



Congressman J. Randy Forbes

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Visiting the White House

White House Tours: Public tours of the White House can be requested for groups as small as one individual, and the Secret Service requires that security information be submitted with the specific dates the group is interested in touring. Requests must be submitted through one's Member of Congress and are accepted up to six months in advance. These self-guided tours are available Tuesday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m, Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and Saturday 7:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (excluding federal holidays), and are scheduled on a first come, first served basis approximately two weeks prior to the requested date. We encourage you to submit your request as early as possible since a limited number of tours are available. All White House tours are free of charge. For the most current tour information, please call the 24-hour line at 202-456-7041. Please note that White House tours may be subject to last minute cancellation.



White House Visitor Center

All tours are significantly enhanced if visitors stop by the White House Visitor Center located at the southeast corner of 15th and E Streets, before or after their tour. The Center is open seven days a week from 7:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. and features many aspects of the White House, including its architecture, furnishings, first families, social events, and relations with the press and world leaders, as well as a thirty-minute video. Allow between 20 minutes and one hour to explore the exhibits. The White House Historical Association also sponsors a sales area. Please note that restrooms are available, but food service is not.

Mobility-Impaired / Wheelchairs

Visitors scheduled for tours who require the loan of a wheelchair should notify the officer at the Visitors Entrance upon arrival. Unfortunately, reservations are not possible. Visitors in wheelchairs, or with other mobility disabilities, use the same Visitors Entrance and are escorted by ramp from the entrance level to the Ground floor, and by the elevator from the Ground floor to the State floor.

Hearing-Impaired

Tours for hearing-impaired groups of ten or more may be requested through one's Member of Congress. The Visitors Office TDD (telephone device for the deaf) is 202-456-2121.

Visually-Impaired

Tours for visually-impaired groups of ten or more may be requested through one's Member of Congress. Guide animals are permitted in the White House.

General Tour Information

All visitors should call the 24-hour Visitors Office information line at 202-456-7041 to determine if any last minute changes have been made in the tour schedule.

Prohibited Items

Prohibited items include, but are not limited to, the following: handbags, book bags, backpacks, purses, food and beverages of any kind, strollers, cameras, video recorders or any type of recording device, tobacco products, personal grooming items (make-up, hair brush or comb, lip or hand lotions, etc.), any pointed objects (pens, knitting needles, etc.), aerosol containers, guns, ammunition, fireworks, electric stun guns, mace, martial arts weapons/devices, or knives of any size. The U.S. Secret Service reserves the right to prohibit any other personal items. Umbrellas, wallets, cell phones and car keys are permitted.

Please note that no storage facilities are available on or around the complex. Individuals who arrive with prohibited items will not be permitted to enter the White House.

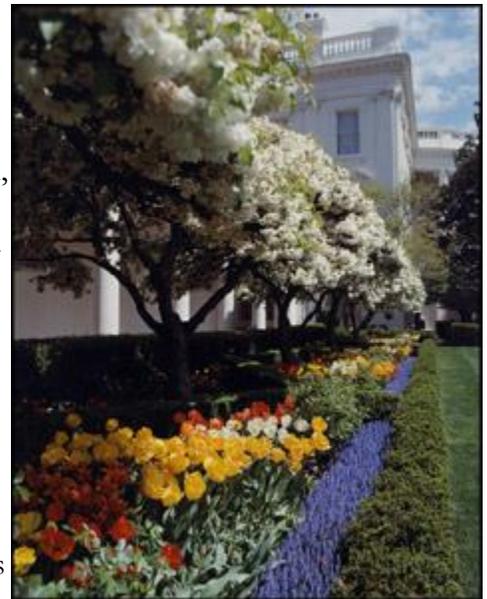
Restrooms/Public telephones

The nearest restrooms and public telephones to the White House are in the Ellipse Visitor Pavilion (the park area south of the White House) and in the White House Visitor Center. Restrooms or public telephones are not available at the White House.

White House Facts

For two hundred years, the White House has stood as a symbol of the Presidency, the United States government, and the American people. Its history, and the history of the nation's capital, began when President George Washington signed an Act of Congress in December of 1790 declaring that the federal government would reside in a district "not exceeding ten miles square...on the river Potomac." President Washington, together with city planner Pierre L'Enfant, chose the site for the new residence, which is now 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. As preparations began for the new federal city, a competition was held to find a builder of the "President's House." Nine proposals were submitted, and Irish-born architect James Hoban won a gold medal for his practical and handsome design.

Construction began when the first cornerstone was laid in October of 1792. Although President Washington oversaw the construction of the house, he never lived in it. It was not until 1800, when the White House was nearly completed, that its first residents, President John Adams and his wife, Abigail, moved in. Since that time, each President has made his own changes and additions. The White House is, after all, the President's private home. It is also the only private residence of a head of state that is open to the public, free of charge.



The White House has a unique and fascinating history. It survived a fire at the hands of the British in 1814 (during the war of 1812) and another fire in the West Wing in 1929, while Herbert Hoover was President. Throughout much of Harry S. Truman's presidency, the interior of the house, with the exception of the third floor, was completely gutted and renovated while the Trumans lived at Blair House, right across Pennsylvania Avenue. Nonetheless, the exterior stone walls are those first put in place when the White House was constructed two centuries ago.

