

Part Five

Getting around New York

Taxis

When it comes to taxicabs, Manhattan is the land of plenty, a revelation for tourists from towns where you have to reserve one in advance. The main thoroughfares sometimes look like rivers of yellow, with four and five lanes of cabs whipping along. The New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission licenses and regulates the yellow “medallioned” taxis (“medallioned” refers to the illuminated light on top of the cab), and there are currently more than 12,000 Yellow Cabs alone. These taxis must be hailed on the street—in other words, you cannot call them on the phone to pick you up.

There is little trick to hailing one: First make sure you’re not on a one-way street trying to wave somebody down on the wrong side. (This happens more often than you’d think.) Then stand at the edge of the curb—try not to walk out into traffic unless you’re blocked by parked vehicles, and even then be very careful—and raise your arm high. You don’t need to wave it about frantically unless you’re in an emergency: Cabbies have a sort of radar. If you feel a little awkward at first pay a visit to the corner of Park Avenue and 49th Street; there you will find a J. Seward Johnson bronze of a very harried salaryman semaphoring for a cab in a sort of urban despair. It’s rude to cut off someone who’s already signaling by getting downstream (though it happens); however, you may approach a cab that’s letting someone else out and wait by the open door.

To avoid unnecessary frustration, realize that in New York, unlike some other cities, passengers are guaranteed a private ride. That is, the cabbie cannot just veer over and see if you happen to be going in the same direction the first passenger is, and then pop you in the front seat. So don’t swear at cabs with shadowy figures in the back. Of course, if there are several in your party who get in together, you can drop off some riders before others. Also note that the cab is not on duty unless the little

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light in the middle of the rooftop sign—the “medallion” that proves the cab is legit—is lit: If the yellow one in the middle that reads “off duty” is lit, he or she is headed home.

If you’re staying at one of the nicer hotels, there is likely to be a doorman available to whistle a cab up for you. This also allows for a bit of cheating if you are a little timid or loaded down. You can walk into the hotel lobby from one entrance and pass through to the other side and, looking as though you just left your room, ask the doorman there to hail you one.

If you are not encumbered by luggage and the like, you can save yourself some time and money by walking to the closest one-way street heading in your direction and hailing a cab there. In a similar vein, if you find yourself gridlocked in a cab within a block or two of your destination, go ahead and pay your fare and proceed on foot.

Many New York cabbies speak only marginal English. You can expect them to be familiar with major hotels, train and bus terminals, and major attractions. For more obscure destinations or addresses, you will do yourself (and the cabbie) a favor by writing down the exact address where you want to go.

Once inside the cab, you should make sure the driver’s license with photograph and name are clearly displayed on the passenger side visor. This is required for your protection in case of disagreement (for complaints, contact the Taxi and Limousine commission at (212) 221-8294). It doesn’t hurt to notice the number, either, in case you leave something behind; perhaps then you can get the dispatcher to send the cab to your hotel.

In our experience, New York cabbies usually take the most direct route to any given destination. Sometimes there is a little fudging, as when a driver circles an entire block to deliver you to a corner address on a one-way street, but in the main you can count on cabbies to keep it short and simple. If you prefer, you can specify the route you want your driver to take, and sometimes on longer fares the cabbie will actually ask if you have a preference. Still, many New York first-timers are a bit paranoid about cabbies taking them for a ride. In particular, LaGuardia Airport to Midtown via the Triborough Bridge arouses suspicions, though it is a perfectly acceptable route.

In addition to the medallion on the roof, a legitimate cab will have an automatic receipt machine mounted on the dashboard so that you can get an immediate record. (Fares begin at \$2, and the meter ticks over \$0.30 for each fifth of a mile, or \$0.20 per minute of standing time; there’s a dark-hours surcharge of \$0.50, and passengers are responsible for tolls.)

If you are making two stops—as when you are picking someone else up at one location and proceeding somewhere else—you need to tell the cabbie this. After you get in the cab, simply say, “Two stops,” and provide your destinations in order. This lets the cabbie know not to turn off the meter when you reach the first destination.

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Don't be surprised if your cabbie drives fast and aggressively. More often than not, you will feel like an extra in a movie chase scene as you careen through the concrete canyons, weaving in and out of traffic. The good news is that these guys are excellent drivers. The other good news is that cabs now have seat belts in the back.

