

# NEIGHBORHOOD FOCUS

## ADAMS MORGAN

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PHOTOS BY JONATHAN QUIGLEY

Adams Morgan's history is as vibrant and colorful as its building's murals, the diversity among its people and in the many ways one can spend time there. Shopping and lounging in the afternoon, or nighttime clubbing and bar hopping in the evening among the dozens of restaurants and drinking holes on and near the 18th Street strip are what makes this the District's liveliest nightlife.

Adams Morgan — also called AdMo, The Morgan, The Morg, AM, and many, many other acronyms — has its diverse roots embedded in its title. It's named after the integration of the all-black, and now defunct, Thomas P. Morgan Elementary School and the all-white John Quincy Adams Elementary School in the 1950s.

Oh, how times have changed. Once AM was a fashionable suburb of DC with elegant apartment buildings and row houses built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of these same turn-of-the-last-century buildings are still in use today, as establishments that serve jumbo sliced pizza, host drag queen brunches, house cute boutique shops, and hold Jell-O wrestling matches and retro '80s dance-offs. I also hear that cheap beer and tasty martinis might be involved. So, let's get to it! Here's an Adams Morgan native's guide to his beloved neighborhood.

### TOP OF THE HILL: EAST SIDE



CITY BIKES

Columbia Road from 18th Street to Champlain Street

People walking to AM from the Woodley Park-Zoo Adams Morgan Metro for the first time are usually looking for the first sign of nightlife. Welcome to the **Adams Mill Bar and Grill** — the first such sign before you reach the 18th Street strip. It's the home to many flip cup and beer pong tournaments upstairs, doggie happy hours on its large outdoor patio and lots of single young people looking to mingle indoors.

Also, as you cross the bridge into Adams Morgan, you'll come across **Mama Ayeshah's**, a family owned and operated restaurant on Calvert that features truly home-cooked Middle-Eastern food.

Notable Columbia Road spots include **Chief Ike's Mambo Room** — a neighborhood haunt where DJs spin reggae, dancehall, soul and funk and patrons can gulp down \$2 PBRs; and **Churreria Madrid** — tasty paella, churros and bistec. **Pasta Mia** has epic long lines, but well worth it for cheap but incredibly tasty Italian dishes, 25 in total, most notably green fettuccine with porcini-mushroom sauce and cheese tortellini with tomato-cream sauce. If you're into bicycles, **City Bikes** has a great selection of high-end bikes and their mechanics are among the city's best.

### TOP OF THE HILL: WEST SIDE

Columbia Road from Belmont Road to 18th Street

If you were to hang a right at Columbia Road at the top of the strip you'll hit one of the longtime tenants of AdMo — **Habana Village** — arguably the best salsa joint within city limits. Walk inside and it's a blast from the past to ol' Habana: older guys in guayabera shirts, younger gals in short skirts and flashy tops twirling around the old wooden floor and tropical colored walls. While it might be intimidating for newcomers, fear not — just grab a mouth-watering mojito and arrive early for salsa lessons: Wednesdays through Fridays, starting with beginner's lesson at 7:30 p.m., intermediate at 8:30 p.m.

One of the best daytime options after a night of salsa dancing (or however you choose to spend your night in AM), is to take part in **Perrys'** famous Sunday drag queen brunch. Drag queen divas — many of the same ones you would find at the 17th Street drag queen high heel race during Halloween week — serve you in some of the most outlandish outfits you'll



ever see. As they sashay back and forth with food, they put on quite a show by shamelessly flirting with customers of all genders — male, female, and not-quite-sure. To top it off, their music selections are on full volume and over the top — think Donna Summer, Whitney Houston and the Eurythmics. Perrys also is home to one of the nicest rooftop decks in the area and is noted for its sushi selection.

On the same side of the street is one of DC's best running shoe stores — **Fleet Feet**, owned by the proud parents of Mayor Adrian Fenty, Phil and Jan. It's been around since 1983, has a knowledgeable staff and allows you to 'test run' their shoes.

For tasty Peruvian-style rotisserie chicken and delicious Lomo Saltado — the national dish of Peru (steak strips with specially seasoned French fries) — be sure to check out **Granja de Oro**. A few doors down is **Grill From Ipanema**, home to authentic Brazilian cuisine including Bahia-style stews, carne de sol (flank steak) and delicious caipirinhas to wash it all down.

### TOP OF THE 18TH STREET STRIP

18th Street between Columbia and Belmont roads

A popular tourist destination — you've probably heard of this place from features on Playboy, Stuff and Wild On!, as well as DC locals who love blues, folk, jazz and bluegrass music and soul food — is **Madam's Organ**. It's hard to miss. A "Sorry, we're open" sign welcomes you, a busty "Madam" mural covers its outside wall and has the motto "Where the Beautiful People go to Get Ugly!" Madam is well-known for its redheads drink for half-off Rolling Rock special, and if you like mounted animals on the wall, mismatched furniture, local eclectic pieces of artwork and just a general crazy vibe that sets the Madam apart from most AdMo places, drop by.

A very similar concept, but much more chill, can be found at Brazilian bistro **Bossa** — known for its massive sky-high candles,