

VISIT GUIDE 2026

Top of the Rock

New York · From 40.87€

https://topoftherock.visit-tickets.com/en/... Skip-the-line-tickets & rates



ORIGIN & HISTORY

The Art Deco Icon of Midtown

GOOGLE 4.7 ★★★★★ 93 370 reviews

TIQETS 4.6 ★★★★★ 1 670 reviews

Built between **1931 and 1933**, the Comcast Building, formerly known as the RCA Building, stands as an icon of New York's Art Deco architecture. Upon its completion, it was already the world's tallest skyscraper, a title it would hold until 1930 before being surpassed by its rivals. Its distinctive architecture, devoid of a spire or point, earned it the popular nickname "The Slab" among New Yorkers, highlighting its unique, blade-like form.

The building was designed to house the studios of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), a subsidiary of General Electric, deeply anchoring its role in the history of American media. It is here that NBC established its headquarters, transforming the site into a true temple of radio and television broadcasting. The interior is rich with artistic treasures commissioned by John D. Rockefeller Jr., who sought to make this complex a cultural jewel as much as a commercial one.

The architectural innovation is striking: it is the first building to group its elevators at the center of the structure, a revolutionary design for the time that optimized space and circulation. This engineering has left a lasting mark on the history of urban architecture. In 1985, the building was officially designated a landmark, ensuring the strict preservation of its historical and artistic integrity against the transformations of the neighborhood.

Over the decades, the building's name has evolved alongside telecommunications giants: GE Building from 1988 to 2015, and now the Comcast Building. These changes reflect the mergers and acquisitions that have shaped the media industry. Yet, the soul of the place remains that of 1933, when architectural boldness and art united to create a monument that continues to intrigue and inspire visitors from around the world.

THE EXPERIENCE

From the moment you step inside, you are immersed in an atmosphere of prestige and retro modernity. Noble materials—granite and aluminum—are bathed in natural light filtered through large glass windows. The ascent to the upper floors is not merely a vertical movement but a gradual transition toward an unprecedented perspective on Manhattan. The relative silence of the centralized elevators contrasts with the vibrant energy of the city stretching out beneath your feet.

Upon reaching the outdoor terraces, you are left breathless. The 360-degree panoramic view offers exceptional clarity, far removed from the distortion sometimes found in other towers. You can distinguish every detail of the Empire State Building, located directly across, as well as the lush expanse of Central Park. It is a total sensory experience, where a gentle breeze and the distant hum of traffic create a bubble of serenity at the heart of urban turmoil. For photographers, it is paradise: the low-angled evening light sublimates the Art Deco vertical lines, offering refined and powerful compositions.



PREPARE YOUR VISIT

Practical information

ADDRESS

Manhattan · Metro: Times Sq - 42 St (Lx, Ly, exit B) or Rockefeller Ctr (N, W, U, 2 min walk).

OPENING HOURS

Open 7 days a week from 8am to midnight. Hours may vary slightly depending on seasons and special events.

FARES

From 42 $ (approx. 40.87 €). A surcharge applies to sunset time slots.

VISIT DURATION

Allow 1h15 to 1h30 to fully enjoy the three observation levels and outdoor terraces. This time allows you to change angles to photograph the Empire State Buildi

PHOTOS

Photography is allowed everywhere, including on the outdoor terraces. No tripod is required, but compact backpacks are admitted. The view without tinted glass g

AUDIENCE

Ideal for families and couples. The space is more spacious than some competitors, which suits children well. Photographers will appreciate the direct natural li

HOW TO GET THERE

Access & transport

Subway

: 6th Avenue & 56th Street at Southeast Corner — 6 min à pied

Grand Central Station (8 min) · New York Penn Station (10 min)

Bus

: 6th Avenue & West 50th Street — 1 min à pied

Grand Central Station (11 min) · New York Penn Station (14 min)

Car

Grand Central Station (5 min) · New York Penn Station (8 min)

Citi Bike / Vélo

Grand Central Station (5 min) · New York Penn Station (9 min)

LOCALISATION

Où se trouve Top of the Rock ?



📍 30 Rockefeller Plaza — 10112 New York

🌐 40°45.561′ N, 73°58.765′ O



ORGANIZATION

Understanding the Observatory Structure

Level 0 (Ground Floor)

This level houses the Welcome Gallery, a quick educational space that provides context on the history of the building and Rockefeller Center. You will find information about the artists who decorated the interior, such as Diego Rivera. It is the starting point of your ascent, where you check in with your e-tickets and go through security.

