

Grand Central Terminal

- 1 Everything about Grand Central Terminal (GCT), conveniently located
in the heart of Manhattan, is remarkable. On an average day, 700,000
people pass in and out of it. The information booth in the Main Concourse
(the huge room that is the focal point of the building) gets as many as
5 a thousand visitors an hour. Standing beside it, you feel that if you stood
there long enough you would eventually see every person you have ever
known in your life. “It’s the town square for eight million people,” says
GCT spokesperson Dan Brucker. “If people get separated in the city, they’ll
meet at the information booth.”
- 10 GCT’s art and style reflect the great economic success of railroad companies
before the growth of car and air travel. You could spend years in Grand
Central before you discovered all its secrets: its tennis courts, its hidden
railroad cars, its private ground-floor apartment (now a bar). Nine stories
15 below the lowest floor that the public gets to see is a basement known as M-42. Brucker
explains, “This is not just the deepest and the biggest but the most secret basement in the
city. During World War II, there were shoot-
to-kill orders if you showed up down here.”
- 20 It was where the power came from to move the trains carrying soldiers.
Today, one box in the basement holds a small red button, about the size
of a coin. Above it is written
25 “Emergency Stop.” If you pressed this button, says Brucker, you could
“make 125,000 people late for dinner.”

▲ Rushing travelers fill the Main Concourse of Grand Central Terminal, New York City.

◀ “It’s the town square for eight million people,” says GCT spokesman Dan Brucker.



This hidden underground ► platform, located near Grand Central, is said to have been used as a secret passage by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1940s.



30 Above the ground, the Main Concourse features a ceiling painted to look like the night sky, with stars shining down. Over the years, smoke blackened this beautiful ceiling. Although people thought smoke from trains was the cause, it was actually tobacco smoke! However, it has since been cleaned and now shows its original beauty.

35 In the name of modernization, plans were made to destroy GCT in the 1960s. However, many people objected, and finally New Yorkers decided GCT was worth saving. In 1976, the U.S. government agreed. It made GCT a National Historic Landmark,¹ recognizing its importance for all Americans and ensuring its continued protection. Once threatened with destruction, Grand Central Terminal continues to give pleasure to passengers and sightseers in Manhattan.

40 Grand Central Terminal by the numbers

Size: Covers 20 hectares of land (almost 30 soccer fields), 53 kilometers of track, and 44 platform—more than any other station in the world

Commuters: About 125,000 a day

Visitors: Some 575,000 people a day come just to eat, shop, and sightsee

45 **Oldest business:** The Oyster Bar, opened in 1913, the same year as GCT

Meals served in terminal restaurants: 10,000 a day

Newspaper recycled: Over 4,500 kilograms a day

Percentage of trains on time: 98

Items in Lost and Found: 19,000 a year



▲ GCT's Lost and Found Office gets more than 200 lost cell phones a month.



▲ About 125,000 travelers arrive at Grand Central every day.

¹ A **National Historic Landmark** is a building, place, or structure that the U.S. government has officially decided to be of historic importance.