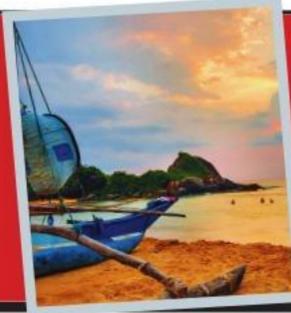


ON SUNDAY Travel Mail



THOMAS COOK LISTS OUT POCKET-FRIENDLY HOLIDAYS

On the occasion of Children's Day Thomas Cook India has listed some affordable domestic and international destinations that students can visit. The destinations include Shillong, Darjeeling, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates.

A WEEKEND IN

WASHINGTON, DC



The Smithsonian Castle with cherry blossoms in full bloom

From history to hedonism and everything in between, there is plenty to keep you busy in the American capital

By Kiran Mehta

THIS is the home of POTUS, one of the most powerful men on Earth. You too can walk the corridors of power as you check out the Capitol building, glimpse the Lincoln Memorial, soar to the top of the Washington Memorial for a bird's eye-view of the White House. Add to the power-play, a touch of drama and a hint of intrigue when you go undercover at the International Spy Museum.

Immerse yourself in nature's bounty at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History; fawn over the works of Leonardo da Vinci, Vincent Van Gogh and many others at the National Gallery of Art. Or just sit back and take in the fabulous view of the placid Potomac river from a vibrant restaurant on the wharf.

From history to hedonism and everything in between, there's plenty to keep you busy in Washington DC. Here's how to make the most of the capital in a flying visit:

SPY MUSEUM: Think only Arya Stark met the 'faceless men'? Full-face latex masks are real and you can check them out at the International Spy Museum. Don't miss the bugged shoes where a pair of polished brogues records every word you say; Mata Hari's iconic bodice - a metal bra-of-sorts worn by the dancer who was dubbed the 'ultimate seductive spy'; the 'lipstick pistol' which twists open only to shoot the enemy. This single shot weapon was used by the KGB during the Cold War.

There's also an Indian connect; a corner dedicated to Noor Inayat Khan, a British spy who traced her roots to Tipu Sultan.

But the best part of this museum is that you get to be a spy (minus the tool-kit!). Even as you enter, you're given a brand new identity; you're de-briefed and sent off on a secret mission (mine was to uncover highly classified information from targets based in Egypt). Whether you're successful or not, you still get to

keep the badge.

NATIONAL MALL: Also known as 'America's front yard', the National Mall is a national park which showcases historic monuments and structures. As you walk the park, it's almost as if you've stepped into an American history book. The first to capture your attention will probably be the 555-foot-tall Washington Monument, made of 36,000 blocks of stone. Sign up - in advance - for a tour and you'll be taken to the observation deck in a high-speed elevator that makes your ears pop; 50 storeys in a minute!

From the observation deck you get a bird's eye view of the city and can spot the White House, Capitol and Lincoln Memorial. Placards and artifacts in this area also reveal the making process of the building. Turns out the original plans were that of a pantheon, but eventually the obelisk took shape.

Within the Mall you cannot miss the Lincoln Memorial, one of the most iconic images of the district. This shrine to Abraham Lincoln is also where Martin Luther King delivered his famous, 'I have a dream speech'. There's an engraving

FACT FILE

GETTING THERE: Fly Turkish Airlines from Delhi/Mumbai to Dulles Airport. The airport offers easy connectivity - Uber, Super Shuttle - to downtown DC

STAY AT: The Kimpton Carlyle Hotel Dupont Circle, a boutique property located in a leafy neighbourhood, a short-walk from the metro. The hotel features the Riggsby, an upscale American restaurant helmed by Chef Michael Schlow named 'Best Chef in the Northeast', by the James Beard Foundation.

that marks the exact spot at which the leader stood and gave his inspirational address. Look out for the dome that is the Capitol Building, a symbol of American democracy. You can gawk the neo-classical architecture or sign up for a tour that takes you through

The Washington Monument, made of 36,000 blocks of stone, grabs your attention

GST CUT BRINGS RELIEF TO HOTEL INDUSTRY

According to a release, the rate of occupancy has increased at Amatra By The Ganges and Amatra Dunsvirik Court. The reason behind this is attributed to lower rates, which helped travellers and guests stay for longer. Another reason has been the recent cut in GST that has made a positive impact on the hotel industry and made the tariffs more appealing to the travellers.



