Welcome to DC!

A Resource Guide for District of Columbia AmeriCorps Members

Brought to you by Serve DC — The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism

Serve DC
THE MAYOR'S OFFICE ON VOLUNTEERISM

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Introduction & Overview

This guide incorporates feedback collected from past and present AmeriCorps members with their top suggestions and advice for new AmeriCorps members starting their year of service in Washington, DC. It provides an introduction to the District with information about the different wards and the diverse neighborhoods that add to its charm. There are also many useful tips to help with all aspects of living and serving in an expensive city on a modest AmeriCorps stipend. Use the guide for tips on grocery shopping, securing housing, can be an important resource for the transition and adjustment for those who are new to the District. Last but not least, there are numerous websites included in the guide, so members are encouraged to use the online version of this resource to compliment the print version and get the most out of Welcome to DC.

The guide is not meant to be an endorsement by Serve DC – The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism. Serve DC is not liable for any action taken based on content of the guide. The guide includes websites where language, resources, and content are referenced from other sources and additional information can be found.

This guide is brought to you by Serve DC – The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism. Serve DC is the District of Columbia Government agency dedicated to promoting service as an innovative, sustainable solution to pressing social challenges. Serve DC engages District communities by building partnerships and organizational capacity, leading local and national volunteer and service initiatives, and providing and promoting meaningful service opportunities. Serve DC also serves as the DC Commission on National Community Service.

Welcome to AmeriCorps!

As a new AmeriCorps member, you have taken a pledge to serve a term of service to "get things done" in the District of Columbia. You are part of a larger, movement of National Service that engages thousands of members across the United States every year. In order to get a sense of the "bigger picture" of AmeriCorps beyond the program where you are serving, this section will provide an overview and brief history of National Service.

Corporation for National and Community Service

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is a federal agency that was established in 1993 and engages more than 5 million Americans in service each year through programs such as AmeriCorps and Senior Corps. CNCS manages the AmeriCorps program nationally. The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 reauthorized and expanded national service programs administered by CNCS by amending the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973.

As the nation's largest grant maker for service and volunteering, CNCS plays a critical role in strengthening America's nonprofit sector and addressing our nation's challenges through service. CNCS harnesses America's most powerful resource – the energy and talents of its citizens – to solve problems. CNCS believe that everyone can make a difference and that everyone should try. From grade school through retirement, CNCS empowers Americans and fosters a lifetime of service.

In addition to the CNCS headquarters office in downtown Washington, DC, there are CNCS State Offices that manage the AmeriCorps VISTA and the Senior Corps programs, which include RSVP, Senior Companion, and Foster Grandparent.

Resource: www.nationalservice.gov

Types of AmeriCorps Programs

AmeriCorps members serving across the country each year meet urgent, local community needs at the organizations where they are hosted. Information about the three types of AmeriCorps programs are listed below. It's important to know which type of AmeriCorps program you're affiliated with!

Resource: www.americorps.gov

AmeriCorps State & National Direct

AmeriCorps State and National Direct members perform direct service and are sponsored by national, state, and local public and nonprofit organizations. AmeriCorps State programs have members that only serve in one state and AmeriCorps National Direct programs have members serving in multiple states.

AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers In Service To America)

VISTA was founded in 1965 as a national service program designed specifically to fight poverty in America. In 1993, VISTA was incorporated into the AmeriCorps network of programs. AmeriCorps VISTA members serve full time with a focus on capacity-building to create programs that continue after they complete their service term.

AmeriCorps NCCC (National Civilian Community Corps)

AmeriCorps NCCC is a ten-month, full-time team-based residential service program for men and women ages 18-24. AmeriCorps NCCC campuses are located in Maryland, Colorado, Iowa, Mississippi and California. Members complete projects in different regions of the country.

National Service in Washington, DC

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) has a network of support at the state level through CNCS State Offices and State Service Commissions. In Washington, DC, the CNCS DC State Office manages AmeriCorps VISTA and Senior Corps programs. Serve DC – The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism is the District of Columbia State Service Commission and Serve DC funds AmeriCorps State programs in the District. There are thousands of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps members serving in Washington, DC. It's a great network to get connected with and there are several ways you can find other National Service members in the District.

Serve DC – The Mayor's Office on Volunteerism

Serve DC is the District of Columbia Government agency dedicated to promoting service as an innovative, sustainable solution to pressing social challenges. Serve DC engages District communities by building partnerships and organizational capacity, leading local and national volunteer and service initiatives, and providing and promoting meaningful service opportunities. Serve DC manages the AmeriCorps State program for Washington, DC. Serve DC offers resources and professional development opportunities for AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps program staff.

For additional information on Serve DC, please visit www.serve.dc.gov

AmeriCorps in DC

During 2013 AmeriCorps Week, Serve DC launched a website called "AmeriCorps in DC" to be a hub for information on how to get involved with AmeriCorps in Washington, DC. This is a great resource for AmeriCorps members to learn how to get more connected to National Service programs in the District.

