

Andréa Seiger

111 Places
in Washington, DC
That You Must
Not Miss

Photographs by John Dean



emons:

For Mom, Dad, and Chris

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© Cover motif: shutterstock.com/J Main
Layout: Eva Kraskes, based on a design
by Lübbecke | Naumann | Thoben
Edited by Karen E. Seiger
Maps: altancicek.design, www.altancicek.de
Basic cartographical information from Openstreetmap,
© OpenStreetMap-Mitwirkende, ODbL
Printing und binding: Lensing Druck GmbH & Co. KG,
Feldbachacker 16, 44149 Dortmund
Printed in Germany 2018
ISBN 978-3-7408-0258-5
First edition

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Foreword

A year after college I moved to Washington to work at a historic hotel. It was there that I first heard stories from senior cooks, bellmen and waiters, some there since the 1940s, who had crossed paths with the powerful and famous. Many of the best tales I have ever heard are from the people behind the scenes of this storied city.

What I love most here are the changing seasonal colors. The cherry blossoms are the precursors to the kaleidoscopic bloom of spring. Cross-country skiers on Connecticut Avenue and community snowball fights on Dupont Circle brighten up winter. Nature's changes are accompanied by rotating highlights of the seasons in museums, theaters, restaurants, and gardens.

One of the greatest cultural benefits is the bounty of free museums, supported by taxes, members and benefactors, on and off the National Mall. The city has also been bestowed with many gifts to the country by other nations and spectacular private collections of art and historic artifacts.

The face of DC changes with every election cycle, as people come and go. The heart and soul of the city, though, lie in its heritage and diversity, colored by stories and feats of the generations before. We walk the same streets as the great thinkers who built this country, and the enslaved people who built our institutions with their hands. By its very nature the capital is cosmopolitan, home to people from around the world. The city is filled with tales of intrigue, peril, and conspiracy, of innovation, creativity, and generosity of spirit.

Visit the spot where a Soviet double agent escaped his CIA handler; sit under a true descendent of Newton's apple tree; drink a toast to the bootlegger of Capitol Hill; and dance to Go-Go in a park dedicated to a hometown musical innovator.

DC is the seat of world power, but the city itself has a distinct funkiness, charm, and coolness. Come find your own stories.

– AMS

14 Blind Whino

Abandoned church becomes an art centerpiece

Once an active church built in 1886, Friendship Baptiste fell into disrepair, and was nearly lost to urban blight. It was reclaimed in 2012 by the SW Arts Club and Blind Whino partners and converted into an experiential art and event space. The evolution into a neighborhood staple was a bit of a happy accident, as the founders were still formulating their vision as the collective evolved.

Public artist HENSE, whose “process and product is a unique battle between the beauty of fine art and the bricolage of the street,” refaced the outside in bright sweeping abstracts that beckon a viewer on the street to come closer. Upon entering, the eye meets a visual smorgasbord of colors and patterns. Every wall is covered by murals, ornate and intricate, realistic and straightforward, and created by artists from the area and around the world. The downstairs rotating gallery is changed regularly, featuring local and regional artists, a specific theme, or visitor-created, interactive wall art.

Painted butterflies on the back of the entrance door seemingly flutter upward, as if guiding you up the stairs. The stairwells are covered in more glorious paintings influenced by ethnic, natural, and abstract themes.

The stage of the upstairs auditorium, flanked on both sides by regal, roaring lions that seemingly leap from the walls, is the focal point for music, dance, and other performances. Vintage stained-glass windows, embossed metal ceilings, and colorful painted walls can be enjoyed from the former choir loft.

Blind Whino is growing its reach into the arts community, partnering with local art collectors, smaller theaters, dance companies, and event organizers to bring diversity of art into the neighborhood. It will soon anchor an art district that is currently in development by the owners of the Rubell Family Collection. With every visit, a new perspective prevails.

Address 700 Delaware Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20024, +1 (202) 554-0103, www.blindwhino.org, info@swartsclub.org | **Getting there** Metro to Southwest Waterfront (Green Line); bus P6, V1 to M Street SW at Delaware Avenue SW or bus 74, A9, W9 to M Street SW at 4th Street SW | **Hours** Sat & Sun noon–5pm | **Tip** A few blocks away is the Titanic Memorial, with its inscription, “To the brave men who perished in the wreck of the Titanic – April 15, 1912. They gave their lives that women and children might be saved.” Located one block towards the Washington Channel from the intersection of 4th and P Streets SW.



