

VISIT GUIDE 2026

the Empire State Building

New York · From 44.81€

https://empirestatebuilding-nyc.visit-tickets.com/en/ · Skip-the-line tickets & rates



History & experience

ORIGIN & HISTORY

The architectural feat of the 1930s

GOOGLE 4.7 ★★★★★ 131 175 reviews

TIQETS 4.8 ★★★★★ 2 916 reviews

The Empire State Building is far more than a mere skyscraper; it is the absolute symbol of architectural audacity in the early twentieth century. Erected in the heart of the Great Depression, this edifice was built with breathtaking speed, remaining a major logistical feat in the history of modern construction. The project, launched by John J. Raskob and overseen by former Governor Alfred E. Smith, aimed to demonstrate the economic resilience of the United States in the face of the 1929 crisis.

The design was entrusted to the firm Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, whose principal architect, William F. Lamb, imposed strict formal rigor. The objective was clear: maximize the number of floors under tight budget constraints while respecting a deadline of one and a half years. The plans, inspired by earlier structures such as the Reynolds Building, were finalized in just two weeks, laying the foundations for a global icon.

The construction site mobilized up to 3,400 workers simultaneously, including the famous “sky boys,” these daring workers who assembled the steel framework several hundred meters above the ground, often without protection. The pace of construction was frenetic, reaching four and a half floors per week. Despite difficult conditions and constant risk, only five workers officially died during the works, a remarkably low figure for a project of this scale.

Inaugurated on May 1, 1931, the building immediately captivated the world. It held the title of the world’s tallest building for nearly 40 years, before being surpassed by One World Trade Center in 2012. Today classified as a National Historic Landmark, it remains the seventh-tallest building in New York and an essential reference point in Art Deco architecture.

THE EXPERIENCE

As soon as you step through the lobby doors, the atmosphere changes dramatically. You enter a world where marble, bronze, and natural light blend together to create a sense of grand scale. The high ceilings and sculpted details evoke the opulence of the Roaring Twenties, psychologically preparing the visitor for the dizzying ascent that awaits. It is a moment of transition between the chaos of the street and vertical majesty.

As you ascend toward the observation decks, the tension slowly builds. The rapid elevators propel you skyward, offering successive views of Manhattan stretching out as far as the eye can see. The promise of the visit is one of total immersion in the New York panorama, where every architectural detail becomes a visual anchor. Whether admiring the sunset or the illuminated night, the experience is sensory and unforgettable.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS

Manhattan · Metro: 34th St-Hudson Yards (A, C, E, H, J, N, Q, R, W) or Bryant Park (N, Q, R, W), 2 min walk.

OPENING HOURS

Open daily. Hours vary by season; the sunset slot is at a premium and in high demand.

FARES

From €44.81. The 102nd-floor ticket costs more than the 86th. Check child rates.

VISIT DURATION

Allow 1h30 to 2h for a complete visit including the historical galleries, the elevator, and time on the terraces. Allow more if you aim for sunset.

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed everywhere, including on the outdoor terraces. Tripods are strictly prohibited to avoid obstructing visitor flow.

AUDIENCE

Ideal for families and couples. Teenagers will appreciate the history of King Kong. People with mobility issues should book in advance.

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

Subway

: 34th Street & Broadway at Northwest Corner — 3 min à pied

34 St-Penn Station (7 min) · Grand Central Station (8 min)

Bus

: Washington Deluxe — 7 min à pied

34 St-Penn Station (10 min) · Grand Central Station (11 min)

Car

34 St-Penn Station (5 min) · Grand Central Station (6 min)

Citi Bike / Bike

34 St-Penn Station (4 min) · Grand Central Station (6 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve the Empire State Building ?



📍 20 West 34th Street — 10001 New York

🌐 40°44.906′ N, 73°59.140′ O



ORGANIZATION

Understanding the observation levels

Level 0 (Ground Floor)

The main lobby impresses with its Art Deco architecture, featuring marble columns and gilded bronze details. This is where the ticket offices and reception points are located. Visitors can check practical information and purchase their tickets if they have not booked them online.

Level 2

This level houses the immersive historical galleries. Here, visitors discover the fascinating history of the construction, including photos of the 'sky boys' and artifacts related to the film King Kong. This section prepares the visitor for the ascent by contextualizing the building's historical importance.

Levels 86 and 102 (Observatories)

The 86th floor offers an open outdoor terrace, ideal for classic panoramic photos. The 102nd floor, accessible for an additional fee, features a wind-protected indoor observation deck, allowing for more comfortable and detailed views of the skyline. Both levels offer complementary vantage points over Manhattan.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Disabled Access**

Easy access via adapted elevators; booking recommended to guarantee a spot.

👨‍👩‍👧 **Families**

Fun tour with cinematic references, suitable for children aged 6 and up.

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish



Must-sees

SELECTION

Highlights of the ascent

01 86th Floor Observation Deck

86th Floor Outdoor Terrace

This is the iconic spot for photographing the New York skyline. The wrought-iron railing offers a 360-degree view of all four corners of Manhattan. On clear days, visibility extends up to 50 miles (80 km) in every direction, including New Jersey and Connecticut.

> 💡 This is where the final scene of the movie **King Kong** takes place, in which the gorilla is shot down by airplanes.

02 Level 2

King Kong Historical Gallery

An immersive exhibition dedicated to the 1933 film. It features original costumes, models, and archival documents. This gallery explains how the film popularized the image of the skyscraper worldwide.

> 💡 The special effects used for the gorilla were considered revolutionary for the time, combining **puppets** and screen painting.

03 SHREVE, LAMB AND HARMON Exterior

Indiana Limestone Facade

The facade is clad in limestone quarried from Indiana, chosen for its durability and luster. Clean vertical lines accentuate the building's height. This Art Deco architecture embodies the modernity of the 1930s.

