

White House VISITOR CENTER

1450 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Garden Tour Showcases History



In the Fall, visitors receive a special opportunity to visit the grounds surrounding the White House. Over the years, the eighteen acres that comprise the White House grounds have been subject to constant change.

Thomas Jefferson is credited as the first president to have a landscaping plan for the White House. He started the tradition of planting trees when he

planted hundreds of seedlings, although none of Jefferson's trees is believed to have survived to the present day. Jefferson also supervised the construction of the east and west knolls of the White House lawn, known as the Jefferson Mounds. President John Quincy Adams was an avid gardener and enjoyed planting seedlings that included herbs and vegetables.

In 1851 during President Millard Fillmore's term, architect Andrew Jackson Downing was hired to create a landscaping plan for the grounds, adding a circular drive on the south lawn as well as a circular park located south of the White House.

Today visitors can view the Rose Garden located outside the West Wing, and the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden outside the East Wing. In 1969, Lady Bird Johnson created the first Children's Garden at the White House. President Nixon's daughter, Tricia, was married in the Rose Garden. The South Lawn can accommodate over 1,000 guests for special ceremonies and speeches.

The care of the lawn was turned over to the National Park Service during the Kennedy administration.

White House Garden Tours are offered on Saturday, October 23rd from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Sunday, October 24th from Noon until 4:00 p.m. Tickets can be obtained each day at the Ellipse Visitors Pavilion beginning at 7:30 a.m.

Celebrate a Holiday Tradition on the Ellipse

The Christmas Pageant of Peace is a Washington tradition during the holiday season. The pageant begins in early December with the lighting of the National Christmas Tree on the Ellipse. The Opening Ceremony will take place on Thursday, December 2, at 5 p.m. The traditional hour-long program includes holiday music by a United States military band and celebrities, choral group performances, a cheery welcome by Santa, and a holiday message from the President of the United States

Following this event, musical groups will perform nightly on the outdoor Pageant stage through the end of the year. Visitors may also stroll among the 56 smaller trees, representing the fifty states, the five territories and the District of Columbia.

In November 1923, First Lady Grace Coolidge gave permission for the District of Columbia Public Schools to erect a Christmas tree on the Ellipse, a park area south of the White House grounds. The organizers named the tree the "National Christmas Tree."

Many changes have occurred throughout the last eighty years. Today's National Christmas tree was transplanted from York, Pennsylvania in 1978. The living Colorado Blue Spruce is a permanent, growing tree on the Ellipse.

This event will require tickets. Further details can be obtained at the White House Visitor Center Information Desk.

The Pageant site will be open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. through Saturday, January 1, 2005. For additional information, call 202-208-1631, TTY 202-219-5246, or visit us on the internet at <http://nps.gov/wbho>.



Sunday Serenades at the White House Visitor Center

Beginning this Fall, the Visitor Center will host musical performances one Sunday a month at 1 p.m. These hour-long programs will feature a wide variety of musical programs, performed by the finest musicians in the United States Armed Forces. For more information, please inquire at the Information Desk for a complete schedule.




Join Us for Family Day – October 24

Special activities and events are planned for Sunday, October 24, at the White House Visitor Center. Children can partake of these Family Day programs to catch a glimpse of life in the White House. For additional information, call the Center at 202-208-1631.





OCTOBER

DAILY, OCTOBER 1, 2


 "Campaigns, Campaigns, and More Campaigns" – Historically, every four years, presidential candidates have spent months traveling across the country seeking the votes of their fellow citizens. Join a Park Ranger and learn about historic presidential campaigns. *Program begins at 12 noon.*

DAILY, OCTOBER 5, 6, 8, 9


  "Explore President's Park" – Take a walking tour with a Park Ranger and discover the many monuments and memorials in President's Park. *Program begins at 12 noon.*




THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7

 Living History Program – Join us as we welcome George Washington, our first president and James Hoban, the Irish architect of the White House. *Free presentations at 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.*



DAILY, OCTOBER 12 – 16

 "Mr. Lincoln's Washington" – Join a Park Ranger's discussion of Washington, D.C. during the Civil War (1861-1865). *Program begins at 12 noon.*


DAILY, OCTOBER 18 – 22

 "Harry S Truman" – Join a Park Ranger and learn about a little known, but gutsy vice president from Missouri who became president during World War II. *Program begins at 12 noon.*

DAILY, OCTOBER 23 – 24

  Fall Garden Tours – View the White House grounds and plantings. Everyone MUST have a ticket (available at the Ellipse Visitor Pavilion) *Saturday from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Sunday from 12 noon – 4 p.m.*

