

# New York

It's true what they say: it's the city that never sleeps.

It's true that you can pretty much find anything you're looking for at any time you want, and that you'll probably come across some of the most amazing and curious sights, smells (?!) and sounds you'll ever experience.

It's true that it's noisy, crowded, over-the-top, and expensive.

It's also true that you'll probably have one of the best visits to a major city—ever. With a little bit of advance planning and the right attitude, New York is a place that's easy to love and hard to forget .

## **Where to Stay & How to Find a (reasonably priced) Hotel**

The first thing to know when you are looking for a place to stay in NYC is that it's almost always cheaper to stay on Friday and Saturday nights (most New Yorkers like to be away on the weekends, and any business travelers have most likely headed home or haven't come in for work yet), so if you have plans to visit other parts of NY or the surrounding area, you're better off doing that during the week and heading into the city on the weekend.

New York no longer allows individuals to rent out their homes/apartments (which used to be a great way to stay in the city and have a little more space and the luxury of a kitchen, helping to cut down on food costs and just having the extra space and the feel of living like a New Yorker). That said, if you are planning on staying longer than a few days and you want to try this out, you can go to [VRBO](#) or [HomeAway](#) and search properties; if you find one you like and think you want to book, you will be asked to "join" a club (it's free) and in doing so technically become a member in a vacation rental venture—this is totally legit and probably fine (although I have never tried it); you can then negotiate directly with the homeowner as you would in any vacation rental situation.

Best place to look for hotels is on one of the collective websites—whichever you like best (although I would avoid ones like PriceLine where you don't really know where you'll end up)—use a site where you can look at the surrounding area. You can also check out individual hotel chain sites for sales and bargains. I tend to use [hotels.com](#) and haven't gone wrong yet.

**Tip: Do NOT stay in a place that is rated anything less than 3.5 stars—the odds of a decent sleep definitely diminish with the ratings....just sayin'.**

If you've come to NY to see NY, then you most likely want to be in Manhattan. While the hotels are going to be pricier, the time and effort you'll save by not having to come in from one of the boroughs or New Jersey is well worth the added cost.

Tips on locales: Times Square is centrally located, but crazy busy and noisy 24/7; you're better off heading a few blocks east to the area around Grand Central Station (42 and Lexington). Financial District is a ghost town on weekends but, because of that, some deals can be found; east village/lower east side is up and coming but can still be a little dodgy at night. Avoid: anything west of 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, anything north of 96<sup>th</sup> Street, anything in the boroughs near a major highway/roadway or not near a subway...more on that below.

There are a couple of hotels outside of Manhattan worth looking into:

[Sheraton Laguardia](#): Located just off Main Street in Flushing, Queens—in the heart of the borough's Chinatown, this hotel has free shuttle (well, a couple of bucks' tip to the driver is nice, especially if he/she helps with bags) to and from LaGuardia (which is great if that's where you are coming and going from—more on that below). It is literally right around the corner from the Main Street [#7 subway](#) into Times Square, and that station is the first and last stop on that line, passing Shea Stadium (I still can't call it [Citi Field](#)) and Grand Central Station. The train is safe well into the evening as it is always crowded, and prices at the hotel are often quite decent. Stay here lots and really like it.

Brooklyn Heights hotels—check a map for nearby subway stations and look at [NY Marriott Brooklyn Bridge](#), [Hilton](#), [Indigo](#) and [Aloft](#): expensive, but there may be discounts on their websites, or maybe you have a membership with one of the chains. Great locations--close to the iconic bridge and subways.

[W Hoboken](#): believe it or not, a great place to stay. Every room has a stunning view of the Manhattan skyline, the [PATH](#) trains are just a few blocks away and the whole area is always hopping with things to do. Right on the Hudson River, it's probably one of the best places to stay on the other side of the B & T's (bridges and tunnels).

