

 **100**

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



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Cedar Hill

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★ AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

1. Walk in the footsteps of a great abolitionist at **Cedar Hill**, formerly the private home of **Frederick Douglass**. While there, take in great views of the city across the **Anacostia River**. Tours are free with a small booking fee.
2. Spend an inspiring moment at **Freedom Plaza**, across the street from the **Willard InterContinental Hotel** where **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.** finalized his famous, "I Have a Dream Speech." Walk to the Lincoln Memorial and find the plaque that marks the spot where he delivered it.
3. Stroll **Cultural Tourism DC's African American Heritage Trail** and visit 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 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 the venues (like **Bohemian Caverns**) that played host to musical performances by Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and more. While you're there, stop at the **African-American Civil War Memorial**.
5. Drop in and get a wristband (\$4) on any Tuesday for two hours of spoken word at the popular weekly open mic night. The show starts at 9pm in the **Langston Room** of their original 14th and V Streets location, but regulars know to get tickets early - anytime after 10 a.m.
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 that gave up a successful career in law and replaced it with one in baking. The "44" topped with salted caramel was inspired by the election of Barack Obama.
8. Feel the city's soul power at any of DC's many nightspots that offer entry free of charge, including **Marvin** (inspired by Marvin Gaye), **Zola**, **Bar 7**, **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 **Oohs and Aahs**, where you can get a soulful meal of ribs with house-made 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 first-hand look at the beautiful architecture of embassies from around the world.
12. Everyone knows Washington, DC as a “seat of power,” but did you know that it’s also home to the world’s biggest chair? The “**Big Chair**,” in Anacostia happens to be the world’s largest (and, at 19 feet, stands as tall as Lady Freedom atop of 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 and 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 \$15/person. Themes range from “Memorials by Moonlight,” a nighttime encounter with the National Mall to “The Most Haunted Houses,” featuring a look at the Octagon, DC’s most ghost-filled residences (according to our in-the-know guide).
16. Nosh at **Old Ebbitt Grill**. Established in 1856, its DC’s oldest restaurant. Guests can enjoy raw bar items for less since they’re 50% off during **Oyster Happy Hour**, Mon.-Thurs. from 3-6pm and 11pm-1am.
17. Visit **Eastern Market** on weekend mornings to browse the work of local artisans and sample farm-fresh produce.
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 & Arlene Kogod Courtyard** at the **National Portrait Gallery** and the **Smithsonian American Art Museum**. When you’re done, walk just a few steps to see the latest exhibitions on display at each of the free museums, open until 7 pm. Need to check your email or confirm a hotel stay while you’re out? You’re in luck. The Courtyard offers free Wi-Fi.
20. Visit the 102-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-Fridays. Contributions are encouraged. (Exhibition is \$12 per person)
23. Follow **Georgetown’s** cobblestone streets to **Old Stone House**, a National Park Service site and the last pre-Revolutionary building standing in Washington, DC 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**, the **National Air and Space Museum**, and many more. Before you go, make sure to check the website of each venue for specific details.
27. DC is a celebratory city with many festivals taking place throughout the year. Check out **washington.org’s** event calendar for info on the DC’s most popular, free-of-charge festivals including the **National Cherry Blossom Festival** (March-April), the **DC Caribbean Carnival** (June), the **Smithsonian Folklife Festival** (June-July) and more.
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 theatre 90 minutes prior to show time.
29. Travel around the world. Visit the **National Geographic Museum**. View engrossing exhibitions that highlight the diversity of international cultures and natural wonders. Adult admission is \$8, kids ages 5-12 is \$4.
30. Dance your way to **Café Citron** in **Dupont Circle**. On Wednesday nights free salsa lessons are offered 7:30-8:30pm.



