



# THE VIEW FROM WASHINGTON

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## Need Some Insight into Visiting the Nation's Capital This Month?

**T**his month, the 2008 AEA International Convention & Trade Show is kicking off in Washington, D.C., with activities, events and meetings starting as early as Tuesday, April 22 and running through Saturday, April 26.

If you haven't made plans to be in D.C. this month, you are behind in your planning — but there's still time. With three major airports — Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA), Dulles International Airport (IAD) and Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI) — all within 50 miles of the convention site, you still can book air travel even at this late date.

But this month's column isn't about convincing you to make last-minute travel plans; this month's column is

about your visit to my town: Washington, D.C. I'm not a native Washingtonian; however, I have lived here in the Washington/Baltimore metropolitan area since 1993, and have been traveling into the Washington area for nearly 30 years for various aviation training courses, conferences and meetings.

### AEA Convention & Trade Show

I can't say enough good things about this year's AEA show — nearly 100 hours of training is available; it's the best avionics trade show in the world for general aviation; and the leadership of the FAA and other government agencies will be in attendance.

I routinely get calls from members who are putting together their three-, five- and 10-year business plans, and they ask a lot of questions about future

avionics requirements. The annual AEA Convention is where you go for that information. Yes, we have regulatory mandates for avionics driving some upgrades, but the next few years will be driven by product upgrades, new technologies and out-of-this-world gee-wiz stuff. Come to the 2008 AEA Convention with your five-year business plan in hand so you can fill in the blanks for sales, service and upgrades.

Your customers need to hear “the rest of the story.” For this, they rely on your expertise and knowledge of the products you will see, touch, hear and learn about during the AEA Trade Show.

OK, you've heard plenty about the AEA Convention in the past few months, but if you haven't, the schedule of events is on AEA's website at [www.aea.net](http://www.aea.net).

So, you're coming to Washington, D.C., and you want to know what to do. Let me share some of my insight into the city, as well as some of my favorite places with you.

### Getting Around

The “underground” rail system in the Washington metropolitan area is called the DC Metro. With a few precautions you would exercise in any big city, the Metro is a safe way to get around Washington, D.C.

For a complete description of the DC Metro system, visit [www.wmata.com/metrorail/systemmap.cfm](http://www.wmata.com/metrorail/systemmap.cfm).

The taxi system is efficient as well,



with taxis in the city proper on a fixed fee instead of a meter system like many other cities use. The fee is based on which “zone” you are in and how many zones you need to go through to reach your destination.

And, of course, the city is very walk-able. I especially like to walk the downtown corridor to enjoy the hundreds of lesser-known monuments you find along the way and the great architecture of the city.

The Gaylord National Resort, the site of the AEA Convention, is at the National Harbor on the Potomac River. From National Harbor, water taxi service is available to and from points around Washington D.C. and Virginia.

The Potomac Riverboat Co. is operating water taxi service between National Harbor and Old Town Alexandria, with additional boat service to Mount Vernon and Georgetown. Water taxis run every half hour between National Harbor and Old Town Alexandria. There are three daily trips to Georgetown’s Washington Harbor and a single daily trip to George Washington’s Mount Vernon Estate.

For more information about water taxi service, visit [www.potomacriverboatco.com/newtaxi.php](http://www.potomacriverboatco.com/newtaxi.php).

## Touring

Of course, while in Washington, D.C., you should see the monuments: the White House, Capitol, Library of Congress and Arlington National Cemetery. The changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery is a must-see — it is very moving. The architecture and art of the Library of Congress is breathtaking.

For information on White House tours, visit [www.whitehouse.gov/history/tours](http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/tours). For information on Arlington National Cemetery, visit [www.arlingtoncemetery.org](http://www.arlingtoncemetery.org).



If you are interested in tours, I usually recommend one of the jump-on/jump-off bus tours operating around the city. You purchase a pass, which is good all day, and you can get off the bus at designated areas to visit the museums or the monuments in the area, then hop back on until something else captures your imagination and you choose to get off again.

There are a number of companies providing these types of tours. The one I’ve used is called Old Town Trolley Tours. For more information about these tours, visit [www.oldtowntrolley.com/Washington-DC](http://www.oldtowntrolley.com/Washington-DC).

I especially like the night tours of D.C. for a memorable experience. You haven’t really seen Washington until you’ve seen it during a lighted night tour. The tours I’ve taken are run by Gray Line Tours. For more information, visit [www.grayline.com/Grayline/destinations/us/washingtondc.go](http://www.grayline.com/Grayline/destinations/us/washingtondc.go).

The *Washington Flyer* magazine also has many ideas for things to do during your stay, plus recommendations for nightlife. Complimentary copies are available at all three area airports, or check out the latest edition online at [www.WashingtonFlyer.com](http://www.WashingtonFlyer.com).

## Aviation First

Aviation is the reason you’re coming this month to D.C., and among the best aviation museums in the world are the Smithsonian Museums.

The Smithsonian Institution’s Na-

tional Air and Space Museum maintains the largest collection of historic air and spacecraft in the world. It is also a vital center for research into the history, science and technology of aviation and space flight, as well as planetary science, terrestrial geology and geophysics.

