

INTERNATIONAL ARRIVAL GUIDE



[The Smithsonian Castle](#)

Welcome to the Smithsonian Institution! Here is some helpful information from the Office of International Relations (OIR):

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

The Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest museum and research complex.

- 20 museums and the National Zoo • 9 research centers • 21 libraries
- 138 million objects and specimens • 190+ affiliate museums and organizations
- 6,500 staff • 6,000 volunteers • 900+ fellows • 1,600+ interns

Learn more at <http://si.edu>.

The Office of INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The OIR serves as the central point for Smithsonian-wide international activities. The Smithsonian has a presence in more than 140 countries and welcomes many international visitors each year.

Learn more at <http://global.si.edu>.

NAVIGATING THE D.C. AREA

Local Transportation



Metrorail and **Metrobus** are two of the most popular ways to get around the city. Find time schedules, maps and current operating information at <http://www.wmata.com>.

DC Streetcars recently launched to provide an additional form of public transportation around the city. Find more information at <http://www.dcstreetcar.com>.

If you prefer bicycling, **Capital BikeShare** offers 3,000 bikes at 350 stations in the D.C. area. The first 30 minutes are free. Find more information at <http://www.capitalbikeshare.com>.

The **DC Circulator** offers six routes through notable neighborhoods in the city, and rides cost only \$1 each. Find more information at <http://www.dccirculator.com>. For information on more transportation options, including

regional buses, car-sharing programs and taxicabs, check out <http://www.godcgo.com/home/ways-to-get-around.aspx>.

How to Obtain a Driver's License



For information on obtaining a license to drive in the United States, please visit <http://dmv.dc.gov/service/driver-license-for-non-us-citizens>. If you reside in Maryland or Virginia, please check with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) for your state. You can locate your nearest DMV office at <http://local.dmv.org/dmv-office-locations.php>.

D.C. Neighborhoods



D.C. is a vibrant city with many distinct neighborhoods. Learn more about the culture, history and attractions of each neighborhood here: <http://washington.org/dc-neighborhoods>.

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Public Schools



You may wish to enroll your children in full-time study (kindergarten - 12th grade) during your stay in the United States. All public schools in the area offer English to Speakers of Other Languages instruction, and schools are generally free for dependents. For more information about D.C. public schools, visit <http://www.state.gov/m/dghr/flo/c21970.htm>.

Employment Information



If your spouse is eligible for paid employment and wishes to work in the U.S., the following websites can be helpful for finding a job in the D.C. area:

dcjobs.com | jobs.washingtonpost.com | craigslist.com
indeed.com | monster.com | simplyhired.com

If paid employment is not an option, unpaid or volunteer work may be a good alternative for dependents looking to become part of the community. Find local volunteer opportunities at:

idealist.org | volunteermatch.org | onebrick.org

If you are unsure about your dependent's work eligibility, please contact OIR before accepting any paid job offers.



The National Air and Space Museum

English Language Classes



If your dependents wish to study English in a formal setting, the D.C. area has several language schools (<http://www.esl-guide.com/dir/dc>). If a more informal learning environment is desired, free or low-cost language classes and conversation groups can be found at <http://www.meetup.com/Free-English-Classes-in-Washington-DC>.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Local Housing



The Smithsonian Office of Fellowships and Internships has created a helpful guide to locating and securing housing in the D.C. area: <http://www.smithsonianofi.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Housing-Guide.pdf>.

Banking and Currency Exchange



Before arriving in the U.S., check with your home bank and credit card providers to ask about exchange rates and fees for using your credit or debit cards abroad. Once in D.C., you can obtain U.S. dollars by visiting a currency exchange store such as Travelex (travelex.com) or Treasure Trove (currencyexchangedc.com), but their exchange rates are often not as competitive as local banks and ATMs.

Telephone and Postal Services



When making calls within the U.S., dial 1 + three-digit area code + seven-digit phone number. When calling outside the U.S., dial 011 + country code + city code + phone number.

Locate your nearest government post office on <https://www.usps.com>. Other popular mailing and shipping services within the United States include Fed Ex (<http://www.fedex.com/us>) and UPS (<https://www.ups.com>).

Weather and Climate



The climate in D.C. fluctuates quite a bit throughout the year, from freezing winters with snow to humid, warm summers. Average precipitation rates hover around 3 inches for every month, but average temperatures vary from low 20s to high 80s. Check the local weather for D.C. at <https://weather.com/weather/today/1/USDC0001>.

