**George Washington Bridge**

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*For other bridges of the same name, see* [*Washington Bridge (disambiguation)*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Bridge_%28disambiguation%29)*. For the American politician, see* [*George Washington Bridges*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington_Bridges)*. For the Marvel comics character, see* [*G. W. Bridge*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G._W._Bridge)*.*

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| **George Washington Bridge** |
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| **Other name(s)** | The GWB, The GW, The Bridge & The George |
| **Carries** | 14 lanes (8 upper deck, 6 lower deck) of[I-95](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_95_%28New_Jersey%29) / [US 1-9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_1-9_in_New_Jersey) (entire span) / [US 46](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_46_in_New_Jersey) (NJ side), pedestrians and bicycles |
| **Crosses** | [Hudson River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson_River) |
| **Locale** | Connecting [Fort Lee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Lee%2C_New_Jersey) in [Bergen County, New Jersey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bergen_County%2C_New_Jersey) and [Washington Heights, Manhattan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Heights%2C_Manhattan) in [New York City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) |
| **Maintained by** | [Port Authority of New York and New Jersey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Authority_of_New_York_and_New_Jersey) |
| **Designer** | [Othmar Ammann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Othmar_Ammann), [Cass Gilbert](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cass_Gilbert) |
| **Design** | Double-decked [Suspension bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suspension_bridge) |
| **Material** | [Steel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steel) |
| **Total length** | 4,760 ft (1,450 m)  |
| **Width** | 119 ft (36 m)  |
| **Height** | 604 ft (184 m)  |
| **Longest span** | 3500 ft (1067 m)  |
| **Vertical clearance** | 14 ft (4.3 m) (upper level), 13.5 ft (4.1 m) (lower level) |
| **Clearance below** | 212 ft (65 m) at mid-span |
| **Construction begin** | October 1927 |
| **Opened** | October 24, 1931; 81 years ago (1931-10-24) (upper level)August 29, 1962; 50 years ago (1962-08-29) (lower level) |
| **Toll** | Eastbound only. As of December 2, 2012; Cars ($13 for cash, $10.25 peak with E-ZPass, $8.25 off-peak with [E-ZPass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-ZPass));$4.25 when carpooling with 3 people or more (EZ-Pass cars only) |
| [**Daily traffic**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annual_average_daily_traffic) | 276,150 (2011)  |
| [**Coordinates**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system) | [40°51′06″N 73°57′09″W﻿ / ﻿40.851589°N 73.952483°W﻿ / 40.851589; -73.952483﻿ (George Washington Bridge)](http://toolserver.org/~geohack/geohack.php?pagename=George_Washington_Bridge&params=40.851589_N_-73.952483_E_region:US_type:landmark&title=George+Washington+Bridge)[Coordinates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geographic_coordinate_system): [40°51′06″N 73°57′09″W﻿ / ﻿40.851589°N 73.952483°W﻿ / 40.851589; -73.952483﻿ (George Washington Bridge)](http://toolserver.org/~geohack/geohack.php?pagename=George_Washington_Bridge&params=40.851589_N_-73.952483_E_region:US_type:landmark&title=George+Washington+Bridge) |
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The **George Washington Bridge** (known informally as the **GW Bridge**, the **GWB**, the **GW**, or the **George**is a [suspension bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suspension_bridge) spanning the [Hudson River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson_River), connecting the [Washington Heights](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Heights%2C_Manhattan) neighborhood in the [borough](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Borough_%28New_York_City%29) of [Manhattan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan) in [New York City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) to [Fort Lee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Lee%2C_New_Jersey), [Bergen County, New Jersey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bergen_County%2C_New_Jersey), in the United States. [Interstate 95](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_95) and [U.S. Route 1/9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_1/9) cross the river via the bridge. [U.S. Route 46](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_46), which is entirely in [New Jersey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jersey), ends halfway across the bridge at the state border with [New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York).

The bridge, an integral conduit within the [New York Metropolitan Area](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Metropolitan_Area), has an upper level carrying four lanes in each direction and a lower level with three lanes in each direction, for a total of 14 lanes of travel. The [speed limit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Speed_limit) on the bridge is 45 mph (70 km/h), though congestion often slows traffic, especially during the morning and evening [rush hours](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rush_hour). A path on each side of the bridge's upper level carries [pedestrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedestrian) and [bicycle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bicycle) traffic. As of 2007[[update]](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=George_Washington_Bridge&action=edit), the George Washington Bridge has the greatest vehicular capacity of any bridge in the world, carrying approximately 106 million vehicles per year, making it the world's busiest motor vehicle bridge, according to the [Port Authority of New York and New Jersey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Authority_of_New_York_and_New_Jersey), the bi-state government agency that owns and operates several area bridges, tunnels, and airports.

