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Visiting New Jersey

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Table of Contents

- **Introduction**
- **Chapter 1** Getting There and Getting Around
- **Chapter 2** North Jersey (Gateway Region)
- **Chapter 3** Central Jersey
- **Chapter 4** South Jersey
- **Chapter 5** The Jersey Shore
- **Chapter 6** Skylands Region
- **Chapter 7** Historical Significance
- **Chapter 8** Revolutionary War Sites
- **Chapter 9** Food and Drink
- **Chapter 10** Notable Foods and Drinks
- **Chapter 11** Shopping
- **Chapter 12** Major Shopping Destinations
- **Chapter 13** Seasonal Activities
- **Chapter 14** Spring in New Jersey
- **Chapter 15** Summer Adventures
- **Chapter 16** Fall Excursions
- **Chapter 17** Winter Wonders
- **Chapter 18** Other Notable Attractions
- **Chapter 19** Museums and Historical Sites
- **Chapter 20** Outdoor Recreation
- **Chapter 21** Wineries and Breweries
- **Chapter 22** Zoos and Aquariums
- **Chapter 23** Planning Your Visit
- **Chapter 24** Utilizing Public Transportation
- **Chapter 25** Summary and Travel Tips

Introduction

Welcome to the captivating world of New Jersey, a state that charms its visitors with its diverse landscapes, rich history, and vibrant cultural experiences. This book is your comprehensive guide to exploring the many facets that make New Jersey a remarkable destination for tourists. Whether you're drawn to bustling cityscapes, serene coastal towns, or historical landmarks, New Jersey has something unique to offer every traveler.

Often overshadowed by its neighbor, New York City, New Jersey stands as an intriguing paradox of urban sophistication and natural beauty. The state is aptly named the "Garden State," having embraced its agricultural roots and verdant scenery. From the rolling hills and orchards of the Skylands Region to the sun-soaked beaches of the Jersey Shore, visitors are treated to a mosaic of picturesque vistas. In addition, the state boasts an impressive network of parks, hiking trails, and outdoor venues that cater to adventure seekers and nature enthusiasts alike.

New Jersey's historical significance cannot be understated. As the "Crossroads of the American Revolution," the state played a pivotal role in the birth of the nation. Tourists will find numerous sites that encapsulate America's struggle for independence, including battlefields, preserved homes, and museums that tell stories of bravery and resilience. History buffs will find an abundance of landmarks that vividly bring the past to life.

The state's cultural scene is just as vibrant and varied. Dining in New Jersey is a gastronomic adventure with an array of cuisines influenced by the diverse cultures that call the state home. Visitors can indulge in classic diner fare, fresh seafood from the coast, and unique regional dishes. New Jersey's wineries and breweries also invite travelers to savor local flavors crafted with a touch of artisanal pride.

Shopping aficionados will be delighted by the state's extensive retail landscape—from trendy boutiques nestled in quaint towns to sprawling outlet malls offering significant bargains. Meanwhile, seasonal events and activities ensure that no matter the time of year, there's always something happening in New Jersey. Whether you prefer the blooming beauty of spring, summer's beachfront festival vibe, or the rustic allure of fall and festive winter holidays, New Jersey has it all.

In this guide, we've carefully curated information to help you make the most of your visit to New Jersey. With detailed insights into transportation, accommodations, attractions, and insider tips, this book aims to be an invaluable resource for anyone planning a trip to the Garden State. Embark on an incredible journey through New

Jersey, where every corner holds a new discovery and every town tells a unique story. Welcome to New Jersey—prepare to be enchanted.

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CHAPTER ONE: Getting There and Getting Around

New Jersey's compact size and strategic location nestled between the major metropolitan hubs of New York City and Philadelphia make it exceptionally accessible. Whether you're flying in from across the globe, rolling in on rails, cruising down the highway, or even arriving by sea, getting to the Garden State is straightforward. Once here, a dense network of roads and public transportation options provides numerous ways to explore its diverse regions, from the bustling urban landscapes of the north to the sandy shores and pine forests of the south. Navigating New Jersey does require some planning, however, as traffic can be challenging and the various transit systems have their own quirks. This chapter will equip you with the essential knowledge to arrive smoothly and move around efficiently during your visit.