## Arrival

If you're coming in by air, you'll come in through one of three airports, and each has its own ways into Manhattan:

**LaGuardia(LGA)**: this is the most likely airport coming from Canada, with a dozen or more Air Canada & WestJet flights a day from Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. Options to get to your hotel:

Taxi: good in off-peak hours (before 7 am and after 7 pm weekdays; anytime on weekends...but watch out for Mets games and tennis events/US Open and others as both are very near LGA and can cause big traffic issues). Fare is usually around \$30-40 (including tunnel or bridge charge) plus tip, so good if more than one person is travelling. Driver may ask you which way you want to go (one way to tell if you are a tourist—either the Midtown Tunnel or the RFK Bridge—just say “wherever you think the traffic is lighter” or “whichever you think is quicker”. Unless of course you have a preference; the bridge route has some fun views, whereas the tunnel is....a tunnel.

Bus: [NYC Airporter](#) Bus: every 30 minutes; \$13. Drops off near Grand Central.

Car service: we like [Carmel](#) and [Dial 7](#): flat rates so you won't care if you sit in a little traffic.

***NOTE: A \$5 billion 5 year expansion and complete reno of LaGuardia began in May 2016; until the work is done, this airport will be a huge mess. Give yourself plenty of time navigating in and out of LGA.***

**John F Kennedy International (JFK)**: JFK has direct service from YYC (WestJet) and from the major eastern Canadian airports as well. Subway stations are near the airport and you can catch the NYC AirTrain straight from all terminals (\$7.75, subway fare plus AirTrain fee). You do this by crossing the street from the terminal and heading into the parking structures; the train is on the second level (follow the signs). You can also take AirTrain to Jamaica Station and take Long Island Rail Road in (7.25 off peak, 10.00 peak plus the AirTrain, which is \$5.00). Possibly a better way during rush hour as the subway will be very crowded. Note: you will have to buy a transit card to exit the AirTrain station at Jamaica. This is a good chance to get your [Metrocard](#). Buy at least \$20 as you will get a little extra on the card. You can use a credit card (no issues with doing this from a security standpoint) or cash—your choice.

Bus: [NYC Airporter](#) Bus: every 30 minutes; \$17. Drops off near Grand Central (42<sup>nd</sup> and Park).

Car service as above; taxis get expensive—it's much further into Manhattan than LGA.

**Newark Liberty International (EWR)**: there's an [Amtrak](#) station as well as NJ Transit station located adjacent to the airport. Take the [AirTrain](#) to get to them. The [NJ Transit](#) fare is much much cheaper and trains run every 15 minutes or so. But the most important thing to know, if taking NJ Transit, is that there are two Penn Stations—on in Newark, NJ and one in NYC—Take the NJ Penn Station for trains to lower Manhattan and the NY Penn station for anything in Manhattan above Canal Street); the trains are fairly regular and will take you into Penn Station (34<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue). Penn Station has a large taxi stand on the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue side as well as many [subway](#) lines that connect. The cost of the AirTrain is included in your Amtrak ticket. This [page](#) explains it well. Oh, and it's pronounced NEW-erk.

A taxi from EWR into the city can be very expensive; there are also car companies that will pick you up for a flat fee. We stuck with [Dial 7](#) for this—they're reliable.

Finally, there are buses that will take you to Manhattan:

[Go Link](#) \$17 pp shared van; will drop you at hotel, but there may be other stops before you

[Newark Airport Express Bus](#) service \$17 large bus; also has connections to other airports (LGA and LFK); drops at a central location in Manhattan near Grand Central.

**Oh, were you coming in by car? Nope. Just don't.**

### **Navigation:**

Some simple lessons:

Streets run east-west; avenues north-south...above Houston Street (pronounced How-stun, NOT like the city in Texas...oh, and don't call Avenue of the Americas that—it's 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue). Anyway, anything south of Houston is a hodgepodge, as that is the oldest part of the city, with criss-crossing roadways and most with names instead of numbers. Even numbered streets run east, while the odds go west, except for the major crossings which are two way: Houston, 14<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 34<sup>th</sup>, 42<sup>nd</sup>, 57<sup>th</sup>...and then Central Park gets in the way. Lower numbered streets are south and the avenues begin on the east side and move west.

