

2026 World Cup: New York & New Jersey

Visitor's Guide — Phase 1



MetLife Stadium, host venue for eight 2026 World Cup matches including the Final

Executive Overview: Why Early Planning is Non-Negotiable

The world's most anticipated sporting event is coming to the New York and New Jersey region, promising an unforgettable month of football culminating in the **World Cup Final on July 19, 2026**. With eight matches scheduled for MetLife Stadium, the region will experience an unprecedented surge in demand for flights, hotels, and transportation. Securing these core components early is the single most important factor for building a successful, stress-free, and financially sound trip.

The strategic importance of planning your trip now cannot be overstated. This guide focuses exclusively on the essential, time-sensitive decisions—booking travel and accommodation—to ensure your trip is a success long before the first whistle blows. Understanding the unique logistics of this region, where the stadium is located in New Jersey while much of the cultural and tourist activity centers on New York City, is the first step toward a seamless and enjoyable experience.



New York & New Jersey at a Glance: Key Match Information

Understanding the official match schedule is the foundational first step in planning your trip. These dates dictate the peak demand periods for all travel services, from airfare to hotel rooms. All matches will be held at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

Complete Match Schedule in New York & New Jersey

Date	Tournament Stage
Saturday, June 13, 2026	Group Stage
Tuesday, June 16, 2026	Group Stage
Monday, June 22, 2026	Group Stage
Thursday, June 25, 2026	Group Stage
Saturday, June 27, 2026	Group Stage
Tuesday, June 30, 2026	Round of 32
Sunday, July 5, 2026	Round of 16
Sunday, July 19, 2026	The Final

With these key dates established, the next crucial decision is choosing a home base for your trip.



Your Strategic Hub: Tiered Travel Blueprints

The New York and New Jersey region offers a vast and complex array of travel and lodging options. To simplify your decision-making, we have broken down the most effective strategies into three distinct traveler profiles: Premium, Mid-Range, and Budget. Each blueprint analyzes the optimal approach for securing flights and hotels based on your specific priorities and budget.

Premium Profile: The Convenience-Focused Traveler

For travelers who prioritize seamless logistics, comfort, and proximity, the strategy is clear: minimize travel time and maximize experience.

Component	Strategy	Estimated Nightly Rate	Primary Vibe
Primary Airport	Newark Liberty International (EWR) - Most efficient choice given proximity to stadium and direct transit connections	N/A	N/A
Lodging Option 1	Meadowlands / Secaucus	450–800+	Convenient, functional, unparalleled direct access to MetLife Stadium
Lodging Option 2	Manhattan (Midtown/Downtown)	400–750+	World-class culture, dining, and nightlife experience



Mid-Range Profile: The Balanced Explorer

Travelers seeking a strategic balance of value, local experience, and efficient transit will find their ideal base in New Jersey's vibrant urban hubs.

Component	Strategy	Estimated Nightly Rate	Primary Vibe
Primary Airports	Newark (EWR) or LaGuardia (LGA) - Provides flexibility	N/A	N/A
Recommended Lodging	Jersey City / Hoboken	300–550	Vibrant atmosphere, excellent dining, stunning Manhattan skyline views, superior value compared to Manhattan

Key Advantage: Robust transit networks, including the PATH train system, provide straightforward connections to both MetLife Stadium and New York City attractions.

Budget Profile: The Adventure-Oriented Traveler

For the cost-conscious traveler, a successful trip requires flexibility and a willingness to navigate slightly longer commutes.

Component	Strategy	Estimated Nightly Rate	Primary Vibe
Primary Airports	EWR, LGA, or JFK (whichever offers best fare)	N/A	N/A
Lodging Option 1	Newark / Elizabeth	250–400	Budget-friendly, ideal for EWR airport access
Lodging Option 2	Carlstadt	Most budget-friendly	Practical, economical

Important Note: Areas like Carlstadt offer the most savings but typically rely on NJ Transit bus service rather than more direct rail lines—a key consideration for daily travel planning.



