

# Getting Around

It's hard to exaggerate the problem of gridlock in Manhattan's streets. The entire center of the island's grid system is packed with cars during the day, and major avenues – primarily Lexington and Broadway – get tied up by double-parked trucks making deliveries to stores. The subway is the fastest way to get between uptown and downtown points, and contrary to popular belief, taking it is statistically safer than walking the streets in broad daylight.

Like most New Yorkers, you should use the city buses exclusively to get to points located along the same avenue or cross-town, when it's easy to calculate the amount of travel time by looking at the traffic.

The best overall plan is to use the subway all day until 40 pm, then use taxis at night. It's very important to note that taxis are obligated to take you anywhere you want to go within the five boroughs, as well as to Newark airport. During rush hours, taxi drivers often brazenly refuse fares from airport-bound customers (particularly during bad weather) because they can pick up easier fares in town. *Do not* ask permission to get into the cab if you're going to the airports, and do not negotiate a higher price for the job above the metered fare. If the cabbie refuses your business, threaten to report his/her license number to the Taxi and Limousine Commission. Even if this is an empty threat, the cab driver should take it seriously enough to relent. See the entry on taxis later in this chapter.

## TO/FROM THE AIRPORTS

When departing for the airports in the middle of the day, allow *at least* 90 minutes travel time. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey's Air Ride line (☎ (800) 247-7433) offers comprehensive information on ground transportation to/from all three airports.

No matter what airport you fly into, there are several advantages to ordering a taxi by

phone. You will be met by a car that is newer and larger than the yellow cabs hailed from the street, and you do not have to tip the driver. You can also order a pickup a day in advance and pay by credit card. If you ask for a 'price check' while ordering the taxi, the dispatcher can tell you the exact cost of the journey, which should run between \$35 and \$50, depending on your departure point and the airport destination. Some of the better services include:

Big Apple	☎ (718) 232-1015
Carmel (Manhattan only)	☎ (212) 666-6666
Citywide	☎ (718) 405-9393
Twin	☎ (718) 898-8888

## JFK Airport

Carey Transportation buses (☎ (718) 632-0500) run to/from JFK at least every 30 minutes from 5 am to 1 am daily. Buses leave from 125 Park Ave, just a block south of Grand Central Terminal, and from the Port Authority Airport Bus Center near the 42nd St and Eighth Ave entrance, from 7:15 am to 11:15 pm each day. One-way fare to JFK is \$13, with half-price tickets available for students. The journey takes at least one hour.

You can also take the subway to the Howard Beach-JFK station on the subway's A train, which takes at least an hour, and then switch to a free yellow and blue bus at the long-term parking lot to the terminals, which takes another 15 minutes. (You have to haul your luggage up and over several flights of stairs at the Howard Beach terminal.)

Taxi fare from the airport is about \$45. (In 1996, New York City introduced a policy mandating that taxis must offer a flat rate of \$30 from JFK to any location in Manhattan. If the fare is still available when you arrive, there will be signs indicating the price at the JFK taxi stands.)

Long-term parking at JFK costs \$6 a day; short-term parking closer to the terminals costs \$4 for four hours.

### La Guardia Airport

Carey Transportation buses leave from Port Authority Airport Bus Center from 7:15 am to 12:45 am daily and from 125 Park Ave a block south of Grand Central Terminal from 5 am to 1 am daily. Buses depart at least every 30 minutes and cost \$10 one way; the trip takes 45 minutes to an hour. The Delta Water Shuttle (☎ (800) 221-1212) leaves frequently for La Guardia with pickups at Pier 11 (at South and Wall Sts) and E 34th St on the East River. Fare is \$20 one way, \$30 roundtrip.

La Guardia is also accessible via public transportation by taking the subway to the Roosevelt Ave-Jackson Heights and 74th St-Broadway stops in Queens (two linked stations served by five lines). You then take the Q33 bus to the La Guardia main terminals or the Q47 bus to the Delta Shuttle's Marine Air Terminal. Since this journey

takes well over an hour and costs two tokens (\$3), it is recommended only for those who absolutely can't afford the additional \$7 for the direct Carey bus. If you're in upper Manhattan, you can go directly to La Guardia by catching the M60 bus anywhere along 125th St for the price of a token or \$1.50 in change (or use a Metrocard).

Taxis to La Guardia from Midtown cost about \$35.

### Newark Airport

Olympia Trails (☎ (212) 964-6233) travels to Newark from stops near Grand Central Terminal at Park Ave and 41st St from 5 am to 11 pm daily. Another bus departs to Newark from Lower Manhattan at One World Trade Center on West St from 6 am to 8 pm Monday to Friday and 7 am to 8 pm Saturday and Sunday. Both buses cost \$7.