Although cabs range throughout Manhattan and the boroughs, they are most plentiful in Midtown. If you find yourself below Canal Street after business hours or on a weekend, for example, finding an empty yellow medallioned taxi cruising down the street may be a challenge. Your alternative is to phone one of the many companies listed under "Taxicab Service" in the Yellow Pages. Although these companies are also licensed by the Taxi and Limousine Commission, their cars will probably not be yellow or have a medallion. Some companies dispatch cars on demand 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but others require advance arrangements. Fares, as you would expect, are generally higher than those of metered, yellow, medallioned cabs. Late at night, in bad weather, and/or in isolated areas, however, phoning for a taxi is a safer and less stressful option than trusting to luck on the street. For the lowest fares ask your concierge, hotel desk clerk, or restaurant maitre d' for a recommendation before hauling out the Yellow Pages. When you call, tell the dispatcher where you want the car to pick you up and where you are going, and ask to be quoted a fare. Almost all of the car-on-demand companies accept credit cards. As always, tips and tolls are extra.

Now, as to illicit taxis. New York has a lot of limousines and luxury cars because of all its executives and celebrities. Consequently, it also has a lot of chauffeurs with time on their hands. So frequently, when you are standing on the street trying to hail a cab—and this is particularly true if you are a woman or if it is clearly theater-rush or dinner time and you look a little harried—a nice-looking sedan or town car may pull over and the driver offer to take you to your destination. These are sometimes referred to as gypsy cabs; although few of them pose a threat in the sense that they are unlikely to kidnap you, they will almost certainly want to charge you a very hefty fee. If it's raining or snowing or you're really late, or you really want to make an entrance, you might want to take him up on it. Just be prepared to pay the fee—and realize that you won't have any legal complaint if you're ripped off.

The Subway

One of the first things that you notice about New York is the snarled traffic. But underground, far removed from the cursing, horn blowing, and bumper-to-bumper slog of the mean streets, is a fast, efficient subway system 250 miles in toto and carrying 3.5 million passengers 24 hours every day. Learn a little about how it operates and you will be able to get

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around New York quickly and affordably. The key to the city is just beneath the sidewalk, and it will set you free. For an online introduction visit nycsubway.org or www.mta.nyc.ny.us.

The Subway vs. Cabs

We recommend cabs whenever you are encumbered by luggage, multiple shopping bags, or anything large you must haul around. Cabs are also preferred for getting around in the evening after rush-hour traffic has abated and after 11 p.m. or so for safety reasons. If there are two or more in your party and you are heading to different destinations, sharing a cab makes more sense than taking the subway. Another good time to take a cab, provided you can find one, is when it's raining or snowing.

From 6:30 a.m. until about 7 p.m. on weekdays, New York streets and avenues are insanely congested. This is the time that the subway really shines. While cabs are stuck for three changes of the same traffic signal trying to crawl through a single intersection, the subways are zipping efficiently along. Plus, the subway is much less expensive.

Will the subway save you time? Maybe; it depends. With the subway, you must walk to the closest station, wait for the train, ride to your destination station, and then walk to wherever you're going. If you are traveling a relatively long distance, say 35 blocks or more, during business hours on a weekday, the subway will beat the cab about 60% of the time. If you are traveling a shorter distance, or if you must transfer on the subway to reach your destination, the cab will probably be faster. On weekends, when the streets are less congested and when trains run less frequently, the primary rationale for using the subway is to save money.

This latter, saving money, is no small potatoes. With fare and tip, the shortest cab ride will cost you about \$5, compared to \$2 on the subway. When we work in New York, we almost always use the subway, allowing enough time between meetings to walk to and from the stations and to wait for the train.

Finally, the subways do not run particularly close to the far east or the far west sides of the island. Thus, subway travel to such destinations as the Javits Center, the Passenger Ship Terminal, or the United Nations is not recommended.

Subway Basics

The New York subway system is one of the world's largest; almost 700 miles of track connect the four boroughs of Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, and Queens. There are close to 500 stations, so you are likely to find one near where you want to go.

The nexus of the system is the complex of stations and routes below Central Park extending to the southern tip of Manhattan Island. Though service to other areas of Manhattan and the outlying boroughs is more

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than adequate, this Midtown and Downtown ganglion of routes, connections, and stops provides the most frequent and flexible level of service that you are likely to find in any American city.

Safety

Once the butt of talk-show jokes, the New York subway system is now clean, scoured of (most) graffiti, and well policed. While not quite as secure as Disneyland, subway travel does not represent much of a risk. Muggings and violent crime are extremely rare these days, though riders on crowded trains and in crowded stations should continue to be alert for pickpockets.