**History**

Groundbreaking for the new bridge began in October 1927, a project of the [Port of New York Authority](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Port_Authority_of_New_York_and_New_Jersey). Its chief engineer was [Othmar Ammann](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Othmar_Ammann), with [Cass Gilbert](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cass_Gilbert) as architect. When construction started the estimated cost of the bridge was $75,000,000. The bridge was dedicated on October 24, 1931, and opened to traffic the following day. Initially named the "Hudson River Bridge," the bridge is named in honor of [George Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington), the first [President of the United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President_of_the_United_States). The bridge is near the sites of [Fort Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Washington_%28New_York%29) (in New York) and [Fort Lee](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Fort_Lee) (in New Jersey), which were fortified positions used by General Washington and his American forces in his unsuccessful attempt to deter the [British](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Great_Britain) occupation of New York City in 1776 during the [American Revolutionary War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Revolutionary_War). Washington evacuated [Manhattan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manhattan) by crossing between the two forts. In 1910 the Washington Chapter of the [Daughters of the American Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daughters_of_the_American_Revolution) erected a stone monument to the [Battle of Fort Washington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Fort_Washington). The monument is located about 100 yards (91 m) northeast of the [Little Red Lighthouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Red_Lighthouse), up the hill towards the eastern bridge anchorage.

[USS *Nautilus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/USS_Nautilus_%28SSN-571%29) passes under the George Washington Bridge in 1956, when the bridge only had a single deck.

When it opened in 1931, the bridge surpassed the [Ambassador Bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambassador_Bridge) for the [longest main span in the world](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_largest_suspension_bridges). At 3,500 feet (1,100 m), it nearly doubled the previous record of 1,850 feet (560 m). It held this title until the opening of the [Golden Gate Bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Gate_Bridge). The total length of the bridge is 4,760 feet (1,450 m).

As originally built, the bridge offered six lanes of traffic, but in 1946, two additional lanes were provided on what is now the upper level. A second, lower deck, which had been anticipated in Ammann's original plans, was approved by Lt. Col. Joseph R. McCammon, [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Army_Corps_of_Engineers), opening to the public on August 29, 1962. This lower level has been waggishly nicknamed "[Martha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martha_Washington)". The additional deck increased the capacity of the bridge by 75 percent, making the George Washington Bridge the world's only 14-lane suspension bridge, providing eight lanes on the upper level and six on the lower deck.

The original design for the towers of the bridge called for them to be encased in concrete and granite. However, because of cost considerations during the [Great Depression](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Depression) and favorable aesthetic critiques of the bare steel towers, this was never done. The exposed steel towers, with their distinctive crisscrossed bracing, have become one of the bridge's most identifiable characteristics. [Le Corbusier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_Corbusier) (Charles-Edouard Jeanneret) said of the unadorned steel structure:

"The George Washington Bridge over the Hudson is the most beautiful bridge in the world. Made of cables and steel beams, it gleams in the sky like a reversed arch. It is blessed. It is the only seat of grace in the disordered city. It is painted an aluminum color and, between water and sky, you see nothing but the bent cord supported by two steel towers. When your car moves up the ramp the two towers rise so high that it brings you happiness; their structure is so pure, so resolute, so regular that here, finally, steel architecture seems to laugh. The car reaches an unexpectedly wide apron; the second tower is very far away; innumerable vertical cables, gleaming against the sky, are suspended from the magisterial curve which swings down and then up. The rose-colored towers of New York appear, a vision whose harshness is mitigated by distance." (*When the Cathedrals were White*)

The George Washington Bridge was designated as a [National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Historic_Civil_Engineering_Landmark) by the [American Society of Civil Engineers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Society_of_Civil_Engineers) on October 24, 1981, the fiftieth anniversary of the bridge's dedication ceremony.

Following the [September 11 attacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_11_attacks) on New York and Washington, the Port Authority prohibited people from taking photographs on the premises of the bridge out of fear that terrorist groups might study any potential photographs in order to plot a terrorist attack on the bridge. Such prohibitions have since been lifted. As the enclosed lower level is more vulnerable to [hazardous material](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazardous_material) (HAZMAT) incidents than the upper level, most HAZMATs have been prohibited there even before the September 11th attacks. If weather allows, on [Martin Luther King, Jr. Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_King%2C_Jr._Day), [Presidents Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidents_Day_%28United_States%29), [Memorial Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memorial_Day), [Flag Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_Day_in_the_United_States), [Independence Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence_Day_%28United_States%29), [Labor Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labor_Day), [Columbus Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbus_Day), and [Veterans Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veterans_Day), as well as on dates honoring those lost in the September 11 attacks, the bridge sports the largest free-flying [American flag](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flag_of_the_United_States) in the world; 90 feet (27 m) long and 60 feet (18 m) wide, the flag weighs 450 pounds (200 kg).