Air travel is often the most convenient option for visitors coming from afar. Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR), located primarily in Newark and Elizabeth in North Jersey, is the state's largest and busiest airport, serving as a major hub for United Airlines and handling countless international and domestic flights. Its proximity to New York City makes it a popular choice even for those visiting Manhattan, but it's perfectly positioned for exploring North and Central Jersey. The airport is divided into three main terminals (A, B, and C), each serving different airlines. Navigating between terminals is facilitated by the AirTrain Newark, a free monorail system that also crucially connects passengers to the broader transportation network.

Upon landing at Newark Liberty, you have several ground transportation choices. The aforementioned AirTrain Newark is key; it connects all terminals, parking lots, and rental car facilities to the Newark Liberty International Airport Station. From this station, you can seamlessly transfer to NJ Transit trains running on the Northeast Corridor and North Jersey Coast Lines, offering direct access to Newark Penn Station, Secaucus Junction (for transfers to other NJ Transit lines), Trenton, and points in between, as well as Amtrak services. This train connection provides a relatively quick and traffic-free route to many parts of the state and into New York City's Penn Station.

If rail isn't your preference, or your destination isn't conveniently located near a station, other options abound at EWR. Taxis are readily available outside each terminal's baggage claim area, offering metered fares to destinations within New Jersey and flat rates to various points in New York City. Ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft also operate legally at the airport, with designated pick-up zones clearly marked outside each terminal. For bus travel, NJ Transit operates several routes connecting the airport to surrounding communities, including Newark Penn Station and locations further afield. Coach USA provides bus service to Manhattan's Port Authority Bus Terminal and other destinations. Lastly, all major car rental companies have

facilities at EWR, accessible via the AirTrain, providing the freedom to explore the state at your own pace. Allow ample time for security screening, especially during peak travel periods, as lines can be long.

While Newark Liberty is the primary gateway, depending on your final destination within New Jersey, other airports might prove more convenient, particularly if you're heading to the southern part of the state. Philadelphia International Airport (PHL), located just across the Delaware River in Pennsylvania, is an excellent alternative for accessing South Jersey destinations like Cherry Hill, Camden, Atlantic City, or Cape May. PHL is a major hub for American Airlines and serves numerous domestic and international routes. Ground transportation options into New Jersey from PHL include SEPTA regional rail (requiring a transfer in Philadelphia to PATCO or NJ Transit), NJ Transit bus routes, rental cars, taxis, and ride-sharing services. The drive from PHL into South Jersey is typically less congested than navigating the routes from the New York area airports.

The two major New York City airports, John F. Kennedy International (JFK) in Queens and LaGuardia Airport (LGA) also in Queens, can serve as entry points, especially for North Jersey. However, traveling from these airports into New Jersey usually involves a more complex journey, often requiring multiple transfers via AirTrain, subway, bus, or train (LIRR or Metro-North connecting to NJ Transit or PATH), and potentially significant travel time and expense, especially factoring in bridge or tunnel tolls if driving or taking a taxi. While potentially offering more flight options or better fares depending on your origin, carefully weigh the transit time and cost against the convenience of flying directly into Newark or Philadelphia if your primary destination is New Jersey.

For visitors heading directly to the southern shore points, Atlantic City International Airport (ACY) in Egg Harbor Township offers a closer, though smaller, alternative. Primarily served by budget carriers like Spirit Airlines, ACY provides easy access to Atlantic City, Ocean City, Wildwood, and Cape May. Ground transportation is more limited than at the larger hubs but includes rental cars, taxis, casino shuttles, and connections to NJ Transit bus routes serving the shore and linking to the Atlantic City Rail Line terminal. Further north, Trenton Mercer Airport (TTN) in Ewing primarily hosts flights from Frontier Airlines. Its location makes it a convenient option for visiting Central Jersey destinations like Princeton or the state capital, Trenton, offering rental cars, taxis, and proximity to NJ Transit and SEPTA rail services at the nearby Trenton Transit Center.