★ DC OUTSIDE

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 sandy pits in **Potomac Park**.
33. Grab your 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 off the George Washington Memorial Parkway and **Mt. Vernon biking/hiking trail** and watch the planes roar in and out of **Reagan National Airport**.
35. Let DC's greenest space surprise you with a visit the **National Arboretum**. While you're there, take in the pillars from the original **U.S. Capitol** that was burned during the War of 1812.



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 is turned into an ice rink in the winter - so stay for awhile to cool down or warm up.
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 & Soul Restaurant** at the **Liaison Capitol Hill Hotel** lists "Bowser Beer" on their dog-friendly patio menu.
38. Spend \$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 Sunday mornings at the **Dupont Circle FRESHFARM Market**. During peak season, there are more than 40 vendors offering fruits and vegetables, meats, cheeses, fish, baked goods and more. Samples are always available. Market hours are 9am-1pm April thru December; 10am-1pm January thru 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.



★ ECONOMICAL EATS & CHEAP HAPPY HOURS

41. The hand-written sign above the register in **Ben's Chili Bowl** lists **Bill Cosby** and **Barack Obama** as the only customers who can eat for free. 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 ceremony. Great for groups and families.
44. Snag a seat at the bar at **Casa Nonna** and score specially-priced happy hour drinks and free appetizers. This **Dupont Circle** restaurant has a rep for being generous with thin-crust pizzas, hot risotto balls and salumi.
45. Draft beers, even the fancy Belgian ones, are half-price at **Brasserie Beck** weekdays between 5-7 pm.
46. Score organic bites at **Johnny's Half Shell**, where James Beard award-winning chef Ann Cashion's mini-burgers are \$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. They don't use spoons, forks or plates in an effort to reduce waste.
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 **Tokorean** for \$3.50 or smoked corned beef sandwich at **Sixth and Rye** from \$9. Find and follow DC's favorite food trucks on Twitter.
50. Even sushi is cause for happy hour in DC. Try **Café Asia**, where nigiri is \$1/piece and maki rolls are discounted Monday-Saturday.



★ FAMILY-FUN FREEBIES

51. Watch the **National Zoo's** conservation efforts first-hand along the Asia Trail. Pay a visit to giant pandas Mei Xiang and Tian Tian and peep 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 a related art project to take home through the **Freer & Sackler Gallery's** "ImaginAsia" family programming.
54. Explore 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.
55. Take pictures with Fala, the famous presidential pooch, at the **Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial**.
56. Budding numismatists will love watching machines print millions of dollars on a tour of the **Bureau of Printing and Engraving**. During the peak season (March-August), first-come, first-served 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 **Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum**.
59. Walk among live butterflies inside the **National Museum of Natural History's Butterfly Pavilion** (adults \$6/children \$5). Tuesdays are free, but timed-entry tickets are required. These are distributed at the Pavilion's box office beginning at 10am on Tuesdays.
60. Teach kids about history at the **National Museum of American History**. See the "Star-Spangled Banner" that inspired our national anthem, critique the inaugural ball gowns worn by first ladies, and check out Dorothy's red slippers in the permanent exhibition "National Treasures of Popular Culture."
61. Shows at the Smithsonian's family-friendly **Discovery Theater** range from tap dance performances to puppetry. 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. It's 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/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

★ GLBT-FRIENDLY FREEBIES

66. Make sure to bring your Broadway best to Monday's Showtunes Sing-a-Long at **JR's Bar and Grill**. Entry is free, and pints are \$3 from 9pm-closing.
67. Head over to the up-and-coming **Atlas District** in Northeast DC. Pop into **H St. 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 Street and 17th Street NW) is a popular spot for picnickers.
69. Grab your cowboy boots and hit **Remingtons** for free country dancing lessons Fridays at 9pm. Visit the bar at 10pm 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 of "M is for Mondays" at the 18th and U **Duplex Diner** in **Adams Morgan**. Margaritas, Merlot, mussels, meatloaf and mac-and-cheese are all 50% before 10pm.
71. Don't want to stray from your workout routine? Join **D.C. Front Runners**, a running, walking and social club that meets at 9:30am on Saturdays at 23rd & P Sts for a brisk walk, or 10am for a fun run followed by socializing.
72. At **Logan Circle's Number Nine** happy hour drinks are two-for-one (5pm-9pm), 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 is \$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. Get there early.



