it's "the world's only university in which all programs and services are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard of hearing students." The Gallaudet University Museum in Chapel Hall, and the *History Through Deaf Eyes* exhibit in the Sorensen Language and Communication Center, commemorate the struggles for equality that people with hearing loss have faced and overcome. See gallaudet.edu.

National Arboretum

See cherry blossom and other blooming trees without the crowds. Take a walk on the trails, visit the Ellipse Meadow, view the National Capitol Columns, and explore the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum. See usna.usda.gov and bonsai-nbf.org.

Ben's Chili Bowl and the Starbucks Signing Store

Taste the legendary chili half-smoke at this lesser-traveled NoMa location of the classic Washington institution—Ben's Chili Bowl. Or catch the streetcar down to the 8th Street stop and walk toward 6th Street to the first U.S. Starbucks signing store—at 625 H St., NE. Order your favorite beverage by pointing or finger spelling. See benschilibowl.com, dcstreetcar.com and bit.ly/3aWvEbh.

The list of things to do and see in our nation's capital is endless. Dig even deeper to plan your getaway by visiting washington.org. Enjoy! **HL**



Mary Corley specializes in art direction, graphic design and visual strategy in the political space. Originally from Oklahoma City, she moved to Washington in spring 2014 to work on Capitol Hill. During the 2016 and 2018 election cycles, she was the lead graphic designer at the National Republican Congressional Committee. She's currently the marketing director at The Data Trust.