

## A Self-Guided Tour for the Young at Heart



Welcome to Washington National Cathedral. We have 112 friendly and spooky characters for you to find and meet!

What are gargoyles really meant to do? They are part of a building's guttering system; they are water spouts meant to keep water from running down the walls of buildings. They are often, but not always, carved in the form of fantastic or imaginary animals or humans. A number of our Cathedral carvings memorialize real people, often in a funny way. However, the sculptors were always careful not to be mean while poking fun.

Some of our critters are not really gargoyles but are called "grotesques," which are also part of the Cathedral's rain control system. Gargoyles carry away excess water via pipes running through their mouths; grotesques deflect rain-water by bouncing it off the top of their heads, noses or other projecting parts and away from the stone walls.

The most difficult gargoyles for you to see are on the south side of the building (as you face the front of the Cathedral, the side to the RIGHT) above the lowest two levels of stained glass windows. To begin your south side gargoyle hunt, step up onto the lawn and come right up to the corner where the "front" of the building sticks out from its long "body." This tour moves from left to right. The first gargoyle is on the lowest level, the third gargoyle from the corner.



**1** The first gargoyle, partially hidden by the tree, is a fierce, wild boar. He has long tusks and a curly pelt. Look out! He's coming right at you!

**2** Move to the next section and look at the top row. The left-hand gargoyle of the pair is a braying donkey. His ears are laid back against his long neck. His open mouth shows his buck teeth.

**3** On the top level of the next bay are a pair of house pets: a dog and a cat wearing belled collars. The bell on the cat's collar is a "jingle" bell, but the dog's bell is similar to the peal bells in the Cathedral's central tower.

**4** Just below the cat and dog is a 1959-60 gargoyle contest winner. It is a half-human creature with its fingers shoved into its ears. It is said to represent "evil refusing to listen to the Word of God." At the time of the competition, the designer was a student at Mt. Holyoke College studying English literature.

**5** Look to the set of gargoyles to the right of the cat and dog. The right-hand gargoyle of the pair is a birdlike creature with a large, toothed beak. If you look closely, you can see that the "eyelashes" are really flower petals.

**6** The right-hand gargoyle in the pair to the right of #5 is another gargoyle contest winner. This gruesome creation features the skeleton of a winged monster entwined in a snake. If you look carefully, you can see the snake crawling out of its eye socket. This image was derived from ancient symbolism to represent "man's awareness of dark forces waiting to devour him."

**7** On the lower level of gargoyles, right above the entrance to the Cathedral Museum Store, is the forepart of a creature that's not quite a crocodile and not quite an alligator. This "crocagator" has the broad flat nose of an alligator but the teeth of a crocodile.

**8** The final creature on this tour is on the lower level, in the far right-hand corner where the transept comes away from the main part of the Cathedral. Cathedral staff members call this delightful carving the "puffy toad." Take a look at the warts surrounding his lips and the wispy plant curling between his toes.

Enjoy your hunt! Now, see how many Cathedral gargoyles and special carvings you can find. Have you tried our other self-guided gargoyle tours, "Wacky Western Gargoyles" and "Silly Southern Gargoyles"?