 **100**

**FREE & ALMOST FREE THINGS
TO DO IN WASHINGTON, DC**



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Cedar Hill

☆ If you're looking for an affordable vacation, check out some of the fun, free and almost-free experiences that await you in DC. Learn more at WASHINGTON.ORG.

★ **AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE**

1. Stand in the footsteps of great abolitionist **Frederick Douglass** at **Cedar Hill**, his renovated former home. While there, take in a great aerial view of the city. Tours are free with a small booking fee.
2. Spend an inspiring moment at Freedom Plaza across the street from the **Willard InterContinental Washington**, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Then head over to the **Lincoln Memorial** to stand where he delivered it.
3. Explore **Cultural Tourism DC's African American Heritage Trail** to learn about lesser-known sites of significance to DC's black history. Consider the house in LeDroit Park where accomplished poet and writer Paul Lawrence Dunbar lived after his marriage to wife Alice in 1898, or The True Reformer Building on U Street, an architectural testament to black economic development. Completed in 1903, it was conceived, financed, designed, built and patronized by African Americans.
4. Stroll through the **U Street Corridor** to reflect on yesterday's "Black Broadway" and see venues like **Bohemian Caverns** which played host to musical performances by Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and more. While you're there, stop by the **African American Civil War Memorial**.

5. Have breakfast at **Busboys & Poets** - named for **Langston Hughes**, who worked as a busboy at the Wardman Park Hotel (now Marriott Wardman Park) in DC before gaining recognition as a poet - on a Sunday morning, or visit any Tuesday night at 9 p.m. to hear spoken word at the venue's open-mic night.
6. Experience history through visual art at the **Howard University Gallery of Art**. Located on campus, the gallery's **African American Art Collection** is free and one of the most comprehensive representations of black artists in existence.
7. Consider a cupcake (\$3.25 each) from **Cake Love**, a black-owned bakery on **U Street** with an owner who gave up a successful career in law and replaced it with one in baking.
8. Feel the city's soul power at one of DC's many nightspots that offer entry free of charge, including **Marvin** (inspired by Marvin Gaye), **OYA** or **Tabaq Bistro**.
9. Attend a Sunday-morning church service at **Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal Church**, the national church of the AME denomination.
10. A taste for soul food should lead you to Oohhs and Aahhs near Howard University, where you can get a soulful meal of ribs with housemade barbecue sauce, macaroni and cheese, and collard greens for under \$10.



Smithsonian American Art Museum - Lincoln Gallery

★ AROUND TOWN

- 11. Amble up **Massachusetts Avenue** to get a firsthand look at the beautiful architecture of embassies from around the world.
- 12. Everyone knows Washington, DC is a seat of power, but did you know it's also home to the world's biggest chair? The **Big Chair** in **Anacostia** happens to be the world's largest (at 19 feet, it stands as tall as Lady Freedom atop the Capitol). Check it out – it's free to visit and serves as a gathering spot for the Anacostia neighborhood.
- 13. For a great and inspiring aerial view of the city, visit the **Old Post Office Pavilion** on Pennsylvania Avenue. Take the elevator to the top of the 315-foot-tall clock tower to enjoy 360-degree views of downtown DC.
- 14. Attend a book talk by a big-time author at **Politics & Prose**, a bookstore and coffeehouse in **Van Ness**. All in-store events are free and open to the public, and they happen multiple nights a week.
- 15. Take a breath of fresh air while learning about DC neighborhoods on a **Washington Walks** tour. All tours are just \$15 per person, and themes range from Memorials by Moonlight, a nighttime encounter with the National Mall memorials, to The Most Haunted Houses, featuring a look at the Octagon, DC's most ghost-filled residences (according to guides in the know).
- 16. Have a power lunch for less at **Old Ebbitt Grill**, the oldest restaurant in DC. There, guests can enjoy raw-bar items for less than \$10 each since they're 50 percent off during Oyster Happy Hour, 3-6 p.m. and 11 p.m.-1 a.m. Monday through Thursday.
- 17. Visit **Eastern Market** on weekend mornings to browse the work of local artisans and sample farm-fresh produce and concoctions.
- 18. Make a late-night stop at **Kramerbooks & Afterwords Café** in **Dupont Circle** to browse conversation-starting titles, order a massive piece of pie and enjoy live music Wednesday through Saturday nights.
- 19. Take in the splendor of the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard at the **National Portrait Gallery** and the **Smithsonian American Art Museum**. When you're done, walk a few steps to see the latest exhibitions on display at each of the free museums, which stay open until 7 p.m. nightly. Need to check your email or confirm a hotel stay while you're out? You're in luck – the courtyard has free Wi-Fi.
- 20. Visit the more-than-100-year-old **Union Station** to find out why its beautiful architecture and special events make it more than just a train station.

