

# The GLBTQ Guide to Washington, DC



BY LAURA MILLER

With the ever-controversial Millennium March fast approaching, gays and lesbians nationwide are turning their eyes towards Washington, DC as a possible tourist-slash-political lobbying destination. What many don't know is how much the DC area has to offer GLBTQ travelers year-round.

It should hardly be surprising that Washington boasts an enormous and highly visible gay community; most national gay-rights organizations are headquartered in DC. While the heavily politicized character of Washingtonian social life can

GLBTQ newspaper, the *Washington Blade*, reveals dozens of professional organizations, including Gays and Lesbians in Foreign Affairs Agencies and USDA GLOBE. There are also groups such as Bisexual People of Color, Girth & Mirth (fat gay men), CMRA (deaf Gays), Khush-DC (South Asian GLB), American Boyz, Inc. (FTM transgendered), Hotbox (railroad enthusiasts), Washington Wetskins (water polo team), and something known only as "Men of Discipline."

Many of these and other organizations regularly host get-togethers and special events. The best way to find out

## Washington by Day

Any GLBTQ tour of Washington should start at Dupont Circle, long recognized as the spiritual center of the gay community; in less politically correct times, it was affectionately known as the "Fruit Loop."

Unfortunately, attempting to park a car in or near Dupont often turns into an all-day event. You're far better off taking the Metro, which is fairly idiot-proof, even for those who have never attempted to use public transportation. Take the Red Line to Dupont Circle, take an escalator up what looks like about 500 floors, and then follow the rainbow flags all the way up Connecticut Avenue.

Along the way, you'll run across one of the finest GLBTQ bookstores in the country, Lambda Rising, which offers an impressive array of new and used books and videos on every conceivable topic of interest to queer folks. For those long-suffering souls who have depended upon Burlington's Peace and Justice Center as their only source for GLBTQ-related literature, this store is well worth a trip, and it's a good place to pick up a *Washington Blade*, a *Metro Weekly*, and a *DC FunMap*. Farther up the hill along Connecticut Ave, you'll find a number of other shops offering a wide variety of sex toys, risqué greeting cards, and various rainbow-colored knickknacks.

As Dupont Circle has become

more gentrified in recent years, the gay community has been gradually gravitating eastward, to the extent that real-estate agents are now shamelessly referring to the neighborhood surrounding 17th Street as "Dupont East."

Walk directly east from Connecticut Avenue along Q Street and eventually you will emerge into a second cluster of gay and gay-friendly shops and restaurants. A second bookstore, Lammas, is more women-oriented; less showy than Lambda Rising, it has a vaguely Peace-and-Justice Center feel to it. Down the street is another gay icon, Annie's Paramount Steakhouse, a delightful if often crowded destination for a weekend brunch or afternoon snack. If the weather is nice, the sidewalk cafes are an excellent vantage point for scoping gay men.

By now, the lesbian traveler may be wondering where all the women are – not that you won't see the occasional dyke couple strolling along 17th

Street, but they are decidedly in the minority. Since Washington has no shortage of single, professional, educated, rabidly feminist career women, the question of why the gay male community is so much more visible than the lesbian community is one which yields no easy answers. If you're determined to find out where all the enlightened, intelligent professional women are hiding, or just want to see something slightly off the beaten path, consider a trip to the National Museum of Women in the Arts. Located on the corner of New York Ave. and 13th Street, one block north of the Metro Center Metro stop, it features several centuries of paintings and sculpture by female artists,

most of which easily rivals what you see in the more mainstream museums.

Of course, if you're willing to forego the gay scene completely, Washington offers all the old stand-by tourist attractions. Most charge no admission, and many are worth a trip to Washington in and of themselves: the Smithsonian museums, Arlington Cemetery, the White House, the FBI building, and various monuments in between.

If you're prepared for a more sobering experience, set aside a few hours for the Holocaust Museum, located just a block away from the Smithsonian on 14th Street and Raoul Wallenberg. It attempts to do justice to all victims of the Holocaust, including homosexuals. Passes are free, but are often available only on a limited basis; check the museum's Web site.



## Washington By Night

The options for dining out in Washington are virtually endless. Any number of restaurants are located within a stone's

### DC RESOURCES

Washington Blade online  
www.washblade.com

National Museum of Women in the Arts  
www.nmwa.org

Smithsonian Institute  
www.si.org

Holocaust Museum  
www.ushmm.org

often have a closeting effect (you tend to run across a number of people who are hush-hush about where they work and whom they're dating), an impressive number of federal employees are very much "out and about."

Casual perusal of the resources listing in the city's

about them is to consult the *Blade's* website.

However, in a city like Washington, you hardly need a special event to find gay or gay-friendly entertainment. This article cannot hope to touch upon all of the city's nooks and crannies, but here are a few of the highlights:

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