

City Report
FIFA World Cup 2026

Houston

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Houston

Overview

Country	United States of America
Host stadium	NRG Stadium (FIFA tournament-time name: Houston Stadium), Houston, TX
Distance to Downtown	~8 miles (13 km) south of Downtown Houston
Stadium capacity	68,311
Roof / cover type	Retractable roof; fully air-conditioned
Altitude	~13 m (43 ft)
Timezone (June-July 2026)	Central Daylight Time (UTC-5)
Official language(s)	English (Spanish very widely spoken; Vietnamese, Mandarin and Arabic well represented in the metro)
Match count & dates	7 matches: 5 Group Stage (14th-26th June), 1 R32 (29th June), 1 R16 (4th July)
Primary airport(s)	IAH (George Bush Intercontinental) is the primary gateway; HOU (William P. Hobby) serves as a secondary option
Population (metro)	~7.5 million (Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land metro)

Risk ratings

Security	LOW
Travel Disruption	HIGH
Medical Infrastructure	LOW
Natural Disasters	HIGH
Storms/ Hurricanes	HIGH
Heat	HIGH

Houston combines extreme summer heat and humidity with exposure to Gulf hurricanes and tropical-rainfall floods, resulting in one of the highest-risk venues in the US. NRG Stadium has a retractable roof and full air conditioning, materially reducing heat exposure during the game. Houston is one of the most transportation-

stressed US host cities, with sprawling urban areas, freeway dependence, and chronic exposure to flooding near the Houston Ship Channel and Buffalo Bayou systems. Hurricane Harvey in 2017 demonstrated the basin's extreme rainfall potential and the heightened hurricane-related risks.

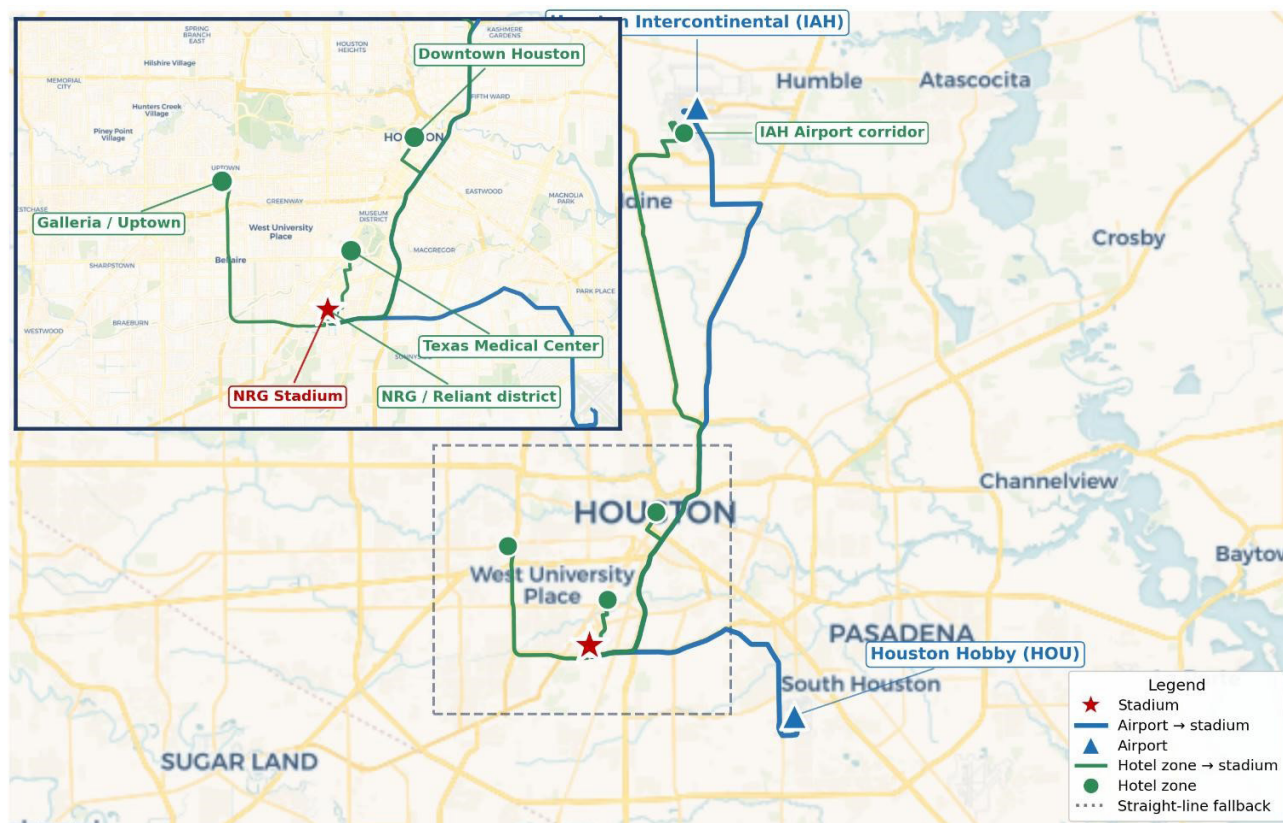
Arrival, departure and transportation

Airports and public transport

IAH (George Bush Intercontinental) is the primary airport, located about 22 miles (35 km) north of downtown. Travellers are advised to allow three hours for international departures during the tournament window. HOU (William P. Hobby) is a smaller, domestic-focused secondary airport about 7 miles (11 km) south of downtown. Both airports are well served by ground transport, but neither has a direct rail connection to downtown; rideshare and taxis are the practical options. METRORail Red Line connects the downtown area to the NRG Stadium area.