61 The Longest Protest

Civic action facing the White House

As the nation's capital, Washington has a long history of protests and marches. 5,000 marched for women's suffrage in 1913. 75,000 attended a concert at the Lincoln Memorial by African-American opera singer Marian Anderson in 1939. The 1963 March on Washington was a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement. 600,000 gathered on the Mall in 1969 to protest the Vietnam War. In recent decades, huge demonstrations called for gay rights, women's rights, pro- and anti-abortion rights, gun control, and the end to various wars.

One small protest, however, can be called the longest running protest in Washington history. The Peace Vigil was started by William Thomas and Concepcion Piciotto, and soon after Thomas' wife Ellen, in 1981 in the middle of the Cold War. Several close calls between the United States and the Soviet Union inspired Thomas to start the vigil, and despite efforts to have it removed and occasional attacks by people angered by its message, the tent, chairs, hand-painted peace and anti-war signs, and donation bucket remain to this day.

Any visitor to the area in Lafayette Square directly in front of the White House over the past 36 years will have seen the vigil, and many will have spoken to its volunteers. In addition to its anti-nuclear focus, the Peace Vigil has staged protests against the Gulf War, Iraq War, and the Syrian War, and has participated in many other campaigns for peace. To this day, no American president has acknowledged or visited the encampment.

William Thomas died in 2009, Ellen Thomas left the vigil shortly thereafter, and Concepcion Piciotto died in 2016. It looked like the Peace Vigil had come to an end, but a new group of protest volunteers has taken up the cause. Recently, the Peace Vigil signs have added other themes, but the spirit and determination of the founders still remains for all to witness.



Address Lafayette Square at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20006 | **Getting there** Metro to Farragut North (Red Line), Farragut West or MacPherson Square (Blue, Orange, and Silver Line); bus 30N, 30S, 32, 33, 36, 37, 39, 42, G 8 to H Street NW and Madison Place NW | **Hours** Unrestricted | **Tip** Stan's Restaurant is a neighborhood joint that has been serving no-frills, affordable cocktails for decades. Order a gin and tonic, a highball of gin on the rocks with a small bottle of tonic on the side. The drinks are good and strong (1029 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005, www.stansrestaurant.com).

75—National Public Radio Tour

Inside the station and the Tiny Desk concerts

The Tiny Desk Concert series, broadcasted from National Public Radio (NPR) headquarters, gets its name from the 1980s psychedelic dance band Tiny Desk Unit. The show's host and music tastemaker, Bob Boilen, was a member of the band, the first to play at the venerable 9:30 Club when it opened in May 1980.

The first concert happened with one microphone and a camera at Bob's desk, with Laura Gibson, whom he and Stephen Thompson discovered at the NXNW music festival. They joked that she should come and play at Bob's desk, which she did. It was "very DIY," says an NPR guide. The fun concept of the series is that musicians may be up-and-comers, discovered by Bob, or the likes of Adele or The Roots, all in a stripped-down setting, in which it feels as though the only one in the room is you, the listener. Bob's cubicle is now bugged with strategically hidden microphones, with a sound engineer on the mixer. When his Emmy Award is wearing a hat, everyone knows that Bob is in the house. Musicians often leave tokens, like T-Pain's Christmas card; a thin slice of Chris Thile's 34th birthday cake preserved in a taped CD jewel case; Blue Man Group's blue lipstick marked mug, and Adele's water bottle, which NPR staff say is being saved in hopes of one day cloning her from the DNA on the rim.

Other tour highlights are the studios of "All Things Considered," "Weekend Edition," the breaking news desk, and the rooftop lawn and beehives that contribute to the environmental certification of the repurposed building, where phone booths were once built for C&P Telephone company. Tour guides refer to many listeners as "backseat babies," those who grew up listening to NPR from the backseat of their parents' car.

Guides and staff love seeing the glee on the faces of visitors, when they hear a recognizable voice and realize that they are seeing their favorite radio personality in the flesh.

Address National Public Radio Headquarters, 1111 North Capitol Street NE, Washington, DC 20002, www.npr.org/about-npr/177066727/visit-npr | **Getting there** Metro to Union Station or NoMa–Gallaudet U–New York Ave (Red Line); bus 80, P6 to North Capitol and K Streets NE | **Hours** Free public tours Mon–Fri at 11am | **Tip** Grab breakfast or a snack at the Mission Muffins stand. All of the goodies are homemade by homeless and transitional bakers in the adjacent Union Mission shelter's Ready 2 Cook program kitchen (65 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20001, www.missionmuffins.org).