In recent years, many stations have been renovated to include various kinds of artwork—murals, paintings, even mosaics—reflecting neighborhood attractions. The station at 81st Street near the Museum of Natural History has mosaics of reptiles, birds, butterflies, sharks, scorpions, and the like. In the Times Square station are murals by Jacob Lawrence and Jack Beal. Houston Street station shows a man sitting on a bench reading a newspaper while a whale kibbitzes over his shoulder. Alice—she of the “Adventures Underground”—and her Mad company are in evidence at 50th Street. Coffee cups and poetry come together beneath Bloomingdales, and 100 eyes, like Argus’s, peer out at Chambers Street travelers.

From 6 a.m. until 11 p.m. or so, you can ride the subway with no more concern for your personal safety than you feel on the streets during business hours. After 11 p.m. it’s wise to use the special “Off-Hours Waiting Areas” that are monitored by subway security. When the train arrives, we suggest that you ride in the same car as the train’s conductor (usually one of the middle cars).

Any time of day, if you are carrying packages, a briefcase, or luggage, sit as far from the doors as possible. A favorite ploy of thieves is to grab the purse or package of a person sitting near a door and escape onto the platform just as the doors are closing.

Finding the Subway

An indispensable aid to locating stations and understanding the subway system is the New York City Transit Subway Map. The map shows all routes and stations and offers helpful information about fares and frequency of service, among other things. Once you know the address of your New York hotel, you can use the subway map to plan your travel around town. You can arrange to have a map mailed to you at home by calling Subway Travel Information at (718) 330-1234 (open 24 hours), or you can begin to familiarize yourself with the routes by logging onto **www.mta.nyc.ny.us**. If you forget to request a map before traveling to New York, you can usually pick one up at the airports, Penn Station, Grand Central Station, or the Port Authority Terminal. Some hotel front desks and concierges also stock a supply of maps. If all else fails, the

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NYNEX Manhattan Yellow Pages book includes complete color maps of both the subway system and Manhattan bus routes; you'll find them at the beginning of the book.

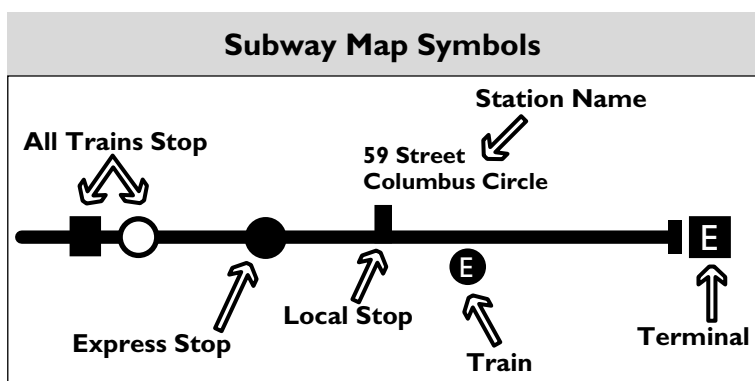
If you are on the streets of Manhattan without a subway map, look for the lighted globes (about the size of bowling balls) that mark most subway entrances. A green globe means the subway entrance is open and staffed 24 hours a day. A red (or red and white) globe indicates that the entrance is open only during hours posted above the station. Some of the larger subway entrances are accessed through buildings. The majority of these have good street signage, although a few do not. Along similar lines, you may exit the subway at a station where the exits lead into a building, as opposed to directly back on the street. If this happens, simply exit the building and from there proceed to the nearest street corner to regain your orientation.

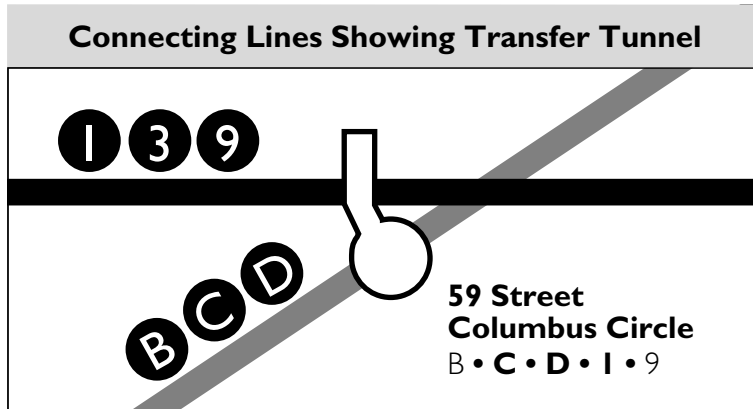
In Midtown and Downtown where various lines converge, there may be several stations located close together. The subway map will help you sort the stations out. If you don't have a map, descend into the closest station and check the system map displayed on the wall.