In December 2011, the Port Authority announced plans to repair the bridge. For the first time, the vertical suspender cables will be replaced. The total bill for the repair is expected to exceed one billion dollars, and will be paid through toll revenue.

**Road connections**

From the [Upper West Side](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_West_Side).

The George Washington Bridge carries [I-95](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_95), [US-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_1), and [US-9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_9) between New Jersey and New York. [US-46](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Route_46) terminates at the state border in the middle of the bridge. [I-80](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_80_in_New_Jersey) and [NJ-4](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jersey_Route_4) also feed into the bridge but end before reaching it. On the New Jersey side of the bridge, the [Palisades Interstate Parkway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palisades_Interstate_Parkway) connects directly to the bridge's upper level (plans to give direct access to the lower level from the parkway have been postponed), and the [New Jersey Turnpike](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jersey_Turnpike) connects to both levels of the bridge. The marginal roads and local streets above the highways are known as [GWB Plaza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GWB_Plaza).

On the New York side, the twelve-lane [Trans-Manhattan Expressway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trans-Manhattan_Expressway) heads east across the narrow neck of [upper Manhattan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upper_Manhattan), from the bridge to the [Harlem River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem_River), providing access from both decks to 178th Street, the [Henry Hudson Parkway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Hudson_Parkway) and [Riverside Drive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Riverside_Drive_%28Manhattan%29) on the West Side of Manhattan, and to [Amsterdam Avenue](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tenth_Avenue_%28Manhattan%29) and the [Harlem River Drive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem_River_Drive) on the East Side. The Expressway connects directly with the [Alexander Hamilton Bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Hamilton_Bridge), which spans the Harlem River as part of the [Cross-Bronx Expressway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross-Bronx_Expressway) (I-95), providing access to the [Major Deegan Expressway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_Deegan_Expressway) ([I-87](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_87)). Heading towards New Jersey, local access to the bridge is available from 179th Street. There are also ramps connecting the bridge to the [George Washington Bridge Bus Terminal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Washington_Bridge_Bus_Terminal), a commuter bus terminal with direct access to the [New York City Subway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City_Subway) at the [175th Street](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/175th_Street_%28IND_Eighth_Avenue_Line%29) ([A](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_%28New_York_City_Subway_service%29) train) station on the [IND Eighth Avenue Line](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IND_Eighth_Avenue_Line).

Emergency services to the George Washington Bridge is provided by several agencies within the area. The Police Department of the Port Authority of NY and NJ, or PAPD, manages the bridge and its traffic. The PAPD maintains various apparatus such as rescue trucks for serious incidents. Emergency Medical Services are provided by the Fort Lee Ambulance Corps. The Fort Lee Ambulance Corps maintains three ambulances to cover the Borough of Fort Lee, US-46, I-95, and the George Washington Bridge.

**Tolls**

The main span of the George Washington Bridge, looking west from Manhattan.

As of December 2, 2012, the cash tolls going from New Jersey to New York are $13 for cars and $12 for motorcycles; there is no toll for passenger vehicles going from New York to New Jersey. [E-ZPass](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-ZPass) users are charged $8.25 for cars and $7.25 for motorcycles during off-peak hours (outside of 6–10 a.m. and 4–8 p.m. on the weekdays; and outside of 11 a.m.–9 p.m. on the weekends) and $10.25 for cars and $9.25 for motorcycles during peak hours (6–10 a.m. and 4–8 p.m. on the weekdays; and 11 a.m.–9 p.m. on the weekends). Trucks are charged $15 per axle, with significantly discounted off-peak and overnight tolls. A special discounted carpool toll ($4.25) is available for cars with three or more passengers using E-ZPass at all times, who proceed through a staffed toll lane (provided they have previously opted-in to the free "Carpool Plan"). The toll is only charged one way (eastbound), which is how all Hudson River crossings are tolled. The George Washington Bridge takes in approximately $1 million per day in tolls.

The bridge has a total of 31 toll lanes, 12 in the upper level toll plaza, 12 in the lower level toll plaza, and seven in the Palisades Interstate Parkway toll plaza. The toll plazas on the lower level and Palisades Parkway are not staffed during the overnight hours and accept only E-ZPass transactions during this period.

