

NEW YORK CITY

FIRST-TIME

Traveler's Guide



Hotels | Activities | Practical Tips

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1. Welcome to New York

Welcome to the city that never sleeps! If it's your very first time in New York, you're about to experience one of the most exciting cities on earth. It's loud, it's fast, and it's absolutely full of energy. Every corner feels like a movie scene: yellow taxis, skyscrapers, the smell of coffee and pretzels, people from everywhere rushing around you.

New York can be overwhelming on your first visit: the noise, the lights, the energy. But don't worry: this guide will help you make the most of your trip without breaking the bank. Whether you're here for just a few days or a whole week, you'll find smart ways to explore, save money, and experience the real New York and not just the tourist version.

So take a deep breath, grab a Coffee, and get ready to fall in love with the city that inspires the world. Welcome to your New York love story .



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2. Before you go



ESTA & Travel Documents

- I always recommend booking flights early and comparing prices across different dates → Compare flights [here](#)
- Check whether you need travel insurance. Bear in mind that many international travel insurance policies do not traditionally cover the USA.
- Apply for your ESTA at least 72 hours before your flight, but ideally a few weeks in advance - just in case
- There are many fake websites that charge extra fees, use always the official [website: here](#)



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3. From Airport to Manhattan



JFK Airport

- **AirTrain + LIRR** (fastest public option): from Jamaica Station, take the LIRR (Long Island Rail Road) to Grand Central Madison or Penn Station.
 - Fast and comfortable, especially during rush hours.
 - 👉 \$19 – \$26 per person
- **Uber Shuttle** (budget-friendly & easy): shared rides to selected drop-off points in Manhattan.

Newark Airport

- **AirTrain + NJ Transit** (best balance): take the AirTrain to Newark Airport Station, then NJ Transit to Penn Station Manhattan.
 - Reliable and usually faster than driving during the day.
 - 👉 \$23 – \$26 per person
- **Uber Shuttle** (budget-friendly & easy): shared rides to selected drop-off points in Manhattan.



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4. Where to stay

5 Handpicked NYC Hotels



Moxy NYC Chelsea

[to this hotel](#)



Arlo Midtown

[to this hotel](#)



W NY - Times Square

[to this hotel](#)



Le Meridien - 5th Avenue

[to this hotel](#)



