

# Learn English Have Fun November 2014 News



**Washington, DC  
The Nation's Capitol**

# Washington, DC

**to found** / faʊnd / (verb): to start or create a country, organization, company, political party, etc.

**namesake** / 'neɪm,seɪk / (noun): a person or thing with the same name as something else.

**swampland** / 'swɑ:mp,lænd / (noun): land that is always wet and often partly covered with water.

**to envision** / ɪn'vɪʒən / (verb): to dream or to think of something that might exist or happen in the future..

**monument** / 'mɒ:njəmənt / (noun): a building, statue, etc., that honors a person or event.

**memorial** / mə'mɔ:riəl / (noun): something that honors a person who has died or serves as a reminder of an event in which many people died.

**federal** / 'fed(ə)rəl / (noun): connected with the national government of a country rather than with the government of one of its member states. The United States of America has 50 states plus the federal district of Washington, DC, and 15 territories (e.g., Guam, Puerto Rico).

**district** / 'dɪstrɪkt / (noun): an area or section of a country, city, or town (often established by a government for official government business).

**status** / 'stetəs / (noun): the legal position of a person, country, etc.

**representation** / ,reprɪzən'teɪʃ(ə)n / (noun): being able to vote for a senator or representative that speaks and acts on behalf of a group of people.

**transient** / 'trænzɪjənt / (adj): staying somewhere only a short time .



Sunrise over the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument & US Capitol

## History of the Nation's Capital

Washington DC was **founded** on July 16, 1790. George Washington, the first US president and **namesake** of the city, choose this site to be the capital of the United States. At the time, the area was undeveloped **swampland** along the Potomac and Anacostia rivers.

The city was designed by a French architect, Pierre L'Enfant, who **envisioned** the city to have 400 feet wide boulevards lined with grand buildings. It took more than a couple hundred years to achieve this **vision** which includes famous **monuments**, museums and **memorials** situated along an immense tree-lined park called the Mall. On one end of the Mall is the Lincoln Memorial and the other end is the US Capitol building.

The U.S. Constitution stated that the capital of the United States would be located in a "**federal** district," and that Congress would oversee the city. The "DC" part of Washington, DC stands for "District of Columbia" and the city is commonly called "Washington," "Washington, DC," "DC" or "the District." Since Washington is a federal district, it has a unique **status**: it is not a US state. Because it isn't a state, residents living in Washington do not have **representation** in Congress.

Many of the people who live in the city work for the government. In 1800, the first government had just 131 employees. Today, the US federal government has approximately 2.8 million civilian employees across the country and about 29% of all jobs in Washington are for federal employees. This makes it a **transient** city at times, especially when there is a change of government and new officials are elected.

# Washington, DC



The White House decorated with wreaths for the holidays

## Washington: the Seat of Government

The US **Constitution**, **ratified** in 1788, created a federal government that works together with individual states to create a system where each state governs itself but they all exist together as one country. To prevent too much control by any group or individual, the government was set up with three different **branches**: the *executive* branch, the *legislative* branch and the *judicial* Branch.

The president is the head of the executive branch and is responsible for **implementing** the laws that Congress creates. The White House is the crowning symbol of the executive branch and houses the president and his family as well as the West Wing and Oval Office—the president's official offices where he works with his senior staff.

The legislative branch **consists of** a Congress of 100 senators (two from each state) and 435 representatives (**apportioned** based on population in districts). Congress passes laws in the US Capitol Building, which like many Washington buildings, is built in a neoclassical style with a white **exterior**. The building is 289 feet in height (88 meters).

**Constitution** / ,kɒnstɪ'tʃ(ə)n / (noun): a set of principles and laws that describe how the country should be organized and governed and the rights/duties of citizens.

