



Honoring sacrifice

Arlington website a useful tribute

Monday is Memorial Day, a day to remember those who have died in our nation's service. Arlington National Cemetery is a place where those who have made the ultimate sacrifice are honored every day.

Besides being the final resting place for members of the armed forces, Arlington is also a popular tourist attraction. If you plan to visit our nation's capital, you should include the national cemetery on your itinerary. But before you visit the actual cemetery, visit its website at ArlingtonCemetery.mil.

The site is a tastefully designed guide to the cemetery, as well as a tribute to those interred there. A black background sets an appropriately somber mood, and the typography is conservative and restrained.

Powerful imagery

The home page features a multi-subject slideshow as the main element. It consists of eight subjects, each one represented by a vertically cropped, labeled image. Hovering over a section opens up the collection of images for each subject. Clicking on one takes you to the subject's page. The subjects are: About us, Visitor Information, Funeral Information, Events, News & Updates, History, Find a Gravesite and Photo Gallery.

To the left of the slideshow is a column of text links that repeat the sub-

jects, plus two additional links for daily funeral schedules and contact information.

The slideshow is nice if you want to look at images of the cemetery. It's full of powerful shots of neat rows of white headstones arranged on manicured lawns, and marines in full dress uniform performing traditional ceremonies, such as 21-gun salutes, changing of the guard and escorting caissons. The Photo Gallery link takes you to even more photos of cemetery events.

The text links next to the slideshow are a little more useful if you want to quickly drill down into the site to find a specific piece of information. Most of them have flyout menus that appear when you hover over them that offer links to subcategories of information.

Nice trip-planning tools

The Visitor Information, Events and News & Updates links are the most useful for planning a trip to Arlington. They provide directions to the cemetery and information on parking and getting around inside the cemetery. There are online, interactive maps as well as downloadable, printable maps. You can even download a mobile app that can serve as an electronic tour guide.

These links also provide the location and history of some of the most popular features and events, such as the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns, the shuttle disaster memorials, 9/11 memorials or President Kennedy's gravesite.

You can check the calendar of events to see if there are any special ceremonies being held while you're

in town. There are also guidelines for appropriate dress for certain ceremonies, and the do's and don'ts of photography and videography. Remember, Arlington is an active cemetery that averages about 100 burials a week, so visitors need to be respectful of the ever-present bereaved. Links to Arlington's presence on popular social media sites also are available.

Interesting history

Even if you're not planning a trip to the cemetery, the website has a lot of interesting information and history on it. You can read about how during the Civil War, Northern Brig. Gen. Montgomery C. Meigs established a military cemetery on the Arlington property. The land had been confiscated from a prominent southern family with ties to George Washington. The family custodian of the property at the time it was seized was none other than Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

Ceremony is a very important and poignant part of military funerals. You can learn about the origins of two of the most well-known rituals, 21-gun salutes and Taps, on the site.

The Arlington Cemetery website is nicely designed, useful and interesting. I did have some issues with slow load times for pages, but it's hard to tell if it was the site or my Internet connection. Either way, the site, as well as the cemetery, are worth a visit.

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