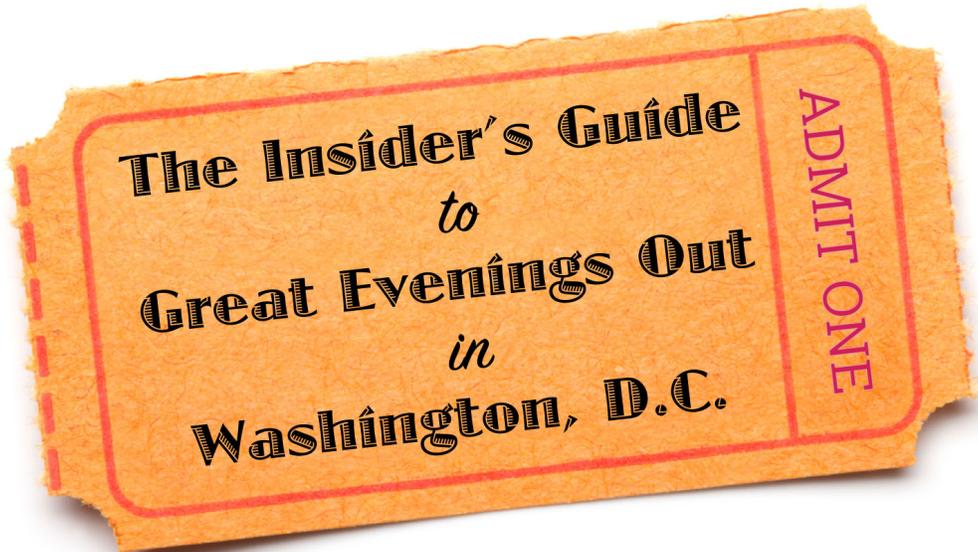


# Just the Ticket



by Pete Miller & Sara Cormeny

October-December 2016



**Just the Ticket**  
**An Insider's Guide to Great Evenings Out in Washington, DC**

October-December 2016 Edition

By Pete Miller and Sara Cormeny

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## Introduction

### Welcome to Our Nation's Capital and to a Great Evening Out!

As you're planning to spend time in Washington, DC, you already know to expect great museums with free admission; stirring monuments; and marble clad public buildings. These attractions can keep you happily occupied all day. However, you may not be aware that DC is also one of the best areas in the country for live theatre – most of it local to boot – or that this famously work-obsessed city has developed a wonderful restaurant and bar scene in recent years. These restaurants, theaters, and bars can keep the fun rolling from closing time at the Smithsonian till late at night. *Just the Ticket* is your key to unlock enjoyable evenings out in and around DC.

The core of this e-book is a collection of twelve great evenings out, curated by us, your enthusiastic local Insiders. Each evening out starts with dinner; there's a fine dining option and a more budget conscious option available in each one. It then continues with the main entertainment, which is a show at one of the area's dozens of producing theatre companies. The evening out culminates with a bar recommendation where you can chat with your companions about your day and your Great Evening Out.

The evenings out are presented in the order of the first performance of the included show. Each one clearly lists the time period and nights of the week for which it is available. We hope this makes it easy for you to find those evenings out that you could choose during your visit to DC.

We don't have show reviews here, though you can check our website for more impressions once the shows have actually opened. The shows in question haven't started performing at the time we write, so anything we say about the quality of a show in this guide is our Insider guess based on what we know about the people putting it on.

The specific evenings out are supported by chapters that guide you through:

- getting oriented and getting around while in DC (See [Getting Around DC](#))
- Buying theatre tickets at the best prices (See [Cheap Seats](#))
- Feeling comfortable going to plays in case that's something you don't usually do (See [Playgoing Glossary](#))

*Just the Ticket* is primarily aimed at people who are visiting DC, but we can imagine that if you live in or around DC, but need a bit of a night-life reboot, these evenings will be just the push you need to do something a little boozy, a little artsy, and completely delicious.

Whoever you are and however you came to be reading this, we hope you'll try one of our evenings out, that you'll have a great time, and that you'll let us know how it went – send us email at [peteandsara@greateveningsout.com](mailto:peteandsara@greateveningsout.com) or comment on our web page, [greateveningsout.com](http://greateveningsout.com). We're pleased that we are now offering you our second edition, and plan to keep publishing this guide quarterly into the foreseeable future, so anything you can tell us that would help improve the guide will be much appreciated.

Okay! Now that you know what we're up to, let's get started.

## The Evenings

### Great Evening 1: Romance and Revelry in Gallery Place

*Romeo and Juliet* is onstage Tuesdays to Saturdays, Sep 13 – Nov 6. Top ticket price \$121.

In fair Gallery Place do we set our scene with so many reasons to visit you can slide into this evening seamlessly after a day of touring in the vicinity. We've selected a classic play of young love, set loosely in Italy, and found some excellent old-world haunts in one of our fave revitalized DC neighborhoods, perfect for a date night.

Savor Italian food in surroundings fancy or familial. As you walk the few blocks to the theater, sharing the sidewalk with all of Washington life, look for signs of young, smitten love. Then take your seats at the theater and turn your thoughts to forbidden romance, passionate fights, and narrowly missed opportunities to save our doomed hero & heroine. Carouse afterwards with elegant cocktails and enjoy the fact that no stars have crossed you this evening. (Metro: Gallery Place/Chinatown or Archives/Navv Memorial)

Indulge in a luxurious meal at **Fiola**, where the food is as lovely to see as to taste and the service makes you feel like a visiting dignitary. The menu fits on a single page – only the dishes the chefs have the best ingredients and inspiration for on the day you arrive. The cuisine draws on the most flavorful all regions of Italy have to offer. We particularly recommend anything that includes seafood and pasta. Most meals are priced by number of courses and always include dessert. The wine selection is exceptional and the bar also turns out delicious, fanciful cocktails and even a few custom-made soft drinks. Whatever you choose, you'll leave happy and impressed. (601 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20004 202-628-2888 [fioladc.com](http://fioladc.com))

For a much less spendy but still tasty Italian meal, try **Carmine's**, a comfortable and friendly place just across the street from your show. All the food here is served family style. One pasta dish with a side vegetable would be a satisfying meal for two and may leave you with some to carry away. We particularly recommend linguini with ragu for meat eaters or garlic and oil for vegetarians. On the off chance that you're doing this evening with a larger group, we suggest a rule of two dishes for every three people. Their house red and white wines serve as fine complements to the meal. There are also always a few good draft beers on offer and the bar can create basic cocktails. (425 7th St NW, Washington, DC 202-737-7770 [carminesnyc.com/locations/washington-dc](http://carminesnyc.com/locations/washington-dc))

*Romeo and Juliet* - a play about young lovers you probably first read when you were a young lover – could there be a better date-play? A little bird (actually a little playwright we sat next to at dinner recently) tells us the visual design of this production will be stunning. The cast of 25 actors will create dramatic crowd scenes, a spectacle that will thrill in this show. In great productions of this play, which this one promises to be, you almost believe that tonight the kids are going to live happily-ever-after, making the end a surprise even when it's exactly what you expect. (**Shakespeare Theatre Company** at the Lansburgh 450 7th St NW, Washington, DC 202-547-1122 [shakespearetheatre.org/events/romeo-and-juliet-16-17](http://shakespearetheatre.org/events/romeo-and-juliet-16-17))

Toast the fallen and the promise for a peaceful future at **Oyamel**. There's a late night menu of flavor packed bites in case you ate lightly at dinner. Tequila and mescal rule the bar with plenty of other variety to suit your tastes. How did seeing the performance tonight make you feel differently about this play than you did back in high school? (401 7th St NW, Washington, DC)

Insider Tip for true immersion: Earlier in the day, visit renaissance Europe at the National Gallery of Art in rooms 15-19 where you will see tapestries and sculptures that could have graced a classy home in Verona. It's one of our favorite corners of this fantastic museum.