**ratify** / 'rætə,faɪ / (verb): to make an agreement official by signing it or formally accepting it.

**to govern** / 'gʌvərn / (noun): to control and manage a country and its people.

**branch** / bræntʃ / (noun): a part of the government with a particular responsibility.

**responsible** / rɪ'spɒnsəb(ə)l / (adj): having the job or duty of taking care of something or someone.

**to implement** / 'ɪmplə,ment / (verb): to make and use a plan, idea or system or law and make it be effective.

**consists of** / kən'sɪsts əv / (phrasal verb): to be formed or made up of (specified things or people).

**exterior** / ɪk'stɪriər / (noun): the outside part of something (e.g., outside of a building).

**to apportion** / ə'pɔːrʃ(ə)n / (verb): to divide something up.

NOTE: capitol vs. capital

**capital** / 'kæpɪtl/ (noun): the most important city in a country or state where the main offices of the government are located. (Washington, DC is the capital of the United States. Sacramento is the capital of the state of California. Albany is that capital of the state of New York).

**capitol** / 'kæpɪtl / (noun): the building where the people who make US laws meet. (There are capitols in every state. The US Capitol is the building where the US Congress meets).



US Capitol

# Washington, DC

**to recognize** / 'rekəg,naiz / (verb): to accept something as true or important.

**shelf** / 'ʃelf/ (plural: **shelves**) / 'ʃelvz / (noun): A flat board which is attached to a frame or a wall, which you can put objects on top (e.g., books).

**manuscript** / 'mænjə,skript / (noun): a very old book or document written by hand before books began to be printed; or a writer's original pages of a book, article, or document before it is published.

**mosaic** / məʊ'zeɪk / (noun): a work of art that has a pattern or picture made of many small colored pieces of stone, glass or other material.

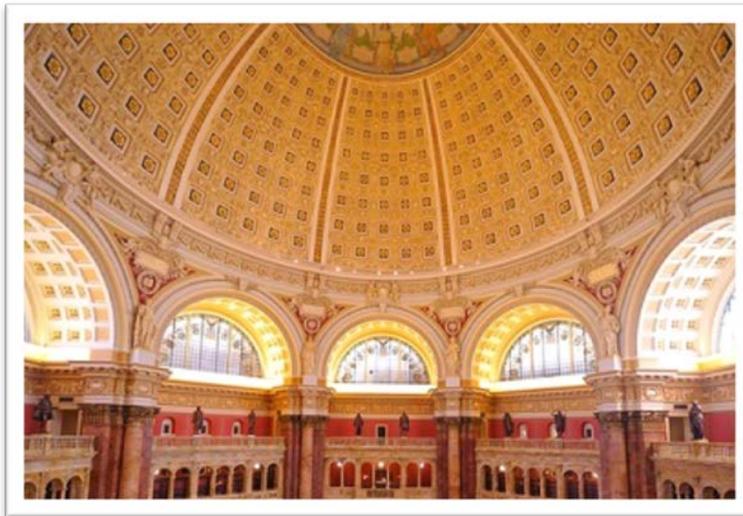
**stained glass** / ,steɪnd 'glæs / (noun): glass that has been colored or painted, these are often used in church windows.

**to interpret** / ɪn'tɜːprət / (verb): to understand an action, situation, etc. in a specified way.

**to apply** / ə'plai / (verb): to use a law in a specific situation.

**to appeal** / ə'pil / (verb): to formally ask a court of law to change an earlier decision it has made.

**unconstitutional** / ,ʌnkənstɪ'tuʃən(ə)l / (noun): not allowed or not legal according to the constitution ( a set of official rules or principles) of a particular country.



The Main Reading Room at the Library of Congress

The Library of Congress, is the research library for Congress but it is also **recognized** as the national library. It is the largest library in the world with more than 158 million items, which are stored on approximately 838 miles of **shelves**.

There are 36.8 million cataloged books and printed materials in 470 languages, 68.9 million **manuscripts** and the world's largest collection of films, maps, sound recordings and sheet music. The building was built in 1897, has marble columns, **mosaics** and paintings and a great Hall which rises 75 feet and has a beautiful **stained glass** ceiling. When I was in high school I used to use this library when I had to write research papers.

