

When in Washington... go the Club

 By [Brian Berkman](#)

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Washington DC is an elegant, formal city. A place of lawmakers, dignified museums and monuments to America's greatness but also to great human losses. Visitors can feel and see the cogs of power at every turn. Washington DC makes me want to walk more upright than other cities and dress more smartly. Dressing casually in DC seems to be wearing a tie without a jacket.

So the contrast at one of the city's most prestigious hotels, The AAA Five Diamond, Ritz-Carlton Hotel Washington, DC is palpable. Even more so within the exclusive confines of The Ritz-Carlton Club.

Where everyone knows your name

The 9th Floor suites have direct access to The Ritz-Carlton Club, a rarefied yet unexpectedly friendly and casual space. Staff get the balance between being personable and efficient spot-on and seem to know just how long to engage before imposing. I much prefer being asked my name rather than my room number (largely because I hardly ever remember the room I'm in) but at the club staff also introduce themselves by name which in the formality of the city is refreshingly casual. The impact of this intimacy is that hotel staff very quickly feels part of one's own team and because they're pre-empting your next request, another cappuccino or selection of chocolate desserts appears almost before being asked for.



A Ritz-Carlton suite is just the place to enjoy all the amenities.



The experience begins at reception and when you write your entry in the guest-book, your signature could rub shoulders with that of a Prince, or a former Secretary of State.

Once inside, everything on offer is available at no additional charge. Canapé-style portions of delicious foods keep flowing from the kitchen. Exquisite Alaskan smoked salmon, so finely sliced it looks like coral gossamer strands curled around your fork. If you have a sweet tooth, the dessert presentation in the evening will make you think you're in Charlie's Chocolate Factory. When one of the staff noticed I wasn't eating dessert she asked if she would bring me fruit with sugar-free dipping chocolate or a cheese platter.

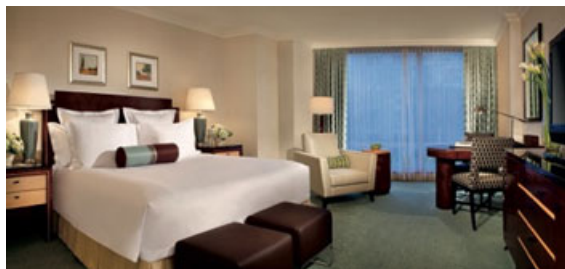
Free Wi-Fi, and why not?

Not only is Wi-Fi included with Ritz-Carlton Club access but so is free use of the adjacent Equinox Sports Club. This standalone health club redefines the fitness experience. A full-sized basketball court, 25m² pool and squash courts are among the almost 1,000m² facilities. Bootcamp, Metcom3 and Tabata classes are offered and the spa-sized change-room and shower facilities include towels, sauna, steam and Kiehl's products.

The Ritz-Carlton's Westend Bistro and, in fact, all the hotel's food outlets including the Club Lounge, Lobby Lounge, in-room dining and banqueting offer a 'lite' menu where preparation is as important as the ingredients. Whenever possible they use

all-natural, fresh, low-calorie ingredients, prepared in healthy ways, to create lighter, nutritious offerings that don't compromise on taste.

Look who's here



Your comfort is the staff's prime concern - and they will know your name, as you will theirs.

Hotel guest-books are displayed in the library and read like the whose-who of power. Prince Harry and Henry Kissinger were on the pages when I looked at it.



Just the place to get fit.

With the biggest ballroom in the city, it makes sense why this property is so sought after for banquets and balls. I popped into the ballroom while it was being set up for a sumptuous event and even in the early stages of the set up the room had been transformed into an elegant snowscape that would make Santa feel entirely at home.

Despite its 300 rooms, the hotel feels like a boutique hotel, which is largely because of its intimate spaces rather than towering lobbies. This property is located in the exclusive West End area at 22nd and M Streets, but there is also a smaller, sister-property in Georgetown.

For more information or reservations for The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, DC, call the hotel directly at (202) 835-0500, a travel professional, or visit [The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, DC](#).

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