

# Why Pope Francis should come to Baltimore

Next week the Holy Father is flying from Cuba to spend time in Washington, D.C., before traveling to New York City and then Philadelphia.

We are so very excited for him to come to the United States—and to the East Coast. But he's missing out on the best the area offers. Just a few miles up the road from D.C. and a few miles south of Philly is a city full of charm, history, culture, and cuisine.



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Pope Francis, we invite you to stop in Baltimore. You will love it:

**1. You can taste the Catholic history.** Looking for the oldest diocese in the nation? The premier episcopal see of the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S.? The first cathedral constructed after the adoption of the Constitution? Come on in. The Basilica is a symbol of our nation's religious freedom. It—and our archdiocese—are dedicated to the Blessed Mother. And the Basilica is absolutely stunning.

**2. Let's talk U.S. saints, especially since you're canonizing one while you're here.** Wouldn't you like to see the city where the first American-born saint, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, made her first vows? St. John Neumann ministered in Baltimore, too. And, if you are feeling inclined to canonize American saints, you could also canonize Blessed Francis Seelos, who served in Baltimore, Cumberland, and Annapolis; Mother Mary Lange, Baltimore-based foundress of Oblate Sisters of Providence (the first sustained religious community for African-American women); and Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin, the "Apostle of the Alleghenies," who ministered in Western Maryland. Not that I'm trying to tell you how to do your job, Holy Father. That's just a friendly

*suggestion on how to make the most of your visit.*

**3. This is Jesuit territory.** *It was a Jesuit, Andrew White, who helped found the Maryland colony. This town is full of Jesuits. Stop by Cristo Rey Jesuit High School. Visit Loyola Blakefield. Go to St. Ignatius Academy. Then stop by Loyola University Maryland, one of the most beautiful university campuses you'll ever see—and full of students who would be thrilled to meet you. I have no doubt one of your brother Jesuits would be happy to give you a tour. If you have time, you could even drop in on the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen just up the road.*

**4. Baltimore is used to being overlooked.** *Being so close to Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia, Baltimore is often overlooked. D.C. especially casts a large shadow. That's why we won't even be surprised if you don't come to Charm City. In fact, a few years ago Pope Benedict XVI came to D.C. and skipped Baltimore. We understood. It happens. But the welcome mat is out.*

**5. Hungry?** *We've got Old Bay to awaken your taste buds, crab cakes so succulent they'll bring tears to your eyes, Berger cookies lathered in sweet chocolate goodness, and cuisine from every corner of the world. Looking for simpler fare? We have that too.*

**6. Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and New York. They are all fantastic cities.** *You'll enjoy them. But Baltimore? Baltimore is best. No, really. That was our slogan a few decades ago. And it's still true.*

**7. Baltimore is the home to the Star-Spangled Banner.** *Our Washington Monument is the oldest in the country. We have an Aquarium and art and painted screens and kitsch and a Natty Boh sign that winks at you. You are in for a treat.*

**8. Baltimoreans have so much pride in our city.** *We also have our challenges. Maybe you've heard about some of them. The problems are raw and they are real. But we have so many people working to bring justice and peace to this city. You just have to believe in the bright future for Baltimore—especially when you meet the amazing people who live in and work in and serve and value this community.*



### *CR File Photo*

We know it's a long-shot. Your schedule is packed. And more than a few Baltimoreans are thrilled to be joining the millions who will travel to see you. So if you decide you can't fit Baltimore in, will you do us a favor? As you're flying over Charm City, please send us your blessing. We'll keep you and your visit to our nation in our prayers.