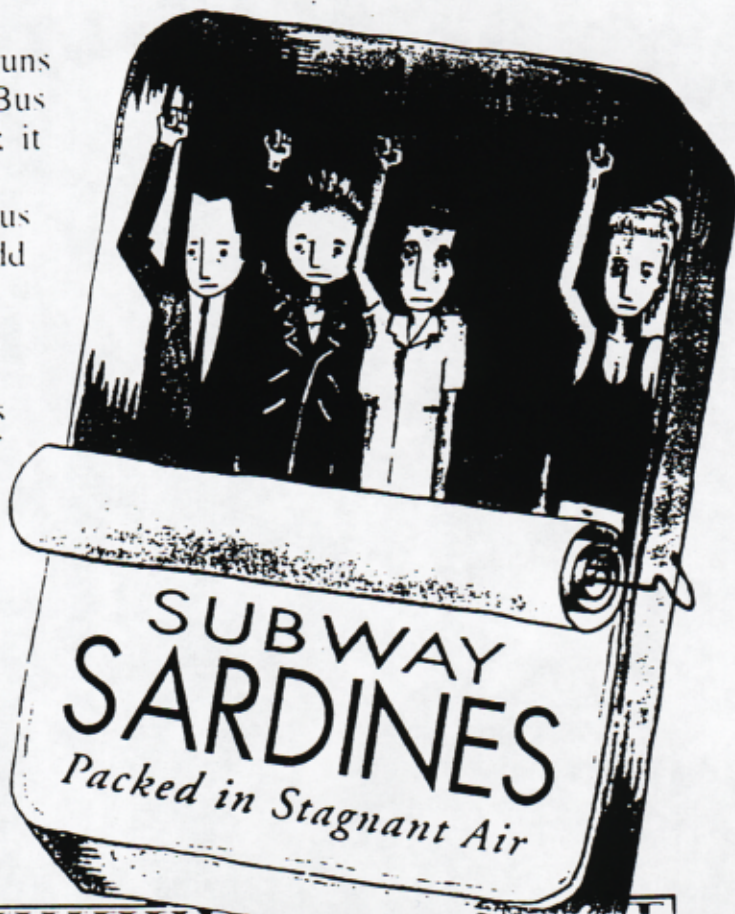
### Getting Around - Subway

New Jersey Transit (☎ (201) 762-5100) runs a No 300 bus from Port Authority Airport Bus Center to Newark airport 24 hours a day; it costs \$7 one way and \$12 roundtrip.

A taxi to Newark will cost about \$45, plus tolls for the driver there and back that will add \$10 to the total.

### SUBWAY

As American humorist Calvin Trillin has noted, 'New Yorkers hate the idea of out of towners being able to find their way around the city,' speculating that is why the New York City Subway map is 'similar in design to spaghetti primavera.' It's noisy and confusing, and during summer the stations can feel like an inner circle of hell. But with a little attention to detail, you can figure out the 656-mile New York City subway system, used by 3.6 million people daily.



## The Subway System

The city's subway system began in 1904 as a nine-mile, privately operated line along Broadway between City Hall and W 145th St. Over the next 30 years, this Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) line expanded service to the Bronx, Queens and Brooklyn, including several elevated lines called 'els.' Competition also came from the rival Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit company (BMT), and the city-owned Independent Line (IND) on Eighth Ave. The private companies basically collapsed during the Depression, and the city wound up owning all three lines – designed to *compete* with rather than augment each other – by 1940. To this day, many New Yorkers refer to the West Side 1, 2, 3, and 9 trains as the IRT line, and a few even use the designations BMT and IND for the rest of the system.

New York's subway system is older than those found in many European cities, but even when it was relatively new the system was considered 'drab and noisy' by the editors of the *WPA Guide to New York*, published in 1939. The book went on to describe a subway where 'intent and humorless hordes cover uptown and downtown platforms, choke narrow stairways, swamp change-booths, wrestle with closing train doors . . . [and] a few of the homeless use the subway as a flophouse.' But, then, as now, 'the romance of the subways of New York may be found in their trajectories, and in the intricacy of their construction and operation.'

The problems and the physical plan of the subways are basically the same as they were when those words were written. Entryways are unprotected from the weather and stairs tend to be icy, snowy or just plain wet, depending on the season. Stations are close to the surface of the street, and you can hear the noise and sense the smells of the avenue above. And platforms, supported by ugly steel beams, are too narrow, leading rush hour crowds to back up the stairs at over-capacity stations like Rockefeller Center.

