



A Guide for Groups: Planning a Smithsonian Visit in the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area

The Smithsonian Institution is the largest museum complex in the world with 17 museums and the National Zoo in the Washington, D.C., area (see pages 4-5) and 2 in New York City. This guide on planning a group trip to the Smithsonian in the nation's capital answers frequently asked questions to help organize your time wisely for a successful and enjoyable visit.

The information provided is **subject to last-minute changes**. To confirm, check at any Smithsonian information desk; or call **Smithsonian Information** M-F from 9 AM-5:15 PM, and Sat. from 9 AM-4 PM at 202-633-1000 (voice/tape) or 202-633-5285 (TTY); or refer to the Smithsonian Web site at www.smithsonian.org/visit/groups.htm.

Hours: Most of the Smithsonian museums are open daily from 10 AM – 5:30 PM; all are closed December 25. Summer hours for the museums are determined annually.

- Smithsonian Information Center in the Castle is open daily from 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM.
- Anacostia Community Museum is open daily from 10 AM – 5 PM.
- National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum are open daily from 11:30 AM – 7 PM
- National Zoo buildings:

<u>April 1 to October 31</u>	<u>November 1 to March 31</u>
10 AM – 6 PM	10 AM – 5 PM
- **Renovation Note:** Arts and Industries Building is closed in preparation for renovation.

Admission: Free entrance to all Smithsonian museums and the National Zoo in the Washington, D.C., area. See **Note below** for information on timed ticket cost to the Butterfly Pavilion.

Important Note – Entry Procedures for the National Museum of the American Indian:
It is strongly recommended that all groups of 10 or more register at least 3 weeks in advance for timed entry to the National Museum of the American Indian. Register by phone at 202-633-6644 (voice) or 202-633-6751 (TTY) or 1-888-618-0572 (toll-free) Monday-Friday, except federal holidays, or by e-mail at NMAI-GroupReservations@si.edu.

Call ahead for Special Group Rates on films, dining, Zoo bus parking, etc.:

- **Smithsonian museums:** The Smithsonian offers special group rates on IMAX® films, planetarium shows, and Butterfly Pavilion admission. **Note:** Timed tickets for the Butterfly Pavilion in the Natural History Museum are required (except on Tuesdays, when timed tickets are free). Also, special group dining packages that include an IMAX® film or planetarium show are available with advance reservation. For group rates, call daily 10 AM - 5 PM 1-866-868-7774 (toll free, out of area) or 202-633-4629 (local), or e-mail GroupSales@si.edu.
- **National Zoo:** The National Zoo offers special group packages that include reserved bus parking (for information, see Web at nationalzoo.si.edu/visit/grouptours/). Call 202-633-4480 or e-mail grouptours@fonz.org. Also, see Bus Parking on page 2.

Starting Out

Begin your Smithsonian exploration at the **Smithsonian Information Center** in the Institution's first building, popularly known as the Castle, which is open daily 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM. This distinctive red, sandstone building is centrally located on the National Mall and may be entered from either Jefferson Drive on the north or the Enid A. Haupt Garden on the south.

The Information Center serves as the focal point for information about the Institution's 17 national museums and National Zoo in the Washington metropolitan area. Volunteer Information Specialists are on hand to answer questions and provide directions. A 55-seat theater offers a free 10-minute video orientation (runs continuously); the theater is equipped with an audio loop and the video is open-captioned. Scale models of Washington's monuments and museums on and near the National Mall are on view in a large, enclosed display. Nearby are several interactive touch-screen programs that provide information on the Smithsonian Institution in English and general information in five other languages.

Eating...Parking...Transportation

Dining facilities: Enjoy a rejuvenating respite from museum trekking by dining in any of the following museums:

Air and Space Museum & its Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center American Art Museum
American History Museum American Indian Museum National Zoo
Natural History Museum Portrait Gallery

NOTE: Accommodations are not available for eating bag lunches within Smithsonian museums. Bag lunches are permitted at the Zoo.

Parking: The Smithsonian does not operate any parking facilities except at the National Zoo and at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center.

- **Bus parking:**

- **Near the National Mall:** There are several areas where tour buses can park on a first-come, first-served basis, including West Potomac Park, but space is limited. For information on bus parking sites, contact the National Park Service Mall Operations Office at 202-426-6841 or see Web at www.nps.gov/nama/parknews/newsreleases.htm. U Street Parking Inc., located at 900 9th Street, NW, near the National Portrait Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, provides parking for 30 buses for a fee; for information and reservations, call 202-265-0010. Free on-street parking for buses is available at the Anacostia Community Museum.
- **At the National Zoo:** Bus parking is limited and a space can be guaranteed throughout the year only to **tour groups** and **school groups** that book one of its Group Safari Packages (see Special Group Rates on page 1 for contact information). School groups not purchasing a Group Safari Package during the busy spring season (April-June) must reserve a space, available only on a first-come, first-served basis, by calling 202-633-4480. Parking for the remainder of the school year is available most weekdays on a first-come, first-served basis. On weekends and during the summer, school bus parking is not available, unless the school group has booked a Group Safari Package.

Reminder: Tour bus operators cannot drop off passengers on Connecticut Avenue as it is both unsafe and illegal. Buses without reservations will be allowed to enter the National Zoo to discharge their passengers at the Bus Loading/Unloading Area

and will be allowed only to return approximately 10 minutes before they are scheduled to pick up their passengers.

