

Student Reporter



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Why D.C. Belongs on Every Teen's Travel List



A look inside the International Spy Museum in Washington D.C., where visitors explore the world of espionage.

[Source: Author, Jane Yoon]



A visit to the U.S. Capitol, one of Washington D.C.'s most important landmarks, where students, especially those interested in law, can find their passion.

[Source: Author, Jane Yoon]

When most teens tend to think about vacation, cities like Los Angeles or New York come to mind. But after a recent trip to Washington, D.C., I believe this city deserves a spot on every teen's travel list. It's more than national monuments and government buildings—it's a place where history, art, culture, and future opportunities come together in ways meant to inspire the youth.

One of my favorite places in D.C. was Georgetown, a small neighborhood full of energy and charm. It's home to Georgetown

University, so the area is filled with students and fosters excitement. People can shop along M Street and Wisconsin Avenue, which offer a mix of big-name stores and small boutiques. Food is a big part of the experience too; Baked & Wired, maman, and Blank Street are a few of many delicious restaurants, bakeries, and cafes for tourists to enjoy. Visiting Georgetown gave me a chance to see a different side of D.C.: not focused on monuments or politics, but on everyday life in a historic, student-centered community.

Another highlight when visiting this city was the International Spy Museum, which goes way beyond your typical museum experience. Instead of just reading documents, I was able to put myself in the shoes of a spy by taking on a secret identity and testing my skills in interactive exhibits. It was fascinating to learn how espionage was able to have such an impact on today's world, and it gave me a new perspective on the background work of global affairs.

And of course, no trip to D.C. would be complete with-

out exploring its art scene. At the National Gallery of Art, I was amazed by the variety of art, from Renaissance paintings to modern American art. Seeing works I'd only heard or seen pictures of in textbooks felt inspiring and accessible, and I was awed by the amount of artwork from different periods, genres, and artists.

For those interested in politics and law like me, the capital offers countless opportunities. For example, I had a chance to attend the Georgetown Law Academy, a 1-week summer program for high school students at Georgetown University. It was the most memorable part of my trip because I was able to meet so many mentors and students from around the world, providing me with a new outlook on politics. We explored legal concepts, practiced public speaking, and even did mock trials at the D.C. Superior Court. Experiencing this in the nation's capital, surrounded by the very institutions where laws are born, made the program even more meaningful. For any teen considering a career in law or politics, opportunities like this make D.C. the perfect place to explore.

Washington, D.C., is more than just the capital of the United States; it's a city that speaks to young people in unique ways. Whether you're into history, art, culture, or politics, D.C. has something to spark your curiosity. For me, it wasn't just a trip but rather an experience that made me see the world and my role in it.

Student Reporter



Ryan Park
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The Science Academy STEM Magnet

August 14th marked the first day of the Los Angeles Unified School District's 2025-2026 school year. For the first time in months, 429,000 students from across the city returned to their desks, ready for class.

This year marks my 3rd year in high school at the Science Academy STEM Magnet. Adjusting to school after summer break always takes time, the worst part being waking up in the early hours of the morning to catch the bus to school. However, it was really nice to see all of my classmates once again.

Going into my junior year of high school, my class schedule was packed with rigorous classes, such as AP Calculus BC and AP US History. On top of that, I decided to join my school's football team for the very first time. This meant that after attending school from 8 AM to 3:40 PM, I had practice until 6 PM and wouldn't end up at home until around 7 PM. I knew I had a ton of work cut out for me this year, but I was still deter-



The very first football game that I played against Milken High School, after managing my schedule and getting my work done, so that I could play.

[Source: Aiden Paek]

mined to get through it all. Junior year is the most important, especially when it comes to college applications. Each day after coming home from school, I jumped straight into my homework, trying to get things done quickly so I could get as much sleep as possible.

Though the first week of my junior year contained many

hurdles, I quickly adjusted to my busy schedule. I was able to finish both my school work and practice football at the same time, something that was brand new to me. In the following days, I played in my very first football game, reconnected with teachers and students, and started to enjoy all of my classes. Although it was difficult to get used to after

summer break, these experiences made it all the more worthwhile.