Inner Levels (70th floor)

After the elevator, you first access the air-conditioned inner levels. These spaces offer wind-protected views, ideal for observing architectural details and using the provided binoculars. Informational panels detail the monuments visible from each direction, helping to identify Manhattan's iconic buildings.

Outdoor Terraces (70th, 67th and 68th floors)

The heart of the experience is found on the three outdoor terraces, accessible depending on weather conditions. The south terrace offers a direct and unobstructed view of the Empire State Building. The other sides allow you to admire Central Park, the Hudson River, and Lower Manhattan. This is where photography reaches its peak, with varied angles and optimal natural light.

ACCESSIBILITY

♿ **Disabled Access**

Full access to observation levels via adapted elevators and accessible terraces.

👨‍👩‍👧 **Families**

Safe and spacious environment, ideal for families with children of all ages.

🎧 **Audio guide**

French, English, Spanish, Italian, German



Must-sees

SELECTION

Must-See Highlights of the Visit

01 South Terrace

Direct view of the Empire State Building

This is New York's most sought-after photo angle. Unlike the ESB, here you have a frontal and unobstructed perspective of the neighboring tower. The proximity allows you to capture the Art Deco details of the Empire State Building with remarkable clarity. It is the must-see spot for any urban photographer.

> 💡 The distance between the two towers is so short that some visitors swear they could hear the wind change tone as it passed from one terrace to the other, a rare acoustic phenomenon in such urban density.

02 Premium / VIP Zone

The Beam Experience

An immersive installation that simulates the sensation of floating above the city. Although often associated with premium offers, it provides a unique and dizzying perspective. It combines technology and emotion to give a new dimension to the contemplation of urban emptiness.

> 💡 Many visitors describe this experience as the most emotionally intense, surpassing even a simple panoramic view, as it directly engages the body in the perception of height.

03 Terrace Access

SKYLIFT Exterior Elevator

To reach the upper levels, you take an exterior elevator exposed to the elements. This transparent vertical ascent enhances the sensation of speed and height. It is a pleasant moment of suspense before reaching the final terraces.

> 💡 Engineers designed this elevator to withstand Manhattan's strongest winds, an invisible but essential technical feat for visitor safety in windy weather.

04 North/East Terrace

View of Central Park

From the terraces facing north and east, you can observe the vast green rectangle of Central Park. The contrast between the lush vegetation and Manhattan's gray street grid is striking. It is the ideal place to understand the city's urban planning.

> 💡 On clear days, it is possible to identify the park's main gardens, a task that becomes a favorite game for local guides accompanying their groups.

05 LEE LAWRIE Main Entrance

Bas-reliefs by Lee Lawrie

Before going up, admire the Art Deco sculptures on the exterior. The main bas-relief, created by Lee Lawrie, depicts an allegory of wisdom inspired by William Blake. These works add a rich narrative layer to the building's raw architecture.

> 💡 Lawrie had to negotiate at length with Rockefeller to include less conventional figures, arguing that public art should be accessible and profound, not merely decorative.

06 BARRY FAULKNER West Facade

Mosaic 'Intelligence Awakening Mankind'

This immense mosaic, measuring 26 meters by 5, uses one million pieces of glass enamel. It evokes a wave of sounds, recalling the building's original function as a radio headquarters. It is a masterpiece of 1930s public art.

> 💡 The creation of this mosaic mobilized hundreds of workers for months, a titanic undertaking for the time that nearly delayed the opening of the building.

07 Exterior / Wide shot

Nocturnal Theatrical Lighting

At night, the black and beige facade of the Comcast Building is enhanced by meticulous theatrical lighting. This illumination highlights the vertical lines and setbacks, creating an imposing silhouette against the night sky. Ideal for urban night photography.

> 💡 The current lighting has been recalibrated several times to reduce light pollution while maintaining visual impact, a delicate compromise between aesthetics and ecology.

08 DIEGO RIVERA Entrance Hall

Diego Rivera's Murals

Although some murals are less visible from the upper floors, the hall houses major works by Rivera, including 'Man's Intellectual Mastery of the Material Universe'. These murals testify to Rockefeller's cultural ambition.

> 💡 Rivera had initially planned to include more communist references, but Rockefeller negotiated to soften certain depictions, although a figure resembling Lenin was left in place, which remains a source of debate today.

TIPS

Optimizing Your Stay at the Top

TIMING

Be sure to book a specific time slot. The timed admission system limits crowds; avoid peak tourist hours (11am-2pm) to enjoy lighter crowds and better photographic conditions.

TICKET

Check the specific rates for sunset. A surcharge generally applies between 4 PM and 6 PM. If you are aiming for golden hour light, this additional budget is often justified by the quality of the images obtained.

