

New York City Transportation

Getting around the city is likely to take some getting used to; public transit here is on the whole quite good, extremely cheap, and covers most conceivable corners of the city, whether by bus or subway. Don't be afraid to ask someone for help if you're confused. You'll no doubt find the need for a taxi from time to time, especially if you feel uncomfortable in an area at night; you shouldn't ever have trouble tracking one down - the ubiquitous yellow cabs are always on the prowl for passenger.

THE SUBWAY - DOWNLOAD A SUBWAY MAP PDF

The New York subway is intimidating and initially incomprehensible. It's also the fastest and most efficient way to get from A to B in Manhattan and the outer boroughs, and it is safer and more user-friendly than it once was. Put aside your qualms: Six million people ride the subway every day, quite a few for the first time.

Any subway journey costs \$1.50, payable by token purchased at any booth, but if you are going to be take more than a couple of rides, it's more efficient to purchase a MetroCard. This allows you to transfer (for free) from subway to bus, bus to subway or bus to bus within a period of two hours. It's available, from token booths and vending machines, in several forms: cards can be bought for \$3 to \$80; \$15 purchases allow eleven rides for the cost of ten, and \$30 purchases allow 22 rides for the cost of twenty. Unlimited-ride cards allow unlimited travel for a certain period of time: a seven-day pass for \$17, a thirty-day pass for \$63 and a daily "Fun Pass" for \$4.

BUSSES - LOWER MANHATTAN MAP (PDF) or MANHATTAN MAP (PDF)

The bus system is

simpler than the subway, and you can see where you're going and hop off at anything interesting. It also features many more crosstown routes. The major disadvantage is that they can be extremely slow - in peak hours almost down to walking pace, and extremely full to boot. In response to cries of overcrowding along several routes, the MTA recently introduced "accordion buses" - two buses attached with a flexible rubber accordion, which helps the big vehicle turn corners. However, because these run slightly less frequently than the ones they replaced, they still get crowded.

Bus maps, like subway maps, can be obtained at the main concourse of Grand Central or the Convention and Visitors Bureau at 53rd Street and Seventh Avenue.

Anywhere in Manhattan the fare is \$1.50, payable on entry with either a subway token, a MetroCard (the most convenient way) or with the correct change - no bills.

TAXIS

Taxis are always worth considering, especially if you're in a hurry or in a group or late at night. Always use medallion cabs, immediately recognizable by their yellow paintwork and medallion up top; gypsy cabs, unlicensed, uninsured operators who tout for business wherever tourists arrive, should be avoided.

Up to four people can travel in an ordinary medallion cab. Fares are \$2 for the first fifth of a mile and 30¢ for each fifth of a mile thereafter or for each ninety seconds in stopped or slow traffic. The basic charge rises by 50¢ from 8pm to 6am. Trips outside Manhattan can incur toll fees; not all of the crossings cost money, however, and the driver should ask you which route you wish to take.

The tip should be fifteen to twenty percent of the fare; you'll get a dirty look if you offer less. Drivers don't like splitting anything bigger than a \$10 bill, and are in their rights to refuse a bill over \$20

WALKING

Few cities equal New York for street-level stimulation. Getting around on foot

is often the most exciting - and tiring - method of exploring. Figure fifteen minutes to walk ten north-south blocks - rather more at rush hour. However you plan your wanderings you're still going to spend much of your time walking. Footwear is important (sneakers are good for spring/summer; winter needs something waterproof). So is safety: a lot more people are injured in New York carelessly crossing the street than are mugged. Pedestrian crossings don't give you automatic right of way unless the WALK sign is on - and, even then, cars may be turning, so be prudent.