One reason there have been few major improvements was the short-sighted policy of artificially holding down the subway fare. For decades, politicians promised to 'keep the nickel fare' and admission to the subway was a heavily subsidized 15¢ into the 1960s.

(It was as low as 60¢ in 1980.) Meanwhile, the system was falling apart, and the building of a needed underground line to replace the razed Second Ave 'el' was abandoned for lack of funds even though excavation had begun for the project. By the '80s, a consensus grew that the subways needed a major overhaul, but this multi-billion dollar program went largely to stop the great decline in equipment and reliability rather than actually bring the system into the late 20th century.

The subway system benefited greatly from a huge infusion of federal, state and local funding during the '80s, and now trains are generally quieter, more reliable and free of graffiti. Almost every token booth offers bus and subway maps, and even pamphlets on such ludicrous subjects as 'Riding Escalators Safely.' But nothing as ambitious as actually building a new line seems likely to happen in the near term, though subway officials still maintain the hole in the ground under Second Ave in the hope that a new line will eventually be built.

In 1995, the system began introducing magnetic strip Metrocards in certain stations, widely seen as a prelude to imposing a staged fare system sometime after 2000. You can buy the reusable plastic Metrocard at all stations in increments of the \$1.50 subway fare.

After a year of solid resistance to the cards – New Yorkers feel a great affinity to their subway tokens, akin to what Americans in general feel about their useless one cent coin – the transit authority introduced free Metrocard transfers between subways and city buses as a way of encouraging their use among people who must pay two fares to get to work. At press time, the agency is considering promotions like free rides on weekends to bribe passengers into using the cards, which are cheaper to maintain.

Unfortunately, the December 1995 25¢ boost in the subway fare – the biggest ever – was accompanied by huge reductions in the budgets for system maintenance and improvement. Some of the stations most in need of repair – Times Square, 59th St and

The subway is the fastest and most reliable way to get around town, especially for trips totaling more than 20 blocks in north-south directions during the day. Taking a bus or a taxi guarantees that you'll hit traffic choke points at places like Times Square and wind up arriving at your destination only after a long and frustrating ride.

Most major Manhattan attractions – especially those on the West Side and downtown – are easily accessible by several subway lines. Madison Square Garden, for example, is within four blocks walking distance of three subway stations on 34th St served by a total of 12 different lines.

Subway tokens, which allow you to ride the system for any distance, cost \$1.50 and are available at booths near the turnstiles. The system also sells Metrocards, which are 'swiped' through the turnstile and are convenient for travelers. It's a very good idea to buy enough tokens for a day or week's travel in one shot – the tokens can be used on the blue-and-white city buses (which do not accept dollar bills or make change), and rush-hour lines at token booths can be wicked. Subway clerks sometimes appear irascible, since they barely slide the tokens through the booth slot and try to give you back as many singles as possible in change to avoid a big count-up of dollar bills at the end of their shift. But they are the single best source for information on how to get around.

The common mistake most visitors make (other than getting turned around and taking a train in the opposite direction) is to board an express train only to see it blow by the local stop they desired. Pay particular attention to the subway map – local stops are shown with solid lines, and express stops are circles.

As for safety, standing in the middle of the platform will bring you to the conductor's car. The conductor can direct you through the system when he/she is not closing the doors of the train. Of course, it's not a good idea to leave a fat wallet bulging in your back pocket on a crowded subway, and all day packs should be secured with a safety pin.

The subway runs 24 hours. For information call ☎ (718) 330-1234.

### PATH

New Jersey PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) trains (☎ (800) 234-7284) are part of a separate-fare system that runs down Sixth Ave with stops at 34th, 23rd, 14th, 9th and Christopher Sts to Jersey City and Newark. A second line runs from the World Trade Center to northern New Jersey. These reliable trains (called the 'Hudson Tubes' when they first opened) run every 15 minutes and fare is \$1 (machines take dollar bills).

### BUS

City buses operate 24 hours a day, generally along avenues in a south or north direction, and cross-town along the major thoroughfares (including 34th, 42nd and 57th Sts). Buses that begin and end in a certain borough are prefixed accordingly: ie, M5 for Manhattan, Q32 for Queens, B51 for Brooklyn, and Bx13 for Bronx.

You need exact change of \$1.50 or a token to board the bus, and if you plan on switching to a connecting route, you must ask for a transfer slip upon boarding. (Metrocards are also accepted on buses.) Drivers will be happy to tell you if their bus stops near a specific site, but don't engage them in a conversation about directions unless you want to endure poisonous stares from the old-timers who prefer using the bus to the subway.

