

FREE DESTINATION GUIDE

NEW YORK CITY

United States



The greatest hits city: icons on every corner and a neighborhood for every mood.

SAFETY: US Domestic: no State Dept advisory

Travelling with ActorTonyB & Nala The Shih Tzu

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Top Sights

- **Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.** Book the ferry and pedestal tickets online well ahead; the first boat of the day has the lightest crowds.
- **Central Park.** Enter at Columbus Circle, rent a bike or row a boat on the Lake, and find the Bow Bridge for the classic photo.
- **Top of the Rock or Empire State Building.** One observation deck is enough: Top of the Rock gives you the Empire State in your photos.
- **The Metropolitan Museum of Art.** Pick three galleries, not thirty. The Egyptian wing and the rooftop (in season) are the local favorites.
- **Brooklyn Bridge and DUMBO.** Walk the bridge from Manhattan in the morning, then explore Dumbo's cobblestones and skyline views.
- **9/11 Memorial and Museum.** Book timed museum tickets; the twin reflecting pools outside are free and worth a quiet half hour.
- **Broadway Show.** Same day discount tickets at the TKTS booth in Times Square or Duffy Square; arrive when it opens.
- **Times Square and Fifth Avenue.** See it once at night in full neon, then keep moving: the real New York starts a few blocks out.

Local Tips

- Tap to pay (OMNY) works on every subway and bus; a weekly cap makes it cheaper than single rides if you ride a lot.
- Book Statue of Liberty, Summit, and Broadway tickets ahead; the spontaneous version of New York sells out.
- Walk the avenues, ride the subway for distance: anything under 20 blocks is usually faster on foot.
- Museum strategy: many museums have free or pay what you wish windows; check the calendar before paying full price.
- Tipping is standard: 18 to 22 percent in restaurants, a dollar or two per drink at bars, and a few dollars for hotel staff.
- Grid logic saves you: streets run east to west, avenues north to south, and addresses climb as you go. Locals navigate by cross streets, so give both.

Customs & Etiquette

Do

- Walk fast, or step aside: sidewalk flow is New York's first language.
- Stand right and walk left on escalators, everywhere, always.
- Order with your choice ready at delis and coffee carts; the line respects decisiveness.
- Greet bodega cats. This is not optional.

Please Don't

- Do not stop in the middle of a busy sidewalk or at the top of subway stairs to check your phone.
- Do not block subway doors or take up extra seats with bags at rush hour.
- Do not call it the metro or the tube; it is the subway or the train.
- Do not hail a cab with its roof light off; off means occupied or off duty.

Things to Know Before You Go

Currency. US dollar (USD). Cards and phone pay work nearly everywhere; small cash still helps at carts and bodegas.

Language. English, plus about 200 others on any given train car. Spanish is widely spoken across the city.

Best time to visit. April to June and September to October: mild weather, full events calendar, and the city at its prettiest.

Getting around. The subway runs 24 hours and beats traffic almost every time. Ferries are the scenic hack, and your feet are the real tour guide.

Five phrases that open doors

Standing on line	New York for waiting in line
The City	How locals refer to Manhattan, and sometimes all five boroughs
Bodega	The beloved corner store, open late, cat included
Uptown / Downtown	Directions first, places second: northbound and southbound
MetroCard is history	Tap your phone or card (OMNY) at the turnstile

What to Bring

- Serious walking shoes; New York is a walking city wearing a subway costume.
- Layers in every season: subway heat, office air conditioning, and street weather are three different climates.
- A small crossbody or belt bag for crowds, shows, and subway rides.
- A phone charger and power bank; navigation and tickets will drain you by 3 pm.
- One outfit a notch up: Broadway, rooftops, and nice restaurants still enjoy the effort.
- A screenshot folder of every reservation; cell service dies exactly where lines form.

What to Expect

Weather: four real seasons. Bitter wind tunnel winters, humid summers, and perfect weeks in May and October.

Pace: fast and transactional on the street, generous once you are seated. Everything runs on time except the thing you are late for.

Costs in practice: New York is both the most expensive and the most bargain rich city in America. Pizza slices, food trucks, and free museum hours balance the Broadway tickets.

How tourists are received: New Yorkers are famously helpful for exactly 20 seconds. Ask a direct question, get a direct answer, keep it moving.

What NOT to Bring

- A car plan: Manhattan driving and parking are expensive, slow, and unnecessary for visitors.
- New shoes for their first wear; break them in at home or pay for it on day two.
- A huge suitcase if your hotel is a walk up; many older buildings have no elevator.
- Counterfeit anything from street tables; tickets, bags, and watches sold curbside are scams or fakes.

Safety Rating

US State Dept advisory level: US domestic destination (no State Department advisory applies)

State Department advisory levels rate foreign countries, so no level applies to New York. The practical picture: a big, busy city where awareness does the work. Tourist areas are well patrolled; the everyday risks are pickpockets in packed spots, phone snatching at station edges, and the occasional scam aimed at visitors.

Three practical safety moves

- Keep your phone pocketed at subway platform edges and use official yellow cabs or ride apps from the airports.
- Skip anyone selling tickets, CDs, or comedy club passes from a folding table; buy from official booths and sites.
- Use the STEP mindset at home too: share your itinerary with someone and keep your hotel address saved in your phone.

Advisory levels change. Check the current rating for your destination at travel.state.gov before you book and again before you fly. Summary reflects the advisory in effect in October 2026.

Budget Snapshot

Rough per person daily ranges in US dollars, including lodging, food, local transport, and activities. Airfare not included. Treat these as planning estimates, not quotes.

Tier	Per day (USD)	What it looks like
Budget traveler	\$150 to \$210 per day	Queens or Brooklyn hotel, subway days, slice shops and food trucks, free museum windows.
Mid range	\$280 to \$400 per day	Manhattan hotel, a Broadway show, observation deck, sit down dinners.
Comfort	\$520 plus per day	Five star stay, premium show seats, guided tours, and tasting menus.

Ready to Go?

You have the sights, the tips, the customs, and the budget. Now put dates on it. Compare flights, stays, cars, and activities for New York City in one place, with live prices and traveler reviews.

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