

Tired of working from home? These sunny patios and shady gardens offer the perfect change of scenery (as well as WiFi).

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After 18 months of working from home, you could probably use a change of scenery. And if you're still not sure when you're going back to the office, you could definitely use one.

Even those who made the patio of a nearby coffee shop or cafe their remote remote-working place of choice in 2020 probably spent more time at home in recent months, choosing socially distanced air conditioning over the endless humidity, pop-up thunderstorms and the threat of smartphones melting in the sun.

But as fall begins, it's time to take advantage of the cooler, pleasant weather and find a new outdoor work retreat, whether to spend a few hours focusing on a specific project or just to provide a much-needed break away from the same four walls. Buzzy coffee shops, peaceful gardens, an office-like environment — no matter your preferred space, you can find it in D.C.

(It goes without saying that you should follow your employer's precautions when connecting to WiFi networks, such as using VPN and multifactor authentication.)

Studio Outdoors

Just outside the District's International Square, there's a tropical escape that doubles as an office. Studio Outdoors, a pop-up workspace and art installation, is open through mid-November. The space, which was designed by local artists No Kings Collective, provides a festive, airy splash of color that almost convinces you you're working in Hawaii, or at least South Carolina: brilliant green turf, lots of plants, fluorescent awnings, funky shade umbrellas and a variety of high-top tables and other seats. (The pink-and-green accents were "certainly new to my palate," general manager Joseph Nicynski jokes, noting that they match his daughter's wardrobe.)

The outdoor space is an extension of Studio by Tishman Speyer, which is a permanent, indoor co-working location across the street. Working at Studio Outdoors is free, but online reservations are required. Among the options: a solo spot with an umbrella, a high-top table with room for four and a pergola that can accommodate eight people. All can be booked for 30 to 120 minutes. Walk-ups are also accepted, depending on availability, Nicynski says.

On an August afternoon, a couple of small groups were meeting, and solo workers were scattered throughout the space. It was easy to focus on work and felt like logging online from a tropical backyard that far exceeded a tiny apartment balcony. — *A.H.*

Open Monday-Thursday. 919 19th St. NW, between K and I streets. yourstudio.com.

- WiFi? Free, high-speed, secure.
- Outlets for plugs? Charging battery packs are provided.
- Bathrooms? Available at Studio, which is across the street.

The Wharf

A combination of scenic workspaces, people watching and the potential for happy hour make the Wharf a solid option. The entire waterfront development, from the Fish Market down to the under-construction Wharf 2.0, offers free WiFi, including on the piers that extend into the Washington Channel. Tables at the District Wharf amphitheater and benches along the longer piers are more traditional options for firing up your laptop, though you can also grab a swing if you're feeling playful.

A cortadito from Colada Shop can get you through a deadline, and restaurants and bars also offer copious amounts of outdoor seating, including at the dockside Cantina Bambina, and the tall, sawhorse-like tables on the patio at Hank's on the Wharf — perfect for those who prefer a standing desk. — *F.H.*

Open daily. 760 Maine Ave. SW. wharfdc.com.

- WiFi? Free, high-speed, unsecured.
- Outlets? Not on the piers; some restaurants do have access.
- Bathrooms? The Wharf has free public restrooms, including below Tiki TNT and Cantina Bambina.

D.C. Public Libraries

Reference books and the hottest new novels stopped being the main attractions at public libraries a long time ago. The amenities at D.C.'s Southwest Library, which opened in May, include an "Innovation Lab" with 3-D printers; rows of computers; child-friendly activity spaces; and glass-walled conference and study rooms. Then there's the building itself: Airy, scandi-modern, full of stylish furniture. Upstairs, near the adult fiction and displays of new arrivals, there's a covered balcony with tables and Adirondack chairs overlooking a tree-filled park and playground. It's fairly quiet during the day, at least until nearby schools let out.

While the goal may be to provide readers with a place to lose themselves in literature, there's nothing to stop you from firing up your laptop and powering through a deadline, no library card required. Just resist the temptation to get up every so often and browse the stacks — or save that for a reward once you've finished.

Other D.C. Public Library branches with outdoor WiFi include the main Martin Luther King Jr. Library downtown, which added an extensive rooftop garden as part of its recent renovations, and Cleveland Park, where a 2018

renovation added an outdoor “Reading Garden” as well as two balconies. — *F.H.*

Southwest (open daily), 900 Wesley Pl. SW. dclibrary.org/southwest. Martin Luther King Jr. (open daily), 901 G St. NW. dclibrary.org/mlk. Cleveland Park (open Monday-Saturday), 3310 Connecticut Ave. NW. dclibrary.org/clevelandpark.