★ ARTS AND CULTURE

- 21. Head to the **National Museum of Women in the Arts**, the only museum in the world dedicated exclusively to recognizing the work of women artists. Admission is free on Community Day, the first Sunday of every month.
- 22. Visit **The Phillips Collection** in **Dupont Circle**, America's first museum of modern art, where access to the permanent collection is free of charge Tuesdays through Fridays. (Contributions are encouraged.)
- 23. Follow **Georgetown's** cobblestone streets to **Old Stone House**, a National Park Service site and DC's last pre-Revolutionary building standing on its original foundation.
- 24. Trip the light fantastic. Thrill to Leo Villareal's dynamic light sculpture "Multiverse" while riding the moving walkway between the **National Gallery of Art's** East and West Buildings.
- 25. Get a behind-the-scenes look at the preservation of art in the **Lunder Conservation Center**. It's the first art conservation facility allowing the public permanent access to views of essential conservation work. There you'll see staff from the **National Portrait Gallery** and the **Smithsonian American Art Museum** hard at work through floor-to-ceiling windows.
- 26. Take a free or nearly free docent-led tour at one of DC's many museums and other cultural institutions, including the **National Archives** and the **National Air and Space Museum**. Before you go, make sure to check each website for details.
- 27. DC is a celebratory city in which festivals take place throughout the year. Check our events calendar for information on DC's most popular free-of-charge festivals, including the **National Cherry Blossom Festival** (March-April), the **Source Festival** (June) and the **Smithsonian Folklife Festival** (June-July).
- 28. See a play. Take advantage of **Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company's** pay-what-you-can seats, offered for the first two performances of every main-stage production (usually Monday or Tuesday). Tickets (two per person) are sold at the theater 90 minutes prior to show time.
- 29. Visit the **National Geographic Museum** and travel around the world. View engrossing exhibitions that highlight the diversity of international cultures and natural wonders. Adult admission is \$8; for kids 5-12, it's \$4.
- 30. Dance your way to **Café Citron** in **Dupont Circle**. On Wednesday nights free salsa lessons are offered 7:30-8:30pm.



★ OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

31. Experience the serenity of the monuments at sunrise. Start with the sun behind you at the **Grant Memorial** (just in front of the U.S. Capitol), and jog the 2 miles down to the **Lincoln Memorial**, passing the **Washington Monument** and the **World War II Memorial** along the way.
32. Make a power play and start a game of Frisbee on the **National Mall** or a game of volleyball at one of the pits at **Potomac Park**.
33. Grab your coat, scarf and hiking boots to trek your way down the **C&O Canal Towpath**, which traces the Potomac from Georgetown to Cumberland, Md.
34. Head to **Gravelly Point**, a park area off the George Washington Memorial Parkway and **Mount Vernon Trail**, to watch the planes take off from **Reagan National Airport**.
35. Let DC's green space surprise you with a visit to the **National Arboretum**. While you're there, take in the beautiful fall colors and see the pillars from the original **U.S. Capitol**, which was burned during the War of 1812.



National Arboretum

36. Browse through the **National Gallery of Art's Sculpture Garden** to take in art and fresh air at the same time. The garden features seating for visitors and a fountain that turns into an ice rink in the winter.
37. Rarely travel without Fido? Bring him to **Lincoln Park** on pet-friendly **Capitol Hill** to make nice with the neighborhood's four-legged friends. **Art and Soul** at the **Liaison Capitol Hill** lists Bowser Beer on its dog-friendly patio menu.
38. Spend just \$5 per vehicle, or \$3 a person if you go on bike, via the **C&O Canal Trail** to explore nature in **Great Falls Park**. These 800 acres of beautiful parkland with green space, cascading rapids and waterfalls are located just beyond the Beltway.
39. Enjoy a veritable feast for the senses each Sunday at the **Dupont Circle FRESHFARM Market**. During peak season, there are more than 30 farmers offering items which include fruits and vegetables, meats, cheeses, fish and baked goods. Samples are always available. Market hours are 9 a.m.-1 p.m. April through December and 10 a.m.-1 p.m. January through March.
40. Discover a hidden treasure in **Montrose Park**, located between **Dumbarton Oaks Park** and **Rock Creek Park** (R St. NW, between 28th and 32nd Sts.), and make sure to stroll along Lovers' Lane - a beautiful 18th-century cobblestone path.