Reading the Subway Map

Each subway line is shown in a different color. Though some lines diverge into separate routes above Central Park in Manhattan and in the boroughs, they bear the color of the trunk (main) line. Each of the diverging routes is designated by a letter or number displayed in a circle or diamond of the same color. Terminals (ends of the line) are indicated by squares for normal service routes and diamonds for rush-hours-only routes.

The Lexington Avenue line, for example, is represented in green. Four routes—the 4-Circle, 5-Diamond, 5-Circle, and 6-Circle—originate in the Bronx and are likewise depicted in green. The routes converge in





Manhattan, where all four follow Lexington Avenue (from which the line takes its name). The end of the line for 6-Circle is City Hall, and the end for 5-Circle is Bowling Green, both in the Downtown tip of the island. 4-Circle and 5-Diamond cross out of Manhattan and head east into Brooklyn. 4-Circle terminates at Utica Avenue, and 5-Diamond ends at Flatbush Avenue. In this example we followed the routes south (downtown) from the Bronx. If we boarded the 5-Diamond subway at Flatbush Avenue and headed north (uptown), we would converge with the other green lines in lower Manhattan, follow Lexington Avenue north, and diverge at 138th Street to cross into the Bronx. If we stayed on to the end of the line, we would wind up at 241st Street in the Bronx.

Stations are represented on the map by:

Each station's name is shown in bold type. Station names are usually streets or avenues—for example, the Houston Street Station on the Red Line is shown on the map as **Houston St.** Some stations, however, have place names, such as **Penn Station** or **Times Square**.

Underneath the station name, the map shows which routes stop at that particular station. If the station is wheelchair accessible, the visual wheelchair graphic will be printed alongside the station name.

The 23rd Street Station on the Eighth Avenue (because the line follows Eighth Avenue) Blue Line looks like this on the map:

23 Street
C-E

This means that the C-Circle Train and the E-Circle Train both stop at this station. The A-Circle Train, which also runs on the Blue Line, does not stop here. If it did, the station would look like this:

23 Street
A-C-E

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You might see a station where some of the routes are not depicted in bold, such as:

72 Street**1-2-3-9**

This means that the 1-Circle, 2-Circle, and 3-Circle trains offer regular service but that the 9-Circle train only provides part-time service, in this case during rush hours Monday through Friday (you need the subway route chart for this last piece of information).

Where certain lines meet or come close to meeting, you will see little symbols that look like this:

This means that there is a pedestrian walkway or tunnel that connects two or more stations, thus allowing riders to transfer to other lines without exiting and reentering the subway system.

Fares

It costs \$2 to ride the subway. (There is no charge for children under 44 inches in height.) Tokens are no longer accepted; you must buy a MetroCard. A MetroCard looks like a credit card. Available at subway stations and at over 2,000 neighborhood stores, the MetroCard can be purchased in any amount from \$2 (a single ride) to \$80. (It's more economical to get at least \$10 worth at a time; each five rides come with a free bonus sixth.) Each time you ride the subway you swipe your card—back to front, with the stripe facing you—through a little electronic reader on the right side of the turnstile. The electronic reader reads the amount of credit you have on the card and deducts \$2 for every ride. When you use your card, your balance is displayed on the turnstile. All the accounting is maintained electronically, so there's no way to tell the fare credit remaining by looking at the card. If you want to check your balance, there are "reader" machines at most stations that will show the card's current balance without deducting anything. It is not necessary to get a new card when your balance gets low: All you have to do is take the card to a fare booth and pay to have your balance increased. When you buy a card or pay to increase your balance, always run your card through the reader (before you leave the fare window) to make sure your purchase was properly recorded. MetroCards expire after one year, but any amount remaining on the card can be transferred to a new card. For additional information on the MetroCard, call (212) METROCARD.

An even better bargain is the one-day, unlimited-ride MetroCard, which costs \$7 (so after only four rides in a day you're already ahead); and which is good until 3 a.m. the morning after it's activated, so you can really see the town. Seven-day, unlimited-ride MetroCards cost \$21, and if you're in town for the long haul, 30-day cards cost \$70. In addition to being available anywhere regular MetroCards are sold, you can also buy these prepackaged cards at Hudson News and many drugstores.

