

A
CAPITOL
GOOD
TIME



Washington, D.C.

by Janna Marlies Santoro



Cherry blossoms

The first time I visited our nation's great capital, I was with my family. We literally whirled around Washington D.C., trying to take in as much as we possibly could – Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Capitol Rotunda, Ford's Theatre – in the one day we had allocated to spend there during a cross country road trip. A seat-of-the-pants tour, yes, but again, we were trying to cram in as much as we could in a very short time. Following a second, more leisurely trip, I'm here to attest that there is a better way!

To follow is an **insider's list of top 10 must-see sights**, compiled with the help of my personal tour guide and close friend,



Lincoln Memorial



Jefferson Memorial

Sarah. When combined with the capital essentials of the White House, U.S. Capitol and other attractions, these local hot spots should provide you with an memorable trip to Washington, D.C. In addition to visiting these, which can be done over a long three-day weekend, be sure to integrate sites from the sidebar, which is full of options for making any trip to D.C. one for the history books.

DAY 1

1. Eastern Market – Starting a tour of the nation’s capital with a trip to Eastern Market introduces visitors to America’s heart – a mixture of rich diversity and culture. Grab a kielbasa for lunch from the **Union Meat Company** and then head a few vendors down to the sign that reads “The Boats In Loaded With Cheese From All Parts Of The World” for an assortment of imported cheeses. Eastern Market is a veritable shoppers’ paradise, complete with fresh produce, flowers and treasures like

jewelry, handmade trinkets, candles and photographs by D.C. photographer and perennial exhibitor, Joe Shymanski (whose work graces some of the walls at my house).

Book lovers, take note of quite a find: **Capitol Hill Books** at 657 C St., S.E., just across from Eastern Market, is a little shop that has used books galore. Patient hunters just may discover a rare find, such as a first edition book by Aldous Huxley.

2. Old Town Alexandria – After a day of shopping, head south of the district on scenic George Washington Parkway to Old Town Alexandria and enjoy a leisurely stroll along the historical streets. For a late afternoon snack, stop in at **Cosi** and indulge in their s’mores – delivered with a fondue-esque flame for roasting the marshmallows. (Side note: Although Cosi is a franchise, it also is a great spot for breakfast, lunch or a late night coffee.) As dusk settles, head toward the Potomac River to enjoy the sunset. To savor an evening

escape

of waterfront dining, reserve a table at the **Chart House**. On the way, you'll pass Town Hall and get a glimpse of history, thanks to folks dressed in 18th century garb carrying oil lanterns.

For some rip-roarin' Irish nightlife, pop into the always crowded **Murphy's Grand Irish Pub**, where the bar flows with cider and Guinness, and you can nosh on authentic fish and chips. Nightly entertainment includes traditional Irish music performed by Sarah's favorite, musician Pat Carroll, as well as Double Down, Kevin James, Pat Garvey and Rocky Guttman.

DAY 2

3. Annapolis – In the heart of this quaint city, Maryland's state capital, lies one of the country's most prestigious training grounds for America's finest: **The United States Naval Academy**. The campus is open to visitors (after an ID check), and this side trip is well worth the 33-mile drive from D.C. The impressive architecture, combined with a waving American flag and midshipmen in uniform, is sure to evoke a surge of patriotic pride. Stop in at the Chapel with its impressive stained glass windows – if you're lucky, perhaps the organist will be practicing Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D.

Back in town, there are more historic sites to visit. Along the street, some of the buildings have old-fashioned boot scrapes (for the snowy months) on the sidewalks next to the stairs. The streets are lined with 18th century brick buildings (of which Annapolis has more than any other city in the country), showcasing shops, cafés and restaurants. For a sweet treat, try the **Annapolis Ice Cream Company**, where the mascot is a penguin and the ice cream is homemade. If it's fashion you prefer, there are plenty of boutiques sure to strike your fancy – including **Johnson's "On the Avenue,"** a classic clothier and haberdashery for gentlemen, and purveyor of uniforms for naval officers.

4. Georgetown – Back in the District of Columbia proper, you'll find more shopping at the very upscale **Georgetown Mall** on M Street. For the perfect ending to a long day, dinner at one of Georgetown's chic restaurants is just the thing. We recommend **J. Paul's,**

Nathans, Clyde's or local favorite **Mr. Smith's** (as in Frank Capra's classic movie, *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*).

DAY 3

5. National Zoo – No trip to Washington D.C. is complete without visiting the zoo. The best part? Admission is free. It had been years since the last time I'd been to a zoo, but this visit. This visit reminded me that the simplest things in life often bring the most pleasure. We were there at the end of March, when Tai Shan, the giant panda cub, was just seven months old. Be sure to check out the new Fujifilm Giant Panda Habitat, a state-of-the-art research facility and habitat that opened in October. Still, it's just as thrilling to see all the other animals up close – elephants eating, gorillas yawning, sea lions playing, lions and tigers and bears...