The judicial branch is the system of courts that **interprets** and **applies** law. The Supreme Court, the court of final **appeal**, is the highest court in the land. It was established by the Constitution and it decides whether or not federal, state and local governments are acting within the law. It can also decide if the president's actions are **unconstitutional**.



caption

The Supreme Court

# Washington, DC

**cemetery** / 'semə,teri / (noun): a place where dead people are buried (also called a graveyard).

**resting place** / 'restiŋ ,pleis / (noun): another word for cemetery – a place where dead people are buried.

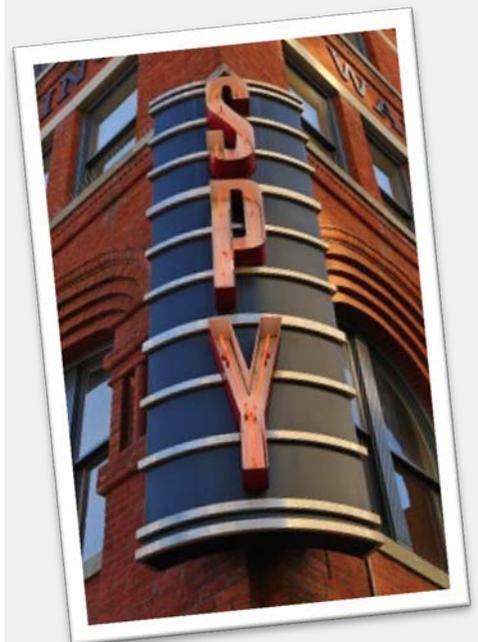
**tombstone** / 'tʌm,stoʊn / (noun): a large stone with the name and the date of birth and death of the person buried underneath it.

**burial** / 'berɪəl / (noun): the process of putting a dead person into the ground, which happens at a funeral.

**wreath** / riθ / (noun): a circle of leaves, branches or flowers that you put on graves to show you remember the person who died and is buried there.

**grave** / greɪv / (noun): a place under the ground where a dead person is buried.

**diffusion** / dɪ'fju:ʒn / (noun): the spreading or distribution of something.



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## Arlington National Cemetery

This **cemetery** is the **resting place** for men and women who served in the US military, including former slaves. It covers 624 acres and is lined with 400,000 graves, which create a sea of white marble **tombstones**. The first military **burial** took place on May 13, 1864 during the Civil War and this year marks its 150th anniversary. Since 1992, hundreds of **wreaths** are placed on **graves** during the Christmas holidays.

## Museums, & the Smithsonian Institution

The Smithsonian Institution was established in 1846 "for the increase and **diffusion** of knowledge." It's the world's largest museum and research complex with 19 museums, nine research centers and affiliates around the world. Washington DC has many other museums and art galleries and if you visit the city you'll be happy to know that entrances are usually FREE of charge.

You could spend years visiting all of the exhibits and special events. Some of my favorite museums are the Spy Museum, Air and Space Museum, American History Museum, Portrait Gallery, American Indian Museum and the National Zoo.



The Smithsonian Castle

# Washington, DC

**obelisk** / 'ɒsbəlɪsk / (noun): a tall pointed stone column with four sides, built in memory of a person or an event.

**bird's-eye view** (idiom): a view from above something that gives a broad or wide view of the area (what a bird would see flying above something).