ITINERARY

Start with the south terrace to frame the Empire State Building before the crowd gathers there. Then, explore the other directions. Allow 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes to calmly visit the three levels and terraces.

PHOTO

Use the south terrace for unobstructed close-up shots of the ESB. For wide landscapes, position yourself at the corners of the terraces. The low evening light accentuates the Art Deco details of the Comcast Building itself, offering interesting reflections.

BREAK

There is no restaurant inside the observatory. Take your coffee or meal break at The Standard Grill or in the many cafés of Rockefeller Center before or after the ascent. Avoid eating on the outdoor terraces to respect other visitors.

CHILDREN

The space is spacious and safe, ideal for families. Children will enjoy the SKYLIFT outdoor elevator. Make sure they stay close to the railings and explain the landmarks (the ESB, Central Park) to keep their interest.

AUDIOGUIDE

The audioguide is available in French and covers the building's history and points of interest. It is useful for understanding the historical and architectural context, especially if you are visiting alone. Please check the availability of headphones at the reception desk.

COMFORT

Even in summer, the wind can be cool at higher elevations. Bring a light jacket. Since there is no luggage storage, prefer a compact backpack. Your shoes should be comfortable for moving around the complex before the ascent.


TOP OF THE ROCK
OBSERVATION DECK

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FAQ

Do I need to book a time slot for Top of the Rock?

Yes, booking a time slot is mandatory to access the observatory. The timed admission system helps control crowds and avoid long waits. I recommend choosing your time precisely as access is strictly limited to that slot.

Why does the ticket cost more at sunset?

A fare surcharge applies specifically to end-of-day time slots, generally between 4 PM and 6 PM, due to high demand for the golden hour light. This option is very popular with photographers. Check the displayed prices wh

What happens if the weather is cloudy?

Visibility depends directly on the weather. A rescheduling policy exists depending on the ticket conditions purchased. If the view is blocked by thick clouds, you can sometimes reschedule the visit. Consult the terms and

Can I cancel or modify my ticket?

Flexibility depends on the package chosen at purchase. Some options allow free modifications up to 24 hours in advance, while others are non-refundable. Carefully check the 'Conditions' section on your confirmation to kn

What is the best panoramic view in New York?

Top of the Rock offers the best direct view of the Empire State Building and Central Park. Unlike other towers, here you have a frontal and symmetrical perspective on Midtown icons. It is the preferred angle for urban ph

DID YOU KNOW?

Anecdotes & curiosities

The nickname 'The Slab'

New Yorkers call this building 'The Slab' because of its flat, slender shape, which is very different from classic Art Deco spires like that of the Chrysler Building. This nickname highlights its unique architecture, completed in 1933, which defied the conventions of the time. It is also known as '30 Rock', a nod to the address 30 Rockefeller Plaza and the famous sitcom produced by NBC.

Innovation of central elevators

In 1933, the Comcast Building introduced a major innovation: the centralization of elevators in the core of the building. Before this, elevators were often placed on the sides. This design allowed for the optimization of office space and influenced the architecture of subsequent skyscrapers. It is a pioneering example of spatial efficiency in vertical design.

NBC Media Heritage

The building has always been linked to the media. Initially leased by RCA, it later housed NBC, a subsidiary of General Electric. This media presence shaped the location's image, making it synonymous with television and radio production. Today, although the studios have changed, the building's media DNA remains palpable in its history and identity.

Landmark Status

Designated a landmark in 1985 along with the rest of Rockefeller Center, the Comcast Building benefits from strict protection. This means that any exterior modification must be approved by historical authorities. This status ensures that the architectural integrity of the Art Deco style is preserved for future generations, protecting the building against overly intrusive modern transformations.

AROUND THE MUSEUM

Located in the heart of Rockefeller Center, Top of the Rock enjoys an ideal strategic location for exploring Midtown. Just below, the famous ice rink attracts families year-round, while the **Guggenheim Museum**, just a few minutes' walk away, offers a fascinating architectural contrast with its organic forms. For a gastronomic break, **The Standard Grill** serves modern American cuisine in an elegant setting. If you wish to extend your stroll into nature, **Central Park South** is within walking distance, allowing you to transition from the urban skyline to the park's wooded paths. Finally, do not miss the majestic St. Patrick's Cathedral, whose Gothic silhouette dominates Fifth Avenue, offering a distinctive historical landmark near Times Square.



Leaving Top of the Rock means carrying with you an image forever etched in memory. It is not simply a view, but a **revelation** of New York's grandeur. Whether at sunrise or during the **sunset**, this experience remains unforgettable—a suspended moment when the city seems to belong solely to you.