If I were to give other students advice, I would tell them to prioritize getting rid of any distractions when working. I didn't realize how many hours I had wasted on social media, mindlessly scrolling through TikTok on my phone. Another thing I would suggest is to utilize any chance you have to get your schoolwork done. Instead of going out during lunch breaks or talking with friends during class, I would focus on getting work done. This allowed me to lessen the workload that I came home to after practice, allowing me to sleep earlier. These little things helped me to stay on top of my academics, while also maintaining other extracurriculars like football, volunteering, Boy Scouts, and much more.

I wish everyone good luck for the 2025-2026 school year, and hope you can use some of my experiences to thrive in your academics and extracurriculars.

Student Reporter



Sarah Li
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Beijing: Where Past and Present Meet

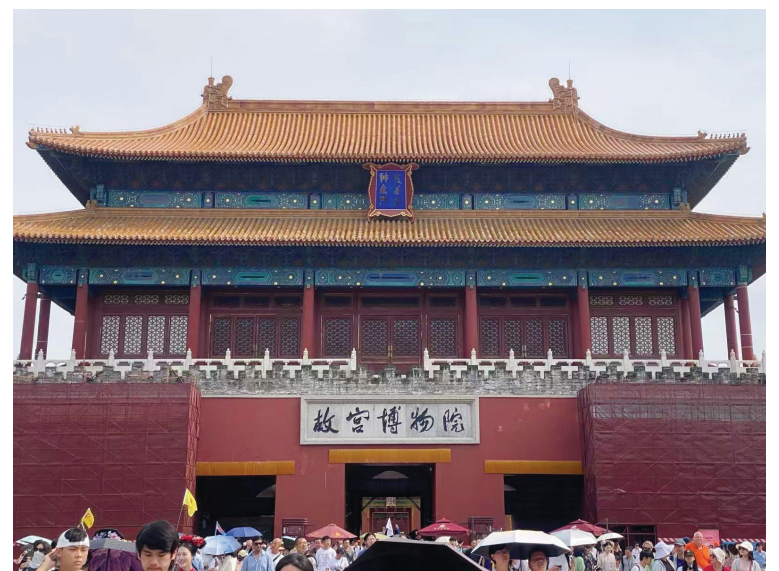
This summer, I had a chance to visit China's capital city, Beijing. Initially, I thought this would be like any other typical trip: sightseeing, taking pictures, and exploring local cuisines. However, this experience was far more meaningful than others. Traversing Beijing, I encountered a city with a natural combination of history and advancement, demonstrating how culture influences past and present.

One of the most awe-inspiring moments was standing on the Great Wall, a famous tourist attraction that was used as a military defense. From the top, the panoramic view stretched endlessly across the mountains; I couldn't see where the end was. I was unable to imagine how people from the past dealt with the extensive amount of work it would take to create. Every stone and brick was carefully placed by hand, forming a structure that withstands the challenge of time and nature. Every part was thoughtfully designed to reach specific purposes: there are wide areas that were designated to allow soldiers to walk and watch out for enemies.

Similarly, wandering through

the Forbidden City, I was amazed by the intricate details of each building, all of which had a special meaning. My eyes were attracted to seven dragons that perched on the golden rooftops, silently guarding the palace. When the sunlight fell upon them, their solemn glaze and upright posture reminded visitors of the authority and power of the Chinese Empire. I even had the opportunity to step inside one of the preserved rooms. By looking at the arrangement of furniture, I could imagine the lives of dignitaries and the courtiers: low tables to put important documents and books, as well as spaces to play Chinese chess.

Yet, Beijing is not just a city saturated with antiquities. A few steps away from the Forbidden City, neon lights flickered on the crowded streets. High-speed trains swept by me, faster than I could notice, like streaks of lightning. Towering skyscrapers stood high, glowing like beacons at night. Shopping malls with huge LED billboards appeared one after another, displaying three-dimensional commercials for technology and fashion. The streets were saturated with ve-



The crowds gather in front of the entrance of the Forbidden City, a destination that I appreciated much more in person than just reading about in history books.