Recommended accommodation zones

Downtown Houston offers the best in-city experience, about 15 to 25 minutes from NRG Stadium in normal conditions. The Galleria and Uptown form the upmarket business district, located 20 to 35 minutes from the venue. The Texas Medical Center is closest to NRG at 10 to 15 minutes and has a high concentration of hotels. Alternatives include The Heights and Montrose, which are 20 to 30 minutes from the stadium, and Sugar Land in the southwest suburbs, which is a lower-cost alternative at 25 to 40 minutes from the venue.



Security and medical risks

Crime

Houston's violent crime rate is moderately elevated and concentrated in specific neighbourhoods. Tourist zones, such as Downtown, Midtown, the Museum District, Montrose, the Galleria and the Medical Center are well-policed and low risk. Specific areas have higher reported crime rates and are not on standard tourist routes: the Greater Third Ward, the Fifth Ward, Greenspoint and Sharpstown. Citywide violent crime fell about 9% in 2025, highlighting an improvement in crime rates across the city. Vehicle break-ins are the dominant property crime exposure for visitors. The NRG Park complex itself is operationally low-risk during events.

Terrorism

Houston maintains an elevated baseline counterterrorism posture as a major energy, port and transportation hub. FBI Houston, Houston Police Department (HPD), Harris County Sheriff's Office, Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), and the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) coordinate regional security. Visitors should expect visible security at IAH, the Port of Houston and the NRG Stadium perimeter. Standard situational-awareness measures apply throughout the tournament window.

Unrest

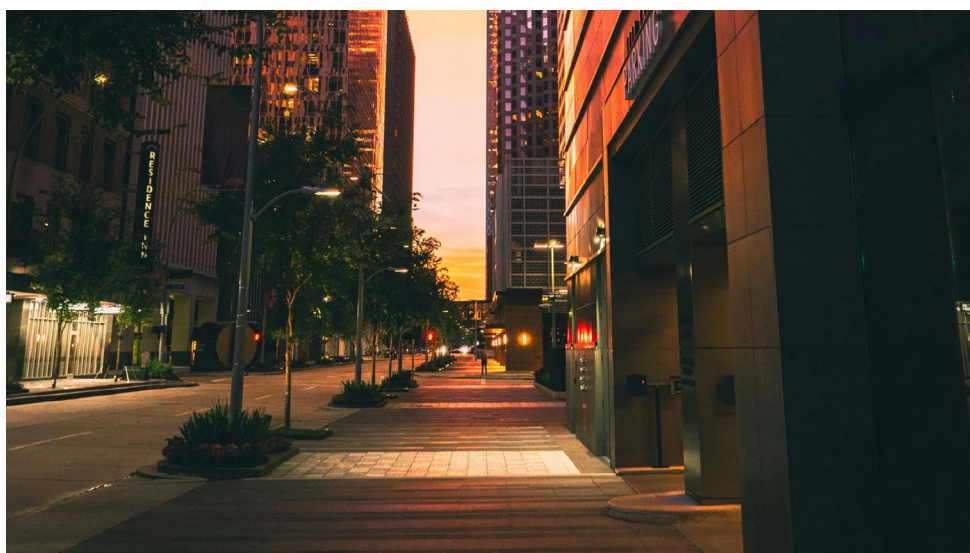
Unrest risks are moderate in Houston compared to other American host cities, with City Hall the dominant flashpoint in recent years, where the largest protests in the city have occurred. The Mickey Leland Federal Building / Houston Immigration Court on Smith Street has been an ICE-enforcement protest site in 2025. Tournament-window large-unrest risk is low; most demonstrations remain peaceful and are well-managed by local authorities.

Natural disaster

Gulf hurricane and tropical-storm exposure is the dominant hazard in Houston. June and July are early in the hurricane season, but documented direct hits and near-misses have occurred. Heavy rainfall from tropical or non-tropical systems can cause catastrophic urban flooding, as demonstrated by Hurricane Harvey (2017). The Buffalo Bayou and Houston Ship Channel systems are flood-prone at multiple recurrence intervals. Severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, and hail are typically documented throughout the tournament window.

