



The heart and home of our nation

Take a look inside the famous mansion where the President lives and leads.

It may be the most famous address in the world: 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in our nation's capital, Washington, DC. The building has been called the President's Palace, the Executive Mansion, and the People's House, but we know it as the White House. It has been the home and workplace of every President since 1800.



John Adams

The symbol of a nation

George Washington, the first President, chose the location for the home of our new government in 1791. It took eight years to build. Slavery still existed at the time, and many slaves were used as laborers. In 1800, President John Adams was the first to move in. President James Monroe had to have the mansion rebuilt a few years later, after British troops set it on fire during the War of 1812. In 1902 President Theodore Roosevelt renovated the building, adding the West Wing as an office space. He also turned a nickname into an official title: the White House.



WOW!
The White House has 132 rooms (including 35 bathrooms), eight staircases, 28 fireplaces, and 147 windows.

PAINTING PROJECT
The White House requires 570 gallons of Duron's Whisper White paint to cover its outside surface.

Two grand entrances
The North Portico (above) has four front columns under a triangular roof. It's the entrance for formal events like state dinners. On the opposite side of the building, the South Portico (right) has six columns, a curved shape, and the Truman Balcony on the second floor.

Beloved staff member
Wilson Roosevelt Jerman started working as a cleaner at the White House in 1957 and retired as a butler in 2012. He served 11 Presidents. When he died in 2020 at age 91, he was remembered as a kind man who made many First Families feel at home.



The West Colonnade

Seat of government

The White House buzzes with activity. About 3,000 staff members keep the place running, including government aides and administrative staff, as well as butlers, groundskeepers, housekeepers, chefs, and the President's valet (personal assistant). The President and close advisers regularly meet in the Cabinet Room, and they discuss urgent, top-secret matters in the Situation Room. The President holds outdoor events in the Rose Garden, and the press secretary updates reporters in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room. Foreign leaders are honored with dinners in the State Dining Room and served dessert from a special kitchen known as the "chocolate shop." If the President and First Family ever needed to escape from danger, there are tunnels and bunkers under the building.



The residence

The life of the First Family

The President's family lives in the Executive Residence, located on the top two floors of the central wing. From there, the President can easily walk to the Oval Office through the West Colonnade, also called the "45-second commute." Life in the White House is exciting but comes with some limitations. It can be difficult to get any privacy, for example, and there's pressure to always be on your best behavior. The family can't leave the building without Secret Service agents, whose job is to keep them safe 24 hours a day. The family also can't open any windows, for security reasons. But there are many advantages, like living in a grand home, having a front-row seat to the workings of our government, and being part of US history.



The Oval Office

An office, a home, and a museum

The White House has three wings and sits on 18 acres of land. The Oval Office, added to the West Wing by President William Taft, is the President's office. There, our nation's leader can sit at the famous Resolute (which means determined) desk while signing bills into law or calling world leaders. The East Wing holds the offices of the President's spouse. The lower floors of the central wing have offices and elegant event spaces. Throughout the building, rooms are filled with valuable paintings, sculptures, and historic furniture. Before the pandemic, about two million tourists visited the White House each year.

Fun at the White House

It's easy to forget that the huge building is also a family's home. Presidents have made changes to it through the years, giving the First Family plenty to do, indoors and out.



The Kennedys' trampoline

Places to play

Some Presidents added outdoor play areas for their children, like a trampoline (John F. Kennedy), tree house (Jimmy Carter), and swing set (Barack Obama). The First Family can also use a jogging track, swimming pool, and tennis and basketball courts.



Nixon bowling

Indoor entertainment

President Franklin Roosevelt added a movie theater in the East Wing where the family and their guests can have private screenings. In the game room, they can play pool or table tennis. There's even a private bowling alley that President Richard Nixon enjoyed.



President Ronald Reagan with his family

Room to roam

In the residence, there's a map room, a music room designed for President Bill Clinton to play his saxophone, a sun room, and several guest bedrooms, like the Lincoln Bedroom. The massive lawn outside is a great place to play catch, run around with pets, or build a snowman.

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