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WORLD CUP 2026

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 The go-to guide for soccer travelers, **liberoguide.com** is the most up-to-date resource, city-by-city, club-by-club, to the game across Europe, North America and Australia. Using only original photos and first-hand research, **liberoguide.com** enables you get the best out of your visit to football's furthest corners and showcase stadiums.

INTRO

The biggest World Cup in history, the last one before its centenary, involves a gargantuan 48 teams, up from 32 which was already considered unwieldy when introduced in a previous century seven World Cups ago.

Initially announcing rival bids, the **U.S., Canada** and **Mexico** combined forces to secure co-hosting rights in 2018, an original 41 potential venue cities whittled down to 16 by the official announcement was made in June 2022. While Mexico has the honor of staging the grand opening at the Azteca Stadium, scene of the 1970 and

1986 Finals starring two of the greatest players in the history of the game, after the Round of 16, the circus moves on. 2026 is very much America's World Cup, and not just from the Quarterfinals onwards.

Of the 16 venue cities, only three are in Mexico and two in Canada. This is

Arrowhead Stadium/Josh Webb



not Mexico's first rodeo, of course, the country welcoming the World Cup for a record third time, while Canadians turned out in significant numbers to watch the Women's World Cup in 2015.

For those who remember America's first World Cup in 1994, the tense final at the Rose Bowl, Escobar's fateful own goal and Diana Ross' penalty bloop, this is now a very different country.

On the plus side, the domestic league created as part of the deal to host 32 years ago is now a thriving proposition, 30 teams playing before crowds averaging 20,000-plus in soccer-specific stadiums. The latest to open, to great ceremony in April 2026, is in **Miami**, a stage for the superstar who has turbocharged soccer in North America, Lionel Messi. Now playing in a record-breaking sixth World Cup, the trophy-

lifting hero of the 2022 tournament will be bowing out with this one, possibly toward the end of the gruelling five-week series in Miami itself.

The arena won't be the 26,700-capacity Nu Stadium by Miami International Airport but, like eight of America's 11 host cities, the South Florida metropolis has moved its World Cup games to its NFL stadium more than twice as big as

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Estadio Akron/Stephen Woodman



its soccer one. **Hard Rock Stadium** in Miami Gardens, **SoFi Stadium** in Los Angeles, **AT&T Stadium** in Arlington near Dallas and, venue for the 23rd World Cup Final, **MetLife Stadium** in New Jersey, are among the arenas being slightly reconfigured to stage soccer's greatest shebang, although all have accommodated large crowds for showcase fixtures before.

For the tournament, 15 of the 16 stadiums must drop their sponsored branding and carry the names of their

main locations – for the purposes of this World Cup guide, we stick with ones they are best known by, so MetLife and not New York New Jersey Stadium, and so on.

This, of course, is the least of the issues visitors are having to deal with. After the tricky logistic of Russia, and the cultural contrast of Qatar, European fans might have been hoping for a hassle-free World Cup held in mainly English-speaking cities brimming with sports bars and au fait with fun. No such luck. Utterly

absurd ticket prices and laughably expensive transportation costs – take a bow, **Kansas City** and **Philadelphia**, for bending over backwards to cater to your guests from overseas – have dominated nearly every conversation about what should be a sporting celebration.

With no national organizing committee to issue guidelines, a modicum of shame has caused some cities to row back on their initial pricing policy. The prime example is New Jersey, which initially tried to charge \$150 for a short train



New York/Brian Mulligan

journey to and from MetLife Stadium, then reduced it to a frankly insulting \$105. (Top marks, however, to NYC Mayor Zohran Mamdani for wangling a deal with FIFA President Gianni Infantino to offer local residents the chance to buy tickets at MetLife Stadium for \$50, with free bus transfers thrown in. The average price to see a group match there is \$864.)

The irony is that the expansion to 48 teams to embrace first-time fans from Curaçao, Jordan, Cape Verde, and Uzbekistan will result in their once-in-a-lifetime experience tainted by shameless greed. To say nothing of Scotland, whose memorable, mural-inspiring qualification night at Hampden is now a distant

memory as each fan wrestles with four-figure logistics for each individual fixture.

Amazingly, too, not all fan zones are free, and only a few places are allowing tailgating, the noble American pregame tradition of sinking beer and grilling up a storm in parking lots alongside the stadium.

Before too long – 2032 in Saudi Arabia? – supporters simply won't bother, and those tens of thousands of Argentines who transformed Qatar from a sterile interzone into a communal football party will stay put in Buenos Aires.

And, nearly a century since their forefathers were cramming into packet boats to cross the River Plate on the morning of the very first World Cup Final in Montevideo, that's a very sorry state of affairs. Suppose they gave a World Cup and nobody came?

Station to stadium

New Jersey, Miami and Boston/Foxborough excepted, the journey from city centers, even airports, to many arenas is relatively straightforward. (Toronto's city airport, connected to the mainland by a pedestrian walkway, is only a couple of miles from BMO Field.)

Visitors to Seattle, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Vancouver, and Atlanta, will particularly appreciate the ease of transit. In other cities, it's a mixed bag, though sky-high parking costs rule out car hire in many cases. →

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Miami/Joe Stubley

ITINERANT FAN

With huge thanks to Edward de la Fuente for his superb stadium photography throughout the guide. Edward's site Itinerant Fan (itinerantfan.com) covers all major American sports arenas, combined with city guides, and ticket information.

Each of the 12 groups in the initial phase is generally clustered into Western, Central and Eastern Zones, although England still managed to land games

in Dallas and Boston 1,800 miles apart, ie the same distance from London to Moscow. Although many criticize FIFA for organizing a tournament in a huge continent when climate change is such a relevant issue – not to mention a fuel crisis – in truth, very few countries can offer the kind of stadiums, hotels and supporting infrastructure that a 48-team World Cup requires.

After FIFA put a stop to multi-nation tournaments after 2002, they now seem inevitable. Unless you're Saudi Arabia, of course.

Dates and games

The 2026 World Cup kicks off on June 11, with four games played every day

MetLife Stadium/Fernando Antunes



across 12 groups until the simultaneous scheduling for the last of three rounds of matches. At this stage, only four of the third-placed teams drop out, the eight also-rans ranked on points scored, then goal difference, then goals scored, then disciplinary record, then current and previous FIFA rankings. Sadly, there's no coin tosses or drawing of lots.

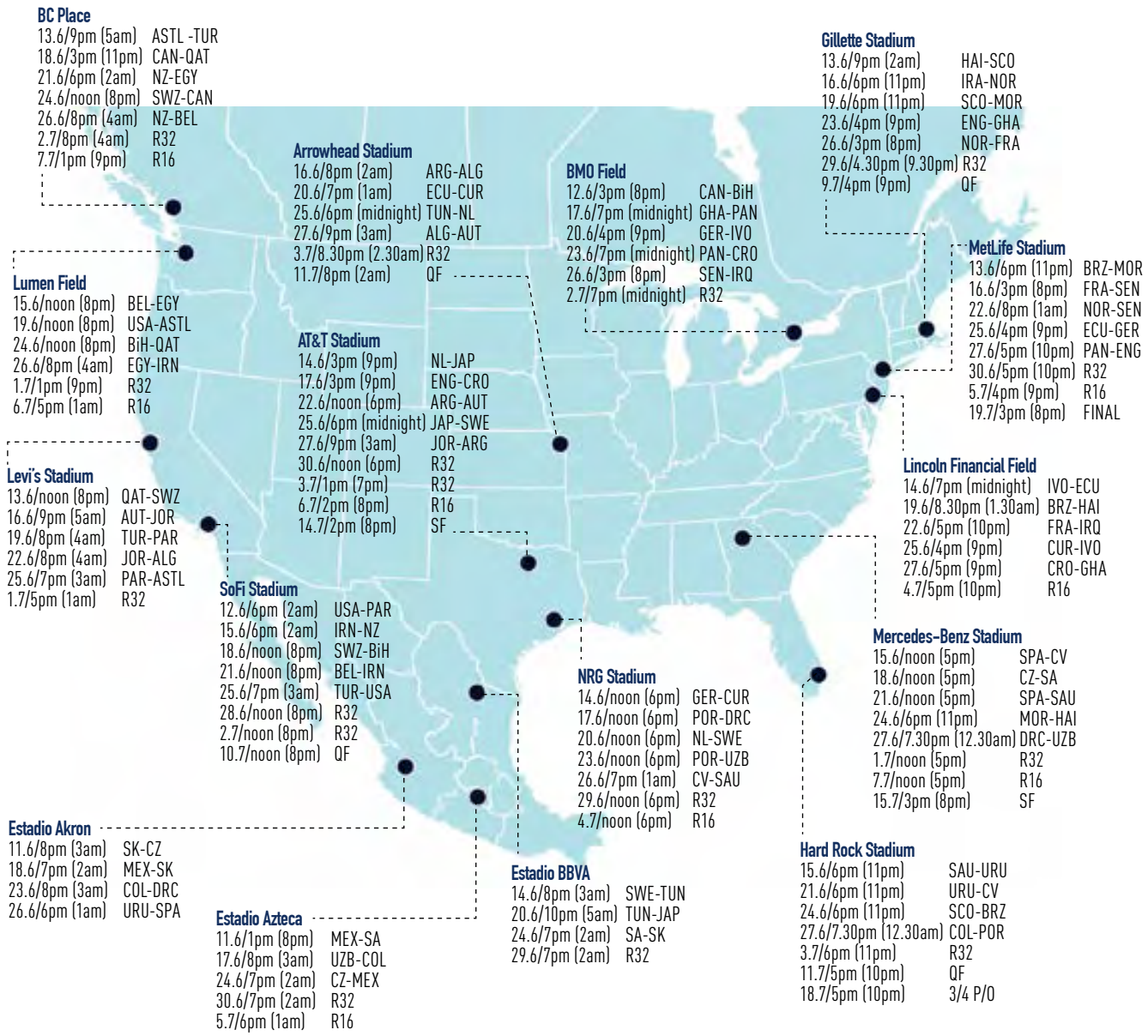
A new Round of 32 has had to be introduced to accommodate the numbers. The alternative, initially proposed until somebody miraculously saw sense, would have been 16 groups of three and probably two whole weeks of drab draws. Even so, 104 games in total is the equivalent of a quarter of a season of Premier League rounds smushed into 39 days. It's a lot of football.

Earliest local kickoff times are noon, even in Texas and California, though most games are scheduled for the early evening, meaning (very) late nights for those watching in Europe. The final, at 3pm local time in New Jersey on July 19, is a manageable 8pm in London, 9pm in Europe. Soccer followers in Australia and New Zealand will need to get used to a lot of early mornings. **LD**

WORLD CUP 2026 Match schedule

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- Group A**
A1 Mexico (MEX)
A2 South Africa (SA)
A3 South Korea (SK)
A4 Czech Republic (CZ)
- Group B**
B1 Canada (CAN)
B2 Bosnia & Herz (BiH)
B3 Qatar (QAT)
B4 Switzerland (SWZ)
- Group C**
C1 Brazil (BRZ)
C2 Morocco (MOR)
C3 Haiti (HAI)
C4 Scotland (SCO)
- Group D**
D1 USA (USA)
D2 Paraguay (PAR)
D3 Australia (ASTL)
D4 Turkey (TUR)
- Group E**
E1 Germany (GER)
E2 Curaçao (CUR)
E3 Ivory Coast (IVO)
E4 Ecuador (ECU)
- Group F**
F1 Netherlands (NL)
F2 Japan (JAP)
F3 Sweden (SWE)
F4 Tunisia (TUN)
- Group G**
G1 Belgium (BEL)
G2 Egypt (EGY)
G3 Iran (IRN)
G4 New Zealand (NZ)
- Group H**
H1 Spain (SPA)
H2 Cape Verde (CV)
H3 Saudi Arabia (SAU)
H4 Uruguay (URU)
- Group I**
I1 France (FRA)
I2 Senegal (SEN)
I3 Iraq (IRQ)
I4 Norway (NOR)
- Group J**
J1 Argentina (ARG)
J2 Algeria (ALG)
J3 Austria (AUT)
J4 Jordan (JOR)
- Group K**
K1 Portugal (POR)
K2 DR Congo (DRC)
K3 Uzbekistan (UZB)
K4 Colombia (COL)
- Group L**
L1 England (ENG)
L2 Croatia (CRO)
L3 Ghana (GHA)
L4 Panama (PAN)

All match times are local with their UK equivalent in brackets.

WORLD CUP 2026 NEW YORK/NJ

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All pix: Brian Mulligan

New York/NJ

On July 19, 2026, **New York** joins other great global cities – London, Paris, Rio, Rome – to host a World Cup Final. Or rather, New Jersey, as **MetLife Stadium** stands seven miles from Midtown Manhattan in East Rutherford. Opened in 2010, it replaced **Giants Stadium**. Home of New York Giants and New York Jets,

with five Super Bowls between them, this classic bowl of 1976 vintage was unveiled just in time to welcome Pelé's Cosmos the following year.

These two names typified the first crazy wave of the game in the Big Apple, before the rise of MLS, and the arrival of founder members **New York/New Jersey MetroStars** in 1996. Fielding Roberto Donadoni, who had played in

the World Cup Semifinal here two years earlier, and USMNT teammates from the same tournament, Tab Ramos and Tony Meola, MetroStars failed to live up to expectations, though improved under New Jersey native Bob Bradley.

Taken over by **Red Bull** in 2006, the team moved further out to Harrison and the similarly branded Red Bull Arena in 2010. Renamed **Sports Illustrated**



Stadium in 2024, it welcomed two-time NWSL Champions **Gotham FC** in 2020, the professional women's team recently signing England regular Jess Carter from Chelsea.

Even nomadic **New York City FC** has played a few times there, a break from its regular home at baseball mecca **Yankee Stadium**, while its own **Etihad Park** is being built in Queens. Created by City Football Group – incorporating Manchester City and Melbourne City, among others – the club has brought the likes of Frank Lampard and Andrea Pirlo to the Bronx, winning one MLS Cup and setting up the Hudson River Derby with Red Bulls.

Set on a former amusement park on Coney Island, **Maimonides Park** is the home of Brooklyn FC, both the women's team in the top-tier USL and the men's, new members of the USL Championship. Still surrounded by fairground rides and the beach, namechecked by the Ramones and Lou Reed, Coney Island provides a classic day out. While the same probably can't be said of Hinchcliffe Stadium in Paterson, New Jersey, this is where the twice-revived **New York Cosmos** is now based, playing its first third-tier USL League One game there in March 2026.

For the last two weeks of the tournament from July 6, the Fan Village at Rockefeller Center in Midtown Manhattan will feature a soccer pitch surrounded by huge screens beaming the action.

Where to drink

The cosmopolitan soccer culture of New York is best explored in its pubs and sports bars, starting with the huge [→](#)

WORLD CUP 2026 NEW YORK/NJ

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Football Factory at Legends, in the shadow of the Empire State Building. Opening early on weekends to screen the Premier League, it welcomes all kinds of supporters' groups – a Leicester fan need never watch the Foxes alone in the Big Apple – serves food and even pours a reasonable pint of Guinness. Eight blocks away, **Smithfield Hall** offers a full schedule of European soccer, including weekend Premier League games over breakfast, or one of numerous draft options by the pint or pitcher, including Coney Island Mermaid Pilsner from Brooklyn.

The other side of Madison Square Garden on the East Side, **Turnmill** opens that little bit later, with happy hours (Mon-Fri 4pm-7pm) to boot. Proud home of NYC Evertonians, the pub plans on offering drink specials for every game of the



World Cup. Further down on E 14th St, **O'Hanlon's** flies its Arsenal colors high, showing Premier League action on 11 screens and pouring beer from 12 taps. Pub quizzes, pool and darts make this a real home from home.

