


# U Street, Columbia Heights & Northeast

U ST & SHAW | COLUMBIA HEIGHTS & MT PLEASANT | NORTHEAST DC

## Neighborhood Top Five

- 1 Wander along U St and take in its jazzy history, troubled descent and vibrant rebirth as an arts and entertainment district, then contemplate it over a meal at **Ben's Chili Bowl** (p195).
- 2 Walk through wooded groves at the **National Arboretum** (p192).
- 3 Fork into meatloaf and cornbread at soul-food joints like **Florida Avenue Grill** (p197).
- 4 Discuss politics, sip free-trade coffee or spout verse at **Busboys & Poets** (p196).
- 5 Gawk at Lincoln's assassination bullet and more macabre exhibits at the **National Museum of Health and Medicine** (see the boxed text, p194).



For more detail of this area, see Map p336 

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Keep an eye out for all the murals splashed across the neighborhood's walls, especially around U St. A painting of local son Duke Ellington, by G Byron Peck, stares out from the True Reformer Building at 1200 U St. Across the way *The Alchemy of Ben Ali*, by Eric B Ricks, pays colorful homage to the founder of Ben's Chili Bowl. *Community Rhythms*, by Alfred J Smith, fills the U Street Metro station tunnel.

### Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Ben's Chili Bowl (p195)
- ➔ Busboys & Poets (p196)
- ➔ Sticky Fingers (p198)
- ➔ Coppi's Organic (p196)
- ➔ Hitching Post (p198)

For reviews, see p195 ➔

### Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Wonderland (p200)
- ➔ Marvin (p199)
- ➔ Looking Glass Lounge (p201)
- ➔ Room 11 (p201)
- ➔ Saloon (p199)

For reviews, see p199 ➔

### Best Places for Music

- ➔ 9:30 Club (p202)
- ➔ Bohemian Caverns (p202)
- ➔ Black Cat (p202)
- ➔ U Street Music Hall (p202)
- ➔ Velvet Lounge (p202)

For reviews, see p201 ➔

## Explore U Street, Columbia Heights & Northeast

The U St Corridor and Columbia Heights have changed more in recent years than probably any other neighborhoods. U St's story, in particular, is remarkable. By the early 1900s, it was one of the most vibrant African American neighborhoods in the country, akin to New York's Harlem. Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong all made sweet music in the Great Black Way's clubs. Then came a long period of neglect, punctuated by the 1968 riots. Revitalization started in the 1990s when the city built the U St Metro station. Cheap rents reeled in restaurants, artists, clubs and creative types, until it became what it is today: a multicultural 'hood of good eats, fab music and eccentric indie boutiques. A dose of scholarliness and activism spill over from Howard University, in nearby Shaw. Between U St's heritage sites, diners and slew of jazz and rock venues, plan on a full day here.

To the north, Columbia Heights and neighboring Mt Pleasant have a reputation as an enclave for Latino immigrants and hipsters. There are no real sights here, but the cheap ethnic food and unassuming punk dive bars can occupy many an evening.

Northeast DC is a vast stretch of leafy residential blocks holding several far-flung sights. Nature lovers have a couple of groovy, free landscapes to explore, as long as you have a car or don't mind lengthy public-transportation trips.

## Local Life

➔ **Be at Ben's** The Chili Bowl (p195) is no secret, and you'll probably find a busload of tourists inside. But it remains a real neighborhood spot, with locals downing half-smokes and gossiping over sweet iced tea.

➔ **Alfresco Tipple** Beer gardens are chockablock in this part of DC, where everyone heads when the weather warms. Marvin (p199), Wonderland (p200) and Looking Glass Lounge (p201) set the standard.

➔ **Groovy Shops** Join residents filling their bags with comic books, vintage brooches and ties-turned-handbags at the little stores clustered on U St between 15th and 16th Sts.

## Getting There & Away

➔ **Metro** The Green and Yellow Lines run in tandem to most of the sites. Useful stops are U St-Cardozo (for U St Corridor sites), Columbia Heights (for it and Mt Pleasant hot spots) and Georgia Ave-Petworth (for a few outlying bars). Religious sites cluster near Brookland-CUA (Red Line).