**emancipation** / ɪ,mænsi'peɪʃn / (noun): giving someone freedom from slavery or other political or social restriction.

**proclamation** / ,prɒklə'meɪʃ(ə)n / (noun): A very important announcement about something that affects everyone.

**contemplation** / ,kɒntəm'pleɪʃ(ə)n / (noun): sitting and thinking about something for a long time.

**to conceive** / kən'si:v / (verb): to think of or create something.

**to endure** / ɪn'dɜː / (verb): to experience something difficult or unpleasant.



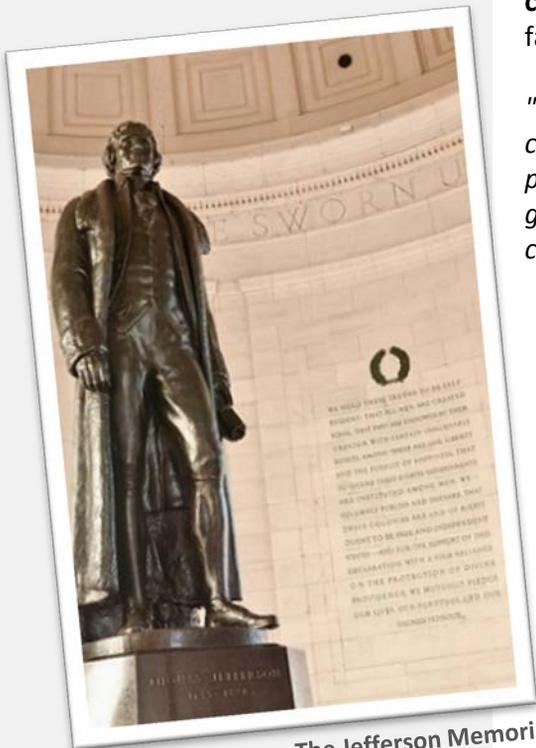
The Korean War Memorial

## A Monumental City

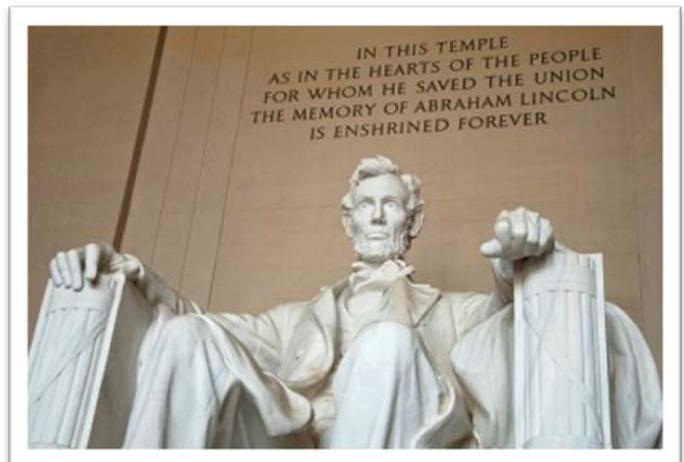
No visit to Washington would be complete without visiting some of the monuments and memorials. The Washington Monument—at 555 feet and made of marble, granite and blue stone—is the world's tallest **obelisk** built to honor the first president, George Washington. If you take the elevator to the top, you'll get an amazing **bird's-eye view** of the city.

The Lincoln Memorial is dedicated to the "Great Emancipator," the 16th President Abraham Lincoln, who issued the **Emancipation Proclamation** on January 1, 1863. Lincoln proclaimed the freedom of slaves in the ten states that were still in rebellion during the Civil War. The Memorial is built of white stone with 36 iconic columns in the neoclassical style and features a 19 foot tall statue of Lincoln sitting in **contemplation**. Parts of the Gettysburg address, which was his most famous speech, are inscribed on the wall:

*"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, **conceived** in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long **endure**."*



The Jefferson Memorial



The Lincoln Memorial

# Washington, DC

The speech emphasized that the US **Civil War** was not only a struggle for the Union of the United States, but also for the principle of human **equality**.

The Jefferson Memorial, modeled after the Pantheon in Rome, is another of the grand monuments dedicated to our forefathers. There's a 19 foot bronze statue of Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, who **drafted** the Declaration of Independence. This is one of my favorite memorials and I love the **inscriptions** (which are **excerpts** from his writings) on the walls of this memorial.

There are many other important memorials in the city including one for civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., President Franklin D. Roosevelt and memorials for veterans of the wars in Vietnam, Korean and World War II.

