

Visiting the Supreme Court of the United States: **A Pre-Visit Narrative**



Contents

Visiting the Court	3
Visitor Entrances	4
Security Screening	5
Police & Security Officers	6
Visitor Desk, Maps & Brochures	7
Exhibitions	8
Touchscreens & Tactiles	9
Public Information Office	10
Non-Public Areas & Spiral Staircases	11
Café	12
Gift Shop	13
Restrooms, Water Fountains & Benches	14
Stairs & Elevators	15
Great Hall	16
Courtroom	17
Courtroom Lectures	18
Exiting the Building	19



Today I am visiting the Supreme Court of the United States! This is the building where the Justices and their staff work. It has big stairs and tall columns that make it look like an ancient Greek or Roman temple. Sometimes the business of the Court may affect access to the building and programs, but there is always lots to learn and explore.



I will enter the building using the Visitor Entrance. There are two entrances at the Northwest or Southwest Door. Sometimes there is a line, so I may need to wait before it's my turn to enter. There is also an accessible entrance with a ramp located along Maryland Avenue on the left side of the building. Visitors are not allowed to bring certain items, including food and liquids, inside the Supreme Court. I will be asked to throw away these items if I have them with me.



When I get inside, I will have to go through security screening. If I have a bag with me or any metal objects, I will place them on the X-ray machine. A security officer might use a handheld metal detector (wand) to quickly check me for any metallic items I might have forgotten in my bag or pockets. Once I am through security, I will need to keep my belongings with me at all times while I visit the Supreme Court.

I will see police and security officers throughout the building. The officers might talk to me about the rules for visiting the Court. I will listen and follow the rules because the rules help everyone to have a safe and fun experience.



Some officers use dogs to help them protect the Justices, Court employees, and visitors. The dogs are busy doing their jobs, so it is important not to pet them.



If I have questions about the Supreme Court, I can speak with the person at the Visitor Desk. This person can provide information about what visitors can see and do. I may also ask where to find places like the restrooms, water fountains, gift shop, and café.



I can pick up a map and self-guided materials at the brochure holders across from the Visitor Desk. Reading these can help me plan my visit.



Some of the exhibits have touchscreens or tactile (touchable) components that I may touch to enhance my experience.



I may not touch portraits, busts, or statues, such as the large bronze statue of the fourth Chief Justice, John Marshall. The oils on my hands may damage these works of art, so it is best to view them with my eyes only.





If I would like a copy of one of the Court's recent opinions, I can visit the Public Information Office on the ground floor. The Public Information Office assists reporters and also acts as the official source of opinions, orders, and other Court information for the public.



Some parts of the building are only open to Court employees or may only be open to visitors at certain times. I will recognize these spaces whenever I see a bronze gate, a closed door, or a roped off area.



I may view, but not enter the two spiral staircases, which are very pretty and unique. I may view them from the ground floor.





If I get hungry I can purchase food at the café on the ground floor. This is the only place in the building where visitors are allowed to have food or drink.

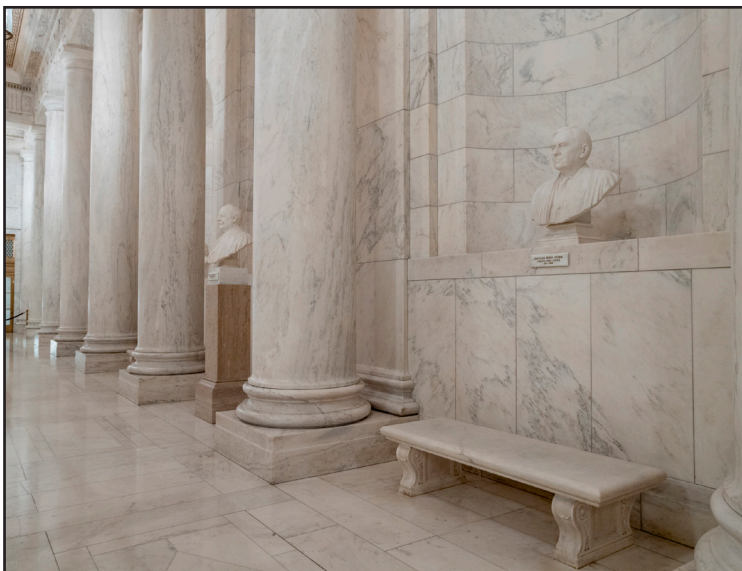




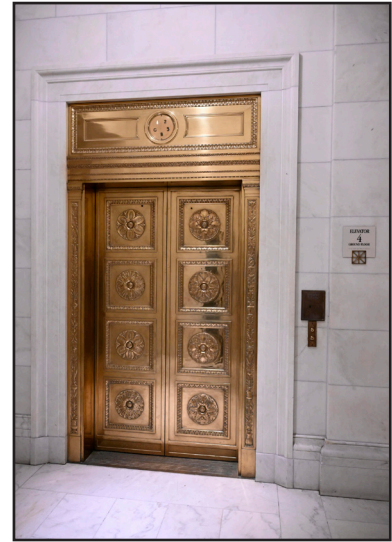
If I would like to buy a souvenir, I can visit the gift shop on the ground floor. There are lots of items for sale, such as books, pencils, mugs, and other mementos. Friendly staff are available to help and answer questions if I need any assistance.