For additional information on AmeriCorps in DC, please visit www.dcamericorps.org.

AmeriCorps Alums

AmeriCorps Alums is a national network combining the alumni of all AmeriCorps national service programs. This valuable network is committed to fostering and growing the vibrant community of AmeriCorps alumni who will continue to lead and serve our nation. Current AmeriCorps members can benefit from resources and professional development opportunities through local chapters of AmeriCorps alums.

For additional information on how to get involved with AmeriCorps Alums, please visit www.americorpsalums.org.

Serve DC Resources

In addition supporting National Service in the District, Serve DC also promotes a variety of volunteer service activities beyond AmeriCorps.

Emergency Preparedness

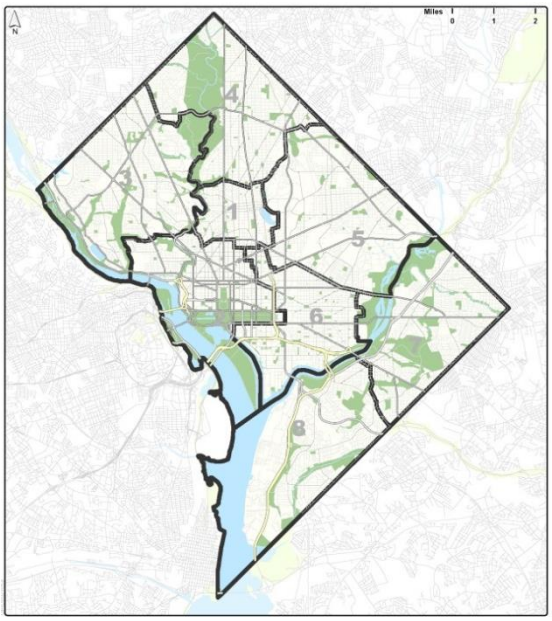
Serve DC recruits and trains District residents to respond and assist during emergencies – ensuring residents play a major role in making their communities safer, stronger and better prepared to address threats of terrorism, crime and disasters. As the District lead for emergency volunteer and donations management, Serve DC provides critical volunteer support to the city's official emergency response effort in the first 72 hours of a crisis.

Serve DC provides free emergency preparedness training and volunteer opportunities as part of Citizen Corps, a national initiative designed to foster a culture of citizenship, service and responsibility. Citizen Corps' mission is to harness the power of every individual through education, training, and volunteer service to make communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues, and disasters of all kinds. To register for Emergency Preparedness events and courses, please visit www.serve.dc.gov.

Communications and Special Initiatives

Serve DC promotes volunteerism and service across the city with strategic community outreach and engagement. Serve DC manages a portfolio of service days, connects residents with meaningful volunteer opportunities, and establishes partnerships and collaboration among community- and faith-based organizations, the private sector, and local and federal government. Serve DC has toolkits for volunteer service days on the agency website. You can stay connected to Serve DC through social media, the agency monthly e-newsletter and regular Volunteer Bulletin by registering at www.serve.dc.gov.

Welcome to the District of Columbia!



Washington, DC Ward Map (DC Office of Planning)

Cityscape of the District of Columbia

Washington, DC – formally the District of Columbia and commonly referred to as Washington, "the District", or simply DC – is the capital of the United States.

Washington, DC is home to more than 600,000 people and commuters from the surrounding Maryland and Virginia suburbs raise the city's population to more than 1 million during the work week. The District of Columbia has an abundance of historic sites, museums, parks, cultural centers, and restaurants. DC is an incredibly vibrant and energetic city with lots of activities to get involved with year-round!

Getting Around

For new residents, the District of Columbia can be somewhat confusing to navigate without key directional tips.

Here is some helpful information about the layout of the District:

- Washington, DC is divided into four quadrants: Northeast (NE), Northwest (NW), Southeast (SE), and Southwest (SW).
- East/west streets are named with letters of the alphabet proceeding away from the Capitol. There are no J, X, Y, or Z streets.
- Numbered streets run north/south proceeding away from the Capitol.
- Avenues run diagonally and most are named after states.
- Washington, DC is divided into eight wards.

For more information on your community or the DC wards, visit:

DC Government

The DC Government website, www.dc.gov, website links to information, District news, community, events, social media, and other resources related to the District of Columbia.

Resource: www.dc.gov

The DC Office of Planning (OP)

The Mission of the OP is to guide development of the District of Columbia, including the preservation and revitalization of our distinctive neighborhoods, by informing decisions, advancing strategic goals, encouraging the highest quality outcomes, and engaging all communities.