Close by, **The Grafton** feels a bit classier, reflected in the superior bar snacks,



Smithfield Hall/All pix Brian Mulligan

brunch and plates, let alone cocktails, but you can still pull up to the bar (all tables might be booked for major games) and order a pint of house lager or Magners cider. On Avenue A, this branch of **Kelly's** goes big on hockey and basketball, much like its sister on 2nd Ave in the Upper East Side – both open at noon, daily, so no breakfast-time Premier League games – but promises nonstop World Cup action throughout in the tournament in a lively sports bar atmosphere.

Over on the Bowery, Irish-run **Sláinte** has long welcomed followers of the round-ball game, a projector and 14 TVs beaming Premier League and European

games amid the bare brick and tricolours. Of the two dozen beer taps, you'll find Guinness, Smithwick's, Harp and various U.S. craft IPAs.

On John Street, 'Your Liverpool Home' near the Financial District, **Carragher's** packs out for LFC games, when a \$40 minimum spend is required per person, no away colors. This apart, it's a convivial Irish American pub, where happy hour starts at 10am (!) and this summer you can bag a weekday lunch (10am-3pm) of an entrée and beer/wine for \$20. Anfield iconography features throughout, with pub merchandise also for sale.

Close to Broadway and the Gershwin Theatre, **McHale's Soccer Republic** opens 9am on weekends, 10.30am weekdays, to serve affordable pints of Heineken and Coney Island IPA among other options, plus house shepherd's pie, Irish style curry and Donegal fish & chips.

Finally, for that real New York experience and late drinking, the wonderful **Parkside Lounge** (317 E Houston St, at Attorney St) is a classic dive bar with pool and foosball, a selection of board games, and a back room that stages comedy. TVs are religiously tuned into New Orleans Saints games – but should screen the World Cup if you ask nicely. Established in 1908, still rocking in 2026. **LD**

WORLD CUP 2026 MetLife Stadium

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Edward de la Fuente



MetLife Stadium

Hosting the World Cup Final on July 19 puts **MetLife Stadium** on a par with Wembley, the Maracanã and the Bernabéu. Not bad for a venue in New Jersey only built in 2010. But in its previous guise as Giants Stadium, it hosted two seminal occasions in soccer history.

After NFL's New York Giants struck a deal with New Jersey in 1971 to build

a new stadium here and move out of Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, it took five years for East Rutherford, seven miles west of Central Park, to welcome a vast, 80,000-capacity bowl in a borough eight times smaller by population. It was unveiled in 1976, in time to welcome New York Cosmos the following year.

It was here that Pelé played his farewell game in the pouring rain, exhorting the packed crowd to believe in 'Love, love love', and here that that New York's two great communities, the Irish and the

Italians, filled the stadium the last time the U.S. hosted the World Cup in 1994. Ray Houghton's early goal lives long in the collective memory.

Giants Stadium staged seven games that summer, attended by an average 73,000 crowd, including the Semifinal won by Italy. Playing that day, Roberto Donadoni returned two years later to join the newly formed New York/New Jersey MetroStars, founder members of MLS, later renamed New York Red Bulls and playing in Harrison since 2010.

Celeste Jenkins



By then, MetLife Stadium had replaced Giants Stadium, holding 82,500, filling close to capacity for the CONCACAF Gold Cup, Copa América 2024 and the Final of the Club World Cup in 2025. A 10min walk from the stadium, **Redd's** (317 Washington Ave, Carlstadt) serves prime pub food and beer in a 35 flat-screen sports bar and biergarten.

Getting here

New York is served by three main airports: **JFK** 16 miles (26km) southeast of Midtown Manhattan, **LaGuardia** 8.5 miles (14km) east in Queens and, nearest to MetLife Stadium 13 miles away (21km), **Newark**, 16.5 miles (26.5km) south-west of Manhattan. Within Newark Airport, an **AirTrain** (every 3-5mins, free with a rail ticket) links to the **Airport Station**, then NJ Transit trains and Amtrak rail to **Newark Penn Station** (5mins) and **New York Penn Station** (30mins), both one stop from **Secaucus Junction**. From there on game days, a shuttle train runs to **Meadowlands Station** beside the stadium.



Brian Mulligan

A round-trip **ticket** from New York to Meadowlands should cost \$12.90 but has controversially been raised to \$98 on game days, plus Penn Station will partially close for four hours before each match.

Dedicated bus lanes will be open from **New York City's Port Authority and Grand Central Terminal** (\$20 roundtrip, 15-20mins). There will be no parking or pedestrian access in the stadium area on game days.

Fixtures

July 13/6pm Brazil v Morocco
 July 16/3pm France v Senegal
 July 22/8pm Norway v Senegal
 July 25/4pm Ecuador v Germany
 July 27 5pm Panama v England
 July 30/5pm R32 W/Gp I v 3rd place
 July 5/4pm R16 W/M76 v W/M78
 July 19/3pm FINAL **L9**

WORLD CUP 2026 Atlanta

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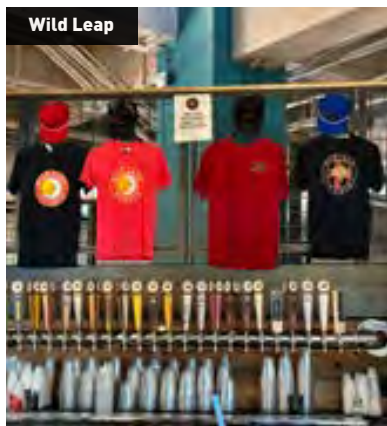
Atlanta

Atlanta was an MLS success story waiting to happen. Attracting the highest average attendance in MLS every non-pandemic year since the team's foundation in 2017, Atlanta United played before an all-time record crowd of 73,019 when it won its first MLS Cup at **Mercedes-Benz Stadium** a year later.

More than that, extraordinary considering Atlanta was not an MLS city for the league's first two decades, it was not a World Cup 1994 venue and it didn't even host any matches for the Olympics it staged in 1996 – but this has just become home of U.S. soccer, with the opening of a national training center in nearby Fayetteville.

Under Arthur Blank, the entrepreneur who has steered United and Mercedes-Benz Stadium to the forefront of the game in the States, the superb training facilities he built and the groundswell of support his team has generated have led to the U.S. Soccer Federation moving its base from Chicago to Atlanta. Logistic also helps. Atlanta, built as a transport hub in the railroad era, is home to the world's busiest airport, as well as huge multinationals – Coca-Cola, The Home Depot – whose sponsorship dollars find their way into sport.

Scheduled for 18 days of the tournament, the Fan Festival takes



place at Centennial Olympic Park, 30 years after it staged the Olympics.

Where to drink

The nearest locale to the stadium actually overlooks it: The **RT60 rooftop bar** of the REVERB by Hard Rock hotel next door. Nearby, **Wild Leap** welcomes fans with its own craft beers (Süperlager, Lone Buffalo, Island Haze) in a huge multi-story space including a decked courtyard.

All pix: Isabelle Brosas



Also close, alongside Centennial Olympic Park, **STATS Brewpub** sets itself up as 'Atlanta's ultimate sports bar' with 70 screens and seven separate audio zones, and house cocktails such as Shots on Goal and Assist alongside the \$30 beer buckets.

Next door, **Der Biergarten** is all Schnitzels, Sauerbraten and Steins, liter helpings of Weihestephan, Bitburger and Paulaner, among many other authentic German brews. On the West side of the

stadium, **Restaurant 10 Bar & Grill** at 10 Northside Drive NW serves wings, ribs and catfish, as well as signature cocktails such as the Atlanta United Punch with four types of rum. Sports and music clips are screened around the island bar.

'Atlanta's ultimate soccer & sports pub' predates United by two decades – the proudly independent **Brewhouse Café** has been screening matches, and serving fine food and drinks in the Little Five Points neighborhood Northeast of

Downtown since 1997. Today, games are shown on 25 screens, matching the number of ales, lagers, and ciders on tap, including local Three Taverns Rotsting and Scofflaw Basement IPA, and Terrapin Hopsicutioner from nearby Athens, each brew available by the pint and pitcher. Brunch includes cocktails and the beer garden comes into its own in summer. Close by, **Hudson Grille** is one of six such sports bars in the Atlanta area, known for its wings, ribs and weekday offers. Don't miss the seasonal beers on tap. **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Mercedes-Benz Stadium

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Mercedes-Benz Stadium

With its unique retractable roof, the 75,000-capacity **Mercedes-Benz Stadium** is located in Downtown Atlanta. One of only three American cities to have hosted the Olympics, Atlanta was forced to demolish its once prestigious Georgia Dome due to its limitations. Alongside, to replace it, Falcons owner and the man behind the Atlanta United MLS franchise, Arthur Blank

commissioned a multipurpose arena, its signature look provided by its eight-paneled retractable roof.

As well as allowing for open-air events, the panels lend the stadium its falcon theme – bird's wings fold out or in within ten minutes thanks to 16 linear tracks. They surround a halo feature over the pitch, lined with a 360-degree video board, and help create a 16-story window along the east side. This lets in natural light and provides panoramic views of Atlanta cityscape.

All pix: Isabelle Brosas



The falcon theme is accentuated by the huge sculpture by Gate 2. Conceived by Hungarian sculptor Gábor Miklós Szőke, whose similar creation also guards Ferencváros stadium in Budapest, the

bird stands 41 feet high, its wing span twice as wide. Manufactured in Hungary, its individual pieces were shipped in four containers to America to be assembled in situ.

Getting here

Hartsfield–Jackson International Atlanta is ten miles (16km) south of Downtown Atlanta, with its own station on the city's **MARTA rapid transit system** of rail and buses. This is located in the **Domestic Terminal**, between the North and South baggage claim areas. A free shuttle links with the **International Terminal**, journey time 15mins. **To use MARTA**, you'll need a **Breeze Card** (\$2), from vending machines and MARTA RideStores at stations and major crossing points, as well as the **MARTA On the Go App**.

A **regular fare** (\$2.50) entitles you to four free transfers within a three-hour period, so you can get into town, check into your hotel and get to the stadium. You can also use your Breeze Card for the **Atlanta Streetcar** (\$1, no transfers onto buses or rail).

The **Airport Station** is at the southern terminus of the Red and Gold Lines, directly linked with **Five Points** in the center, 20mins away. The stadium is served by two stations on the Green and Blue Lines: **GWCC/Philips Arena/CNN Center**, and **Vine City**. The first is the preferred option and closest to Gates 2-4 on the east side of the stadium; the second is nearest Gate 1 via a Pedestrian Bridge over Northside Drive on the west side of the stadium.

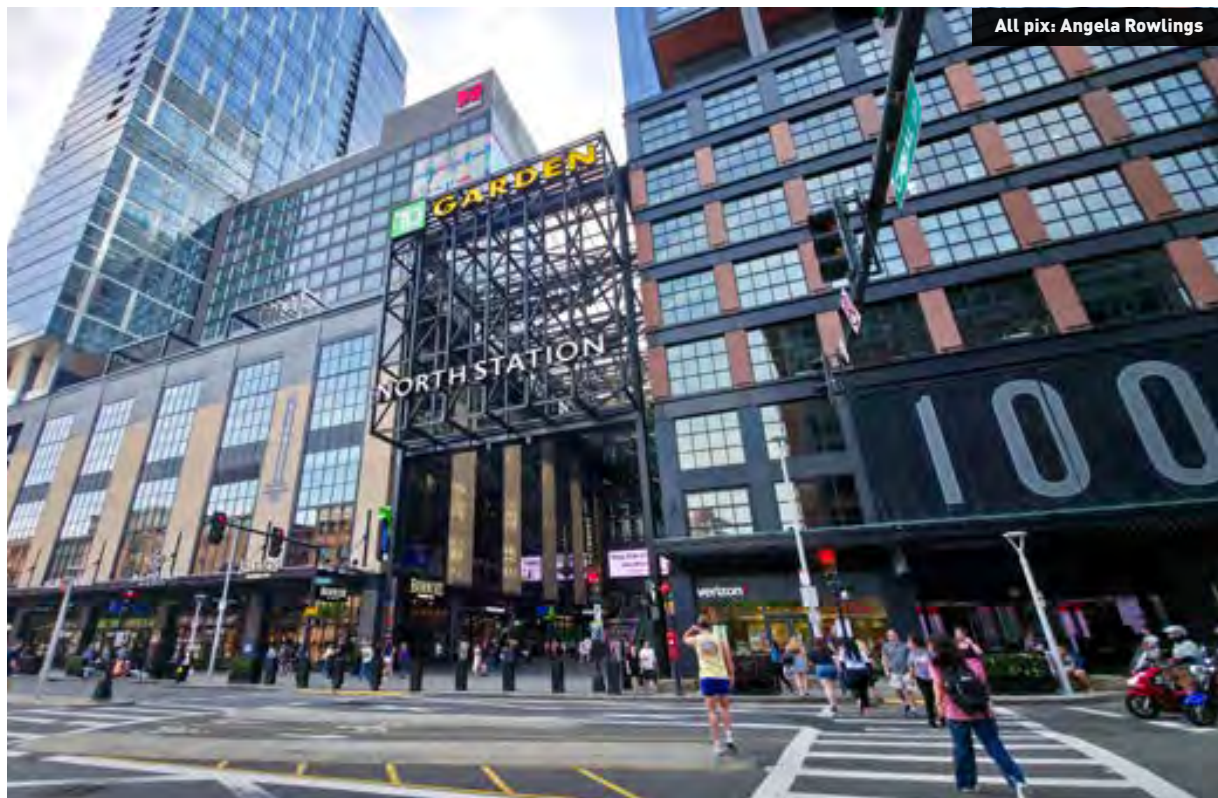
From the airport, you'll find **taxicabs** at the Domestic Terminal between Doors W-1 and W-2, and at the International Terminal outside the A-1 Door. The standard fare to Downtown Atlanta is around \$35-\$40. **Yellow Cab of Atlanta** (+1 404-305-9075) is as good as any.

Fixtures

June 15/noon Spain v Cape Verde
 June 18/noon Czech Republic v South Africa
 June 21/noon Spain v Saudi Arabia
 June 24/6pm Morocco v Haiti
 June 27/7.30pm DR Congo v Uzbekistan
 July 1/noon R32 W/Gp L v 3rd place
 July 7/noon R16 W/M86 v W/M88
 July 15/3pm SF W/M99 v W/M100 **LG**

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All pix: Angela Rowlings

Boston

The British are coming to **Boston** this summer, nearly 250 years after Paul Revere didn't say these famous words when he rode out for Lexington to sound the alarm. As America prepares to mark the Semiquincentennial anniversary of its independence, the Tartan Army and hordes of England supporters will be

descending on the home of baked beans for three group games.

Except that these games aren't taking place in New England's sporting metropolis, but 25 miles away in **Foxborough**, where locally born billionaire businessman Robert Kraft built **Gillette Stadium** and surrounding retail complex Patriot Place in the early 2000s. Which would be fine under normal

circumstances, when \$8.75 would cover the hour-long journey southwest. But the World Cup isn't normal circumstances, and so Boston transportation authority MBTA has seen fit that a round trip should cost \$80 – unless you're taking the Stadium Express Bus Service from several hotels, in which case it's \$95.

Which is a shame because most leave Boston with an extremely favorable



The Greatest Bar



impression of this historic, welcoming city. Sports plays a big part in this, fabled baseball stadium Fenway Park and the former Boston, now TD, Garden integral to America's urban heritage.

As for soccer, NASL's Boston Minutemen sank as quickly as a tea chest and MLS charter team New England Revolution has hardly challenged the hegemony of the Patriots, Red Sox, Celtics and Bruins.