- **At the National Air and Space Museum’s Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center:** School buses, tour buses, motor coaches, mini-buses, commuter buses, hotel shuttles, and airport shuttles that have a prominently and clearly displayed logo are exempt from the parking fee at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia.
- **Car/van parking:** Free on-street parking for cars and vans on Jefferson and Madison Drives on the National Mall is limited and the 3-hour posted time limit is enforced. Parking is available in nearby commercial lots and garages. Parking is available for free at the Anacostia Community Museum. Parking at the National Zoo costs \$10 for the first hour; \$15 for 2-3 hours; \$20 for more than 3 hours. Zoo parking lots fill early in the day during spring break, holidays, and summer months; the use of Metrorail, Washington’s subway, is encouraged (to call for schedule, see phone number listed below). Daily parking at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center costs \$15 per vehicle; parking is free after 4 PM.

Public transportation:

- **Metrobus and Metrorail,** Washington’s subway system, link the city with communities in nearby Maryland and Virginia. All stations are equipped with an elevator and/or escalators. For information on Metrobus and Metrorail schedules as well as parking at Metro stations, call 202-637-7000 (voice), 202-638-3780 (TTY), or visit the Metro Web site: MetroOpensDoors.com. **Tip:** Ask about the One Day Pass. Metrorail is very busy during rush periods (before 9:30 AM and between 3-7 PM); it’s best to travel during non-rush periods.
- **D.C. Circulator** offers a quick and convenient service to Smithsonian museums (Note: The purple route operates only on weekends.). For more information on this inexpensive, hop-on/hop-off bus service, call 202-962-1423 or visit the Web site: www.dccirculator.com.

Accommodations for visitors with disabilities: All museums have at least one entrance that is accessible to visitors with limited mobility; wheelchairs are available free of charge in every museum in Washington, D.C.; at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, in Chantilly, Virginia; and at the National Zoo on a first-come, first-served basis.

Security: When you visit any of the Smithsonian’s museums, you’ll be greeted upon entry by one of our security personnel who **will** conduct a thorough but speedy **hand-check** of all bags, briefcases, purses, and containers. Several of the museums have self-service lockers or checkrooms, but all bags must be inspected by security first. We ask for your patience, cooperation, and assistance in keeping America’s treasures safe. To speed your entry, we suggest the following:

- Bring only a small purse or “fanny pack.”
- We do not recommend bringing daypacks/backpacks or luggage as each item will be subject to a lengthy search in each museum visited. It is best to leave such items on the tour/school bus or in a hotel room.
- Do not bring sharp items – such as knives (including pocket or Swiss Army knives), screwdrivers, corkscrews, scissors, nail files, etc. – into the museums.
- **At the Air and Space Museum, American History Museum, American Indian Museum, Natural History Museum, and Postal Museum, all visitors are required to walk through a metal detector; at the Air and Space Museum and Postal Museum, bags are checked through an x-ray machine.** Those who are unable to go through the metal detector will be hand-screened with an electronic wand by security personnel.

Group Tours

Most Smithsonian museums offer free tours of their exhibitions to groups. Group tour reservations are required 2-8 weeks (time frame varies by museum) in advance and can be scheduled by calling Monday – Friday (except federal holidays) or writing to the Education Department of the museum(s) of interest.

Note: Requests for sign language or oral interpreters must be made at least 2 weeks in advance.

Anacostia Community Museum

Office of Education, MRC 777
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-4870 (voice)

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and Freer Gallery of Art

Office of Education, MRC 707
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-1012 (voice)
E-mail: asiatours@si.edu

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

Office of Education, MRC 350
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-2796 (voice)
202-633-8043 (TTY)
E-mail: marucak@si.edu

National Air and Space Museum (on the Mall) and its Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center (in Chantilly, Va.)

Office of Education, MRC 305
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
For tours:
202-633-2563 (voice)
202-357-1505 (TTY)
E-mail: NASMTours@si.edu
For IMAX® theater and planetarium:
1-866-868-7774 (toll-free, out of area)
202-633-4629 (local)
E-mail: GroupSales@si.edu

National Museum of African Art

Office of Education, MRC 708
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-4640 (voice)
202-357-4814 (TTY)

National Museum of American History, Kenneth E. Behring Center

Note: Group tours not available
Downloadable pre-visit and post-visit materials available at
americanhistory.si.edu/educators/visiting.cfm

National Museum of the American Indian

Note: Reserved tours available for school
Groups only
Office of Education, MRC 590
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
1-888-618-0572 (toll-free)
202-633-6644 (voice)
202-633-6751 (TTY)
E-mail: NMAI-GroupReservations@si.edu

National Museum of Natural History

Note: Group tours not available
For previsit packets and self-guides available for teachers:
202-633-1077 (voice)
202-633-9287 (TTY)
For IMAX® theater:
1-866-868-7774 (toll-free, out of area)
202-633-4629 (local)
E-mail: GroupSales@si.edu

National Portrait Gallery

Department of Education, MRC 973
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-8503 (school groups)
202-633-8519 (non-school groups)
E-mail: NPGEducation@si.edu (school groups)
NPGAdultTours@si.edu (non-school groups)

National Postal Museum

Department of Education, MRC 570
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-5535 (voice)
202-633-9849 (TTY)

National Zoological Park

Friends of the National Zoo, MRC 551
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-4455 (school groups)
202-633-3025 (non-school groups)
202-673-7800 (TTY)
E-mail: education@fonz.org (school groups only)

Renwick Gallery of the

Smithsonian American Art Museum
Tour Scheduler, MRC 510
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-8550 (voice)
SAAMMuseumTours@si.edu

Smithsonian American Art Museum

Office of Educational Programs, MRC 970
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-8550 (voice)
SAAMMuseumTours@si.edu

**Smithsonian Institution Building,
The Castle**

Visitor Information and Associates'
Reception Center, MRC 010
Smithsonian Institution
PO Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012
202-633-2987 (voice/tape)
202-633-5285 (TTY)
E-mail: CastleTours@si.edu
**Note: Tours not recommended for
school groups**