

Touring Washington: a Brief Guide for CoSA/NAGARA/SAA DC 2010

Hop-on/Hop-off Tours: If you have never been to Washington, DC, and only have a limited amount of time to see the city (or perhaps limited mobility), a guided tour is not a bad way to go. Several companies offer hop-on/hop-off tours, where you can get on and off of vehicles following roughly similar routes through the downtown and National Mall area, while hearing commentary about the sights:

Tourmobile Sightseeing: This is a service authorized by the National Park Service, which operates distinctive blue shuttles and has live narrators. This service, unlike some of the others, also provides a riding tour of Arlington National Cemetery. It does not, however, venture outside the Mall area. A one-day adult ticket for use between 9:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. costs \$27, from kiosks and boarding sites along the National Mall. Web site: <http://www.tourmobile.com> or call 202-554-5100.

Open Top Sightseeing: One of two companies operating open-topped London buses for sightseeing, this company offers a wide-ranging tour of the city, from the Mall, through Georgetown, and up to the National Cathedral. This service has a stop near the

conference hotel, at 2600 Calvert St., NW, in front of the Chipotle burrito shop. A full circuit takes about two hours; a two-day tour hop-on/hop-off adult ticket costs \$30. Web site: <http://www.opentopsightseeing-dc.com> or call 877-332-8689.

City Sightseeing Double Decker Tours: The other double-decker tour bus company, this route leaves from Union Station and offers three routes around Washington, including one route that runs around the Pentagon in Arlington. It also offers a Potomac River boat tour for an additional fee, and a reduced-cost evening tour. A one day adult ticket costs \$30; a two-day ticket costs \$35. Web site: <http://www.city-sightseeing.com> and select “Washington, DC” or call 877-322-7066.

Self-Guided Tours: With a little planning, you can save money and get off the beaten track:

African-American Heritage Trail: The Cultural Tourism office of the District of Columbia government has developed over 15 self-guided tours across Washington that illuminate significant landmarks of African-American history and culture. Trails close to the conference hotel include the Striver’s Section and Dupont Circle trail, which includes the Duke Ellington Birthplace Site; and the Greater U Street Trail, which includes the African American Civil War Memorial and Museum. Both of these trails are also reachable from the Green and

Yellow Metro lines. Web site:

<http://www.culturaltourismdc.org/things-to-see/tours-trails/african-american-heritage-trail>.

Neighborhood Heritage Trails: The Cultural Tourism office has also developed other self-guided trails that can provide visitors with a richer appreciation of the city. One trail a short walk from the conference hotel is the Adams Morgan Heritage Trail, which takes walkers through a culturally diverse and historically significant area of the city. Web site: <http://www.culturaltourismdc.org/things-to-see/trails-tours/neighborhood-heritage-trails/roads-diversity-adams-morgan-heritage-trail>.

Congressional Cemetery Walking Tours: For an experience off the beaten track, consider taking the Metro to the Potomac Avenue stop to the cemetery that since 1807 has been the last stop for congressmen, military leaders, and others. The cemetery has designed a number of self-guided tours based around historical periods and themes. Web site: <http://www.congressionalcemetery.org/walking-tours>.

A Sampling of Specialty Tours (the concierge staff at the Marriott Wardman Park can also assist you with identifying other tours):

DC Ducks: This company runs converted WWII-era military amphibious personnel carriers to give a combined land and river tour with live narration of the National Mall area. The tours take 90 minutes, leaving on the hour between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. at Union Station. An adult ticket is \$35. Web site: <http://www.dcducks.com>

On Location Tours: This combined bus and walking tour led by local actors take you to locations from *The Exorcist*, *West Wing*, *Wedding Crashers*, and other television and movie sites around the city, including Georgetown and Dupont Circle. The tours cost \$40, take about three hours, and leave from Union Station. Web site: <http://www.screenetours.com/tour.php/dc/> or call 800-979-3370 for reservations.

Washington Ghost Tours: An evening walking tour takes you on a 90-minute route to haunted locations close by Lafayette Park, near the White House. The tours leave at 8:00 p.m. and cost \$15. Web site: <http://www.dcghosttours.com/> or call 888-844-3999 for reservations.

Spies of Washington Tours: An experienced former intelligence officer provides guided walking tours that highlight places and events associated with espionage and counterintelligence. Walking tours

cost \$12, but coach tours and private car tours are also available. Web site: <http://www.spiesofwashingtontour.com> or call 703-569-1875 for reservations.

Segway Tours: Several companies offer tours on electric gyroscopically controlled Segway vehicles. **Capital Segway** offers two-hour tours for \$65, leaving from 1350 I St., NW; see <http://www.capitalsegway.com/tours> or call 800-979-3370 for reservations. **Segs in the City** offers several different tours, ranging in cost from \$45 to \$80 depending on time and distance. Most leave from the Old Post Office building at 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW, but one runs up Massachusetts Ave. to Embassy Row and the National Cathedral, leaving from the PNC Bank at Dupont Circle. See http://www.segsinthecity.com/segs_in_dc.htm or call 1 800 734 7393 for reservations. **Caution: be careful on these things! I have seen tourists fall off these devices, and DC drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians may give you dirty looks.

Web Sites:

- The Destination DC organization has a useful site for leaning about the city: <http://washington.org/visiting/experience-dc>
- In addition to its self-guided tours, the DC Cultural Tourism office offers links to other activities: <http://www.culturaltourismdc.org/>
- Locals use the Washington Post's Going out Guide: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/gog/>