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24

 Family Day – Special activities for all children with an emphasis on the White House. *Activities begin at 12 noon.*


DAILY, OCTOBER 25 – 30

 "Mary Todd Lincoln" – Join a Park Ranger and discuss the most maligned and misunderstood first lady of the 19th century. *Program begins at 12 noon.*




NOVEMBER


DAILY, NOVEMBER 1, 2, 3, 5

 "Presidential R and R" – Join a Park Ranger's discussion on the "down time" Presidents need for "rest and relaxation" to relieve the demands of the office. *Program begins at 12 noon.*



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6

 "Air Force One" – A 50-minute video documents the history of Presidential flight. *Screening at 1 p.m.*


THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4

 Living History Program – Enjoy a special hour-long program featuring "Thomas Jefferson". Our third president will discuss his political career in the 18th century. *Free presentations at 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.*


DAILY, NOVEMBER 8 – 11

  "A Stroll Around the Park" – Join a Park Ranger on a walking tour and view the many historic sites within President's Park. *Program begins at 12 noon.*


THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 11

 Crafts Program – "What Veterans Day Means To Us" – Activities for children. *Programs from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.*

DAILY, NOVEMBER 16 – 20

 "Yes, We Have No Picassos" – Join a Park Ranger and view a slide presentation of art works in the White House. *Program begins at 12 noon.*

DAILY, NOVEMBER 23, 24, 26, 27


 "Visiting Baldrige Hall" – As the White House Visitor Center celebrates its first decade, join a Ranger's review of this historic hall. *Program begins at 12 noon.*



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Thanksgiving Day – The White House Visitor Center will be closed.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30

 "Washington's Washington" – Discover how a dismal swampy lowland developed into the beautiful parkland that today includes the White House. *Program begins at 12 noon.*



Interpretive Program



Walking Tour




Video Presentation




Special Event


DECEMBER


DAILY, DECEMBER 1, 3, 4

 "Washington's Washington" – Discover how a dismal swampy lowland developed into the beautiful parkland that today includes the White House. *Program begins at 12 noon.*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 2


 Living History Program – "Martha Washington" will discuss her role as our first First Lady when our nation's capital was moved from New York City to Philadelphia. *Free presentations at 9:30 a.m., 11 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.*

 National Christmas Tree Lighting – The lighting of the National Christmas Tree on the Ellipse heralds the start of the Pageant of Peace. Tickets required. See story on opposite page for more information. *Program begins at 5 p.m.*


 Pageant of Peace – A holiday celebration on the Ellipse that is not to be missed! *Open daily from 11 a.m. until 11 p.m.*





SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4

 "Air Force One" A 50-minute video documents the history of Presidential flight. *Screening at 1 p.m. Repeated on December 18.*


MONDAY, DECEMBER 6

 "Our National Christmas Tree – Beacon of Hope" – This program explores the eighty year history of a holiday tree. *Program begins at 12 noon. Repeated on December 13, 20, 27*


DAILY, DECEMBER 7 – 10

  "A Stroll Around the Park" – Join a Park Ranger on a walking tour and view the many historic sites within President's Park. *Program begins at 12 noon.*


DAILY, DECEMBER 14 – 18

 "Before Constitution Avenue" – Join a Park Ranger's discussion on the canal and "traffic" on Constitution Avenue through the last 200 years. *Program begins at 12 noon.*

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15

 "Presidential Inaugurations" – Every four years since 1801, a Presidential Inauguration has been held in Washington, D.C. Learn about the history of these solemn moments. *Exhibition on display in Baldrige Hall.*


DAILY, DECEMBER 20 – 23

 "The Ultimate Pomp and Circumstance" – Join a Park Ranger's discussion on the history of Inauguration Day. *Program begins at 12 noon*

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25

Christmas Day – The White House Visitor Center will be closed.

DAILY, DECEMBER 28 – 31

 "I Do Solemnly Swear..." – Join a Park Ranger for an informative slide show about past Presidential Inaugurations. *Program begins at 12 noon*



Programs may change due to reassignment of rangers to other duties that serve the National Park Service. Every effort is made to maintain the schedule as printed. Please contact the Visitor Center at (202) 208-1631 to confirm programs and dates. The Center is open daily from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, e-mail us at wbbo_presidents_park@nps.gov.

This calendar is sponsored by the National Park Service and the White House Historical Association.

EXPERIENCE
Your AMERICA