Arriving by train is another excellent option, leveraging the state's position on the busy Northeast Corridor, the electrified rail spine connecting Washington D.C., Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston. Amtrak provides frequent service throughout the day, stopping at several key New Jersey stations, including Newark Penn Station, Newark Liberty International Airport Station, Metropark (in Iselin, convenient for Central Jersey business parks), and the Trenton Transit Center. Newark Penn and

Trenton are major hubs offering connections to NJ Transit trains, light rail, PATH (in Newark), and buses. Amtrak's high-speed Acela service offers faster journeys with fewer stops, while Northeast Regional trains provide more frequent service and stop at more stations. Booking Amtrak tickets in advance is highly recommended, especially for Acela and travel during peak periods, to secure better fares. Train travel offers a comfortable, scenic, and often faster alternative to driving, particularly between major city centers.

Complementing Amtrak, NJ Transit operates an extensive commuter rail network that not only serves New Jersey residents but also connects with neighboring states. While cross-border connections are generally less direct than Amtrak for long distances, NJ Transit trains link with SEPTA (Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority) regional rail at the Trenton Transit Center, providing seamless travel between Philadelphia and New Jersey points. Connections with Metro-North Railroad (serving New York State and Connecticut) are possible via transfers in Secaucus or Hoboken, primarily serving commuters rather than long-distance tourists. NJ Transit's rail system is primarily focused on connecting suburban communities with major employment centers like Newark and New York City, but it's invaluable for navigating between different parts of the state.

For travel specifically between northeastern New Jersey and lower and midtown Manhattan, the PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) train system is indispensable. This rapid transit system functions like a subway, operating 24/7 and connecting major New Jersey hubs—Newark Penn Station, Harrison, Journal Square (Jersey City), Hoboken Terminal, Exchange Place (Jersey City), and Newport (Jersey City)—with key locations in Manhattan, including the World Trade Center, Christopher Street, 9th Street, 14th Street, 23rd Street, and 33rd Street. PATH uses a separate fare system, payable with NYC MetroCards or PATH's own SmartLink card. It's a fast, efficient, and cost-effective way to cross the Hudson River, making it popular with both commuters and tourists staying in New Jersey while visiting New York City.

Intercity bus services also provide extensive connections to New Jersey from across the country. Major carriers like Greyhound, Peter Pan, BoltBus, and Megabus operate routes terminating or stopping in key cities such as Newark (often at Penn Station), Atlantic City (at the Atlantic City Bus Terminal), Camden, and Trenton. These services are generally the most budget-friendly option, though travel times can be longer compared to train or air travel, and comfort levels vary. Many buses also arrive at the Port Authority Bus Terminal in Midtown Manhattan, the busiest bus terminal in the world, from which travelers can easily connect to NJ Transit buses or PATH trains to reach their final New Jersey destination.

NJ Transit itself operates a vast network of interstate bus routes, primarily connecting various points in North and Central Jersey with Manhattan's Port Authority Bus Terminal and certain routes connecting South Jersey communities with Philadelphia.

These buses are a lifeline for commuters and provide another viable option for tourists, especially those heading to towns not directly served by rail lines. Routes vary greatly in frequency and travel time, heavily dependent on traffic conditions, particularly during rush hours when entering or exiting Manhattan tunnels and bridges. Using the NJ Transit mobile app or website is essential for planning bus journeys and purchasing tickets.

For maximum flexibility, arriving by car allows you to explore New Jersey's nooks and crannies at your own pace. The state is crisscrossed by major interstate highways. The iconic New Jersey Turnpike (I-95) runs diagonally across the state, connecting the Delaware Memorial Bridge in the south to the George Washington Bridge in the north, serving as the primary artery between Philadelphia and New York City. Interstate 80 traverses the northern part of the state east-west, while Interstate 78 serves the central region, also running east-west. Interstate 287 forms a large loop around the northern and central suburban areas, connecting other major highways. Interstates 195 and 295 provide crucial links in Central and South Jersey.

Be prepared for tolls. The New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway, which runs north-south closer to the coast, are the state's main toll roads. The Atlantic City Expressway connects the Philadelphia area to Atlantic City and also requires tolls. Tolls can be paid with cash at staffed booths or via E-ZPass, an electronic toll collection transponder strongly recommended for anyone planning significant driving. E-ZPass lanes offer discounted tolls and allow drivers to pass through collection points without stopping, saving considerable time, especially during peak hours. E-ZPass transponders from other participating states are compatible. Numerous bridges and tunnels connecting New Jersey to New York (George Washington Bridge, Lincoln Tunnel, Holland Tunnel, Goethals Bridge, Bayonne Bridge, Outerbridge Crossing) and Pennsylvania (Delaware Memorial Bridge, Walt Whitman Bridge, Benjamin Franklin Bridge, Betsy Ross Bridge, Commodore Barry Bridge, various smaller Delaware River bridges) also charge substantial tolls, often collected only in one direction (typically entering New York or Pennsylvania).