## Great Evening 2: Beery bard in a burgeoning borough, Petworth

*Love's LaBeers Lost* is onstage Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, Sept 28 – Oct 22. Top ticket price \$20.

Experience the wide variety of entertainment and dining options in a rapidly changing neighborhood with a great meal and an innovative play in a bar. Petworth, about four Metro stops from downtown DC, offers the latest trendy, independent artisan restaurants, side by side with the cheap eats that kept residents fed and entertained during its scruffier years. Insider must-do: Upshur Street Books, the local bookstore where the President and his family famously did their Christmas shopping a couple of years ago, is a new Washington treasure that gives you a sense of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century-DC vibe you'll feel when you walk these blocks. (Metro: Columbia Heights for **Meridian Pint**, Georgia Ave/Petworth for **DC Reynolds**)

Roll with the beer theme by having dinner at **Meridian Pint**, which sits squarely at the middle of great food, lively fellow diners, and a cool bare-concrete-accented-with-luxury-finishes décor. As the name implies, their craft beer offerings are impeccable, although cocktail and wine drinkers will also be attended to. The food emphasizes elevated bar/diner dishes. Their burgers are quite spectacular. There's also always something nice with a piece of fish in the middle. The menu is seasonal, but their delicious roast chicken is nearly always there. Indulge within reason. Unlike most of the shows we send you to, tonight's doesn't represent a pause in the flow of alcohol. (3400 11th St NW, Washington, DC (202) 588-1075 <http://meridianpint.com/>)

Looking to save some cash and a few steps? Skip **Meridian Pint** and head straight to **DC Reynolds**, the bar-cum-theatre, an hour before curtain. Grab a burger, or something more elaborate. We've done this before for other plays at this place, and they serve better-than-average pub grub. This will also let you get the lay of the land and give you time to wonder how the show-amongst-the-drinkers is possibly going to work. Beer is good. Cocktails are OK. If you care what wine tastes like, you should probably stick with Meridian Pint. (3628 Georgia Ave NW, Washington, DC 20010)

Clink glasses with royalty in *Love's LaBeers Lost*, a bar room setting of a light and funny Shakespeare play that may be new to you as it doesn't get performed very often. The young King of Navarre and his closest friends make a vow to live three years in celibacy, sobriety, and study – a vow which they all of course break; and you'll be there to watch, laugh, and perhaps help. A pretty princess and her ladies in waiting arrive and add complications. We've enjoyed LiveArtDC's three previous bar/play combinations, and expect great things from this one as well. You will spend the show sitting or standing around the bar, free to order refills any time you like. The action will go on all around you. Shakespeare purists need not apply, but they will be missing out. (LiveArtDC at DC Reynolds 3628 Georgia Ave NW, Washington, DC no box office phone <http://liveartdc.com/liveartdc-presents/loves-labeers-lost/>)

If you need one more after the show, stay at **DC Reynolds** to chat up other audience members and any of the cast who hang around. Thank the bar staff for continuing to host this wonderful silliness. Talk about whether this play might not belong in the high school curriculum where *Romeo and Juliet* currently lives. It's also about adolescents. There's way less gang warfare and drug abuse. No youngsters have to die. It's about whether to go to college or just get on with life, a question all teens face.

### Great Evening 3: My, what a large horse sculpture. Barracks Row.

*An Iliad* performs Wednesdays – Saturdays, Oct 1-22. Top ticket price \$17.

Spend an evening like classical elite in a hopping entertainment zone many visitors miss. Barracks Row, south of D St SE mostly along 8<sup>th</sup> St SE, is full of everyday shopping, sturdy neighborhood eateries, and some high tone restaurants serving multi-course meals intended to provide your whole evening's entertainment. You'll probably see Marines in gleaming dress uniforms mixing with other locals. (Metro: Eastern Market)

We're starting you with Mediterranean classics with local twists thrown in (like a lamb half smoke that won a competition for best lamb dish) at **Cava Mezze**, a sleek, contemporary space. You could make a fine meal out of two or three of their dips and a plate of grilled octopus with plentiful fresh pita to soak everything up. The bar has good wine and beer and a wide spectrum of liquors if you're in a cocktail mood. This isn't quite as fancy or pricey as our usual dinner picks; but it's so tasty and pleasant we couldn't resist the thematic relationship to the show tonight. (527 8th St SE, Washington, DC (202) 543-9090 [cavamezze.com/capitol-hill](http://cavamezze.com/capitol-hill))

To go even easier on the budget, hit local Mexican chain **District Taco**. In addition to the namesake street food available with many fillings and in either flour or corn tortilla, they offer burritos, salads, nachos, and all day breakfast. You can dress whatever you order at their salsa bar which features a variety of flavors and heats. The only adult beverages are bottled beer, but there are plenty of nearby bars if you want something more elaborate to drink before the show. A bunch of our actor friends let us know they treasure this spot when they're working in the area. (656 Pennsylvania Ave SE, Washington, DC 20003 [districttaco.myshopify.com](http://districttaco.myshopify.com))

Taffety Punk's *An Iliad* brings poetry to life with the classical story of an angry general who sits out a battle because he's dissatisfied with his pay package, and then gets really pissed by what happens next. Actress Esther Williamson will bring you this story, with live musical accompaniment, as though you were hearing it at a party in Plato's Athens. She'll put the whole Trojan War in your lap in an intimate theater within an arts center – check out whatever art they have hanging in the gallery which serves as a lobby before the show. This punk rock inspired company has a special genius for bringing classic stories to today's audience with riveting effect. (Taffety Punk at the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop 545 7th St SE no box office phone [taffetypunk.com/shows/catalog/TPUNK048/An-Iliad.html](http://taffetypunk.com/shows/catalog/TPUNK048/An-Iliad.html))

You may have eyeballed a bar you liked over on 8<sup>th</sup> St SE while headed to dinner – if so, feel free to drink there. This neighborhood is well supplied with good places. We'll make our official recommendation **Tunnickliff's Tavern**. It makes the list because it is a frequent post-show destination for Taffety Punk artists and audiences. We've toasted many fine performances there over the years, and want to welcome you into that club. However, if you pick off Esther or somebody from the band in the CHAW lobby on the way out, feel free to ask where they're going and whether you can hear how they're feeling about the show. The ability to chat with the artists whose work you just saw is one of the things that can make live theatre more fun than a movie. (222 7th St SE, Washington, DC)

## Great Evening 4: Latin American food, farce, and fury, Gallery Place

*Kiss* performs Wednesdays-Sundays Oct 10 – Nov 6. Top ticket price \$75.

