U.S. CAPITOL VISITOR GUIDE

The U.S. Capitol is open from
8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Monday – Saturday.
It is closed on Thanksgiving Day,
Christmas Day, New Year's Day,
and Inauguration Day.
www.visitthecapitol.gov

U.S. CAPITOL
visitor center

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WELCOME TO THE U.S. CAPITOL

Your visit to the historic U.S. Capitol begins as you enter the Capitol Visitor Center. With its soaring spaces and skylight views of the Capitol dome, the Visitor Center welcomes you on a journey of discovery. The Capitol is home to the U.S. Congress and its two legislative bodies, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate. Through films, exhibits, and tours, you will learn about how Congress works, how this magnificent building was built, and how citizens can participate in this extraordinary experiment called representative democracy.

The Capitol stands as a monument to the American people. It is where the issues facing the nation are considered, debated, and written into law. The Capitol also houses an important collection of American art, and it is an architectural achievement in its own right. History is made at the U.S. Capitol, and the Capitol Visitor Center is your entryway to that history.

DINING & GIFT SHOPS

Restaurant (Lower Level): Freshly made soups, salads, specialty entrées, pizzas, sandwiches, desserts, and beverages reflect the diverse bounty of America. *7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Monday – Saturday*

Gift Shops (Upper Level): A unique selection of merchandise inspired by the Capitol's art and architectural treasures, fun and educational gifts, books, jewelry, and exciting custom-designed products make excellent souvenirs. *8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Saturday*

GUIDED TOURS OF THE CAPITOL

Guided tours of the Capitol begin at the Orientation Theaters on the lower level of the Capitol Visitor Center. "Out of Many, One," a 13-minute film, illustrates how this country established a new form of government, highlights the vital role that Congress plays in the daily lives of Americans, and introduces you to the building that houses the U.S. Congress.

Tours are free, but tour passes are required. *8:45 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., Monday – Saturday*

Advance Passes: Tours may be booked in advance online at www.visitthecapitol.gov, through the offices of your Senators or Representative, or through the Office of Visitor Services by calling (202)226-8000.

Same-Day Passes: A limited number of passes are available each day at the tour kiosks on the East and West Fronts of the Capitol or at the Information Desks in Emancipation Hall on the lower level of the Visitor Center.

WATCHING CONGRESS IN SESSION

Hours: The Senate and House Galleries are open to visitors whenever either body is in session. In addition, the House Gallery is open 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday, when the House is not in session.

Passes: Passes are required to enter either gallery at any time. Visitors may obtain gallery passes from the offices of their Senators or Representative. Gallery passes are available for international visitors at the House and Senate Appointment Desks on the upper level.

EXHIBITION HALL (LOWER LEVEL)

Here you can explore the only exhibition in the country dedicated to telling the story of Congress and the construction of the U.S. Capitol. Exhibit highlights include rarely seen historic documents from the National Archives and the Library of Congress, artifacts from around the country, and an 11-foot-tall touchable model of the Capitol dome. You may also watch the action on the floors of both chambers of Congress at the House and Senate theaters when Congress is in session. Numerous interactive stations allow you to discover more about Congress, its Members, and the Capitol. *8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday – Saturday*

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Explore the history of Congress and the Capitol firsthand through lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on programs. Check updated schedules at the Information Desk for the day's activities.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS ACCESS

Visitors have direct access from the Capitol Visitor Center to the historic Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress, one of the nation's great treasures, via the Library of Congress Tunnel. The entrance to the tunnel is located on the upper level of the Visitor Center near the House Appointment Desk.

THE CAPITOL GROUNDS

The Capitol is set amidst 58.8 acres of winding paths, memorial trees, inviting benches, and beautiful flower plantings that are changed seasonally. The grounds today reflect a plan completed in 1892 by renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. As you stroll the grounds, note the magnificent bronze and stone fountains and lanterns on the East Plaza, which were restored to their original glory during construction of the Capitol Visitor Center.

The Capitol grounds have played host to presidential inaugurations, Independence Day concerts, and the yearly visits of more than three million people. We invite you to enjoy this historic landscape.

VISITOR TIPS

All areas of the Visitor Center are smoke free.

Strollers and Baby Changing: Strollers are permitted in the Visitor Center and baby-changing stations are available in each family restroom.

Public Telephones and ATMs: These are located outside each Gift Shop.

Foreign Languages: Visitors may request listening devices for foreign-language versions of the films and the exhibition at the Information Desks.

Visitors with Disabilities: Visitors may request wheelchairs from Capitol Visitor Center staff wearing red vests or at one of the Information Desks in Emancipation Hall. Sign-language interpreting for tours is available when booked in advance. Listening devices with audio description of the films and exhibition are available at the Information Desks. All films have open captioning.

Service Animals: Service animals are allowed in the Visitor Center and the Capitol.

