

PRESENTED BY



Instant Guide to Washington, D.C. The Mall

4 hours on the go

Fodor's



Washington, D.C. is one of the world's great capitals, and the Mall is the heart of almost every visitor's trip to the city. This expanse of green, stretching due west from the Capitol to the Wash-

ington Monument, is lined on the north and south by some of America's finest museums, almost all of which are free. The Mall is also a picnicking park and an outdoor stage for festivals and fireworks, with the city's monuments and the halls of government a stone's throw away. Choose from our top picks, which will give you the best Mall experience.



QUICK HITS

■ **Washington Monument:** The epitome of a landmark attraction, this 555-foot, 5-inch obelisk on the west end of the Mall is visible from nearly everywhere in the city. Ride to the top for unforgettable views of the District, Maryland, and Virginia.

■ **National Gallery Sculpture Garden:** Take a stroll in the sculpture garden next to the National Gallery of Art's West building. The huge central fountain becomes a skating rink in winter.

■ **Smithsonian Institution Building:** Better known as the Castle, this red-sandstone building houses the Smithsonian Information Center. Ride on the old-fashioned carousel in front of the building.

■ **On the Lawn:** The Mall's spacious green is ideal for some outdoor fun. Fly a kite, browse the street vendors, join a protest, or just take a break and people-watch.

SHOPPING BLITZ

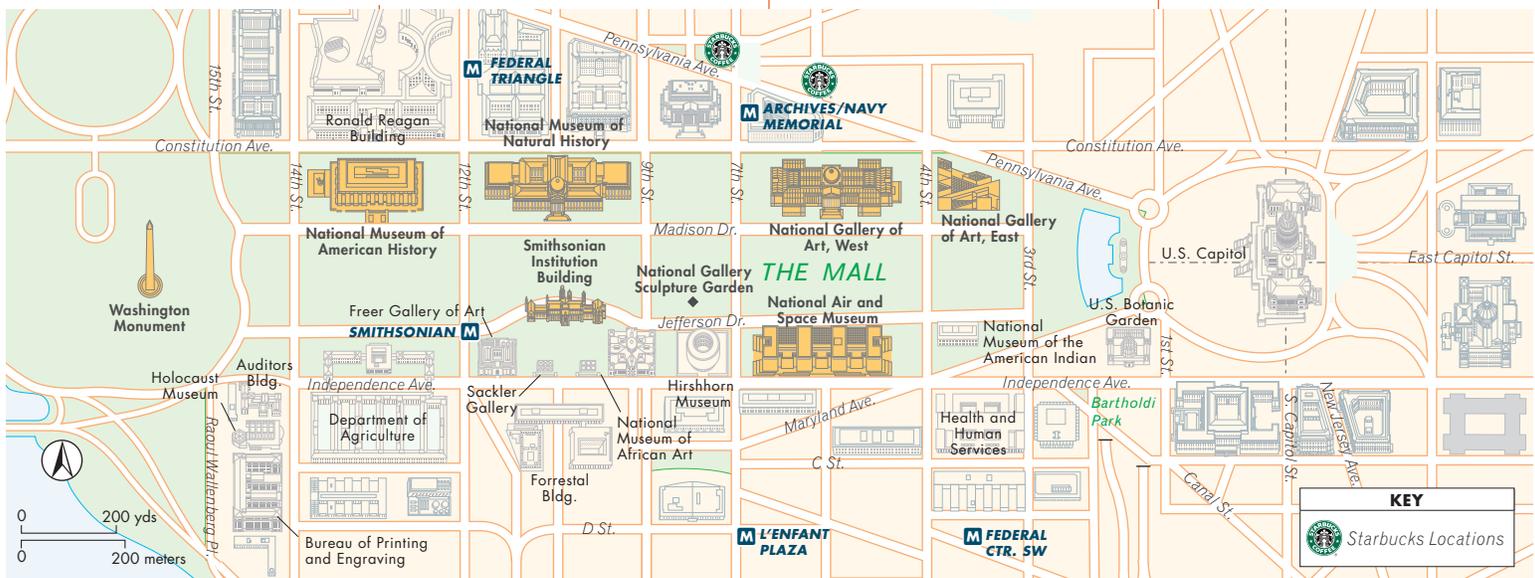
■ **National Air and Space Museum Store:** The three-story museum store is the largest in all the Smithsonian museums and one of the best. Along with souvenirs, books, and collector's items, it displays a model of the *USS Enterprise*, used in the filming of the first *Star Trek* television series.

■ **National Gallery of Art:** Here you can find one of the country's largest selections of books on art and art history, along with beautiful posters, prints, reproductions, stationery, and gifts.

■ **More Museum Stores:** With a wide range of merchandise and price points, museum gift shops let you bring home a small memento of your visit. Another bonus: you won't pay tax on anything purchased in a public museum.

IN-THE-KNOW

Visitors often confuse the Mall with the similarly named National Mall. The Mall is the expanse of lawn between 3rd and 14th streets, and the National Mall is the national park that reaches from the Capitol to the Potomac, including the Mall, the monuments, and the Tidal Basin. To reach the monuments, head west from the Mall and be prepared for a long walk. Security is tight at museums; visitors must go through screenings and bag checks, which can create long lines during peak tourist season.



DON'T MISS

■ **National Air and Space Museum:** The galleries of this hugely popular museum tell the story of aviation from the earliest human attempts at flight to supersonic jets and spacecraft. Strap yourself into a flight simulator, see famous aircraft including the *Spirit of St. Louis*, and touch a 4-billion-year-old slice of moon rock.

■ **National Museum of Natural History:** Giant dinosaur fossils, glittering gems, creepy-crawly insects, and other natural delights make up the museum's collection of more than 126 million

specimens. Popular exhibits include Dinosaur Hall's giant *Tyrannosaurus rex*, the perfectly preserved giant squid in Ocean Hall, and the Hope Diamond, a rare 45.52-carat blue gem.

■ **National Gallery of Art, East and West Buildings:** The two buildings of the National Gallery hold stellar collections of paintings, sculptures, and graphics by artists as varied as Leonardo da Vinci and Pablo Picasso. The West Building features earlier works, including pieces by Renaissance and French Impressionist superstars, and the East Building houses

masterpieces from every famous name in 20th-century art. Check out the free docent-led tours in both buildings.

■ **National Museum of American History:** The 3 million artifacts in the country's largest history museum explore America's cultural, political, and scientific past, with holdings as diverse and iconic as Abraham Lincoln's top hat and Judy Garland's ruby slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*. The museum's nickname, "America's attic," is apt: its galleries are crammed with unexpected treasures from every nook and cranny of American history.

GET HERE FAST

You can access the Mall from several Metro lines: the closest are the Blue and Orange lines at Smithsonian and Federal Triangle, and the Yellow and Green lines at Archives/Navy Memorial. Parking is hard to find along the Mall. There are parking garages north of the Mall in the Downtown area. Once you're on the Mall, it's easiest to get around on foot, so wear comfortable shoes.