

National Harbour

Location: Maryland, USA **Designer:** Sasaki Associates **Photographer:** Craig Kuhner, Ed Wonssek **Completion date:** 2008 **Site area:** 1,214,057 sqm



1. Marina
2. National Plaza
3. The Balcony
4. American Way
5. National Gateway

National Harbour is a mixed-use complex located along the Potomac River just south of Washington, DC. While convenient to key tourist sites, National Harbour is a resort and convention destination that offers an alternative to the urban experience of Washington proper.

The project is evocative of the region's great urban places such as Georgetown, Annapolis, Maryland and the Baltimore Inner Harbour. The vehicular entrance to National Harbour – called the National Gateway – is designed to provide a sense of transition and arrival. Motorists pass through a monumental gateway portal featuring a site-specific sculpture by Albert Paley, across a series of cobblestone paving bands and under the dappled light of a densely planted birch grove before arriving at the project's urban street grid.

A major pedestrian thoroughfare called Grand Avenue, inspired by Barcelona's famed Las Ramblas, establishes the primary spine for the project. Defined by an allee of majestic plane trees, Grand Avenue showcases multiple iconic fountains, numerous pieces of public art, and a series of small-scale vendor kiosks. The colour and texture of the avenue's paving set the stage for its terminus – a waterfront plaza which steps down to a natural sandy beach along the Potomac. Both this avenue and the waterfront plaza are designed as flexible spaces – capable of hosting the activities of daily life while also accommodating major festivals. These key urban spaces are framed by retail storefronts and restaurants, promoting both street activity and urban interaction.

Right: Rising from the banks of the Potomac River in Prince George's County, Maryland, National Harbor is a mixed-used development

