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Washington is famous for its monuments and museums. But beyond the must-see tourist spots is a treasure trove of less familiar destinations. Here are 61 fun places to visit—gorgeous gardens, behind-the-scenes tours, quirky museums, and more.

FYI: You can spend the night in an 1830 brick lockhouse on the C&O Canal near Poolesville.

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The arrest of a National Zoo scientist for trying to poison cats set off a fierce debate over whether cats are innocent and adorable or an ecological nightmare.

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For a century, spring in Washington has meant cherry blossoms, thanks to a gift from Japan. Here's a look back at the annual spectacle—as seen in a new book from National Geographic.

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WOMEN OF FASHION

In a city that's not supposed to care all that much about style, some women have done well helping us with what we wear. Here are standouts in Washington's fashion scene.

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After a decade of setbacks and near misses, Ilir Zherka says it's time to give District residents full representation in Congress. It's a fight he thinks he can win.

BY ARIEL SABAR



ON THE COVER

Photograph of a formal garden at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley by Ron Blunt



**Built in 1830, this
brick lockhouse
along the C&O
Canal near
Poolesville can
be rented for
an overnight.**



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Hidden Gems

Washington is famous for its monuments, landmarks, and museums. But beyond the must-see tourist spots is a treasure trove of less familiar destinations. Here are fun places to visit—gorgeous gardens, interesting behind-the-scenes tours, quirky museums, a new skateboard park, and more.

Hidden Gems

TRAVEL BACK IN TIME . . .

by spending the night in a lockhouse along the **C&O CANAL**. Completed in 1850, the 184-mile canal was once lined with 57 small houses where lock keepers and their families lived. The waterway stopped operating in 1924, and the houses were abandoned. But in 2009, the National Park Service began restoring a handful of them. Six lockhouses can now be rented; all are brick or stone homes that are more than 170 years old and can sleep eight. The most modern are Lockhouse 6, near Brookmont, and Lockhouse 10, near Cabin John, which have kitchens and central air. Prices range from \$70 to \$150 per night. canaltrust.org.

LAUGH TILL YOU CRY . . .

at an **AFTER-HOURS STORYTELLING EVENT**. Modeled after the New York City event called The Moth (heard on NPR), local storytelling gatherings are gaining popularity and can be a great way to break out of a nightlife rut. SpeakeasyDC (speakeasydc.com) draws a crowd each month to various venues with topics such as “bad mommy moments” and “stories about sex,” and the group vets performers before each show. Story League (storyleague.org) is more casual—anyone can submit a story online or in person at the beginning of the night—but just as much fun. Arrive early to get a seat, then settle in as Washingtonians bare their souls and tell entertaining tales about everything from security clearances to online dating. Check the websites for schedules, locations, and prices.

DIG FOR BURIED TREASURE . . .

at **GUNSTON HALL**. George Mason’s 18th-century estate in Fairfax County. The staff gives volunteers tools and basic archaeological training, then lets them go to work. Among the many artifacts that been have found are coins, glass jewelry beads, and a two-tined fork with a bone handle from the 1760s. The field season goes from April to December; in the winter, volunteers can work in the lab, dating and categorizing unearthed objects. The house, designed in Chesapeake Georgian style, is also worth a visit. The intricate carvings in the Palladian Room are marvelous, and Mason’s writing desk sits in the Little Parlor. 703-550-9220; gunstonhall.org.



↑ **Marvel at the beauty of nature . . .**

at the Wilderness Society’s **ANSEL ADAMS COLLECTION**.

Before his death in 1984, Adams donated 75 of his most important landscape photographs to the Wilderness Society. These images, along with 13 others and a photograph of Adams himself, are tucked away on the first floor of the society’s downtown DC headquarters in a white-walled gallery. The collection of original black-and-white photos includes sweeping vistas and detailed microcosms in America’s majestic wilderness: Yosemite National Park, the Sierra Nevada, Death Valley National Park, the Great Smoky Mountains, Glacier Bay National Park, and more. Free. 202-833-2300; wilderness.org.

Discover rare orchids . . .

in the orchid room at the **US BOTANIC GARDEN**. The greenhouse is packed to the ceiling with a selection of the garden’s 5,000 orchids from around the world. Flowers are rotated twice a week so that each of the 200 on display is at the peak of its bloom—you might see a tropical lady’s-slipper orchid from Southeast Asia or a five-foot-tall laelia aniceps from Central America. Through April 29, the garden is cohosting its annual orchid exhibit with the Smithsonian. More than 500 flowers are on display in the serene style of a Japanese garden with a moon bridge, a teahouse, and bamboo. Free. 202-225-8333; usbg.gov.



PHOTOGRAPH OF ANSEL ADAMS COLLECTION BY GROUP GOETZ ARCHITECTS