Ben's Chili Bowl

★ ECONOMICAL EATS & CHEAP HAPPY HOURS

41. The handwritten sign above the register in **Ben's Chili Bowl** lists **Bill Cosby** and **Barack Obama** as the only customers who can eat for free. But you can sup inexpensively at this city signature, where the famous chili half-smoke is \$5.45.
42. Head over to **Julia's Empanadas** for a taste of South America. A variety of hand-made, fatly-stuffed, freshly-baked hand-pies are \$3.49 + tax/each.
43. Explore the richness of DC's Little Ethiopia starting at 9th and **U Street** NW. Pick a restaurant and explore mildly spiced stews served communally on circles of spongy bread. On Wednesday nights and Sunday afternoons, **Dukem** offers a free cultural show: traditional dancing, music and coffee great for groups and families.
44. **El Chucho** in **Columbia Heights** has exceptional happy hour deals not only on righteous margaritas, but food, too. Feast on tacos and its raved-about Elote Loco, street-style corn on the cob
45. Draft beers, even the fancy Belgian ones, are half-price at **Brasserie Beck** weekdays between 5-7 pm.
46. Eat organic at **Johnny's Half Shell**, where James Beard award-winning Chef Ann Cashion's mini burgers and mini Asian tuna sandwiches are just \$2.50, and her fried oysters and gumbo are \$7.50 each during happy hour.
47. Watch the chef make ropes of skinny noodles in the window of **Chinatown Express** before ordering a big bowl for under \$5.
48. Ten bucks will get you falafel, twice-fried fries and change until 4am on weekends at **Amsterdam Falafelshop**. Make sure to snag a napkin; in an effort to reduce waste, they don't use spoons, forks or plates.
49. Catch the newest trend in dining with food trucks, a fleet of independent kitchens on wheels that serve global cuisine all day. Try a bulgogi steak taco from **TaKorean** for \$3.50 or a smoked corned beef sandwich at **Sixth & Rye** from \$9.
50. Even sushi has a happy hour in DC. Try **Café Asia**, where Nigiri is \$1 a piece and maki rolls are discounted.

★ FAMILY-FUN FREEBIES



51. Watch the **National Zoo's** conservation efforts firsthand along the Asia Trail. Pay a visit to giant pandas Mei Xiang and Tian Tian and take a peek at their tiny neighbors, the red pandas.
52. See the stars in **Rock Creek Park** at the only planetarium operated by the National Park Service. Tours of the night sky are free.
53. Explore an exhibition and create an art project to take home through the **Freer & Sackler Gallery's** "ImaginAsia" family programming.
54. See the National Mall with **DC by Foot**, a walking tour company that gives free, kid-friendly tours (gratuity recommended) infused with games, fun facts and trivia. Tours include the Arlington Cemetery Walking Tour, the Lincoln Assassination Walking Tour and the Twilight Washington Bus Tour.
55. Take pictures with Fala, the famous presidential pooch, at the **Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial**.
56. Make money (or see money being made) with a free tour of the **Bureau of Engraving & Printing**. During the peak season (March-August), first-come, first-serve same-day tickets are required. The ticket office opens at 8 a.m.
57. Putter to **East Potomac Golf Course** for a round of miniature golf. Players 18 and under play \$5 per game. Gorgeous views of the Potomac River and planes roaring into National Airport are gratis.
58. Play pilot in a mock cockpit at "America by Air," an exhibition on permanent display at the **National Air and Space Museum**.
59. Walk among living butterflies at the **National Museum of Natural History's Butterfly Pavilion** (\$6 for adults, \$5 for children). Tuesdays are free, but timed-entry tickets are required. They are available at the Butterfly Pavilion box office beginning at 10 a.m. every Tuesday.
60. Teach kids about history at the **National Museum of American History**. See the original "Star-Spangled Banner" that inspired our national anthem, explore the history of the American presidency and check out Dorothy's red slippers in the permanent exhibition National Treasures of Popular Culture.
61. Check out the latest performance at the Smithsonian's family-friendly **Discovery Theater**. Shows range from tap-dance performances to puppet-show workshops, and tickets are always under \$10.
62. Let kids roam free at **Friendship Park** (aka Turtle Park), DC's most popular playground, located in the city's American University Park neighborhood. Little ones love the huge sandbox, which is always full of toys.
63. Take a ride on the **Metrorail** system to give kids a taste of a train ride and a break from the summer heat. Day passes are a great value at \$9, and the Metro travels all over the city. For a ride dependent on people power, rent a four-person paddle boat (\$19 an hour), weather permitting at the **Tidal Basin**.
64. Fly a kite next to the **Washington Monument** for a great family photo.
65. Give kids an inspiring lesson in freedom with a stop at the **National Archives Building** to view John Hancock's "John Hancock" on the **Declaration of Independence**.



