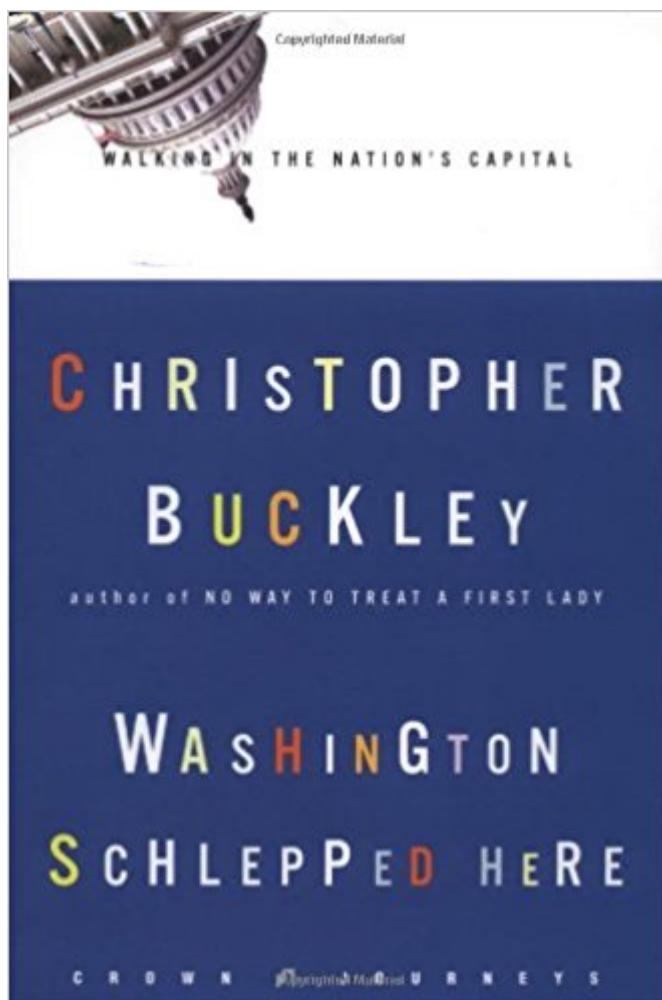


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# Washington Schlepped Here: Walking In The Nation's Capital (Crown Journeys)



## Synopsis

The father of our country slept with Martha, but schlepped in the District. Now in the great man's footsteps comes humorist and twenty-year Washington resident Christopher Buckley with the real story of the city's founding. Well, not really. We're just trying to get you to buy the book. But we can say with justification that there's never been a more enjoyable, funny, and informative tour guide to the city than Buckley. His delight as he points out things of interest is contagious, and his frequent digressions about his own adventures as a White House staffer are often hilarious. In *Washington Schlepped Here*, Buckley takes us along for several walks around the town and shares with us a bit of his "other" Washington. They include "Dante's Paradiso" (Union Station); the "Zero Milestone of American democracy" (the U.S. Capitol); the "Almost Pink House" (the White House); and many other historical (and often hysterical) journeys. Buckley is the sort of wonderful guide who pries loose the abalone-like clichés that cling to a place as mythic as D.C. Wonderfully insightful and eminently practical, *Washington Schlepped Here* shows us that even a city whose chief industry is government bureaucracy is a lot funnier and more surprising than its media-ready image might let on.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Buckley (*No Way to Treat a First Lady*) presents an engaging introduction to the highlights of monumental Washington in this collection of walking tours. While some readers might have appreciated a stroll through some of the capital's less-visited quarters (his tours barely venture

beyond the Mall), Buckley digs up enough historical tidbits about even greatest hits stops like the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum and Washington Monument to let veteran tourists see them freshly. His approach-combining the stories of those who built Washington and the stories of those who ruled it-pays off in rich anecdotes about, for instance, Pierre L'Enfant, the city's designer, who died in poverty, and James McNeill Whistler, who created the Freer Gallery's Peacock Room in a defiant act of artistic license. It's useful, too, to have a guide who's a former Washington insider (Buckley worked as a speechwriter to Vice-president Bush during Reagan's first term) and actually knows what it's like to steal stationery from Air Force One. Buckley's tendency to let jokes tell the stories is occasionally confusing: for instance, he writes, "Congress immediately passed a law prohibiting vice-presidents from speaking in verse; it remains on the books today." If he's not kidding he should elaborate, and if he is, well, he should be funnier. This isn't a critical guide to Washington-Buckley wears his conservative and patriotic credentials on his sleeve-and it is unlikely to appeal to anyone looking for insight into the Washington its residents actually inhabit, but its anecdotes, alternately frivolous and solemn, make a good companion to D.C.'s best-known attractions. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Semireverent, semisatirical, this perambulation of the monuments of Washington, D.C., takes readers from Union Station, down the Mall, and across the Potomac to Arlington National Cemetery. Your guide yearns to be buried there, but, stymied by the military-service regulation for interment, civilian Buckley confides his plot to have his ashes scattered on the grounds, preferably near the tombstone of Pierre L'Enfant, the designer of the city. Is Buckley's wish a gesture of solidarity with L'Enfant, who moldered in a pauper's grave until a guilt-wracked posterity in 1909 restored his sepulchral dignity? Probably not, since Buckley has prospered with a string of humorous novels mocking Washington's ways, and Washington does nothing if not take itself seriously. So no monuments to writers, please: mostly generals, presidents, and war casualties are honored here. Buckley recaps their deeds, and the deed of getting a particular memorial built, admitting chagrin for conducting "Buckley's Death March." No apology is needed, for Buckley has restored Washington, D.C., as our object of both awe and laughter. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