Driving in New Jersey, particularly in the densely populated northern regions and during commute times (roughly 6-9 AM and 4-7 PM weekdays), can be stressful. Traffic congestion is common on major highways and approaches to New York City. Drivers can sometimes be perceived as aggressive; familiarity with local driving habits, like anticipating sudden lane changes, is helpful. Using a reliable navigation app with real-time traffic data (like Waze or Google Maps) is practically essential. Parking in cities like Newark, Jersey City, Hoboken, and popular shore towns during the summer can be difficult and expensive; pay close attention to parking signs regarding permits, street cleaning, and time limits to avoid hefty fines or towing.

Once you've arrived, navigating within New Jersey offers a similar range of choices, often dictated by where you are and where you want to go. Driving remains the most

flexible option, especially for exploring rural areas, the Pine Barrens, the Skylands, or disparate points along the Shore. All major car rental agencies are present at airports and in larger towns. Ensure you have a valid driver's license and appropriate insurance (check your personal auto policy or credit card coverage before relying solely on rental agency insurance). Remember that E-ZPass is almost a necessity for frequent travel on the Turnpike or Parkway; rental agencies offer them, often for a daily fee plus the cost of tolls, or you can sometimes purchase one at retail locations or service areas if staying longer. Be aware that New Jersey is the only state where self-service gasoline pumping is illegal; attendants are required to pump your gas, a quirk that often surprises out-of-state visitors. Most stations accept credit cards.

A unique feature of New Jersey roadways, particularly multi-lane state highways, is the "jughandle" ramp. Instead of making direct left turns across oncoming traffic, drivers must often exit to the right onto a C-shaped or looping ramp (the jughandle) to cross the highway or execute a U-turn. These were designed for safety and traffic flow but can be confusing for first-time visitors. Navigation apps usually handle them correctly, but pay attention to signage indicating "All turns from right lane" as you approach intersections on these types of roads.

NJ Transit's rail network is excellent for traveling between major towns and cities, especially along the Northeast Corridor (Trenton-Newark-New York), the North Jersey Coast Line (New York/Hoboken-Long Branch-Bay Head), the Morris & Essex Lines (New York/Hoboken-Summit-Dover/Gladstone), the Montclair-Boonton Line (New York/Hoboken-Montclair-Hackettstown), the Main/Bergen County Lines (Hoboken-Suffern, NY), the Pascack Valley Line (Hoboken-Spring Valley, NY), the Raritan Valley Line (Newark-High Bridge), and the Atlantic City Line (Philadelphia-Atlantic City). Key transfer hubs include Newark Penn Station (Amtrak, PATH, Newark Light Rail, buses), Trenton Transit Center (Amtrak, SEPTA, River LINE, buses), Hoboken Terminal (PATH, Hudson-Bergen Light Rail, NY Waterway ferries, buses), and crucially, Secaucus Junction. Secaucus Junction allows passengers on most northern lines originating from Hoboken to easily transfer to trains heading into New York Penn Station via the Northeast Corridor, significantly expanding travel possibilities.

Purchasing NJ Transit train tickets is straightforward. Ticket vending machines (TVMs) accepting cash and cards are available at most stations. The highly recommended NJ Transit mobile app allows you to purchase and display tickets directly on your smartphone, avoiding lines and potential onboard surcharges (a fee is often added if buying tickets onboard when a TVM or agent was available at your origin station). Fares are generally based on distance or zones traveled. Check schedules carefully, as service frequency varies significantly between peak weekday hours, off-peak times, and weekends/holidays. Some lines have limited or no service on weekends.

