



Main Street,  
Annapolis, Maryland  
PICTURE: Shutterstock/Sean Pavone



# As easy as ABC(D)C

A road trip through Annapolis, Baltimore and Washington DC reveals the many layers of history behind the America250 celebrations, finds **Tracey Davies**

**A**s the US gears up for its big birthday, there's no better way to mark 250 years of independence than in true American style: hitting the highway for a road trip exploring one of its most historic regions.

Following in the footsteps of those who shaped a nation, this route through the East Coast triangle of Annapolis, Baltimore and Washington DC is a great suggestion for US-bound clients inspired by the fireworks and festivals of Independence Day but who want to delve deeper into the stories from centuries of history.

## APPEALING ANNAPOLIS

To really get under the skin of American independence, you need to tread the same paths as its Founding Fathers, starting with Annapolis, Maryland's capital city, set on the shores of Chesapeake Bay. Winding down to the waterfront, the cobbled streets, red-brick mansions and colourful clapboard houses of its historic district feel like wandering through a Disney set.

Maryland State House, the oldest state capitol still in continuous use, was built between 1772 and 1779, just as unrest was fomenting into a full-blown war of independence between the British and the 13 colonies that would go on to form the first United States. My journey starts, ironically, where the conflict came to an

end, since this state house was the place where George Washington resigned as commander-in-chief of the Continental Army in 1783 and where the Treaty of Paris was then signed, ending the Revolutionary War.

Of course, an army marches on its stomach – so I'm delighted to discover there are some tastier sides to the history of Annapolis. First, we gear up with grits 'n' gravy at

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Chick & Ruth's Delly, which has been feeding Maryland's governors since 1965. The retro diner on Main Street has dishes named in their honour, including The Hogan's Hero, a cheesesteak tribute to long-time governor Larry Hogan.

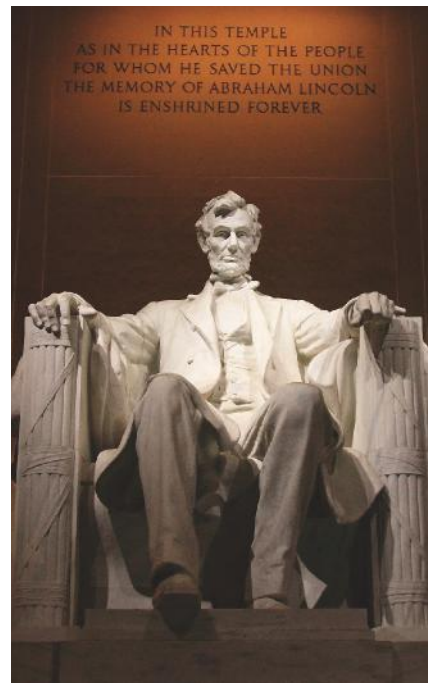
Then it's time for a tipple or two in Middleton Tavern, which opened in 1750 and was a favourite haunt of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. Whether that's because it was a quiet spot to plot rebellion or because of its epic Maryland crab cakes, I really couldn't say. ➤

# DESTINATIONS

## THE US | CAPITAL REGION



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: United States Capitol, Washington, DC; Lincoln Memorial Statue; USS *Constellation*, Baltimore; and Fort McHenry, Baltimore PICTURES: Shutterstock/Volodmyr Tverdokhlib, Dwi Yoga Pujo Laksono, Walt Bilous, Felix Lipov



### BOOK IT

**North America Travel Service** offers a 14-night Colonial America fly-drive, taking in Washington, Gettysburg, Shenandoah National Park, Colonial Williamsburg, Annapolis and Baltimore, from £2,816 based on two adults sharing. The price includes British Airways flights from Heathrow departing in October, four-door car hire and accommodation including the Washington Hilton and the Historic Inns of Annapolis. [northamericatravelservice.co.uk](http://northamericatravelservice.co.uk)

**Audley Travel's** Classic Capital Region self-drive starts in Philadelphia, travelling to Gettysburg, Shenandoah National Park and Williamsburg, before stays in Annapolis at Historic Inns of Annapolis, in Baltimore at The William Fell, Tapestry Collection by Hilton, and in Washington at the Royal Sonesta Dupont Circle. The 17-day route costs from £5,465 including flights and car hire. [audleytravel.com](http://audleytravel.com)

### STAR-SPANGLED BALTIMORE

It's less than an hour's drive north to Baltimore, the biggest city in Maryland. As a fan of *The Wire*, I was expecting gritty streets with a seedy underbelly – but I find a buzzy, attractive city with a cool vibe and a real sense of its own history.

My base at The William Fell, a Tapestry Collection hotel by Hilton in Fells Point, is perfect for seeing the best of Baltimore in just a couple of days. It's a scenic 30-minute stroll along the waterfront to Inner Harbor where *USS Constellation*, the last surviving sail-only warship built by the US Navy and the only Civil War-era ship still afloat, is docked. Commissioned in 1855, the three-masted warship still has working cannons, which are fired throughout the day – much to the fright of those lunching at Inner Harbor's waterfront restaurants – and dozens of hammocks hanging below deck. I half-expect Jack Sparrow to swing by on a rope.

From here, I hop on a Lime bike and cycle to Locust Point and Fort McHenry, which protected Baltimore in the War of 1812 against us Brits. Now a national monument, it inspired poet Francis Scott Key to write *The Star-Spangled Banner*, which went on to become the US national anthem. I wander around the ramparts with the tune running through my head, before catching the folding of the flag ceremony as the sun goes down.

Aside from boats, ballads and battles, Baltimore has an impressive beer scene. I spend a delicious couple

of hours sampling hazy IPAs at The Ministry of Brewing, a cavernous brewery housed in a former church, before raising a glass to Edgar Allan Poe at one of the poet's favourite drinking holes in Fells Point, dubbed The Horse You Came In On Saloon.

### DC'S STATE SECRETS

No road trip exploring America's story would be complete without a stop in the capital, Washington, DC. Swapping my Zest rental car for a pre-booked Big Bus Tour, I tick off many of DC's must-see sights: the White House, Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument and Arlington National Cemetery among them. I manage to squeeze in a couple of hours at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, home to the Wright brothers' Flyer and Amelia Earhart's Vega 5B aircraft.

As a hotbed of espionage – DC has produced more spies than anywhere else in the nation – The International Spy Museum is another essential stop. I test my spy skills in an RFID-enabled undercover mission and fail miserably. Mata Hari has nothing to worry about.

I console myself with a Nixon-style martini (seven parts gin to one part vermouth, shaken not stirred) in the whiskey bar at the infamous Watergate Hotel – an appropriate toast to my historic AB(DC) road trip. **TV**

Find out more at [visitmaryland.org](http://visitmaryland.org) and [washington.org](http://washington.org)