Ten Avenue blocks= approximately one mile; 20 street blocks = approximately one mile.

Fifth Avenue is the dividing line between east and west; numbers get larger as you head in either direction. In other words 1 E 51 Street is literally just east of 5<sup>th</sup> on 51<sup>st</sup>, 300 East 51<sup>st</sup> is at 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

Looking for a street address? You're not gonna believe this. Someone actually figured this out:

### FINDING AN ADDRESS

A useful formula has been devised to help pinpoint any avenue address. By dropping the last digit of the address, dividing the remainder by 2, then adding or subtracting the key number given here, you will discover the nearest cross street. For example: to find No. 826 Lexington Avenue, you have to drop the 6; divide 82 by 2, which is 41; then add 22 (the key number). Therefore, the nearest cross street is 63rd Street.



Avenue Address	Key Number	Avenue Address	Key Number
1st Ave	+3	9th Ave	+13
2nd Ave	+3	10th Ave	+14
3rd Ave	+10	Amsterdam Ave	+60
4th Ave	+8	Audubon Ave	+165
5th Ave, up to 200	+13	Broadway above 23rd St	-30
5th Ave, up to 400	+16	Central Park W, divide full number by 10	+60
5th Ave, up to 600	+18	Columbus Ave	+60
5th Ave, up to 775	+20	Convent Ave	+127z
5th Ave 775-1286, do not divide by 2	-18	Lenox Ave	+110
5th Ave, up to 1500	+45	Lexington Ave	+22
5th Ave, up to 2000	+24	Madison Ave	+26
(6th) Ave of the Americas	-12	Park Ave	+35
7th Ave below 110th St	+12	Park Ave South	+8
7th Ave above 110th St	+20	Riverside Drive, divide full number by 10	+72
8th Ave	+10	St Nicholas Ave	+110
		West End Ave	+60

Or use your phone.

### Getting around/transit:

A couple of things to know/do:

**DO buy a [MetroCard](#).** If you haven't already done so, you can get one right inside any subway station; use cash or a credit card and buy at least \$20 (cards can be shared)—you'll get a little extra and may not have to top up your card, depending on how you plan to use it. You can't ride the subway or a bus without one.

**DO either download a [NYC transit map](#)** or ask an attendant for one at a manned subway booth. Or check the Where magazine or ask at the hotel—just make sure you have a map.

**Buses** run on the avenues and across the main two-way cross streets and through Central Park as well. The final destination is what you will see on the bus front—if it says “express”—it will only make stops at those main cross streets. Look for a bus shelter every 2-3 blocks, and each one will say what buses will stop there and there will be a pole with the routes on it, so you can see if it stops where you want to go. Your Metrocard will allow you to head in two directions within a certain time period (in other words, if you want to get to Times Square and you are at South ferry, you can take a bus up what becomes 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and then transfer at 42<sup>nd</sup> to the crosstown bus). To pay your fare, put your Metrocard into the machine by the driver (I never get the direction right, even though there are little arrows to direct you) and the fare will automatically be deducted from the card.

**Trains:** by all means, use the subway wherever you can—it's fast and cheap, and always good for a study of characters. Used to be I wouldn't recommend the train after 9 pm, but it's gotten

a little better; still, unless you're coming from a game at Yankee Stadium with everyone else, or some other busy space, maybe take the bus or even a cab after 10:30 or 11 at night. To pay your fare, put your Metrocard into the machine at the turnstile in the direction indicated (again, I often get it wrong), and the turnstile will be opened and the fare deducted from your card.

**TIP:** You can check the balance on your MetroCard at the small machine next to the pay machines in the train stations; you can also top up your current card any time you like (best to do it at a non-rush hour time, or people will be glaring at you while you try to complete your transaction).

**Taxis:** on taxis, yes NYC has Uber. Totally up to you if you use, but would I? Why bother when there are so many cabs around? All you have to do is step off the curb and hold your hand up. The only time you will have trouble getting a cab is in the snow or pouring rain or in the Times Square area after the shows let out.