The museum has two display facilities. Its building at the National Mall & Memorial Parks in downtown Washington, D.C., has hundreds of artifacts on display, including the original Wright 1903 Flyer, the Spirit of St. Louis, the Apollo 11 command module and a lunar rock sample visitors can touch. The Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, near Dulles International Airport, displays many more artifacts, including the Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird, Boeing B-29 Superfortress Enola Gay and Space Shuttle Enterprise.

Most people don’t realize the Smithsonian isn’t one museum but an entire group of museums, including but certainly not limited to:

- National Museum of Natural History: Where natural history lives.
- National Museum of the American Indian: Collection, preservation, study and exhibition of the living cultures and history of the native peoples of the Americas.
- National Portrait Gallery: Portraits of distinguished Americans.
- National Zoological Park: More than 400 animal species in a 163-acre

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park.

- Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden: Modern and contemporary art.
- Smithsonian Institution Building, the Castle: Smithsonian Information Center.
- National Museum of African Art: Collection, research and exhibition of African art.
- Smithsonian American Art Museum and its Renwick Gallery: Paintings, sculpture, graphics, folk art, craft and photography from the 18th century to present.

Most of the Smithsonian Museums border the National Mall, which is the park-like area stretching east to west from the U.S. Capitol Building (on the east end) to the Lincoln Memorial (on the west end). For more information, you can review all of the Smithsonian Museums at [www.si.edu/museums](http://www.si.edu/museums).

The College Park Aviation Museum, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is on the grounds of the world's oldest continuously operating airport in College Park, Md. — an easy metro ride from downtown D.C. The airport was founded in 1909, when Wilbur Wright came to Washington to give flight instruction to the first military aviators.

Visitors to the museum step into an open, one-and-a-half story exhibit space, which highlights the display of unique aircraft and artifacts and tells the story of the airport's many first in flight. For more information, visit [www.pgparcs.com/places/historic/cpam/index.html](http://www.pgparcs.com/places/historic/cpam/index.html).

The Patuxent River Naval Air Museum in Lexington Park, Md., is the only museum in the United States dedicated to preserving the rich heritage

of the research, development, testing and evaluation of Naval aircraft. The museum is supported jointly by the Navy, the state of Maryland, St. Mary's County, the Naval aviation community and the local community. For more information, visit [www.paxmuseum.com/index.htm](http://www.paxmuseum.com/index.htm).

### Politics

Want to see Washington in action? One of the most interesting things I have done in the course of my work in Washington is to attend, and occasionally testify at, a Congressional hearing. Most of these hearings are available to the public, and I would highly recommend you take the time to not only visit and tour Congress, but also to sit in on a committee hearing.

You also should schedule an appointment to visit with your elected officials. To locate your elected officials, visit [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

This year is an especially good time to be in Washington, D.C. — an election year is always an exciting time.

And the AEA is planning some excitement of its own. If you haven't heard, Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, is the keynote speaker for the AEA Annual Awards Luncheon on Friday, April 25. I have had the opportunity to hear Gingrich speak on a number of topics and, I promise, he will make you think long and hard even after his presentation is over.

### History

Needless to say, the eastern part of the United States is full of history. If you are particularly interested in Civil War history, the Civil War Trails program has installed nearly 800 interpretive markers at Civil War sites in Vir-

ginia, Maryland and North Carolina. In addition, there are at least a dozen major civil war battlefields within a half-day drive of Washington, D.C.

For more information about Civil War battlefields, visit [www.civil-wartraveler.com/EAST/VA/trails-FAQ.html](http://www.civil-wartraveler.com/EAST/VA/trails-FAQ.html).

Baltimore, which is only 40 miles north of D.C., is the home of Fort McHenry. After burning Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1814, the British attacked Baltimore by land and sea. Because of the heroism at Fort McHenry and North Point, Baltimore held off the British. Francis Scott Key's commemoration of the fort's bombardment was later set to music to become America's national anthem.

Mount Vernon, the home of George and Martha Washington, is one of the most popular historic estates in America. Located 16 miles south of Washington, D.C., and eight miles south of Old Town Alexandria, Va., the plantation rests on the banks of the Potomac River.

In addition, numerous towns along the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay are within easy driving distance of the convention grounds.

For more information on the history of Baltimore, visit <http://pages.baltimorecountymd.com/history.htm>.

### Sports

The Washington Nationals Major League Baseball team is at home in its brand-new stadium during the week of the AEA Convention, playing first the New York Mets, then the Chicago Cubs. For more information, visit [www.washingtonnationals.com](http://www.washingtonnationals.com).

The Baltimore Orioles will be on the road during the convention; however, the Orioles host the New York

Yankees the weekend prior to the AEA convention. For more information, visit [www.baltimoreorioles.com](http://www.baltimoreorioles.com).

If you're interested in something I haven't mentioned, most likely it can be found on the Washington, D.C. Convention & Tourism Corp. website at [www.washington.org](http://www.washington.org).

This will be one of the best venues yet for the annual AEA International Convention & Trade Show. If there is anything I can do to make your stay in Washington even better, please let me know. □

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*If you have comments or questions  
about this article, send e-mails to  
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