- WiFi? Free, unsecured.
- Outlets? None outdoors.
- Bathrooms? Yes.

The Roasted Boon Co.

This Eritrean-owned shop at the corner of Rhode Island Avenue and 11th Street opened last year with a welcoming, neighborhood vibe: sunny floor-to-ceiling windows; fun, lime green accents; and a “SHAW” mural that nods to its location. The coffee beans are roasted on-site, and the drink menu offers the usual Americanos and cortados alongside the “boon of the day” (“boon” is the Tigrinya word for coffee) and Shahee, an Eritrean tea spiced with cinnamon, cloves and cardamom.

The outdoor space boasts several tables, outfitted with comfortable mesh chairs, fit for those wanting to settle in for a long time. (You’ll find less-comfortable metal bar stools indoors.) On a recent Sunday afternoon visit, meetings among friends and colleagues seemed commonplace outdoors, while indoors was quieter, with people reading or typing on laptops. What’s especially great about Roasted Boon is its hours: The cafe is open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. during the week, for those who have early or late starts to the work day. — *A.G.*

Open daily. 1018 Rhode Island Ave. NW. roostedboon.com.

- WiFi? Free, high-speed, secure.
- Outlets? Plentiful, including at the bar seats indoors.
- Bathrooms? Yes.

Creative Grounds DC

This Bloomingdale cafe offers a bit of everything: coffee, tea, snacks — and an immaculate, calming energy. You can spot the cafe from blocks away, thanks to a large sign proclaiming “ART & COFFEE” along the railing. You step down from the sidewalk to the ground-level cafe, which gives the outdoor patio a bit of privacy. The outdoor area has a few tables and umbrellas, plus a window where you can order your drinks if you’re still wary of going indoors.

Inside, there’s a bit of an art gallery vibe, with minimalistic white walls, hung artwork from local artists and a few plants tastefully staggered throughout the cafe. Only 20 people can be inside at a time and masks are required, with the exception of active drinking or eating. Two wooden communal tables are the centerpiece of the space, with stylish couches, bar-level tables and chairs and outlets lining the walls. Creative Grounds is a quiet spot where you can focus entirely on your work or your craft. — *A.G.*

Open daily. 1822 North Capitol St. NW. creativegroundsdc.com.

- WiFi? Free, high-speed, unsecured.

- Outlets? Indoors only.

- Bathrooms? Yes.

Dumbarton House

One of Washington's finest Federal-era homes, Dumbarton House is operated as a museum by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, who have furnished it in the style of the early 1800s. The grounds have beautiful gardens, which are open to the public daily from dawn to dusk. (The museum is open Friday-Sunday.)

The East Park, entered from the corner of 27th and Q streets, is a charming space with wooden park benches arranged along a circular walkway, surrounded by colorful plantings. A re-creation of a 19th-century herb garden also has stone benches. Up a flight of stairs is the North Garden, which offers views of the rear of the house from its wide lawn. A semicircular niche in the north wall, decorated with cherubic statues, is one of the most unexpected places to work in Washington — it feels like you've snuck your laptop into the setting of a Jane Austen novel.

The important thing to note is all the places to work at Dumbarton House offer bench seating, with no tables. If you don't want to crane your neck at your laptop, it may not be the best option. While access to the grounds is free, Dumbarton House does ask for donations to help keep the site open, with QR codes on signs at the entrance. — *F.H.*

Open daily, 975 Q St. NW, dumbartonhouse.org

Open daily. 2/15 Q St. NW. dumbartonhouse.org.

- WiFi? Free, but unsecured.
- Outlets? None.
- Bathrooms? None outdoors.

Jolt 'N Bolt

The walls in this Adams Morgan haunt are lined with coffee kitsch: paintings of coffee cups, decorative mugs and '90s-style wallpaper depicting espresso drinks. The ceiling has been painted in trompe l'oeil clouds and the shelves are pleasantly cluttered. It's one of those places that feels like it has been around for ages. (It's been open for 15 years, which in coffee shop time, might as well be a century.)

You can work next to the cafe in a cozy brick alleyway with fresh air, reliable WiFi and limited visual distractions. The narrow space has several two-person tables, accented with potted plants and warm hanging lights. It's best for focusing on quiet work — any conversations there will be overheard (in fact, you might want to bring headphones in case someone else gets chatty).

Jolt 'N Bolt's menu has smoothies, health juices, and acai bowls. It's the kind of spot you come not for high end brews but for the down to earth, homey atmosphere, and the feeling that you could hang out for as long as you need. — *K.A.*

Open daily. 1918 18th St. NW. joltnboltcoffee.com.

- WiFi? Free.
- Outlets? One outside, several inside.
- Bathrooms? Yes.