Peruvian food, a play by a Chilean directed by a Russian, and a bar with wines and liquors from everywhere let this evening show you how influences from around the world flow into DC, and nowhere more so than in this neighborhood. Gallery Place hums with life any night of the week with sports fans, movie goers, foodies, street musicians, and playgoers all taking full advantage of what's on offer. Leave some time to explore the neighborhood, weaving through the throng and feeling the vitality. (Metro: Gallery Place/Chinatown or Archives/Navy Memorial)

Start with dinner at **China Chilcano** - a Peruvian fusion restaurant. The food is tasty and creative, as one would expect from DC celebrity chef Jose Andres who here incorporates flavors and techniques from the Asian immigrant population in Peru. The menu changes with the seasons, but there will almost always be a wonderful Lomo Saltado and some mouthwatering Dim Sum. Cocktails with Pisco (a spirit distilled from Peruvian wine) are the highlights of the bar. The service is outstanding, and particularly good at helping you manage your pre-show time. We recommend reservations; although if there are just one or two in your party, it's a fun place to eat at the bar as well. (418 7th St NW, Washington, DC 20004. (202) 783-0941 [chinachilcano.com](http://chinachilcano.com))

For a less expensive and more casual meal, eat down the block at **Protein Bar**. In a world with a lack of healthy fast food options, this emerging chain of restaurants is working to buck the trend. They serve a good variety of fresh, low-fat, high-flavor dishes. It's a juice bar rather than alcohol bar here, but if you want a pre-show adult beverage, you can get beer or wine from Judith's Bar at the theater or drop in on any of the many nearby bars. (398 7th St NW, Washington, DC 20004 [theproteinbar.com](http://theproteinbar.com))

In *Kiss*, two couples meet for a double date in what starts out as a conventional sex farce, but this farce is going on during a civil war, so it quickly becomes anything but conventional. In scenes that alternate between hilariously funny and pressure cooker tense, a terrific young cast will show us that when love and war get together, fairness gets fuzzy. **Woolly Mammoth** turns up the intensity by staging this play in their rehearsal hall rather than in the larger auditorium keeping the action almost within arm's reach. We expect a sexy and mysterious evening that will have the audience guessing until the end. (641 D Street, NW Washington, DC 20004 202.393.3939 [woollymammoth.net/kiss](http://woollymammoth.net/kiss))

For a post-show drink, walk a block west to the **Partisan**. Partisan also houses a restaurant and butcher shop, but you want the bar at the back right now. It's a comfortable exposed-brick space with a good beer selection, fabulous specialty cocktails, and some good wine by the glass. Bartenders are knowledgeable and helpful if you've got any questions. If you gave Woolly your email address when buying tickets, you should have a message from them on your phone, with discussion questions for over drinks. (709 D St NW, Washington, DC 20004 [thepartisandc.com](http://thepartisandc.com))

## Great Evening 5: Explore democracy in a whole new way, U Street Corridor

*Beertown* performs Tuesdays-Fridays, Oct 18 – Nov 7. Top ticket price \$30.

Immerse yourself in beer (not literally of course, you might catch a chill) and community in our home stomp. This neighborhood, the U Street Corridor, was a major entertainment destination for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; over the last ten years it has become one again. This is a super-hot nightlife neighborhood, and it's a fair chance that our picks will be overflowing when you try to visit them. If that is the case, don't despair. Good choices abound all along 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets NW. (Metro: U St/Cardozo)

Start with dinner at **The Fainting Goat**, with a recycled-materials-chic atmosphere and a short, high-quality menu. Everything here is tempting, with fresh, local ingredients and inventive preparations. Specific offerings change with the seasons, but there are usually grilled meat or fish meals suitable for two or more to share with lots of smaller dishes categorized as nibble, feed, or graze to have on the side or make a whole meal of. Service is friendly and attentive. Beverages are good in all categories, although they put the most love into their cocktails. There's seating on two levels with the main dining room up a short flight of stairs a hint more elegant while seating near the bar makes it easier to watch the rest of the crowd. (1330 U St NW, Washington, DC 20009 (202) 735-0344 [faintinggoatdc.com](http://faintinggoatdc.com))

For a more casual and less expensive dinner, **Amsterdam Falafelshop** will take good care of you. You can get the yummy little morsels in pita-sandwich form or in a bowl with salad and a wide selection of condiments from a zesty fixings bar. All of the ingredients are the equal of food we've eaten from much fancier Mediterranean restaurants. It's not gracious dining, but it's very tasty, quick, and affordable. No liquor license, so hit the bar at **The Fainting Goat** or choose another nearby if you want a pre-show drink. (1830 14th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, [falafelshop.com](http://falafelshop.com))

After dinner, you'll walk just a few blocks but find you've arrived in a small Midwestern town where you now live. *Beertown* is a show that happens all around you rather than staying up on stage, and it invites you in to the extent you want to play along. The experience starts with a dessert potluck. If you're on the road but want to contribute, consider picking something up at Trader Joe's (1914 14th St NW, Washington, DC), but don't feel obligated. Here in Beertown, there is a tradition of opening the city's time capsule every five years and carrying out a public debate on what belongs in it. This is that special day, and you are welcome to enter in to the debate and to vote your conscience. Don't be surprised if you find yourself really caring about what's going on; it kind of pulls you in. The whole thing is great fun. We've seen many performances of past runs, and Pete performed as a member of the rehearsed cast a few years ago. This gets our strongest seal of approval. (dog & pony dc at The Thurgood Marshall Center 1816 12th St NW, Washington, DC no box office phone [dogandponydc.com/beertown-in-dc](http://dogandponydc.com/beertown-in-dc))

Indulge in post-show drinks on 14<sup>th</sup> St NW at **Bar Pilar**. This is a small, stylish place that pours equally high quality wine, beer, and cocktails. Consider inviting some of your new neighbors along to share thoughts about the experience. Did it make you think differently about the nuts and bolts of democracy? What does your hometown do to try to influence what people think of it? How do you participate in that? (1833 14th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009, [www.barpilar.com](http://www.barpilar.com))

## Great Evening 6: A slice of death, H Street NE

*43 and 1/2: The Greatest Deaths of Shakespeare's Tragedies* performs Thursdays-Saturdays, Oct 20 - Nov 13. Top ticket price \$34.

H Street NE fills with fun seekers almost every evening of the week. It is lined with imaginative bars and restaurants, including the **H St Country Club** where you can play indoor mini-golf and **Biergarten Haus** where you can oompah like it's Oktoberfest any night of the year. Young Washingtonians flock here at the end of the work day to mingle and play. You'll only see the early guard while dining pre-show, but you'll enjoy a romp through tragic death in Shakespeare plays (with pie involved in some way) then come back to catch the scene at prime time. You can get here by taking **Metro to Union Station** then following signs to the still new and still free **DC Streetcar**, but we usually catch an Uber or a cab to and from this lively but hard-to-park area.