Resource: http://planning.dc.gov

District of Columbia Neighborhoods

A number of rich, diverse and historic neighborhoods can be found in Washington, DC. These neighborhoods are cultural assets and represent the unique backgrounds that DC's many residents come from and add to the overall charm of the city. Here are some resources to help you explore neighborhoods in Washington, DC:

Cultural Tourism DC

Cultural Tourism DC is a nonprofit that helps DC residents and visitors discover, experience and celebrate the city's art, culture and heritage. Cultural Tourism DC is an independent coalition of more than 250 culture, heritage, and community-based member organizations. Cultural Tourism DC and its members develop, deliver, and celebrate experiences that are authentic to Washington. Please see the Cultural Tourism DC website at: www.culturaltourismdc.org (see section on "Historic Neighborhoods"). Also check out information from Cultural Tourism DC on the "Heritage Trails" as a way to explore the history and information about DC neighborhoods.

Washington.org

The Washington.org website is "DC's official travel website" and offers information on attractions, things to do, and information on DC neighborhoods. Visit http://washington.org/dc-neighborhoods

Here is a snapshot of a few of the many District neighborhoods:

Adams Morgan

Adams Morgan is a hub of nightlife, good food, live music, and a cross-section of D.C.'s multi-ethnic heritage. This neighborhood gets going after hours, with late night eateries and clubs. One of the neighborhood's main streets, 18th Street, Northwest, is vibrant and lined with colorful row houses.

Anacostia

Just across the Anacostia River in Southeast , Anacostia is a historic neighborhood that was named after its Native American inhabitants and dates back to John Smith's arrival in the New World in 1607. Of particular interest are the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, the Woodlawn Cemetery, and the Anacostia Museum—a Smithsonian Museum showcasing African-American culture.

Atlas District/H Street, Northeast

A destination for nightlife, the growing Atlas District is home to the Atlas Performing Arts Center and a variety of restaurants, music venues, and bars.

Capitol Hill/Eastern Market/Barracks Row

Capitol Hill holds the Capitol building, the Supreme Court, and the Library of Congress. Eastern Market is a vibrant neighborhood located just to the southeast of the Capitol that is filled with restaurants, coffeehouses, and bars, perfect for weekend lunches. Eastern Market also hosts an open-air market on the weekends. Barracks Row on Eighth Street near the Eastern Market metro station has numerous shops and restaurants.

Columbia Heights

Columbia Heights is approximately one and a half miles long and a mile wide. At one time the nickname of Columbia Heights was the "City within a City." Perhaps now a better nickname would be "the World within a Neighborhood." This neighborhood has extensive shopping centers, theaters, and restaurants.

Chinatown

Chinatown is home to DC's Verizon Center, the Gateway Arch (7th and H Streets, Northwest), and has become a major shopping and dining district in recent years. Chinatown also hosts the Smithsonian Portrait Gallery.

Dupont Circle

Dupont Circle is home to diplomats and ambassadors from all parts of the world along Embassy Row. The R Street galleries and 18th Street mainstream clubs provide food, fun and entertainment. The Dupont Circle area has also long been a center for DC's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities.

Farragut

It's a wonderful (corporate) life in glass-walled Farragut, where government agencies, lobbying firms, and non-profit organizations make their offices spaces their homes. Tasty and inexpensive lunchtime eateries are a main feature.

Foggy Bottom

The State Department, Kennedy Center, and the infamous Watergate Complex make Foggy Bottom the stomping grounds of the political elite but, the area's superstar is the White House at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. All of this is on old marsh ground, which made the moniker "Foggy" appropriate even before the smog from local 19th-century factories rolled in.

Georgetown

Georgetown boasts tree-lined streets of brick row houses that are home to politicos, campus buildings of the world-class Georgetown University, and blocks of shopping and dining.

NoMa

NoMa is a moniker for North of Massachusetts Avenue and this neighborhood is one of the District's fastest growing. It is located next to Capitol Hill and north of Union Station and is home to Gallaudet University and Union Market.

Petworth

Petworth is emerging as a vital urban neighborhood delivering all the advantages of city living. It is easily accessible by the Metro for DC residents and even for commuters from Maryland. Another perk of this neighborhood is that it is walk-able and boasts lots of food establishments, restaurants, farmer's markets, and grocery stores.

Southwest/Waterfront

Southwest is home to the Washington Nationals' Baseball Stadium, the Arena Stage, boating area, and the city's fish markets.

U Street Corridor

Located in Northwest, U Street was renowned as the biggest cultural center for African Americans before Harlem. U Street is lined with shops, restaurants, night clubs, and music venues. In addition, it boasts many of DC's numerous Ethiopian restaurants. Not far from U Street is also the Howard Theatre.

Transportation

The Washington, DC metro area has a variety of easy-to-use, affordable public transportation options that can move you around the city or get you to a flight to a faraway location. In addition to the websites below, many of these systems have applications for use with Smartphones.

Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)

WMATA is an efficient way to get around D.C with the Metro Rail and Metro bus systems that provides stops in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Metro prices fluctuate depending on distance and time of the day you travel. It's best to get a SmarTrip® card and add value as you go because it costs more to use paper fare cards. This card is accepted on both the metro and bus. The Metro bus system also offers bus-to-bus transfers and a discounted bus-to-rail transfer. For more information on WMATA, visit www.wmata.com. There are also several smartphone applications such as "DC Next Bus" that can help you pinpoint when and where you can get a bus to your destination.

Circulator Bus

The DC Circulator is a bus system runs limited "express" routes in the metro DC area. The bus runs every 10 minutes and is compatible with the SmarTrip® card system. To learn more about the Circulator, visit http://www.dccirculator.com. There is also a "Next Circulator" smartphone application that shares when the next bus is leaving from a location near you.

Taxicabs

Taxicabs are plentiful and fares are based on a meter system. Keep in mind that there are additional fees for luggage and riding during certain weather conditions like snow. For the most up-to-date information about taxicabs in DC check out http://dctaxi.dc.gov.

Capital Bikeshare

Capital Bikeshare is a program that allows users to borrow bikes from over 200 stations across the DC Metro area. You can take a bike, use the extensive network of dedicated bike lanes, and return the bike to a station close to your destination. Once you are a member, you will get the first 30 minutes of each trip free and pay an additional fee for every 30 minute period afterwards. For more information, visit http://capitalbikeshare.com/.

Airports

In the Washington, DC metro area, there is access to three major airports: Regan National, Baltimore Washington International (BWI), and Dulles International. Regan National is accessible directly by Metro. BWI is accessible during the week using the MARC train (http://mta.maryland.gov/marc-train) or Amtrak train. Dulles airport is accessible through by the 5A WMATA bus, in addition to Washington Flyer which provides a variety of ground transportation options http://www.washfly.com. Ground transportation services such as Supershuttle are provided at all airports.

Trains & Buses

Union Station is DC's transportation hub and expected to triple in ridership by 2030. Rail travel has made it the second busiest in the Amtrak train system. It is one of the most used multimodal stations in the country. The station also connects with the Metrorail's Red Line and inter-city bus lines including affordable Bolt Bus, Mega Bus, and Greyhound bus services, which provide easy access to major East Coast cities and destinations outside of the DC metro area. Virginia also manages a rail system, the Virginia Railway Express or VRE, visit http://www.vre.org.

Housing

If you are relocating to the District of Columbia to serve in AmeriCorps, a major part of your transition will be finding affordable housing. This section shares tips and resources for searching and securing a great place to live in.

Some tips to consider for your search:

- Most AmeriCorps members find roommates in order to reduce the cost of living. Ask AmeriCorps program staff if there is a way to connect with other members looking for roommates.
- Scan local print and online classifieds and real estate sections of DC metro newspapers.
- Explore and walk around prospective neighborhoods and look for "For Rent" and "Open House" signs as not all openings are formally posted.
- Check vacancy notices on bulletin boards at neighborhood coffeehouses or grocery stores.
- Reconnect with friends, family, or contacts in the DC area to ask for advice on where to look and if they know of available options.
- Check with your college alumni office as many universities have offices in DC that can assist alumni.

Below are some suggested online resources for your housing search in the DC metro area:

- **Craigslist**: A city-based local classifieds and forums - community moderated, and largely free. www.washingtondc.craigslist.org
- **DC Housing Search**: A free listing service that provides easy access to information about housing opportunities within the District of Columbia. http://www.dchousingsearch.org
- **The Washington Post**: The Post has an extensive Real Estate section that includes rental options in DC metro area: www.washingtonpost.com
- **Apartment.com**: Apartments.com is a national online resource for individuals looking for an apartment. www.apartment.com
- **Washington City Paper**: The City Paper has a classified section that includes rental properties in the DC metro area. http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com
- **Zillow:** Zillow is an online real estate database where you can find homes and apartments for rent. http://www.zillow.com/
- **Padmapper**: Padmapper is a free online tool to help you find an apartment to sublet or rent. www.Padmapper.com
- **Free Booklets**: There are a number of apartment find guides at your local grocery store. These include Apartments For Rent (www.aptsforrent.com) and the Washington Post Apartment Showcase (www.apartmentshowcase.com).
- **College Dorms**: DC is home to several institutions of higher education and during the summer, student housing may be available.

Lease Agreement

After you find accommodations you want to rent, discuss the terms of the lease with the landlord or property management company. It is to your advantage to have a lease in writing as a written lease protects both you and your landlord by specifying the rights and obligations of each party. Read the lease carefully before signing! It is a legally binding document. If there are any terms or conditions that seem unreasonable or unclear, discuss them with the landlord.

Any changes or additions to the lease should be agreed to by both you and your landlord. They should appear in the lease before it is signed and should be initialed by both you and the landlord. For example, if a landlord has agreed to make repairs, a statement should be included in the lease.

