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Capitol Building, Washington (iStock)



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So many, in fact, that seeing them in reality is, bizarrely, a bit unreal.

That's definitely the case with the White House, which we're standing in front of nice and early to get a proper look and some photos before it all gets too busy.

But then with the wide road outside closed off by the Secret Service agents, there's actually plenty of room to take it all in.

It's every bit as impressive as we'd imagined.

Of course, a certain former big cheese on the US version of *The Apprentice* has, if such a thing were possible, made the White House and Washington DC bigger news than ever.

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The White House in Washington DC (iStock)

And just like the White House, you can't come to the seat of power and not see the Capitol Building.

building famous around the world.  
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There's nothing, it seems, our guide doesn't know no matter how random the question from our party.

We've only got a few days to do must-see DC, so we're glad we're not wasting time travelling far from the main attractions. The Darcy on Rhode Island Avenue is a mere six blocks from the aforementioned abode of Mr Trump.

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classy but not stuffy, with some really nice touches.  
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One is the fact you can get free bikes and scooters to aid your exploration – another is the free gin-tasting cocktail sessions at 5.30pm each day.

The food is worth tasting, too, especially if you happen to like seafood. That's the speciality of in-house restaurant Siren which is already winning a fine local reputation. The crab cakes in particular were stunning.

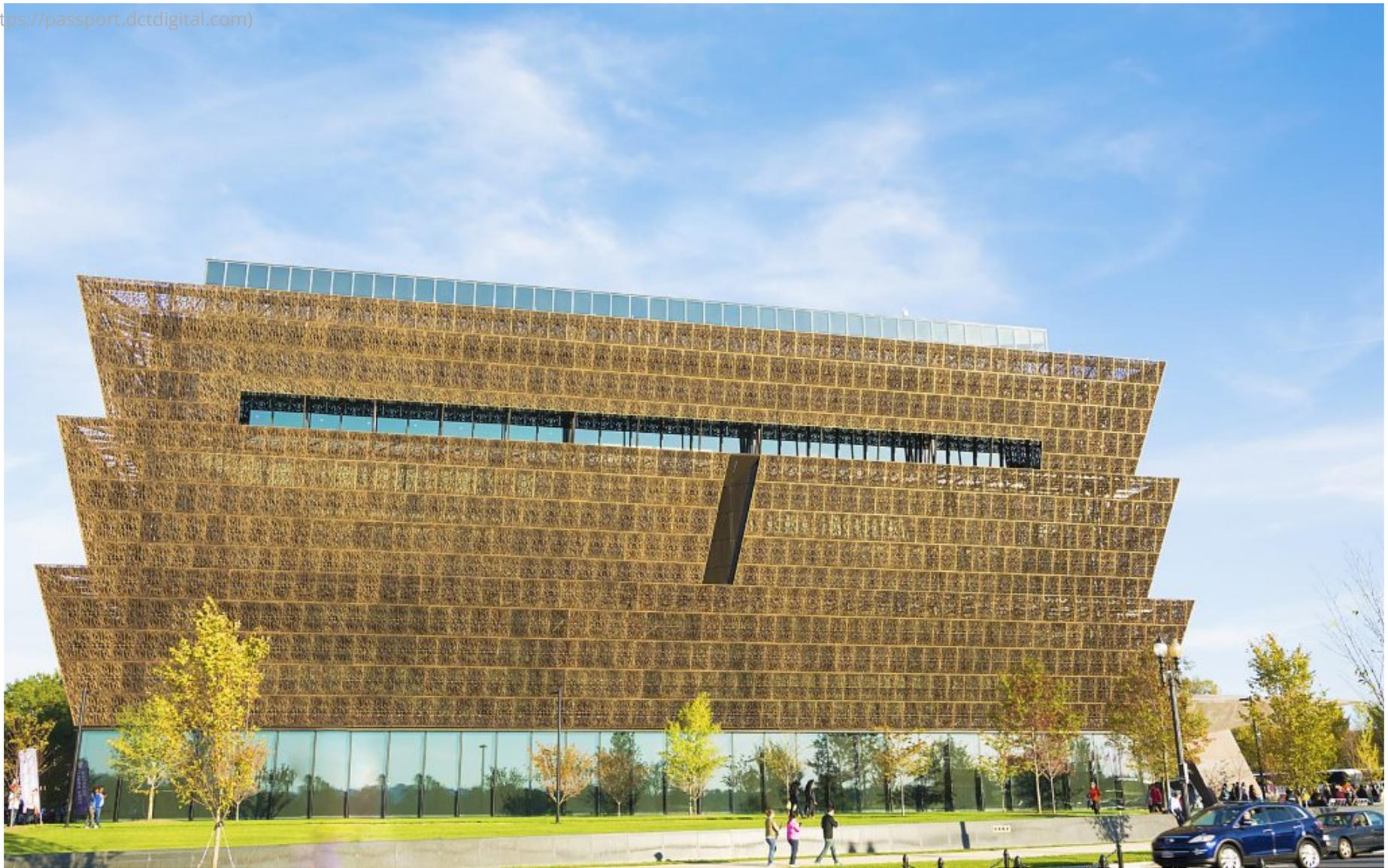
But then locals are spoiled with all sorts of delicious fare in a city adding Michelin stars for fun these days. But we loved the buzz and atmosphere of the less fancy All Purpose Pizzeria where the gnocchi and the buona pizza were to die for.

It's in the smart Shaw neighbourhood, just one of the areas that's transforming itself in trendy, lovely for a walk, fashion.

Back on the main tourist trail, the Washington Monument is closed for renovations but the iconic needle is still the place to be. You're right at the centre of the National Mall, looking one way to the Capitol Building and the other to the Lincoln Memorial and the Reflecting Pools.

If the above are things you've seen so many times before, there's a new cracker directly opposite.

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Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture (iStock)

The National Museum of African American History and Culture is ultra-modern looking and surprisingly bright and airy inside. The glass elevator takes you down and back in time to the 1400s then you work your way back up, learning about everything from slave ships to segregation.

museum is so popular you'll need to book ahead – tickets are released in three-month blocks.

It's the newest of numerous Smithsonian attractions and the Air and Space Museum is an older but also endlessly fascinating must-do with its Apollo spacecraft one of thousands of exhibits.

The vast Natural History Museum is another place you can spend many an hour. All the Smithsonian centres are free.

And with Trump, politics and more making such big news, the Newseum (\$25) is the place to read – well, see – all about it.

It tells the story of news through the centuries, not dusty and dry but lively, fun and endlessly interesting.

We use virtual reality headsets to picture ourselves on the scene at the Berlin Wall and then go to the basement to touch a piece of it.

But take a tip and start or end your tour on the 6th floor terrace which has some of the city's best views.

You look across to the adjacent Capitol Building and directly down to Pennsylvania Avenue, THE street which has seen so much history.

## The Facts

*The Darcy Hotel is part of Hilton's Curio Collection and has rooms from \$350. [thedarcyhotel.com](http://thedarcyhotel.com) (<http://thedarcyhotel.com>)*

*National Museum of African American History and Culture details at [nmaahc.si.edu](http://nmaahc.si.edu) (<http://nmaahc.si.edu>)*

*And get all tourist information from [washington.org](http://washington.org) (<http://washington.org>)*

					
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