Welcome to the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site

VISITOR GUIDE FOR ADULTS

This guide will provide you with additional information to supplement the objects, timeline, videos and multimedia kiosks in this space.

For further questions and inquiries, email education@sept11mm.org.
Trying to make sense of 9/11 is not an easy task.

The attack is almost incomprehensible in its scope and has the understandable potential to elicit strong emotions and trigger intense memories for many people.

These emotions are exacerbated when we feel we do not have a full understanding of what happened on 9/11. The unknown becomes a barrier to our coming to terms with that day.

This guide, then, aims to provide basic information to help answer your questions about 9/11 and facilitate your visit to the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site. Understanding our world in the 21st century requires grappling with the issues and questions posed by 9/11, and we hope this guide and your visit help you in that process.

When using the guide, look for this symbol:

It points you to an object in the 9/11 Memorial Preview Site that highlights a topic presented in the guide.

Please note that these might not be listed in the order you see them.

There are also boxes throughout the guide highlighting additional offerings in the Preview Site.
The 9/11 Memorial Preview Site is located half a block from the World Trade Center (WTC) complex. On September 11, 2001, the entire seven-building complex was destroyed in an act of terrorism.

The centerpieces of the complex were the Twin Towers. At 110 stories each, 1 WTC (the North Tower) and 2 WTC (the South Tower) provided nearly 10 million square feet of office space for approximately 35,000 people and 430 companies. They were the tallest buildings in New York City, and for a brief period upon their completion, they were the tallest buildings in the world. They attracted roughly 70,000 tourists and commuters every day.

The North Tower rose 1,368 feet—1,730 feet with a large antenna—and the South Tower stood 1,362 feet high. Views extended 45 miles from the top of the towers in every direction—far enough to see all five New York City boroughs, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

The towers were massive. Each weighed more than 250,000 tons, and contained 99 elevators and 21,800 windows. Each floor was an acre in size and there was enough concrete in the towers to build a sidewalk from New York City to Washington, DC. The complex even had its own zip code: 10048.

Here is a map of the original WTC site:

The two towers were surrounded by five other buildings which together made up the WTC complex. One building was a hotel and the rest were office buildings between 8 and 47 stories tall. The Twin Towers were completed in 1973—although tenants began to arrive in December 1970—and the other buildings were built over the next 14 years.

In February 1993, terrorists with links to an Islamist extremist group detonated explosives in a van parked underneath the WTC. Six people were killed and thousands were injured.
On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen terrorists from the Islamist extremist group, al Qaeda, hijacked four commercial airplanes, deliberately crashing two of the planes into the upper floors of the North and South Towers of the WTC complex and a third plane into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia.

After learning about the other attacks, passengers on the fourth plane, Flight 93, launched a counter-offensive, and the plane was crashed into an empty field in western Pennsylvania, approximately 125 miles (15 - 20 minutes by air) from Washington, DC.

The 9/11 attacks killed 2,976 people from 92 nations.

In New York:

- 87 crew and passengers aboard Flight 11
- 60 crew and passengers aboard Flight 175
- 2,164 workers and visitors in and around the WTC
- 441 first responders - members of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY), New York City Police Department (NYPD), Port Authority Police Department (PAPD), and other first responder agencies

In Arlington, Virginia:

- 125 employees and contractors at the Pentagon
- 59 crew and passengers aboard Flight 77

In Somerset County, Pennsylvania:

- 40 crew and passengers aboard Flight 93

When the buildings were struck, between 16,400 and 18,000 people were in the WTC complex. Of those, the vast majority evacuated safely. As they rushed out, first responders rushed in trying to save those still trapped or injured. The fires, intensified by the planes’ burning jet fuel, were incredibly hot. They weakened the buildings’ support steel, which along with the initial damage to the buildings’ structural columns, ultimately caused both towers to collapse.

The South Tower burned for 56 minutes and collapsed at 9:59 am. The North Tower burned for 102 minutes and collapsed at 10:28 am. The five other buildings in the WTC complex also fell or were destroyed because of damage sustained when the Twin Towers collapsed.

There were very few survivors after the collapse, but 18 individuals were rescued from the rubble.

Listen to stories from survivors and those directly impacted by the 9/11 attacks on the audio phones at the back of the Preview Site.
Aftermath

The collapse of the buildings left the site devastated, with ruins towering roughly 17 stories and spread beyond the 16-acre site. Thousands of volunteers flocked to ground zero to help with the rescue, recovery and clean-up efforts, and on May 30, 2002, the last of piece of WTC steel was ceremonially removed.

Memorials sprung up immediately after the tragedy and acted as impromptu outlets for grief, support, healing, and remembrance. These memorials appeared around the world in myriad forms in the days and weeks following the attacks.

Look at the “LADY LIBERTY” MEMORIAL.

Lady Liberty is a notable example of this spontaneous and collective response. Covered head to toe with tribute items, the statue exemplifies a form of artistic response to tragedy that contributes to healing while building a sense of community.

Within the first two years following the attacks, plans integrating a museum, memorial, and commercial buildings were proposed and advanced. The new 7 WTC was completed in 2006, and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum began construction later that year.
The Memorial and Museum will both be located on the western side of the former World Trade Center complex where the Twin Towers once stood. The Memorial was designed by two architects, Michael Arad and Peter Walker, whose proposal was selected in a design competition out of 5,201 submissions from 63 countries.

The Memorial will open on September 11, 2011, the 10th anniversary of the attacks, while the Museum will open the following year on the 11th anniversary.

The Memorial park surrounds two square waterfalls set within the footprints of the North and South Towers. This is where the towers used to stand.

The waterfalls—the largest man-made waterfalls in North America—will cascade into reflecting pools, finally disappearing into the center voids.

The names of people who were killed in the 9/11 attacks in New York, at the Pentagon, and on Flight 93, as well as in the 1993 bombing at the WTC, will be etched in bronze around the edges of the pools.

When completed, the plaza will be lined with cobblestones and filled with over 300 oak trees, creating a space for reflection separate from the sights and sounds of the surrounding city. The trees were selected from a 500-mile radius of the WTC site, including nurseries located in New York, Pennsylvania, and near Washington, DC, to symbolize areas impacted on 9/11.

Now, instead of looking up at the towers, we will look down at what is left behind. It will be a different kind of looking, asking us to appreciate the power of what isn’t there, the power of staring at an absence.

Visit kiosks to view the construction progress at the WTC site.
National September 11 Memorial Museum

Visitors will enter the Memorial Museum through a Pavilion where two steel “tridents”—remnants of the North Tower’s façade—stand in the building’s atrium. The main exhibition space will be located seven stories down to the bedrock foundations of the World Trade Center. The Museum will offer displays of artifacts from the WTC and 9/11 attacks, interactive exhibitions, contemplative areas, and programs that will convey individual and collective stories relating the experiences of survivors, responders, area residents and eyewitnesses. A memorial exhibition will honor the individual victims of the attacks.

Around the Memorial

On the rest of the WTC site and next to the Memorial and Museum will be commercial buildings and a transportation hub. One of these buildings has already been completed and two are under construction. 1 WTC, the building directly north of the North Pool, will have 105 stories and stand taller at 1,776 feet than the original Twin Towers. This building is expected to be completed in 2013. The other buildings will be developed in the coming years.

See artifacts in our collections throughout the Preview Site and share your own 9/11 story for the Museum in our recording booth.