Air Travel & Arrival Strategy

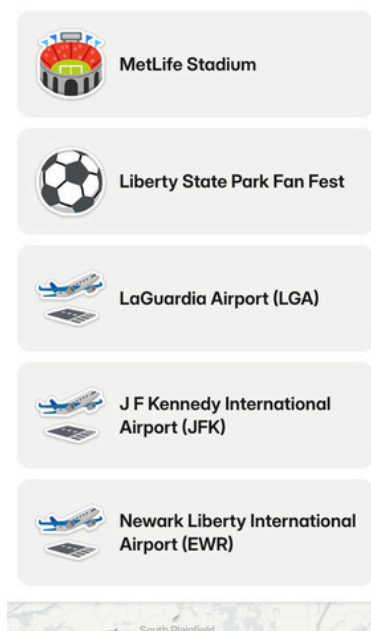
Choosing the right arrival airport is a critical logistical decision that directly influences your travel costs, ground transportation time, and overall convenience. The New York/New Jersey region is served by three major airports.

Airport Options

Airport	Profile & Strategic Value	Distance to Stadium
Newark Liberty International (EWR)	The most efficient choice for World Cup travelers. Closest to MetLife Stadium with direct NJ Transit rail connections. Ideal for those staying in New Jersey or prioritizing stadium access.	10 mi / 20 min
LaGuardia Airport (LGA)	Located in Queens, New York. Good option for those staying in Manhattan or exploring NYC. Well-connected via public transit and closer to Manhattan than JFK.	15 mi / 30 min
John F. Kennedy International (JFK)	The largest international hub in the region. Best for international travelers seeking maximum flight options. Located in Queens, farther from both stadium and Manhattan.	25 mi / 45 min

With your flight plan in place, let's focus on mastering ground transportation to the stadium on match days.

NY/NJ World Cup Map



Mastering Match Day: Stadium Transportation Matrix

MetLife Stadium is located within the Meadowlands Sports Complex in East Rutherford, New Jersey, and is not easily accessible by foot from major transit hubs or lodging zones. Understanding the dedicated transportation systems in place for major events is absolutely critical for a stress-free match day experience.

Transportation Options at a Glance (From Manhattan)

Mode	Cost (Est. Round Trip)	Avg. Time	Reliability	Key Considerations & Fan Verdict
NJ Transit Rail & Bus	10–20	45–60 min	High	Fan Verdict: Recommended method. The Meadowlands Rail Line from Secaucus Junction is the primary route. Pre-purchase tickets on the NJ Transit app, but ensure your phone is fully charged—fans stress that a portable battery pack is essential, as a dead phone means a lost ticket. Expect severe post-match queues.
Rideshare (Uber/Lyft)	60–150+ (Each Way)	60–120 min	Low	Fan Verdict: Avoid for return trips. Base fares are high, but expect extreme post-match surge pricing. Fans report drivers soliciting off-app cash fares of \$200+ for return journeys. Unreliable pickups are common.
Rental Car	\$110+ (incl. parking)	60–120 min	Medium	Fan Verdict: Not recommended. Parking must be pre-purchased, and fans report severe traffic congestion, with waits of 1-2 hours just to exit the parking lots post-match.
Private Bus/Shuttle	30–50	45–75 min	High	Fan Verdict: A solid alternative. Look for official or private charter services operating from major hotels in both New York and New Jersey for a more organized experience.

Critical Insight: Navigating Post-Match Egress

The overwhelming consensus among local fans and event veterans is that leaving MetLife Stadium after a major event is a significant logistical challenge. While getting to the stadium is manageable, the post-match egress is famously difficult, with long queues and delays being the norm for all modes of transport.

Proven Fan Strategies:

- **Leave Early or Wait It Out:** The biggest rush occurs immediately after the final whistle. To avoid it, either depart a few minutes before the match concludes or plan to relax for an hour. The nearby American Dream mall is a popular spot to wait for the initial crowds to thin out.
- **Pre-Purchase All Tickets:** Whether you choose the train or bus, buy your round-trip ticket in advance, either as a paper ticket or on the NJ Transit mobile app. This allows you to bypass the massive ticket purchase lines after the match.
- **Keep Your Phone Charged:** A dead phone means a lost mobile ticket and no way to call for a ride. A portable battery pack is an essential piece of equipment for every fan relying on a smartphone.
- **Consider the Bus:** While the train is the primary recommendation, some fans report that the bus queue at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Manhattan feels less chaotic and more orderly than the post-match train line at the stadium.



