



THE WASHINGTON MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Welcome to Washington, DC!

Washington D.C. is a city of open spaces and historic monuments all centered around the National Mall. You will notice that the landscape of Washington D.C. is different than that of other major cities with no skyscrapers or towering buildings. The historic architecture of Washington D.C is fitting for the nation's capital.

Washington does have one skyscraper: the Washington Monument. Standing at the base, you can see some of the most famous and familiar sights in the world. Look along the National Mall to the east and you'll see the Capitol, 15 blocks away. Lining the Mall on both sides are many of the Smithsonian Institution's museums, as well as both buildings of the National Gallery of Art. To the north sits the White House. To the west are the Lincoln Memorial and the reflecting pool. Looking south, you'll see the Jefferson Memorial and the cherry tree-lined Tidal Basin.

It is hard to believe, but the land on which Washington DC's elegant National Mall and its stately buildings stand was once a marshy swamp. George Washington created this special district as a federal power hub to avoid the problem of establishing the capital city in any one state. Its strategic location, with accessibility to the sea via the Potomac River and between the South and the North, made it an attractive site. Originally designed by the French architect Pierre L'Enfant in 1791, Washington is a city of green parks, wide tree-lined streets and very few skyscrapers, all of which give it a European air. It is very much a purpose-built capital, a city of grand buildings (such as the White House and the US Capitol) and impressive monuments (the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, to name but two).

Congress and the second President, John Adams, moved to Washington, DC in 1800, but it was a further six decades before it began to look like a capital city. In the interim period, foreign ambassadors considered it a hardship posting. Now, this political centre stage, capital of the most powerful nation in the world, is the place to be. Washington, DC is always in the international spotlight. Occasionally this attention is not welcome. For example, the world's largest concentration of spies lurks around the city. Washington, DC has also had its share of political scandal, such as the Watergate affair, Mayor Marion Barry's imprisonment for drug offences, the Monica Lewinsky affair and the painful struggle of the 2000 presidential elections. The nation's capital was once again in the spotlight on September 11, but this time for tragic reasons, as a hijacked plane crashed into the Pentagon. Since that time, barricades, blocked-off streets, police and security checks have given parts of the city a different façade.

Washington, DC (Washington to visitors and DC or the District to locals) is divided into four quadrants – northwest (NW), northeast (NE), southeast (SE) and southwest (SW). It is a city of neighborhoods, each with its own diverse culture. Capitol Hill, beyond the Capitol, is a blend of government buildings, townhouses, specialty shops and restaurants. Foggy Bottom, also home to several government buildings, is a charming, quiet neighborhood. Perhaps the most famous area in DC is Georgetown, a historic district with elegant 18th- and 19th-century townhouses, home to many influential residents, as well as chic restaurants and shops. One of the most colorful

neighborhoods is Adams Morgan, with an eclectic mix of international restaurants, sidewalk cafés, ethnic stores and late-night entertainment.

The presidential election of 1964.

The Twenty-third Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which allowed District residents to vote for the president and vice president, passed both houses of Congress in 1960 and went to the states for ratification. By 1961, the required majority of state legislatures approved the amendment. In 1964, residents of Washington who had never before voted cast their first ballots for president.

D.C. Stats and Fun Facts

- Capital: It is the capital of the United States
- Mayor: Adrian M. Fenty (D)
- Entered the Union: February 21, 1871 (as a municipal corporation)
- Motto: Justitia omnibus (Justice to all)
- Flower: American Beauty rose
- Tree: Scarlet Oak
- Bird: Wood Thrush
- Sports Teams: DC Freedom (Women's Soccer); DC United (Men's Soccer); Washington Capitals (Hockey); Washington Mystics (Women's Basketball); Washington Redskins (Football); Washington Wizards (Men's Basketball); Washington Nationals (Baseball)
- Origin of Name: The district is named after Christopher Columbus
- Major Industries: Federal government, tourism
- Land Area: 68.25 square miles (177 square kilometers)
- Altitude: Highest, 420 ft.; lowest, sea level
- Average Daily Temperature: Jan., 35.2 degrees F; July, 78.9 degrees F
- Population: 572,059
Female: 302,693; (52.9%); Male: 269,366 (47.1%)
American Indian and Alaska Native: 1,713 (0.3%); Asian: 15,189 (2.7%); Black: 343,312 (60.0%); Hispanic/Latino: 44,953 (7.9%); Other race: 21,950 (3.8%); Two or more races: 13,446 (2.4%); White: 176,101 (30.8%)
2000 percent population 18 and over: 79.9%; 65 and over: 12.2%; median age: 34.6

Why is Washington, D.C. our nation's capital?