And in any case, cab fares will add up quickly, so unless you feel you really can't wait for a bus or train (if you're late—and remember, travelling on the surface can sometimes be very frustrating and slow), then grab a cab and go!

A taxi is available when the main light is on on the top of the roof; the little lights on either side say "off" and "duty" and those cars are not in service, and all lights out on top means the cab currently has a fare.

**TIP:** when hailing a cab, head into the intersection in the direction you want to go, and stand wherever the cab will have to pick you up AFTER the traffic light. In other words, if you want to go downtown from 85<sup>th</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, stand on the southeast or southwest corner; otherwise, the chances are good you'll get stuck at your first red light, whereas if he/she has come across the intersection the lights are in your favour.

## **What to Do, what to do? What not to do too.**

**First the do's:**

**GO see a Broadway show.**

Forget the big shows, unless there really is something you must see...tickets to the sold out shows can cost as much as \$600 US per seat. So, unless this is the case, fuggedaboudit—there are plenty of possibilities. Best ways to get discounted tickets? Go to the TKTS booth, located in the middle of the triangle between 45<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Street, where 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Broadway intersect—under the red stairs (where you *must* snap a photo); tickets for matinees go on sale

around 11 am and evening performances at 3—you can save as much as half the price or more of a ticket...but you will have to wait on line, which cuts into your day. Alternatively, go on line before you leave home and visit [Broadwaybox](#) or [Playbill](#); join their clubs (they're free) and look for discounts there.

TIP: you have a better chance of getting great seats at a show if you buy individual seats (as opposed to two together); you aren't going to talk during the show anyway and single seats are often in prime spots—you can always catch up during intermission....

**Go up to the top pf at least one tall building in midtown.** Yes it's expensive, but either the [Empire State](#) or [Rockefeller Center](#) (which has a great view of the Empire State) are well worth the price of admission. Go early though—crowds will get heavy during the day—especially if it's clear (and don't waste your money if it's raining, foggy or cloudy).

### **Go to the park(s)!**

[Central Park](#): anytime, but I do not recommend heading into the park after dark unless there is a concert on and everyone is heading that way (stay with the crowd). So many great spots and things to see and do. Carriage rides—a bit expensive, although there are now fewer horses so it may not feel as Disney ride-like; the Great Lawn and the Boathouse and Strawberry Fields—yes. TIP: keep an eye on the buildings when you head in and you'll always be able to tell where you are/in which direction you're heading. Makes it easier to get in and out.

[The HighLine](#): the city's newest park, it's made from the old elevated rail tracks that sit on the west side of the city. It stretches from Gansevoort Street in Greenwich Village to 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, with many places to climb up. Some very cool architecture and it begins/ends right at the brand new Whitney Museum on Gansevoort (more on that below)

TIP: Walk the Highline in the early morning, during the week. It's not very wide and on weekends it can be impassable with people and rather frustrating.

[Washington Square](#): at the very south end of 5<sup>th</sup> Ave, this park is surrounding by the campus of NYU and has a replica of the Arch de Triomphe in it. Interesting; not very large, and not recommended late at night.

[Battery Park](#): at the very southern tip of Manhattan, parts of the original fort that guarded the colony are here. This is near South Ferry (Staten Island Ferry terminal) with great views of the Statue of Liberty and also the South Street Seaport, the Millennium Tower and Ground Zero and Wall Street—it's really not even that far to City Hall, Chinatown and Little Italy.

**Neighborhoods worth a visit:** [Chinatown](#), [Little Italy](#) (especially in September for the [Feast of San Gennaro](#)), [Greenwich Village](#), [Soho](#), [Times Square](#), [Columbus Circle](#); the [Gold Coast](#) (upper 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue—from 59<sup>th</sup> to 96<sup>th</sup> Streets)

**Sports:** Yankees, Mets; Rangers, Islanders(Barclays Center in Brooklyn), NJ Devils (Prudential center in Newark); NY Jets & NY Jets (NFL—both at the Meadowlands in Jersey); NY Knicks, Brooklyn Nets (formerly the NJ Nets, they now play at Barclays Center in Brooklyn)

**Souvenirs:** Two places to buy 'em: Chinatown and some of the shops that line Times Square.

**TIP:** Chinatown is the only place in NY you can and should barter—gently—it's not a sport here. Best thing to do is suggest that you saw something or someone told you'd they'd sell for a few dollars less up the street; they'll often quickly lower their prices. But be reasonable—you're not in Mexico or China.