The following information should be covered in the lease and/or discussed with the landlord:

- Names and addresses of landlord and tenant(s).
- The number of people that are able to live in the unit.
- Dates covered by the lease, when and if the lease can be renewed, and when/how the lease can be ended. (Questions: If the lease is terminated early, is there a penalty? Can you sublet?).
- Terms and conditions of rent payments. (Questions: What is the amount of the rent and when is it due? Is there any grace period if not paid on this date? Is there a penalty for late payment? When can the rent be increased?)
- Information about utilities. All utilities included in rent costs should be specified in the lease. (Questions: Do you pay utilities directly to the utility company or landlord? Where is the thermostat located and how is it controlled? Is the heat oil or electric? What are the average and expected utility costs?)
- Information about maintenance and repairs. (Questions: Who is responsible for maintenance and repairs? How will these costs be handled? Are you expected to pay any part? Is extermination part of maintenance? How often will it be done? Who will pay for it? Has there been flooding in the unit (especially basement units)? If so, how extensive was the damage?)
- Information about allowing pets and any extra charges. (Question: what types of pets are allowed?)
- If the accommodation is furnished, a list of the furniture and its condition should be included in the lease. (Question: Who is responsible for the furnishings in case of fire or theft?)
- Landlord access to the unit. (Questions: Who has the right of entry to the rental unit? May the owner enter for inspection or repairs?)
- Terms and conditions for a security deposit. (Questions: Is a security deposit required? If so, how much? When and under what conditions will it be returned?)
- Terms and conditions for shared living situations. (Questions: If renting a room within a house, what areas may you use and when? Are there any kitchen restrictions? What are the guest policies?)
- Condition of appliances. (Questions: Do all of the appliances work and when did the most recent repairs occur?)
- Security and systems in place. (Questions: What types of security systems are in place and are there adequate locks on the main doors and ground level windows?)

- Amenities, Storage and Parking. (Questions: Is there a washer and dryer? If not, is a laundry facility close to the unit? What type of storage space is provided and how is it secured? Does the unit have a parking space and is there an additional fee? How close is public transportation?)

Resources for Tenants in Washington, DC

It's important to understand your rights and the rules and regulations that apply to tenants in Washington, DC. Here are some resources to become familiar with DC specific guidelines.

- The DC Office of the Tenant Advocate (OTA) helps tenants understand the Rental Housing Act of 1985 (rent control) and the Rental Housing Conversion and Sale Act of 1980. This site also lists Rent Regulations for Washington, DC. For additional information and resources, please call (202) 719-6560 or visit: http://ota.dc.gov .
- The Washington Post has information on renting in Washington, DC from this link: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-adv/classifieds/rentals/dcfaq.htm.

Food & Dining

While the Washington, DC metro has an abundance of amazing restaurants, it's important to develop a budget for spending on eating in and eating out.

Eating In

Cooking your own food can help you save a tremendous amount of money, but it's also important to know where to go for groceries that match your budget. Here are some tips and suggestions for planning meals.

- Cook in larger batches to lower cost of an individual meal and plan out multiple meals.
- Take advantage of exceptional deals on expensive items by freezing food.
- For recipes that call for expensive ingredients, consider substituting cheaper alternatives (For a list of substitutions, see http://www.foodsubs.com.
- Make a list before going shopping and stick to it.
- Utilize the shopping and bonus cards offered by supermarkets, as well as print and online coupons.
- Purchase reusable grocery bags to help the environment and because there is a bag tax of 5 cents per bag in Washington, DC: http://ddoe.dc.gov/page/bag-law-faqs
- Potluck! When you are a member of AmeriCorps, having dinner potluck-style is going to be one of your best plans.

Farmer's Markets

The number of farmer's markets is growing in the DC metro area and it's a great way to get your fresh produce and support local business efforts. Additionally, some farmers markets accept SNAP/food stamp benefits.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

CSA is a unique sharing program where members pay a fee up front to receive a share of a farms harvests and produce. The fee they pay covers the costs of running a farm for the year. Websites like the Washington Post can help you find a CSA near your neighborhood that's easy for picking up your produce and fits your price range.

Tips and Recipes

Organizations such as Share Our Strength has programs like Cooking Matters that offers tips and recipes for cooking on a budget: http://cookingmatters.org/what-we-do/tips-and-recipes.

Eating Out

Living on an AmeriCorps budget provides limits on spending a lot of money on food, drinks and entertainment, but there are lots of great websites and resources for finding affordable options for eating out.

- **Food Trucks**: The number and variety of Food Trucks are growing in Washington, DC. If you find a food truck that you like, see if there's a way to follow it on social media to know if it will be in your neighborhood.
- **Happy Hours**: DC is known for its lively happy-hour scene. Information on locations and deals can be found using the Washington Post Entertainment section (the Post also features cheap eats and regular listings for those on a budget) or websites like www.dcist.com, www.urbanspoon.com, or www.yelp.com.

