

10 Must-See Museums in Washington D.C.

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If you like museums, you're in for a treat. Welcome to the National Mall in Washington D.C. – a special and unique cultural haven offering what you can't see anywhere else in the world. And did I say for free?

What follows is a Top Ten list of spectacular museums all located within a mile radius on the National Mall. However, a warning is in order: these museums are so large and comprehensive you'd need to commit more than a quick weekend to visit and enjoy them all. Soft comfortable walking shoes, a backpack with energy bars and water bottle are recommended for your optimum culture-vulture pleasure.

1) National Gallery of Art (NGA)

If you visit Washington D.C. and leave without checking out this magnificent museum you'll be missing a lot.

The super sleek East Wing, designed by the incomparable I. M. Pei, is devoted mostly to modern art and new exhibitions. To enjoy the old masters and permanent collections, visit the West Wing. While you're on your way there through the underground passage, stop by at the museum cafeteria, enjoy a sandwich and the "Waterfall Window."

Web site: <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb.html>

2) National Air and Space Museum

If you love technology like I do, this is definitely worth your time. Where else are you going to see Lunar Module LM-2, the vehicle that landed on the moon? Or the very first airplane, the Wright Flyer, that defied gravity? Don't forget to visit the museum's extension in Northern Virginia as well (<https://airandspace.si.edu/udvar-hazy-center>) where they exhibit the spy plane SR-71 Blackbird.

Web site: <https://airandspace.si.edu/>

3) National Museum of Natural History

For all nature lovers, those interested in plants, animals, rocks, fossils, and the story of mighty evolution. A priceless educational resource for geeks and inquiring minds of all ages.

Web site: <https://naturalhistory.si.edu/>

4) National Museum of American History

A mega pit-stop for history buffs, especially those of American History. Centuries of social, economic and technological change and development displayed through thousands of exhibition pieces that collectively paint the American Mosaic.

Web site: <http://americanhistory.si.edu/>

5) National Museum of African American History and Culture

The latest, a truly magnificent and opulent addition to the national museums on the Mall. “A People’s Journey – A Nation’s Story” is how the museum site summarizes this must-see shrine to the struggles and successes of African Americans.

Web site: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/>

6) National Museum of American Indian

Like none other, this national museum displays another facet of the “American Story” through the lenses of Native Americans. The museum hosts special programs if you visit in November, during the American Indian Heritage Month.

Web site: <http://nmai.si.edu/>

7) National Museum of African Art

A rich tapestry of African art, culture, photos, specials collections, and live events. The museum offers great educational resources for students and teachers alike. If you love things African, you’ll be richly rewarded during your visit.

Web site: <https://africa.si.edu/>

8) Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Sculpture lovers take notice: you’ve never seen a museum like this before. Shaped like a multi-layered cake with a hole in the middle, Hirshhorn offers a lot even for the most discriminating art aficionado. Especially noteworthy are the ever-changing installations and special collections.

Web site: <http://hirshhorn.si.edu/collection/home/>

9) Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Together with the Freer gallery, this is home to one of the greatest collection of Asian art in America. What you’ll enjoy depends on when you visit since the exhibitions change frequently. Sometimes you’ll be treated to a collection of rare Buddha statues; on another day it might be a collection of thousand-year old hand-written Korans. Interesting fact: 96% of the museum is underground.

Web site: <http://www.asia.si.edu/>

10) Freer Gallery of Art

Freer Gallery has a larger scope than its twin, the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery. With over 26,000 art objects dating all the way back to the Neolithic era, its eclectic collection is guaranteed to please all. Especially noteworthy is the famous “Peacock Room” by American painter James McNeill Whistler. Don’t miss it.

Web site: <http://www.asia.si.edu/>

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