**Eats:** pizza, bagels, street cart hot dogs (aka dirty water dogs), deli (but stay away from the big names, unless you want to pay \$20.00 for a corned beef on rye), Chinese takeout, black and white cookies, Italian ice, any street food at a street fair.

**Museums—so many to choose from!** My favorites:

[Metropolitan Museum of Art](#)—huge—it would take days, so plan what you really want to see. It's "pay-what-you-can", but the suggested donation is...\$25 per person.

[Museum of Modern Art](#)—free on Fridays from 4-8 pm, but can be very crowded (it's suggested to arrive after 6 pm); regular admission is \$25, but they used to have a half price offer after 4 pm, but the museum closes at 5:30, so know what you want to see before you go!

[The Whitney](#): Brand new and absolutely amazing, at the south end of the Highline, \$22; Fridays 7-10 pm—pay what you wish

[The Guggenheim](#): great architecture, great for modern art, right on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue (closed on Thursdays)

[The Tenement Museum](#): Fantastic history here; buy tickets on line in advance.

[Brooklyn Museum](#)—easy train ride from Manhattan; suggested "contribution" is \$16. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

[NYC Transit Museum](#)—in Brooklyn, near a subway stop; fun for kids and mass transit buffs. Closed Mondays, 7 bucks.

There are also many specialty museum and art galleries.

**TIP:** check on admission discounts and/or free times; also consider buying a membership—sometimes it's less for two and if there's a really popular exhibit you may get priority access (I did this once for a Jeff Koons exhibit at the Whitney—the big balloon dog and the like? Oy, not great, but then I had an invite and a free admission when the museum opened its new building downtown—worth every penny)—possibly worth it if you plan to be in NY more than once in the year, or plan several visits to the same museum.



**Visit iconic buildings and spaces:** [Ground Zero/Freedom Tower](#) (observation deck now open), the [Wall Street Bull](#), the [Brooklyn Bridge](#), [South Street Seaport](#), [Grand Central Station](#) (go and look at the ceiling of the main waiting room), [USS Intrepid](#)

**Go for a run!** If you're a runner, by all means, do it in NY...but be careful re: traffic (see below)

**Don't:**

**Don't go to Liberty Island.** It's expensive and you'll waste hours waiting on line. Instead, take the Staten Island Ferry from South Ferry. It's free, and you will have to disembark in Staten Island and turn around and get back on. Make sure to get onto the starboard (right) side of the boat heading across and port (left) coming back. The ferry sweeps right past the island and you can get great pictures of the statue from right there from the deck of the ferry.

**Don't play street games**—you'll see the occasional three card monte dealer on the corner with a crowd around him/her—do NOT play. You WILL NOT win.

**Don't put your purse on the back of your chair, or your wallet in your back pocket.** Don't take out expensive or the newest electronics on the train or on the street.

**Don't buy stuff from the street vendors** selling knockoffs-sunglasses, handbags, cheap paintings. No good can come of this.

**Don't always obey the traffic signals.** Well, obviously do if a truck is careening towards you. But if you stand on the street corner while it says "don't walk" with no cars coming or gaps in the traffic, people will a) know you're a tourist and b) will get mad if you're blocking their progress. Just be very careful and look both ways (even if it's a one-way street) before you dart out. I always "shadow" a local—stand just to the side and behind someone, on the side the traffic is not coming from and move when they do. (we did this in Rome and it worked like a charm)

**Don't rent bikes** unless you are very, very comfortable with this. If you haven't been on a bike in a while, this is not for you—not even in the parks.