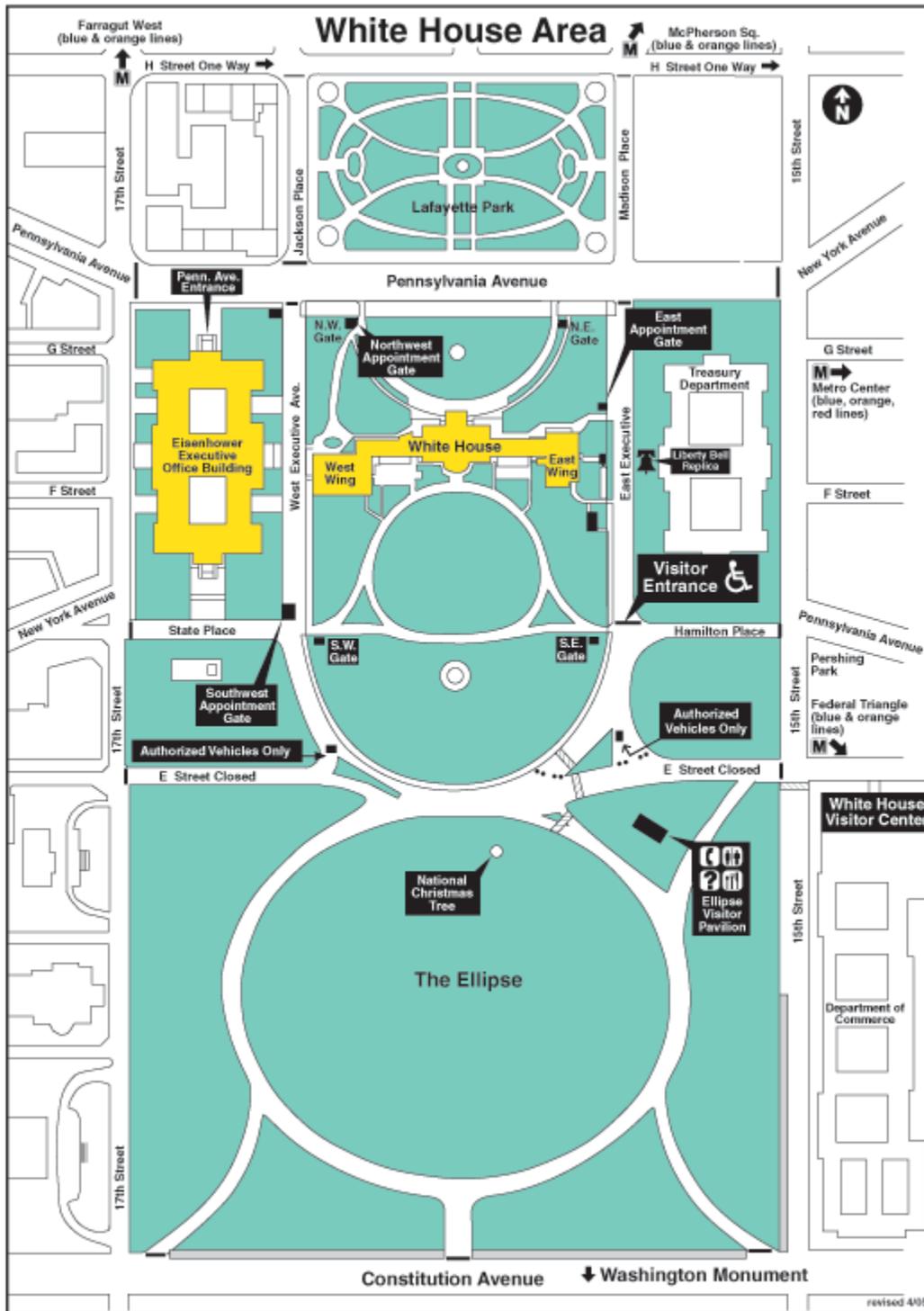
Presidents can express their individual style in how they decorate some parts of the house and in how they receive the public during their stay. Thomas Jefferson held the first Inaugural open house in 1805. Many of those who attended the swearing-in ceremony at the U.S. Capitol simply followed him home, where he greeted them in the Blue Room. President Jefferson also opened the house for public tours, and it has remained open, except during wartime, ever since. In addition, he welcomed visitors to annual receptions on New Year's Day and on the Fourth of July. In 1829, a horde of 20,000 Inaugural callers forced President Andrew Jackson to flee to the safety of a hotel while, on the lawn, aides filled washtubs with orange juice and whiskey to lure the mob out of the mud-tracked White House.

After Abraham Lincoln's presidency, Inaugural crowds became far too large for the White House to accommodate them comfortably. However, not until Grover Cleveland's first presidency did this unsafe practice change. He held a presidential review of the troops from a flag-draped grandstand built in front of the White House. This procession evolved into the official Inaugural parade we know today. Receptions on New Year's Day and the Fourth of July continued to be held until the early 1930s.

- There are 132 rooms, 35 bathrooms, and 6 levels in the Residence. There are also 412 doors, 147 windows, 28 fireplaces, 8 staircases, and 3 elevators.
- At various times in history, the White House has been known as the "President's Palace," the "President's House," and the "Executive Mansion." President Theodore Roosevelt officially gave the White House its current name in 1901.
- Presidential Firsts while in office... President James Polk (1845-49) was the first President to have his photograph taken... President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09) was not only the first President to ride in an automobile, but also the first President to travel outside the country when he visited Panama... President Franklin Roosevelt (1933-45) was the first President to ride in an airplane.
- With five full-time chefs, the White House kitchen is able to serve dinner to as many as 140 guests and hors d'oeuvres to more than 1,000.
- The White House requires 570 gallons of paint to cover its outside surface.
- For recreation, the White House has a variety of facilities available to its residents, including a tennis court, jogging track, swimming pool, movie theater, and bowling lane.

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/facts.html>

Area Map



More Information

Visit the White House website at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/tours/>