

NEW YORK NOIR: NAVIGATION GUIDEBOOK

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People travel to, from, and around New York City in a variety of ways. This document tells you a little bit about those different ways and how to reason about them.

General Distances

The length of a block in Manhattan running north-south is on average **264** feet, while those running east-west average **800** feet long. Street widths average between **60-100** feet, and sidewalk widths average between **10-25** feet.

Walking

A good rule of thumb is that an average New Yorker will walk a distance of approximately **one block per minute**. This represents a walking speed of about **3 miles per hour**, or **20 minutes per mile**. At a fast jog, a person might be able to cover as much as two blocks per minute for a short distance.

New York City, and Manhattan in particular, is a walker's paradise. People are much more likely to walk a mile from point A to B than in almost any other city in America. Owning a car in Manhattan is very rare. The average New Yorker would probably prefer to **walk half a mile (10 blocks)** in good weather rather than deal with the hassle of hailing a cab or getting on a train or bus.

For journeys longer than a mile or in particularly bad weather, a person is more likely to want to take a cab, bus, or subway.

Subways

The New York City subway system was not a centrally designed network when first built in 1904, as one of the earliest mass transit operations in the world. Instead, several different companies built their own separate and incompatible sections of rail and operated independently. These independent companies eventually began to lose money and were sold to the city, which unified them under one system, though the different lines are still known by original acronyms:

- IRT lines: Originally the Interborough Rapid Transit company.
- BMT lines: Originally the Brooklyn–Manhattan Transit corporation.
- IND lines: Independent Subway system.

The NYC subway system now operates **24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year**. Like the city itself, the subway system never sleeps.

Subways in Manhattan mostly (but not exclusively) run **North (uptown) or South (downtown)**. The uptown and downtown station entrances and platforms are separate, so an observant subway ticket station attendant might notice whether someone was headed to, or coming from, an uptown or downtown platform.

As a very rough approximation you might estimate that a subway takes about 2 minutes to travel between stations, or maybe **5 minutes per mile**, though a person might have to **wait an average of 10 minutes for a train** (or longer late at night).

You can find a complete list of subway stations in the directory and each one is indicated by a **symbol** on the neighborhood maps; however, you will have to consult a separate **subway map** to see which lines run between which stations.

NOTE: Subway station attendants have recently been working closely with the NYPD to be their eyes and ears on the ground, and undergo training to be observant and remember faces. Therefore if you have a good description of a suspect, and you can identify a subway station where they entered or exited recently, there is a good chance the subway station attendant on duty will remember them.

Buses

Traveling by bus is decidedly less common than traveling by subway in Manhattan. For one reason, Manhattan is only 2 miles wide at its widest point -- making most east-west travel walkable. Therefore, it's quite common for folks to take a subway to get to a destination street and then walk east or west as needed.

But some folks enjoy taking the bus. It's certainly more scenic and the air is better. An average **wait time for a bus might be 20 minutes**, and you could expect to travel at about the same speed as a subway, or **5 minutes per mile**.

Manhattan buses do **not** operate 24 hours a day like subways. Generally they will run from 6am to around 6pm.

Buses do not have fixed stops. Instead a bus runs east-west and west-east back and forth across a specific street, and stops when people request to get on or off.

The same bus driver will have the same route every day, and because the drivers see all passengers get on and off, they may remember where a particular passenger embarked and disembarked. Recently the NYPD has been working with bus drivers to train them to be good observers with good memory recall. **A bus driver makes a particularly good witness**, and you can talk to the driver of any given route by visiting them at the **far west border of Manhattan** where their routes start (see bus symbols on the far west of each neighborhood map, or in yellow pages).

Taxicabs

The blue collar working man in New York is unlikely to find himself in a cab except on a very special occasion. Compared to public transportation on a bus or subway, a cab is a luxury for most. For the well-heeled, though, a taxicab is a luxury ride that can be hailed on almost any corner and will drop you directly at the door of your destination in record time. There is no faster way to travel in Manhattan.

You can expect to wait for no more than **2-3 minutes** for a taxicab during most hours (6am-midnight), though it might take you **10-15 minutes** late at night (unless you go directly to the taxi company). You can expect to travel about **18 miles an hour** by cab, or about **6 blocks per minute**.

Taxi drivers are even more likely than bus drivers or subway station attendants to remember a particular fare, and keep records of all pickup and drop-off locations, as well as names if the pickup was arranged by telephone. They are also much more likely to engage their clients in conversation.

Important: Cab companies are **very** territorial in New York. Most neighborhoods have their own cab companies that service them, and cabbies are **strongly** discouraged from picking up passengers in any neighborhood other than the one where their cab company is headquartered. The only occasional exception is that a cabbie may **pick up** a fare while dropping someone off **in a "foreign" neighborhood** as long as that person's **destination** neighborhood is the cabbie's home neighborhood. A cabbie would never pick up a fare in a foreign neighborhood whose destination was in yet another foreign neighborhood.

If you are trying to track down the cabbie who **picked up** a fare inside a given neighborhood, you should visit the cab company headquartered in that neighborhood. In rare cases the person may have been picked up by a cabbie who works out of the **drop-off** neighborhood and was just on his way back when he was hailed down.

Private Car

Very few New Yorkers own private cars. Those that do tend to live in the northern half of Manhattan. Even the wealthy tend to prefer traveling by taxi. However, if someone does own a private car you may be able to find them on record at the **Department of Motor Vehicles**, and you may be able to locate parking tickets at the **Department of Parking Enforcement**.

Leaving and entering Manhattan

Manhattan is an island, and there are only a handful of ways on and off it. In the yellow pages you will see a list of **bridges and tunnels** that are generally traveled by car (taxi or private). In addition, a few **subway lines travel between boroughs**. There are no airports open to the public in Manhattan -- those flying in or out by plane would need to travel through Newark **airport** in New Jersey, or Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn.

General Notes

Residents of Manhattan are very loyal to the neighborhoods they live and work in. Many spend most of their lives never leaving their own neighborhood. Therefore it is very unlikely that any given resident will patronize a store or shop outside of their own neighborhood if they don't have a good reason to do so.

Uptown vs Downtown

Manhattan is a long strip of land oriented North-South, but while New Yorkers will frequently talk about addresses being east or west, they never talk about locations in terms of north or south. However, you will hear people refer to "uptown", "downtown", or "midtown". These terms are sometimes used to refer to general areas of Manhattan; an address below 14th street would be considered downtown (or lower Manhattan), while addresses near 42nd street would be considered midtown, and addresses above 72nd street uptown. But these are loose designations. In fact, New Yorkers will commonly refer to any area further North than their current location as "uptown" and any area further south of them as "downtown". For example, uptown trains are simply trains going north, and downtown trains are simply trains going south.