You'll dine at **RedRocks**, an upscale pizza joint serving great food with great style. We recently used it ourselves for pre-show dinner while headed to exactly the venue where we're sending you, so can vouch with perfect confidence. Beer, wine, and cocktails all flow nicely from the bar. Pizza leads the menu -- the Toscano fed us very well. Others at the table enjoyed salads or pasta dishes, and everybody was happy. Service was wonderful, even though we slowly turned into a party of 14 who trickled in over an hour then split the bill 6 ways. They never failed us and never made us feel like we were being unreasonable. You'll feel a pleasant glow by the time you're walking away to the show. (1348 H St NE, Washington, DC 202-621-7300 [redrockshstreet.com](http://redrockshstreet.com))

For an even quicker and cheaper meal hit **&pizza**, where you choose a crust and toppings then follow your own pizza as it makes its way through a conveyor belt oven. This local chain (which is poised to invade Philadelphia as well) makes a good quick bite, and people love it. We always note that these fast-casual places are full of smiling customers at almost any hour. The dining area is Spartan -- the crowd around you will provide any decoration on offer. If it's a nice evening, you might want to do take-out and stroll with your pizza and window-shop a spot for a pre-show drink. (1118 H St NE, Washington, DC [andpizza.com](http://andpizza.com))

Your show tonight is all about death in Shakespeare tragedies. An earlier version was a hit of the fringe festival three years ago. They amp the carnage up to absurd lengths -- Quentin Tarantino directing Shakespeare kind of thing. It's played for laughs, but friends who saw it tell us that it also made them think about violence in life and art in stimulating ways. The original cast are back, and we find remounts of shows with the original cast have a little something extra -- like the actors were all rehearsing in their heads between productions, and everything pops bigger and brighter. The marketing materials promise that there will be pie. We aren't sure what that means, but it's why we sent you for pizza, and we look forward to finding out. (**Nu Sass Productions** performing at the Trinidad Theater 1358 Florida Ave NE, Washington, DC no box office phone [nusass.com](http://nusass.com))

Thirsty after all those buckets of blood? You may find the bar open at the theater. If so, stop there to swap impressions with other audience members and meet members of the cast. If that bar isn't open, feel free to visit anything you spotted earlier or try out our recommendation -- the **Star and Shamrock**. This charmingly odd neighborhood bar hosts happy hours for local artists and is deeply comfortable. What was with the pie? (1341 H St NE, Washington, DC [starandshamrock.com](http://starandshamrock.com))

## Great Evening 7: Welcome to the megachurch, Dupont Circle

*The Christians* performs Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, Nov 16 – Dec 11. Top ticket price \$65.

You're going to church on a weeknight in a neighborhood where it's easy to misbehave. Dupont Circle was one of the first neighborhoods to kick off as a lively entertainment district in the 1990's. It's been full of hopping bars and restaurants ever since, continuing to evolve for DC's ever-changing audience, with a focus on the neighborhood's residents. We'll be sending you tonight either to a fancy newcomer or venerable institution to eat, then a show on nearby 16<sup>th</sup> St NW, and back to 17<sup>th</sup> St NW for a nightcap. You'll probably see the population on the street change from families in the early evening to a happy buzz of fun seekers towards the end of your visit. It is now a 24 hour neighborhood that many tourists visit even though there is no single cultural attraction. The vibe of the place alone is enough to draw them. We feel sure you will enjoy it as well.

Your primary dining option is **Nazca Mohica**, a recently opened and truly wonderful Peruvian double threat that serves a long, varied menu upstairs and a shorter but still delicious tapas menu below. (Dining pre-show, you'll be able to take advantage of their happy hour menu downstairs on many evenings.) Either deck will take good care of you in beautiful surroundings and with highly attentive service. If any of the dishes are unfamiliar, the staff will be happy to explain. Expect spice and heat, but never enough to drown out the peak-of-perfection ingredients. The bar focuses on cocktails made from Pisco, a Peruvian cousin of brandy; and if you lean at all in that direction, be sure to try one or two. They also pour undistilled wine and a few beer selections. Cebiche is available and excellent on either deck. You could make a fine meal sharing several variations of that one dish. (1633 P Street NW, Washington, DC 202-733-3170 [nazcamochica.com](http://nazcamochica.com))

To sample Dupont Circle as it ever was and to save a few dollars, dine at the **Trio**. This is pretty much a full on diner with a bar. Meatloaf and pot roast are always on the menu. Drinks are discounted for happy hour from 4-7 weekdays. Most of the seating is in booths. Staff are friendly and helpful. (1537 17th St NW, Washington, DC 20009 [triodc.com](http://triodc.com))

We heard the guy in charge of **Theater J**, Adam Immerwahr, talk recently about why *The Christians* is an appropriate play for a Jewish theatre company to produce. "It's about people in a religious community who feel threatened by the society around them because of their faith. What could be more Jewish than that?" We were immediately intrigued and hope you will be as well. If the philosophy doesn't reel you in, we can offer a live choir on stage and pointed humor that made audiences stifle guilty laughter in other theaters where it has been produced. Amazing local actor Michael Russotto leads the cast. This promises to be an entertaining show that will also leave you with plenty to talk about afterwards. (1529 16th St NW, Washington, DC 202- 777-3210 [dcjcc.org/center-for-arts/theater-j/on-stage/16-17-season/the-christians](http://dcjcc.org/center-for-arts/theater-j/on-stage/16-17-season/the-christians))

Get your after-show drink on at **Duke's Grocery**. Imaginative cocktails, some good beers on draft, and a few nice bottles of wine should make everyone around your table happy. Most of the crowd here are fairly young, but everyone is welcome. They serve a late night spectrum of snacks in case anyone has the munchies. How did the show meet or upend your expectations? (1513 17th St NW, Washington, DC 20036 [dukesgrocery.com](http://dukesgrocery.com))

Great Evening 8: A whale of a good time, Dinner Gallery Place / Show Waterfront  
*Moby Dick* performs Tuesdays-Sundays, Nov 18-Dec 24. Top ticket price \$97.

Your quest for a great evening will be far easier and safer than hunting a white whale. You'll have dinner in Gallery Place, pulsing with life around the clock as art lovers, shoppers, sports fans, movie goers, foodies, street musicians, and playgoers all scoot by to their varied destinations. Your show for the night sets sail, sensibly enough, from Waterfront; historically a major dining and dancing destination currently in the middle of a massive reconstruction project. New doors don't start opening until late next year. In the meantime, you'll be able to see something of the construction site from the lobby of your theater. We look forward to all-Waterfront great evenings starting in 2018! (Metro: Archives/Navy Memorial for Dinner, Waterfront for show.)