★ 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 **Pope John Paul II Cultural Center**.
- 77. Take pictures at the **Chinatown Friendship arch** at the corner of 7th & H Sts, 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. Tour the **Mexican Cultural Institute**, a neighborhood jewel in **Columbia Heights**, to be inspired by the latest exhibition by Mexican artists (open Mon.-Fri. 10 am-6pm, and Saturday noon-4 pm).
- 80. Explore the **Goethe Institut** in Chinatown to learn about German culture, see the work of German artists and *sprechen* some Deutsch.



Chinatown Friendship Arch



Tomb of the Unknowns, Arlington National Cemetery

★ MUSTS FOR HISTORY BUFFS

- 81. Visit the history gallery off the lobby of the **Willard InterContinental Hotel** to 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 are you aware you can step inside Honest Abe's summer home? **President Lincoln's Cottage** reveals the distinctly domestic side of an historic presidency. Admission for kids is \$5, and Girl Scouts can earn a badge.



Cultural Tourism DC - Historic Neighborhood Walk

- 83. See the original **Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution** and **Bill of Rights** at the **National Archives**, then stick around to research your own family's immigration records.
- 84. Check out the **Library of Congress'** interactive elements, like the re-creation of **Thomas Jefferson's** original library. Check ahead to see if your visit coincides with one of the free lectures, concerts, exhibits, and poetry readings that are held regularly.
- 85. Visit **Arlington National Cemetery** and watch the **Changing of the Guard** ceremony at the **Tomb of the Unknowns**.
- 86. Watch history being made by sitting in on a ground-breaking **Supreme Court** ruling.
- 87. Trace the names of loved ones lost at the **Vietnam Veteran's Memorial Wall**, a place of deep reflection for many visitors.
- 88. Test your history knowledge at the **National Portrait Gallery**, home to the nation's only complete collection of official presidential portraits outside of the **White House**.
- 89. See America's story told in stamps at the **National Postal Museum**, then walk across the street to 102-year-old **Union Station** to get 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.



Shakespeare Theatre Company - Sidney Harman Hall

★ PERFORMANCES

91. The **National Theatre's** free performance series "Saturday Morning at the National" is designed for the whole family. The line-up changes weekly showcasing puppet, magic, music and ballet. Seating is limited and tickets are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis 30 minutes before the curtain goes up. Check website for performance schedule.
92. Take in a free daily performance at the **John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Millennium Stage**, nightly at 6 pm. Acts range from performances by the National Symphony Orchestra to gospel and jazz groups to poetry slams and hip-hop. 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 3-9pm 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 to join in.
94. Check out free, live music at the **National Gallery of Art** on Sunday evenings at 6:30pm. Concerts feature choral, world, opera music and more, and are held in the West Building (6th St. & Constitution Ave, NW entrance). Seats are available on a first-come, first-serve basis starting at 6pm. No entry after 6:30pm.
95. Head over to **George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium**, where throughout the year, free shows are sprinkled throughout the performance calendar. The **GW Orchestra** concerts are all free and open to the public, and you may even catch a live performance by the **United States Air Force Band's Jazz Ensemble**.
96. Get half-priced, day-of-show or advance sale tickets for theater seats at the likes of **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 office (7th St between D & E Streets, NW) to purchase tickets in person, Wed.-Fri. from 11am-6pm; Sat. from 10am-5pm and Sun. from 12pm-4pm.
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 ten 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 during show season starting at 10am.
99. The **Washington Ballet's** "beerandballet&bubbly" program, patrons are invited to the school to watch an open rehearsal and mingle with dancers afterward over beer. Each preview is \$25 = and usually runs before a major performance; call 202-362-3606.
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.