



# Geology of the National Mall

A *Views of the National Parks* virtual experience



**T**he National Mall in Washington D.C. is a great place to study the history of the United States. Immense memorials stand as tributes to past presidents and war veterans. Visitors come every day to admire these structures, and learn the stories behind them. But did you know that you can also learn about geology at the National Mall?

By looking at the stones in each of the sites on the National Mall, you will see that geology and history are closely knit together. The geology of the area influenced the position of Washington D.C., the capital of a new nation. Building materials for places like the White House and the Capitol were chosen from locally available rocks. Later, when the memorials were built, specific building stones would be chosen for their properties such as color, texture, and strength. Park Ranger Sonya Berger says, “The stone not only provides the building blocks of each structure, but strengthens the themes and ideas of the monuments and memorials as well.”

## Features

By exploring the “GeoStory” of the National Mall, you can discover many of the ways that geology and history interlock to create the meanings and significance of the city and its memorials. Whether you want to learn about the types of stones used in the construction or the meanings of each memorial, you will find your answers in this virtual experience!

- **Introduction**

Watch a short, animated video that explains the idea of the “GeoStory”, the blend of geology and history, of the National Mall. Coming summer 2005.

- **Tour**

Choose a specific memorial from the interactive National Mall map or take a guided tour beginning with the geology of the Washington, D.C. area and stopping at 14 different memorials. At each stop, learn how geology and history play a role in the construction and significance of the site. For example, you will see that stones from all over the country were chosen for the Lincoln Memorial. How does this diversity contribute to the meaning of the memorial to Abraham Lincoln?

A view of the National Mall, with the U.S. Capitol located in the foreground and the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial off in the distance. (NPS Photo)

---

*Freedom is not free.*

— Words inscribed in granite,  
Korean War Veterans Memorial

---

Visit *Views of the National Parks* online:  
[www2.nature.nps.gov/Views](http://www2.nature.nps.gov/Views)

The monuments and memorials of the National Mall are in essence stories in stone. Explore each of these unique sites and discover how geology creates symbolism and meaning. Also, explore the United States through the Quarry, where you can learn the origins of many of the stones on the National Mall.

---

*... that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*

— Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, inscribed in limestone, Lincoln Memorial

---

- **Interactive activities**  
See various activities to bring history and geology to life throughout your tour. Build a “GeoFlag” to learn about the different types of rocks. Then look for each type as you continue the tour. Help George Washington decide where the capital of the United States should be built by exploring locations on a map. At Constitution Gardens, learn about which animals visit the National Mall and identify their tracks.
- **Quarry**  
Learn about the origins of the building stones of the National Mall. Select a state to see which rocks were quarried there and where they appear on the National Mall. You can also choose to explore the quarry by type of rock or memorial.
- **Challenge your understanding**  
Test your new knowledge of history and geology in a range of activities related to the National Mall. Coming summer 2005.

The Natural Resource Program Center teamed up with interpretive rangers at the National Mall and the NPS National Capital Region to create this virtual experience.

**Contact us**  
The National Mall, Washington, D.C.  
**Sonya Berger - Park Ranger**  
sonya\_berger@nps.gov  
(202) 528 - 9612

**Views Project**  
**Bruce Nash - Project Manager**  
bruce\_nash@nps.gov  
(303) 987 - 6697

### Teacher Resources

The Teacher Guide (in development) will provide teachers (both local and distant) with curriculum-based activities and lesson plans that can be used in the classroom and in the field. These teaching tools will include both history and science lessons that can be printed or viewed on the computer. Information is provided so teachers can relate this virtual experience to national teaching standards.

### Partners

Visit *The National Mall* online:  
[www.nps.gov/nama](http://www.nps.gov/nama)