Heat

Houston's June and July humidity pushes perceived temperatures above 105°F (40°C) on most days. NRG Stadium's retractable roof and air conditioning materially reduce heat exposure once inside the stadium, but pre-match queuing and the EaDo Fan Festival remain high heat-illness exposures. Travellers should prioritise hydration, particularly during daytime hours.



Stadium and matchday

Match schedule

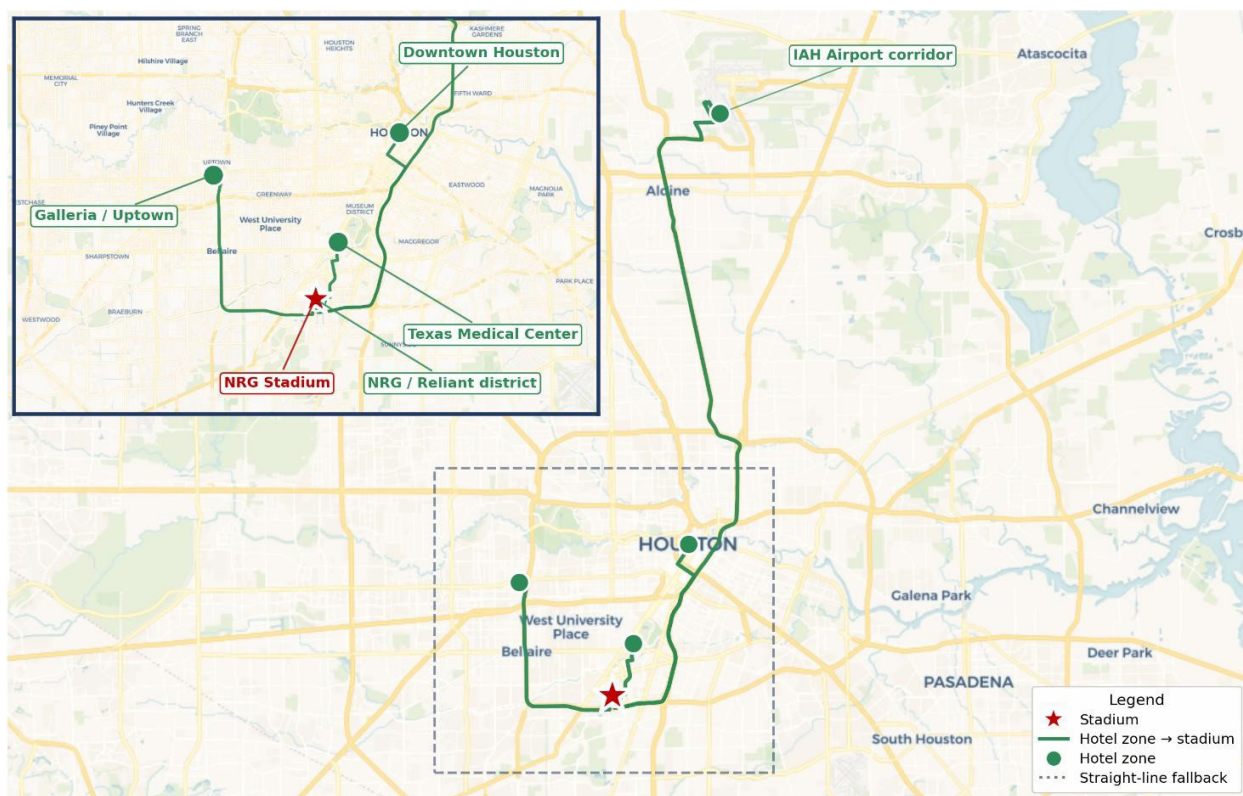
Date	Match	Stage	Kickoff (local)
14 th June	Germany - Curaçao	Group E	12h00
17 th June	Portugal - DR Congo	Group K	12h00
20 th June	Netherlands - Sweden	Group F	12h00
23 rd June	Portugal - Uzbekistan	Group K	12h00
26 th June	Cape Verde - Saudi Arabia	Group H	19h00
29 th June	Winner of Group C - Runner-up Group F	Round of 32	12h00
4 th July	Winner of Match 73 - Winner of Match 75	Round of 16	12h00

Public transport and transportation to the stadium

NRG Stadium sits in the NRG Park complex, about 6 miles (10 km) southwest of downtown Houston. The METRORail Red Line serves the venue (Stadium Park / Astrodome station). Driving routes converge on