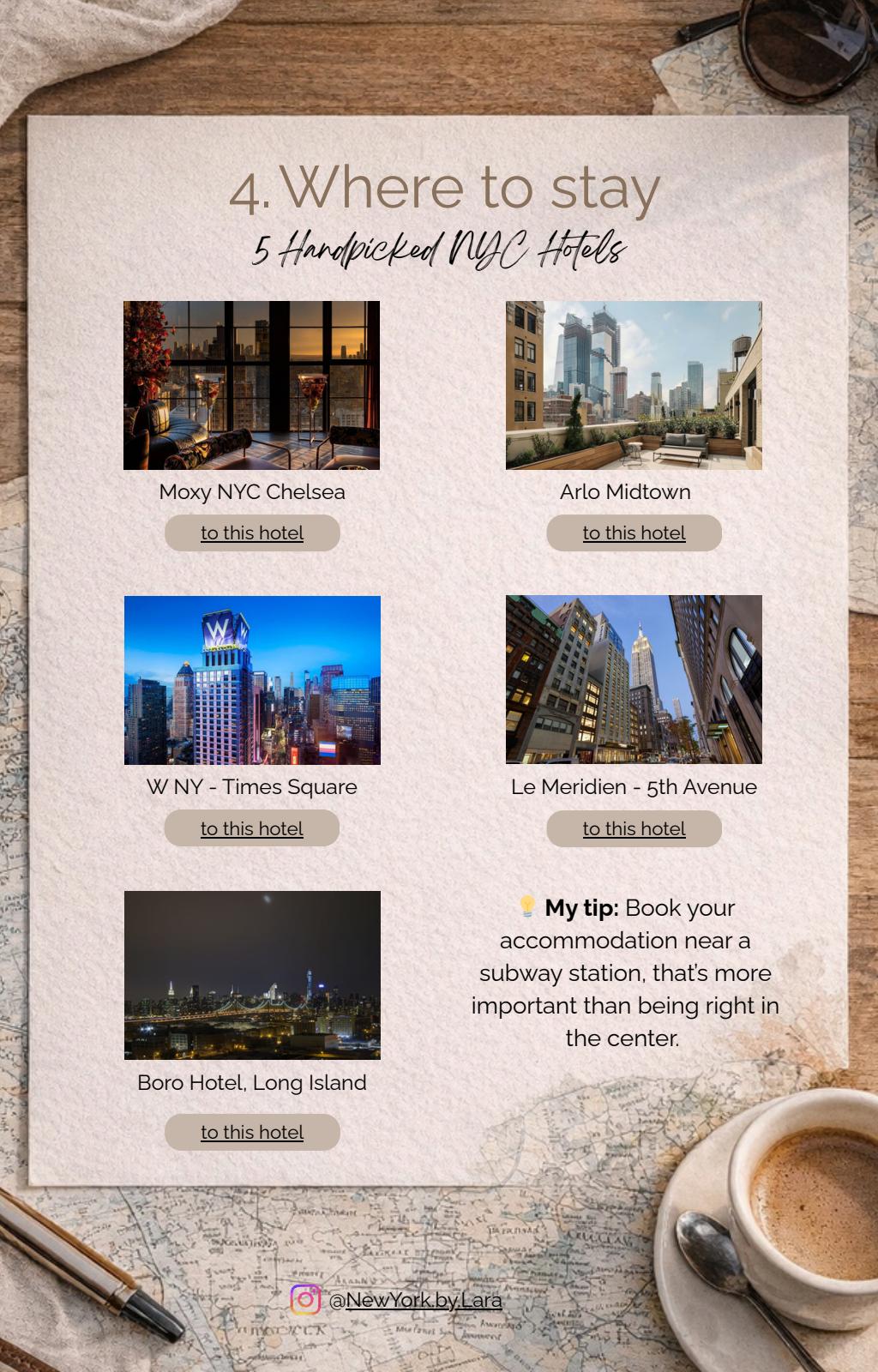
Boro Hotel, Long Island

[to this hotel](#)

 **My tip:** Book your accommodation near a subway station, that's more important than being right in the center.



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5. Top things to do

Must-see Attractions in New York



Top of the Rock

[to this activity](#)



9/11 memorial

[to this activity](#)



Summit one

[to this activity](#)



Helicopter flight

[to this activity](#)

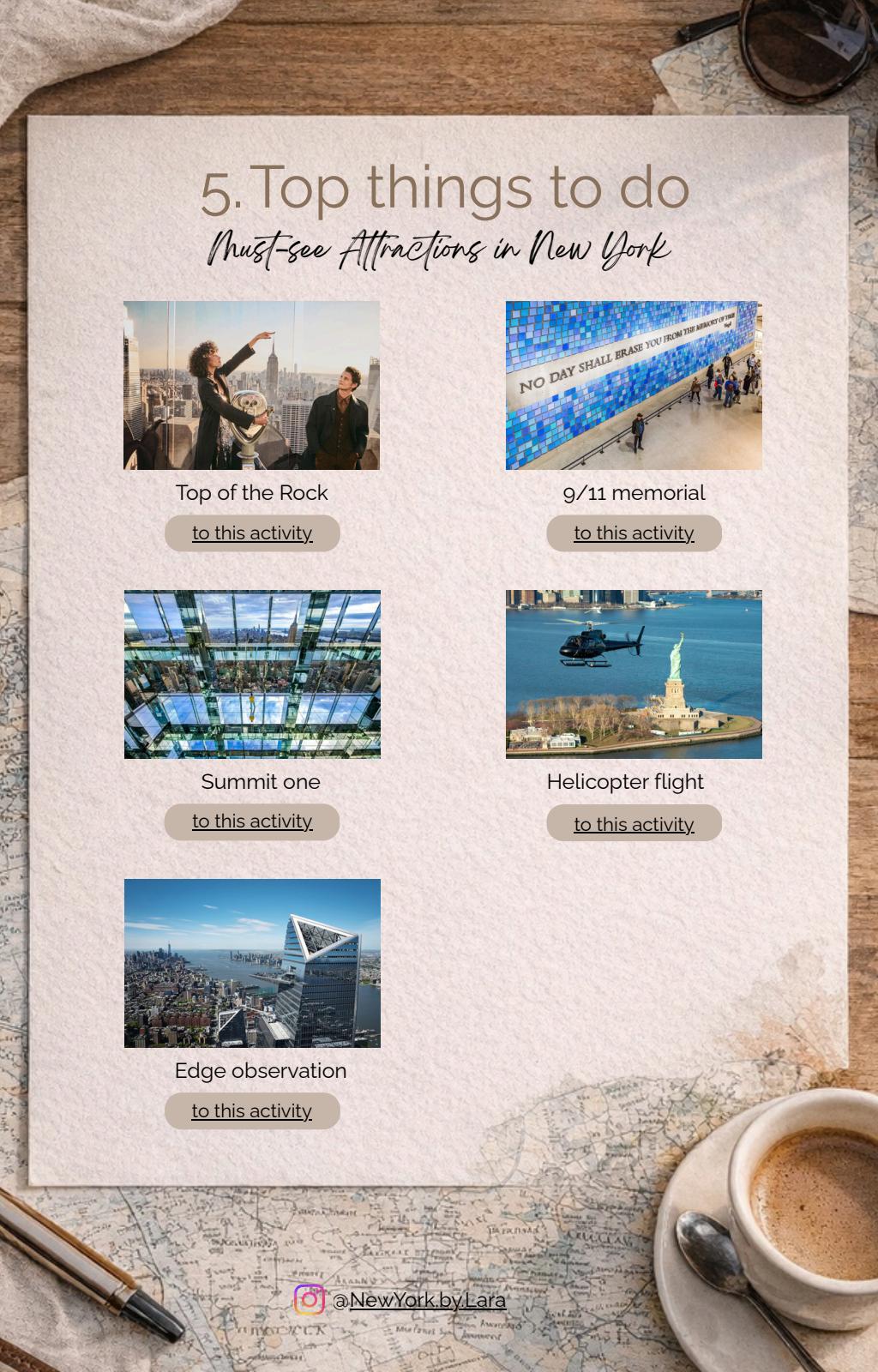


Edge observation

[to this activity](#)