As a footnote, Boston – or rather, Foxborough – was where Maradona played his last World Cup match, against Nigeria in 1994, and USMNT beat England 2-0 in 1993, a warm-up for a tournament the visitors failed to attend.

Downtown City Hall Plaza hosts the **Fan Fest** June 12 through 27, free to enter but registration required.

Where to drink

Boston's top spot for soccer followers, **The Greatest Bar** at 262 Friend St is currently ordering as much beer that it can stock, this being the official HQ of the Tartan Army in Boston. Four floors encompass wall to wall HD screens and a history of local sports, music and politics, such as the revered figures and memorable moments on the Sistine ceiling on the first floor. Absolutely unique and arguably the finest sports bar in the States. Open until 2am nightly.

Nearby **Banners** (82 Causeway St) also hits big with its 60 screens, including the biggest in the region at 40 feet, 30 rotating beer taps. The only downside is its early closing hours, either 10pm or 11pm. With a history dating back to the 1700s, **The Point Boston** sits across from Haymarket Station, filling an atmospheric bar room at the end of a narrow building.

More on the stylish, gastro side, **Warehouse Kitchen & Sports Bar** in the Financial District is pulling out all the stops for the World Cup, extending its opening hours for select matches. Decent draft beers, too. For a quality coffee the morning after, **Caffe dello Sport** on Hanover Street shows soccer and sells alcohol – as well as quality panini and confectionery from early in the morning. 

WORLD CUP 2026 Gillette Stadium

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Gillette Stadium

The home of the New England Patriots occupies the site of the old Foxboro Stadium, stage for six games at the 1994 World Cup, including Maradona's last two. The 60,000-capacity venue then co-hosted the Women's World Cup five years later – 50,484 watched USWNT beat North Korea here – by which time billionaire businessman Robert Kraft had launched New England Revolution in the inaugural year of MLS, 1994.

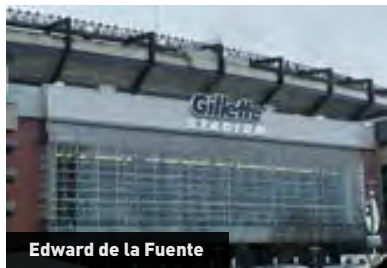
Lifelong Patriots fan/owner Kraft would play a prominent role in the North American bid for World Cup 2026, having built a stadium for his all-conquering Pats two decades earlier. Of the many options, he had chosen to stay in Foxborough, 25 miles from Boston, paying for the whole thing himself, more than half a billion dollars in today's money.

With an initial capacity of 68,756, **Gillette Stadium** featured a grand entrance whose two signature features were a bridge modeled on a historic crossing linking Boston and Cambridge, and a lighthouse, a nod to the coastal heritage of New England. Here the Patriots embarked on a string of Super Bowl wins, led by all time-hero quarterback Tom Brady, whose statue was unveiled here in 2025.

Around the stadium, Kraft built retail hub Patriot Place, where you find sports bar **The Harp** and mainstream eateries, and



Ian Thomson



Edward de la Fuente

then oversaw a substantial overhaul of the arena from 2021. A new lighthouse attraction now offers panoramic views for miles around, while the video board is the largest of its kind in the States. Crowds for soccer, however, are usually relatively modest – which won't be the case when England and Scotland play here in June.

Getting here

Logan Airport is ten miles (16km) east of Downtown Boston. A free **Silver Line bus** (SL1) runs from each of the airport's four terminals every 8-15mins to **South Station** (20-30min journey time) – follow the signs for Ground Transportation. **Boston Logan Airport Cab** (+1 617-420-5888) should charge around \$30 to

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South Station (10-15mins) and \$100 to **Gillette Stadium** 30 miles (48km) away in **Foxborough** (45min journey time), although surge pricing on match days could double this.

From South Station, **MBTA trains** run to **Foxboro Station** alongside the stadium, \$80 round-trip via the **MBTA app** (mbta.com/mbta-endorsed-apps#mticket). Only those with same-day match tickets can use the service – regular rail links run

on non-match days. **Boston Stadium Express** buses run from 100 hotels in the Boston area, roundtrip for same-day match-ticket holders \$95. **Rideshare services** drop off and pick up at Lot 16 – this is not available for private vehicles. **Booked parking** nearby via **JustPark** (justpark.com) starts at \$175.

MBTA runs a **subway** and **bus network** (one-way \$2.40/\$1.70), pay contactless or top up a free **CharlieCard** (min \$5). Single-

use **CharlieTickets** (\$2.90/\$2) are also available from machines. Use the **MBTA app** for Commuter Rail and ferries.

Fixtures

June 13/9pm Haiti v Scotland
 June 16/6pm Iraq v Norway
 June 19/6pm Scotland v Morocco
 June 23/4pm England v Ghana
 June 26/3pm Norway v France
 June 29/4.30pm R32 W/Gp E v 3rd place
 July 9/4pm QF W/M89 v W/M90

WORLD CUP 2026 Dallas

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Dallas

Shoulder-to-shoulder-pad in the same city as the world's most valuable sports team, **FC Dallas** has had to face many challenges to thrive as a soccer franchise in MLS. As **Dallas Burn**, this founder member of Major League Soccer played at the **Cotton Bowl**, as steeped in NFL legend as its former tenants, the Dallas Cowboys, today valued at \$9 billion. Based in one of the world's richest cities, the Burn initially failed to attract investors and had to rely on MLS itself to back the club.

But this is Dallas. Despite no local rival – Houston Dynamo didn't enter MLS until 2006 – the Burn was turned around by the man whose father inspired the creation of the city's most famous fictional son. Oil tycoon H. L. Hunt begat J. R. Ewing, central character of TV soap *Dallas*. In real life, Hunt sired at least 15 children, the tenth of whom, Lamar, went on to steer contemporary soccer in the U.S..

While MLS is still dwarfed by NFL in the Big D, soccer now has a prominent foothold. The size of the Cowboys' **AT&T Stadium**, at 80,000 the largest of America's World Cup stadiums, was not the only factor that pushed the city's credible but doomed bid to stage the final – love of soccer also came into play. The prestigious Dallas Cup for youth teams, for example, was set up by the Texas Longhorns Soccer Club to reciprocate

Kamille Carlisle



the hospitality its teams had received in Europe. Held every Easter, it has welcomed the likes of David Beckham, Wayne Rooney and Andrea Pirlo. Though New Jersey's MetLife won the 2026 final vote, Dallas – or rather, nearby Arlington – will host nine matches, more any other venue. When Dallas was selected for the 1994 World Cup, it had not hosted regular professional soccer for a decade.

Now it is one of only eight cities with an unbroken record of MLS representation since its inception in 1996.

Fair Park stages the city's Fan Festival throughout the tournament.

Where to drink

Right on Elm Street – yes, that Elm Street – soccer-friendly **City Tavern**

is approaching a quarter-century of showing games and serving beer. These days, you'll find Yuengling, Blood & Honey from Revolver Brewing in Texas, and Velvet Hammer from Peticolas Brewing in Dallas. One block over on Main Street, **Frankie's** is not only a winner of Best Sports Bar in Dallas but also Best Happy Hour, Best Cocktail Bar and Best Wings. And that doesn't mention the craft beers,



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currently local Four Corners, Oak Cliff and Pegasus City.

Where Elm Street meets Main, **Press Box Grill** puts the emphasis on the grill, but the bar counter merits propping up and chugging back while gawping at sports. On the first floor of the Omni Hotel a few blocks from Dealey Plaza, **Owner's Box** attracts sports fans and hotel guests with its huge and multiple TV screens. You can book a private table with sound-isolating technology or sip a Curveball cocktail with Garrison Brothers bourbon on the patio. **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 AT&T Stadium

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All pix: Celeste Jenkins



Smoke Chemistry Social

AT&T Stadium

The house that Jerry built, aka Jerry World, is the largest stadium in NFL and the biggest in America to co-host the World Cup. Home of Dallas Cowboys, **AT&T Stadium** is sited in Arlington, between Fort Worth and Dallas, in an area of various sports and leisure attractions. When controversial owner Jerry Jones bought the Cowboys for a song in 1989, steering the team to three Super Bowl victories in five years, home was still Texas

Stadium in Irving. Pouring millions into influencing a ballot to persuade Arlington taxpayers to fund half the construction, Jones oversaw the creation of one of the most expensive stadiums in history, 80,000 seats beneath a retractable roof facing two vast video screens. Costs eventually ran beyond \$1 billion, Jones covering overruns of 100%.

Opened in 2009, Cowboys Stadium, AT&T Stadium from 2013, soon welcomed a full house for soccer, Mexico making the

first of several appearances. Almost every summer, at least one high-profile fixture has filled up this arena, such as the 82,026 who watched El Clásico here in 2023. Nine World Cup games take place here, including the Semifinal on July 14 – expect Messimania for two of Argentina's group games.

Serving the three stadiums that surround it, **Texas Live!** comprises several venues in one, offering big-screen sports, beer, and piles of grilled meat. Closer to AT&T Stadium, **Smoke**

Chemistry Social appeals to cocktail drinkers and cigar smokers.

Getting here

Dallas Fort Worth Airport is 19 miles (31km) from Downtown Dallas. From **Terminal A**, the **Orange Line** of the **DART light rail network** runs to Dallas city center, including transit hub **Akard Station** (every 20mins, 50min journey time) close to Elm Street. Download the **GoPass app** (gopass.org) for tickets and schedules. There are also ticket machines at main stops and stations.

Smaller **Love Field Airport** is six miles (10km) Northwest of Downtown Dallas, mainly used by low-cost **Southwest Airlines**. **Love Link bus 005** runs to **Inwood/Love Field Station** on the Green and Orange Lines.

From **Victory Station** in **Downtown Dallas** and **Central Station** in **Fort Worth**, **Trinity Railway Express (TRE)** trains run to the main transport hub on game days, **Centreport Station**, five miles north of the stadium. Free for match ticket holders, stadium shuttle buses then operate from five hours before kickoff and for three hours after the game. Use the GoPass app for TRE tickets and times.

If you're driving, **parking** must be pre-booked through **JustPark** (justpark.com), cheapest spots from \$125-200. **Taxis**, **Ubers** and other hired vehicles must pick up and drop off from **Arlington Esports Stadium**, ten minutes from AT&T Stadium on foot. Serving Dallas, Fort Worth and Arlington, **Texas Yellow Cabs** (bigtexascabs.com; +1 817-676-3702) promises no surge prices.

Fixtures

June 14/3pm Netherlands v Japan
 June 17/3pm England v Croatia
 June 22/noon Argentina v Australia
 June 25/6pm Japan v Sweden
 June 27/9pm Jordan v Argentina
 June 30/noon R32 R-U/Gp E v R-U/Gp I
 July 3/1pm R32 R-U/Gp D v R-U/Gp G
 July 6/2pm R16 W/M83 v W/M84
 July 14/2pm SF W/M97 v W/M98 **L9**

WORLD CUP 2026 Houston

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Houston

Forever associated with space travel rather than soccer, **Houston** lacks the sporting heritage of its Texan rival and fellow World Cup co-host, Dallas. While the stadium hosting MLS team here, Houston Dynamo, was the first soccer-specific one to open in a downtown location, its modest capacity of 22,000 means that games this summer are being played at NFL arena (and rodeo

venue) **NRG Stadium** three miles south of downtown Houston.

Only opened a decade before **Shell Energy Stadium**, NRG sits in a similarly branded sports and entertainment complex connected by the city's light rail network, a huge plus when compared to Dallas. And while business-focused Houston lacks the range and variety of pubs and sports bars of Dallas and, indeed, Austin, the ones it does have are mainly clustered around the

Ian Thomson



soccer stadium, within easy reach of the Central Business District and downtown

Celeste Jenkins



hotels. Bear in mind that Houston in June means searing temperatures and high humidity – plan accordingly and stay indoors mid-afternoon.

Major soccer games, invariably involving Mexico, have been played to capacity crowds at NRG Stadium almost as soon as it was unveiled, although Dynamo had a more convoluted beginning. The 2006 MLS expansion team was created when AEG relocated its San Jose Earthquakes franchise here, giving the new entity the somewhat insensitive name of Houston 1836. Mexicans hardly needed reminding of the battle won by General Sam Houston which gained Texas its independence.

Switching to Houston Dynamo, the debutants won back to back MLS Cups in their first two seasons but last made the final in 2012.

East Downtown hosts the World Cup Fan Fest, free to enter and running all tournament-long.

Where to drink

The best sports bars are found around **Shell Energy Stadium**, conveniently located close to downtown. **Pitch 25** 'creates community and passion for soccer fans' thanks to its origin story. Orange Crush legend Brian Ching conceived of an interactive bar with its own soccer pitch and teams but where the more sedentary supporter can share a pitch platter or tuck into ribeye steak (this is Texas, remember), choose from 100 draft beers (happy hours Mon-Fri 3pm-6pm) and join communal watch parties.

Even closer to the stadium, **King's** attracts the local Manchester United and Chelsea fraternity with multiple screens, drinks deals and curry, along with standard pub grub. Also close, **Little Woodrow's EaDo** is the local branch of a backyard bar chain, with generous happy hours (particularly Fridays) and alfresco World Cup watch parties sponsored by Michelob ULTRA.

On the other side of the stadium, **Texas Tailgate** makes perfect sense on game days when gatherings convene and music rings out. Screens a-plenty, of course. Close to the ballpark, **Biggio's**, in the Marriott Marquis Houston, allows guests to sample local craft brews such as Eureka Heights and Tejas Beer while watching the action on a big screen. Nearby, the Houston branch of nationwide chain **Tom's Watch Bar** stages World Cup watch parties thanks to its phalanx of screens, specialty margaritas and superior bar food. **L3**

WORLD CUP 2026 NRG Stadium

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NRG Stadium

The first NFL venue to have a retractable roof, **NRG Stadium** south of downtown Houston will be staging six of its seven World Cup fixtures at noon. This both avoids the mid-afternoon thunderstorms typical for June and takes advantage of the stadium's twin-paneled fabric covering that can be maneuvered to its full extent in under ten minutes.

Stage for Cristiano Ronaldo's last World Cup, NRG Stadium has witnessed two of the memorable Super Bowls in history, both dramatic triumphs for Tom Brady's New England Patriots, the first also involving the infamous Niplegate halftime show featuring Janet Jackson.

Prominent soccer games, played here almost as soon as the place opened in 2002, have drawn similar capacity crowds of around 70,000. Mexico can always be relied upon to fill the place, for obvious reasons, most recently the CONCACAF Gold Cup win of 2025 over their American hosts, but there's also been a Manchester derby in 2017, and Real Madrid's defeat of United in 2023. Brazil topping their group this June will bring the Seleção here, local fans treated to the global spotlight, the city having missed out on the World Cup in 1994.

Getting here

Houston is served by two airports: the major **George Bush Intercontinental**

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(IAH) is 23 miles (37km) north of Downtown Houston and the older **William P. Hobby** seven miles (11km) southeast of the city center. Now an operating base for low-cost **Southwest Airlines**, Hobby Airport is only 15min taxi journey (\$35) to NRG Stadium, also south of Downtown. **Houston Cab Taxi** (+1 832-807-6403) has **online booking** (houstoncabs.com/airport-transfers).

From IAH, the **Route 500 IAH Downtown Direct** bus leaves Terminal E, Level 2, exit door E201, every 30mins nonstop for **George R. Brown Convention Center** (\$4.50, 35mins) in the heart of Downtown Houston. Buses then go on to **Hobby Airport**, 1hr 15min total journey time from IAH. Pay with cash, credit card or contactless. Alternatively, you can use the local

RideMETRO card (\$2 from vending machines/RideStore locations) or download its **app**, and tap in.

