

Traveling with Jewish Taste®

Washington, DC: Great Museums ...But the Highlight Was Lunch

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



If you like museums, then you will love Washington, DC. Our nation's capital offers a plethora of world-class institutions, each with a different focus. Having been in Washington several times over the years, I am always surprised by how little I feel I have accomplished when confronted with so many choices. We recently visited over the long Presidents' Day weekend. Our son, Avi, eager to show us his new home, ran us ragged visiting a wide range of attractions.

Washington offers several major sites of interest to the Jewish tourist. The most prominent, of course, is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, located on the National Mall.

A public-private partnership, the museum's mission is to "inspire citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, promote human dignity, and prevent genocide." It does this through exhibits and extensive archives, including the "Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive." The Museum also works with law enforcement, the judiciary, and the military, among other groups, to provide education and training.

The National Museum of American Jewish Military History, operated under the auspices of the Jewish War Veterans of the USA, preserves records of the contributions that Jewish men and women in the Armed Forces of the United States have made during and between times of war, from the founding of the country to the present. The museum not only features exhibitions but boasts publications and educational programs as well.

The B'nai B'rith Center for Jewish Culture encompasses the Klutznick National Jewish Museum and the Philip Lax Archive. The former features a permanent collection of Judaica and fine art, including pieces by Marc Chagall, Ben Zion, Malcah Zeldis, Edna Hibel, and Art Spiegelman, as well as exhibits on sports and culture.

This museum also offers a virtual gallery of its holdings that provides a resource about Jewish ceremonial artifacts and assists those who may be researching family items looted by the Nazis.

The Jewish Historical Society of Greater Washington and its Lillian & Albert Small Jewish Museum "preserve, chronicle and present the story" of the Washington area Jewish community through archives, exhibits, educational programs, publications, and the restoration of the 1876 Adas Israel Synagogue – the oldest in the Washington, DC area. The synagogue, now known as the "6th and I" (its actual location) is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Washington, DC JCC offers a wide variety of artistic and cultural programs. Its "Theater J" has a full season of five productions and three special events. Among

the highlights of the year are The Washington Jewish Film Festival, the Jewish Literary Festival, and the Jewish Music Festival. In addition, the JCC hosts a full schedule of stimulating speakers.

The Smithsonian Institution affiliated museums form the heart of the National Mall.

The world's largest museum and research complex, the Smithsonian includes nineteen museums and galleries, as well as the National Zoological Park, in Rock Creek National Park. Among my favorites is the American History Museum which houses artifacts ranging from early toys and games, to Mr. Rogers' sweaters, to the recently installed kitchen of the late Julia Child.

On this jaunt to Washington, we chose to visit the newest of the Smithsonian group, the National Museum of the American Indian.

A beautiful building designed to reflect the landscape of the Southwest and surrounded by native plantings, the edifice is definitely not a typical stately Washington building of granite and columns. Opened in 2004, the museum has a few kinks to work out (some exhibits have no descriptive legends), but overall is a nice overview of the native populations of the Americas, and their beliefs and cultures.

The core of the museum is a treasure trove of 800,000 artifacts donated by George

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The Mitsitam Native Foods Café



At The National Gallery of Art, "The Square of Saint Marks, Venice," Giovanni Antonio (Canal) Canaletto, circa 1743



The Smithsonian's latest addition, The National Museum of the American Indian

Moist and Spicy Corn Bread

I couldn't find one quintessential food to represent Washington, DC – or at least one that would allow a kashrut-observing Jew to enjoy, but given the intense interest in fresh food, sustainable agriculture, and the "locavore" (eating food that is locally produced) movement, and our wonderful experience at the Museum of the American Indian, I offer you my take on corn bread, a true product of the Americas.



Ingredients:

1 cup butter, melted	3/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese
1 cup sugar	1 cup all-purpose flour
4 eggs	1 cup yellow cornmeal
1 can cream-style corn	4 teaspoons baking powder
1 chili pepper, seeded and chopped fine (wear gloves to work with the pepper)	1/4 teaspoon salt

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Coat a nine by thirteen inch baking dish with vegetable spray. In a large bowl, beat together butter and sugar. Beat in eggs one at a time. Blend in cream corn, chilies, and cheese.
- In a separate bowl, stir together flour, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt. Add flour mixture to corn mixture; stir until smooth. Pour batter into prepared pan.
- Bake in preheated oven for one hour, until a toothpick inserted into center of the pan comes out clean.

Serves 10, or 5 "fressers" (literally, Yiddish, "glutton")

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Gustav Heye, who amassed his collection over forty-five years. In order to understand how the exhibits are organized, I would recommend taking one of the highlights tours conducted regularly throughout the day, and watching the orientation video.

The highlight of our visit was – believe it or not – lunch!

The Mitsitam Native Foods

Café is a must-do experience to cap off a visit to the museum. The cafeteria offers indigenous cuisines found throughout the Northern Woodlands, South America, the Northwest Coast, Meso-America, and the Great Plains.

