



The Congressional Award

2017 GOLD MEDAL CEREMONY

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO DC

A CURATED LIST OF MUST DO'S FROM THE CONGRESSIONAL AWARD STAFF
COMPILED JUST FOR GOLD MEDALISTS.

EASTERN MARKET

225 7th Street SE, DC | Staff Pick: Shea

Located in the heart of the historic Capitol Hill neighborhood, Eastern Market is DC's destination for fresh food and on weekends, local farm-fresh produce and handmade arts and crafts. For over 136 years, Eastern Market has served as a community hub, connecting neighbors, families, and visitors.



GETTING THERE - One block north of the Eastern Market Metro Stop on the Blue and Orange Lines.

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY / SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

Chinatown, DC | Staff Pick: Kati



We are spoiled in DC with access to some great museums that offer free admission. While I visit the National Mall often, I love the Portrait Gallery/American Art Museum – a bit off the path – where there are a variety of art exhibits.

The Portrait Gallery obviously has some great exhibits, including all of the Presidents, which is a great long-standing exhibit. It also has some portraits of celebs. On the west side of the gallery (The Art Museum half), you can find pieces from the [Works Progress Administration](#) from the 1930's. This exhibit not only shows some amazing pieces depicting America in the 1930's, but is a great history lesson for the New Deal and the focus on the arts during the Great Depression.

If you head to the top of the building, you will find amazing spaces to just sit and relax, along with seeing some modern art. Finally, there is a courtyard ([Kogod Courtyard](#)) in the center of both museums that hosts events throughout the year and is a nice indoor space to avoid the heat.

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible. Gallery Place/Chinatown is the closest (Red/Yellow/Green Lines) while Metro Center is only a couple of blocks walking from the 11th Street Exit (Red/Orange/Blue/Silver).

MILK BAR

City Center, DC | Staff Pick: Kirsten

Milk Bar is an award-winning (Congressional Award) bakery. They have stores in NYC and Toronto as well as this new location in D.C. If you love sweet treats and fun décor this is the small shop for you. Chef Christina Tosi is the founder and owner of Milk Bar and is known for her whimsical, innovative creations.



People from all over the district flock here for her creations like cereal milk ice cream, compost cookies, and crack pie. I have never, ever had a bad bakery item here and always end up buying treats to take home with me. My absolute favorites are the crack pie and the chocolate, chocolate cookie. I am also pretty positive I have tried every flavor cookie and can say that they make great souvenirs to take home to family (if you don't eat them all).

GETTING THERE – Located on the corner of I and 11th St. NW. Metro accessible by way of Metro Center Station.

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART'S SCULPTURE GARDEN FOUNTAIN

National Mall, DC | Staff Pick: Erica

Dip your toes in the [National Gallery of Art's Sculpture Garden fountain](#). It's a great place to relax and take advantage of the beauty of the area. The kids also love it! Located on the National Mall, it's a quick and convenient stop in between museums. If you grab some food from a nearby food truck or hot dog stand, it's also a very affordable lunch spot. If you come back in the winter, the fountain becomes an ice rink. Make note!

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible by Archives-Navy Memorial-Penn Quarter Metro Station (Yellow/Green Lines).



TIDAL BASIN

Washington, DC | Staff Pick: Sibley



Another great spot to run around and enjoy the sights is the Tidal Basin. It sees a ton of action during Cherry Blossom season, but it's a hit all year round. Right across the water is the Jefferson Memorial. To the other side of you is the White House and Washington Monument. It's just a short walk to the Lincoln, WW11, and MLK Memorials. You can't go wrong here. Jog, picnic, read a book, sketch, or play with the dogs. You can even paddle boat at the Jefferson Memorial. Although, perhaps not with Sibley. You'll be sure to take in some of DC's finest attractions here.

GETTING THERE - The best way to get to the Tidal Basin is to take Metro to Smithsonian Station (Blue/Orange/Silver Lines). From the station, walk west on Independence Avenue to 15th Street. Turn left and head south along 15th Street.