The standard fare for the **METRO Local Bus** and **METRORail** to the stadium is \$1.25. A **day pass** is \$3. This includes the slower **102 IAH Express bus** from **Terminal C** at IAH to downtown **Milam & Rusk** (50mins). The **Red Line** on the



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METRORail network runs every 6-12mins from **Central Station** to **Stadium Park/Astrodome** (25-30mins), a short walk to NRG Stadium. Free transfers for up to 3hrs allow you to change from the Green or Purple Lines at Central.

There is **free parking** at **West Loop Transit Center** (4675 Braeswood Blvd, Houston, TX 77096) southwest of the city, where a **shuttle bus** (\$2) runs every 30mins to **Fannin South Park & Ride**, one stop (\$1.25) from NRG Stadium (4mins).

Fixtures

June 14/noon Germany v Curaçao
 June 17/noon Portugal v DR Congo
 June 20/noon Netherlands v Sweden
 June 23/noon Portugal v Uzbekistan
 June 26/6pm Cape Verde v Saudi Arabia
 June 29/noon R32 W/Gp C v R-U/Gp E
 July 4/noon R16 W/M73 v W/M75 **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Kansas City

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All pix: Isabelle Brosas

Kansas City

Around the Power & Light District, backdropped by the home of **Sporting KC** fans, No Other Pub, the crowd waved flags in celebration. One bright day in June 2022, Kansas City had been chosen as one of 11 cities across the U.S. to co-host the World Cup 2026. The rest of the world, failing to see Chicago or Washington D.C. make the cut, remained puzzled. Kansas City? Isn't that a song?

An elite training base for U.S. Soccer, Kansas City provides ample evidence of how far the game has come since Lamar Hunt laid the groundwork in the 1960s, and then again in the 1990s. After three decades in MLS, two MLS Cups and four U.S. Open Cups, this soccer hub was where the Texan oil man sited Kansas City Wiz, now Sporting Kansas City, a founder member of MLS in 1996. He may have been behind the Super Bowl, the American Football League and the high-profile Kansas City Chiefs, but his sports focus did not stop at gridiron.



Johnny's Tavern

Inducted into the National Soccer Hall of Fame, lending his name to the U.S. Open Cup, and granted a Medal of Honor for



KC Hooley House

'changing the course of soccer in America', Hunt helped create the NASL back in the Sixties, and was also behind Columbus Crew, the first soccer-specific stadium in modern times, and FC Dallas. But Kansas City, where he had taken the Dallas Texans in 1963 to become NFL powerhouse the Chiefs, was always essential to his strategy. On the border of two states, the streetcar suburb of Kansas City, Missouri, is where you find **Arrowhead Stadium**, home of NFL's Chiefs and the 73,000-capacity arena where World Cup fixtures will take place.

Its gateway a huge heart, the KC Fan Fest takes place on the south lawn of the National WWI Museum & Memorial.

Where to drink

No Other Pub by Sporting KC anchors a corner of the Power & Light District, sporting blue and white across the building. Inside, 'Kansas City's World Cup Headquarters' serves superior bar food

– Southwest chicken flatbread, cheesesteak sandwiches, and signature fries – while draft beers include German-style Dunkel by the Kansas City Bier Company. Along with multiple screens, NOP excels in bar pastimes, golf, bowling and arcade games.

Alongside, **McFadden's Sports Saloon** has screens aplenty, while **Johnny's Tavern** has been serving hamburgers since 1953, all local branches tuned to sport. The **KC Hooley House** is a huge Irish pub ideally suited to sports-watching at the TV-lined bar or in the courtyard with its pull-down screen. Just over Truman Road, the **Streetcar Grille & Tavern** aims to be a sports bar of higher quality, with its 24 beers on tap, Wine Wednesdays and weekend brunches. In the nearby Old Town Lofts, **John's Big Deck** is named for its huge rooftop patio with views over Kansas City. Level 1 comprises a sports bar and grill, level 2 a weekend dance club. The first floor offers live music. **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Arrowhead Stadium

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Arrowhead Stadium

Lamar Hunt started building **Arrowhead Stadium** five years after bringing NFL's Kansas City Chiefs here from Dallas in 1963, to replace the inner-city Municipal Stadium, of limited size and capacity, and dating back 40 years. With no suitable location found in Kansas City itself, Jackson County suggested a location south-east of town at the junction of Interstate 70 and the 435 encircling Kansas and Missouri. In fact, it was a location for two stadiums, for football and baseball, alongside each other.

The Chiefs opened Arrowhead Stadium – given a name reflecting local Native heritage by a public vote – in 1972. That November, a highest-ever crowd of 82,094 watched the Chiefs' first home victory in the regular season. In more modern times, the legendarily loud Arrowhead set a world record for stadium noise level in 2013. By then, soccer had long been established here. Intended that Kansas should be in at the start when MLS was launched in 1996, Lamar Hunt arranged for his new franchise to share the home of the Chiefs. A whole end was blocked off for Kansas City Wiz games, average gates hovering below 13,000, before the club moved out to ballpark Legends Field in 2008.

KC returned to play Manchester United at Arrowhead Stadium in 2010 in front of 52,424, a record for a soccer game in



Josh Webb

the area. Setting up at soccer-specific new-build Sporting Park in 2011, the club rebranded to become Sporting Kansas City. Sporting would return to Arrowhead Stadium after 14 years to take on Messi's Inter Miami, drawing a crowd of 72,610, the fourth-highest for an MLS game. Still the same steep-sided, open bowl as when it was created in nearly 60 years ago, Arrowhead Stadium will be demolished after the Chiefs move to Wyandotte

County in 2031, having hosted six World Cup games after being overlooked for the 1994 tournament. Capacity for 2026 is set at 73,000.

Getting here

ConnectKC is laying on **Airport** (free) and **Stadium** (\$15 roundtrip) **Direct** buses, for which a **pass** is required – **register** via kc2026.com/transportation. **Kansas City**

International Airport is 18 miles (29km) northwest of Downtown Kansas City, buses heading to 27th Street & Main near the **Fan Festival**, setting-off point for Stadium services, as well as from four P&R locations. A **taxi** (+1 816-243-2345) from the airport should take 30mins to Downtown Kansas City and cost around \$60. Arrowhead Stadium is four miles southeast of Downtown. Expect to pay around \$40 with **zTrip taxi** (+1 855-



Brooke Tramel



Josh Webb

699-8747), bookable **online** at ztrip.com/book-a-ride. Prices for **parking** at **Arrowhead Stadium** (1 Arrowhead Dr, Kansas City, MO 64129) have been set at \$125-\$150 for group games, \$175 and \$225 for the knockout matches. Spots can be **booked** via justpark.com/us/event-parking/fifa-world-cup-2026/kansas-city-stadium. A match ticket is required to complete the purchase.

Fixtures

July 16/8pm Argentina v Algeria
 July 20/7pm Ecuador v Curaçao
 July 25/6pm Tunisia v Netherlands
 July 27/9pm Algeria v Austria
 July 3/8.30pm R32 W/Gp K v 3rd place
 July 11/8pm QF W/M95 v W/M96 **LD**

WORLD CUP 2026 Los Angeles

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Los Angeles

Stage for America's only previous World Cup Final in 1994, soon to be host of a record third Olympic Games, **Los Angeles** is also only one of two cities with two teams in MLS. The crosstown derby between **LA Galaxy** and **LAFC**, known as El Tráfico due to the congestion along the 13 miles of Interstate 110 between the two, has invariably been a high-scoring affair since the Black and Gold came on the scene in 2018.

That March, the 4-3 defeat to MLS founding members Galaxy set the tone for the clashes to follow, two played on July 4 at the **Rose Bowl**, one before a crowd of 82,110. One of two venerable arenas still in use more than a century after their opening, the Rose Bowl in Pasadena holds just under 90,000, although for decades it was the largest football stadium by capacity in the U.S., the attendance record of 106,869 set for the namesake Rose Bowl game in 1973.

That goalless draw between Brazil and Italy brought 94,194 to this National Historic Landmark, although all of the eight games the Rose Bowl staged in 1994 recorded crowds of 90,000-plus. A decade before, a six-figure attendance watched the Olympic Football Final between France and Brazil. Six miles directly west from here, installed around the same time as the stadium, the iconic letters spelling out HOLLYWOOD look down upon LA,



Cat & Fiddle/Tony Pierce

including another landmark built in the aftermath of World War I, the **LA Memorial Coliseum**.

Dedicated to veterans who served in the Great War, this centerpiece of Exposition Park ushered in two innovative concepts when it hosted the Games in 1932: the Olympic Village and the three-tier medal podium. **This summer, between June 11-14, the LA Coliseum will be home to the World Cup Fan Festival.** Alongside stands BMO (formerly Banc of California) Stadium, home of LAFC.

But neither the Rose Bowl nor LA Coliseum is being used for the 2026 World Cup. That honor goes to **SoFi Stadium** down in Inglewood, opened in 2020, and shared between NFL stalwarts, Los Angeles Rams and Los Angeles Chargers. Host of Super Bowl LVI in 2022, which famously celebrated West Coast rap in the halftime show, SoFi Stadium has already witnessed a number of top international soccer games, with USMNT due to open its World Cup campaign here on June 12.



Tony Dawber



Tony Pierce

Close to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX), it sits a few miles north of Carson, where **Dignity Health Sports Park**, home of LA Galaxy, now features a statue of the man whose star quality transformed MLS and later established soccer in Miami: David Beckham.

Where to drink

The most legendary soccer-friendly pub in LA, particularly after it moved from Laurel Canyon to Sunset Boulevard in 1985, the **Cat & Fiddle** has been revived by the family of co-founder and former Rod Stewart bandmate Kim Gardner who welcomed so many of the city's expat punkerati way back when. Its current →



Gwen Jones

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All pix: Tony Pierce/Tom's Watch Bar

iteration in West Hollywood is still a top place to catch the game, where Sunday roasts, vinyl Fridays and pub quizzes also feature, along with house cider, hazy IPA and, of course, PG Tips tea.

On S Figueroa St in South Park, in a buzzy part of Downtown LA where LA Lakers plays, **33 Taps** surrounds customers with screens while serving top-notch wings, house vegan burgers and beer from, you guessed it, 33 taps. Happy hour on pints,

food and pitchers runs weekdays 3pm-7pm, then daily from 9.30pm, and animal charities are supported. Practically next door, the Downtown LA branch of **Tom's Watch Bar** ('All the Sports, All the Time') comprises 100 screens, a superior kitchen and extremely busy bar, margaritas the specialty. Full focus is being given to World Cup watch parties this summer.

Just off Hollywood Boulevard on Wilcox Ave, **Brickyard Pub** feels old-school,

offering the simple pleasures of pool, darts, TV sports and plentiful happy hours, as well as a vast selection of craft beers.

Towards Santa Monica in West LA, there's a more neighborhood vibe to the NFL-centric **Banter Bar**, which also takes its live music, pool and partying seriously. Open nightly until 2am, expected to show World Cup games and fire up the grill on the outdoor patio. Similar in vein and feel, with a blue-chip pedigree, **Tiny's**



33 Taps



to squeeze 23 screens and 24 beer taps into its convivial, intimate space. Happy hour runs Mon-Fri 3pm-7pm and Sun 4pm-7pm, and those draft options include house Nickel IPA.

Generous happy hours, TV sports and a friendly atmosphere also typify **Founders Ale House**, halfway to West Hollywood on W Pico Blvd, rotating its craft beers and including vegan alternatives on its menu.

Where to shop

Suitably located in LA's Fashion District, the **Football Boutique** not only stocks sought-after jerseys and merchandise but stages viewing parties and houses a 1x1 street soccer cage. Ideal for hanging out and picking up on the local soccer scene. **LD**

Hi-Dive caters to homesick Chicagoans, laudably serving an anti-brunch menu, and pouring Paulaner Hefeweizen and Weihenstephaner. Also open until 2am.

In the same vicinity, **The Nickel Mine** on Santa Monica Boulevard manages

WORLD CUP 2026 SoFi Stadium

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SoFi Stadium

Previously a racetrack owned by studio moguls and movie stars, **SoFi Stadium** is an award-winning arena that has seen a lot of significant action in the short time from its opening in 2020 to today, the eve of the eight World Cup games it is scheduled to host. Most notably, it was here that Super Bowl LVI unfolded in 2022, featuring home side Los Angeles Rams and Cincinnati Bengals. The cream of West Coast rap – Snoop Dogg, Dr. Dre, Kendrick Lamar – performed the halftime show, during which Eminem famously took the knee, begging the question as to what's being planned here for the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games in 2028.

Outside, a huge canopy composed of 302 polymer panels also welcomes visitors to the adjoining YouTube Theater, also integral to the Hollywood Park complex in which SoFi Stadium sits, facing an attractive water feature. Alongside, a hangover from the racetrack days, **Hollywood Park Casino** houses the **Century Bar & Grill**, with its Event Menu on game days of superior burgers, premium cocktails and 20-plus beers in two sizes.

Back in the stadium, some 400 of the 70,000 seats have been removed from the corners to widen the pitch for soccer, arranged in five tiers above the long sidelines, four behind the goals. Suspended over the pitch, an oval double-



Tony Pierce

sided videoboard gives SoFi Stadium its signature look, although name branding will be removed for the tournament.

Getting here

Los Angeles Airport (LAX) is five miles (8km) west of SoFi Stadium, connected via **LAX Metro Transit Center** by a bus service on game days. A pink sign at the Lower/Arrivals level outside each of nine airport terminal buildings indicates the stop for the free Metro Connector shuttle bus (every 10mins) to the Transit Center, arriving at/leaving from Bays 1 and 2. For a taxi, Uber or Lyft, head to Terminal 1 for **LAX-it** ('LA Exit'), signposted green, either by walking or taking the free LAX-it shuttle from your arrival terminal.

The stadium bus service (\$1.75, every 10mins) usually leaves from Bay 8 at the LAX Metro Transit Center, journey time 15mins, dropping off/picking up from **Lot S – E Arbor Vitae/District Dr**, a 5-10min walk to the stadium. The Transit Center also links to **Metro Lines C** and



Edward de la Fuente



Tony Pierce

K, allowing you to ride into the city or **Downtown Inglewood Station** (Line K, 6min journey time), itself a 30-min walk

from the stadium. Line K terminates at Expo/Crenshaw, crossing with Line C to Downtown LA and Santa Monica.

Machines at stops and stations sell **TAP top-up cards** (\$2), download the TAP app or use your Apple Wallet. A regular oneway ride is \$1.75 – from Downtown to the stadium, add a \$3.50 roundtrip fare.

Fixtures

June 12/6pm U.S. v Paraguay
 June 15/6pm Iran v New Zealand
 June 18/noon Switzerland v Bosnia-H
 June 21/noon Belgium v Iran
 June 25/7pm Turkey v U.S.
 June 28/noon R32 RU/Gp A v RU/Gp B
 July 2/noon R32 W/Gp H v RU/Gp J
 July 10/noon QF W/M93 v W/M94 **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Miami

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All pix: Joe Stubley

Miami

Soccer in **Miami** has been transformed by the two most successful players of the modern era: David Beckham whose deal with LA Galaxy in 2007 included a clause in his contract to buy an MLS franchise; and Lionel Messi, whose stratospheric skills had an immediate effect on this franchise, Inter Miami, upon his arrival in July 2023. This has resulted in a first MLS Cup win for the team in pink in December 2025, and the grand opening of soccer-specific

Nu Stadium by Miami International Airport on April 4, 2026. The final was also a parting farewell to Fort Lauderdale, where the Inter project had been parked from its underwhelming kick-off during the pandemic summer of 2020.