News, Entertainment & Things to Do

It's easy to stay current with what's happening in and around Washington, DC with the range of area print and online resources. You can easily find local blogs talking about specific neighborhoods to newspapers that cover information from around the world. Here is a sample list of resources to stay connected:

- **Afro American**: The Afro American is a leading online news and information provider specifically highlighting news pertaining to African Americans of the Baltimore and Washington metropolitan area. http://www.afro.com
- **Capital Community News**: Publisher of the Hill Rag, MidCity DC, East of the River, and the Fagon Guides that provide local neighborhood news. http://www.capitalcommunitynews.com
- **The Washington City Paper**: The City Paper is a weekly publication that focuses on Washington, DC. The City Paper also contains a comprehensive list of all the events happening in DC, including comedy tours, concerts, plays, movie showings, etc. The City Paper is available in print near public transportation stations and online at www.washingtoncitypaper.com.
- **DCist**: DCist is a blog operated by the Gothamist blog family. The blog covers all things happening in DC from news to entertainment. www.dcist.com
- **El Tiempo Latino** is a free newspaper serving the Latino community of Washington, DC. It covers culture, local news, sports, education and politics pertaining to the Latino community. http://eltiempolatino.com
- **Metro Weekly** is a news magazine and resource for LGBT entertainment, politics, nightlife and more. www.metroweekly.com
- **Prince of Petworth**: "PoPville" chronicles the happenings in Washington DC's neighborhoods. Topics covered include quality of life, real estate, restaurants, bars, retail, architecture, gardening, pets, transit, crime and other general observations. http://www.popville.com
- **Washington Blade**, founded in 1969, is an award-winning news source with a large following in print and online. Readers, locally and around the world, rely on the Blade for unmatched coverage of LGBT news. http://www.washingtonblade.com
- **Washington Hispanic** is a Spanish language newspaper in the Washington DC area covering Latino community matters. http://www.washingtonhispanic.com

Museums

Washington, DC is overflowing with museums and many of which are free and within walking distance to public transportation. Below is a list of some of some great options:

- The **Smithsonian Institution** is the world's largest museum and research complex including 19 museums and galleries plus the National Zoological Park. Most Smithsonian museums are free and open every day of the year! Information can be found here: http://www.si.edu/Museums.
- The **National Zoo** is a 163-acre zoological park set amid Rock Creek Park in the heart of Washington, D.C. With free admission and open to the public 364 days a year, the zoo is home to 2,000 individual animals of nearly 400 different species. See more at http://nationalzoo.si.edu.

- The **Corcoran Gallery of Art** offers an extensive collection of American and European masterworks and ongoing exhibitions of contemporary art. Please see http://www.corcoran.org/
- The **Philips Collection** is an exceptional collection of modern and contemporary art in a dynamic environment for collaboration, innovation, engagement with the world, scholarship, and new forms of public participation. Please see: http://www.phillipscollection.org/index.aspx.
- The **Library of Congress** is the nation's oldest federal cultural institution and it serves as the research arm of Congress. It is also open to visitors offering many free events and activities. Please see: www.loc.gov.
- The **Fredrick Douglass National Historic Site** is the famed abolitionist's home. http://www.nps.gov/frdo/index.htm.

Activities

As a diverse and cosmopolitan city, the District of Columbia offers a countless range of activities that appeal to all interests. It's easy to do a quick online search for "things to do in DC" to get a listing that ranges from festivals on the National Mall, free outdoor movies in the summer, live music, flea markets, film festivals, and first Friday art shows.

Here are a few sources for things to do in DC:

- **Discounted Event & More**: Half-price theatre tickets can be found through Cultural Alliance at www.cultural-alliance.org. Be sure to also check out Goldstar DC at www.goldstar.com/washington-dc/events, LivingSocial at www.livingsocial.com, and Groupon at www.groupon.com for discounted prices on a number of activities in the Washington, DC metro area.
- **Embassies**: DC is home to more than 160 embassies and consulates and more than 50 of them are scattered along Embassy Row near Dupont Circle. A lot of these embassies also put on regular programs and events that could be lots of fun to attend. http://washington.org/article/international-embassies-dc
- **National Mall**: During the summer, you can watch a "Screen on the Green" movie, listen to jazz on Fridays in the Sculpture Garden, or wander around the Smithsonian Folklife Festival.
- **Kennedy Center**: Check out a free show every day of the year at 6pm at the Millennium Stage. It's a beautiful venue and a great way to see a show at no cost. www.kennedy-center.org.
- **DC Jazz Festival**: With more than 125 performances in dozens of venues across the city, the DC Jazz Festival is the largest music festival in Washington, DC and one of the most highly anticipated cultural events in the nation. www.dcjazzfest.org
- **Social Connections**: There are a variety of ways to meet new people including sports leagues, political groups, social events, etc. This website has specific groups you can look through to find similar interests http://www.meetup.com.