Where trains don't go, NJ Transit buses often do. The bus network is incredibly extensive, reaching nearly every corner of the state, from dense urban routes to

suburban connectors and rural services. Buses are essential for reaching many attractions, parks, and smaller towns not located near rail lines. Planning your bus trip is best done using the NJ Transit website or mobile app, which provide route maps, schedules, and fare information. For many local routes, exact change is required if paying cash onboard; the mobile app offers a convenient cashless payment option. Be aware that bus travel times can be less predictable than trains due to traffic conditions.

New Jersey also boasts three modern light rail systems enhancing connectivity in specific corridors. The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail (HBLR) is invaluable for navigating the densely populated waterfront areas opposite Manhattan, connecting Bayonne, Jersey City (including Liberty State Park), Hoboken, Weehawken, Union City, and North Bergen. It offers connections to PATH trains, NY Waterway ferries, and NJ Transit buses and trains at various points. The Newark Light Rail consists of two lines: one connecting Newark Penn Station and Newark Broad Street Station (both major rail hubs), and another extending north through Branch Brook Park (famous for its cherry blossoms) to Grove Street in Bloomfield. The River LINE connects the state capital, Trenton, with Camden, running parallel to the Delaware River and stopping in several historic river towns like Bordentown and Burlington. All three light rail systems operate on a proof-of-payment system: passengers must purchase and validate their tickets *before* boarding, and fare inspectors conduct random checks onboard.

The PATH train, while primarily connecting New Jersey to New York City, also serves as a useful link for travel *between* its New Jersey stations: Newark, Harrison, Journal Square, Grove Street, Exchange Place, Newport, and Hoboken. It's often the quickest way to travel between these specific cities.

Ferries provide scenic and often surprisingly quick alternatives, especially for crossing the Hudson River or Delaware Bay. NY Waterway operates numerous ferry routes connecting points in Hudson and Bergen counties (like Weehawken, Hoboken, and Jersey City) with various terminals in Manhattan (Midtown/W. 39th St, Battery Park City/World Financial Center, Pier 11/Wall Street). While primarily serving commuters, these ferries offer spectacular skyline views and bypass tunnel and bridge traffic. Further south, the Cape May-Lewes Ferry provides vehicle and passenger service across the mouth of the Delaware Bay, linking Cape May, New Jersey, with Lewes, Delaware. It's a pleasant journey and a convenient shortcut for travelers heading between the southern Jersey Shore and points south like the Delaware beaches or Ocean City, Maryland.

Taxis and ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft are widely available throughout the more populated areas of New Jersey, particularly in cities, suburbs, around train stations, and airports. They offer door-to-door convenience but can be more expensive than public transit, especially during peak demand periods or for longer distances. Traditional taxi fares are often regulated by municipality.

While New Jersey is the most densely populated state, opportunities for walking and cycling exist. Many downtown areas, such as Princeton, Montclair, Hoboken, Red Bank, Haddonfield, and shore towns like Cape May and Ocean City, are quite walkable with shops, restaurants, and attractions clustered together. Dedicated multi-use trails, like the lengthy Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park towpath in Central Jersey or various "rails-to-trails" paths, offer excellent recreational cycling away from traffic. However, outside of these specific areas and trails, cycling on regular New Jersey roads requires caution due to traffic volume and speed. Bike rentals are available in many tourist destinations, particularly along the Shore and near state parks.

Information on accessible transportation options for travelers with disabilities can generally be found on the websites of the respective providers (NJ Transit, Amtrak, PATH, airports, ferry companies). Most trains, light rail vehicles, and many buses are equipped with lifts or ramps, priority seating, and audio/visual announcements. Access Link provides paratransit services through NJ Transit for those unable to use fixed-route buses. Accessible taxis and ride-share options can also be requested. Planning ahead and confirming specific accessibility features for your intended routes and stations is always advisable.

Ultimately, the best way to get around New Jersey depends heavily on your itinerary. A trip focused on the urban centers of the northeast might rely heavily on NJ Transit trains, PATH, and light rail, perhaps combined with ride-sharing for local trips. Exploring the far-flung beaches of the Shore or the trails of the Skylands might necessitate renting a car. A multi-region trip could involve a combination of driving and public transit. Utilizing online tools and mobile apps provided by transport agencies is key for checking real-time schedules, delays, service advisories, and purchasing tickets, ensuring a smoother journey through the Garden State.

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