I can use restrooms on the ground floor or first floor. If I need a drink of water, I can use the fountain located inside the ground floor restroom. There are no water fountains on the first floor.



If I get tired or need a break, there are benches throughout the building where I can sit.

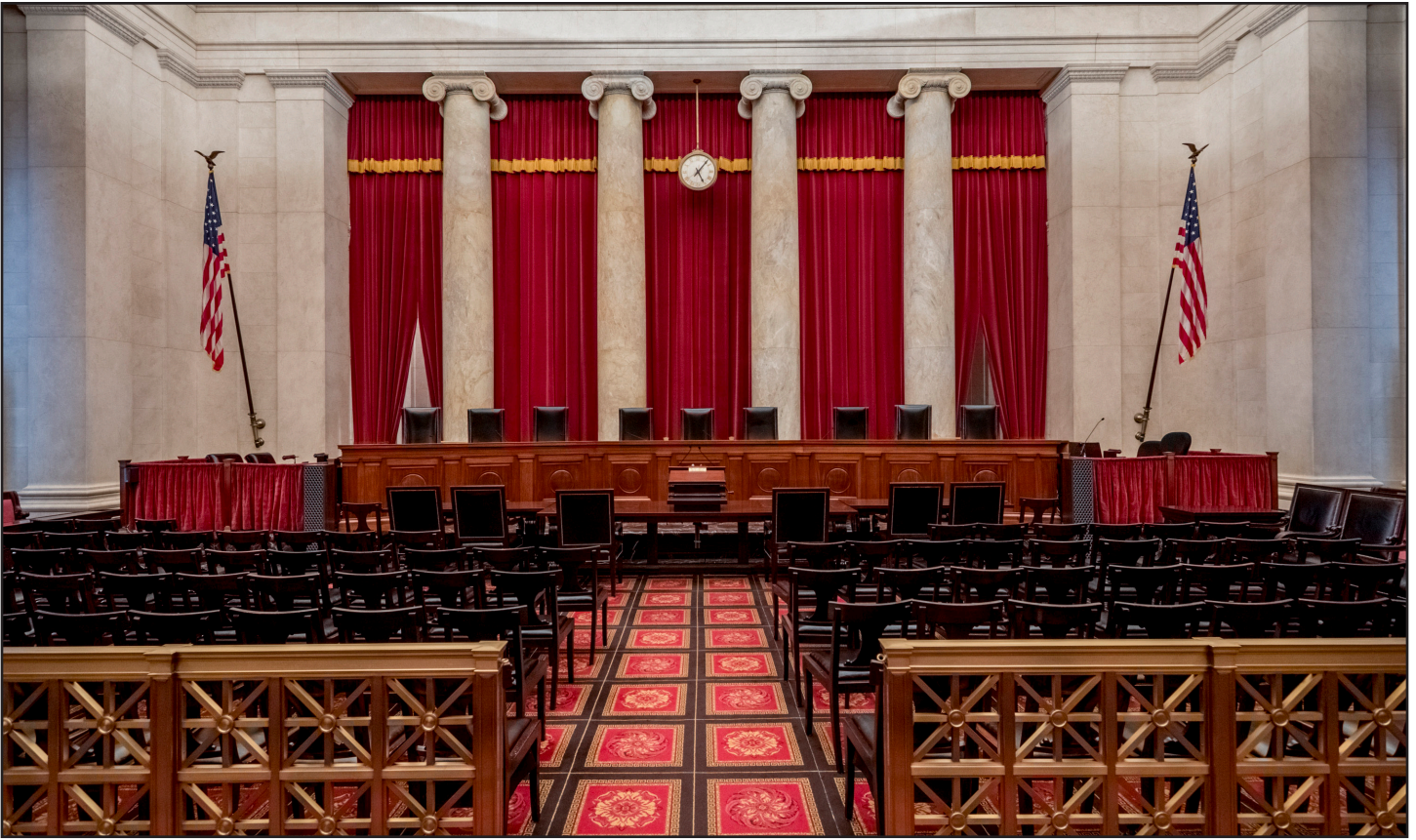


I can travel from the ground floor to the first floor using stairs or elevators. If I take an elevator, there will be a staff person inside who operates it. Other visitors who are not part of my group might get on the elevator with me, too.



I can visit the Great Hall upstairs on the first floor. It is made of white marble and has a very high ceiling. When the Great Hall is crowded, it may become noisy.