Miami was among the two-dozen potential venue cities bidding to host the 2026 World Cup, confirmed in 2022. Home of NFL's Miami Dolphins, the **Hard Rock Stadium** in Miami Gardens has been adapted to stage six games involving Scotland, Brazil, Uruguay, Portugal and

probably Argentina, not to mention the match for bronze between the last two of the final four. A sport-obsessed metropolis with a 70% Hispanic/Latino population, Miami has hosted an equal record number of Superbowls, celebrated three NBA Championship wins and regularly staged showcase soccer fixtures attracting crowds of 50,000-plus. What it lacked was a soccer team that locals could identify with and follow. And for that, it needed a stadium in town – one caveat to the Beckham deal, the other being to site his team anywhere but New York.



La Cervceria Tropical



Between June 13 and July 5, Miami's Fan Fest unfolds at Bayfront Park, overlooking the waters of Biscayne Bay.

Where to drink

For a relaxed drink near the Hard Rock Stadium, head to the ethnic restaurants on nearby NW 27th Ave, including **Lorna's Caribbean & American Grill**, a mother-and-son business first opened in 2006. On the menu are traditional classics such as Atlantic snapper, curry goat and Jamaican-style oxtails, as well as exotic cocktails.

Prime spot for soccer watching in town is **Grails** in the arty entertainment neighborhood of **Wynwood**, imaginatively theming its own décor around one-of-a-kind sneakers. TVs abound, also on the large patio named, because somebody had to, Miami Vice. To go the whole nine yards, order your cocktail in a take-home sneaker. On a match day – it's 11am opening on weekends – you might get the ball rolling with a Messi Mule based

Beckham had been offered his franchise for \$25 million – the going rate back in 2007 when MLS was wobbling, not even a tenth of what anyone would pay now. By the time he retired in 2013, MLS was enjoying the benefits of the Beckham effect, doubling in size and attracting better attendances across the league. Towards the end of his time at LA Galaxy, a showcase fixture between Barcelona and Mexican giants Guadalajara had brought a crowd of 70,000-plus to the Hard Rock Stadium, the first of a string of summer friendlies played in a near packed arena.

WORLD CUP 2026 Miami

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Mickey Burkes

on Hendrick's gin and Campari. La Rubia and Modelo Especial stand out among the draft beer options, slow-braised pork-belly tacos and slow-cooked ribs the best of the superior bar food.

Nearby, **La Cervecería Tropical** celebrated its fifth anniversary in April 2026 but dates back to 1888, when the Blanco-Herrera family set up Cuba's first brewery. Their descendants recently revived the beer and the brand in Miami, building this colorful tap room and bar, with a tropical garden alongside. Beers include the celebratory Inter Miami 2024-25, food chicharrón pork belly, empanadas of *ropa vieja* stewed beef, and frita cubana burgers. More boutique in style, brewpub **Casa La Rubia** serves its signature blonde ale, sold across Miami, right from the source. Salsa nights and *fútbol* watch parties characterize the Latin-inspired former home of Veza Sur.



Grails

Downtown, Black Market Miami embraces 1980s' Miami in upscale sports-bar form, 30 or so 4K TVs screening the action amid the bare brick and archive photos. Look out for game day specials and happy hour weekdays, including Fridays, 4pm-7pm. Close by, **Lost Boy Dry Goods** feels more old-school, half-priced beer and cocktails in happy hour tempting customers away from the surrounding competition. Pool tables, dartboards and a row of TV screens over the bar keep customers entertained.



All pix: Joe Stubley

Handily located beside Government Center Station, **Auld Dubliner** gets lively post-work and for big games – it opens early on weekends for that very reason. There's pool, too, and pub classics on the menu.

Just south of Downtown, you'll find plenty of sports-friendly bars in the financial district of **Brickell**. Matt Kuscher's **Kush**, the Brickell branch of this Wynwood favorite, divides its draft options between local (Kaptain Kush, Dr. Dank), craft (La Playita, La Rubia) and 'sh*tty' (all the rest), while mixing specialty drinks such as a Dan F*cking Marino of cantaloupe-infused

Vida Puebla mezcal, Campari and Aperol. TV sports, industrial lighting and plentiful neon do the rest. Opening mid-morning with an all-day menu, **American Social** offers waterfront views to accompany its extensive offering of cocktails and draft beers, Samuel Adams producing the house lager. When two old friends conceived of this top-quality concept, sports was essential to the equation – and buckets of beer to go with it. **305 Sports Bar** plays up its Miami credentials in its area-code name, offering U.S., Mexican and European beers in equal measure. You'll find Mahou, Modelo, La Rubia and La Tropical on draft,

with happy-hour deals Mon-Fri 4pm-9pm and buckets served for watching the match. Valet parking (\$10) and terrace drinking complete the picture.

Over on **South Beach, Finnegan's Way** opens up fairly early each day to screen sports and serve breakfasts (until 1pm – full Irish under \$15 until noon) on Ocean Drive. Drinks half-price during happy hour, Mon-Fri 4pm-7pm. Just behind, Liverpool hangout **Mickey Burkes** on Washington Avenue is similar in character, opening at 9am on weekends, TVs galore over a big old bar counter just begging to be propped up. **LB**

WORLD CUP 2026 Hard Rock Stadium

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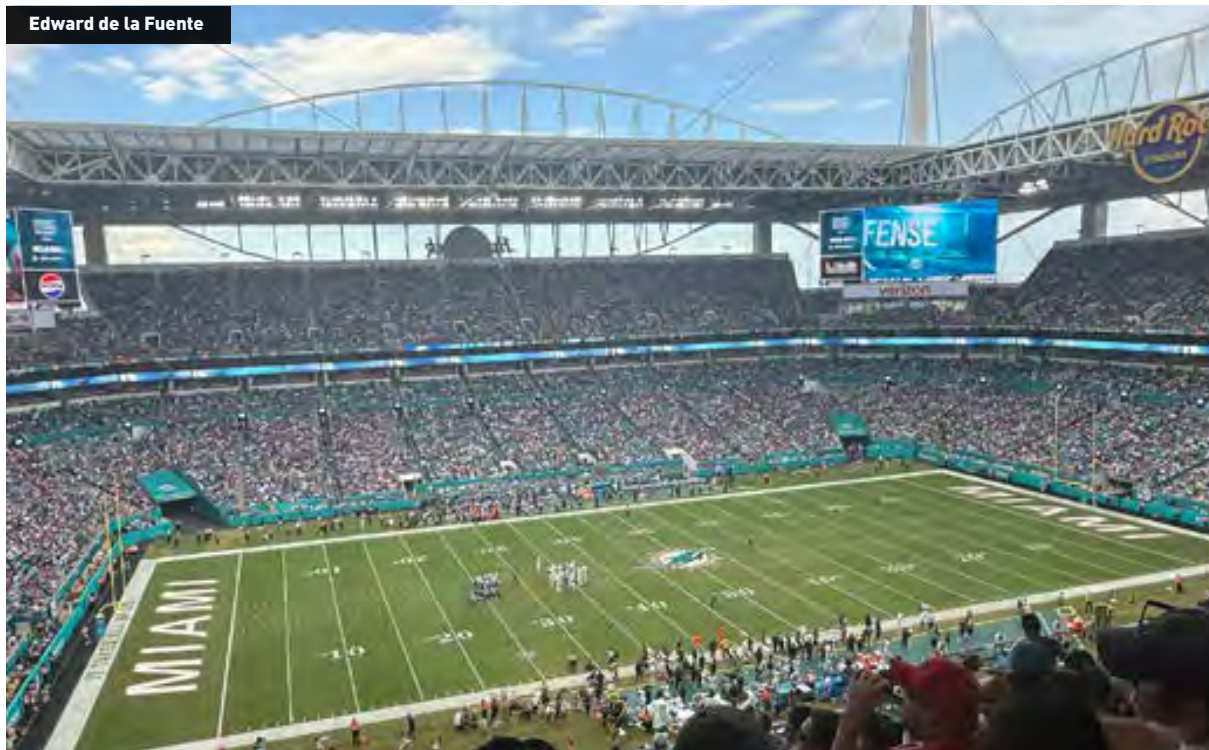
Hard Rock Stadium

The **Hard Rock Stadium** owes its existence to the man who created the NFL team that plays there. Decades before David Beckham received an expansion franchise, moved it to Miami then built a stadium there, Joe Robbie did the same. The former lawyer, sportswriter and war hero followed the AFL commissioner's advice all the way to South Florida, founded Miami Dolphins, before offering coach Don Shula an unbeatable deal and a share in the ownership. The rest, as they say, is NFL history.

And when the Dolphins started winning Super Bowls and the city-owned Orange Bowl stadium wanted to up the rent, Robbie simply built his own, in what is now Miami Gardens, 15 miles north of Downtown Miami. Robbie also had the vision to create America's first multisports arena, vowing to bring baseball to Miami, the soon-to-be Marlins, and owning NASL soccer side Miami Toros.

The later named Hard Rock Stadium would be more rectangular in shape, sacrificing intimacy for flexibility, to host soccer showcases such Barcelona v Guadalajara in 2011 before 70,000 spectators, and the chaotic Copa América Final of 2024, Messi's Argentina beating Colombia 1-0, the current capacity of 65,000 swollen by thousands of ticketless fans.

Edward de la Fuente



Getting here

Miami International Airport is eight miles (13km) northwest of Downtown Miami. On Level 3, the free **MIA Mover** runs every 5-15mins to **Miami Intermodal Center** 3-4mins away, near **Nu Stadium**. From here, the **Orange Line** of Miami's **Metro** sets off for **Government Center** in Downtown Miami, where **MiamiCentral** serves **Brightline trains** within Florida (including Fort Lauderdale and Orlando) and **Tri-Rail** commuter rail, which also

links direct to the airport. Chargeable **EASY Cards** (\$2) for Metrorail, Tri-Rail and the **Metrobus network** are available from kiosks and machines at the airport, stops and stations. You can also download the **GO Miami-Dade Transit App** or **SoFloGo App**. A taxi from Miami International Airport carries a minimum fare of \$15. **Black Cab Miami** (+1 786-299-8416) usually provides a reliable service. Also from Government Center, a free **Metromover** connects to stops around the city center every 3-5mins,



including **Brickell**, while the city's **trolley network** is also free, including around **Miami Beach**.

Lorna's/Joe Stublely



The **Hard Rock Stadium** is in **Miami Gardens**, 12.5 miles (20km) north of Miami International Airport. The nearest public transportation is Tri-Rail to **Golden Glades** 25mins away – a 10min taxi hop to the stadium. From the city, the stadium recommends booking an **Uber Shuttle** from specific pick-up points in Miami Beach and Brickell, with fixed fares. **Taxis** will drop off on 199th Street, where they await passengers after the game. Note that **Rideshare services** are subject to surge pricing, and drop-offs are in Lot 44 Betty T. Ferguson Recreational Complex, a 30min walk to the stadium.

Fixtures

June 15/6pm Saudi Arabia v Uruguay
 June 21/6pm Uruguay v Cape Verde
 June 24/6pm Scotland v Brazil
 June 27/7.30pm Colombia v Portugal
 July 3/6pm R32 W/Gp J v RU/Gp H
 July 11/5pm QF W/M91 v W/M92
 July 18/5pm 3/4 L/SF v L/SF **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Philadelphia

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Philadelphia

Philadelphia is staging its first World Cup as America marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, signed right here – in fact, the last match to be hosted at **Lincoln Financial Field** will be on July 4, although probably not involving Team U.S.A.. Missing out in 1994 as JFK Stadium had just been demolished, the City of Brotherly Love later welcomed MLS team **Philadelphia Union**, founded in 2008 and soon moving to soccer-specific **Subaru Park**, beside a former dump for chemical waste in distant, post-industrial Chester, Delaware County.

But Union's first game was at Lincoln Financial Field, which has since staged numerous showcase soccer fixtures, recently involving Arsenal, Liverpool, Newcastle and Aston Villa, as well as co-hosting the 2003 Women's World Cup and 2025 Club World Cup. Located in what is now called the **South Philadelphia Sports Complex**, an easy hop by the city's SEPTA Metro, this is where Philly's four main sports teams play, the quartet the lifeblood of the city and integral to its identity.

But soccer has its own local history. Nearby Bethlehem Steel won four of the first six U.S. Open Cups during World War I, while Soccer Hall of Famer, locally born Walter Bahr, was playing at Philadelphia Nationals when he appeared at the 1950



World Cup. It was Bahr's long shot that Joe Gaetjens deflected to score the single goal to beat England, 1-0.

And then there was Philadelphia Atoms, fielding several local players, whose winning run to the NASL title in 1973 was followed by passionate fans at Veterans Field. Three years later at JFK Stadium, Pelé, Bobby Moore and former Atoms goalkeeper Bob Rigby starred for Team America against England in the Bicentennial Cup tournament.

Philly's Fan Festival runs for all 39 days at Lemon Hill in Fairmount Park.

Where to drink

Bars with special permits may operate until 4am during the World Cup. On South Street, **Founding Fathers** celebrates sports in Philadelphia, but doubles up as a gathering place for Spurs fans, Tottenham the house lager. Yards Pale Ale and Evil Genius Hair of the Dog, both brewed a couple of miles away, also feature. Early weekend opening. In



All pix: Brian Mulligan/McGillin's

Chinatown, **Bar-Ly** shows sport from 33 screens beneath bright lanterns, with Asian fare on the menu and an absurd number of tap beers from independent breweries. Happy hour 3pm-6pm is a meal deal on non-game days. Alongside, **Lion Sports Bar** screens every Premier League game and should be *the* place for watch parties during the World Cup, facilitated by 35 TVs, sound-on transmissions and happy hour (4pm-6pm) for food, cocktails and draft beers.

On Drury Street, Philadelphia's oldest pub in continual operation, **McGillin's** screens Philly's favorite sports teams, offering 30 beers on draft and daily specials. A classic American sports bar/restaurant by Rittenhouse Square, **Cavanaugh's** invites you to pull up a bar stool facing a screen, order up its house burger with sugar-cured bacon and Warsteiner Pilsner and tune in to a Union game, with match tickets offered all season. **LD**



WORLD CUP 2026 Lincoln Financial Field

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Stadium pix: Edward de la Fuente



Brian Mulligan

Lincoln Financial Field

Its construction partly bankrolled by the City and the holding company sponsors of the same name, **Lincoln Financial Field** incorporates elements of Philadelphia and host NFL team, Philadelphia Eagles, in its design. The same brick you see in the historic architecture around town, and the same exposed steel in the city's bridges, while the canopies trace the shape of an eagle's wings. Yet the main reason Eagles fans love the Linc is for the raucous tailgating parties up to five hours before each game, a tradition set to continue come the World Cup.

Another plus is transportation, a quick ride by SEPTA Metro bringing you from the Center City to the South Philadelphia Sports Complex, established a century ago as exhibition grounds to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. With it came the Sesquicentennial Stadium, later Philadelphia Municipal and then JFK Stadium, a horseshoe-shaped bowl at one point accommodating six-figure crowds, mainly to watch Philadelphia Eagles, and annual Army-Navy football games. It was here that England played Team America in the bicentennial summer of '76, and rock legends played Live Aid.



The Eagles, the football team that is, had already moved to nearby Veterans Stadium, shared with baseball's Philadelphia Phillies and knocked down with the JFK in the early 2000s. In their place have risen the Linc, the **Xfinity Mobile Arena** and **Citizens Bank Park**

ballpark, home to the Eagles, 76ers, Phillies and Flyers, Philadelphia's four revered sports teams, as if Wembley, Twickenham, Lord's and the O2 Arena were clustered in one hub in London. Its capacity raised to 69,000 for the World Cup, Lincoln Financial Field was where Chelsea beat Palmeiras in the Club World Cup Quarterfinal in front of 65,782 on July 4, 2025, a trial run for 2026. Note that if you're not tailgating, there are drinking options at the **Stateside Live!** complex next door, but only if you buy a special package deal (from \$175) beforehand.