6. Cherry Blossoms and Capitol Mall – The visual spectacle you'll witness when the cherry trees bloom makes it worth the trip to the capital in early spring (be forewarned – the weather can be dicey). You'll have crowds with which to contend, but if you can manage to be there on a weekday, they will be significantly less. Again, there is something magical about strolling along the Tidal Basin in the crisp air, with the pink and white blossoms against the bright blue sky. The surrounding memorials that pay tribute to the country's past are sure to trigger any American's pride.

7. Smithsonian Museums – **The National Museum of American History** is within walking distance to a number of other Smithsonian museums in D.C. (19 in all!), which boast free admission. Check the Web site for several options. **The National Museum of Natural History** is huge draw for kids, as is **The National Museum of Air and Space**.

At the **National Museum of American History**, exhibits include the First Ladies' dresses (among them, Laura Bush's red dress from the 2001 inaugural ball – the only red dress in the exhibit), and other pop culture notables such as the famous ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*, a painting of Ella Fitzgerald by Tony Bennett, *Seinfeld's* "puffy shirt," and a Ray Charles display featuring an electric piano with Braille-marked keys.

8. Mount Vernon Trail – This 18-mile trail runs from the Potomac River's shore to **George Washington's estate in Mount Vernon**, Virginia. Completely paved, the trail provides a scenic route for cyclists, that offers wonderful views of the Potomac, the capital's monuments, Old Town Alexandria, Arlington National Cemetery and a local favorite, Gravelly Point. From town, even just a brisk one-mile walk down the trail will take you from the **Jefferson Memorial**, under the 14th Street bridges and across the river for a unique vantage point of the capital.

9. Memorials via Night Tour – Another insider secret: touring the memorials at night when they're illuminated is rather inspiring, and as an added bonus, there are no crowds! From the **Albert Einstein Memorial Statue** (at the National Academy of Sciences, 500 Fifth St., N.W.), it's a short walk through the memorials on Capitol Hill that remember our soldiers: Vietnam Veterans, Lincoln, Korean War Veterans and World War II. **The Reflecting Pool**, **Washington Monument** and distant views of the **U.S. Capitol** and the **White House** in their nighttime splendor are breathtaking.

DAY 4

10. Arlington Cemetery – Depending on your travel arrangements, it is easy enough to see Arlington Cemetery in one or two hours of the morning before leaving the same day. My flight left in the afternoon, and we had plenty of time to stop at the cemetery, walk through to **The Tomb of the Unknowns** and watch the changing of the guard (which happens every half hour). Simply put: a stop here provides another awe-inspiring chance to revisit America's past, and is just the way to end a trip to the nation's capital. •



A FEW TIPS TO MAKE THIS TRIP WITH EASE:

- **To tour Alexandria and Annapolis**, it is essential to rent a car and have good maps and directions. Find maps online at the Web sites listed below.
- **Inside the district**, take the Metro whenever possible – to Eastern Market, Capitol Mall, National Zoo and Arlington.
- **Airports with easy access to D.C.:** Dulles International Airport (Virginia), Baltimore/Washington International Airport (Maryland) and Reagan National Airport (D.C.).

• Contact info for places mentioned:

Annapolis Ice Cream Company

196 Main St., Annapolis
443-482-3895, www.annapolisicecream.com

Arlington National Cemetery

703-607-8000
www.arlingtoncemetery.org

Capitol Hill Books

657 C St., S.E., Washington, D.C.
202-544-1621, www.capitolhillbooks-dc.com

Clyde's of Georgetown

3236 M St. N.W., Washington D.C.
202-333-9180, www.clydes.com

Cosi

700 King St., Alexandria
703-299-9833, www.getcosi.com

Eastern Market

7th and North Carolina Aves., S.E., Washington D.C.
www.easternmarket.net

J. Paul's Georgetown

3218 M St., N.W., Washington D.C.
202-333-3450, www.j-pauls.com

Johnson's "On the Avenue"

79 Maryland Ave., Annapolis
410-263-6390

Murphy's Grand Irish Pub

713 King St., Alexandria
703-548-1717, www.murphyspub.com

Nathans Georgetown Restaurant & Saloon

3150 M St., Washington D.C.
202-338-2000, www.nathanslunch.com

U.S. Naval Academy

121 Blake Road, Annapolis, Maryland
www.usna.edu

ADDITIONAL SIGHTS AND RESOURCES:

• **Classic Sights:**

White House – A must-see historic site. Tours arranged through your local congressman's office, [\[gress.org\]\(http://www.congress.org\). 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., 202-456-2200.](http://www.con-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

U.S. Capitol – Senators and Representatives meet under this magnificent white dome. Tours also arranged through your local congressman's office, www.congress.org. Capitol Hill, 202-225-6827.