[Source: Author, Sarah Li]

hicles, the chatter of pedestrians, and tourists taking photos. At that moment, I saw the coexistence of past and present: an ancient imperial court over six hundred years old sat on the left with silence and dignity, while the bustling towers and modern structure filled the other side.

What made this trip memorable was the new perspective it

gave me. Visiting the city in person rather than reading it in a textbook demonstrated that the culture is real and alive. Observing that the traditions continue with modern technology has helped me to understand and appreciate the past. It also reminded me that history is ubiquitous, not only in books and museums, but also in people's lives.

Student Reporter

Korean Heritage Meets Hype at the National Museum



Chaewon Hong
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The National Museum of Korea is bustling with not only national visitors but also foreign tourists seeking traditional souvenirs that preserve Korean heritage, reflecting the recent K-heritage boom. [Source: Author, Chaewon Hong]

When one steps into a gift shop, they often expect to encounter common merchandise, such as notebooks and magnets, that end up being stacked at the back of the house garage. However, this wasn't the case for the customers at the gift shop of the National Museum of Korea. These guests can purchase a diverse range of history-embodying souvenirs and daily utensils, from Korean traditional spoons to recreated mini statues that were popular during the Joseon Dynasty.

People have come to embrace the country's tradition and cultural aspects, including artifacts and behaviors. Due to this factor, over recent years, K-culture has undergone an exponential rise globally. This pushed cultural institutions to incorporate traditional elements into their goods, hoping to increase awareness about Korean culture. The National Museum of Korea leads such movements, as they apply traditional ceramics, Buddhist art, and royal ring ornaments in their merchandise,

which includes tote bags, calendars, clocks, and a vast variety of day-to-day basics.

The craze over these recent goods reached its peak this August, as the National Museum of Korea released a special edition to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Korean Liberation Day, Gwangbokjul. The museum integrated a range of symbols and elements that embody the Korean liberation movements, like redefined national flags and the symbolic flower of Korea, the Mugunghwa. These symbolize independence and national pride, and accordingly, the Gwangbokjul collection instantly received much-needed attention across social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. This, in particular, accelerated the trend and popularity, not only limited to Korean boundaries, but beyond them.

Calling herself "a lucky customer," Mrs. Kang, a visitor at the National Museum of Korea, contended that she had "Practically run all the way from her house for the new collection," fearing that it would be sold out by the time she arrived. Fortunately, she was able to purchase a flag-ornamented statue of the "Pensive Bodhisattva," originating from the Samguk period (삼국시대), also known as "The Three Kingdoms Period."

The customer also noted that this marketing strategy and release of limited editions were an effective way to ensure the widespread sharing of Korean culture globally, rather than confining it as a precious piece of heritage within national borders.

Personally, this experience helped me acknowledge the importance of commemorating and highlighting Korea's past. While Korean culture and technology are being recognized globally, there is certainly less awareness surrounding the Japanese annexation of the country, as far fewer individuals are well aware of the grim history the nation has undergone, especially the brutal wars, painful grief of losses, and violent corruptions that ultimately led to achieving liberation.

This surge of popularity in the artifacts sold by the museum refutes critics' concerns, asserting that the transforming consumer trends are likely to reduce the influence that cultural heritage carries. However, as these souvenirs gain popularity across different parts of the world, the heritage boom will reflect that the commercialization of national heritage, traditions, and historical artifacts enables the amplification of cultural significance in the modern world.

Student Reporter

Trio Animoso at EIU: Revisiting My Dream



Irene Kim
Grade 11
University Laboratory High School

I started learning to play the harp two years ago with the dream of joining my high school orchestra by junior year — this year. My freshman self would be disappointed to find out that a lot of other things come with being a junior; I couldn't afford to prioritize "orchestra" when choosing my school schedule. Nevertheless, I still live with the dream of performing with an orchestra, and I often sign up to attend orchestra performances at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), which is nearby.