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Admittedly, we are not great fans of New York City buses, but you should know that with MetroCard you can transfer free from subway to bus, bus to subway, or bus to bus. You must use your MetroCard to start your trip and must make your transfer within two hours. Transfers from subway to subway are also free, with or without the MetroCard, as long as you do not exit the system. However, again, the unlimited-ride MetroCards are bargains, as they can be used for the buses all day as well as the subway.

Finally, be aware that the card was designed for New Yorkers, who, of course, are always in a hurry. In practical terms, this means you have to swipe your card fast! If you ease it through the turnstile device at a more leisurely tempo, it won't work. When in Rome . . .

Riding the Subway: A Primer

Looking at your subway map (or at one of the large poster-sized subway maps on display in the stations), try to locate the stations closest to your starting point and to your destination. If the station closest to your starting point does not offer service in the general direction you'll be going, check to see whether there are any other stations reasonably close by that do. Try to find a subway route that requires no transfers. It is generally faster to get within a few blocks of your destination on the subway and then cover the remaining distance on foot than it is to make a transfer. As a rule of thumb, it takes less than two minutes to walk the short blocks between streets. Walking crosstown, you can cover the long blocks between avenues in four to five minutes each.

Check to see which trains stop at stations you have identified. In general, the more trains, the better. Make sure that trains that stop at your departure station also stop at your destination station.

Almost all trains except the 7-Circle Flushing Local and the L-Circle 14th Street Canarsie Local (cross-town trains) travel generally north/south, or, in subway-speak, uptown (north) and downtown (south). Traveling on the subway is immensely simplified if you can determine whether you are traveling uptown or downtown.

If you want to go crosstown (east or west), you may need to know where the train terminates. Let's say you want to go from the west side to the east side on the E-Circle train. The signs for this train will not say "crosstown"; they will say "Jamaica/Queens," indicating the train's final destination. If you know (or learn by looking at the subway map) that this train travels cross-town en route to the borough of Queens, you will know to board in the direction of "Jamaica/Queens" to reach your cross-town destination. Incidentally, most trains that run cross-town also run part of their route north/south. Thus, signs for the E-Circle train may read "Uptown-Jamaica/Queens" or "Downtown-World Trade Center."

When you approach the station, there may be one or multiple entrances. If there is only one entrance, proceed inside and follow the

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signs directing you to the Uptown or Downtown train platforms, whichever applies. If you are standing at a street intersection and there is a subway entrance on all four corners, or on both sides of an avenue, the entrance(s) on the west side of the avenue will lead to Downtown platforms, and the entrance(s) on the east side of the street will lead to Uptown platforms. Normally there is good signage at the entrances identifying the line, trains (routes), and direction that the particular entrance serves. Usually, because you do not have to swipe your MetroCard until you are within spitting distance of the platform, you can verify that you have chosen the correct entrance by checking the signage on the platform. If you want to travel uptown and you descend to a platform that reads “Downtown,” do not pass through the turnstiles. Instead, return to the street, cross the avenue, and descend to the Uptown platform.

Though most stations are served by only one line, there are a number of stations, particularly in Midtown and Downtown, that are served by several lines. What you have here, essentially, is a sort of double- or even triple-decker station. With these stations it's a little more complicated than uptown versus downtown. At these multiline stations you may have a choice of lines going uptown and downtown as well as, possibly, some cross-town lines. If you start your trip at one of these stations, locate the system map near the entrance and determine exactly which line you need and which direction you want to go. Armed with this knowledge, follow the signs to the correct platform.

Be aware that in the larger stations you may have to pay and go through the turnstiles before you get anywhere near the train platforms. Don't worry. The inside signage is good, and there are interior passages that will allow you to correct your mistake if you end up on the wrong platform.

Once on the platform, double-check the signs, and if necessary recheck the system map. The platform sign will show the trains that stop at that platform, indicate their direction (usually uptown or downtown), and specify the terminal (end of the line) for each route.

Sometimes a single waiting platform will serve two tracks. Trains arriving on one side of the platform will go in one direction, and trains on the other side will go in the opposite direction. If you descended a long way or had to navigate a spiraling stairwell, you may arrive on the platform somewhat disoriented. Check the signage to determine the correct direction for your travel. If the signs don't help, simply ask another waiting passenger.

If there are several trains that stop at both your departure and destination stations, you can take your choice. If you are going a relatively short distance (30 blocks or less), go ahead and hop on the first train that comes along. If it's a “local,” it will make a lot of stops, but you will still probably arrive sooner than if you waited for an express. If you are going a long way, you may want to hold out for an express train.

