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WASHINGTON MONUMENT & LINCOLN MEMORIAL

The far western Mall salutes the nation's war heroes and two beloved presidents. These silent meditations on country and sacrifice are periodically awakened by public demonstrations, including Martin Luther King's 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and the 1996 unveiling of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, which covered the Mall's eastern flank.

METRO: FEDERAL TRIANGLE, BLUE & ORANGE LINES; TRANSFER TO BUS N3 TO 15TH STREET & CONSTITUTION AVENUE

Follow 15th Street south toward the gravity-defying Washington Monument (1). Take the footpaths across 17th Street to the dynamic National World War II Memorial (2), an ellipse-shaped pool festooned with fountains and 56 pillars, each dedicated to a state or territory. Follow the tree-canopied walk along the rectangular Reflecting Pool (3) and up the stairs to the Lincoln Memorial (4), a spiritual climb into the receiving room of the 16th president. After cherishing the inscription of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, return to the entrance to admire the breathless expanse of the entire Mall. South of the Reflecting Pool is the Korean War Veterans Memorial (5), a lifelike depiction of an anxiety-riddled night patrol. Backtrack to the Lincoln Memorial and continue north to the poignant Vietnam Veterans Memorial (6). The V-shaped sculpture is a polished reflective surface bearing the names of fallen soldiers, creating a unique interaction between the living and the dead. Follow the footpath across Constitution Avenue and turn left to the National Academy of Sciences Building (7; 2101 Constitution, N.W.), where a scalable statue of Albert Einstein contemplates the heavens from a shady repose. Catch bus N3 to the Federal Triangle Metro station.



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PENN QUARTER

D.C.'s once-abandoned downtown has awakened to a full embrace of urban renewal thanks to an injection of new restaurants and museums.

METRO: GALLERY PLACE-CHINATOWN, RED, BLUE & ORANGE LINES

Head west on G Street to the American Art Museum & National Portrait Gallery (1; 750 9th, N.W.); both are enjoying a marathon makeover. D.C. has gone mad for mezes, thanks to Zaytinya (2; 701 9th, N.W.), a sassy glass cocoon serving Middle Eastern nibbles. Turn left on 9th Street and head to the International Spy Museum (3; 800 F, N.W.), where Cold War-era espionage gets a Hollywood makeover. Follow F Street west and turn left on 10th Street to Ford's Theatre (4; 511 10th, N.W.), where Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth shot President Lincoln in 1865. The president was carried across the street to the Petersen Home (5; 516 10th, N.W.), where he died. Continue down 10th Street and turn right on E Street. The Warner Theater (6; 13th & E, N.W.) is an old vaudeville house that now hosts national productions. Across 13th Street is the National Theater (7; 1321 Pennsylvania, N.W.), D.C.'s oldest continuously operating stage. Follow 13th Street north to Fahrney's Pens (8; 1317 F, N.W.), where anyone whose signature matters buys a crafted sword. You are now solidly in the heart of the city's bland downtown, seemingly divorced from the federal government. Continuing north on 13th Street, turn right on New York Avenue into the arms of the National Museum of Women in the Arts (9; 1250 New York, N.W.). Continue east to 12th Street and turn right to end at the Metro Center station (12th & G, N.W.).