Red Panda, National Zoo

66. Make sure your voice is on-key for the Monday-night Showtunes Sing-a-Long at **JR's Bar and Grill**. Entry is free, and pints are just \$3 from 9 p.m. to closing.
67. Head over to the up-and-coming **Atlas District** in Northeast DC. Pop into **H Street Country Club** and enjoy a game of Skee-Ball or indoor mini golf.
68. Catch some rays a sunny days in **Rock Creek Park**. The grassy "**P Street Beach**" (P and 17th Streets NW) is a popular spot for picnickers.
69. Grab your cowboy boots and hit **Remingtons** for free country dancing lessons Fridays at 9 p.m. Visit the bar at 10 p.m. on the third Friday of alternating months to catch the DC Cowboys kick up their heels during a high-energy performance.
70. Find friendly faces and a half-price menu on "M is for Mondays" at the **Duplex Diner** at 18th and U in **Adams Morgan**. Margaritas, Merlot, mussels, meatloaf, and mac and cheese are all 50-percent off before 10 p.m.
71. Don't want to stray from your workout routine? Join **DC Front Runners**, a running, walking and social club that meets at 9:30 a.m. on Saturdays at 23rd and P Streets for a brisk walk, or 10 a.m. for a fun run followed by socializing.
72. At **Logan Circle's Number Nine** happy hour drinks are two-for-one (5 p.m.- 9 p.m.), whether you order a \$6 beer or a fancy \$11 berry mojito.
73. Hang with a predominantly African American crowd at **The Fireplace**. On Wednesdays, rail drinks and domestic beer are \$3 all day and night.
74. The oldest continually operating lesbian bar in the U.S., **Phase 1** hosts karaoke, Jello wrestling and drag-king shows with few cover charges.
75. Grab some friends and watch a sporting event at **Nellie's**, DC's first gay sports bar. Wednesday-night trivia is especially popular, so get there early.

★ **GLBT-FRIENDLY FREEBIES**

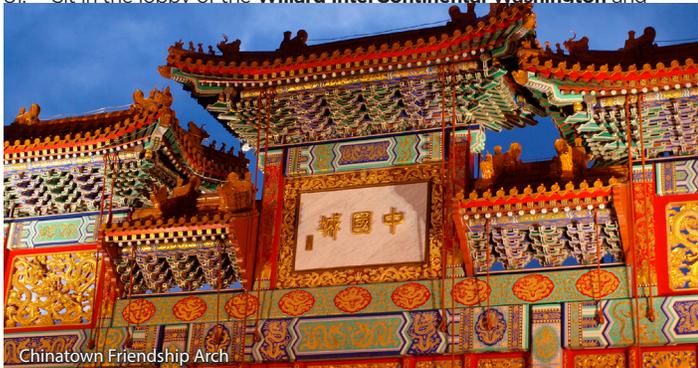
★ **INTERNATIONAL DC**



- 76. Get a taste of Little Rome with a visit to the myriad Roman Catholic institutions located in the Brookland neighborhood of DC, including the **National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Franciscan Monastery and Garden, Catholic University** and the **Blessed John Paul II Shrine**.
- 77. Take pictures at the **Chinatown Friendship Arch** at the corner of 7th and H Streets NW, then head to **Tony Cheng's** for dim sum at a deal. Two steamed pork buns are less than \$5.
- 78. Pay as little as \$5 to catch French movies, discussions and wine tastings at the **Alliance Française de Washington**.
- 79. Head to 16th Street to tour the **Mexican Cultural Institute**, a neighborhood jewel in Columbia Heights, where you'll be inspired by the latest exhibition of visual art by Mexican artists (open 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 3-6 p.m. Monday through Friday).
- 80. Explore the **Goethe Institut** in **Penn Quarter** to learn about German culture, and see the work of German artists in the gallery.

★ **MUSTS FOR HISTORY BUFFS**

- 81. Sit in the lobby of the **Willard InterContinental Washington** and



Chinatown Friendship Arch



Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery

- imagine history unfolding. The hotel is where Julia Ward Howe wrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," where **President Ulysses S. Grant** popularized the term "lobbyist" and where **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** wrote his renowned "I Have a Dream" speech.
- 82. Millions visit the stirring Lincoln Memorial, but did you know you can tour Honest Abe's summer home? **President Lincoln's Cottage** reveals the distinctly domestic side of a historic presidency. Admission is \$5 for kids, and Girl Scouts can earn a badge.
- 83. See the original **Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution** and **Bill of Rights** at the **National Archives**, then research your family's immigration records.