**civil war** / 'sɪvl wɔːr / (noun): a war between groups of people in the same country. In the United States, this was the war fought between 1861-1865 between the northern and southern states.

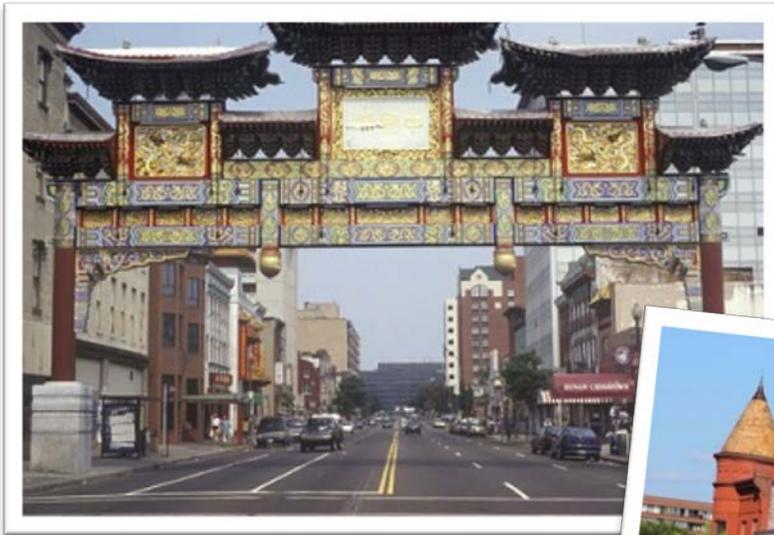
**equality** / i'kwɔ:ləti / (noun): being equal in rights, status, advantages, etc.

**forefather** / 'fɔə,fɑ:ðə / (noun): a personal from an earlier time who helped to create something important .

**to draft** / 'drɑft / (verb): to write a version of something (such as a document) that can be changed before the final version.

**inscription** / in-'skrip-shən / (noun): words cut into a surface (like marble).

**excerpt** / 'eksɜ:rpt / (noun): a short piece of something (e.g., writing) taken from a longer whole.



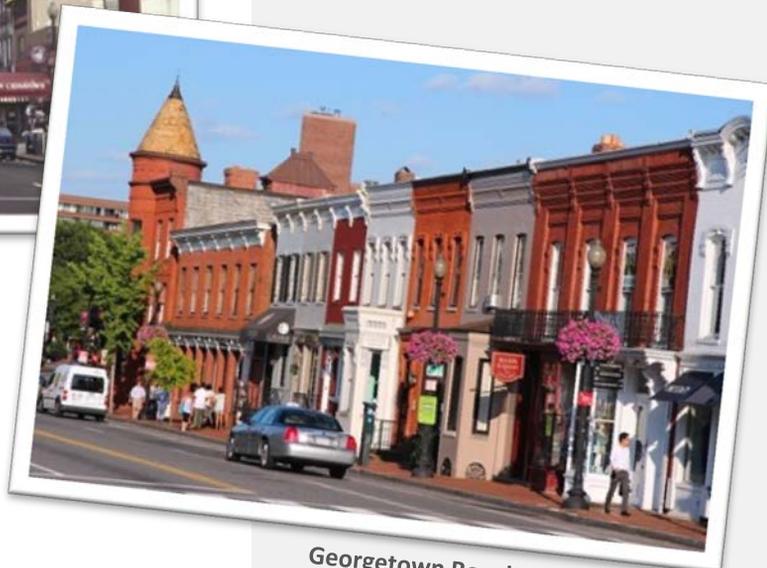
Friendship Arch, Chinatown

## Washington Neighborhoods

There are a number of different neighborhoods in Washington from the urban and hip Adams Morgan, to the vibrant Dupont Circle to **upscale** Georgetown. I'll just briefly mention two neighborhoods in the city.

