

# TRAVEL *60* YEARS WEEKLY

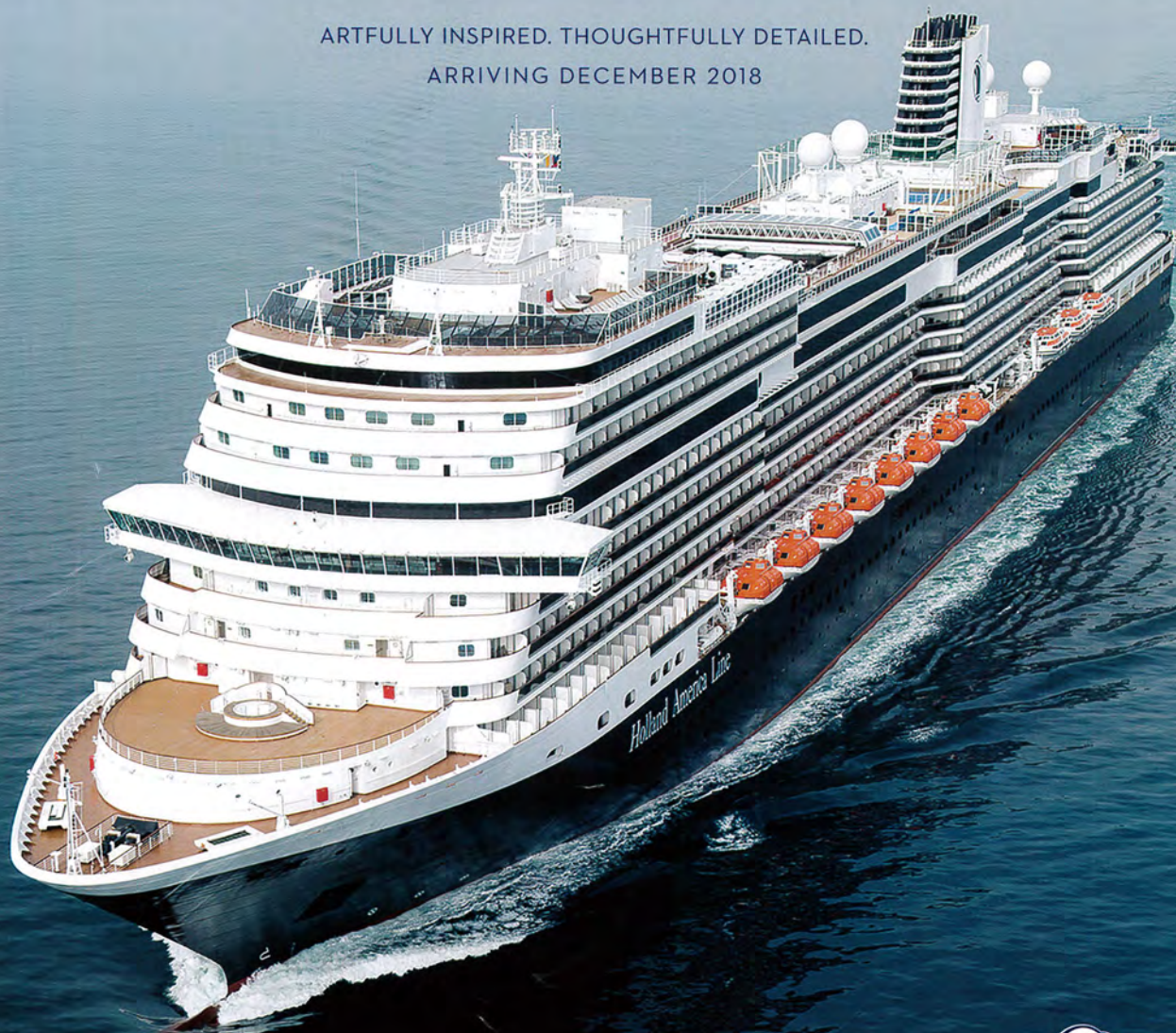
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# Mixed-use waterfront districts a capital idea in Washington



Above, the first phase of Washington's \$2.5 billion mixed-use Wharf district opened in October and has three hotels, from left: an InterContinental, a Hyatt House and a Canopy by Hilton. Top right, a guestroom at the InterContinental Washington D.C. — The Wharf. Bottom right, the city's first Thompson Hotel, shown here in a rendering, is set to open in the Yards waterfront district in 2020.