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When the train comes into the station, it will be well marked. The A-Circle train on the Eighth Avenue Blue Line, for example, will sport big blue circles with the letter A inside. The conductor usually rides in the middle of the train and will usually stick his head out of the window when the train stops. If you are really confused, ask him if the train goes to your destination station.

You've probably seen film footage of people crowding on and battling off subways. Although this does sometimes occur at the height of rush hour in the larger stations, usually things are much more civil. When the train stops, approach the door and wait for it to open. Allow passengers getting off to disembark, then step into the car. The conductor observes the loading process, so unless you're trying to leap on or off at the last second (not recommended), you shouldn't have to worry about getting caught in a closing door.

Once inside, take a seat if there is one available. If you are still a little confused, you will find a system map displayed on the wall of the car. Check the next scheduled stop for the direction you wish to travel. When the train pulls in, verify by the signs on the platform that you are traveling in the right direction. If you have mistakenly boarded the right train in the wrong direction, wait until the train stops at one of the larger stations where transfers are optional. These larger stations have internal passages that will allow you to cross over to the right platform without leaving the system and having to pay again to reenter.

Buses

In addition to being subject to all the problems that afflict Manhattan surface traffic, buses are slow, make innumerable stops, and have difficulty maneuvering. Even so, there are several good reasons to use public bus service. After 11 p.m. buses are safer than walking if you are not up to springing for a cab. Some buses, like the 1, 5, 6, 10, and 15, run very interesting routes and are a dirt-cheap option for sight-seeing (ride on weekends, when traffic is less problematic). Though subways excel in north/south, uptown/downtown service, there is less crosstown (east/west) subway service than one would hope (especially since no subways cross beneath Central Park). Buses fill this public transportation gap, running a goodly number of crosstown routes. You can get a vague idea of the bus's destination by noticing the initial that precedes the route number: "M" for Manhattan, "Q" for Queens, "B" for Brooklyn, and "Bx" for the Bronx. That's "up," remember? Finally, of course, buses are inexpensive to ride, especially with the MetroCard, which allows bus-to-bus, bus-to-subway, and subway-to-bus transfers. Maps of Manhattan bus routes can be found in the front of the NYNEX Manhattan Yellow Pages. MTA buses cost \$2 and require either exact change or a MetroCard. For more information, check out www.mta.nyc.ny.us.

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Walking

New York is a great town for walking. Like most cities, it has neighborhoods that are not ideally suited for an evening stroll, but these are easily avoided. If you observe a few precautions and exercise some common sense, you will find the sidewalks of New York not only interesting and exhilarating but also quite hospitable.

As you begin to explore, you will find that the blocks between the east/west streets are quite short. Thus, walking south (toward Downtown) on Seventh Avenue, most folks will be able to cover the blocks from 59th Street to 49th Street in about 12 minutes, even assuming a wait for traffic at several intersections. Crossing town from east to west (or vice versa), the blocks are much longer. A walk from First Avenue to Tenth Avenue along 42nd Street is a real hike, requiring more than 30 minutes for most people.

If you want to try a restaurant eight blocks away, and the address is north or south of where you are, you won't even need a cab. If the restaurant is eight blocks away across town (east/west), take a subway or hail a taxi.

If you become disoriented during a walk, proceed to the nearest street corner and see what the street is (as opposed to an avenue). Then walk one additional short block in either direction. If the next cross street is higher in number, you are heading north (uptown). East will be to your right, and west to your left. If the next cross street is lower in number, then you are walking south. East will be to your left, and west to your right.

Let's say, for example, that you just emerged from a subway station on the Avenue of the Americas (also called Sixth Avenue) and are not sure which way's which. Walking to the nearest corner, you discover that you are at the intersection of 24th Street and the Avenue of the Americas. You continue one more block on Avenue of the Americas and reach 23rd Street. You now know that you are going south and that First through Fifth Avenues are to your left (east) and that Seventh through Eleventh Avenues are to your right (west).

Or you can go by the traffic: Fifth, Park, and Lexington avenues are one-way streets going south; Park, Madison, and Third go north. Seventh and Broadway go south; Eighth goes north until it becomes Central Park West, when it is two-way (but of course, you can see the park from there anyway), and so on.

Because there is no better or more direct way to experience New York than to explore it on foot, we recommend that you do as much hoofing as your time and stamina permit. To help you organize your walking, we include several walking tours (guided and self-guided) in Part Seven, Sight-seeing, Tours, and Attractions.