

# Public transportation

**"Public transportation" generally means using some kind of vehicle (car, wagon, bicycle, bus, tram) to move a person from one place to another. Public transportation takes many forms.**

## Bus, city bus

It travels a regular route at regular times during the day and into the night. If you want to travel by bus, you must go to the bus stop, where there will be a bus timetable, and find out the time your bus will arrive.

In many places, several different buses stop at the same bus stop. So it's important to know the number or color of the bus route you need. In most cities, the bus route and the name of the last stop are displayed in the bus driver's window. In some cities and towns you pay the fare in cash when you get on the bus. This is typical of the red double decker buses in London and most other buses in Britain. In larger cities in the US, however, you have to buy a token, or special bus company coin, before getting on the bus. You insert the token into a small machine next to the driver. When you want to get off the bus, sometimes you have to pull a cord (long piece of rope or wire) or push a button to signal the driver.

One of the greatest advantages of traveling by bus is its low cost and dependability (it always goes to the same place at more or less the same time). The disadvantages are waiting for the bus in bad weather; no door-to-door service; slow or stopped traffic; discomfort on



the bus from its exhaust fumes, heat, or cold; and the risk of sitting next to an unpleasant person.

School bus - in many English-speaking countries, school districts (systems) provide special buses for students. In the US, bright yellow school buses are in almost every town and city in the country. (Often you can see them in movies.)

When you start at a school, the officials tell you the exact place and time the bus will pick you up each morning, a few meters from your home. There is no fare to pay because the cost is paid for by taxes, the school district, and the federal government. School buses may also take students to football or basketball games on the weekends.

The biggest advantage of traveling by school bus is that it's very safe. Buses and school bus drivers meet special safety requirements, and cars must obey special traffic laws when a school bus is there. The school bus schedule is reliable, and that helps families who rush in the morning. But sometimes you meet a tired driver who shouts at the passengers.

## Trams

Trams and commuter trains are found in some of the larger cities of the world. In the Czech

Republic they are very traditional in Prague, Liberec, Pilsen, and Brno. Trams (or "street cars") are used in cities like San Francisco in the US. In Chicago, the trams are elevated on tracks in the air, up above the traffic, and therefore are called "the el" (elevated).

If you want to travel on trams or trains, you must go to the tram stop or train station. It's possible to buy a one-way or one-time ticket, but people who commute regularly prefer to buy a weekly, monthly, or yearly pass to save time and money. Every day many commuters in the northeast US from states such as Connecticut, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania, take a train to work in New York City.





The advantages and disadvantages of traveling by tram or commuter train are similar to buses, except on commuter trains you can enjoy a quiet ride lasting an hour or two twice a day, when you can read the newspaper or finish office paper work.

## **Metro, underground, subway**

Perhaps the biggest problem is remembering which term to use in the proper city! "Metro" is used in Prague; "underground" (or "tube") in London; and "subway" in New York City. Unlike in Prague, in some cities more than two different lines share the same station. In New York, for example, the "B" train, the "A" line, the "F" train, and others could all stop at your stop. So you must know the number, color, or letter of the route you need. In New York, if you need to transfer from one line to another, you can just cross the platform. First-time visitors to Prague sometimes do this in Prague Metro stations, only to find out they're on the same line, going back exactly the way they had just come!

In American cities you pay the fare with a token, which you insert into the turnstile (a kind of gate) before going to the platform. You may also be able to buy a long-term pass.

The advantages of traveling by metro, underground, or subway are the low cost, dependability, speed (no traffic jams) and relative safety. The disadvantages are waiting for your ride on a crowded platform, or facing rushing masses of people running for their train; and getting lost, until you know the system.

## **Taxi, taxi cab, cab, hack**

(slang, from 'hackney carriage' which was horse drawn)

A passenger car driven by a cab driver takes you to places within a city. On the street you can hail, or call out to, the driver to stop and pick you up. Or you can telephone to ask for a cab to come directly to you.

When you get into the taxi, the driver trips, or starts, the meter, which counts how many miles or kilometers you travel. When you arrive at your destination, you pay the cab driver the fare that shows on the meter, plus a tip, or extra money for the service.

The advantages of traveling by taxi are that you go directly to the front door of your destination. The driver may help you with your packages or luggage. The disadvantage is the high cost (plus a tip).

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