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Celebrate past presidents by visiting Philly spots

By Carolyn Wyman

FOR DOTHIS

Nowadays Presidents' Day is mostly about Presidents' Day sales. But Philadelphia is one of a few places in the country where you can instead spend the holiday weekend interacting with places and things that honored presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln saw, touched, and wore. Here's an itinerary for seeing some of the most interesting Washington/Lincoln artifacts in Center City. (Go on Presidents' Day to catch Monday-only special programs and free admission at many locations.)

Head to the **Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent** (15 S. Seventh St., Tue.-Sat. only, www.philadelphiahistory.org), which has Lincoln's hat and Washington's desk currently on view. The hat is not Lincoln's iconic top hat but a fedora he acquired as a disguise after learning of an assassination plot while on his 1861 preinaugural visit to Philadelphia. This museum also owns the desk Washington sat at while conducting the nation's business in the President's House, two blocks away.

Walk to **The President's House** (524-30 Market St., www.ushistory.org/presidentshouse), an outdoor (so dress appropriately, or freeze) exhibit on the footprint of the mansion that served as the nation's White House for most of Washington's two terms. Check out its displays and videos about the nine slaves who kept his house humming. Then head east and drink in the irony of the Washington quote hanging on the side of the **National Museum of American Jewish History** (101 S. Independence Mall East, free admission through February, www.nmajh.org): "Happily the Government of the United States ... gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance." This quote is actually not about slavery but about religious freedom and comes from a supportive (and still relevant) letter Washington wrote to the Hebrew Con-



Take a selfie with Washington at Signers' Hall at the National Constitution Center.

gregation of Newport, R.I., in 1790. The original letter is on the museum's fourth floor.

Speaking of religion, Washington worshipped semi-regularly at both **Christ Church** (20 N. American St., www.christchurchphila.org) and **St. Peter's Church** (313 Pine St., www.stpetersphila.org). You can sit where he and Martha did at both places, although only St. Peter's pew 41 (actually owned by their friends, the mayoral Powells) is original.



Washington's "Rising Sun" chair can be found at Independence Hall.

The one at Christ Church is at least in its original location, marked by a plaque. (Note: Both churches are closed Presidents' Day.)

Independence Hall (520 Chestnut St., www.nps.gov/inde) offers one-stop shopping for Washington/Lincoln artifact scavengers. Enter the Assembly Room to see the "Rising Sun" chair Washington occupied while presiding over the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Benjamin Franklin is reportedly responsible for the optimistic name, though in the midst of the contentious debates, he admitted to fearing that its sun was setting.

Staying in the Assembly Room, Google "Lincoln's address at Independence Hall" and read the extemporaneous but prescient speech referencing assassination that Lincoln gave here on Washington's birthday in 1861 (the plot that prompted him to buy the fedora was evidently top-of-mind). Better yet, show up in front of Independence Hall on Monday at 2:15 p.m. to listen to a Lincoln impersonator deliver the speech to a company of historically costumed Union Leaguers.

Walk next door to **Congress Hall**, enter the second-floor Senate chamber and Google "Wash-

ington's Second Inaugural address," then read it where he did: At 135 words, it's even shorter than President Trump's. Washington's inaugural crowd was also much smaller than Trump's (the Donald would be happy to know) — Washington actually rode to the ceremony alone; the low-keyness, the apparent result of his reluctance to serve a second term.

Walk to the **National Constitution Center** (525 Arch St., www.constitutioncenter.org) and go into the main exhibit gallery to look at a Lincoln-signed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, the guest book from the Get-

tysburg address ceremony and a mourning ribbon worn when Lincoln's funeral procession came through Philly. While you're there, visit Signers' Hall, featuring life-size bronze sculptures of all who were present at the Constitution's signing, and take a selfie with George Washington (at 6 foot 2 inches and standing more or less upright, he's the tallest dude in the room).

Reward yourself after a hard day of history-hunting by downing Gen. Washington's Tavern Porter beer at **City Tavern** (138 S. Second St., www.citytavern.com), a re-creation of the elegant eatery where Washington and his fellow Founding Fathers regularly ate and drank. Local brewer Yards based this beer on a recipe Gen. Washington detailed in a letter to his officers.

Extra credit assignment: Drive out to **Valley Forge National Historical Park** (1400 N. Outer Line Dr., King of Prussia, www.nps.gov/vafo) in King of Prussia and tour the building that served as Gen. Washington's headquarters during the winter of 1777-78. Go on Monday to participate in special kids-focused birthday celebration activities, including sampling of a fruitcake-like "Great Cake" Martha likely served at George's 46th birthday celebration at Valley Forge, and the chance to "play" Continental Army soldier under the command of a Washington impersonator.



Take a tour at Valley Forge National Historical Park. Digital Ranch