> 💡 The limestone was selected for its ability to withstand New York weather while maintaining a distinctive **light color**.

04 Summit

Dynamic LED Lighting

The building's summit changes color to celebrate major events, such as the New York City Marathon or national holidays. Over 1000 LED zones enable complex chromatic variations. It is a unique nighttime spectacle in the skyline.

> 💡 The tower was illuminated in **orange** to honor the city of Syracuse during a regional sporting event.

05 86th Floor Observation Deck

View of Central Park

From the north side of the terrace, you get the best view of Central Park. The contrast between the lush nature and the urban density of Manhattan is striking. It is the ideal angle to understand the city's geographical structure.

> 💡 On very clear days, it is possible to spot **Mount Washington** in Vermont, more than 100 km away.

06 102nd Floor Observatory

102nd Floor Indoor Vitrine

Unlike the 86th floor, this level is entirely glass-enclosed and air-conditioned. It offers protection against wind and cold, allowing for prolonged observation. The informational panels detail the buildings visible from this altitude.

> 💡 This level was added later to offer visitors a more **exclusive** and comfortable experience.

07 Observation Deck 86

Statue of Liberty (Distant view)

Heading southwest, the Statue of Liberty appears distinctly on Liberty Island. It is a strong visual landmark that connects the skyscraper to the history of American immigration. Visibility depends heavily on weather conditions.

> 💡 Many tourists try to identify the **cruise ships** passing in front of the statue to determine their relative position.

08 86 Observatory

Chrysler Building (Proximity)

Just a few blocks away, the Chrysler Building offers an interesting perspective on the architectural rivalry of the 1930s. Its chrome crown shines particularly in the sun. Comparing the two Art Deco styles is enriching.

> 💡 The Chrysler Building had briefly surpassed the Empire State Building in height thanks to its hidden spire, creating an intense **race for height**.

TIPS

Optimizing your visit to the summit

TIMING

Be sure to book a slot 45 minutes before sunset to enjoy the day-to-night transition. Golden hours are more expensive but offer the best photo quality.

TICKET

Choose the skip-the-line ticket to avoid the ticket queue, but allow an extra 15-20 minutes for airport-style security checks. Check child rates.

TOUR

Start with the historical galleries on the 2nd floor before ascending to better appreciate the context. Then, go directly to the 86th floor, and to the 102nd if your budget allows.

PHOTO

Use a stabilizer or your hands, as tripods are strictly prohibited. The natural morning light provides the best conditions for outdoor photos without reflections.

BREAK

Take a coffee break at Grand Army Plaza before the visit to be refreshed, or have lunch around 34th Street after getting off to extend the culinary experience.

CHILDREN

Prepare teenagers by talking to them about King Kong before the visit. Cinematic references make the experience more fun and memorable for young visitors aged 6 and up.

AUDIOGUIDE

The French audioguide is recommended to understand the historical and architectural anecdotes. It significantly enriches the visit of the galleries and observatories.

COMFORT

Wear light clothing and comfortable shoes. Remove heavy coats before the security scanners and avoid large suitcases or glass bottles.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I really need to book a specific time slot?

Yes, it is highly recommended, especially for sunset. This slot is at a premium and sells out quickly. Without a specific booking, you risk missing the golden light that transforms the cityscape. Golden hour spots often

Does the skip-the-line ticket avoid all queues?

No, it only avoids the ticket line. You will still have to go through airport-style security checks. Allow an extra 15 to 20 minutes for this mandatory step before accessing the elevators.

What happens in case of fog or poor visibility?

Tickets are generally not refunded by distributors in case of bad weather. Carefully check the cancellation conditions of your specific package before purchasing to avoid any unpleasant surprises.

Is there a price difference between the 86th and 102nd floors?

Yes, the ticket for the 102nd floor is more expensive as it offers exclusive access to the upper glass-enclosed terrace. The 86th remains the standard and economical option for enjoying the open-air view. The price diffe

What is the best time to visit the Empire State Building?

Sunset offers the best visual experience, transitioning from day to illuminated night. Avoid midday peak hours. At night, you can admire the tower's dynamic lights from inside.

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

The real cost of construction

Although the initial budget was estimated at 25 million dollars, the total cost reached $40,948,900. This overrun is explained by the urgency of the deadlines and the high-quality materials. The 1929 crash complicated the financial management of the project.

The Bold Sky Boys

The workers known as the 'sky boys' worked without harnesses or safety nets. They sometimes had lunch sitting on steel beams, hundreds of meters above the ground. Their courage allowed them to double the planned construction pace.

Construction speed record

The building was erected in less than two years, a record for the time. The pace of four and a half floors per week helped revive the local economy by employing thousands of people during the Great Depression.

Symbol of American power

At the time of its inauguration, the Empire State Building was the tallest building in the world. It symbolized America's restored confidence after the economic crisis. Its name refers to the nickname of New York State, The Empire State.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Located in the heart of Midtown, the Empire State Building boasts a strategic location ideal for extending your day. Just a few minutes' walk away, **Times Square** offers unparalleled electric energy with its giant illuminated signs, perfect for a spectacular end to the evening. Directly across, the **Rockefeller Center** allows you to compare views of Central Park from its own Top of the Rock observatory. For a quieter break, the adjacent Grand Army Plaza park provides a green sanctuary before resuming the ascent. Finally, the proximity to Fifth Avenue and 34th Street guarantees a wide selection of restaurants and shops for lunch or shopping after the visit.



Visiting the Empire State Building is touching the soul of New York. It is not just a matter of height, but of **pure emotion**. Looking out over the city from the top, you understand why this place has become a global myth. Leave with magnificent photos and the feeling of having conquered a giant of stone and steel.