Each of the five food stations offers a wide variety of options that put to rest the assumption that cafeteria food must be dreadful. In fact, we had a scrumptious meal featuring



Seen at the National Museum of American Jewish Military History, the exhibition, "An American, a Sailor, and a Jew: The Life and Career of Commodore Uriah Phillips Levy, US

vegetarian samples from each of the stations, including wild rice with watercress and cranberries, pickled green mango with red onion, black bean and roasted corn salad, annatto spiced carrots, a vegetable tamale with spicy peanut sauce, garbanzo bean puree, and "Roasted Pumpkin & Corn Salad with Agave Nectar Vinaigrette." Yum.

No sooner had we finished up at the American Indian Museum than we found ourselves at the National Gallery of Art to view the special exhibition, "Venice: Canaletto and his Rivals."

On view through May 30, it is well worth the trip to see approximately fifty views of 18th century Venice, known as "vedute," by Canaletto and his rivals, including Michele Marieschi, Francesco Guardi, and Bernardo Bellotto. These artists depicted the famous monuments and vistas of Venice in different moods and seasons, in large part to provide souvenirs to young Europeans on the "Grand Tour" of the continent.

Getting around Washington is very easy, and I would recommend leaving the car behind and taking "the Metro." On Sunday we ventured out to Alexandria, Virginia, for a lovely day of sauntering along charming and historic King Street, exploring unique little shops.

At street's end, we found the Torpedo Factory sitting right on the Potomac River, its vast manufacturing space converted into studios and galleries for artists working in media ranging from oil painting to ceramics, photography to sculpture, paper folding to glass blowing.

After all that walking, one will be hungry. Dining in Washington is an adventure in international foods. One can find everything from Ethiopian to Brazilian, as well as five kosher restaurants in the District itself (although one of these is a Subway at the JCC).

We ate Middle Eastern food in the Adams Morgan neighborhood and delicious vegetarian fare at Founding Farmers, a Foggy Bottom restaurant owned by and featuring the products of the Farmers Union, an association of family farmers and ranchers.

The latter is just one of several dining places that features "fresh American food" from farmers unions.

Granted, you will need a lot longer than one weekend to do Washington justice, but because virtually all the museums in the city are free, you can take in as much or as little as you wish, without the pressure of trying to do it all.

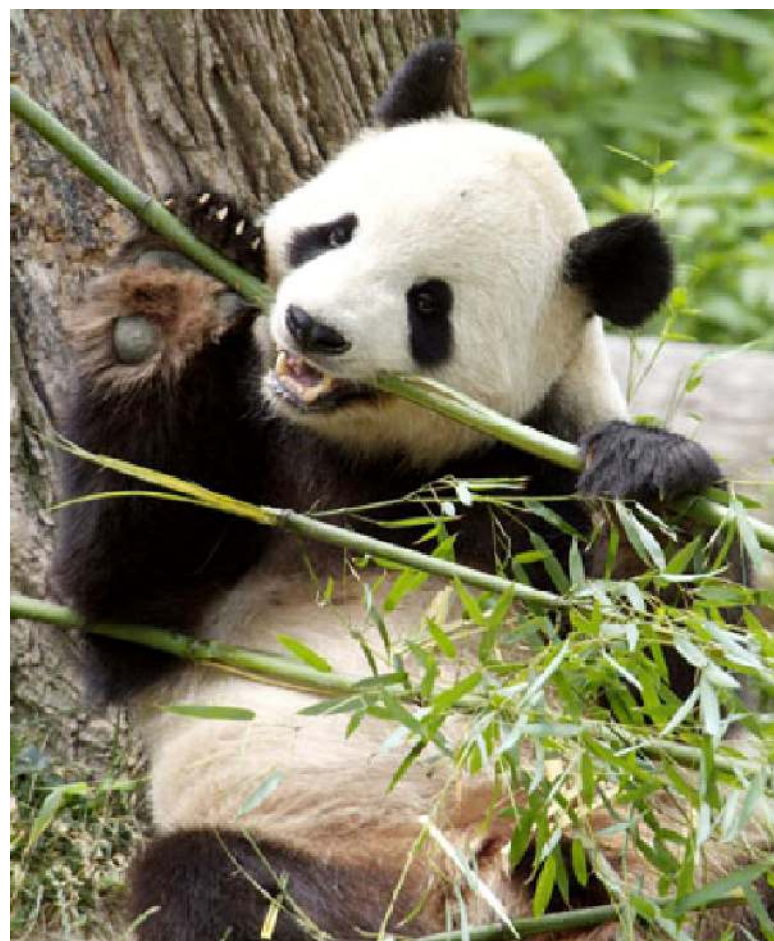
And, feel free to come back.

Carol Goodman Kaufman, an organizational psychologist and writer, is the author of Sins of Omission: The Jewish Community's Reaction to Domestic Violence (Westview Press, 2003). She serves on the National Board of Hadassah and chairs the Jewish Community Relations Council of Central Massachusetts. Kaufman divides her time between Worcester, West Stockbridge, and the world.

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At the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum a child's painting of Jews celebrating Hannukah. From the Theresienstadt detention camp, circa 1943



A giant panda at the National Zoological Park



Visitors enjoy the Smithsonian's "America on the Move" exhibition



Artifact from the exhibition "Abraham Lincoln, an Extraordinary Life" at the Smithsonian's American History Museum



A work by Marc Chagall at the Klutznick National Jewish Museum