

DC's war memorials and military museums: reminders that freedom isn't free



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The District of Columbia War Memorial

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The summer season is rapidly approaching and, as such, Memorial Day is just around the corner. While this is a time when many people are planning their vacations to enjoy the freedom that comes with living in the United States, for many soldiers it is when they are thankful that they cheated the hands of death and remember their friends and colleagues who weren't as lucky as they gave their lives to defend our freedom. As the nation's capital, DC has a wealth of memorials and museums dedicated to honoring the service and sacrifices of the men and women of the United States military.

On Armistice Day in 1931, 11 years after the end of the First World War, President Herbert Hoover dedicated the [District of Columbia War Memorial](#) to the memory of Washingtonian soldiers who gave their life and service to their country in the four year battle. The memorial is quite humble by today's standards as it quietly rests in a small grove of trees on the [National Mall](#) not far from the [Lincoln Memorial](#). On the cornerstone of the tall, domed structure are the names of 26,000 individuals from Washington who served in the war and on the base are those of the 499 who lost their lives during their service.

It took quite some time longer for the [National World War II Memorial](#) to be constructed. Two days before Memorial Day in 2004, President George W. Bush dedicated the memorial which sits between the Reflecting Pool and Seventeenth Street Northwest. An arch at each end of the plaza stands tall as a focal point of the two semi-circles made of 56 granite pillars that enclose the Rainbow Pool. On the west side of the memorial lays the Freedom Wall. The wall, set against a background view of the Reflecting Pool and the Lincoln Memorial, has 4,048 gold stars that each represent the lives of 100 Americans who perished in battle.

These are just two of the landmarks in our beautiful metro area which remind us to be thankful of the sacrifices of our friends and family who choose to serve their country and protect our freedoms. The easiest way to get to each of these memorials is by using public transportation as both are within a short walking distance of the [Smithsonian Metro station](#).

Throughout this week the DC Places & Faces column will be highlighting [other military memorials](#) and museums as an honor to the men and women who keep this country free.

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Tourists relax at the fountain of the National World War II Memorial.

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