Between 1776 and 1800, Congress met in several different locations. Philadelphia served as the last temporary capital from 1790-1800. The location of the permanent seat of the federal government was a controversial issue that divided Americans for many years. Various possibilities were suggested and many compromises were made until finally on July 16, 1790, Congress passed a law that permitted President George Washington to select a location for the national capital along the Potomac River and to appoint three commissioners to oversee its development. Washington selected a ten square mile area of land from property in Maryland and Virginia that lay on both sides of the Potomac. (In 1846, land formerly belonging to Virginia was returned to that state.) Congress met for the first time in the new capital on November 21, 1800 and the transfer of the government from Philadelphia was completed by June of 1801.

How did the city get its name?

Shortly after the owners of the land selected for the capital transferred their property to the government, President Washington began to refer to the newly-created town as "the Federal City." At a meeting on September 9, 1791, the commissioners agreed that the "Federal district shall be called the 'Territory of Columbia' and the Federal City the 'City of Washington.'" (The term "district" was more popularly used than "territory" and officially replaced it when the capital was incorporated in 1871.) The name "Washington" was chosen by the commissioners to honor the President. "Columbia," a feminine form of "Columbus," was popularized as a name for America in patriotic poetry and song after the Revolutionary War. The term idealized America's qualities as a land of liberty.

What design is on Washington, D.C.'s flag?

The design for the flag of the District of Columbia was approved in 1938. It consists of three red stars above two horizontal red stripes on a white field. The design was taken from the shield on the coat of arms of George Washington's family, which appeared on one of the earliest maps of the district in 1792.

How is D.C. different than a state?

Like other citizens living in states, D.C. citizens pay full federal and local taxes, but they do not get the privileges of representation and independence that the states have. Also, unlike the states, when D.C. receives federal funding, the funding comes with directives on how the money should be spent. D.C. residents do not have voting representatives in the Senate or in the House of Representatives to protect their interests. They have nonvoting representation that can sit on committees, but the representatives cannot vote on bills affecting their District. Senators and members of Congress from the states have voting powers. D.C. residents have a limited Presidential vote equal to the smallest state regardless of their population, and have only had the right to vote for the President since the 1964 election. Unlike states who can appoint their own local judges, the President appoints D.C.'s local judges. Congress only delegated power to a locally elected mayor and 13-member city council in 1974, and Congress continues to review and modify D.C.'s laws and budget. No states have their laws and budget reviewed or appointed mayors and city councils.

Why is D.C. no longer 10 square miles?

In 1846, the area encompassed by the city of Alexandria and Alexandria County (now Arlington County), was retroceded to Virginia. As a result of this process, the federal district lost one third of its total area. Merchants in Alexandria had expected to gain commercial benefits from being associated with the national capital, but the city quickly stagnated with disputes over the canal and competition with the port of Georgetown. Merchants and traders who expected to become rich were disappointed, because the federal government had no need for the land south of the Potomac River. As part of the District, they had not only lost the right to vote and representation but also potential economic growth. The slave trade was a third, though unstated, reason for the retrocession. The slave trade flourished in Alexandria and by removing the city from congressional authority, Alexandria was able to keep its active business until slavery was outlawed. Also retrocession gave Virginia's slaveholders two additional representatives in Virginia. Alexandria's

voters petitioned Congress asking for the return of the land to Virginia, but it wasn't until they petitioned the Virginia legislature in 1846 that they were able to retrocede.

It is almost impossible to get lost in Washington, DC. Streets running north and south are consecutively numbered from Capitol Street (or a line running north and south through the Capitol building) starting with 1st street. Streets running east and west are consecutively lettered from the Mall (or a line running east and west through the Capitol building) starting with "A" street. While numbers are unlimited, when the alphabet runs out, the streets are named in alphabetical order after people with two-syllable last names, then three-syllable last names, then trees and flowers. Meanwhile, diagonal streets are named after States. The only tricky part is to know that the city is divided into four quadrants, NW, NE, SW, and SE. Thus if someone says they will meet you at "5th & D", you need to ask which quadrant in order to figure out which of the four possibilities they mean. NOTE: IF A QUADRANT IS NOT SPECIFICALLY STATED, THE NW QUADRANT IS ALMOST ALWAYS MEANT.