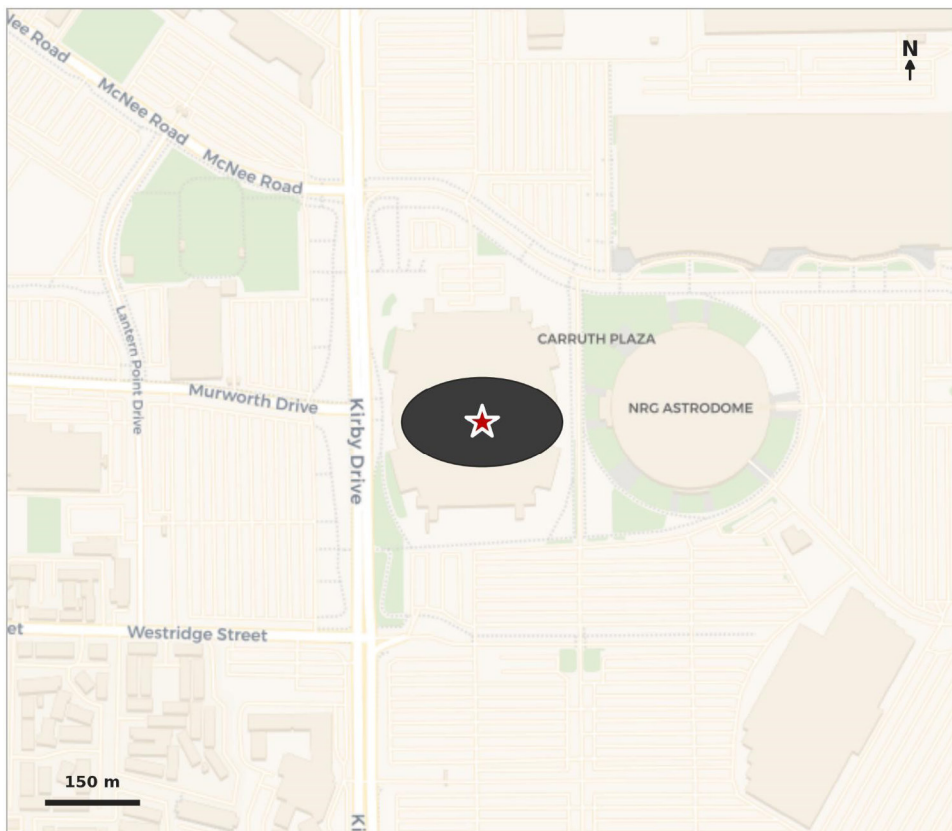
the South Loop (I-610), State Highway 288, Kirby Drive and Main Street. HPD and the Harris County Sheriff's Department close the inner perimeter to non-credentialed traffic four hours before kickoff. Pre-purchased parking is mandatory; rideshare drop-off operates from designated lots. Travellers should allow for at least 30–

45 minutes for travel from downtown and 45–60 minutes from the Galleria on matchdays. Houston hosts two knockout matches: the Round of 32 on 29th June and the Round of 16 on 4th July, as it is also US Independence Day. The Round of 16 will have the largest perimeter footprint of any Houston match.