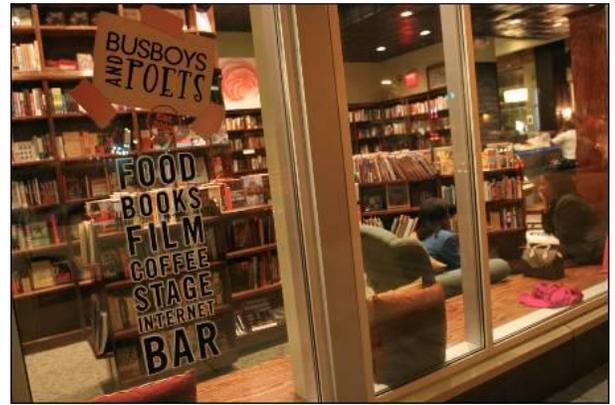
Parking: [East Potomac Park](#) has 320 FREE parking spaces. The Tidal Basin is just a short walk from the park.

BUSBOYS & POETS

Various Locations in DMV | Staff Pick: Molly

Busboys and Poets is a great place to stop for a cold drink or an affordable, healthy meal. They have a few locations around the city, and two just outside the city both in Virginia and Maryland.

My favorite thing about Busboys and Poets are the big comfortable chairs and laid back coffee shop feel. All of the locations have a bookshop and weekly events ranging from music, poetry readings, and storytelling.



UNION MARKET

Northeast DC | Staff Pick: Derek



If you're anything like me, you believe that the best way to explore a new town is to eat your way through it. Get your culinary fix at DC's gourmet food hall.

The warehouse-like market sits on a 50 acre lot that used to be home to the 1930's Union Terminal Market. You won't find many places in Northeast DC topping the list so it's worth the trip out if you find yourself near Union Station. Inside you'll find over 40 local artisans that offer charcuterie, gelato, cheeses, pastries, and more. Be sure to stop by TaKorean for some Korean BBQ Tacos.

GETTING THERE – Just a few blocks away from NoMa-Gallaudet Metro Station (Red Line).

OPEN CITY / THE DINER / TRYST

Woodley Park/Adams Morgan, DC | Staff Pick: Matt

Open City, The Diner, and Tryst are a collection of restaurants in the Woodley Park and Adams Morgan neighborhoods. All three give a great diner or coffee shop vibe, serving breakfast all day and providing a wide range of different types of food.

I love all of these restaurants because they are such fixtures of their neighborhood. All are great to visit with families, and it is not uncommon to see parents and children there at all times, some snacking on French toast while others enjoy a cheeseburger. Everyone has a chance to find something they like!

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible by Woodley Park/Zoo/Adams Morgan station (Red Line). Open City is around the corner from the Metro. Tryst and The Diner are a 15ish minute walk away in the Adams Morgan neighborhood, on 18th St.



WASHINGTON NAVY YARD

Navy Yard, DC | Staff Pick: Malika



Navy Yard is a neighborhood that I discovered with The Congressional Award. We had an intern lunch there. It is an amazing place especially when it is hot since it is refreshing with all the water sources around (the lake and fountains).

You can go there and relax with your family or friends. If you have little brothers or sisters it would be the perfect place for them since there are a lot of kids too. While the kids are playing you can relax by reading a book or taking a sweet nap on the grass.

There are also restaurants around: Mexican, American, Italian, you name it! Not too far from the Yard Park, you can find the Nationals Ball Park.

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible by Navy Yard Metro Station, New Jersey Avenue entrance.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Capitol Hill, DC | Staff Pick: Molly

Besides being the largest library in the world, the architecture and art are reason enough to visit. The library offers free tours and has rotating exhibits throughout the main hall galleries, including Thomas Jefferson's library.

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible. A short walk from Capitol South Metro Station (Blue/Orange/Silver Lines).