Getting here

Philadelphia International Airport is seven miles (11km) southwest of Center City, each terminal connected by **SEPTA Regional Rail Airport Line to Gray 30th St Station** and **Suburban Station** (\$11 on board, \$8.75 contactless or with a SEPTA Key card (\$4.95) every 30mins, 20-25mins journey time). Each subsequent ride with

SEPTA Metro, bus or other transportation is \$2.90, including two transfers, valid for up to 2hrs.

The stadium is by **NRG Station** on the **Broad Street Subway Line B**, 15mins direct from **15th St/City Hall**. Fares stay the same during the World Cup – in fact, the return journey will be free for 2hrs after each game. Parking spots 5-10min walk from the stadium start at \$125, through justpark.com. Gray 30th St Station is Philadelphia's main rail hub, with direct **Amtrak** trains from **New York Penn Station** (one-way approx \$50, journey time 1hr 30mins).

Fixtures

June 14/6pm Ivory Coast v Ecuador
 June 19/8.30pm Brazil v Haiti
 June 22/5pm France v Iraq
 June 25/4pm Curaçao v Ivory Coast
 June 27/5pm Croatia v Ghana
 July 4/5pm R16 W/M74 v W/M77 **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 San Francisco Bay

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All pix: Craig Snelgrove

San Francisco Bay

At the head of the tech-focused **Bay Area**, **San Francisco** is synonymous with the Gold Rush, post-war counterculture, and five-time Super Bowl winners, the 49ers. Based at **Levi's Stadium** down the bay in **Santa Clara**, the Niners first played at **Kezar Stadium** in a corner of Golden Gate Park. Built in 1925 on proceeds bequeathed by Mary Kezar, the youngest of a successful pioneer family from the mid-1800s, Kezar Stadium was reconstructed 90 years later, a revered

landmark for many San Franciscans. Key scenes from *Dirty Harry* were filmed here, chosen after Clint Eastwood realized its cinematic potential while watching a 49ers' game.

It was also here that Hungarian soccer legend Ferenc Puskás briefly managed the short-lived (and strangely named) **San Francisco Golden Gate Gales**, which folded with the formation of NASL in 1968. Recently, supporter-owned **San Francisco City Football Club** has moved into the rebuilt stadium, to play matches in the semi-pro USL League Two and U.S.

Open Cup. Alongside, **The Kezar Pub** is the best sports bar in town.

Showcase soccer fixtures have always been staged down the Bay, first to **Stanford Stadium** at the namesake university, where the U.S. and Brazil drew huge crowds for the 1984 Olympic tournament, then for six games at the 1994 World Cup, one involving the same two teams on July 4. The 49ers, meanwhile, moved out to **Candlestick Park**, site of the Beatles' final show in 1966. Once it was knocked down in 2015, after a farewell concert given by Paul



Mad Dog in the Fog



The Kezar Pub

McCartney, some of its seats went to Kezar Stadium and focus shifted to Santa Clara.

Though without a host soccer team since opening in 2014, Levi's Stadium has witnessed major fixtures such as Manchester United playing Barcelona and Real Madrid in summer tournaments

before sub-70,000 crowds, and the annual visit of San Jose Earthquakes, the nearest MLS side a ten-minute drive or train ride away.

No major fan festival is currently planned for the San Francisco Bay Area.

Where to drink

First port of call should be **The Kezar Pub**, by the historic stadium of the same name and Golden Gate Park, a screen-filled haven for Liverpool and 49ers' followers, open from 6am on weekends to broadcast Premier League action. Expect humungous Kezar breakfasts, wings and plentiful tap options, but most of all, old-school atmosphere.

Close by, Haight Street of 1960s' lore is where you find **Mad Dog in the Fog**, where Chesterfield scarves are given equal prominence as Real Madrid's – if you can make them out among the TVs, flags and framed shirts. A few blocks along, **Danny Coyle's** opens early for Premier League and Bundesliga games, specifically for fans of Manchester United, Spurs, Bayern and Borussia Dortmund who, somehow, all convene here. It also prides itself on the quality of its Guinness. Nearby, **Nickie's** numbers among the better sports bars, serving breakfast from 10am on weekends and screening Premier League action. Over by Union Square, **Golden Gate Tap Room** specializes in TV sports, pub games and IPA varieties. **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Levi's Stadium

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Craig Snelgrove

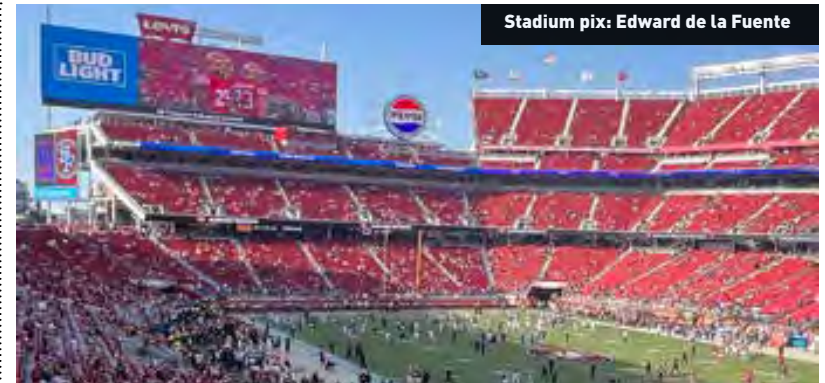
Levi's Stadium

Eco-friendly **Levi's Stadium**, a sports arena with a farm on its roof, opened in 2014 with an MLS game between San Jose Earthquakes and Seattle Sounders – but it was designed to be the new home of NFL team San Francisco 49ers after the demolition of Candlestick Park. Unsurprisingly corporate, given its proximity to Silicon Valley and universally known sponsor, for many, Levi's Stadium could never hold a candle to Candlestick Park, even though few baseball fans miss its foggy dew and chilly winds.

An open bowl of 68,500 fire-red seats, expanded to 71,000 for the World Cup, Levi's Stadium might suit the winter but for events in summer – such as showcase friendlies involving Manchester United, Barcelona, Real Madrid and Wrexham – the sun frazzles one side of the stadium, forcing spectators to find relief at the many concessions stands. That covering for rotational crops sits atop a building containing the suites, rather protect regular ticket-holders from the elements.

As the stadium lies on the flight path into nearby San Jose International Airport,

a roof would not have been possible anyway. On the plus side, a location right by rail and light rail stations means this is a rare World Cup stadium conveniently facilitated by public transportation. Host of two Super Bowls – including the most recent one featuring that epic halftime show by Bad Bunny – and concerts by Taylor Swift and Beyoncé. Levi's Stadium rises to the big occasion. Sadly, no Pot 1 team was drawn to play here in the World Cup group stage, the reason for the lack of a fan festival. (Followers of Australia's Socceroos can be trusted to find bars in San Francisco.) If Team U.S.A wins its group, it plays its Round of 32 fixture here – although tailgating



Stadium pix: Edward de la Fuente

is poor compared to Candlestick Park. The meeting point is **Clara's Junction** on Tasman Drive, a large, sports-friendly bar with a taco truck and pit bbq.

Getting here

West of the stadium, **Great America Station** is served by the Orange and Green Lines of the **VTA light rail network**, linked with the transport hub of **San Jose Diridon**, as well as **bus route 60** from **San Jose International Airport** via **Metro/Airport Station**, total journey time 45mins. A **taxi** (Yellow Checker Cab +1 408-777-7777) takes 10mins and costs \$35-\$40.

Equally close to the east, **Santa Clara, Great America Station** is on the **Amtrak** and **ACE lines**. From **San Francisco Caltrain Station** on the city's **Muni network**, take the Caltrain either to **Mountain View** (every 30mins), then transfer to the **VTA Orange Line**, total journey time 1hr 30-45mins, or



to **Santa Clara** (1hr 15mins) then head back via **Amtrak** to Santa Clara, Great America (7mins). Sacramento, Berkeley and Oakland are directly linked with Amtrak. A **taxi** from **San Francisco International Airport** takes 40mins and costs around \$140.

Fixtures

June 13/noon Qatar v Switzerland
 June 16/9pm Austria v Jordan
 June 19/8pm Turkey v Paraguay
 June 22/8pm Jordan v Algeria
 June 25/7pm Paraguay v Australia
 July 1/5pm R32 W/Gp D v 3rd place **LD**

WORLD CUP 2026 Seattle

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Seattle

The name 'Seattle Sounders' echoes across half a century of soccer in the States, from from Pelé's last competitive game in the 1970s to the MLS Cups of the 2010s. Another common thread is large crowds. When the original Sounders started life at **Memorial Stadium** in 1974, they often sold the place out, even in the pre-Pelé NASL days. Before Portland staged his farewell at Soccer Bowl '77, Seattle's Semifinal victory over Los Angeles Aztecs was witnessed by 56,256.

But it was when Sounders Mark 3 was launched at **Lumen Field** in 2009 that Seattle's fan phenomenon exploded, pushing the team top of the MLS attendance table, way ahead of Beckham's LA Galaxy. By the time Portland Timbers arrived in 2011, the Pacific Northwest had its local rivalry, a three-way Cascadia derby with Vancouver that helped transform a league that was in jeopardy a few years earlier. It was only when Atlanta burst onto the scene in 2017 that Seattle lost its hegemony in terms of crowd numbers across North America.

Built to replace the indoor **Kingdome** – where that 1977 Semifinal took place – Lumen Field is ingeniously designed to cater for both NFL and MLS, capacities set at just under 69,000 and 38,000 for each, with the possibility of a crossover for major soccer games, such as the six World Cup ones here. The one that brings together



Chuck Carlson

USMNT and Australia may challenge the stadium record noise levels set here for a Seahawks football game in 2013.

Easily accessible by light rail and Intercity trains, this former industrial zone, rebranded SoDo – initially South of the DOme, now South of Downtown – is rapidly gentrifying, only a couple of miles from that symbol of 1960s' optimism, the Space Needle. When the Sounders rebranded for MLS, it put this landmark front and center of the logo. Alongside the tower, the foundation date of 1974 links to the original NASL team, a sense of continuity unique in U.S. soccer.

Seattle's Fan Festival runs along at locations along Unity Loop, including Seattle Center, Waterfront Park, Pacific Place, and Victory Hall in SoDo.

Where to drink

Seattle is overflowing with craft beer, best sampled at a sports bar such as **Uptown Hophouse** by Climate Pledge



Stuart Fuller

Arena, the city's Fremont Brewing, Georgetown Brewing, and Urban Family Brewing featured among its 24 taps. Match action beams down from many screens, Hop dogs, wings, and flatbreads served on non-event days at the Arena. Across the street, **Tom's Watch Bar** follows its same nationwide formula, a multiscreen wraparound surrounding a huge sports bar in which jumbo wings, burgers and draft beers are served.

On 4th Ave near Westlake Station, **Yard House** is a little classier, TVs dangling over an island bar and superior food on offer, not to mention hundreds, yes hundreds, of draft ales, beers and ciders. Pouring pints of Guinness, Smithwick's, quality European beers and local craft IPAS, **The Atlantic Crossing** in Greenlake opens for Premier League action from 8.30am, its weekend breakfasts a treat for sore hangovers. **L9**



Atlantic Crossing/Anatol Steck

WORLD CUP 2026 Lumen Field

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Chuck Carlson

Lumen Field

Regularly cited as one of the most atmospheric stadiums in both NFL and MLS, **Lumen Field** stands on a former industrial zone just south of Downtown Seattle. Twin arches rising over the long sidelines and a scoreboard tower at the north end, with the 3,000-seater Hawk's Nest at its base, distinguish this arena unveiled in 2002 from the soccer-specific stadiums that have followed it. It's also considerably bigger, capacity set at just under 69,000 for football, 38,000 for soccer, while the likes of Austin, Miami and Philadelphia are way below 30,000, even 20,000.

The beauty of Lumen Field, apart from allowing in great swaths of Seattle cityscape through its open north end and views of the volcanic peak of Mount Rainier to the south, is its flexibility. Capacity for Sounders games gradually increased season upon season as more sections were opened, rising to a record



Stuart Fuller

average gate of 44,247 in 2015, more than every Premier League club but four that year, Anfield included. In 2019, Seattle's MLS Cup win over Toronto was witnessed by 69,274, the second-biggest since the league started in 1996. As well as attendances, noise levels will be recorded this summer, to see if a game – USMNT v Australia, say – can better the decibel levels set here for a Seahawks football game in 2013.

As well as tailgating, you can find prematch drinks at **Shawn O'Donnell's** at the base of Smith Tower at Pioneer Square, a homey Irish pub serving hearty fare, Guinness and local craft IPAs. Right by stadium, brewpub **Elysian Fields** embodies Seattle, its craft beer scene, its passion for local sports and its arty, bohemian side as illustrated by funky beer cans lining the fridge. Come early on game day for a terrace table.

Getting here

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport is 14 miles (23km) south of Downtown Seattle, on the same **1 Line of Sound Transit's Link** light rail network (every 8-15mins) as **Stadium** and, more convenient for Lumen Field, **International District/Chinatown** beside **King Street**, journey times 30-35mins. A **oneway ticket** (by cash/card, local **ORCA card** (\$3) or Transit GO app) is \$3, a **day**



Anatol Steck

pass \$6, 3-Day **PugetPass** \$18. **King Street Station** is also served by Amtrak trains from Los Angeles, Portland, Vancouver, and other destinations.

The ORCA card is valid for the **Monorail** (\$4, every 10mins) between **Westlake Station** (3 stops up from International District/Chinatown) and **Seattle Center** (journey time 2mins) beside the Space Needle and **Fan Zone**. A 3-Day Monorail Sea26 Fan Pass is \$20. **Seattle Airport Taxi** (+1 206-430-5051) has a set rate of \$45 to Downtown. **Parking** can be booked through **SpotHero** spothero.com/ search. Prices to park near the stadium on game days currently start around \$70 but are sure to rise.

Fixtures

July 15/noon Belgium v Egypt
 July 19/noon U.S.A. v Australia
 July 24/noon Bosnia-H v Qatar
 July 26/8pm Egypt v Iran
 July 1/1pm R32 W/Gp G v 3rd place
 July 6/5pm R16 W/M81 v W/M82 **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Toronto

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All pix: John Slama

Toronto

BMO Field is the latest, soccer-specific iteration of a long-established sports ground at this prime site west of downtown Toronto. Tucked in from windy, chilly Lake Ontario, the original Exhibition Stadium dated back to the late 1800s and hosted baseball, soccer and Canadian football – yes, there is such a thing.

NASL's Toronto Blizzard played bigger games at Exhibition Stadium. The original

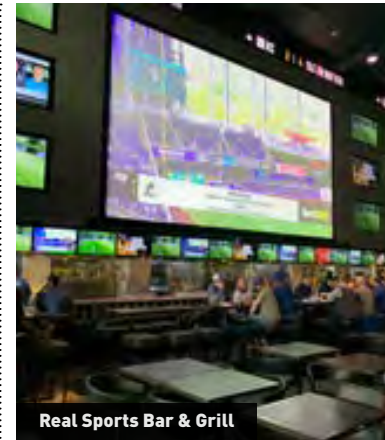
Toronto Metros–Croatia, Soccer Bowl Winners in 1976 despite the presence of Pelé, had its roots in the city's ethnic communities which dominated the Canadian game in its early days. 2026 marks the centenary of the foundation of the Canadian National Soccer League, won by teams such as Toronto Ulster, Scottish, Ukraina, Italia, and so on.

