



RV TRIPGEN

The Complete Guide to
RV Travel in

District of Columbia

How to RV-visit DC without parking inside DC,
and everything else you need to know before you cross the District line.

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RV travel in the District of Columbia

Honest framing first: DC is not an RV destination. There are zero campgrounds inside the District. There is no public RV parking. The historic core (the National Mall, the monuments, museums, the Capitol, the White House) is the attraction, and you visit it by Metro or on foot -- not by driving a rig through downtown. The right way to RV the DC area is to park in Maryland or Virginia within 10-25 miles of the Mall and shuttle in. Cherry Hill Park in College Park MD (the closest full-hookup RV park to the Mall, with a hotel-style shuttle into the Metro), Greenbelt Park (NPS, no hookups but cheap and quiet), and Pohick Bay or Fort Whaley in Virginia are the workable bases. From any of them you're on the Metro Red, Green, Orange, or Blue line in under 30 minutes and at the Smithsonian in another 20. Below is what you need to know about driving in DC if you absolutely have to (mostly: don't).

District of Columbia by the numbers

Boondocking + dispersed sites	29
Established campgrounds	0
Dump stations	0
Propane refills	0
Potable water fill-ups	2
Laundromats	0
RV showers	2
Verified-bad spots (overnight prohibited)	1

Source: iOverlander community database (62% of District of Columbia spots verified in the last 24 months).

Driving rules

Freeways within DC (cars)	55 mph
Most arterials (cars)	30 mph (default for most numbered streets)
Residential streets (default)	25 mph (DC-wide default since 2020)
School zones	15-20 mph (posted, strictly enforced)
Drive on	Right
RV passenger seatbelts	Required for all occupants (primary enforcement)
Cell phone use while driving	Hands-free only (banned hand-held), texting banned

Right turn on red	Permitted unless signed otherwise (many DC intersections post 'No Turn on Red')
Residential parking	Permit-only on most residential streets -- non-residents get 2 hours max

Highways

RV-friendly corridors

Highway	Note
I-495 (Capital Beltway)	Ring road around DC, 64 miles in MD and VA. RV-friendly, big-rig easy. This is your access route to the suburban RV parks.
I-95 (north-south through MD/VA)	Joins the Beltway at College Park MD (north) and Springfield VA (south). Main approach corridor from north or south.
I-66 (west of DC, in VA)	Main western approach. Note: HOV restrictions inbound 6:30-9am weekdays; commercial vehicles restricted in some segments.
I-295 (DC Anacostia Freeway)	Limited-access freeway through SE DC connecting the Beltway to downtown. RV-tolerable but no parking at the end.
MD-295 (Baltimore-Washington Parkway)	Federally-administered parkway, BUT note: passenger-vehicle-only between MD-410 and DC line -- commercial vehicles and many large RVs are prohibited northbound.

RV-restricted segments

Segment	Restriction
Rock Creek Parkway (NPS-administered)	Passenger vehicles only. RVs, buses, and commercial vehicles prohibited. Same applies to the Clara Barton Parkway.
George Washington Memorial Parkway (NPS, VA side)	Passenger vehicles only. RVs and commercial vehicles prohibited; oversized vehicles must use I-495 or I-395 instead.
Pennsylvania Avenue (between 15th and 17th NW)	Closed to all vehicles past the White House; permanent closure since 1995.
E Street between 15th and 17th NW	Closed to non-government traffic.
Most downtown streets	Not RV-restricted by sign, but practically: no oversized parking, low-clearance loading-zone canopies, tight turning radii. Don't try.
Most NPS Mall parking	Cars only at most lots; the West Potomac Park lots take some RVs but fill by 9am summer/cherry-blossom season.

National parks + monuments

National Park / Monument	Entry fee	Reservation note
National Mall and Memorial Parks	Free entry to all monuments and memorials	No camping. Day-visit only. Park at Smithsonian/Mall Metro lots if you absolutely must (most lots passenger-vehicle-only); recommended is to stay in MD/VA and ride Metro Blue/Orange/Silver to Smithsonian station.
Rock Creek Park	Free entry	No camping. Day-use park within DC. Limited RV access -- Rock Creek Parkway prohibits oversized vehicles. Visit via the Nature Center entrance off Military Road; small rigs only.
Anacostia Park	Free entry	No camping. Day-use park along the Anacostia River in SE DC. Small-rig friendly; full-time-band parking sites in Greenbelt MD.
President's Park (White House surrounds)	Free entry; White House interior tour requires congressional request 21 days ahead	No camping. Day-visit only. Park outside DC and Metro in.
Frederick Douglass NHS (Anacostia)	Free entry; timed-entry house tour	No camping inside the historic site. Day-visit only.
Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, etc.	Free; Washington Monument requires timed-entry ticket via recreation.gov	No camping. Treat as day-visit Mall destinations.