LOCATION & HOURS

The Capitol Visitor Center, the new main entrance to the U.S. Capitol, is located below the East Plaza of the Capitol between Constitution and Independence Avenues.

Visitors: The Visitor Center is open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday. It is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Inauguration Day.

Official Business: Visitors with official business appointments may enter the Visitor Center as early as 7:15 a.m.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Before entering the Capitol Visitor Center, all visitors are screened by a magnetometer and all items that are permitted inside the building are screened by an x-ray device.
The following items are strictly prohibited:

- Any bag larger than 14" wide x 13" high x 4" deep
- Aerosol containers
- Any pointed object (knitting needles, letter openers, etc. Note: pens and pencils are permitted.)
- Cans and bottles
- Electric stun guns, martial arts weapons or devices
- Food or beverages of any kind (The restaurant is available to satisfy your dining needs.)
- Guns, replica guns, ammunition, and fireworks
- Knives of any size
- Mace and pepper spray
- Non-aerosol spray (Prescriptions for medical needs are permitted.)
- Razors and box cutters

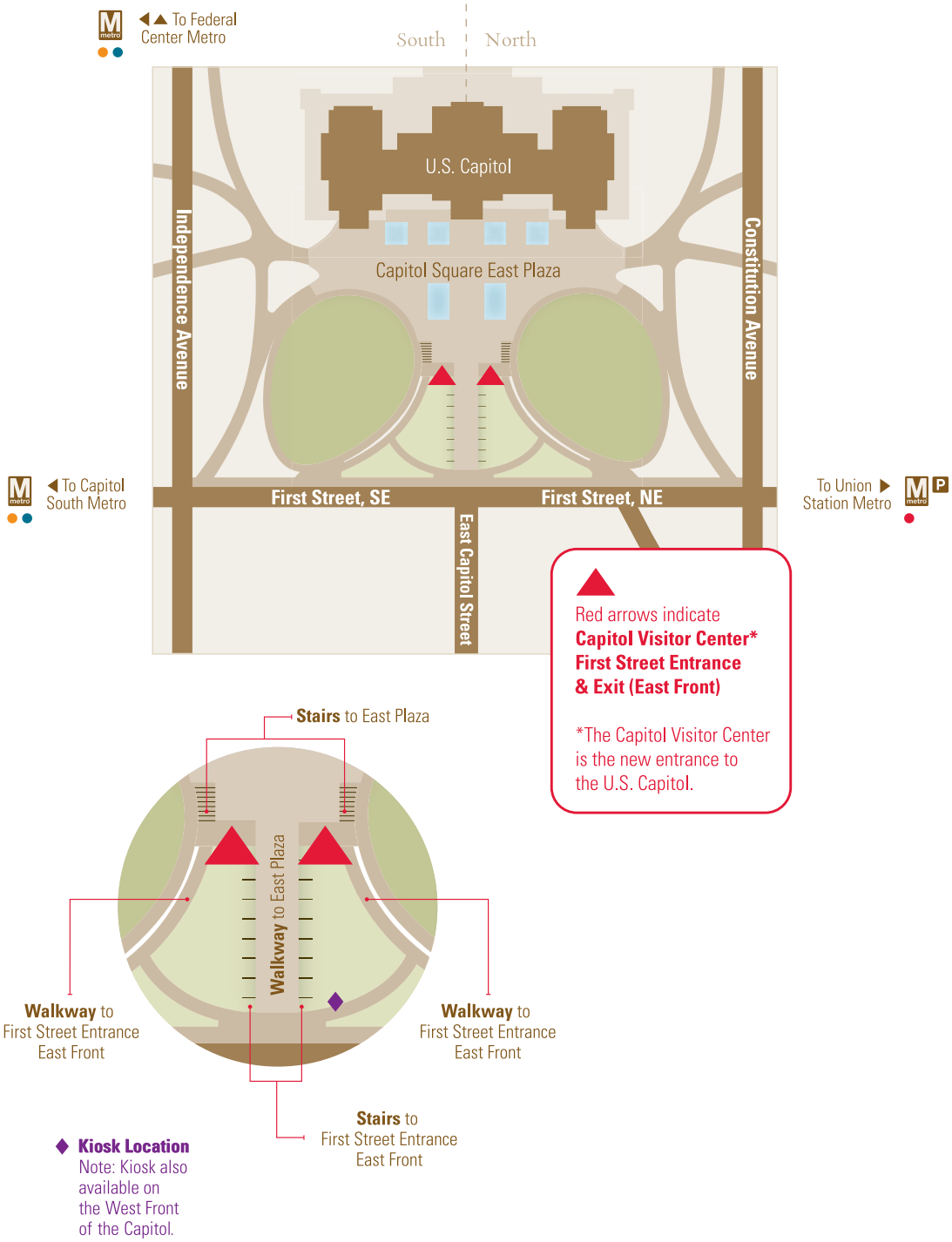
The following are allowed in the Capitol Visitor Center and the Capitol, but not in the Senate and House Galleries:

- Battery-operated electronic devices (Medical devices are permitted.)
- Cameras
- Creams, lotions, or perfumes
- Strollers
- Video recorders or any type of recording device

Respecting Capitol Art

During your visit, help preserve the Capitol's statues and other works of art. Enjoy looking at them, but do not touch them – each touch does some damage.