Foot traffic and cyclists cross for free on the sidewalk. Though there are sidewalks on each side of the bridge, cyclists and pedestrians can only use the south side. It offers spectacular views of the Hudson River, the Manhattan skyline and the [New Jersey Palisades](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jersey_Palisades). Pedestrians had to pay tolls of 10 cents shortly after the bridge opened, but non-motorized traffic is no longer tolled.

Under George Washington Bridge's Manhattan-side pillar

In January 2007 the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced a deal with [Geico](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geico), the auto insurance giant, that included the posting of a large billboard on top of the toll plaza that said "Geico Drive Safely," and Geico signs on the tollbooths and approach roads, some of which would feature the insurer's signature gecko. The arrangement would have provided the agency with $3.2 million over two years. A week later, however, the Port Authority canceled the contract with Geico after criticism that the signs would mar the landmarked bridge, that the Port Authority had failed to negotiate a good price for the deal and that the placement of the signs might violate Fort Lee's regulations.

**Non-motorized access**

Full view of the George Washington Bridge from the New York side of the Hudson River.

The George Washington Bridge is popular among [sightseers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tourism_in_New_York_City) and commuters traveling by foot, bicycle, or roller skates. The South sidewalk (accessible by a long, steep ramp on the Manhattan side of the bridge) is shared by cyclists and pedestrians, with a level surface from end to end. The entrance in Manhattan is at 178th Street, just west of [Cabrini Boulevard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabrini_Boulevard_%28Manhattan%29) which also has access to the [Hudson River Greenway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hudson_River_Greenway) north of the bridge. The sidewalk is accessible on the New Jersey side from Hudson Terrace, where a gate open in daytime and evening allows pedestrians and bikes to pass. Also on Hudson Terrace, less than one hundred yards north of the bike/ped entrance, walkers will find the start of the [Long Path](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Path) hiking trail, which leads after a short walk to some spectacular views of the bridge, and continues north towards [Albany, New York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albany%2C_New_York). The George Washington Bridge carries [New York State Bicycle Route 9](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_State_Bicycle_Route_9), a bike route that runs from [New York City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) north to [Rouses Point](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rouses_Point%2C_New_York).

The Port Authority closed the North Sidewalk at all times in 2008. Though offering direct access into Palisades Interstate Park, the North sidewalk requires stairway climbs and descents on both sides, always an inconvenience and obstacle to handicapped people, and a risk in poor weather conditions.

[Transportation Alternatives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transportation_Alternatives), a New York City advocacy group, has proposed an enhanced River Road connector in Fort Lee, which would create safer pedestrian and bicycle access to the George Washington Bridge on the New Jersey side of the bridge.

**Alternate routes**

Aerial view of GWB (2010)

The George Washington Bridge from [Riverside Drive](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Riverside_Drive_%28Manhattan%29)

The George Washington Bridge is notorious for traffic jams during rush hour, as are the highways connected to it, including the Cross Bronx Expressway to the east, the Major Deegan Expressway and West Side Highway to the south, and the western approaches to the toll plaza in New Jersey (specifically I-95 and the Palisades Parkway).

Within the [New York metropolitan area](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_metropolitan_area), the [Tappan Zee Bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tappan_Zee_Bridge) (Interstates [87](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_87)/[287](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_287) and [New York State Thruway](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_State_Thruway)) is an alternate route that avoids the city proper.

For longer-range traffic, such as traffic between New England (and points north/east) and Pennsylvania (and points south/west), [Interstate 84](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interstate_84_in_New_York) which crosses the Hudson on the [Newburgh–Beacon Bridge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newburgh%E2%80%93Beacon_Bridge) is often used as an alternative rather than either the GWB or the Tappan Zee Bridge, as it avoids the core of the New York metropolitan area entirely.

**Suicides**

The George Washington Bridge is [among the most frequently chosen sites](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_suicide_sites) in the area for committing [suicide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Suicide). In a record-breaking year, 2012 saw 43 attempts at suicide, with 18 people jumping to their death.

In 1994, a caller into [The Howard Stern Show](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Howard_Stern_Show) was on the bridge threatening to commit suicide, but Stern managed to talk him out of it.

**In media**

As a famous New York landmark, the bridge is often seen in many movies set in New York, mostly in establishing shots. The bridge is featured, along with the nearby [Little Red Lighthouse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Red_Lighthouse), in Hildegarde Swift's 1942 children's book *The Little Red Lighthouse and the Great Gray Bridge*.

**See also**

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|  | [***New York City portal***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3ANew_York_City) |
|  | [***New Jersey portal***](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal%3ANew_Jersey) |

* [List of fixed crossings of the Hudson River](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fixed_crossings_of_the_Hudson_River)

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