RECHARGE YOUR BODY AND SOUL WITH AYURVEDIC DETOX THERAPY

THE Niraamaya Spa, at Niraamaya Retreats in Kovalam, Kumarakom and Thekkady is offering a two week Ayurvedic seasonal detoxification procedure which repairs severe damage done to your body. Rs 30,000 onward

Take in the fabulous view of the placid Potomac river from a restaurant on the wharf



The National Museum of Natural History houses a treasure of exhibits to take your breath away

certain parts of the Capitol, while revealing the history and also some legends behind this icon.

THE SMITHSONIAN: There are museums and then there's the Smithsonian. It isn't just one site, but a total of 19 museums, 21 libraries, nine research centres and a zoo. Don't miss the National Museum of Natural History where you'll be blinded by the sparkle of the Hope Diamond, a 45.52 carat rock mined from India, and said to bring bad luck to its owners, including the

infamous Marie Antoinette.

The Butterfly pavilion makes for a delightfully colourful visit. If sea-life is what interests you, head to the Sant Ocean Hall where you'll learn that jelly fish are even older than dinosaurs; that the largest giant squid ever to have been discovered was a whopping 43 feet and was spotted in Japan.

The Mall also features the National Gallery of Art which is rated among the best art museums in the World.

DISTRICT WHARF: The District Wharf is the home of America's oldest, continually operated, open-air fish market. Peek into the many stalls and you'll be tempted to bite into the crab cakes, the shrimp tacos, or a Cajun crawfish. You could pack up finger food, then find a quiet corner with a bench that overlooks the waters to enjoy a quiet meal. If you'd rather paint the town red, choose from one of many restaurants and lively bars that dot the wharf.



Anguilla has the finest sea and sand in the Caribbean islands, worthy of a surrealist painter's palette

ISLANDS IN THE CARIBBEAN YOU MUST EXPLORE

Revealing the tiny, tranquil isles most tourists haven't heard of

SOME of the first destinations that spring to mind when thinking about the Caribbean probably include the Bahamas, Barbados and Jamaica. But there are plenty of lesser-known idyllic islands that are equally worth a visit.

COLOURFUL ANGUILLA

Anguilla has the finest sea and sand in the Caribbean - the former worthy of a surrealist painter's palette and the latter so sumptuous that walking can become aerobic exercise. Anguilla is by no means cheap but it has a good range of hotels and villas, many of them striking and stylish - from faux-Moorish to modernist fantasy in white concrete - and enviably good restaurants in styles from French to oriental.

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

The British Virgin Islands are a cluster of 60 soaring volcanic peaks and coral outcrops that barely make it above the surf, lying at the eastern tip of the Greater Antilles.

If a flight beyond an airline hub can often get you to a smaller, less developed island, in the British Virgin Islands a boat journey takes you even further - to tiny cays and magnificent, deserted bays.

LITTLE CAYMAN

A sliver of scrub-covered coral rock that just breaks the surface of the western Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba and to the west of Jamaica. Little Cayman has just one coastal road and more iguanas than people, and is extremely laid-back and quiet - there are just a handful of hotels in its protected south-western corner. It also has the Caribbean's best scuba-diving.

ST BARTS

The Caribbean's most sophisticated island, it is a small, rocky and surprisingly beautiful blip in the north-eastern region, where the young and beautiful linger in waterfront bars or saunter past in a mere hint of a bathing suit. St Barts has dozens of excellent restaurants and shops, and a clutch of extremely stylish hotels. However, the majority of visitors stay in luxury villas.

LA DESIRADE

The 'Desired One' - a table-top of limestone standing proudly off Guadeloupe, the French island in the eastern Caribbean. It is dry, scrubby and quiet, but expect to eat well. Stay at Hotel Oasis, where they serve delicious fresh fish at their beachside restaurant.

— Daily Mail



Little Cayman has just one coastal road and is really laid-back and quiet