BAKED AND WIRED

Georgetown, DC | Staff Pick: Kati



The cupcake wars have slowed in recent years, but you can still find some amazing treats in DC. Your primary options are Sprinkles Cupcakes, Georgetown Cupcake, and my favorite, Baked and Wired – all in Georgetown! Grab a flavor of the day, or one of their [signature treats](#) (consider an Elvis Impersonator, a Unicorn & Rainbows, or a Texas Sheet Cake) and head down to the [Georgetown Waterfront](#). There is a walking path where you can see the Potomac looking down to the Kennedy Center. Or, you could grab your cupcake and walk a bit on the [C&O Canal](#) before cutting up to M or Wisconsin streets for [some shopping](#).

GETTING THERE – Georgetown is not really Metro accessible. You can hop on the [Circulator](#) or if you like the walk, head that way from Foggy Bottom Metro Station (Orange/Blue/Silver). It's a quick 15 minute stroll to the heart of Georgetown.

MARINE CORPS SUNSET PARADE AT THE IWO JIMA MEMORIAL

Arlington, VA | Staff Pick: Erica

The memorial itself is certainly worth the trip across the bridge to Virginia. Held every Tuesday night during the summer months, the Sunset Parade is both patriotic and moving. The views are outstanding and there is no charge for admission.

If Tuesday evenings don't work for you, there's also a Friday night parade at the Marine Corps Barracks Washington at 8th and I.

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible. A short walk away from Rosslyn Metro Station (Blue/ Orange/Silver Lines).



MERIDIAN HILL PARK

16th & W Streets NW, DC | Staff Pick: Kirsten

Meridian Hill Park is a hidden gemstone. Located in NW D.C. it is designed to match the European models of parks with monumental walls and fountains that are located throughout the 12-acre land. It really is hidden inside the walls that surround the park and if you were not paying attention there is a chance you might run right by it. But once you find it and are inside, you no longer feel like you are in the city.



My favorite weekend activity is to get a fruit juice popsicle (my favorite is Pineapple Basil) from [Pleasant Pops Farmhouse Market](#) a few blocks away and then grab a picnic blanket and catch up with friends. Meridian Hill is a huge picnic spot on the weekends and after work. You can often find people in large groups playing outdoor games, walking their dogs or just lounging with a good book.

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible from the U Street/Cardozo stop (Green Line) or the DuPont Circle stop (Red Line). Both are about a half mile walk from the park.

WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL

National Mall, DC | Staff Pick: Shea

The World War II Memorial honors the 16 million who served in the armed forces of the U.S., the more than 400,000 who died, and all who supported the war effort from home. Symbolic of the defining event of the 20th Century, the memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice, and commitment of the American people. With every state and territory having its own pillar it is a great place to take a perfect social media quality photo.

GETTING THERE – Metro's Smithsonian Station drops you right in the middle of the National Mall. The WWII Memorial is just east of the Washington Memorial and west of the reflecting pool.



W HOTEL ROOFTOP BAR (POV)

15th & F NW, DC | Staff Pick: Erica



The W is just a block away from Old Ebbitt Grill, and it's where I take all of my out of town guests. You simply cannot beat the view.

Stay for dinner (although menu options are somewhat minimal) or grab a refreshing drink (have we mentioned how important it is to hydrate in DC in June?) and take some family photos.

You'll see the monuments, White House rooftop (complete with guards), planes taking off and landing at National Airport (DCA) as well as many of the museums and other DC (and Virginia) landmarks. It's also a cool night-time stop, although your pictures won't come out. Don't miss it!

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible via Metro Center (Red Line).

GRAVELLY POINT PARK

George Washington Memorial Parkway, Arlington, VA | Staff Pick: Sibley

If you are interested in a little jog, the Mount Vernon Trail is one of Sibley's favorites. Stopping at Gravelly is perfect for watching the planes from Reagan National Airport land and take-off. Bring a ball and run around the grassy fields. Take in the DC views from across the Potomac. Bring a lunch and you've found a great (albeit a bit noisy) spot!

GETTING THERE - Accessible by car off of the George Washington Memorial Parkway.



MOUNT VERNON

Mt. Vernon, VA | Staff Pick: Matt



The estate George Washington spent his life is a fascinating trip into our history which is located only 20 miles south of downtown DC. Staff there have preserved the President's mansion, many of the buildings which were used to support the farming operation there, and the elaborate gardens which were planted there.