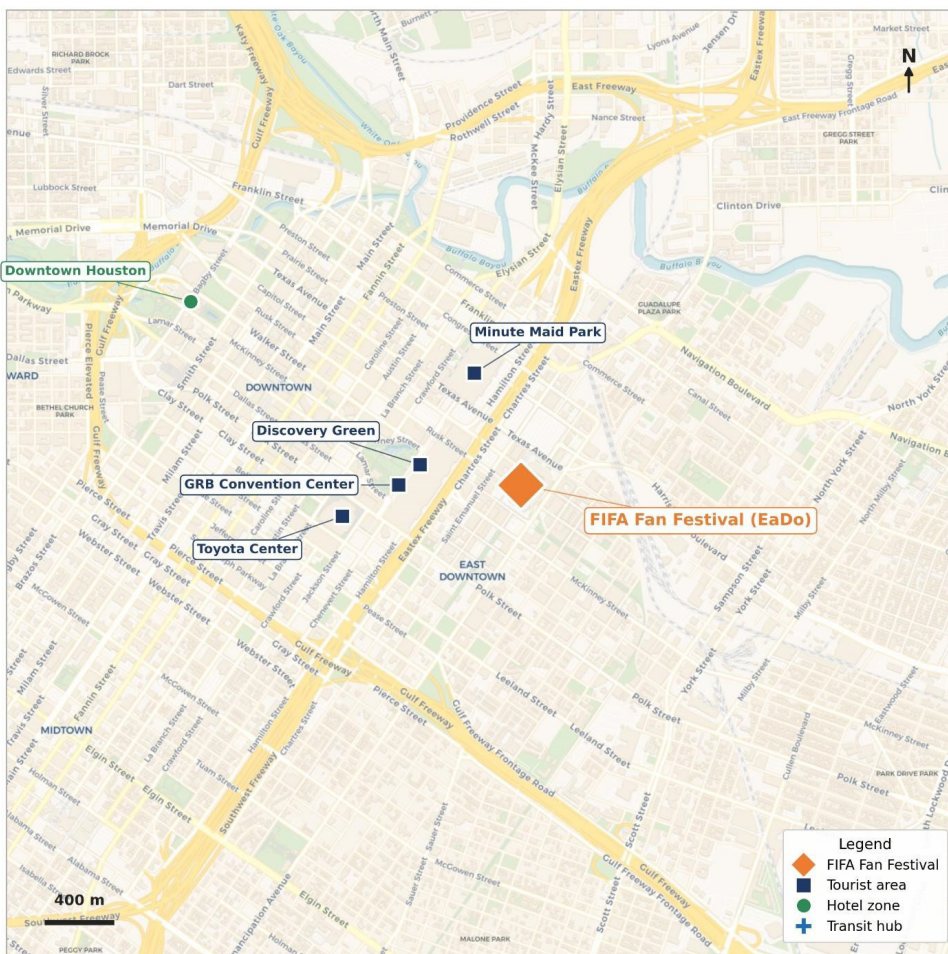
Entry/gates into the stadium

Per FIFA standard policy for the 2026 World Cup, NRG Stadium gates are expected to open two hours before kickoff. A FIFA-standard clear-bag policy is enforced (maximum 12" x 6" x 12" / 30.5cm x 16cm x 30.5cm), and there is no bag check or storage on-site. The screening is conducted by a metal detector and visual inspection. Prohibited items include professional cameras with detachable or telephoto lenses, drones, oversized signs and banners (FIFA's typical size limit is ~2 m x 1.5 m), umbrellas and any flagpoles. The retractable roof typically closes for matches in the summer Gulf heat; under standard NRG operating procedure, the open/closed call is made two hours before kickoff and cannot be reversed for the rest of the match, with the roof taking about 10 minutes to fully actuate.



Fanzones

The official FIFA Fan Festival is in East Downtown (EaDo), near Shell Energy Stadium, and runs from 11th June to 19th July 2026. It is free to the public, every match day, with a capacity for about 15,000 visitors daily. Discovery Green is adjacent and will host additional commercial watch-party activity. Each official fan zone operates its own screening perimeter. The EaDo Fan Festival site is a mature event corridor, and operations should run smoothly, but expect compounded heat and humidity during midday kickoffs, particularly with limited shade; hydration is essential for queuing fans and Fan Festival attendees.



Match risk rating

Match	Date and Kickoff (All Times Local)	Match Risk Rating
Germany – Curaçao	14th June 12h00	MINIMAL
Portugal – DR Congo	17th June 12h00	MINIMAL
Netherlands – Sweden	20th June 12h00	LOW
<p>This match is rated as LOW risk due to the likelihood of disruption in Houston. Precedent from past World Cups indicates that the Netherlands are likely to have one of the largest fanbases; Dutch fans generally congregate in large numbers in public squares and main roads on matchdays and MD-1, which is liable to result in disruption in Downtown Houston and in the vicinity of NRG Stadium. Sweden fans are likely to travel in moderate numbers to Houston for the match; clashes between the two fanbases are highly unlikely to be recorded, though isolated instances near the stadium and in high footfall areas in Downtown Houston cannot be ruled out. Demand surge is likely to affect the Red Line light rail, as well as major roads such as Highway 288, I-610, and Almeda and Main Streets.</p>		
Portugal – Uzbekistan	23rd June 12h00	MINIMAL
Cape Verde – Saudi Arabia	26th June 18h00	MINIMAL
Round of 32	28th June 12h00	MODERATE
<p>This match is assessed as MODERATE risk due to elevated security and operational risks commensurate with the knockout stage. While the teams are not confirmed for this match, knockout stage matches are more likely to involve two teams with large fanbases, with a higher likelihood of disruption and fan unrest if it is a rivalry match or involves a fanbase with ultras presence. Disruption is likely to be recorded in Downtown Houston and the vicinity of NRG Stadium due to fan gatherings in public squares on matchday and MD-1. Demand surge is likely to affect the Red Line light rail, as well as major roads such as Highway 288, I-610, and Almeda and Main Streets.</p>		
Round of 16	4th July 12h00	MODERATE
<p>This match is assessed as MODERATE risk due to elevated security and operational risks commensurate with the knockout stage. While the teams are not confirmed for this match, knockout stage matches are more likely to involve two teams with large fanbases, with a higher likelihood of disruption and fan unrest if it is a rivalry match or involves a fanbase with ultras presence. Disruption is likely to be recorded in Downtown Houston and the vicinity of NRG Stadium due to fan gatherings in public squares on matchday and MD-1. Demand surge is likely to affect the Red Line light rail, as well as major roads such as Highway 288, I-610, and Almeda and Main Streets.</p>		

Business as usual operations

Demand surges around match days, particularly the Round of 32 on 29th June and the Round of 16 on 4th July. The South Loop (I-610), I-45 and US-59 are highly likely to face elevated disruption around afternoon kickoffs. Houston hotels, particularly in the Galleria, Medical Center and Downtown, will see elevated demand across the tournament window. The most affected sectors include energy, aerospace and NASA operations, healthcare, maritime and port operations, and oil services. NRG Park sits south of downtown, so direct disruption to CBD offices is moderate.

will close adjacent surface streets and pull traffic onto the South Loop in both directions, increasing city-wide disruption risks during matchdays.

around Discovery Green and the NRG Park perimeter are highly likely to be enforced, particularly given Houston's energy-sector sponsorship density.