The Great Hall leads to the Courtroom. This is where the Justices hear cases, called oral arguments, presented by attorneys. The Courtroom has marble columns, red curtains, a carpeted floor, and rows of benches where the public can sit.



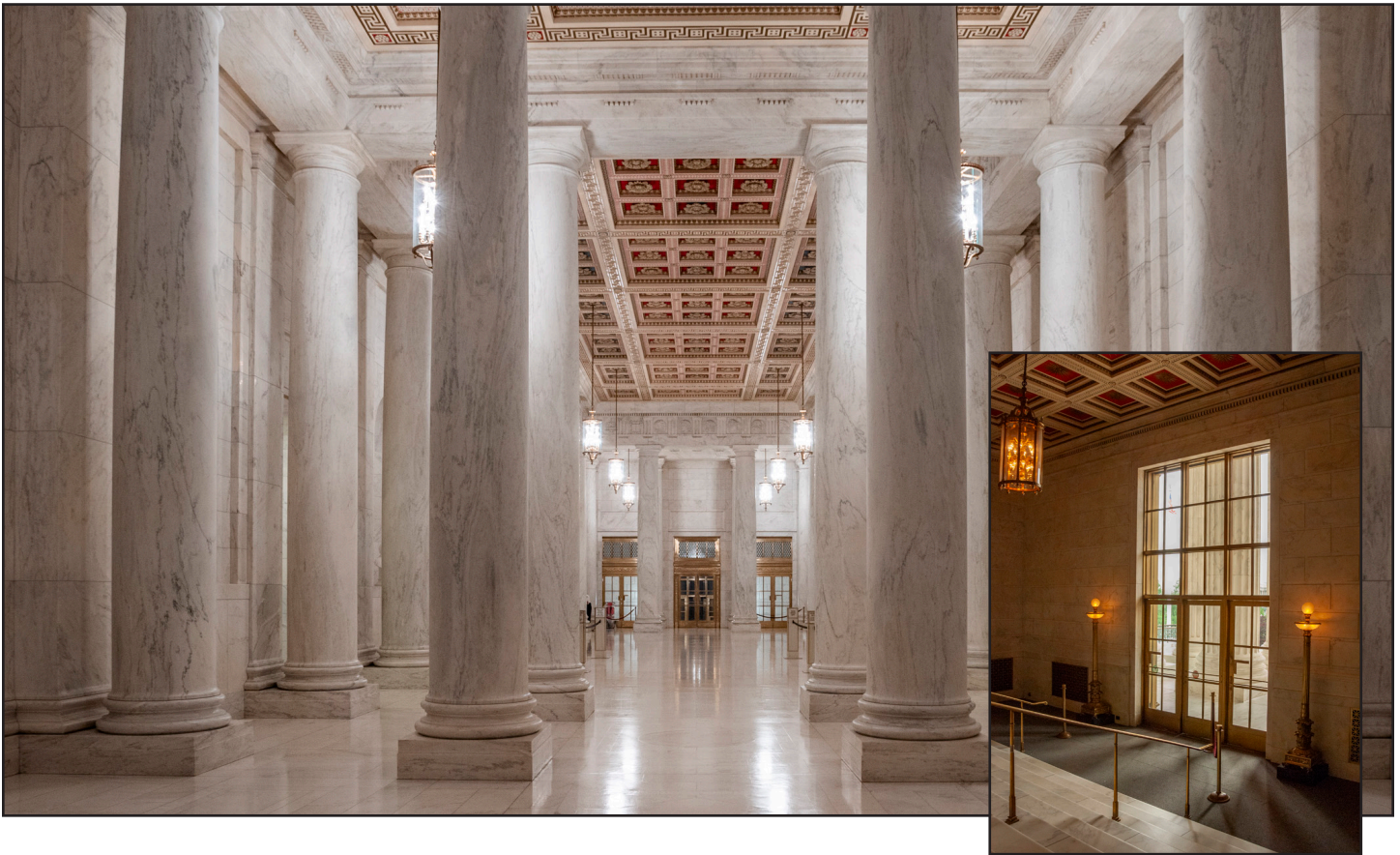
When there is a gate or ropes in front of the entrance to the Courtroom, I can look into the room, but cannot go inside. I may take a photo from here.



Sometimes a volunteer called a docent provides a Courtroom Lecture, a 20 to 25-minute presentation about the Supreme Court. The docent might use a microphone to give this talk. If I want to attend, I will join the line in the Great Hall. Before leading visitors inside the Courtroom, a police officer will use a loud voice to explain the rules everyone needs to follow. This includes not taking photos inside the Courtroom.



I do not have to stay for the whole lecture. I can leave quietly at any time by going back out the door I came in.



When I am ready to leave the building, I can use the exits on the first floor or ground floor. On the first floor I can exit out the doors at the far end of the Great Hall and go down the building's big front steps.



It is OK if I did not have a chance to see and do everything during my visit today. I hope I can visit the Supreme Court again soon!



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