I'm currently planning a trip to DC this winter, and this book was recommended to me as a "must read" for anyone going to DC, or who just likes trivia or off-beat history. The book is full of walking tours centered around the mall - map included! I don't know that I'll retrace Christopher Buckley's

steps, but the information he gave will certainly make my visit more enjoyable... providing that the lingering effects of the recent earthquake and hurricane won't get in the way.

Buckley is the best. As a DC'er, really enjoyed.

I have not read anything by Christopher Buckley before, but I am, as of this book, a fan. Buckley offers a light-hearted romp through Washington, D.C. He's quite witty and a great writer. I also think he does a fine job of passing on some interesting tid-bits of information. It's kind of like a right-wing version of Vowell's "Assasination Vacation." She has more information, but Buckley is funnier.

Let's get to my main gripe about this book first. I didn't realize Mr. Buckley would constantly be pouring so much praise on the Reagans, the Bushes, the Cheneys et al ad nauseam. To call his treatment of these people partisan would be an understatement. On the other hand, he did get to page 117 of this slim volume before he attacked Clinton by name. He had warmed up earlier, however, by wondering what is wrong with politicians who come from Arkansas. Buckley apparently does like some Democratic politicians but only dead ones since he seems to like John and Robert Kennedy. At least he doesn't trash them. If you can work around all this gushing, when Mr. Buckley gets down to business and starts walking, he manages to give a lot of information about a truly beautiful and great city, sometimes with great wit. He can be quite funny and entertaining. In Washington an agenda means "sinister intentions, for example. I found out why the White House is so called, that Thomas Jefferson was a very poor speaker and that George Washington was the only president whose slaves were freed at his death. Mr. Buckley discusses the design and layout of Washington in some detail, does a good job I thought on The Vietnam Memorial and both the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials. But by the time we had gotten to the Franklin Roosevelt Memorial, I didn't expect much. Never mind that there is beautiful artwork here by both Robert Graham and George Segal, world class artists. That all goes unmentioned. Mr. Buckley remembers instead that Roosevelt was always spoken of in the family he grew up in as "that man" and Mrs. Roosevelt as "that woman." Well, in the family I grew up in they were kin to the "Holy Family" and remain so. Mr. Buckley finishes up with a visit to Arlington National Cemetery. Parts of this chapter are very moving. I must admit though that I keep coming back to that image of the Cheneys' appearance at a publication party for Lynne Cheney celebrating her children's book AMERICA-A PATRIOTIC PRIMER. I'm glad it was Buckley's night out and not mine.

Flippant, shallow, self-absorbed. I appreciate a laugh, but it's hard to read a stand-up routine: you have to hear it delivered, and this reads like a transcription. There was definitely some information to be gleaned, but in order to do so, the reader must wade through "yuck, yuck, wink, wink" in every sentence. Subtlety is not this author's strong suit. The style was a barrier to the content.

I am neither ardent Republican nor Democrat. But, I am an ardent Christopher Buckley fan. I've read most of his books and find him to be unfailingly witty and insightful. And, if you've ever seen him doing his schtick in person, you'd realize that he doesn't take himself that seriously. So, if you scrutinize this book looking for evidence of partisanship, you're surely going to find it. But consider the way Buckley presents it: screaming across the room to get Dick Cheney's attention, he is self-aware enough to acknowledge that his behavior is a source of embarrassment to his children. And as for those who might criticize his penchant for name-dropping, consider the following passage: "For two years I had a White House pass that allowed me everywhere except, of course, the second-floor residence. One time, hearing that Jimmy Cagney was about to get the Medal of Freedom in the East Room - where Abigail Adams hung her wash out to dry, where Lincoln's body lay in state, and where I once sat behind *Dynasty* star Joan Collins while she and husband number four (I think it was) spelunked in each other's mouths with their tongues while Andy Williams crooned 'Moon River' - I rushed over from the Old Executive Office Building just in time to see President Reagan pin it on the man who had tapped out 'Yankee Doodle Dandy' and was now a sad, crumpled, speechless figure in a wheelchair. I remember Reagan putting his hand on Cagney's shoulder and saying how generous he had been 'many years ago to a young contract player on the Warner Brothers lot.'" That's typical of the book and of Christopher Buckley's personal style. Just the right combination of name-dropping, humor and reverence. He's silly when can be, and respectful when he needs to be. His 'Washington Schlepped Here' demonstrates a child-like enthusiasm for museums, an insatiable willingness to learn from Park Rangers and other tour guides, and a respectful reverence for George Washington and (especially) Abraham Lincoln. And despite growing up in a family where Franklin Roosevelt was known only as 'that man,' he pays tribute to the enormity of FDR's achievements when visiting both the FDR Memorial and the Holocaust Museum. For Christopher Buckley fans and newcomers alike, this book is a great read.

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