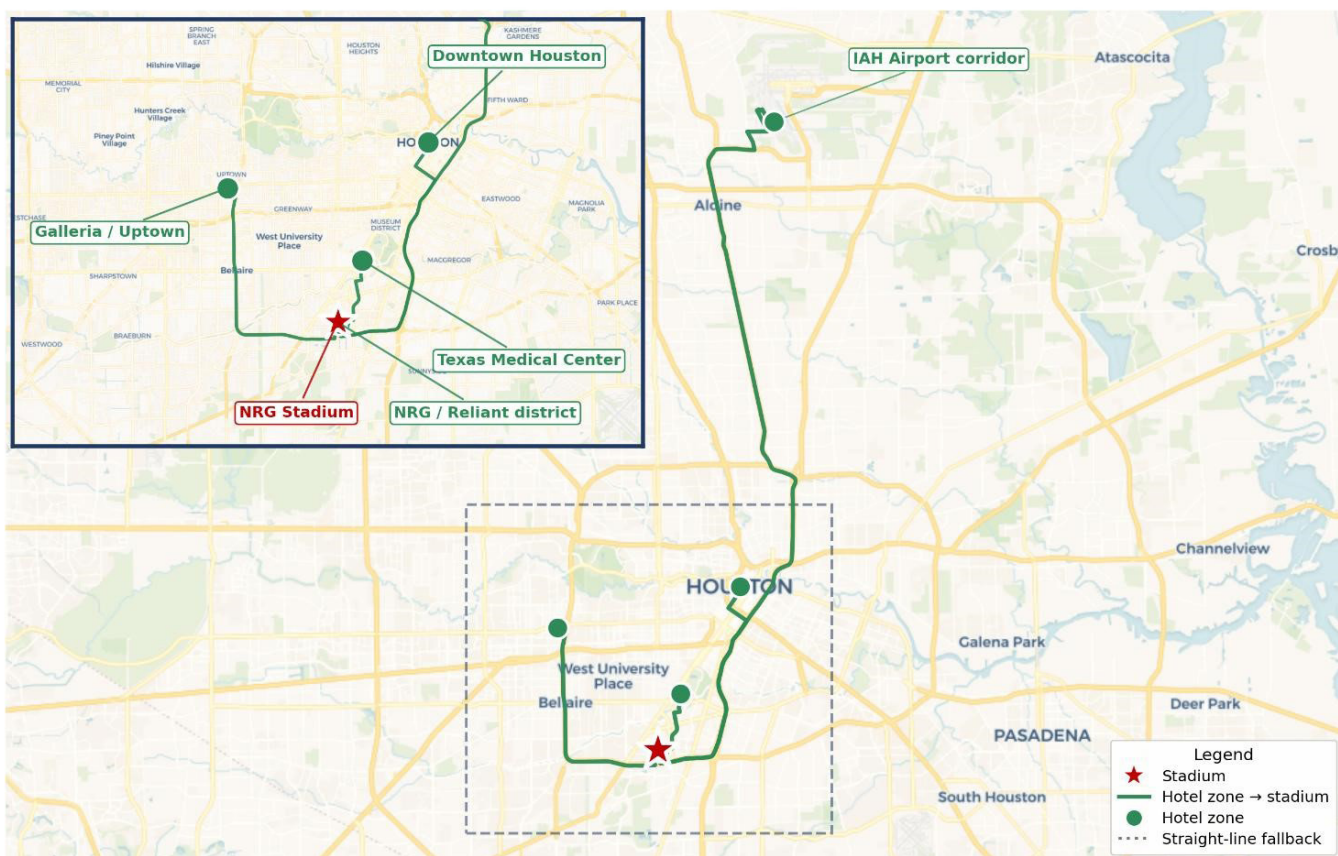
Recommendations for businesses and organisations

- Consider implementing remote-work options for staff commuting via the South Loop (I-610), I-45 or US-59. NRG Stadium operations

- Pre-book hotel blocks for visiting staff. The Galleria, Medical Center and Downtown clusters will likely face demand surges during the tournament window; consider Sugar Land or The Woodlands as overflow options.
- Maintain an active hurricane-preparedness plan throughout the tournament. June marks the start of the Atlantic hurricane season, and a tropical system's landfall during the tournament is plausible.
- Brief marketing and legal teams on FIFA-marks restrictions: ambush-marketing enforcement

Recommendations for residents

- Plan errands and medical appointments away from match-day afternoons.
- Refresh hurricane evacuation kits and keep a grab-bag in case of hurricane or tropical storm-related disruption.
- Sign up for the Houston OEM alerting service and AlertHouston to stay apprised of severe weather, flood and operational developments.