If you want to learn about 18th century life in Virginia and get up close and personal with the American Revolution, Mt. Vernon is the place to do it! The mansion can be difficult to reach without the aid of a car, but if you have the time and means I highly recommend it.

GETTING THERE – Accessible by bus from Huntington Station (Yellow Line). The option can be difficult to coordinate without some planning, and a car is the easiest way to reach Mt. Vernon.

EMBASSY ROW / DUPONT CIRCLE

Massachusetts Ave. NW, DC | Staff Pick: Derek



Whether you take an official [tour](#) or stroll through on foot, it's impressive to see the diversity of private residences, embassies, diplomatic missions, and even the U.S. Naval Observatory. Wrap up your adventure by checking out a number of restaurants and attractions in Dupont Circle. Stop by the [The Board Room](#) for a bite and access to hundreds of board games.

GETTING THERE – Start from DuPont Circle Metro Station (Red Line) and head northwest up Massachusetts Ave for Embassy Row.

BURGER TAP & SHAKE

Foggy Bottom, DC | Staff Pick: Malika

Burger Tap & Shake or BTS is one of the best burger places in Washington, D.C. (according to me). I often passed this restaurant when in Georgetown but never gave it a try until my friend convinced me. Now it's a favorite. It is a pretty popular space.

The burgers are between \$6-8. They have their own sauce on each table which is absolutely delicious.

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible from Foggy-Bottom.



THE POTOMAC RIVER

DC, MD, VA | Staff Pick: Molly



There are a ton of ways to explore the Potomac River. Whether you walk or bike along the scenic George Washington Memorial Parkway, stop along the way to check out the numerous historic forts, houses, and monuments.

If you'd rather get out on the water, there are a handful of companies that rent out kayaks and paddle boats. They also offer guided tours of the monuments, some in the evening when it's not as hot and the monuments are lit up!

GETTING THERE - The Key Bridge Boathouse in Georgetown is my go-to. They offer hourly and daily rates for rentals and Georgetown is an awesome place to explore, eat, and shop!

FOOD TRUCKS

Everywhere, DC | Staff Pick: Derek



Depending on what part of the country you're from, your life may be forever changed when you sink your teeth into a taco al pastor, lamb burger with Asian pork belly fries, crepe, or croqueta from one of the DC's preferred "food on the go" vendors.

GETTING THERE - There is no one address to provide so use Twitter and/or [Food Truck Fiesta](#) to track down your meal and thank me later.

OLD EBBITT GRILL

13th & G NW, DC | Staff Pick: Erica

Washington's oldest bar and restaurant makes for a DC classic. Located just next to the White House, it's a traditional eatery for White House staff and DC lobbyists. The menu offers a good range, with the crab cakes remaining one of their most popular items. The restaurant is also very large, with three separate bar areas, two dining rooms and the atrium. Its family friendly, Metro accessible, and fun. The wait can be long, so plan ahead! Plus, you never know who you will run into there!



GETTING THERE – Metro accessible via Metro Center.

THE VILLAGE AT SHIRLINGTON

Arlington, VA | Staff Pick: Sibley



If you happen to be staying on the Virginia side, Shirlington Village is a fantastic place to stay, eat, and shop. It's uber dog-friendly with two dog parks, (complete with an adjacent brewery), trails, parks, family friendly eateries, a public library, theater, and grocery store. It's all very walkable and close to DC.

Yogi Castle is THE spot for some awesome frozen yogurt. Luna Grill dishes up some great breakfasts. Busboys & Poets is our favorite because of its great vibe and it doubles as a book store. The Carlyle has an outstanding menu. And then stop in Dogma Bakery because you may very well find Sibley there seeking out some gourmet treats!

GETTING THERE - Accessible by car off of I-395.

THE NEWSEUM

555 Pennsylvania Ave NW, DC | Staff Pick: Kirsten

With the many free museums that Washington has to offer you might ask why one would pay to enter this one, but the Newseum is one of the most unique and interactive museums in the district. It is dedicated to free expression and the five freedoms of the First Amendment. There are seven levels of [interactive exhibits](#).