Built on those foundations, Toronto FC became the first Canadian Major League Soccer franchise in 2007 after Maple Leaf Sports & Entertainment stumped up the

CA\$10 million expansion fee to join. The Reds attracted sellout crowds, 30,584 in full voice for TFC's MLS Cup win here in 2017, starring all-time hero Sebastian Giovinco, also a Serie A winner with Juventus.

Real Madrid, Celtic, and Spurs have all appeared in recent years, while Canada opens its World Cup campaign here against Bosnia on June 12.

Toronto's Fan Festival runs all tournament at Fort York & the Bentway, tickets from CA\$122, free GA full.



Real Sports Bar & Grill



Where to drink

Sports bars are concentrated in Toronto's Entertainment District, around Union Station, convenient before the hop to BMO Field. For industrial-scale sports gawping, by Air Canada Centre, **Real Sports Bar & Grill** has 199 (!) HD TVs, a 39-footer HD screen and 126 draught beer taps while round the corner, **Hoops Sports Bar & Grill** has wall-to-wall TVs and a slew of draft beers.

In the shadow of CN Tower, **The Pint** features numerous Ontario small-batch brews among its 40 tap beers and many screens. Carefully conceived **Lucky Clover** prides itself on its 165-inch, double-sided video wall, large patio and top-quality kitchen.

A few blocks away, the **Wheatsheaf Tavern** has a neighborhood feel, dating back to 1849 and a sense of character amid the tourist-friendly gleam elsewhere. Live music and TV sports receive equal focus. Further east, **Flatiron & Firkin** is located in the basement of the city's historic Flatiron building three blocks from the station. Premium tap beers complement a British touch to the menu, and live TV sports.

On the waterfront, a couple of miles east of the stadium on Queens Quay, Ontario chain **Shoeless Joe's** attracts Toronto's Red Patch Boys supporters' group, and offers daily meal deals, wings, burgers and the like. Close by, **Amsterdam Brewhouse** is the lakeside outlet of a Dutch-founded craft-beer bar set up on John Street in 1986. Serving house beer brewed in northeast Toronto, this attractive locale comprises four spacious patios, with views of the water and CN Tower. Inside, TVs screen sports and a kitchen turns out superior bar food. Further along, **The Goodman** has a trendier feel but still with a row of TV screens over the bar, and tables with lake views. **L@**

WORLD CUP 2026 BMO Field

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BMO Field

BMO Field is Canada's national soccer stadium. After work began in March 2006 on the site of the former Exhibition Stadium near the waterfront, Toronto FC was named as the first Canadian team in MLS the following May. Unveiled in April 2007 with a TFC defeat against Kansas City Wizards, BMO Field was the main venue for the U-20 World Cup that summer. With crowds at a then near-capacity 20,195 and an artificial surface, the new arena proved the perfect stage for tournament MVP Sergio Agüero and fellow 2014 World Cup star Ángel Di María, winners with Argentina. Later TFC lynchpins Michael Bradley and Jozy Altidore scored vital goals here for U.S.A.. Despite initial poor form from its home team, BMO Field averaged a 20,000-plus attendance for its first five years as an



All pix: John Slama

MLS stadium, 16,000 of these season-ticket holders. Fan groups such as Red Patch Boys, U-Sector and Original 109 created a real soccer atmosphere in sections 111-113.

After a natural grass field was laid in 2010, a further CA\$120 million renovation between 2014-16 saw an extra tier and roof added to the East Stand, plus the pitch reconfigured for gridiron football. Capacity has risen for 2026, with 17,000 temporary seats raising the figure to 45,000, the lowest of the 16 stadiums co-hosting the tournament.

Getting here

Toronto Pearson Airport is 12 miles northwest of downtown Toronto, connected by the **Union Pearson Express** rail link from **Terminal 1** to **Union Station** (every 15mins, 30min journey time). The **Terminal Link** people mover (free, every 4-8mins) serves Terminal 1 from various parts of the airport.

Tickets are available from vending machines (cash/cards), online, contactless, or via the **PRESTO discount top-up card** (CA\$4). The stadium is by



Exhibition Station, one stop west of Union Station on the **GO Train**. Direct from the airport, the oneway fare, including transfers within 2hrs, to the

stadium is CA\$8.70 (PRESTO CA\$8.05). From Union Station, it's CA\$4.40 (PRESTO CA\$3.70). On weekends and holidays, a **day pass** is CA\$10.

A **taxi** from Terminal 1 (Door D) of Pearson Airport to Exhibition Place should cost around CA\$60-65, or CA\$70 to downtown. To contact **City Taxi Toronto**, call +1 416-740-2222 or download its free app.

Toronto Transit Commission also operates streetcars from downtown to Exhibition Place. Increased service is laid on for game days. The #509 Harbourfront streetcar runs from Union Station along Lake Shore Boulevard West, the #511 service along focal Bathurst Street.

Billy Bishop City Airport on Toronto Islands near the stadium serves short-hop flights within Canada and from Boston, Chicago and New York. A **pedestrian tunnel** links to the mainland (6min walking time) at Eireann Quay and the #509 Harbourfront streetcar. There's also a free **ferry service** (every 15mins, 2min journey time). The stadium is a 15min walk away.

Fixtures

June 12/3pm Canada v Bosnia-H
 June 17/6pm Ghana v Panama
 June 20/4pm Germany v Ivory Coast
 June 23/7pm Panama v Croatia
 June 26/3pm Senegal v Iraq
 July 2/7pm R32 RU/Gp K v RU Gp L **LD**

WORLD CUP 2026 Vancouver

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Liam Dawber



Bar pix: Sara Cooke

Vancouver

The name of **Vancouver Whitecaps** echoes through each major era of soccer in North America, from NASL to MLS. It was coined by a one-armed sporting hero inspired by the view as he drove over the spectacular Lions Gate Bridge, the Lions being the snow-topped mountain peaks beckoning to northbound traffic heading into British Columbia.

While names of sports teams and franchises change with the wind in

North America, baffling and frustrating Europeans, the one chosen by Denny Veitch on that sunny Sixties' afternoon has stuck for 70 years. Whitecaps won the NASL title in 1979, welcomed later England star Peter Beardsley and joined MLS in 2011, alongside West Coast rivals Portland Timbers.

Recently, a Whitecaps side starring Thomas Müller claimed an MLS Cup runners-up spot, 20,000-plus gathering in **BC Place** to watch the action in faraway Florida, an MLS record for a watch party. Nevertheless, all is not well in Vancouver –



the club makes the least stadium revenue of all 30 in MLS and there's strong talk of a move to Las Vegas.

Vancouver's Fan Fest takes place in the PNE Grounds at Hastings Park during the whole tournament.

Where to drink

By the statue of heroic marathon runner Terry Fox, the **Boston Pizza Restaurant & Sports Bar** is one of several Vancouver branches of this national chain, initially conceived in Edmonton 60 years old. Here, near Gate A of BC Place, it's perfectly located to serve beer and family-friendly fare to the pre-game crowds. Just behind it, the **District Bar Restaurant** takes its inspiration from New York, with brunch, bar menu and daily specials, with similar focus on booze. You can also watch the match here, in casual surroundings.

Equally close to the stadium, tucked behind Beatty Street, **Shark Club Sports Bar & Grill** doesn't skimp on screens, 72 filling this 400-seater space, plus two maximized ones. Newcastle fans who have filled their own Shark Club before a match at St James' Park might be interested to know that this is the original venue, opened below the Sandman Hotel in 1993, now back in the hands of the Gaglardi family.

A 15-minute walk away at the corner of Granville and Smithe Streets, **Dublin Calling** is where main Whitecaps supporters' group the **Southsiders** gather on match days, at 'Vancouver's Sports Headquarters'. This is where the March to the Match sets off, before turning into Robson Street and up to BC Place. Those here after the game can take in the action on 15 screens, order domestic or premium beers by the pitcher, and lay into wings, burgers or fish & chips.

Near Waterfront Station on W Cordova Street, **Lions Pub** plays up its Brit credentials, even down to the Scotch eggs and cottage pie on the menu. Screens show sports over the bar counter and around the dark-wood interior. Towards Waterfront Station, **Malones Tap House** dates back to 1998, and offers 38 craft beers on draft, with tap takeovers and long happy hours on a daily basis. TV sports, too. **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 BC Place

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BC Place

One of two Canadian venues co-hosting the 2026 World Cup, **BC Place** has long been staging soccer internationals. Located a few blocks from Downtown Vancouver, conveniently served by the Expo Line Sky Train, BC Place was originally conceived as an indoor venue where the opening of Expo 86 would take place.

Both the Vancouver Whitecaps and BC Lions played here from the first month of opening, June 1983, the NASL team until the league's closure the following year, the Canadian football team until today.

With the 2010 Winter Olympics in mind, BC Place was converted into an outdoor stadium of 54,500 capacity, topped by a new retractable roof, the largest such cable-supported structure in the world. Canada's national soccer teams have used Vancouver since the men's game with the U.S. in 1985. It was at BC Place that Tony Waiters' Canadians warmed up for the upcoming 1986 World Cup Finals with a friendly against Wales.

Following a \$150 million overhaul, BC Place staged the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympics, its transformation convincing Vancouver's reclusive owner Greg Kerfoot to elevate the club to MLS status. The Whitecaps moved into BC Place the following year, taking over (and usually filling) its lower tier.



Kerfoot continued to pour money into Canada's women's soccer team, who played Olympic qualifying playoffs at BC Place in January 2012 in front of 25,000 despite the freezing temperatures. Spectators attended in greater numbers for the 2015 Women's World Cup. When Canada faced England, the game was just over 54,000 – the final, a USWNT triumph, attracted a full house. Soccer doesn't hold a candle to Ed Sheeran, however, who drew 65,061 here in 2023.

Getting here

Vancouver International Airport is 7.5 miles (12km) southwest of Downtown Vancouver, on Sea Island. It has its own station, **YVR Airport**, at the terminus of the **Canada Line**, part of the SkyTrain network built for the 1986 Expo. This runs every 7mins to **Yaletown-Roundhouse** (nearest **BC Place**), **Vancouver City Centre** and adjacent **Waterfront** 20-25mins away in Fare Zone 1, through two Fare Zones (C\$4.55 cash or contactless, C\$3.75 with a reloadable **Compass Card**, C\$6 refundable deposit). Journeys from YVR Airport incur an additional C\$5



All pix: Sara Cooke



AddFare charge. Vancouver Taxi (+1 604-871-1111/604-255-5111) should

charge around C\$40 from the airport to the city center.

A journey within Fare Zone 1 is C\$3.15/ C\$2.55 with a Compass Card, an **all-zone DayPass** is C\$11.25. Tickets and Compass Cards are available at vending machines at all SkyTrain stations. The **SkyTrain** consists of three lines – **Stadium-Chinatown Station** on the **Expo Line** is the nearest to the East side of BC Place. You can also access the stadium by

Aquabus (C\$7.75/Day Pass C\$19) along Vancouver's waterfront, alighting at **Plaza of Nations**.

Fixtures

June 13/9pm Australia v Turkey
 June 18/3pm Canada v Qatar
 June 21/6pm New Zealand v Egypt
 June 24/noon Switzerland v Canada
 June 26/8pm New Zealand v Belgium
 July 2/8pm R32 W/Gp B v 3rd place
 July 7/1pm R16 W/M85 v W/M87

WORLD CUP 2026 Mexico City

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All pix: Jennifer Fernández Solano



Mexico City

No other capital has witnessed as many memorable moments in World Cup history as **Mexico City**. Pelé and Maradona were crowned here in 1970 and 1986. The Hand of God, the 4-3 semi, the Goal of the Century, these all unfolded in iconic arena, the **Azteca**. Only one stadium has ever hosted two World Cup finals and, although it won't be a third in

2026 but the opening fixture, the Azteca will still provide a memorable setting.

The domestic team based here is **Club América**, Mexico's most successful. Backed by media giant Televisa since 1959, América are loved and hated in equal measure, adding spice to El Súper Clásico with Guadalajara and cross-city derbies with **Cruz Azul** and **Pumas UNAM**. Founded at the university of the same acronym in 1954, UNAM moved into

the newly built **Estadio Universitario** by the sprawling college campus in **Coyoacán**, just as this leafy independent municipality was being swallowed up by Mexico City.

Some 10km south of focal Zócalo, Coyoacán still feels separate and tranquil. The 1968 Olympic Games saw the significant expansion of what was now the Estadio Olímpico Universitario to witness Bob Beamon's leap, Fosbury's



flop and the Black Power salute. It also staged four games at the 1986 tournament, one of the last works by legendary Mexican muralist Diego Rivera still in place over the main entrance.

Now holding 87,500, the Azteca underwent renovation around 2016 to coincide with its 50th anniversary, and again nearly a decade later. Funding partly came from Monterrey bank **Banorte**, which bought the naming rights to the stadium. Its reopening, a friendly between Mexico and Portugal, attracted a near full house in late March.

The city's main square Zócalo hosts the Fan Fest, from June 11 to July 19.

Where to drink

Leafy **Colonia Condesa** and **Roma Norte** make for convivial bar hops. **Falling Piano** (Coahuila 99) is the two-floor tap room of the in-house brewery inspired by George Snyder of Grand Rapids, Michigan, killed by a falling piano in 1887. This bar allows visitors to sample the dozen brews on tap and superior tacos



Celtics Pub Irlandés

while studiously avoiding the dangling piano. Sport on three screens, speed beer dating and trivia quizzes provide the entertainment.

A few blocks north at Querétaro 207, the local branch of the Mexico-wide **McCarthy's Irish Pub** puts on live music, and serves hefty bar food and the house lager. Further north at Sinaloa 61, the **Doghouse Pub** is a classier attempt at recreating the atmosphere of UK hostelry, with TV sport, plentiful tap beers, pub food (including English breakfasts) and darts.

Over on Condesa, the **Celtics Pub Irlandés** (Avenida Tamaulipas 37) dates back to 2003, when an ambitious Asturian opened this tavern dedicated to all things Celtic. Pizzas, burgers and pool also feature, as well as TV sport and occasional live music.