Multi city travel

Houston sits in FIFA’s Central cluster. Flights to Dallas are about an hour, Atlanta about two and a half, Mexico City about two and a half, and Monterrey about an hour. Houston is one of the closest US host cities to the Mexican host cities and a strong base for fans following matches across both countries.

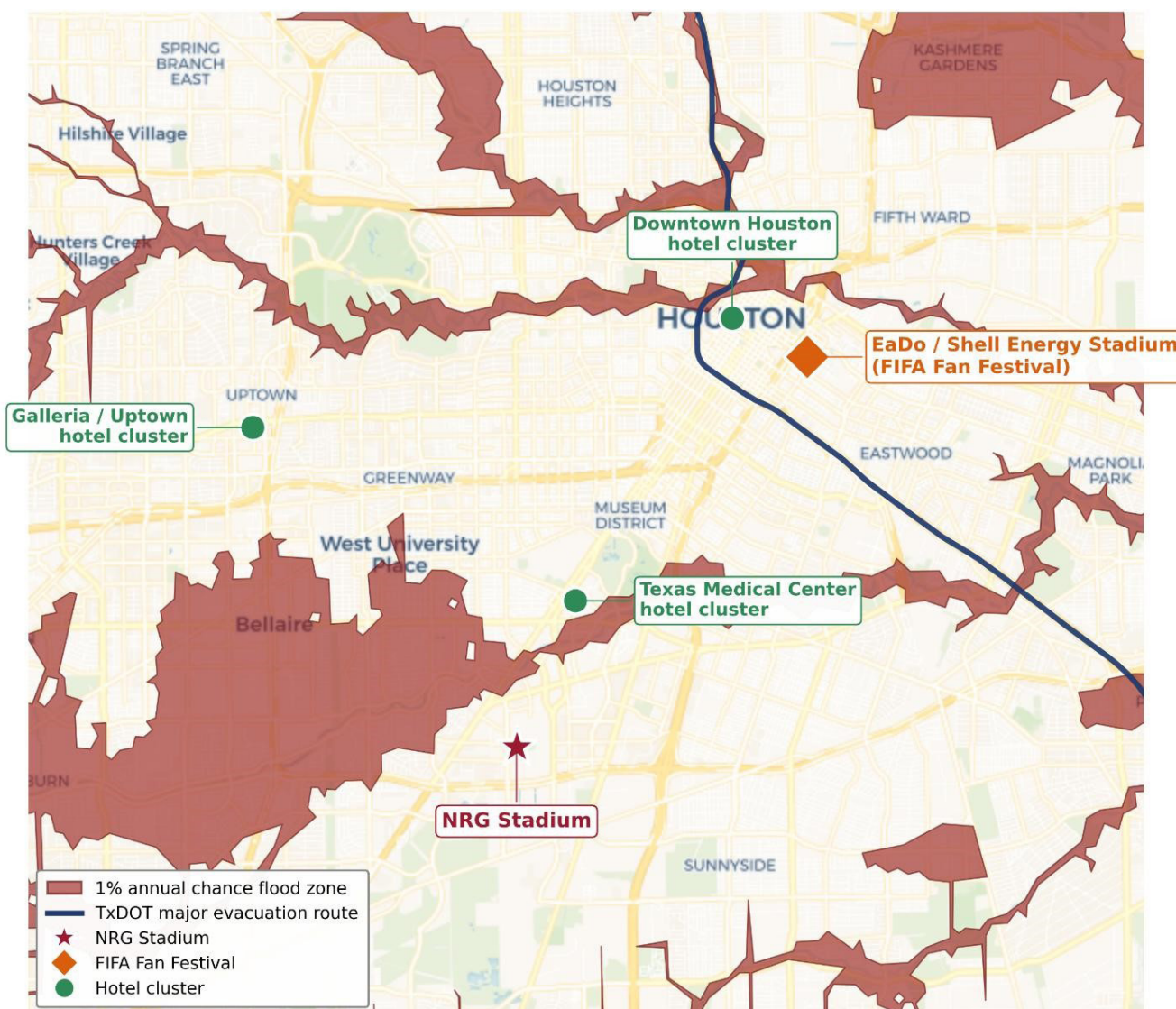
Travellers to Mexico require a visa unless they are from Canada, the USA, the EU, the UK, Japan, or select other countries. Travellers entering Canada need a passport; visa-exempt nationals flying in need a Canadian eTA before boarding. See the Special Advisory for routing guidance.



City-specific risks

Houston's defining tournament-window hazard is hurricane and tropical-system exposure combined with chronic urban flooding. The Atlantic hurricane season opens on 1st June; documented direct hits and near-misses have occurred during the tournament window in past decades. The National Hurricane Center is the authoritative source and will publish briefings throughout the tournament. The Houston basin sits below sea

level in places, and Buffalo Bayou and the Houston Ship Channel system are floodprone at multiple recurrence intervals. The operational implications are that any tropical-system threat within 72 hours of a match will trigger a FIFA-led contingency review, and visitors should pre-identify evacuation routes, primarily consisting of I-45 north toward Dallas, I-10 west toward San Antonio and US-290 northwest toward Austin, ahead of arrival.



