

Understand New York City

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Buildings go up, marriage bans come down and everyone jumps online – the future is now in NYC.

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Epic triumphs, shady transactions, roaring populations and tumbling towers; the story of old New York reads better than a Dickens novel.

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Get up to speed on Slow Food, hobnob with celebrity chefs and snuggle up to new American comfort food.

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A symphony of steel and glass plays in counterpoint to low-slung facades of thick-cut brick and spooling fire escapes – each an architectural flourish of bygone progress.

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Out and proud, New York has long led the fight for rights. It hasn't always been smooth sailing, but it's always been one heck of a ride.

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New York is the darling destination of both the big and small screen. In fact, more movies have been set here than any other place on the planet.

New York City Today

Now more than ever, New York City continues to fulfill its destiny as a shining beacon of progress. Human rights are challenged and championed – marriage laws extended to all, as thousands march for fiscal reform. The latest social trends continue to change the landscape as well, from the dinner plate to the worldwide web. And – already towering above the city that never sleeps – is a brand new tower, designed to be the tallest in America, that's both a symbol of a hopeful future and a reminder of a painful past.

Best on Film

Annie Hall (1977) Oscar-winning romantic comedy by the king of New York neuroses, Woody Allen.

Manhattan (1979) Allen's at it again with tales of twisted love set among NYC's concrete landscape.

Taxi Driver (1976) Scorsese's tale of a troubled taxi driver and Vietnam vet.

West Side Story (1961) A modern-day *Romeo and Juliet* set on the gang-ridden streets of New York.

Best in Print

The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay (Michael Chabon; 2000) Beloved Pulitzer-winning novel that touches upon Brooklyn, escapism and the nuclear family.

A Tree Grows in Brooklyn (Betty Smith; 1943) An Irish-American family living in the Williamsburg tenements at the beginning of the 20th century.

Down These Mean Streets (Piri Thomas; 1967) Memoirs of tough times growing up in Spanish Harlem.

Invisible Man (Ralph Ellison; 1952) Poignant prose exploring the situation of African Americans in the early 20th century.

The Age of Innocence (Edith Wharton; 1920) Tales and trials of NYC's social elite in the late 1800s.

Occupy Wall Street

Inspired by the revolutionary spirit in Tunisia and Egypt, thousands took to the Financial District's Liberty Sq on 17 September, 2011, to take a stand against the nation's division of personal wealth, and how the so-called '99%' are at the mercy of the rule-writing, wealthiest '1%.' Known as Occupy Wall Street, the movement is largely a byproduct of the Global Economic Crisis that saw the bankruptcy and closure of several heavyweight money movers – most headquartered in New York City. And in true NYC fashion, the protests have since spread like wildfire through the rest of the country (100 cities and counting) and beyond. For more information, see www.occupywallst.org.

Start-Up, Up & Away!

The dot-com days may be long over, but social media is still raking in the chips. In New York City, America's networking hive, there are many busy bees at work crafting web-based businesses that are revolutionizing the transference of the almighty dollar. Humans have been connecting with one another for almost a decade on Facebook, and now a wave of New York-based start-ups are giving people a new way of engaging with a variety of consumables from packaged vacations to medical supplies, and everything in between. Exclusive web clubs, 24-hour flash sales, and dynamic cross-media synergy have taken the virtual world by storm, and most of them are based here.

Marriage Is So Gay

New York has long been the hub of gay rights in America, and on June 24, 2011, the state government granted a major boon to the LGBT community when it legalized marriage between two persons of the same gender in the Marriage Equality Act. It had been a long, ardu-