Bus maps for each borough are available at subway and train stations, and well-marked bus stops have 'Guide-a-Ride' maps showing the stops for each bus and nearby landmarks. Remember that some 'Limited Stop' buses along major routes pull over only every 10 blocks or so at major cross streets. 'Express' buses are generally for outer borough commuters and cost \$4 and should not be used for short trips.

As a safety precaution, you can request to be let off at any location along a bus route – even if it is not a designated bus stop – from 10 pm to 5 am.

Of course, you will discover the same woes found in every other major city during bad weather: after a 25-minute wait for a bus, three will come along in a row.

Call ☎ (718) 927-7499 for all bus information.

## TAXI

Is there a category of worker more maligned than the New York City cab driver? No, not all of them are thieves, incompetent or in desperate need of a shower. The most common tension between driver and passenger comes from arguments about the fastest route from one place to another. Most cabbies *will* attempt to ride down Broadway in bad traffic, or cross town on crowded 59th St rather than use a faster Central Park 'transverse' – they're making money on the metered trip.

Taxis cost \$2 for the initial charge, with 30¢ for every additional quarter mile and 20¢ a minute while stuck in traffic. There's an additional 50¢ surcharge for rides after 8 pm. Tampered meters turn over every 20 seconds or so while the cab is stopped in traffic or at a light, and if you notice it happening, don't hesitate to ask if it is 'running too fast.' If the driver apologizes a bit too energetically you've probably busted him and can negotiate a lower fare than the meter. Tips are expected to run 10% to 15% with a minimum of 50¢. If you feel ripped off, ask for a receipt and note the driver's license number. The city's Taxi and Limousine Commission (☎ (212) 302-8294) is particularly aggressive and the threat of a complaint puts the fear of god into obnoxious cabbies.

For hauls that will last 50 blocks or more, it's a good idea to instruct the driver to take a road well away from Midtown traffic. Suggest the West Side Hwy or Eleventh Ave if you hail a taxi west of Broadway; on the East Side, the best choice may be Second Ave (heading downtown) or First Ave (uptown), since you can hit a string of green lights in either direction.

One cab cliché does hold: only about one in five cab drivers actually thanks you for the tip, no matter how generous.

## CAR

In New York, the cost, the traffic, and the high incidence of petty thievery more than offset any convenience having a car may offer. The city adds to the problem with Byzantine street cleaning rules that require you to move your car several times a week if you park on the street. Meanwhile parking garages in Midtown are usually operated by the Kinney Corporation, which has a hammer lock on the industry and garaging a car will cost at least \$30 during daylight hours. Cheaper lots can be found in Manhattan along West St in Chelsea, but even those \$10 to \$15 daily deals aren't a bargain after the city's phenomenal 18.25% parking tax is added. Using a hotel lot is no bargain either – Midtown hotels can charge \$40 a day, even for their customers.

## Rentals

Hopefully, there is a special section of hell reserved for the people who set car rental rates in New York. Though rental agencies advertise bargain rates for weekend or week-long rentals, these deals are almost *always* blacked out in New York or can only be obtained in conjunction with an airline ticket.

If you want to rent for a few days, book through your travel agent before leaving home. A spot rental will cost at least \$70 for a mid-sized car, though you'll probably have to spend \$95 or more a day. And that's before extra charges like the 13.25% tax.

The rental agencies will also try to sell you options on personal insurance coverage (about \$15 a day), which you don't need if you have medical coverage, as well as a 'Collision Damage Waiver,' (also called Liability Damage Waiver) which for another \$15 covers the full value of the vehicle in case of an accident, except those caused by acts of nature or fire. (Some credit cards, such as MasterCard Gold and American Express, cover collision insurance if you rent for 15 days or less and charge the full cost of rental to your card.)

Agencies also add a \$5 daily fee for each additional driver in the car. In all, you're

... taking about \$100 a day – plus the option to prepay for a tank of gas to avoid filling up before a return, which costs \$20 but is worth it due to the high price of gasoline in the city (about \$1.60 a gallon).

With costs running well over \$300 for a three day weekend rental, you may be better off renting a car on a weekly basis to save money in the long run. It used to be possible to play agencies against each other, or to rent cars at a cheaper rate at the airport, but the companies have gotten wise to just about any money-saving move and have blocked them by bureaucratic rules, or the statement on coupons and airline tickets that 'agreements can be revised or discontinued without prior notice.' That about covers any possibility that you'll beat them at this game.

If you don't find the above discouraging ... then you must be on an expense account.