The Pentagon – Tour the top secret headquarters of the Department of Defense. 48 North Rotary Road, Arlington, Virginia, 703-697-1776.

Library of Congress – The world's largest library. 10 First St., 202-707-8000.

International Spy Museum – No Austin Powers here – this is the real deal. 800 F St., 202-EYE-Spy-U, www.spymuseum.org.

United States Holocaust Museum – The country's memorial to the millions of people who lost their lives during the Holocaust. 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place. 202-488-0406, www.ushmm.org.

National Gallery of Art – View paintings, sculptures, decorative arts and more from around the world. Admission is free. 6th St. & Constitution Ave., 202-737-4215, www.nga.gov.

National Aquarium – Get close and personal with your favorite sea creatures. 14th St. & Constitution Ave., 202-482-2825, www.nationalaquarium.com.

African American Civil War Memorial – This sculpture honors the more than 208,000 African American Soldiers for their efforts during the Civil War. Vermont Ave. & U St., 202-667-2667.

Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center – If you're looking for some guidance, don't miss this building, home to the D.C. Visitor Information Center. 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., 202-312-1300.

Kreeger Museum – This former home of David and Carmen Kreeger is now a museum showcasing their extensive art collection. 202-338-3552, www.kreegermuseum.org.

National Archives and Records Administration – View the heart of America first-hand. This building houses the original Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Constitution Ave., 202-357-5000, www.archives.gov.

U.S. Navy Museum – Learn more about the U.S. Navy and view some historical artifacts. 805 Kidder Breese St., 202-433-4882, www.history.navy.mil.

John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts – Experience culture with great music, dance and stage performances in any of six theatres. 2700 F St., 202-467-4600, www.kennedy-center.org.

National Mall – Two and a half miles of historic scenery connecting the Potomac River to the U.S. Capitol and the White House. www.nps.gov/hama.

Supreme Court – Tour this historic site and you'll be the judge. First St., 202-479-3211. Admission is free.

Corcoran Gallery of Art – View a large collection of historical and contemporary American art. 500 17th St., 202-

639-1700, www.corcoran.org.

• **More Insider Sights:**

Christ Church in Old Town Alexandria – Historic church once attended by George Washington and Robert E. Lee. 118 N. Washington St., Alexandria, Virginia. 703-549-1450. www.historicchristchurch.org.

National Cathedral – Drop in on a Sunday evening for free organ concerts, or take a crypt tour to view the graves of Woodrow Wilson and Helen Keller. Massachusetts and Wisconsin Aves., N.W., Washington, D.C. Recorded information at 202-364-6616. www.cathedral.org.

Georgetown University – Take a self-guided walking tour. 37th and O St., N.W., Washington, D.C. www.georgetown.edu.

Washington Monument – To take the elevator to the top, get in line early on the morning of the day you want to go, or get free tickets on the National Park Service Web site, www.nps.gov. Click on Find A Park and select Washington; then click Fees & Reservations.

Lunch on the river in Georgetown

– We recommend the Sequoia Restaurant, 3000 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 202-944-4200. www.arkrestaurants.com.

Dine by the White House – For fine dining, The Occidental is frequented by beltway celebrities (members of Congress, etc.). 1475 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 202-783-1475 for reservations. www.occidentaldc.com. Note: The Occidental is closed for kitchen renovations until December when the restaurant will reopen and celebrate its 100th anniversary.

Embassy Row Walking Tour – Most of the embassies are on Massachusetts and New Hampshire Avenues near Dupont Circle. Detailed information and maps on line at www.embassy.org. Click on Embassy Tour under Embassies.

Lost Dog Cafe in Arlington – Some of the best sandwiches around. 5876 N. Washington Blvd., Arlington, Virginia. 703-237-1552. www.lostdogcafe.com. (Also check out the Stray Cat Café, right next door.)

Odyssey Dinner Cruise – Dine and dance to live music while cruising along the Potomac. Perfect for special occasions. Make reservations online at www.odysseycruises.com, or call 888-741-0281.

Catch a Wolf Trap Foundation performance – The only National Park for the Performing Arts. www.wolftrap.org.

• **Additional Web Site Resources:**

www.ci.annapolis.md.us
www.cherryblossomfestival.org
www.congress.org
www.smithsonian.org
www.thedistrict.com
www.washington.org