Sports & Staying Active

There are numerous ways to stay active in the DC Metro area if that means joining a sports league, running in a marathon, swimming at one of many DC public pools, hiking on a trail, taking a yoga class, or kayaking on the Potomac. Here are a few resources to help you plan an active routine. Please also remember that there are a lot of informal networks like Meet Up where you can connect with others with your interests.

Biking

The Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) is the national capital region's nonprofit bicycle advocacy and education membership association. We have been serving the District of Columbia (DC), City of Alexandria, and the counties of Arlington (VA), Fairfax (VA), Montgomery (MD), and Prince George's (MD) since 1972 with the mission of creating a healthy, more livable region by promoting bicycling for fun, fitness, and affordable transportation. Please see www.waba.org.

Running

Grab your running shoes and prepare for a fun, short jog or train for a marathon

The DC Capital Striders Running Group has a purpose to allow runners of all endurance levels, paces, distances and months or years of running experience to run together in a non-competitive atmosphere and to get to know each other through a variety of social activities. For more information see www.dccapitalstriders.com.
DC Road Runners: Runners of all ages and speeds are invited to join the Washington, DC area's premier running organization, the DC Road Runners. DC Road Runners provides a year-round schedule of running events that offers everyone a chance to participate regardless of age, gender, or athletic ability.

Washington Running Club: Runners of all ages and abilities are invited to join WRC! You are entirely welcome to check us out first to see if we are a good fit for you before becoming a member. If you enjoy running with us and want to make WRC a part of your running life, please join as an official member. Please see www.washrun.org.

Team Sports

If you're looking for a team sport, there are several meet ups for soccer, softball, kickball (http://www.kickball.com/dcareakickball), bocce ball, or ultimate frisbee (www.wafc.org).

Pools

The District of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation operates several indoor and outdoor swimming pools that offer free swimming to residents. http://app.dpr.dc.gov/. Several of the pools also offer swimming classes for a fee.

Gyms and Studios

The DC Metro area has a variety of options for gym memberships and studios that specialize in yoga or capoeira. Be sure to check in on discounted memberships and opportunities to volunteer in exchange for discounts!

Hiking

There are lots of opportunities to find groups and clubs to join that can get you on the local trails of Rock Creek Park in the heart of Washington, DC (http://www.nps.gov/rocr/index.htm), or to the Billy Goat Trail in Great Falls National Park (http://www.nps.gov/grfa/index.htm), or to Shenandoah National Park (http://www.nps.gov/shen/index.htm). Many local hiking groups may charge a small feel for transportation and a planned day trip or multi-day backpacking.

Lectures & Discussions

Many organizations regularly offer forums and panel discussions on a variety of topics, such as foreign policy, economic policy, and civil rights issues. The list below represents only a couple of organizations that offer these types of professional development opportunities.

- Brookings Institute: http://www.brookings.edu
- American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy: http://www.aei.org/home
- Cato Institute: http://www.cato.org
- Center for American Progress: http://www.americanprogress.org
- The Urban Institute: http://www.urban.org/index.cfm
- The Foundation Center: http://foundationcenter.org
- Center for Nonprofit Advancement: http://www.nonprofitadvancement.org/
- The Washington Diplomat is an independent monthly newspaper catering to the international and diplomatic community of Washington DC. It features various events, lectures, reviews on museum exhibits, art, theatre, and a wide range of other cultural offerings. http://www.washdiplomat.com/
- DC Public Libraries: Accessible across neighborhoods, DC Public Libraries offer endless book options, access to the internet, community meetings, lectures, and classes. Visit: http://www.dclibrary.org/.

Finances

As an AmeriCorps member, you will need to be creative with spending on a modest living allowance. Thinking outside the box will be important to living stress free on a budget.

Money Saving Ideas

- Re-evaluate and track your spending habits
- Shop at thrift stores and sell clothing you no longer need to consignment shops
- Attend auctions, flea markets, yard sales, or estate sales
- Buy food in bulk and share expenses
- DIY (do it yourself) for household repair
- Use public transportation or look into riding a bike
- Use a public library instead of purchasing new books or buy used books
- Join a YMCA to take advantage of low-cost programs and classes
- Volunteer at events (such as ushering at plays) for free admission
- Barter for goods and services
- Cook more meals at home and pack your lunches
- Clip coupons from newspapers and magazines
- Reuse and recycle as much as possible
- Get a rewards card at grocery stores, points add up!
- Join a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and take advantage of the shared produce!

Taxes

When doing your taxes, keep in mind that the AmeriCorps living allowance and Education Award are considered taxable income. All tax information can be found in your MyAmeriCorps Portal Account. If you need help preparing your taxes, there are low-cost and free options available through the support of volunteers, if you qualify. The IRS website has information on volunteer programs at http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Free-Tax-Return-Preparation-for-You-by-Volunteers.