Chinatown features the Friendship Archway, a traditional Chinese gate that is made of seven roofs, 7,000 tiles and 272 painted dragons. It is the largest single span archway in the world. With such a majestic entrance, you may be surprised to know that the 2010 census showed that only 21% of Chinatown's 3,000 residents are Asian.

Many Chinese left the area in the late 1960s, after **riots** during the civil rights movement, and the Asian population decreased substantially further in the 1990s.



Georgetown Row house shops

**upscale** / 'ʌp'skeɪl / (adj): appealing to people who have a lot of money.

**riots** / 'raɪət / (noun): a situation where a group of people behave violently in a public place, often as a protest and damaging property.

# Washington, DC

**cobblestone** / 'kɑ:blstəʊnz / (adj/noun): a round stone that is used to pave a street.

**quaint** / kweɪnt/ (adj): attractive in an unusual or old-fashioned way.

**high-end** / 'haɪ'end / (adj): higher in price and quality than other similar things.

**waterfront** / 'wɑ:tə'frʌnt / (noun): land that is next to the water (e.g., river, lake, ocean).

**harbor** / 'hɑ:bə / (noun): a place next to land that has water deep enough for ships to stay (dock) and be protected from wind or storms.

**to adorn** / ə'do:ən / (verb): to make someone or something more attractive by adding something beautiful.

**festive** / 'festɪv / (adj): suited to a celebration or holiday.

**decorations** / ,dekə'reɪʃn / (noun): something that makes another thing look more attractive on special occasions.

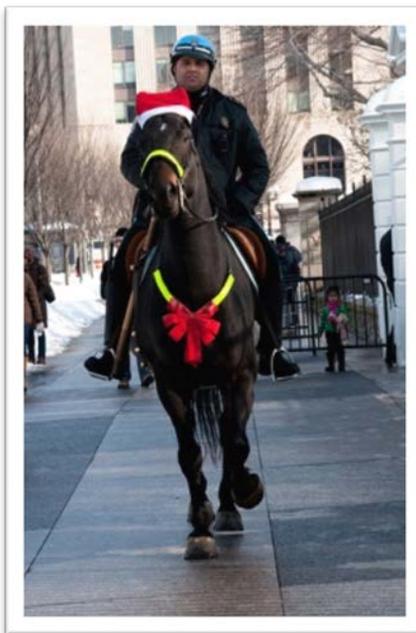
**long-standing** / 'lɔ:ŋ'stændɪŋ / (adj): something that has existed or lasted for a long time.

**tons** / tʌnə / (informal): a lot of

**to spend time** / 'spend 'taɪm / (idiom): to use your time doing something.

**to connect** / kə'nekt / (verb): in this sentence, it means to communicate with someone (e.g., by email, phone, Facebook).

Georgetown is the wealthiest neighborhood in the city as well as the oldest. Many of the neighborhood streets are lined with **cobblestones**, **quaint** 18<sup>th</sup> century architecture and row houses, plus **high-end** shops, bars, restaurants, and a beautiful **waterfront harbor** along the Potomac River.



The Capital Christmas tree / National Park Police Horse with Santa Hat

## Year-End Holiday Decorations

At this time of year, the city is **adorned** with **festive decorations** for Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's. The decoration and lighting of Christmas trees near the US Capitol and the White House are **long-standing** traditions this time of year. The national Christmas tree is lit by the President and First Lady in early December and is then turned on each evening. Decorations for the tree are provided by each state and it's truly a magnificent sight.

Washington DC is definitely one of my favorite cities in the world and if you have the opportunity to visit you will not be sorry. With its rich history, beautiful parks and **tons** of free places to visit, you could easily **spend** several weeks or even months here without getting bored.

I hope you enjoyed practicing English while taking a mini-tour of the Nation's capital. Since this is the last newsletter of the year, **I'd like to take the opportunity to wish you and your loved ones a very safe and happy New Year** and I look forward to **connecting** again in in 2015.

All the best,

Nicole