Cultural Tourism DC - Historic Neighborhood Walk

- 84. Check out the **Library of Congress'** interactive elements, like the re-creation of Thomas Jefferson's library. While you're there, see if you come across one of the free lectures, concerts, exhibits and poetry readings that are held regularly.
- 85. Visit **Arlington National Cemetery** to see the Changing of the Guard ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns.
- 86. Watch history being made by sitting in on a groundbreaking **Supreme Court** ruling.
- 87. Trace the names of loved ones lost at the **Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall**, a place of reflection for many visitors.
- 88. Test your knowledge at the **National Portrait Gallery**, where the nation's only complete collection of presidential portraits outside The White House is located.
- 89. See America's story told through stamps at the **National Postal Museum**. Then walk across the street to the more-than-100-year-old **Union Station** and be inspired by its beautiful architecture.
- 90. Get out into DC's neighborhoods to learn about history beyond the National Mall by experiencing **Cultural Tourism DC's free self-guided walking trails**. They are marked with illustrated signs revealing the stories behind Washington's historic neighborhoods.

★ **PERFORMANCES**



Shakespeare Theatre Company - Sidney Harman Hall

- 91. The **National Theatre's** free performance series "Saturday Morning at the National" is designed for the whole family. The lineup changes weekly, showcasing puppetry, magic, music and ballet. Seating is limited, and tickets are distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis 30 minutes before the curtain goes up. Check the theater's website for its performance schedule.
- 92. Take in a free performance at the **Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage** every evening at 6 p.m. Acts include everything from performances by the **National Symphony Orchestra** to poetry slams. The Kennedy Center offers deep discounts to patrons ages 17-25 through its Attend program.
- 93. Feel the beat of a local tradition: Head to **Meridian Hill Park** on Sundays (weather-permitting) between 3 p.m. and 9 p.m. to hear the famous drum circle, a fixture in the park for more than 40 years that brings together people together from all different backgrounds to hear drum beats and watch African dancing. For a hands-on experience, bring your own drum and join in.
- 94. Check out free live music at the **National Gallery of Art** on Sunday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Concerts feature choral, Afghan, opera music and more, and are held in the West Building (6th Street and Constitution Avenue NW entrance). Seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis starting at 6 p.m., and there's no entry after 6:30 p.m.
- 95. Head over to **George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium**, where free shows are sprinkled throughout the performance calendar. The **GW Orchestra** concerts are all free and open to the public. You might even catch a live performance by the **United States Air Force Band's Jazz Ensemble**.
- 96. Get half-price day-of-show or advance tickets for theater seats at **Signature Theatre**, the **Kennedy Center**, **Folger Theatre**, **Imagination Stage** and more online at **TICKETPLACE.org**, run by the Cultural Alliance of Greater Washington DC. Or stop by their booth (7th Street between D & E Streets NW) to purchase tickets in person. It's open 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Wednesday through Friday; 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Saturday; and noon - 4 p.m. Sunday.
- 97. At **Arena Stage**, half-price HotTix tickets go on sale at the box office 30 minutes before curtain. Students get 35 percent off, and patrons under 30 can take part in the pay-your-age program, with tickets on sale three months before the performance date; purchase by phone (202-488-3300) or in person. Arena Stage also hosts a number of specials, including "Entourage Nights", one-night events for which groups of 10 or more can get 30-percent discounts (some tickets are as low as \$25) and network with other theatergoers.
- 98. Get a taste of the Bard for a great value at the **Harman Center of the Arts**. Patrons 35 and under can get discounted tickets to see the **Shakespeare Theatre Company's** productions for \$15 through their Young Prose program. The weekly allotment of discounted tickets is released every Tuesday morning of show season starting at 10 a.m.
- 99. **SpeakeasyDC** shines the spotlight on different storytellers from around the city each month. Often irreverent and laugh-out-loud funny, performances are meant to be based on an autobiographical experience. Tickets usually cost \$15 and venues vary each month.
- 100. Enjoy free live jazz at the **Smithsonian American Art Museum's Take Five!** performance series. It usually takes place on the third Thursday of each month, and the museum's café stays open so guests can enjoy beer, wine and light snacks during the performance.