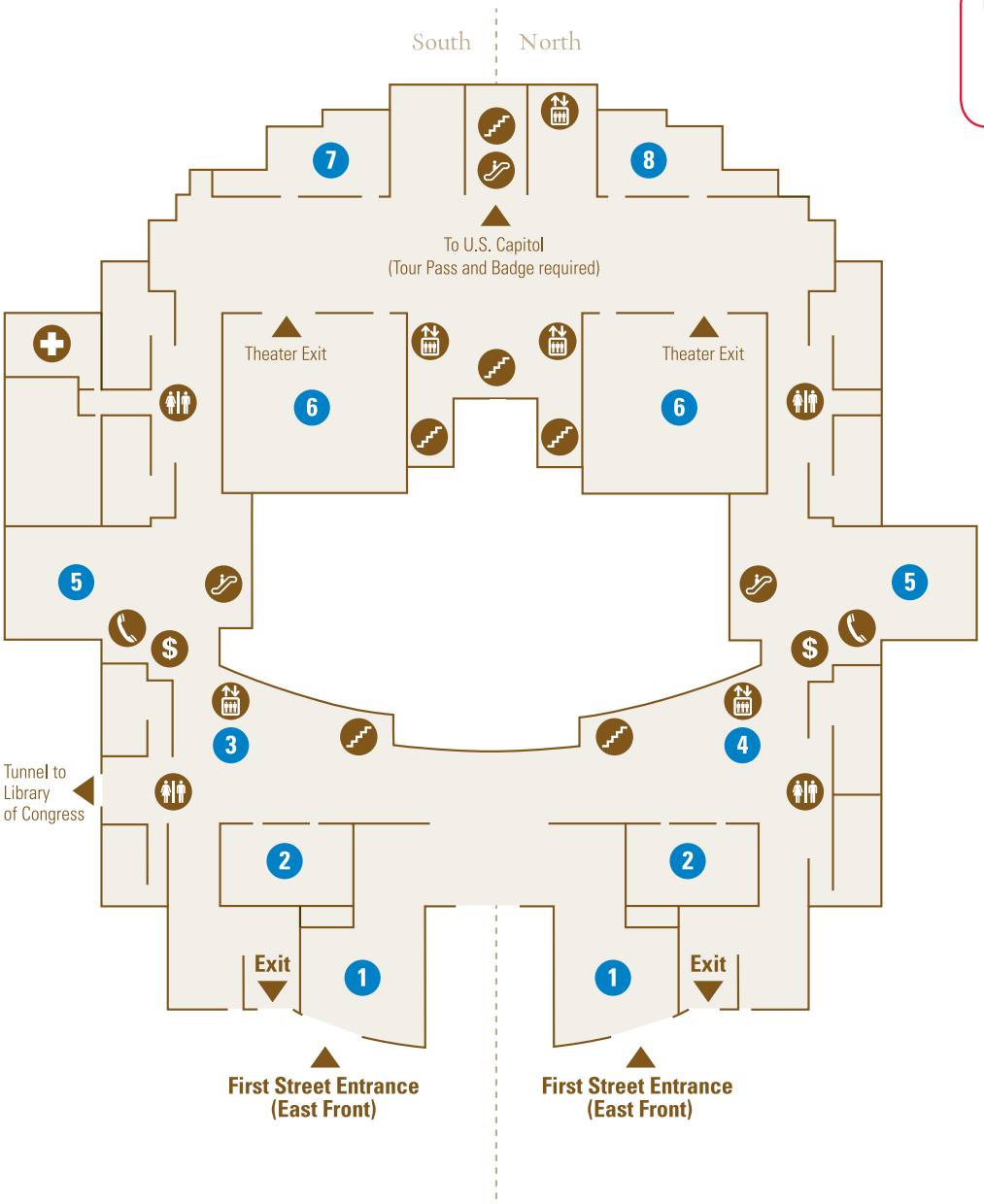
CAPITOL LOCATION

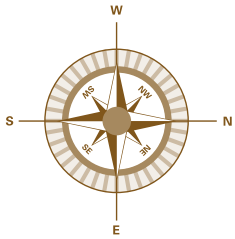


UPPER LEVEL

In the event of an evacuation:

- Proceed to the nearest exit – exit up stairs
- Follow direction of U.S. Capitol Police
- If assistance is needed, seek U.S. Capitol Police help





*Areas of Interest**

1. Screening
2. Coat Check
3. House Appointment Desk
4. Senate Appointment Desk
5. Gift Shops
6. Orientation Theaters
7. House Gallery Staging
8. Senate Gallery Staging

*All emergency exits are located on the Upper Level

Legend

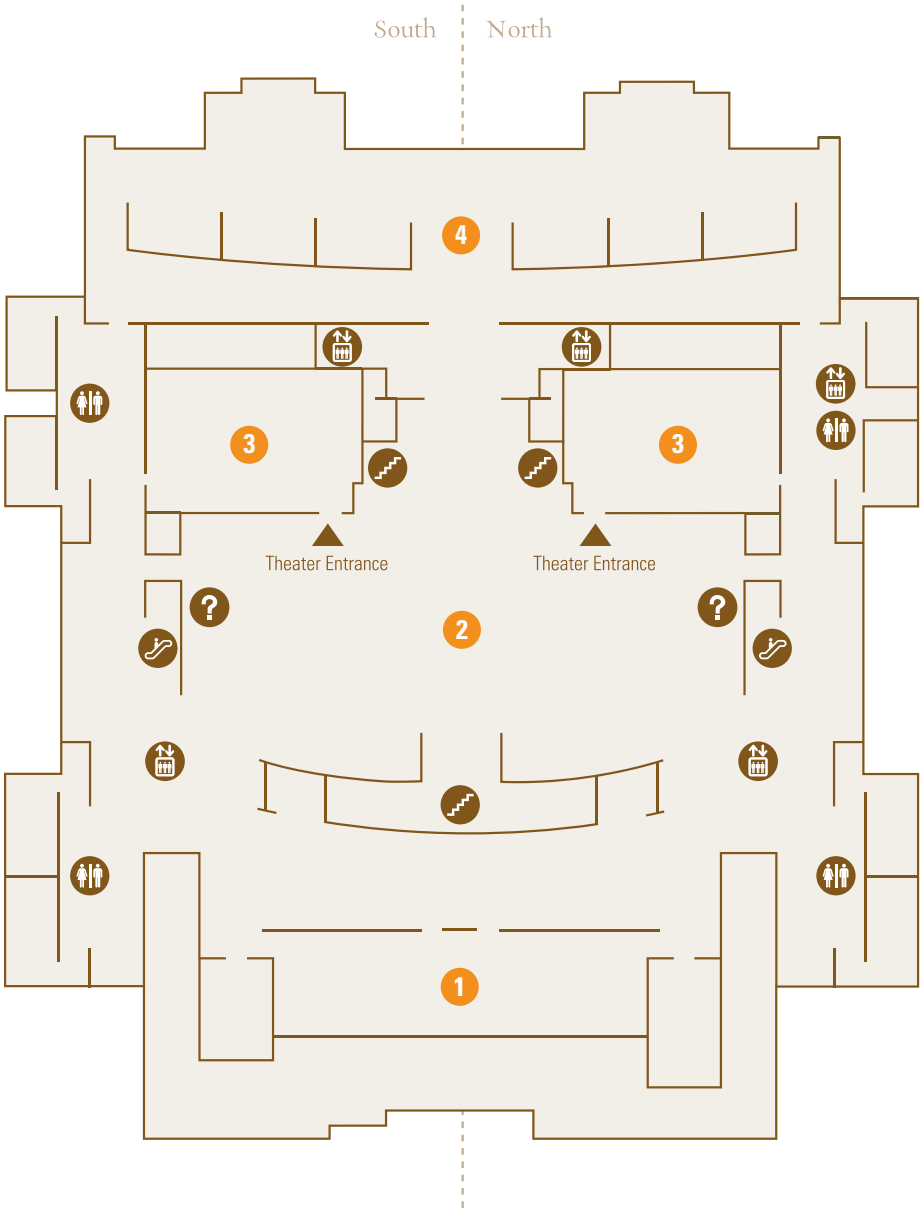
- ATM
- Elevator
- Escalator
- First Aid
- Information
- Restrooms*
- Stairs
- Telephone

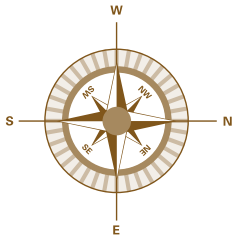
*Family restrooms are available.

LOWER LEVEL

In the event of an evacuation:

- Proceed to the nearest exit – exit up stairs
- Follow direction of U.S. Capitol Police
- If assistance is needed, seek U.S. Capitol Police help





Areas of Interest

1. Restaurant
2. Emancipation Hall
3. Orientation Theaters
4. Exhibition Hall

Legend

- ATM
- Elevator
- Escalator
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*Family restrooms are available.