Start with dinner at **701**, a restaurant with the look of an exclusive club but a feel that makes everyone welcome. The food is always great. The staff are skilled and friendly. They serve a pre-theatre fixed meal. The menu is short but varied - always including a few good seafood dishes, which may be particularly appropriate tonight, and some delicious and satisfying vegetarian options - cauliflower schawarma has us contemplating a visit there ourselves. The beverage menu offers excellent choices for cocktail, wine, or beer. It is steps from Archives/Navy Memorial metro station where you can catch a train to the theater, or hail a taxi or meet an Uber just out front. (701 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20004 202-393-0701 [701restaurant.com](http://701restaurant.com))

Or save some cash about one block north on 7<sup>th</sup> Street at **Merzi**, a made-to-your-order Indian restaurant. Think Chipotle with curry instead of salsa. The food is fresh and tasty and as creative as you are. Choose a starch, a protein, a sauce, and some add-ins, then sit at a booth and dig in. Service is quick and friendly. If you happen to get an exceptionally warm night, there are some benches a block away on the Navy Memorial where you can eat and watch the neighborhood transform from work time to play time. (415 7th St NW, Washington, DC 20004 [merzi.com](http://merzi.com))

So, a guy named Ahab really wants to kill this whale in a story you can see as a straight up adventure tale or as an exploration of how what we care about shapes our lives and whether we get to choose what matters. Whichever angle harpoons your curiosity, this production keeps the stakes and the action high. Wave tossed scenes are staged on swinging platforms. You will laugh at jokes you may not have noticed if you found the book a slog back in school. Fate becomes an onstage character invented for this production and played by three women who help to guide us through the story. Chicago audiences had a great time with this one, and we expect you will, too. (**Arena Stage** at 1101 Sixth Street, SW, Washington, DC 20024 (202) 488-3300 [arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/moby-dick](http://arenastage.org/shows-tickets/the-season/productions/moby-dick))

The **Arena** lobby bar may be open for a post-show drink, otherwise, we recommend heading back towards your lodging and having a nightcap at a bar you've been noticing while coming and going from there. Either way, talk about how this production changed your feelings about this classic story. Oh, and do you know any better whether his name really is Ishmael or if he just wants to be called that?

## Great Evening 9: Country house holiday in a bustling suburb, Bethesda

*Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* performs Wednesdays – Saturdays, Nov 23 – Dec 18. Top ticket price \$65.

Join the aristocrats for a great evening out in Bethesda that will delight the Jane Austen fan in your life or in your soul. This is a Maryland neighborhood just seven Metro stops from downtown Washington. There's fun shopping and attractive housing. Unfortunately, as Insiders, we can tell you we have to dig a little deeper around here to find good food and drink, but we're happy to work that hard for you. Wisconsin Avenue, Woodmont Avenue, and the big triangle Woodmont makes with Norfolk and Rugby are the main streets on which to find hospitality and sparkle. (Metro: Bethesda)

Get things going at **Black's Bar & Kitchen**, a sleek dining destination near one point of the Woodmont Triangle. The interior gleams with polished wood as efficient staff members whiz by dispensing plates rich with seafood or steak and succulent sides. An array of oysters from the raw bar make a great start. For a main, choose from among their composed plates or specify a hunk of creature from the grill and choose your own vegetables and sauces. The bar is strongest on wine and cocktails including a few tangy non-alcoholic concoctions that show off their custom mixers for anyone spurning alcohol. The pastry chef specializes in playful elevated versions of mass-market confections. Whatever path you choose through the menu, you'll have an excellent meal. (7750 Woodmont Ave, Bethesda, MD 20814 (301) 652-5525 [blacksbarandkitchen.com/intro](http://blacksbarandkitchen.com/intro))

You could save some time and money by dining at **la Madeleine**, a cafeteria-style French café. You can get salads, entrees, or sandwiches to put together whatever meal you'd like. The food is tasty. You can have some wine with it. There's even a bit of charm to the country décor. The cuisine is sufficiently Euro that you could make a party game out of trying to choose a dish that might be mentioned in the show later. The pastry counter really shines here, so consider winding up with something sweet to dip in café au lait. (7607 Old Georgetown Rd, Bethesda, MD [lamadeleine.com](http://lamadeleine.com))

Either restaurant is just a short walk to Pemberley, or rather **Round House Theatre**, where you are invited for a holiday gathering to check in with the clever Bennet family and their connections. The value proposition for this play starts very simply – “You liked *Pride and Prejudice*? Here's more.” But that's just the beginning. The cast includes Katie deBuys, Danny Gavigan, and Erin Weaver – each of whom has shown us thrilling performances many times. Kendra Rai, who has designed some of the most eye popping costumes we've ever seen, will dress them all. We hear the script is witty and fun. Seems like a present worth unwrapping. (4545 East-West Hwy, Bethesda, MD (240) 644-1100 [roundhousetheatre.org/performances/miss-bennet](http://roundhousetheatre.org/performances/miss-bennet))

Ideally, we'd want to send you for wassail or port in a quiet little wood paneled drawing room after this show, but Bethesda doesn't really offer that. The cozy bars here close too early for our purposes. **The Barking Dog** has become our favored post-show bar after a Round House play. How did the whole sequel / play thing work for you? How did people's enjoyment of the show vary based on their predisposition toward Austen? The Dog is a friendly, neighborhood pub. Good general selection of drinks. Friday and Saturday nights, there's dancing upstairs if you've still got the energy. They probably won't play a minuet, but you could ask. (4723 Elm St, Bethesda, MD 20814 [barkingdogbar.com](http://barkingdogbar.com))

## Great Evening 10: Every time a bell rings. . ., Mt Vernon Square

*It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* performs Thursdays-Saturdays, Nov 25 – Dec 18. Top ticket price \$65.

Spend an evening that'll make you glad you were born, hanging out in Mt Vernon Square with a sumptuous meal and a fresh look at a story that has become a holiday essential. If you're in town for a big meeting, you likely already know the Mt. Vernon neighborhood, which holds DC's main convention center and our graceful former Public Library. (Mt Vernon Square Metro, or if you're starting on the mall or in the Gallery Place neighborhood, just walk a few blocks north on 7<sup>th</sup> St NW.)

**The Dabney**, where you'll be dining, is tucked away on Blagden Alley, a cluster of recently renovated backstreets full of hip services and entertainment. Your smart phone map will find it for you handily. The menu, like all the ingredients, is fresh every day. If there are just two of you, a snack, a couple of small plates, perhaps with a side, and dessert should feed you nicely. If you've managed to rustle up a double date, consider one of their family style entrees. Grilling is their specialty technique, so get something done on the big fire you'll see from the dining room. The ambience reminds one of a charming farmhouse set with piles of extra tables for a celebration. Service is friendly and informative. Cocktails, including a few clever alcohol-free selections, headline at the bar supported by worthy beer and wine. (122 Blagden Alley NW, Washington, DC (202) 450-1015 [thedabney.com](http://thedabney.com)). Reservations are a must.

If your budget or schedule doesn't include a fireside feed at The Dabney, you'll find great burgers and everything you'd expect to get with them in a fun, futuristic setting at **Bolt Burgers**. You can order one of their signature burgers or play mix and match with patties and fixings from a rich checklist of options. Crispy green beans provide an interesting variation on French fries. While it looks like a fast-casual chain restaurant, this in fact seems to be the only one. (1010 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001 [boltburgers.com](http://boltburgers.com))

*It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* puts it right on the label. We watch a group of actors arrive at their radio station to perform an audio version of the Jimmy Stewart classic. As a result, you get to see both a charming version of the story you probably know from the film classic, and you get a second story told in glances and asides about the lives and relationships of the people performing - the cast is tremendously engaging. We can give this one a firm recommendation because it is a remount of the show from last year with all the same people. We were delighted to see it then and are so glad to have the chance to share it with all of you. In addition to everything else going on, you get to see how sound effects are made live for you and for the "listening audience at home". This one is sweet and fun throughout. You're in for a holiday treat. (**Washington Stage Guild** 900 Massachusetts Ave NW Washington, DC 20001 – look for the sandwich-board sign that points to the correct doorway for the theatre. 240.582.0050 [stageguild.org](http://stageguild.org))

After the show, pop across Massachusetts Ave to **The Dignitary** in the lobby of the Marriott Marquis. It's a slick, attractive space. They pride themselves on whiskey drinks, but will probably have some kind of special holiday punch on if you want to drink one in Clarence's honor. (901 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001)

## Great Evening 11: The puppets play, amaze, and maybe frighten. Gallery Place

*King UBU* performs Tuesdays-Saturdays, Dec 8 – Jan 7. Tickets around \$25.