Close to the main square of Zócalo, **Pata Negra Centro Histórico** shows Champions League and Liga MX games in surroundings suitable for the cocktails and superior Spanish tapas they serve. **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Azteca Stadium

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Azteca Stadium

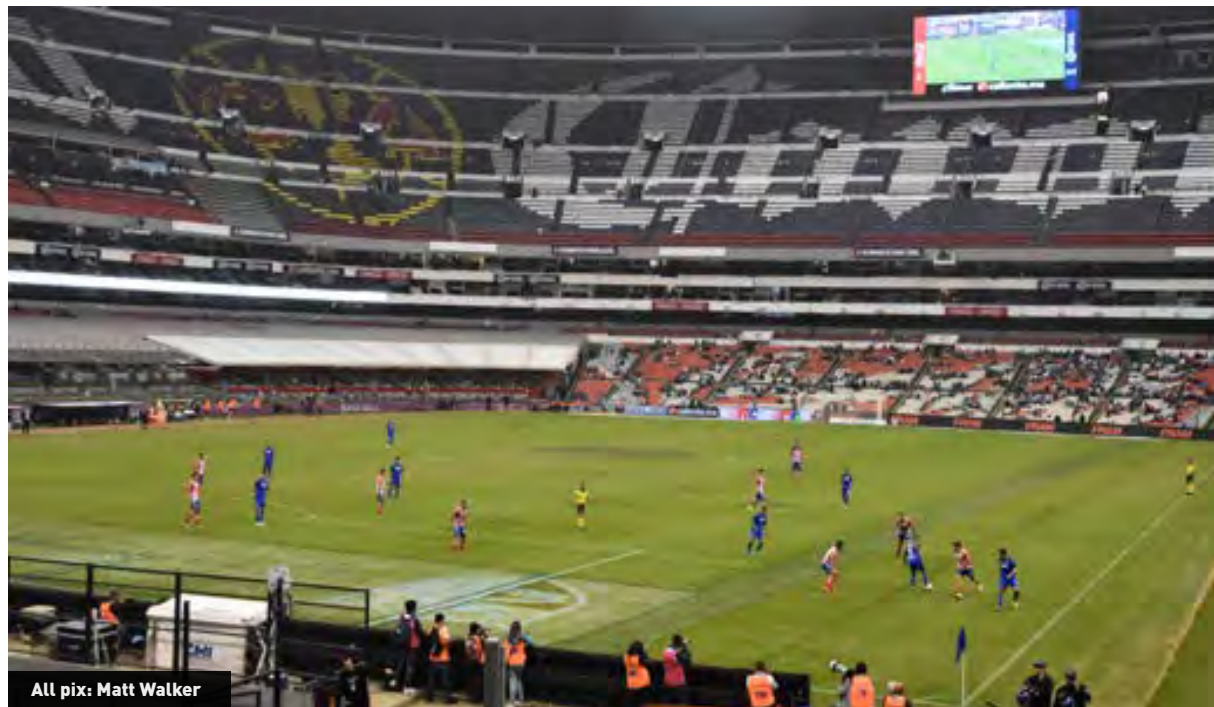
The first and currently only stadium to have hosted two World Cup finals, each a triumph for a football legend, the **Estadio Azteca** is forever linked with 1970 and 1986. Currently holding 87,500 spectators, 20,000 fewer than for that memorable Brazil-Italy final of 1970, the Azteca was pressed into service for the 1968 Olympics, co-hosting the football tournament. Head of the organising committees for both the Games and World Cup, Pedro Ramírez Vázquez and his fellow architect Rafael Mijares travelled Europe to observe major sports arenas, influencing their common project. Both were inspired by European modernism but also the pre-Columbian culture of Mexico – in the stadium concourse, they had American sculptor Alexander Calder create his largest work, *El Sol Rojo*, its red sun motif summoning the central tenets of Aztec culture.

Colour broadcasts of the 1970 finals helped establish record audiences around



the world, games kicking off at noon or mid-afternoon to correlate with TV viewing times in Europe. After the heart-stopping 4-3 semi-final between Italy and West Germany here, the Match of the Century commemorated with a plaque, Pelé's band of gold Brazil put on a wonderful display in the final. This would be the last time the original Jules Rimet trophy still gleamed – to be kept by Brazil and later stolen.

With high-res LED screens and new seating, the Azteca stages the opening ceremony for 2026. When the World Cup circus leaves town on July 5 after the Round of 32, the Azteca may have hosted Mexico four times, two group games and potentially two knock-out rounds.



All pix: Matt Walker

Getting here

Benito Juárez International Airport is 8km (five miles) north-east of downtown Mexico City.

Red Metrobús line 4 runs every 10-15mins from **Gate 7** of Terminal 1 and **Gate 2** of Terminal 2 to **San Lázaro metro station** 1min away. Buy an **integrated mobility card** (Tarjeta de Movilidad Integrada, MX\$15/US\$0.90) valid for the Metrobús, Metro and light-rail networks from machines at stations and stops (card only). Metrobús is MX\$6/

US\$0.35 per ride, Metro MX\$5/US\$0.30 and light rail MX\$3/\$0.20. Networks close at midnight and reopen at 5am.

A short walk from Terminal 1, the **Terminal Aérea station** is the terminus of **Metro line 5** while 500m from Terminal 2, **Pantitlán station** serves **lines A, 1, 5 and 9**. Lines 1 and 5 connects to the city centre and line 2, which terminates at **Tasqueña**. Here you can pick up the **Xochimilco light-rail line** (tren ligero), 15mins/nine stops from **Estadio Azteca** serving the stadium alongside. From central **Zócalo** via

Tasqueña to the stadium, allow around 1hr. From the airport, a taxi can reach the Azteca in 40mins or be in the city centre in 30mins. Buy your taxi ticket at the **Transporte Terrestre** kiosk in either terminal – expect to pay around MX\$300/US\$17 into town, MX\$400/US\$23 to the Azteca.

Fixtures

June 11/1pm Mexico v South Africa
June 17/8pm Uzbekistan v Colombia
June 24/7pm Czech Republic v Mexico
June 30/7pm R32 W/Gp A v 3rd place
July 5/6pm R16 W/M79 v W/M80 **LD**

WORLD CUP 2026 Guadalajara

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All pix: Stephen Woodman/Los Famosos Equipales

Guadalajara

Mexico's second city is, locals would argue, its football capital. Home to the eponymous CD Guadalajara, 12-time Mexican champions, this is where some of the most memorable moments in World Cup history have taken place.

The Banks save, the Pelé lob from the halfway line, his Mazurkiewicz dummy, Josimar's thunderbolt, the epic France-Brazil showdown of 1986, they all took place here. But they all took place at the Estadio Jalisco – and the action this

June will not only be at another stadium, the **Estadio Akron**, but in another city, **Zapopan**, a 15-minute drive west of Guadalajara.

CD Guadalajara, known by all as Chivas, the Goats, moved in as soon as the stadium opened in 2010. Their city rivals, however, Atlas, stayed at the Jalisco, which means that the Clásico Tapatío between them has since taken place at alternate stadiums. Chivas recruits solely Mexicans, ideally players from Jalisco state. While this rule is sometime stretched, it is typified by locally born Javier Hernández, who joined Chivas when he was nine.



Fittingly, it was Chicarito who scored the first goal at the newly built Estadio Akron in 2010, against Manchester United, the striker then playing the second half for his new club.

Visitors whose early football memories were shaped by the 1970 World Cup can make a pilgrimage to the Estadio Jalisco north-east of the city centre, near Monumental on Line 1 (Mi Macro Calzada) of the Guadalajara Macrobus network. Just across the main road, a dramatic sculpture by ex-player Miguel Miramontes Carmona, *Los Futbolistas*, celebrates the tournament on a square renamed Plaza Brasil.

Central square Plaza de la Liberación is the location for the Fan Festival, between the Teatro Degollado and the illuminated Cathedral.



Señor Stone



Where to drink

About 2km west of the city centre, trendy **Colonia Americana** is where you find the long-established **York Pub**. Serving its own-brand beers with the Union Jack logo on the glass, it beams sport on several TVs. A few buildings along, **Señor Stone** goes big on ribs, beer and football – note the framed shirts and multi-screen action.

Nearby, **Sky Wings** has screens a-plenty plus a huge range of bottled beer to

accompany its namesake chicken speciality. A block away, **Gallo Cervecero** also focuses on chicken and cerveza, poured by the litre during generous happy hours after 7pm Mon-Thur. Screened sport is another major feature.

In the city centre close to Cineforo, the **Sky Gamers Sport Bar** 'feels like you were at the stadium', vast screens showing any number of fixtures, classic video games and old-school bar pastimes providing pre- and post-match entertainment.

Don't miss legendary corner cantina **Los Famosos Equipales**, once a corner grocery store that developed into a popular hangout as regulars pulled up a table outside, *equipales* being the chairs they sat on. Dating back to 1920, it displays team line-ups and match photos from the radio era. The speciality here is the Nalga Alegre, a cocktail of rum, gin, red wine and orange soda. **LB**

WORLD CUP 2026 Estadio Akron

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Estadio Akron

The patches of cloud forest swathing La Primavera, the wooded biosphere reserve backdropping the **Estadio Akron**, partly inspired French architect/inventor Jean-Marie Massaud to create the signature white ring floating above its 46,000 fire-red seats. Its bowl shape is also taken from the natural surroundings of extinct volcanos – spectators enter as if under the volcano and two of the arena's five levels are below ground.

No wonder it was almost a decade in the making. When film producer and nutrients entrepreneur Jorge Vergara took over the city's flagship club, CD Guadalajara, in 2002, it was his aim to have them move out of their groundshare at the Estadio Jalisco (of World Cup 1970 fame) and into a new stadium for their centenary in 2006.

In the end, the curtain-raising was script-perfect but not as Vergara originally



envisaged – who knows what he thought when fantasy designer Massaud first sat in his office talking of clouds and volcanos.

Massaud's ring provides shade but, separating the upper rim of seating, allows natural light to fall over spectators and the turf, which soon replaced the controversial artificial surface. This was the stage for local boy Javier Hernández to bid farewell to fans by scoring the opening goal in the curtain-raising friendly Manchester United, the club he had just signed for, in 2010. He then played for his new team in the second half.

All pix: Stephen Woodman



CD Guadalajara, known by all as Chivas, recruits only Mexicans, often raising them, too. 'Chicarito' would return the love shown by his home town by returning to see out his illustrious playing career in 2023. Note that the Estadio Akron will be referred to be its non-sponsored name of the **Estadio Guadalajara** for the tournament.

Getting here

The Estadio Akron is not actually in Guadalajara but Zapopan, an adjoining

community a 15-minute drive west from the metropolis. A new express route on the **Macrobus network, Line 5 (Mi Macro Aeropuerto)**, will run from the airport, calling at eight stops including main points in the city centre and the stadium.

Order and pay for a taxi at the desk in airport arrivals. Expect to pay around MX\$750/US\$42 to the stadium and MX\$500/US\$28 to the city centre.

Zapopan-based **A Su Servicio GDL** taxis (+52 33 3146 2354) are fairly reliable. Note that **Uber** drivers must pick up and drop off in a car park 1.2km from the airport on the Chapala highway.

Fixtures

June 11/8pm South Korea v Czech Republic
 June 18/7pm Mexico v South Korea
 June 23/8pm Colombia v DR Congo
 June 26/6pm Spain v Uruguay **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Monterrey

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Monterrey

Which city generates the highest average attendances in Mexico's Liga MX, among the top ten most lucrative leagues in the world? Mexico City? No. Guadalajara? No way, José. It's **Monterrey**. And not only five-time champions **CF Monterrey**, who play in front of 45,000 fans every home game at the **Estadio BBVA**, a 2026 World Cup venue – but also their city rivals, **Tigres UANL**, based at the **Estadio Universitario**, where four games took place for the 1986 tournament.

Given that Tigres usually attract 40,000-plus, too, the Clásico Regiomontano between them is arguably the fiercest in Mexico, tickets snapped up straight away. The name refers to mountainous terrain surrounding Monterrey. Towering over the Estadio BBVA to the south-east rise the four peaks of the Cerro de la Silla, a symbol of the city. The location is officially **Guadalupe**, a separate community a few kilometres east of Monterrey.

CF Monterrey – known as the Rayados after their blue-and-white striped shirts – have only played here since 2015. Before then, the Stripes mainly played at the **Estadio Tecnológico**, another 1986 World Cup host. It was here that England lost their opening game to Portugal and drew 0-0 with Morocco.

In 1999, the club was bought by FEMSA, a powerful multinational involved in



Both pix: Stephen Woodman/McCarthys Irish Pub



Stadium Doce Sports Bar Club

beverage and retail. It oversees the bottling of more units of Coca-Cola than anywhere in the world, in what is considered the richest city in Mexico. It was FEMSA which developed the Estadio BBVA, the eco-friendly Steel Giant of 53,500 capacity, co-designed by Populous of Wembley fame and prestigious Mexican architects VFO.

Green-lit in 2010, the stadium was created with serious green credentials, blending in with the ecological park around it.

Halfway between the city centre and Guadalupe, Parque Fundidora hosts the Fan Festival, where Avenida Fundidora meets Adolfo Prieto.

Where to drink

A short hop south of the Estadio BBVA, the screen-filled **Stadium Doce Sports Bar Club** (Paseo de las Américas 2101) fills its narrow space with framed CF Monterrey and Tigres shirts and match tickets, serving superior bar food and pouring various types of bottled beer into chilled glasses.

Further south, in the lively district of Contry at the foot of La Silla, the **Strikers Sports Joint** (Avenida Eugenio Garza Sada Sur 3680) focuses on food, served in bare-brick surroundings offset by rows of TV screens. On the same avenue nearer the centre, **La Taberna House of Brews** offers two-dozen sought-after varieties on tap in five sizes, up to a litre glass and a growler, including by local producers Cuauhtémoc Moctezuma and Cervecería Rrèy, in a stand-alone wooden house dotted with TV screens. Alongside, the Monterrey branch of the Mexico-wide **McCarthys Irish Pub** lives up to its motto ('Let's Rock!'), keeping students from the nearby university happy with house lager, pub grub and TV football.

On the fringes of the Historic Quarter, where bars surround cobbled streets, the **Beer Saloon Barrio Antiguo** attempts to recreate the days of the Old West while treating guests to TV sport, ice-cold beer and wood-fired pizzas. **LG**

WORLD CUP 2026 Estadio BBVA

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Estadio BBVA

Appropriately nicknamed the Steel Giant, the **Estadio BBVA** sits just outside the industrial hub of Monterrey in the municipality of Guadalupe, in the looming shadow of the four-peaked Cerro de la Silla. In order to dissuade the authorities from blocking its construction in an expanse of greenery, powerful multinational FEMSA, which owns CF Monterrey, had architect Federico Velasco, Mexican firm V&FO Arquitectos and Populous of Wembley fame come up with an eco-friendly design that earned it LEED Gold status for sustainability, a first for a Latin-American stadium.

The challenges were significant. Surrounded by trees, green zones help filter rainwater while the contours of the stadium not only merge with the surroundings but allow the stadium to dip from the north end 46 metres high to the south at 32 metres, giving spectators in



the north-west corner a prime view of the mountain peaks.

Within the stadium, two tiers of 53,529 seats in the blue and white of CF Monterrey slope at angle of 34 degrees almost to the edge of the pitch, making the Estadio BBVA the most intimate of the 16 venues hosting the 2026 tournament.

The Estadio BBVA has already staged two World Cup fixtures, the inter-confederation play-offs in late March involving Bolivia, Suriname and eventual qualifiers, Iraq. Sadly, Mexico won't be playing here, not even for the Round of 32 match up, the only knock-



All pix: Stephen Woodman

out game of the four scheduled here this summer.

Getting here

Monterrey International Airport is 17 miles (28km) north-east of town. A **Ruta Express bus** (MX\$15/US\$0.90, every 20-30mins, 4.30am-10.30pm) to town sets off from **Terminal C** and calls at 20 stops before arriving at **José Martí** near **Estación Y Griega**. From town, it goes from Estación Y Griega to Terminal A. Journey time is 90mins-2hrs, depending on traffic. Pay cash on board, purchase a rechargeable **Me Nuevo card** (MX\$20/US\$1.15) from a metro station or convenience store or download the **Urbani**

travel app. A free shuttle links all three termini at the airport.

Also from Terminal C, the **Noreste** service (MX\$140/US\$8, every 30-45mins) runs to **Monterrey Central bus station** (45min-1hr journey time) at Avenida Cristóbal Colón 855 by **Cuauhtémoc** metro station. The **Grupo Senda** runs hourly services from the airport (referred to as 'Aeropuerto Mariano Escobedo (NL)' on timetables) Terminal C to Estación Y Griega for about the same price, journey time 90mins-2hrs.

Both Y Griega and Cuauhtémoc are on the same **line 1** of the **Metrorey network** as **Exposición**, its terminus

and the nearest station to Estadio BBVA a 10-15min walk south, making it an easy transfer. A single metro journey is MX\$10/US\$0.60, a combined or longer one, MX\$15/US\$0.90.

From its outlets in the airport terminal, **Taxi Seguro** (+52 81 1649 2295) offers fixed rates to town, charging around MX\$500/US\$29. It also has a main dispatch office at the Central bus station.

Fixtures

June 14/8pm Sweden v Tunisia
 June 20/10pm Tunisia v Japan
 June 24/7pm South Africa v South Korea
 June 29/7pm R32 W/Gp F v R-U/Gp C **LG**