By Danny King

WASHINGTON — The Potomac River's Washington Channel is less than a mile and a half from the U.S. Capitol, but the maritime feel and natural setting of the city's new Wharf waterfront district feel much farther away from the traditional D.C. vibe.

A far cry from the neoclassical buildings that line the National Mall, the view from an Embark D.C. Potomac cruise offered the greenery of East Potomac Park, planes taking off from Washington Reagan National, stately riverfront homes occupied by the three- and four-star generals at Fort McNair and the most notable symbol of the new breed of destinations built to draw tourists and locals alike to this southern edge of the city: the Wharf.

With its first phase opening in southwest Washington last October and the second phase breaking ground this year, the \$2.5 billion mixed-use district will eventually stretch a mile along the Washington Channel.

Combining nationally known eateries like Shake Shack with local players like sandwich specialist Taylor Gourmet, seafood restaurant Hank's Oyster Bar and high-end bike retailer District Hardware and Bike, the Wharf also has three hotels: an InterContinental, a Hyatt House and the first U.S. outpost of Canopy by Hilton.

Last fall also marked the opening of the 6,000-seat Anthem concert venue at the Wharf, christened with a Foo Fighters performance. This spring, the venue will host concerts by artists including Kygo and Jack White.

The Wharf is the latest development in the triangular-shaped waterfront area south of the Mall. Punctuated by the 2008 opening of the Nationals Park baseball stadium, it will get two more attractions this year: The 20,000-seat Audi Field, fu-

ture home of the D.C. United soccer team, will open just east of Fort McNair in July; in the fall, the International Spy Museum will move into a new building that more than doubles its current space in the northwest part of the city.

"I never understood why the waterfronts weren't the most developed parts of the city," said Elliott Ferguson, CEO of Destination DC, the city's convention and tourism bureau. "The Wharf is really a continuation of Washington, D.C., reclaiming its waterways on both the Anacostia and the Potomac."

About a mile east of the Wharf, a 48-acre parcel along the Anacostia is being redeveloped into a mixed-use project called the Yards, a nod to the nearby Navy Yard. The area, which housed a wharf, sugar refinery and brewery in the 19th

century before becoming part of Navy Yard, will eventually have about 3,400 residential units and 400,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space. A waterfront park opened there in 2011, and the city's first Thompson Hotel is scheduled to open in early 2020.

Wharf developer PN Hoffman is hoping the destination will be an additional draw for the capital, which has enjoyed a long stretch of positive tourism growth. In 2016, the most recent year tracked, Washington recorded its seventh straight year of tourism growth with a record 22 million visitors, according to Destination DC. That number almost surely rose last year, when the city hosted both the inauguration of President Donald Trump and the Women's March.

In the meantime, Simon Antoine, gen-

eral manager of the Wharf's InterContinental hotel, said occupancy has been above 80% since last fall's opening, with about 70% of guests coming from the U.S. and 30% international.

While Antoine expects the combination of daytime water activities, such as kayaking, boating and paddleboarding, and nighttime shows at the Anthem to spur many locals to explore the city's southwestern waterfront, he said there already have been signs that the new attractions are drawing more tourists as well.

For example, he said, the InterContinental had an influx of guests from the West Coast when the pop singer Morrissey performed at the Anthem last fall.

"I didn't expect people to come from that far," he said. "But the space is spectacular."

