

Enjoy an afternoon of gargoyles and gardens at the Washington National Cathedral



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DC Places & Faces Examiner



The Washington National Cathedral

Photo credit: Krystal laeger

Whether you're religious, an atheist or agnostic, the [Washington National Cathedral](#) is a must-see structure in D.C. merely based on its ornate detail alone.

The Cathedral is often thought to be of the Catholic sect of Christian faith based on its imposingly large nature and the gothic style of architecture. However, the church is actually Protestant Episcopal and places a great emphasis on remaining true to their mission of being a place welcoming of all faiths and perspectives in order to promote open discussion and understanding.

Ground on the soaring building was first broke by workers in September of 1907 and celebrated with a crowd of 10,000 onlookers including President Theodore Roosevelt and the Bishop of London, both of whom gave

a speech to the crowd. The Washington National Cathedral holds the record of longest-running construction in all of Washington, D.C. In 1990, after 83 years of building, the Cathedral was final after the completion of the towers on the west end of the structure.

Open to the public year-round, the Cathedral offers [several tours](#) of the church and grounds as well as a [climb of the 333 steps](#) inside the central tower. The docent-led general tour lasts approximately thirty minutes. Specialized tours cover things such as the highlights, the art and architecture, the gardens, [the gargoyles](#) and what goes on behind the scenes at the Cathedral.

Two unique tours also offered are the Tour and Tea tour, which is self-explanatory from the title, and the [Service and Sacrifice tour](#). The Service and Sacrifice tour shows visitors parts of the church's iconography that honors the men and women who have served their country and also brings light to members of the

military who were pivotal figures in bringing the Cathedral into fruition.



Sculpture water fountain in the alcove next to the Administration Building.

Photo credit: Krystal laeger

While the Cathedral is designated as the national place of prayer, the church and grounds offer so much more than a spiritual home for those of faith. [The Bishop's Garden and Olmstead Woods](#) provide tranquil places in nature amongst the city which are a lovely break away from the hustle and bustle to rest one's body and indulge in reflection on life and the world.



The koi pond that lies in the Bishop's Garden.

Photo credit: Krystal laeger

Many visitors to the more serene and secluded areas of the Cathedral grounds bring a book along to enjoy on a sunny afternoon. The Cathedral also displays [exhibits](#) of historical and social nature which align with the history and spirit of the church, such as their current exhibit, "[Dreamers and Believers: Cathedral Builders](#)" which focuses on the volunteers, architects, artisans and everyday people who helped create the Cathedral.

The Cathedral is located in the northwest area of D.C. on Mount Saint Alban near the intersection of Woodley Road Northwest and Wisconsin Avenue Northwest. The nearest metro station is Cleveland Park at a distance of 1.2 miles away. One has a good chance of finding parking in the surrounding residential neighborhood, but visitors beware as many of those streets have time limits on cars parked without the display of a city permit. For your convenience, there is a paid parking garage available for visitors on-site of the Cathedral grounds and the fees are listed [here](#) on the [Washington National Cathedral website](#).

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