Though Georgetown is *luxe* DC at its white-collar best, over-spending on luxury goods is not required to enjoy the cobbled streets of the historic and stately neighborhood. M St NW and Wisconsin St. are the main commercial corridors that attract Georgetown University students, the international shopping elite, and residents alike. Off these congested corridors one can find the old C&O Canal—Georgetown’s original claim to fame as a 19th century waterway port; the surprisingly scenic Potomac waterfront; and a neat grid of fantastic mansions, many with gorgeous gardens peeking from behind the gates. Add to this the sprawling estate-museums of Dumbarton Oaks and the Tudor Place and you can craft an afternoon of Secret Garden delights and discoveries. If gardens aren’t your thing, plenty of shopping opportunities might satisfy your search for earthly pleasure.

—Anna Simon, Georgetown University Librarian

Get there: 15 minute cab ride or public transit. Bus options: From the hotel walk to New York Ave NW and 9th St. NW and take the Circulator bus west ($1). The Circulator goes all the way down M Street. Or, from Dupont Circle grab the G2 bus west at P and 20th Sts. NW. The last stop is Georgetown University.

Walk-about: If time is on your side, stroll from Dupont Circle into Georgetown via the Dumbarton Bridge on Q Street NW. Four magnificent cast-iron buffalo by Alexander Phimister Proctor, c. 1914-15, stand guard over the bridge’s arches, designed to emulate the curves of Roman Aqueducts. The view up and down Rock Creek Park is stunning, too.

The Tudor House Historic House and Garden is a few blocks west at 31st and Q Sts. NW. Built by the granddaughter of Martha Custis Washington, the Tudor House was preserved by six contiguous generations of family, and it remains much as it was in 1816. Costumed interpreters do an excellent job of showing the grounds and house.

- 1644 31st St. NW; house tours are $10, self-guided garden tours $3

One large block north on 31st St. is the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, a Harvard-run institution specializing in Byzantine, pre-Columbian, and garden and landscape studies. While the museum and libraries are impressive, the various gardens recall an English Versailles and are worth the entrance price to tour.

- 1703 32nd St. NW; $8 for the garden, museum is free

You’ll need some sustenance after your garden jaunt; try Patisserie Poupon (1645 Wisconsin Ave NW). The French bakery and café has lunch fare, pastries, and great coffee, as well as a charming, private café terrace.

From here stroll south down Wisconsin Ave. and take in the shops, or wander south-west through the Georgetown neighborhood and gaze upon the homes of the very well-off. Depending on your wandering direction you’ll pass a John Flevog shoe store (1265 Wisconsin Ave NW),
best described as “artisanal” shoes. There’s also a Camper shoe store (3219 M St NW) and a Frye Company store (1066 Wisconsin Ave NW).

Other specialty stores include Fleurir Hand Grown Chocolates (3235 P St NW); Georgetown Emporium, an antique and vintage shop (2613 P St. NW); and Just Paper & Tea, an independent store stuffed with both kinds of wares (3232 P St. NW).

When the dinner bell tolls, be wary of the M St. tourist traps with mediocre fare and inflated prices. Good bets include:

Café Bonaparte (1522 Wisconsin Ave. NW)
Reasonably-priced French café with a dedicated following, and slightly distanced from the M St. hordes.

Bandolero (3241 M St. NW)
Sleek, modern Mexican—everything is tasty. Happy Hours are usually quiet and a good deal. Try the suckling pig tacos.

Kafe Leopold (3315 Cady's Alley NW)
European-style bistro where everything comes a-la carte. Outdoor seating, but it gets crowded.

Pizza Paradiso (3282 M St. NW)
Solid pizza with an accompanying emphasis on craft brews (there’s another location in Dupont Circle). Try happy hour in the basement bar.

Martin’s Tavern (1264 Wisconsin Ave NW)
DC’s oldest family-owned restaurant has booths dedicated to past patrons, including Lyndon Johnson, George Bush, and Madeline Albright. A plaque commemorates where the Kennedys, who used to live down the street, became engaged.

Farmers, Fishers, Bakers (3000 K St. NW)
Farm-to-fork food with farmer-sized portions. You can get anything that falls into one of the titular categories—sushi, pizza, steak, burgers, organic salads, etc. It’s a weird hybrid but it’s really good—and they feature local art throughout the restaurant. Homemade soda bar for those who prefer mocktails.

After dinner, try strolling along the C&O Canal (parallels the Potomac between M and K Sts.) or Georgetown Waterfront Park (3000 K St. NW). The early 19th century canal remains much as it was, complete with stone bridges, locks, and a quiet walking path. The Potomac promenade features views of the Key Bridge, Roosevelt Island, the Kennedy Center, and uh, Virginia. Walking west will take you by the boat houses and the kayakers; walking east take you past Washington Harbor, eventually leading you to the Kennedy Center.

Just north of the waterfront is Georgetown University, the oldest Catholic and Jesuit university (classes began in 1792) in the country. Several buildings recall this history, like the neo-Gothic
Healy Hall, Dahlgren Chapel, and Old North, where George Washington gave an address ca. 1795.

Back on M St. is the Old Stone House, the oldest building in Washington (1765!). This National Park Service site closes at 5, but you can still admire this historical holdout from the street.