To rent a car you must have a valid driver's license and present a major credit card. In March of 1997, the New York state supreme court ruled that the nationwide policy of restricting rentals to those at least 25 years of age was discriminatory. Though the major companies now must offer cars to teens, they are allowed to charge a higher rate and will no doubt make it prohibitively expensive for college age consumers to take advantage of their new rights.

Call the agencies' toll free numbers to inquire about the most convenient office for you in town:

Avis	☎ (800) 331-1212
Budget	☎ (800) 527-0700
Dollar	☎ (800) 800-4000
Hertz	☎ (800) 654-3131
Thrifty (in Brooklyn)	☎ (800) 367-2277

## BOAT

In the late 19th century, hundreds of ferries operated on New York's rivers, but disappeared with the opening of several East Side bridges. Now New Yorkers are rediscovering the convenience of ferries. New York Waterway (☎ (800) 533-3779) operates several routes including boats up the Hudson River Valley and from Midtown to

Yankee Stadium in the Bronx. Its main ferry route is between Hoboken's Erie Lackawanna Train Terminal and the World Financial Center in Lower Manhattan. Ferries leave every 20 minutes at peak times. The trip takes eight minutes and costs \$2 each way.

In the summer of 1997, the New York Water Taxi company (☎ (212) 681-8111) began running ferries from various points along the Hudson and East Rivers, offering a combination deal with Gray Line Bus Tours with a \$22 two-day unlimited-stop pass for tourists. Call for up-to-date information.

## BICYCLE

There are some US towns where you can leave your bike unattended and even unlocked – but New York is not one of them. The hassles of bike ownership may have contributed to the move toward in-line skaters, since thieves can pick bike locks with the greatest of ease – an expensive new bike can vaporize within minutes of being left on the street. The only solution is to use a banged-up bike that no one would really want, and lock it up anyway.

See Activities in Things to See & Do for information on recreational bicycling in New York.

## ORGANIZED TOURS

### Bus Tours

In general, bus tours of the city cannot be recommended because, at \$15 to \$50, they are too expensive and the buses are certainly not immune to getting caught in traffic jams – in fact they cause quite a few on their own. Residents in Greenwich Village hate the tour buses, which choke the narrow streets, and people in Harlem don't much like them either, since they are filled with white European tourists who gawk from the second deck of the bus at a neighborhood they're too terrified to explore on their own.

The premier tourist bus service is Gray Line (☎ (212) 397-2620), which offers more than 29 different tours of the city from the Port Authority Bus Terminal at Eighth Ave and 42nd St, including a

hop-on, hop-off loop of Manhattan. The cheapest tours begin at \$15/7.50 for adults/children and go as high as \$50/37.50. There are big downsides to these tours: often you get a non-native guide who knows far less about the city than some of the passengers. (They're usually hired because of their ability to speak more than one language.)

New York Apple Tours (☎ (800) 876-9868) offers tours on rumbling old London double decker buses that sometimes break down in mid-tour. Buses make a loop of Manhattan from the Plaza Hotel and W 50th St and Seventh Ave; it costs \$25/16 for two days unlimited use of the buses.

### Boat Tours

More than one million people a year take the three-hour, 35-mile Circle Line cruise around Manhattan (☎ (212) 563-3200), which leaves from Pier 83, at 42nd St on the Hudson River, from March to December. This is the tour to take, provided the weather is good and you can enjoy the breezes on the outside deck. The quality of the narration depends on the enthusiasm of the guide: be sure to sit well away from the narrator to avoid the inevitable 'where are you from?' banter. Tickets for adults/seniors/children cost \$18/16/9.

Circle Line also runs a 2½-hour Tuesday night Jazz Cruise from Pier 83 and a Thursday night Country Music Cruise during the summer. Tickets are \$20; call ☎ (212) 563-3200 for reservations.

World Yacht (☎ (212) 563-3347) has well-regarded culinary cruises around Manhattan year round that leave from Pier 81 at W 41st St. Reservations and proper dress are required, and tickets for adults/children range from \$29/16 for a two-hour lunch to \$75 for a three-hour dinner.

### Helicopter Tours

Gray Lines has three different helicopter tours of Manhattan that depart on the half



K.V. GRANT

The World Trade Center has a way of appearing in photos of other monuments, like the Washington Square Arch.

hour from the heliport (☎ (212) 397-2600) at E 34th St and First Ave. Tours last up to four hours and cost \$61/52.50 to \$91/82.50 for adults/children depending on the duration. Island Helicopter Sight-seeing (☎ (212) 683-4575) has departures from the same site from 9 am to 9 pm daily; tickets range from \$44 to \$129, and they slap on a \$5 additional charge for tickets purchased on the day of departure.