Heurich House

The gardens behind the landmark Victorian mansion and house museum are the site of the Heurich House's annual German-style Christmas market as well as weekly craft beer happy hours — both uses honoring Christian Heurich, a German immigrant who became Washington's largest brewer around the turn of the 20th century. But the tranquil gardens, which face a side street south of Dupont Circle, are open every weekday to anyone who wants to sit at decorative metal benches among the wildflowers or under shady trees. There's also one picnic table, for those who prefer to rest their laptop somewhere other than their lap. No matter where you decide to perch, you might want to have bug spray handy.

Heurich House is most peaceful early in the week — I've rarely seen more than one or two other visitors — though museum staff say up to 20 people can work here, socially distanced and taking advantage of the password-protected WiFi. Pro tip: Time your visit for Thursday or Friday afternoons, when you can work for a few hours before easing into the 1921 happy hour at 5 p.m., where craft beer and cider are served, and the carriage house, which includes an exhibit about the Christian Heurich Brewing Company, is open until 8 p.m. — *F.H.*

Open Monday-Friday, weather permitting. 1307 New Hampshire Ave. NW. heurichhouse.org.

- WiFi? Free and secure.
- Outlets? None.
- Bathrooms? None. Facilities in the carriage house available after 5 p.m. Thursday and Friday.

Mercy Me

Mercy Me features indoor and open-air co-working spaces with funky furniture and decorations in classic, muted autumn colors (think dark berries and burnt oranges) — an ideal spot for those who thrive among a perfectly curated, Pantone palette working aesthetic. Located in the lobby of the Yours Truly DC hotel, Mercy Me is a cafe, restaurant and bar, but the combination isn't overwhelming. There are two outdoor spaces: The front patio is smaller, connected to the indoor space through an open air entrance; the back patio is a more secluded courtyard, tucked between buildings, with colorful chairs, tables and umbrellas and a few elusive outlets.

Boasting a menu with Call Your Mother bagels, breakfast tacos ("best spiced chicken sausage in D.C.," said the Texan who accompanied me) and an array of pastries (try the guava vigilante, a croissant filled with guava jam), the cafe portion lives up to its self-declared "sorta South American" label. Dinner and drinks are served from 5 to 10 p.m. daily,

so when you've packed up your work, stay put and get a cocktail (or two). — *A.G.*

Open daily. 1143 New Hampshire Ave. NW. mercymedc.com.

- WiFi: Free, high-speed, unsecured.
- Outlets: Available inside, with a few on the outdoor patio.
- Bathrooms: Yes.

Emissary

This Dupont-area cafe comes in two sizes: big and “baby” (yes, that is what they call the latter). Both spots have outdoor spaces with a mix of picnic tables and bistro-style seating, and serve breakfast food, cocktails and drinks — but they come with different vibes.

The Emissary on P Street is the larger of the two, and has table service, and breakfast and lunch menus. The outdoor area has pastoral-looking grass planters that line part of the seating area, separating it from the bright, busy street. Still, you'll be pleasantly distracted here, so come for lighter work that doesn't require a ton of focus.

“Baby” Emissary, located in a brownstone on a part of 20th Street that is mostly residential, is more chill. It seems to attract fewer dates and study groups than P Street and more locals working and reading. Because it only offers counter service and has a smaller food menu, it's an easier spot to settle in for a while and work to the hum of the neighborhood. — *K.A.*

Open daily. 2032 P St. NW. 1726 20th St. NW. emissarydc.com.

- WiFi? Free.
- Outlets? Both locations have outlets indoors. P Street has one set of outlets against the building outdoors.
- Bathrooms? Yes.

Doubles

The patio at Doubles might be the least outdoorsy of outdoor work spots. At this fenced-in, wood-paneled, covered courtyard in Park View, you get the benefits of working outside — the breezy, open air feel — without the usual distractions of a streetery. The cafe serves coffee from high-end local roastery [Small Planes](#), and sandwiches and pastries for breakfast and lunch.

Doubles shares its outdoor patio with the neighboring [Sonny's Pizza](#) (note: the WiFi is better on the Doubles' side of the courtyard). They overlap hours only on weekends, but the patio, with its sea of orange picnic tables, is made to accommodate both spots, so it can feel a little bit like working in a cafeteria. That feeling is offset by the calming — sometimes a little too sentimental — indie music. If you're feeling a little isolated working from home but not looking for a space that is too bustling, this is a nice, low-key go-to. — *K.A.*

Open Wednesday-Sunday. 3118 Georgia Ave. NW. [doublesdc.com](#).

- WiFi? Free.
- Outlets? None outdoors (the indoor space is closed).
- Bathrooms? Yes.

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