Your Planning Timeline: A Step-by-Step Checklist

A phased approach to booking is the most effective way to manage the complex logistics of a World Cup trip. This simple, time-based checklist will help you stay on track and secure the best options.

✓ Right Now

- Secure your flights now for the best prices and availability.
- Book your hotel using a refundable rate to maintain flexibility until your specific match dates are confirmed.

✓ January - February 2026

- Stay vigilant. A second wave of hotel room inventory is expected to be released during this period. Monitor rates and availability to refine or confirm your initial booking.

✓ 60 Days Out (Spring 2026)

- Finalize any remaining travel details.
- Begin reviewing official stadium policies, such as bag requirements and prohibited items, to avoid any surprises on match day.
- Download the official NJ Transit and MTA (New York City transit) mobile apps to manage tickets and view real-time schedules.
Purchase a reliable portable battery pack for your phone. It is your ticket, map, and communication device.

✓ 30 Days Out (May-June 2026)

- Apply for your ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorization) or necessary visa if required for international travel.

Review the official MetLife Stadium clear bag policy to ensure your bag will be permitted.

Prepare for the weather. July in this region is typically hot and humid, with average temperatures between 25–32°C (77–90°F).



Essential Know-Before-You-Go

Attending a major summer event in the New York/New Jersey region requires an awareness of local conditions. Planning ahead, especially for groups and families, can significantly enhance your experience.

Health, Safety, and Weather Awareness

- **Weather Preparation:** July is the hottest and most humid month of the year. Pack light, breathable clothing, stay hydrated, and use sunscreen.
- **Money & Tipping:** Credit and debit cards are almost universally accepted. Tipping for service staff (restaurants, taxis) is customary and expected, with 18–20% being the standard rate.
- **Personal Safety:** As in any major metropolitan area, always be aware of your surroundings, particularly in crowded tourist areas and on public transportation. Keep valuables secure.
- **Emergency Contacts:** In case of a medical emergency, the nearest major hospitals are Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey and Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, New York.

Tips for Families & Groups

- **Family Lodging:** For families seeking a quieter environment with more space, hotels in Jersey City or Hoboken are highly recommended. These areas provide a more relaxed atmosphere while still offering simple and direct transit into Manhattan via the PATH train.
- **Group Lodging:** For large groups, renting a house through services like Airbnb in Northern New Jersey (e.g., Bergen County) can be a more cost-effective and logistically simple solution than booking multiple hotel rooms. This allows for shared spaces and better coordination.
- **Accessibility:** MetLife Stadium is fully ADA compliant. For any specific accessibility questions or needs, it is best to contact the stadium's guest services directly well in advance of your visit.

To aid in your final planning stages, here is a curated list of essential resources.



Appendix: Essential Links & Resources

Use these official and recommended resources to stay informed and manage your bookings.

- **Official World Cup Information:** fifa.com/worldcup
- **NYNJ Host Committee:** nynj2026.com
- **Regional Transportation:** njtransit.com | new.mta.info | panynj.gov/path
- **Regional Airports:** newarkairport.com (EWR) | laguardiaairport.com (LGA) | jfkairport.com (JFK)
- **MetLife Stadium:** metlifestadium.com
- **New York City Tourism:** nycgo.com
- **New Jersey Tourism:** visitnj.org

Coming in Phase 2 (May 2026)

Thank you for consulting our Phase 1 logistical guide. As the tournament approaches, look for our comprehensive Phase 2 guide, scheduled for release in May 2026. This next installment will shift focus from logistics to experience, covering everything you need to know about the planned 39-day FIFA Fan Festival™ at Liberty State Park, local fan zones, curated dining guides, and cultural highlights. Our goal is to equip you with the insider knowledge needed to experience the vibrant and diverse culture of New York and New Jersey like a local.

This guide is based on current logistical projections for the 2026 World Cup in New York & New Jersey. Always check official World Cup and local transportation sources for the most up-to-date information.