A lavish and spectacular evening in a quiet corner of Gallery Place with a jaunt back into the thick of it for a nightcap. Gallery Place hums with life any night of the week with sports fans, movie goers, foodies, street musicians, and playgoers all taking full advantage of what's on offer. Leave some time to explore the neighborhood, weaving through the throng and feeling the vitality. (Metro: Gallery Place/Chinatown)

Get into the spirit of lush luxury at **Co Co Sala**, a charming, chocolate-obsessed haven where surfaces gleam softly and the food runs toward the decadent. The décor is an intriguing blend of gilded age and contemporary. The menu is full of comfort food dishes amped up with lively new flavors. We recommend anything that incorporates chocolate – like the cocoa nib steak a poivre – or something with their mole sauce. Eat lightly on the savories and indulge in a dessert. If you can recruit a larger group, go for one of the dessert samplers that will spoil you enough to inspire some resolutions. Drink a cocktail or wine here to catch them at their best, or a hot chocolate on a chill night. You might be able to meet a gift-buying need in their chocolate boutique as well. (929 F St NW, Washington, DC (202) 347-4265 [cocosala.com](http://cocosala.com))

For a less expensive but still tasty meal, head to **Le Pain Quotidien**. This international bistro chain serves up reliable salads, soups, and sandwiches everywhere we've been. Rustic seating, friendly staff, and at this particular location available beer and wine make this an unusually pleasant quick bite. The menu won't hold any mysteries to you, and there is table service. Have a starter each and split an entrée for an affordable feed for two. (975 F St NW, Washington, DC [lepainquotidien.com](http://lepainquotidien.com))

**Pointless Theatre Company** are gifted at combining live acting, music, dance, puppetry, and visual design into captivating theatrical confections. They harvest inspiration for their creations from all over, and they've dug up a controversial, 120 year old play for this one. Legend has it that when *King UBU* was first performed, it caused riots with its depiction of vulgarity and vice in a royal household. The play has a deeply absurd story, and we aren't sure exactly what Pointless will do with it, but we feel confident it will be fun to watch. This is likely to be more of a theatre *experience* than a *story*. If you can take your seat with the perspective of belting in for an amusement park ride, you're likely to have a good time. You'll always remember something you didn't think a puppet could do in front of you. (**Pointless** at Flashpoint Gallery 916 G St NW, Washington, DC no box office phone [pointlesstheatre.com](http://pointlesstheatre.com))

Wrap of your great evening with a nightcap just around the corner at **Zaytinya**. This is the Mediterranean outpost of celebrity chef José Andres' culinary empire. It's a great place for a meal, but also has one of the most sparkling bars in the city. Having a cocktail here, you feel almost like you're on an elite deck of a cruise ship bobbing off a Greek island. Classics with a twist rule the drinks menu, where you will also find good craft beers and nice wine by the glass. Did the show have anything to say about privilege today? (701 9th St NW, Washington, DC [zaytinya.com](http://zaytinya.com))

Insider Tip: If you're in the neighborhood during the day, you'll find a holiday craft market in full swing along F St NW between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. Dive through for a look at what creative people from throughout the region are dreaming up and selling, and maybe cross a couple of people off the gift list.

# The Insider's Guide to Making the Most of these Evenings

## Getting Around DC

Most of the neighborhoods where our packages send you are well served by public transportation – specifically by Metro Rail, the DC area's mostly underground train service. We've included Metro stop information for every destination.

Just a bit on street naming in DC to make all your other navigating easier.

**Quadrants:** The capitol building is the center of the grid for DC. From the dome, lines shoot out north, south, east, and west dividing the city into quadrants. The quadrant a place is in is part of its address. All of the city in the arc between the line going north and the line going east is in Northeast, and likewise for the other four quadrants. There are miles of distance between 410 15th St SE and 410 15th St NW, so it's important to pay attention to the quadrants.

**Street names:** Numbered streets run north to south with the numbers rising as you get further from the capitol. Lettered streets run east to west going further along the alphabet as you get further from the capitol. Getting further north or south, you run out of alphabet and go to two syllable names, once again in alphabetical order (Adams, Bryant, Channing . . .). Beyond that it's three syllable names to the edges of the city. The base blocks are large, so many blocks in residential areas are broken in half by an intermediate street that can be called anything, although often the intermediate number streets are the same number but called a "Place" instead of a "Street." The intermediate alphabet names often start with the same letter as the nearest letter street (Riggs is between R and S). State named avenues run at diagonals and are confusing until you learn them and wonderful short cuts once you do.

**Getting Around on Foot:** DC is an incredibly walkable city, with wide sidewalks, very visible and consistent street signs, and a reasonably compact downtown. In the sorts of restaurant-filled and nightlife-intensive neighborhoods we're sending you to, street crime is unusual – you should feel as safe as you would in any major city. With your newfound understanding of the quadrants and the street names, we'd encourage you to wear comfortable shoes and assume that you can get to these restaurants, theaters and bars on foot once you're within a half a mile.

**Metro Rail and Bus:** DC rush hour traffic is awful, so public transportation, particularly Metro Rail which is our local subway system, is going to be your friend. The subway lines are distinguished by color. Which train you want is indicated by the name of the station at the end of the line. You can get maps of the system and learn about fares and other details at [wmata.com](http://wmata.com). You'll need to buy a SmarTrip card to get started; it's a plastic card (like a credit card) that is available from machines at the Metro stations. You load value into it at the station using cash or a credit/debit card, and touch the SmarTrip card to a sensor as you enter (and leave!) a Metro station, or when you get on a Metro Bus, to pay your fare for each trip.

**Smart Phone Maps and Directions:** Your other good friend getting around DC is going to be the smart phone you probably already own. The various map applications for smart phones (we're Google Maps fans, but others work, too) can be very helpful visiting an unfamiliar city. You probably already know you can type in an address then make the map give you driving directions. Most of these applications can also give walking directions and transit directions, by clicking on a button with a walking figure or a train car. The walking and transit data for these applications are quite accurate in and around DC. Our

evening out descriptions will contain addresses for all the restaurants, bars, and theaters. Your phone can help you get there.

**Uber:** If you do need to get someplace distant along surface roads and don't have a car along, Uber is probably your best option. If you're not familiar with Uber, it includes a smart phone app that a passenger uses to request a ride, while drivers use an app to agree to provide rides. Under normal conditions, you can get a ride through Uber within minutes almost anywhere in the DC area. Learn more at [uber.com](http://uber.com), and consider getting your account set up before visiting DC. We don't have any financial interest in Uber. We just find it very useful ourselves when we're away from home.