A major con of orchestra concerts, though, is that harps are either not included at all or barely audible; the only time I ever recognized them in a piece was when two were playing together. And so, when my harp teacher informed me of a flute, viola, and harp trio coming to play nearby in Charleston, Illinois, I immediately saved the date.

On Tuesday, August 26, the Trio Animoso, or "group of three spirits" consisting of flutist Sophia Jean, violist Julian Seney, and harpist Subin Lee, performed a program of five pieces at Eastern Illinois University's Recital Hall. Entering the venue, I was surprised to see how small it was; with only 175 seats and the stage up close, the room was much



Flutist Sophia Jean, violist Julian Seney, and harpist Subin Lee, the Trio Animoso, perform at Eastern Illinois University's Recital Hall. [Source: Gyeong Mi Doh]

more private than I'd expected. However, once their first piece began, I quickly realized that this was a deliberate choice. The

size of the venue allowed for the sounds of the three soft-sounding instruments to travel directly to the audience instead of getting

lost among louder instruments like they do in orchestral performances in larger venues.

Because the stage was so close to the audience, something peculiar caught my eye: the musicians would tap a black device with their feet every now and then. At first, I supposed it might be some sort of microphone or recording device, but I noticed that they frequently tapped mid-play. Then, another question suddenly came to me: How were they playing for 5 minutes straight without turning their sheet music? Just then, I noticed that reflecting off the back wall of the stage, on each of their music stands were not sheets of paper but tablets. With that, it all fell into place: the black devices on the stage floor were for page turning. This made sense for harp because playing requires both the hands and feet. I began envisioning myself on stage, vigorously stepping on the black circle amidst plucking the strings and moving pedals.

Seeing the musicians up close and hearing each instrument's unique sound — especially the harp — in the blended harmony, the performance allowed me to step away from everything else and reconnect with my dream — to imagine myself on stage as my future orchestral harpist self.

Student Reporter

ASB: The Minds Behind It All



Katie Lee
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The Associate Student Body, ASB, plays a crucial role in everyday school life. So what does this group do? And why are they so important? From planning pep rallies, homecoming, and spirit weeks to coordinating fundraisers, ASB is behind it all to ensure that the students enjoy school life, and that the events are unforgettable. Having served as my High School's Historian last year, I serve as the High School Vice President for the 25-26 school year.

ASB is made up of eager students wanting to make a positive change in the school community and students through leadership positions with specific responsibilities: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Historian, Spirit Commissioner, etc. My main job last year as the High School Historian was to take pictures of every event at our school. In addition, I managed three of our school's main Instagram accounts - the ASB account, the High School account, and the school's overall main account. Throughout the year in this position, I gained crucial leadership

experience, and I realized the importance of communicating with my peers.

As the High School Vice President, I help support the President in any way possible, and also manage all the club constitutions. In addition, my job is to say the morning announcements, including the pledge and daily school information, when and if the President is unable to do so. In addition, this role has taught me to take initiative, stay well organized, and communicate efficiently between the students and ASB, all while maintaining a positive school environment.

Other than leadership roles, every member of the ASB, from the cabinet members to the class representatives, comes together to plan for future events. For example, ASB plans homecoming. Homecoming is one of my school's biggest events. The ASB will plan the theme, the food that is going to be served, and much more. They also plan what will be used for decorations, how the ticket system will work, and the prices for the tickets. In addition, the ASB also plans every



Students at the Science Academy STEM Magnet enjoy a Pep Rally, put together through the hard work of the ASB. [Source: Author, Katie Lee]

single spirit week. They figure out which week to host it and the different themes for each day.

What can you get out of being a part of ASB? ASB is a great avenue to gain leadership experience. It also teaches you how to work as a team and how important it is to listen and communicate with others. There are many opportunities to serve in ASB, from being a cabinet

member to being a class representative. Aside from the great experience, you also make new friends. Speaking from my own experience, I've made quite a lot of friends being a part of ASB since middle school, whether it's from sitting next to them during meetings, or from going to events together, and working with each other. So, I encourage you to join!