General advice

- **During major events, plan journeys avoiding common protest flashpoints.** City Hall, the federal courthouse and Rice University are likely locations for organised demonstrations.
- **Pedestrian travel is advisable across Downtown, Midtown, the Museum District, Montrose, the Galleria and the Medical Center before nightfall as long as basic security precautions are followed.** Exercise increased caution in parts of the Third Ward, Fifth Ward, Greenspoint and Sharpstown.
- **Hydration is essential outdoors at all times — apparent temperatures over 105°F (40°C) are routine during the tournament window.** Use DEET-based repellent for evening outdoor events: both *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus* mosquito vectors are widely distributed across Harris County.



Appendix: methodology

Risk ratings

MINIMAL	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH	EXTREME
Locations in this category are likely to be affected by small-scale, peaceful, protests that occur sporadically and represent no security risk but may cause temporary localised travel disruption.	Locations in this category are likely to be affected by small-scale protests and low-level clashes, resulting in a heightened police presence in the affected areas. Multiple arrests are reported, resulting in travel and operational disruption.	Locations in this category are likely to be affected by medium to large-scale protests and multiple low-level clashes. Local businesses are at a heightened risk of being damaged and looted, resulting in operational disruption.	Locations in this category are likely to be affected by large-scale protests and clashes taking place resulting in the deployment of National Guard units to contain the unrest. Movement restrictions are implemented to contain unrest, resulting in significant operational disruption.	Locations in this category are likely to be affected by significant civil unrest resulting in the temporary absence of law and order. Strict movement restrictions are imposed and a significant deployment of National Guard units leads to severe operational disruption.

Incident impact ratings

MINIMAL	LOW	MODERATE	SIGNIFICANT	CRITICAL
Incidents in this category are routine within the risk environment and do not pose a threat to life. Incidents rarely impact beyond the immediate vicinity and / or there is negligible implication associated with the risk factor.	Incidents in this category are routine within the risk environment but rarely pose a threat to life and / or the casualty impact is incidental and highly localised. Incidents rarely impact beyond the immediate vicinity or the implications are incidental.	Incidents in this category are fairly common for the risk environment and may pose a threat to life, occasionally resulting in mass casualties. The impact is typically restricted to the immediate vicinity and / or is incidental.	Incidents in this category occasionally occur in the risk environment and typically pose a credible and imminent threat to life, occasionally resulting in mass casualties. The impact may spread beyond the immediate vicinity.	Incidents in this category are highly out of the ordinary for the risk environment, pose a significant and imminent threat to life and will likely result in significant mass casualties. The impact is likely to have wider-reaching implications.

Risk trends

RAPIDLY IMPROVING	IMPROVING	STABLE	DETERIORATING	RAPIDLY DETERIORATING
The situation is improving in the short term, with the potential for an event to cause a sudden and unexpected improvement.	The situation is improving in the medium term, at a steady and predictable rate.	The situation is unlikely to see a significant improvement or deterioration over the medium term.	The situation is worsening in the medium term, at a steady and predictable rate.	The situation is worsening in the short term, with the potential for a sudden and unexpected deterioration.

Source evaluation criteria

CANNOT BE JUDGED	UNRELIABLE	RARELY RELIABLE	FAIRLY RELIABLE	USUALLY RELIABLE	RELIABLE
No basis exists for evaluating the reliability of the source.	Lacking in authenticity, trustworthiness, or competency. Frequent history of misinformation or inaccuracy.	Significant doubt about authenticity, trustworthiness or competency. Some history of misinformation or inaccuracy.	Doubt about authenticity, trustworthiness, or competency. History of some valid information.	Some doubt about authenticity, trustworthiness, or competency. History of valid information most of the time.	No doubt of authenticity, trustworthiness, or competency. History of being reliable almost all of the time.

Information validity

CANNOT BE JUDGED	CONFIRMED FALSE	LIKELY FALSE	POSSIBLY TRUE	PROBABLY TRUE	CONFIRMED TRUE
No basis exists for evaluating the validity of the information.	Confirmed as false by reputable independent sources.	Not confirmed. Possible but not logical. No other information on the subject or information is contradictory.	Not confirmed but reasonably logical. Limited other information on subject.	Not confirmed but logical in itself and consistent with most other information on subject.	Confirmed by reputable independent sources and logical in itself.

Forecasting

REMOTE CHANCE	HIGHLY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	EVEN CHANCE	LIKELY	HIGHLY LIKELY	ALMOST CERTAIN
<5%	10% - 20%	25% - 35%	40%-50%	55%-75%	80%-90%	>95%

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