State parks

DC has no state-park system equivalent -- the District operates a Department of Parks and Recreation with city parks, none of which permit camping. The functional substitute is National Park Service units within DC (National Mall, Rock Creek, Anacostia) and Maryland/Virginia state parks within an hour's drive: Greenbelt Park NPS (College Park MD), Pohick Bay Regional Park (VA), Cunningham Falls State Park (Thurmont MD, 60 miles), Bull Run Regional Park (VA).

Boondocking + dispersed camping

BLM: DC has no BLM holdings. There is no Federal land in DC that permits dispersed camping. Honest answer: DC is not a dispersed-camping jurisdiction. Anyone telling you otherwise is misinformed.

National Forest: DC has no national forest. The nearest USFS unit is George Washington and Jefferson NF in western Virginia, 90+ miles west of the Beltway. For an RV-base-and-shuttle DC visit, plan to camp in MD or VA, not in any federal lands inside the District.

Stay limit: 1 days at any one location (federal rule, applies to BLM and NF dispersed).

Tribal lands

DC has no tribal lands within District boundaries. The land's pre-contact stewards were the Piscataway, Nacotchtank (Anacostan), and Pamunkey peoples; the National Museum of the American Indian on the Mall (a Smithsonian institution) is the canonical place to engage with that history and with broader indigenous-cultures interpretation while you're visiting.

Propane, dump stations, fuel

Propane: No propane refill inside DC itself. Closest reliable refills: Cherry Hill Park on-site (College Park MD), U-Haul locations in College Park MD and in Alexandria VA, and Tractor Supply locations in Beltsville MD, Manassas VA, and Waldorf MD. Plan refills before crossing the Beltway inbound.

Dump stations: No public dump stations inside DC. Cherry Hill Park has dump for guests. Greenbelt Park (NPS) has a dump station. Pohick Bay Regional Park (VA) has a dump station. Plan dumps before or after your DC visit window, not during.

Fuel: Gas and diesel available at standard density in DC retail (Wawa, BP, Shell along major arterials) but most stations have tight forecourts not suitable for large rigs. Best practice: fuel up in MD or VA before crossing into the District. Fuel prices in DC are notably higher than in suburban MD/VA -- expect \$0.30-0.50/gallon premium.

Weather windows

Best months: Late March through May (cherry blossoms peak late March to early April) and September through October. Daytime 60-78 F, nights 45-60 F. Comfortable walking weather for Mall visits.

Avoid: July through mid-September brings 90-95 F with brutal Mid-Atlantic humidity -- the Mall has minimal shade and walking the monuments in August is genuinely miserable. January-February occasionally brings ice storms that close the Beltway. Cherry blossom peak weekend (variable, late March to mid-April) creates extreme tourist density -- Mall parking impossible, Metro shoulder-to-shoulder.

Climate caution

Plan DC visits for shoulder-season weekdays. Cherry blossoms are spectacular but the peak weekend draws over a million visitors and turns the Tidal Basin into a slow-shuffle queue. Mid-April after peak bloom, or late September through October, gives you the same monuments without the crush.

Emergency + road conditions

State patrol	Dial 911 for emergencies (DC Metropolitan Police); 311 for non-emergency
Road conditions	https://511md.maryland.gov (for MD approach), https://511virginia.org (for VA approach)

How RV TripGen helps

How to RV-visit DC without parking inside DC

RV Tripgen's standard DC plan is: full-hookup base at Cherry Hill Park (College Park MD), Pohick Bay (Lorton VA), or Greenbelt Park NPS (College Park MD); drive to the nearest Metro station; ride Red/Green/Blue/Orange/Silver to Smithsonian; walk the Mall. Your rig never crosses the District line. Total Metro fare under \$10 round-trip per person.

DC overflow campgrounds within 30 minutes

RV Tripgen surfaces five DC-shuttle-base RV parks ranked by Metro proximity, hookups, and capacity: Cherry Hill Park (College Park MD, full hookups, on-site shuttle), Greenbelt Park (NPS, no hookups, Metro 1.5 mi), Pohick Bay Regional Park (Lorton VA, full hookups, Metro 8 mi), Bull Run Regional Park (Centreville VA, electric/water, Metro 12 mi), and Capitol KOA (Millersville MD, full hookups, MARC train option).