Health Care & Insurance



As an international visitor in the United States, you should be aware that the health care system may differ from that of your home country. You may need to purchase additional insurance.

Please contact the Office of International Relations with any specific questions about health insurance. A glossary of useful health care terms to reference during your stay can be found at www.healthcare.gov/glossary. For a list of local hospitals, visit www.yellowpages.com/washington-dc/hospitals.



Egyptian museum professionals visit the [National Museum of the American Indian Cultural Resources Center](#).

Emergency Services



Call **911** on any telephone to be connected to emergency services. Smithsonian Alerts (<http://alerts.si.edu>) will notify staff via email and/or phone in case of a local emergency affecting the Smithsonian Institution or the surrounding area. If an emergency occurs while you are at the Smithsonian, please call (202) 633-8100 or contact your direct supervisor if possible.

Contacting Your Consulate



Locate your home country's nearest embassy or consulate in the United States by visiting <http://embassy.goabroad.com/embassies-in/united-states>.

LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT

Free Local Activities & Event Calendars



Most of the Smithsonian museums are free to visit (<https://www.si.edu/Visit>), or you can join a free event with the Office of Fellowships and Internships (<http://www.smithsonianofi.com/inside/office-of-fellowships-and-internships-events>). The Smithsonian events calendar also lists many free and paid events (<https://www.si.edu/Events/Calendar>). More free events and activities can be found at <http://washington.org/100-free-and-almost-free-things-do-dc> and <http://freeindc.blogspot.com>.



The National Museum of African Art

Places to Eat and Drink



D.C. is home to some of the best food in America! The following websites allow you to search restaurants in the D.C. area by factors including price, cuisine and location:

washingtonian.com | zagat.com | zomato.com

After you have chosen a restaurant, www.opentable.com allows you to make a free reservation at many locations.

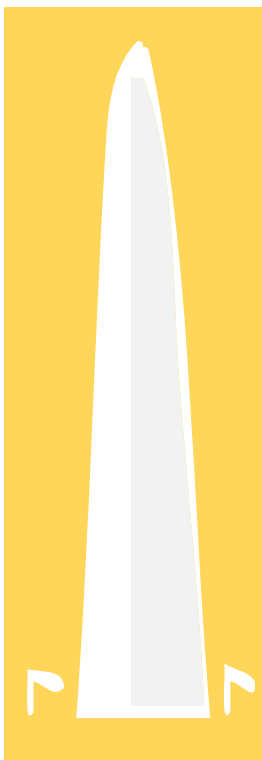
Places to Shop



Washington.org offers a helpful shopping guide to the D.C. area (<http://washington.org/DC-guide-to/dcs-shopping-districts>), but also consider Alexandria in nearby Virginia for more shopping options (<http://www.visitalexandriava.com>). You can also use the following search engine to search for specific types of stores in D.C.: <http://washington.org/find-dc-listings/shopping>.

Find an interactive map of attractions on DC's official travel website: washington.org/dc-map.

U.S. CULTURAL BASICS



American Culture

Americans come from many different cultural backgrounds, including people of different races, ethnicities, religions and belief systems. Metropolitan areas such as Washington, D.C., tend to be particularly diverse. Because of this diversity, it is difficult to generalize about American culture, but the following website includes basic information regarding social customs, practices and etiquette in the United States: <http://www.edupass.org/culture>.

Culture Shock

Many people experience an adjustment period known as "culture shock" when visiting a new country or culture. This website from the U.S. Department of State offers helpful tips for understanding and addressing culture shock: <http://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/adjusting-new-culture>.

Religious Services

The U.S. House of Representatives Office of the Chaplain has compiled a list of places of worship near the U.S. Capitol: <http://chaplain.house.gov/religion>.

Newspapers & Magazines

The Washington Post
<https://www.washingtonpost.com>

The Washington Times
<http://www.washingtontimes.com>

Washingtonian
<http://www.washingtonian.com>

Radio & Television

National Public Radio
<http://www.npr.org>

Local public radio: WAMU 88.5
<http://wamu.org>

D.C. also has local news stations from several major television broadcasters, including ABC (wjla.com), CBS (wusa9.com), FOX (fox5dc.com) and NBC (nbcwashington.com).