**Taxi cabs:** In most of the neighborhoods where our evenings out send you, there will also be DC cabs driving around. You can hail a cab on the street; you'll be able to tell which cabbies are taking passengers by the lighted sign on the top of the cab. DC cabs use a meter system for figuring out how much you need to pay. We suggest using cash for taxis if at all possible: Many drivers need your payment in cash, and some who take credit cards add a substantial convenience fee if you pay that way.

Between a little sense of how the city is laid out, your feet, the trains, Uber and taxis, you should have an easy time following along on any evening out. If we've ever suggested anything that gets you confused or lost, we apologize, and please let us know so we can fix it in the future.

## Getting Your Theatre Tickets

As theater Insiders, we are so delighted that DC has great shows from small 50-seat spaces to the most magnificent 500-seat halls. We're focusing our advice in this book on the middle-sized theaters, where tickets generally run from \$30 to \$100.

For each show, we've listed the top ticket price for the most expensive night a show is on, to give you a relative sense (or worst-case-scenario?) of the cost of attending. We've also put a link to the theater website on each show, and the box office phone number. These are convenient options and guarantee you a seat on the night you'd like to attend.

If you buy in advance through the box office at a theater where the top price is over \$60, you may find a cheaper ticket by buying a ticket for a weeknight instead of weekend, or for a side-section seat instead of a front-and-center seat.

Most of the shows we're recommending are in theaters where you'll have an assigned seat, and buying in advance through the box office lets you choose the best seat available when you buy.

But let's not stop there – read on for advice on the many, many discounts available for theater seats in DC.

## Cheap Seats

Who doesn't love a deal? Let's get to work buying our theater tickets armed with the knowledge of Insiders.

Even at the larger theaters with the most expensive tickets, you can usually get a deal with some advance planning, and at the medium-sized and small theaters, deals abound all the time. Of course, the bigger the discount compared to top ticket prices, the less likely you'll be in a prime front-and-center seat. That being said, in most of these theaters, every seat is quite good.

Here are our best Insider Tips for getting a theater ticket at the best prices.

**Discount Websites:** There are two popular ticket discounting websites that aggregate ticket discounts for theaters in DC : goldstar.com and culturecapital.tix. Locals who use them sign up for their email newsletters to scan deals that are usually available for tickets in the coming week, though sometimes there are early-bird discounts a month or two out. The deals are also listed on their websites, updated more than once a day, so you can go and scan that. Most (but not all) of the shows in this guide are likely to have tickets available through the discounters, and tickets are usually half off the "retail" price.

**Pay What You Want Performances:** Some of these theaters offer "pay what you want"/"pay what you can", often called PWYC, performances on a walk-up basis a couple of hours before the show, either occasionally or all the time. We are fans of PWYC, which generally draws a diverse, fun audience. We can promise that even if you only want to pay \$5 you will be admitted and there is no shame in it. However, if you are willing to pay \$20 or \$40 per ticket, which we consider a more equitable yet still bargain rate for the theaters that offer these discounts, you will be greeted with a smile and a hearty thanks!

**Social Media Discounts:** Many theaters announce discount codes for website purchases through their Facebook listings, email lists, and twitter accounts. If you read this guide before your trip and get really interested in a particular show, you might try following the theater on social media, to look for a discount code.

**Youth Discounts:** We long ago aged out of these great deals, but if you are 30 years old or younger, many of the theaters offer youth discounts that you should take advantage of as they tend to be pretty good deals at these mid-size theaters. You may need to phone or visit the box office to buy your tickets rather than using the website. The theater may not offer you the discount unless you ask for it, so do ask. Usually youth discounts apply only to the eligible person/people, and not to us oldsters who may be in their party.

**Military Discounts:** Many DC area theaters offer discounts for active duty US military and veterans. Again, phoning the box office is probably the easiest way to take advantage of this discount if you are eligible.

**“Rush” Tickets and General Discounting on the Evening of the Show:** Some theatres offer last minute rush tickets in the hour before performance. This is a somewhat risky maneuver to undertake, as obviously if the show has sold out, you won’t be able to get in. If you decide to take this route, you again might have to ask for the rush seat discount. Certainly, if you haven’t bought tickets in advance because you weren’t sure how your day was going to turn out, be sure to ask for any discounts when you buy at the box office, as you may be pleasantly surprised.

## DC Playgoing Primer

Most of you can skip this chapter, but we have heard from some people that they were reluctant to attend a play partly because they didn't know what to expect or what was expected of them. The next few pages contain some selected Insider wisdom and should banish any concerns.

### Playgoing Glossary

Here are some terms you may not be familiar with that you'll hear in the course of seeing a play.

**Curtain or curtain time** – the time at which the show is scheduled to begin performing. By curtain time, the whole audience should be seated, so show up 10-15 minutes before curtain. Some shows have seating breaks to allow late arriving audience members to sneak in after the show has started, but some do not.

**Lobby** – This is the space where the audience waits before taking their seats. It will usually have some seating, bathrooms, and often a concession area where you can buy food and drink.

**Program or Playbill** – At most plays, you will be handed a little booklet that includes some writing about the play and some background information on all the people involved in creating the play. For some plays, there will be an overview of the parts of the play telling you when and where they happen. Finally, if it's a musical, there will be a list of all the songs and when they happen in the performance.

**House** – This is the part of the theater where audience members sit. You'll hear this term if you show up early for a show. When the staff of the theater are ready for you to take your seats, someone will announce "The house is now open."

**Rake** – Rake is the angle at which the seats in the house are arranged relative to each other. Usually, each row back is at least a little higher than the row in front so everyone can see over the heads of the audience members in front of them. Some houses are essentially staircases. Some are flatter. You might want to think about the rake of the theater when you decide where to sit.

**Reserved seating** - Some plays have reserved seating – your ticket will have an address on it, usually a letter and a number, like C19. There are almost always ushers in the auditorium whose job it is to help you find your seats

**General admission** - Other shows are General Admission, in which case your tickets will say that or just GA. In that case, everyone who has bought a ticket is free to select a seat from those in the auditorium that are not yet occupied. Some people are very selective about where they sit, and so intentionally show up well before curtain time to have their choice of seats.

**Intermission** – Many plays are too long for the audience to comfortably sit through the whole performance in one go. Intermission is a 10-15 minute break to allow people to stretch, pee, buy more treats or drinks, and talk about how the play is going. When the lights go out on stage and come up on the house and the actors don't all line up on the front of the stage to let you clap for them, it's probably intermission. Towards the end of intermission, theater staff will let you know, often by flashing the

lights in the lobby, making verbal announcements, or playing tiny xylophones. Any one of those is a signal for you to get back to your seat.

**Curtain call** – At the end of the play, the actors come out on stage and bow for applause. This is called a curtain call and is a chance for the audience to show appreciation. Some audience members will stand up and keep clapping. This is supposed to be reserved for extraordinary performances, but in some theaters, it becomes the norm. Never feel pressured to join the standing ovation, but if you feel moved to, feel free.

