

THERE ARE PLACES I REMEMBER

In issue 72 we kicked off a new series exploring Beatles locations around the globe and we hope our readers will actively participate by contributing articles about their hometowns or locations they have visited. In part 2 of this series, we will explore The Beatles in Washington DC.

It isn't only Liverpool and London that have Beatles connected sites to visit. Fans visiting Washington DC can fill a day (or two) following in the footsteps of the Beatles and solo Beatles. You can even stay in the same hotel room where the Fab Four stayed in 1964.



Union Station

When the Beatles arrived in Washington DC the first time on 11 February 1964, they travelled by train from New York and arrived in a snowstorm. The train journey ended at Union Station located very near the venue in which they would perform later in the day. They were greeted by 2000 fans who crowded the station trying to get a glimpse of a Beatle. Union Station is more than just a station. In the 1980s it was restored and today it not only houses the Amtrak train platforms, but also sports high end shops and restaurants on the upper levels, and a buzzing food hall in the lower level.



The Coliseum

The Beatles first ever concert in Washington DC was at the Coliseum (formerly known as the Uline Center) on M Street in NE. 8,092 screaming fans attended. This venue was a difficult one for the band, especially Ringo, as it was a theatre with a round stage in the centre of the arena. In order to enable all the screaming fans to see their faces, they had to continually rotate the stage to face different directions. For poor Ringo this



meant repositioning his drum kit repeatedly. Although the building still exists, for years it was derelict. In recent years however, it has been transformed into a flagship location of the REI sporting shop. The renovation was done with an eye to preserving the building's history and fans who visit will be thrilled to see original posters on the walls and some of the original seating displayed as artwork in the back of the shop.



The National Postal Museum

Conveniently located next door to Union Station is The National Postal Museum. This free museum that is part of the Smithsonian Institution and is interesting and fun even without its Beatles connection.

On the lower level, right next to the escalator that carries you down, is a glass case containing John Lennon's stamp collection. Although the museum has had this book in its collection for a while, in 2018 it went on temporary display. The exhibit was extended recently and at the time this was written, is still on display. In addition to the actual album, it contains information about how John was given the collection.



The Mall

Washington DC unlike many cities has most of its tourist sites centrally located surrounding a long grassy rectangle called The Mall. This stretches from the Capitol Building on one end all the way past the Washington Monument and reflecting pool ending at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial. Pathways bookend each side of the mall. Fans who walk along the left-hand side of The Mall from The Capitol (near Union Station) will walk along the very path that the Beatles were photographed on as shown here.



Yoko's wishing tree

Continue further along this path until you reach the modern circular Hirschhorn Museum and step into the sculpture garden between the museum and The Mall. Turn right almost immediately once entering and you will find Yoko Ono's Wishing Tree. Not exactly Beatles but related nonetheless, this tree was planted in 2007.



The White House

Crossing to the opposite side of The Mall while continuing to aim towards the Washington Monument, soon you will see across Constitution Avenue (directly to the right of the Washington Monument) The White House on the other side of the open space called The Ellipse.

In 1974, George Harrison was received by Gerald Ford, President of the United States, at the White House. With George was his father Harry Harrison, wife Olivia, Ravi Shankar, Billy Preston and Tom Scott. It was the first time any Rock and

Roll personality was ever received at the White House. George had been invited by the president's son Jack. While at university in Utah, Jack had attended George's Salt Lake City concert and been invited backstage. He returned the favor by inviting George and his friends to visit the White House. Dark Horse was played while they ate lunch and during the 20-minute meeting with the President in the Oval office, George gave the President an 'OM' button and the President gave George a 'WIN' button. At the time, George was the first and only Beatle to meet a US President. However, more recently in 2010, Paul McCartney not only met President Obama in the White House, he sang 'Michelle' to the First Lady, Michelle Obama. Paul was at the White House to receive the Library of Congress Gershwin Prize for Popular Song.

RFK Stadium

To get to RFK Stadium you will have to get on the Metro (underground train). Take the Blue or Orange line to Stadium-Armory. You will also need to be quick as it has been slated to be demolished within the next two years. At the time of writing, bids are being accepted for the demolition. In August 1966, on The Beatles final tour, their 4th stop was at



DC Stadium (renamed RFK Stadium in 1969). This time they performed in front of 32,164 lucky fans. The event was marred by a protest by 5 hooded Ku Klux Klan members in front of the venue protesting at John's 'more popular than Jesus' quote that had been taken out of context from an interview with London Evening Standard journalist Maureen Cleave on 3 April 1966. Immediately after the concert, The Beatles boarded a bus and headed to Philadelphia.



The Omni Shoreham Hotel

Take another Metro ride across town to the north-east to the Woodley Park-Zoo/ Adams Morgen stop on the Red Line, you will find The Omni Shoreham Hotel.

When the Beatles first performed in DC in 1964, they stayed here. While preparing for the show, John Lennon used hotel stationery to write down the planned set list. A copy of this set list is on display in the hotel lobby today.

Word got out quickly and the hotel was inundated with teenagers desperate to see or touch a Beatle.

The current director of sales for the hotel was the general manager back in 1964, and in an interview celebrating the 50th anniversary of the stay, she remembered how The Beatles had requested a hair dryer which was very unusual for men at the time. They struggled to find one and finally borrowed one from a member of the kitchen staff. I wonder if they kept that hair dryer? Planning to stay at the Omni Shoreham? You might just want to try booking room 625 (now called a Presidential suite) because that is the very room The Beatles stayed in.

The British Embassy

When their 12-song gig was over in at the Coliseum in February 1964, the Beatles wanted some nightlife. President Johnson was hosting a ball at the White House but had not invited the Beatles. Instead they reluctantly attended a charity ball at The British Embassy. Far from the type of fun night they preferred and had experienced days earlier at the Peppermint Lounge in New York, this was not an event they were keen to attend. As George Harrison later recounted to biographer Hunter Davies, they felt the people at these events were hypocrites who snobbishly looked down on their music and style but wanted to use their popularity for publicity. You can find the British Embassy a 5-minute taxi ride away from the Omni Shoreham Hotel on Massachusetts Avenue.

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