

# Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial

Washington, D.C. • National Park Service • U.S. Department of the Interior

FREEDOM OF SPEECH  
FREEDOM OF WORSHIP  
FREEDOM FROM WANT  
FREEDOM FROM FEAR

In his 1941 State of the Union Address, as the nation prepared for war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt spelled out "Four Freedoms" as a reminder of what we must fight for. From the days of his first Presidential campaign during the depths of the Great Depression, Roosevelt spoke directly to the people. "I pledge you, I pledge myself," he said in his 1932 acceptance speech, "to a new deal for the American people." Four years later, he proclaimed that "this generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny." Throughout his Presidency, 1933-1945, he addressed America by radio in what came to be known as fireside chats. Each idea, each phrase was underscored by courage and optimism that inspired no less in the people he served.

More than 50 years after Roosevelt's death, his own words call out from the walls of his memorial as if he were somehow present. Those of us who know FDR only as an historical figure will recognize these words by their association with great and catastrophic events. For the many Americans who lived through the Roosevelt years, the words recall personal struggles and triumphs during 12 years that seemed like a lifetime.



# Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial

## Commemorating FDR's Presidency

The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial is one of the most expansive memorials in the nation. Yet its shade trees, waterfalls, statuary, and quiet alcoves create the feeling of a secluded garden rather than an imposing structure. The memorial is divided into four outdoor galleries, or rooms, one for each of FDR's terms in office. The rooms are defined by walls of red South Dakota granite and by ornamental plantings; quotations from FDR are carved into the granite. Water cascades and quiet pools are present throughout. Each room conveys in its own way the spirit of this great man.

A sculpture of the Presidential seal is mounted inside the entryway. The first room introduces FDR's early presidency, when he launched the New Deal in response to the worst economic crisis of the century. A relief sculpture depicts his first inauguration. In

the second room, sculptural groups—an urban breadline, a rural couple, and a man listening to a fireside chat—recall both the despair and the hope of the times. New Deal social and economic programs are depicted in bronze panels.

A grassy berm between the second and third rooms marks the historical point at which Roosevelt and the nation confronted World War II. In the third room, Roosevelt appears as a seated figure; his beloved dog Fala sits nearby. The fourth room honors the life and legacy of FDR. A sculptural relief of Roosevelt's funeral cortege hangs in an alcove. The statue of Eleanor Roosevelt commemorates her role as First Lady, as well as her later work as United Nations delegate and champion for human rights. In the plaza is a timeline of important dates and events from the extraordinary life of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.



George Segal's sculpture of a 1930s breadline captures the hunger, both literal and figurative, that many Americans felt during the Depression years.

**Building the Memorial** The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Commission was established by Congress in 1955. Its guidelines invited prospective designers to look to "the character and work of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to give us the theme of a memorial that will do him the honor he deserves and transmit his image to future generations." It was not until May 1997 that the memorial took its place alongside other Presidential monuments in Washington, D.C. Designed by Lawrence Halprin, the memorial incorporates the work of prominent American artists Leonard Baskin, Neil Estern, Robert Graham, Thomas Hardy, and George Segal, as well as master stone-carver John Benson.

**About Your Visit** The memorial stands in West Potomac Park, between the Tidal Basin and the Potomac River. At the front entrance is an information area and a bookstore. Park rangers are available from 8 a.m. to midnight. The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial is part of the National Park System, one of more than 370 parks that are examples of our nation's natural and cultural heritage. Address inquiries to: Superintendent, National Capital Parks-Central, 900 Ohio Drive SW, Washington, DC 20024-2000. Further information is available at [www.nps.gov/nacc](http://www.nps.gov/nacc).