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6. Steal my 4 days Itinerary

Day 1: Classic Manhattan

- Start early at Times Square (before 7 AM – quiet, empty, best photos)
- Coffee break at Bryant Park
- Top of the Rock or free skyline views from the M Social Hotel rooftop
- Roosevelt Island Tram for amazing views
- 5th Avenue, Grand Central Terminal & New York Public Library rooftop
- Dinner in Hell's Kitchen (great affordable local spots)

Day 2: Downtown, Statue & Brooklyn

- Free Staten Island Ferry for Statue of Liberty views
- Battery Park & 9/11 Memorial
- Insider tip: Mondays at 7 PM, free 9/11 Museum tickets online
- Walk through Wall Street & Stone Street for lunch
- Brooklyn Bridge walk at sunset (start from Manhattan)
- Dinner at Time Out Market in DUMBO with skyline views

Day 3: SoHo, Chinatown & Local NYC

- Bagels to go from Liberty Bagels or Black Seed Bagels
- Explore SoHo's cobblestone streets, cafés & boutiques
- Lunch in Chinatown (Xi'an Famous Foods or Joe's Shanghai)
- Cannoli stop at Ferrara Bakery in Little Italy
- Evening drinks in NoHo or the Lower East Side

Day 4: Central Park & Goodbye NYC

- Morning walk through Central Park (enter at Columbus Circle)
- Choose one museum: The Met or Natural History Museum
- Lunch from a food truck or café on the Upper West Side
- High Line walk for city views and art
- Last slice at 2 Bros before heading to the Airport



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7. Final tips before you go

Before you take off for New York, here are a few things you'll be really glad to know in advance:

- Bring comfortable shoes – you'll walk a lot!
- If you're coming from Europe: Pack a US plug adapter → [link](#)
- Don't overplan New York City is full of surprises.
- Be open, friendly, and respectful – New Yorkers are direct but kind.
- Tipping is part of the culture: it's how many service workers earn their living. In restaurants and cafés, it's normal to tip 15–20% of your total bill. In taxis or for food delivery, a few dollars are appreciated too.
- The prices don't include tax: in the US, the price you see on the tag or menu is not the final price. Sales tax (around 8–9% in NYC) is added at checkout. This applies to stores, cafés and restaurants
- When you arrive in the US, you'll go through Immigration (Customs & Border Protection) before collecting your luggage. Here's what to expect and how to make it smooth:
 - Have your documents ready: Passport, ESTA, and flight details. Keep them in hand – not buried in your bag.
 - Answer briefly and honestly: The officer might ask where you're staying, how long you're visiting, or what you do for work. Just keep it short and polite: "I'm here for vacation, staying one week at a hotel in Manhattan."
 - Don't use your phone or make jokes.
 - Be confident: A smile and calm attitude go a long way. They just want to make sure you're a genuine visitor.
- Planning your trip? You can compare flights, hotels and activities directly on my [website](#).

Enjoy every moment. Whether it's your first or fifth time, New York always has something new to show you. ❤



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7. Final tips before you go

🚫 What to Skip

Skip the Ubers: Traffic in Manhattan is crazy.

Skip the MetroCard machine lines: You don't even need one!

Skip expensive Statue of Liberty cruises: The view's the same from the free ferry.

Skip tourist restaurants in Times Square: They're crowded and twice the price.

Skip busy sightseeing times: Crowds can double your waiting time.

Skip paid tours: You don't need a guide to explore neighborhoods like SoHo, Chinatown, or Greenwich Village.

Skip thinking "free" means boring: Some of the city's best experiences cost \$0.

💰 What to Do Instead

Ride the subway like a local: It's faster & cheaper.

Tap your same card/phone at subway gates: once you hit about \$33 in rides per week, every other ride is free. No MetroCard needed.

Take the Staten Island Ferry: Free ride, amazing Statue of Liberty views, and great photos.

Eat like a local: Grab \$1.50 slices at \$1.50 Fresh Pizza or handmade \$10 gnocchi at Gnocci on 9th.

Use your jet lag: Early mornings mean empty landmarks – go to Brooklyn Bridge before sunrise.

Use Google Maps or a free walking tour app: Explore at your own pace – and learn as you go.

Plan smart: Museums like The Met or MoMA have free or pay-what-you-wish hours. Check their websites before you go.



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