



Best new hotels in Washington, D.C.

Wait until Obama settles in, and you'll find some great places for your stay

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Who cares that inauguration attendees are still scrambling for a hotel room in D.C.? Anyone who wants to explore Washington's fresh new start (or is just crowd-averse) won't be there for January's historic event, anyway. Wait for the new president to settle in to the White House and you'll find some great new (and newly renovated) hotels for your own stay.

The Affinia Liaison Capitol Hill — a newcomer to D.C. as of April 2008 — was booked solid within 72 hours of the historic Nov. 4 results (though they still get hopeful callers). So wait until after the festivities to appreciate the Affinia's unique, only-in-D.C. features, like its power broker-inspired interiors, large black-and-white oil paintings of iconic leaders, and series of satirical photos show a "day in the life of a Washington liaison."

"The artwork may inspire Obama supporters to work even harder toward change," jokes General Manager Dani Elhachem.

The sleek new Donovan House, named after "Wild Bill" Donovan, a 20th-century general and grandfather of the CIA, has replaced a Holiday Inn in the Thomas Circle neighborhood. The hotel is more fox-fur than foxhole, with Sferra fine linen sheets, Keihl's bath products, and in-room Dean & DeLuca rations to keep the troops happy.

Unveiled just before Election Day, the Hyatt Regency completed a \$7-million lobby overhaul in late October 2008, and opened its new restaurant, Article One, named for the first article of the U.S. Constitution (which outlines the powers of Congress). Maybe "Bailout Bar" will be the next addition to the Capitol Hill property?

Not all of D.C.'s hotel news is about re-namings and new holdings — some iconic properties are getting a facelift, like the 1926 St. Regis Hotel, D.C., whose preservation efforts were unveiled last February. Designers restored the original, hand-painted ceilings in the lobby and ballroom of this T+L 500 winner, while giving the hotel a technology update that includes Wi-Fi.

Another historic gem, the 1923 Jefferson Hotel will re-emerge from a renovation in summer 2009. The hotel still holds fast to its collection of antiques, period artifacts and documents signed by President Thomas Jefferson, while adding high-tech features like televisions disguised behind mirrors.

Following Obama's lead with ambitious environmental policies, the hotel purifies its water in-house, where it's bottled and sealed on-site. And for those who prefer something stronger, Quill bar serves up herbal-infused alcohols and artisanal house-made mixers.

Also undergoing a renovation is the Four Seasons Hotel Washington D.C. in Georgetown is wrapping up a \$40-million renovation just in time for the January festivities. The overhaul includes the hotel's sixth-largest (and most lavish) room, the Royal Suite 1,k— ideal if the Lincoln Bedroom is already booked when Obama's high-profile supporters (like Jennifer Aniston, George Clooney, or Oprah) come to town.

And if you won't be in D.C. until fall 2009, Starwood is expecting to open W Washington, D.C., in the former Hotel Washington, by then. Known for its innovation, trendy clientele, and hip décor, the new property will feature a see-and-been rooftop terrace with views of the White House, where guests can Obama-spot while sipping cocktails.

So set your sights on D.C. now, before the buzz on these hotels has you waiting until 2012 to get a room.

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