The two that are the most memorable exhibits are the 9/11 Gallery featuring the broadcast antennae from the top of the World Trade Center and the Berlin Wall Gallery whose eight concrete sections are one of the largest pieces of the original wall outside Germany.

The Newseum does require tickets to enter, \$22.95 for adults (19 to 64) and \$13.95 for youth (7 to 18) but that is a small price to pay for the knowledge that you will walk away with. My advice would be to [purchase your tickets](#) in advance and get there right before it opens.



GETTING THERE – Metro accessible by Archives/Navy Memorial/Penn Quarter (Green/Yellow) & Judiciary Square (Red).

MATCHBOX

Various locations in DMV | Staff Pick: Kati



Matchbox is a regional restaurant that serves great pizza and sliders. Affordable for the DC area, it's kid friendly and has a nice warm aesthetic. They have a great outdoor space at the 14th Street location, but Chinatown and Eastern Market are also favorites. If you stay through the weekend, the breakfast pizza can't be beat. Their sister restaurant [Ted's Bulletin](#) is also great! Go for the food, leave with a Pop-Tart!

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible. Gallery Place/Chinatown is the closest (Red/Yellow/Green Lines) while Metro Center is only a couple of blocks walking from the 11th Street Exit (Red/Orange/Blue/Silver).

BUFFALO EXCHANGE

Logan Circle, DC | Staff Pick: Malika

Buffalo Exchange is one of my favorite stores in D.C. It is a thrift store that sells new and recycled clothes for men and women. I am a big fan of vintage clothes and accessories, which is why I really love to go there. The most pleasant thing is that you can find amazing accessories or high quality clothes at affordable prices.

You'll notice that fashion does not create new trends but just brings back the old trends. So why spend a lot of money on new silk scarf that will be out of season a couple of months later when you can spend less money on an iconic scarf?



GETTING THERE – Accessible by Metro Bus or Metro at McPherson Square, followed by a brief 10 minute walk.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL

National Mall, DC | Staff Pick: Molly



While you're checking out the National Mall's museums and monuments, you will probably stop at the Lincoln Memorial. Try to go at night when it's cooled down, less crowded, and the dramatic lighting makes the monument and the National Mall really special.

As for my favorite things to look for at the monument- a plaque commemorating Martin Luther King Jr. is at the top of the steps just outside the building, and is the place where he stood to deliver his "I Have a Dream" speech. Also, Lincoln's second inaugural address is engraved on the north wall of the memorial and has a typo in the first paragraph- try to spot it!

GETTING THERE - Take Metro to Smithsonian station, which drops you right in the middle of the National Mall. The Lincoln Memorial is East, past the Washington Monument and the Reflecting Pool.

OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria, VA | Staff Pick: Derek

Old Town is an historic district and is known as the epicenter of the city that George Washington called home. Lined with cobblestone streets and brick sidewalks, you can stroll down King Street for one mile of non-stop shopping and restaurants. The area is bookended by the [George Washington Masonic Memorial](#) the Potomac River waterfront.

GETTING THERE – Metro accessible by King Street-Old Town Metro Station (Blue/Yellow Lines). A free trolley is also offered.



NANDO'S PERI-PERI

DC, MD, VA | Staff Pick: Matt



Nando's is a South African restaurant which came to the US for the first time in 2008. 24 of its 30 locations in the US are in DC, Maryland, or Virginia, making this a real local treat! The restaurants all have funky modern décor and the seating to handle family-sized groups.

The food at Nando's is all based on their delicious chicken and their Peri-Peri sauce, which comes in several different flavors. The sauces can get quite spicy, so be careful if you have a sensitive tongue! The restaurant also serves a wide array of sides, and I've gone there before just to order garlic bread. Their locations are scattered across the area, so you will probably have a good opportunity to visit!

GETTING THERE – Various locations including Bethesda Row and the corner of Wisconsin Ave and Veazey St (Bethesda and Tenleytown-AU stations, both on the Red Line) and 7th Street between H and I Streets, which is accessed from Metro's Red, Green, and Yellow Lines by way of Gallery Place-Chinatown station.