

DC Bike Summit info (practical info and money-saving tips)

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Location of the DC Bike Summit, 2013.

Dates

Arrival March 3rd- (Sunday)- For first timers, this should be your travel day getting to DC. Doesn't matter when you arrive, unless you want to do some sight-seeing (few opportunities during the Summit)

- March 4th- (Monday) Registration and seminars oriented towards first-timers. We don't yet have an agenda for the first day, but it won't be grueling. More info here as we get it.

- March 5th- (Tuesday) Caffeine day. You're going to be in seminars from 8am through 4:30, and after that will be a number of industry functions. This is going to be a long day, no way around it.

- March 6th- (Wednesday) Your time to shine on Capitol Hill! There will likely be a "breakfast" in one of the Congressional buildings around 8am, but food is scarce, you're much better off grabbing breakfast before arrival. You can typically assume your meetings will be over by 4pm, but you won't know this until your assignments are given out the prior evening.

Departure March 6th (Wednesday) evening, or anytime March 7th (Thursday). If leaving Wednesday, your earliest-flight out should be after 6pm if leaving from DCA (Reagan National), 7:30pm from BWI (Baltimore), or 8pm from IAD (Dulles). Or anytime on Thursday morning, March 6th, keeping in mind that, from central DC, you should plan on 30 minutes (by metro or cab) to get to DCA, 90 minutes (by metro/train) to get to BWI, and 2 hours to get to IAD. Thus an early-morning departure on Thursday to Dulles isn't going to allow much sleep, and you're subject to rush-hour traffic as well.

Flying & directions to/from Airports

Check fares for all three Washington airports; in most airline searches, you choose "WAS" as your destination city. Use Kayak.com for the widest-possible search of fares. Make sure you check into what it would cost if you fly out a day earlier or leave a day later, as that can sometimes be a difference of hundreds of dollars. A very nice feature of Kayak is that you can tell it to show only flights at a certain time of day, for example, flights that leave DC between 6pm and Midnight on Wednesday. If you don't select this option, the results will be misleading because you'll be seeing cheap fares for early flights that you can't take.

If you want to get in and out as quickly as possible, try for a flight into and out of DCA. DCA is a quick & direct metro (subway) ride into DC. Metro fare will be under \$5 each way, and trains are frequent. There's really no advantage to taking a cab to the airport, unless you have a very late meeting on "The Hill" and that last meeting is a long way from a metro station. It should be only a 30 minute cab ride, but traffic could wreck your plans. The metro is the most-reliable means to get to the airport on a schedule.

BWI requires taking a metro to a regular train station, then the "MARC" train to a transfer shuttle for the airport. Here's a link for a 5pm trip. Cost will be about \$11 total, if you take the MARC train. Do not take the Acela Express, as this will possibly save you 8 minutes but cost \$30 more! About one hour total trip time.

For IAD, you'll find "driving directions" that claim 35 minutes... yes, if the stars and the moon align just right, that's possible. On a bad day, it could easily be two hours. There will eventually be a metro line extension all the way to IAD, but for now, it's either a cab ride, or a combination of Metro and bus. About one and a half hours, but it will seem like a lot more.

For DCA? Hardly need directions at all. Just take the blue line, direction Franconia/Springfield. 24 minutes later you're there.

If there's no big difference in fares and DCA is available, always choose DCA. BWI is probably the worst airport if things go wrong; there aren't many alternate flight options if something goes wrong with your itinerary. IAD has the advantage of nearby hotels if you're stranded, and a lot of connection possibilities to help you get home, but if you don't have elite status on an airline, you could be waiting literally for hours in a line that is almost literally a block long. OK, here's a good place for a helpful hint. If your flight

has been cancelled, use your cell phone and call the airline's reservation number while you're in line. Chances are they can do as much for you on the phone as the person at the head of the line.

Luggage

Do anything and everything possible to avoid checking luggage. Not because of cost, but to avoid losing it and for greater flexibility if you have to rebook to a different flight. You just need one suit; biz casual is fine for everything else. Some will tell you to dress up a bit at other times, but it's not really required. No jeans with holes or worn out shoes, but whatever a salesperson would normally wear to work will be fine except for the one day meeting with Congress. For that you need a suit & tie and dress shoes. But comfortable dress shoes, because you're going to be walking, a lot. Miles maybe! Point is, one piece of on-board luggage will do fine.

Hotels

This can be a HUGE expense, or reasonable. Your choice. If you need to know where you're staying ahead of time, and it's got to be nice, you're going to be spending over \$250/night. If you want to stay at the Renaissance Marriott, the headquarters hotel for the Bike Summit, you're looking at \$500+ per night! Many of us have spent time at the rather, no, make that overtly-funky Harrington, what they call a "tourist" hotel, complete with creaky radiators and last renovated sometime in the 30s. Cost for their posh digs runs between \$135-\$175/night.

But if you're willing to do the Priceline thing, you can do better. Much better. The downside is that you may end up with as much as a 3/4 mile walk to a Metro station, so you might end up taking a cab a few times. That's not really that big a deal though, because you're only going to be heading back to your room once, each night. You can get a good idea of which hotels Priceline uses by looking at their Hotwire options; sometimes, there will only be one or two 3.5 star hotels in a given area, making it easy (and in general, the 3.5 star hotels are the best deals; a bit of around \$110 generally gets you a \$200+ room).

This may be a very good find; the Holiday Inn Alexandria SW. At about \$135/night, 4 minute walk from a Metro, it could be worth it's somewhat remote location, on the "other" side of DCA airport. You can see the route here; it's a 29 minute ride to the convention site (no transfers) and a 31 minute trip from the hotel to Wednesday's Congressional meetings, as shown here. Last year I stayed at the Bethesda Hyatt, on a Priceline deal at about \$110/night. Great hotel, fantastic location right on top of the Metro, but it's normal rate runs to almost \$300, and Priceline has added a number of other possible Bethesda options so you could get stuck at a hotel a couple miles out of town. I'd suggest sticking to Priceline options within the DC, not the suburbs, so you can be sure to catch a quick cab ride if you need to.