

Downtown & Penn Quarter

PENN QUARTER | JUDICIARY SQUARE | CHINATOWN | CONVENTION CENTER

Neighborhood Top Five

- 1 Gawk at the Declaration of Independence, Constitution and Bill of Rights – the real, live, yellowing, spidery-handwriting-scrawled documents themselves – at the **National Archives** (p129).
- 2 Browse the world's largest collection of US art at the **Reynolds Center for American Art & Portraiture** (p130).
- 3 See the very seat where Abraham Lincoln was assassinated at **Ford's Theatre** (p131).
- 4 Read the day's newspapers from around the globe and learn about the journalist lifestyle at the **Newseum** (p131).
- 5 Behold the palatial room that has held 17 inaugural balls at the **National Building Museum** (p133).



For more detail of this area, see Map p302 ➔

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Many restaurants in the neighborhood offer pre-theater menus. This generally means a three-course meal for around \$35, offered before 6:30pm. Our favorite is Bistro D'Oc (\$25, including a glass of wine). Rasika, Brasserie Beck, Jaleo and Central Michel Richard are among the others that offer pre-theater deals.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Central Michel Richard (p136)
- ➔ Red Apron Butchery (p134)
- ➔ Minibar (p136)
- ➔ Hill Country Barbecue (p135)
- ➔ Zaytinya (p135)

For reviews, see p134. ➔

Best Places to Drink

- ➔ RFD Washington (p138)
- ➔ City Tap House (p138)
- ➔ Poste Lounge (p138)
- ➔ Rocket Bar (p138)
- ➔ Green Lantern (p138)

For reviews, see p138. ➔

Best Theaters

- ➔ Shakespeare Theatre Company (p138)
- ➔ Capitol Steps (p138)
- ➔ National Theatre (p138)
- ➔ Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company (p138)
- ➔ E Street Cinema (p139)

For reviews, see p131. ➔

Explore Downtown & Penn Quarter

Washington's downtown is less conventional city center and more of a gussied-up transition space between the National Mall and Washington's residential communities. The neighborhood both emerges from and is attached to Penn Quarter, a corridor formed by the line Pennsylvania Ave creates between the White House and the Capitol. There are the usual chain stores and bright lights, but the area revolves around the enormous, gaudy Verizon Center, home of DC's professional basketball and hockey teams, and some of the city's best museums.

We're talking about the National Archives, where the Declaration of Independence lies enshrined for viewing; the Reynolds Center for American Art, filled with famed portraits and a who's who of big-name artists' works; Ford's Theatre, where John Wilkes Booth shot Abraham Lincoln; and the Newseum, a whiz-bang, multi-story collection of artifacts and current-events exhibits. The elegant National Building Museum, cheeky International Spy Museum and creepy Crime Museum are also on tap. You'll need a few days to do them all justice.

Downtown is also the theater district. The Capitol Steps do their political shtick. Shakespeare Theatre puts on well-regarded productions of the bard's plays (including a free summer series). And Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company stages contemporary and experimental works.

In case you hadn't figured it out, the neighborhood bustles day and night. Trendy restaurants and bars cater to conventioners (the Convention Center is in the 'hood), theatergoers and sports fans. While this good life tends to come with a not-so-lovely price tag, there are a few cheap surprises to be discovered here as well.

Local Life

➔ **Start the day right** Office workers cluster here on their way to work, because Red Apron Butchery (p134) makes a killer breakfast sandwich.

➔ **Oasis** Locals seeking peace and quiet from downtown's hullabaloo head to the Reynolds Center for American Art (p130) and its 1st-floor interior courtyard of trees, peaceful fountains and free wi-fi.

➔ **Evening movie** E Street Cinema (p139) is a quirky theater screening quirky movies for neighborhood types.

Getting There & Away

➔ **Metro** All five Metro lines cross downtown, so there are several stations here. The main ones are Metro Center (where the Red, Blue, Orange and Silver Lines hub), and Gallery Pl (where the Green, Yellow and Red Lines merge).