**Theater/Theatre** – Some people will tell you that these are just the American English and Queen’s English ways of spelling the same word, like color/colour. Many American theatre artists use theater to mean the building and the auditorium and theatre to mean the art form. The “It’s just two spellings” people think the “Building/art form” people are effete snobs. So now you know a little piece of theatrical controversy.

## Frequently asked questions

**Where should I sit?** This is largely a matter of taste, but there are a few things to think about. We always try to sit towards the center of the house from left to right and in the most forward row where our knees will be above the floor of the stage. In some highly raked houses, the very front rows are below the floor of the stage, and you’re likely to wear your neck out looking up at the action. If your show has reserved seats, you’ll decide where to sit when you buy your tickets, and tickets for sections closer to front and center may cost more those further away. If the show is general admission, you’ll be able to choose your seat based on what seats are not yet occupied when you enter the house. People at the box office can help you choose a good seat.

**How should I dress to go to a play?** This is up to you. Some people treat going to a play as a big deal date night and dress up to impress whoever they are going with. Lots of people in DC dash over straight from the office, wearing whatever they wore to work. In any audience, you’ll see suits and jeans and everything in between. We see Miss District of Columbia in her crown in an audience occasionally, so clearly anything goes. It can be good to have something warm you can get into and out of easily, since temperatures inside the auditorium may swing around between air conditioning and heat from the lights.

**Can I take food and drinks to my seat?** This varies by theater. Many DC theaters now allow drinks to the seats as long as they aren’t in glass containers. Usually, there will be signs near the entrance to the house that tell you if drinks are prohibited. Any staff member in the lobby can also tell you.

**How should I behave during the show?** Most plays expect the audience to sit quietly, except for laughter or gasps caused by the action of the play – those, they love. Evidence that the show is reaching you is welcome. Audible conversation between audience members is usually not as welcome. Cell phones ringing or otherwise making noise or lighting up are particularly irksome to the people on stage and other audience members. You’ll probably hear an announcement before the show asking you to silence or turn off anything that might make a noise or a light and asking you not to text during the show. All of this is just part of the audience making a shared effort to allow everyone to pay attention to the play. When a play works right, audience members are pulled into a whole world being created on stage. Distractions can make it harder for people to go on that journey.

**What if I'm not having a good time?** First, know that if it's a play we recommended to you, we would apologize to you in person if we could. Never let seeing a play turn into a waste of time. You should only leave during the action if you are ill or if the play is offending your deepest values. If the play has an intermission, and you're not liking what you're seeing, just leave. If you still trust us enough, go check out the bar we recommended and talk with your companions about what you didn't like. What could have made it better? Though we are great theatre lovers, we leave plays at intermission from time to time; sometimes because we're not enjoying them, but often because we feel that particular play showed us everything we needed from it in act one. If you think of it later, send us a message to let us know what show didn't work for you and why. We plan to keep making this guide and want to get better at recommending shows people will probably like.

**OK, I did like the play, curtain call is over, what now?** You can just scoot to the bar and talk about the play with your friends, make plans for tomorrow, then tuck your weary tourist feet into bed. However, if an actor in the play did work you really appreciated, you could ask a theater staff member in the lobby where the actors come out. Here in DC, that will usually just be a particular door in the lobby, but some theaters have a special stage door that separates the actors and the audience. In either case, you can plant yourself near said door and wait a while. Most actors take 5-10 minutes after the show to get into street clothes – longer if they end the show covered in stage blood, silly string, or blue paint. Once he or she is ready for the world again though, almost every actor appreciates an audience member hanging around to deliver a few words of praise.

**Why are they asking me for a donation?** Virtually all of the shows we'll be recommending are performed by not-for-profit theatre companies. That means donations make up a substantial part of their income, and that everyone working on it is doing it not to get rich but to keep the art form alive. Because of this, you are likely to hear a pitch either before or after the show to contribute money. If you feel called to donate, please do, and thanks in advance. However, even if you got your tickets at a deep discount, don't let the pitch make you feel obligated to donate. Being in the audience, paying attention, and remembering what you saw are the really important things you bring as an audience member. Any donation is frosting.

**How do you choose the Great Evenings Out?** Our research for these evenings starts with analyzing two factors: great theater performances, and great evening-out neighborhoods. We cull through the list of shows that are coming up onstage, in neighborhoods with good dining and nightlife options and easy transportation (well, mostly – sorry about Shirlington). We choose shows based first on how fun or audience-friendly they look; then on other factors we can figure out from the description and our many years of attending theater (who is in the cast, other shows by the same playwright, companies that excel in producing the kind of show we're recommending, things that have "buzz" amongst our fellow theater-going friends); then on ensuring we've got a good spread of neighborhoods and evenings of performance.

Then we pair the shows with nearby restaurants and bars that we've eaten at and enjoyed, or that come with strong reliable recommendations from friends. If we can find something "theme-y" (French restaurant with a show set in Paris, for instance), we like to add to the fun that way, but we won't do it at the expense of a good meal. We try to give a couple of dining options along the price spectrum. Most of these neighborhoods have several restaurants and bars, but we'll let you know if not. We have no affiliation with any of the bars or restaurants and don't take payment or other consideration for recommendations.

We have myriad affiliations with lots of theaters in town. But that said, we are also genuinely committed to letting you know about fun and/or thoughtful evenings out, and won't be recommending all of the shows at our affiliated theaters to you, as much as we adore them. Not all of them are the best night-on-the-town fit for the time period we're covering. We promise to be as impartial as two mega-fans can be, and hope you can trust our recommendations. We don't take any payment or other consideration for our show recommendations either.

## Thank You for Reading Our E-Book!

Thank you for reading our book. We hope you are impressed, like us, with the variety, quality and depth of entertainment and dining options in and around Washington DC.

We're delighted to be releasing this, the SECOND edition of our e-book, and we plan to continue to update it in the future and release further editions. Additionally, we have a website, [greateveningsout.com](http://greateveningsout.com), where we'll include other tips as we learn of them, including new restaurant and show information. Please visit us there.

We would love your input, both about the evenings and about the book -- please, please drop us a line to let us know if you had a good evening out based on this advice, or if you think we are missing something. The secrets of Insiders are garnered from a constant stream of advice and feedback; we need your notes and suggestions. [peteandsara@greateveningsout.com](mailto:peteandsara@greateveningsout.com).

## About Us

We are theater enthusiasts and restaurant fans based in Washington DC.

After a career in Information Technology, Pete has taken his love of the performing arts and his management expertise to become a nationally-recognized arts administration adviser. He is a member of the Theater Communication Group's Art of Governance Task Force and serves on the board of Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company. Pete brews his own beer, owns over 300 board games, and almost cannot stand absurdist theater.

Sara is a native Washingtonian and has done stints in journalism, web development and health care reform. She currently serves on the board of the DC Public Library Foundation and is excited to help support the modernization project for the city's historic central library. She is the keeper of her book club's historic record, webmaster of her sewing club, and an elementary school literacy tutor. Of course, she loves absurdist theater.

We met and started dating in 1992. Our earliest Great Evenings Out together looked a lot like these, and we are delighted to share the concept with you. Evenings like these have brought us over two decades of happiness, and this project promises to bring us many more.

You can reach us at [peteandsara@greateveningsout.com](mailto:peteandsara@greateveningsout.com).