Below are some basic information related to taxes for AmeriCorps members:

- **W-2 Form**: Your W-2 will include the taxable portions of your living allowance and not any payments from your Education Award (which you will receive after you successfully complete your service year).
- **Form 1099**: AmeriCorps members are required to pay taxes on any portion of the Education Award or interest payment made on their behalf. The 1099 is the IRS form that reports to you the total of these payments. The 1099 includes all payments that were sent to the school or lending institution before the end of the calendar year.
- **Earned Income Tax Credit FAQs**: http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/

Budget Tools

Building a budget can be an effective way for you to manage your finances and alleviate some of the stress of living on an AmeriCorps stipend. You can use a basic template in Excel to break out categories of major spending or find an online budget tool to help you organize and track your spending.

- **360 Degrees of Financial Literacy** is a free program of the nation's certified public accountants to help Americans understand their personal finances through every stage of life. http://www.360financialliteracy.org
- **Mint.com** is the free online software that offers a budget tool and allows you to establish savings goals, automatically analyzes your spending habits and can offer suggestion on how to cut back. http://www.mint.com.
- **MyMoney.gov** is the US government's website dedicated to teaching all Americans about financial education. www.mymoney.gov
- **PearBudget** is a really simple budgeting and expense tracking service. This is good for those especially new to budgeting. https://pearbudget.com/
- **Pennysaver** is another free online classified network that connects buyers to sellers with quality neighborhood discounts specific to your city. www.pennysaverusa.com

Government Benefits & Assistance Programs

As an AmeriCorps member, it is critical that you are aware of how AmeriCorps service and the living allowance may impact eligibility and access to government benefit and assistance programs. As a resource, www.benefits.gov is a website that provides easy, online access to government benefit and assistance programs.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Plan (SNAP)/Food Stamps

An AmeriCorps member with less than $2,000 in assets (checking and savings accounts) may qualify for SNAP assistance. The U.S. Department of Agriculture funds the SNAP program, but each state administers the program, so you need to check with your individual state. Programs in DC, Maryland, and Virginia have slightly processes, and members should contact the appropriate state office to learn more about eligibility and the application process.

Resource: http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap.

Tip: Apply for SNAP early in your service year! At the end of every service year, numerous surveys from AmeriCorps members emphasize how they wished they had taken advantage of the SNAP benefits.

For more information on the SNAP program:

- DC Department of Human Services: www.dhs.dc.gov
- Maryland Department of Human Resources: http://www.dhr.state.md.us
- Virginia Department of Social Services: http://www.dss.virginia.gov

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) is a program that may be affected by the living allowance. Please contact your case manager to report your status as an AmeriCorps member and request additional information. Resource: http://www.hhs.gov/recovery/programs/tanf.

Income Based Repayment

Qualified federal student loan holders can apply for Income Based Repayment (IBR) to help manage loan payments that are based on income of the program participant. To find out more about IBR, please visit www.ibrinfo.org.

Resources for Persons with Disabilities

Supplemental Security Income (SSI)/ Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI). The HEART (Hero Earnings Assistance and Relief Tax) Act of 2008 specifies that any cash or in-kind benefit paid to a participant in the AmeriCorps program is excluded from the SSI income calculation, which means that SSI recipients can freely serve as AmeriCorps members without the fear of losing their SSI. Program managers can take the following steps to increase participation, alleviate concerns, and ensure retention of individuals with disabilities in service programs:

- Inform all applicants and participants that guidance is available regarding the relationship between participation and eligibility for government benefits.
- Encourage participants to notify the government benefits agency (e.g., Social Security Administration) that they will be participating in service to identify any potential problems as well as ways to address those problems.
- Emphasize the availability of work incentives and other policies that might lessen any adverse impact on SSI or SSDI benefits.
- Develop working relationships with local Social Security offices and with local organizations to raise awareness about ways to ensure that national service participation will not result in a loss or reduction in disability benefits.

Resource: National Service Inclusion Project website at www.serviceandinclusion.org/

Serve DC Resources for Disability Inclusion

Serve DC strives to ensure the full, proactive inclusion of individuals with disabilities in service and actively encourages individuals with disabilities to participate in National Service programs. For information on Serve DC's Disability Inclusion Policies and Procedures, please see: www.serve.dc.gov.

Transportation

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), which operates the Metrobus and Metrorail service, is fully accessible. For information on WMATA accessibility, visit www.wmata.com.

Housing

Washington, DC has various resources for persons with disabilities to find affordable, accessible housing, including:

- DC Center for Independent Living www.dccil.org
- Endependence Center of Northern Virginia: www.ecnv.org

Other Resources

University Legal Services (ULS) provides assistive technology services to persons with disabilities, as well as advocates on behalf of people with disabilities to ensure their access to public and subsidized housing, public accommodations, and DC government services. ULS also publishes a guide on services for persons with disabilities. Visit www.uls-dc.org.

Serve DC

THE MAYOR'S OFFICE ON VOLUNTEERISM

WWW.SERVE.DC.GOV

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