

# New York City



It's a helluva town. The crown jewel of North America, if not the western hemisphere, New York, New York is everything you imagine it to be: big, fancy, scary, sexy, gilded, seedy, magical, monumental and, not least of all, friendly. The adventurous traveler is welcome here so long as you keep moving swiftly down the sidewalks. If you want to take a picture, please do! Just move to the side and out of the flow of traffic.

What's there to say about New York City that hasn't already been said? Walt Whitman to Woody Allen have all weighed in on the topic. There's the history, the architecture, the cuisine, the fashion, the nightlife, the art, the underbelly, the skyboxes and, most importantly, the myths – the eight million stories in the Naked City. And they are all true. Yet with so many things to do and see and try, how can the curious visitor attack it with the verve and vigor required? Get ready to walk, to ride the subway, to hail a cab, and see this city for all the spectacular glory that makes it a world-class destination of legend.

Nearly everything that is interesting about this endlessly fascinating metropolis is located outside of Midtown Manhattan. There are notable exceptions that prove the rule, of course, but it is a guarantee that you will find a more memorable dinner in Tribeca, a better bar in Williamsburg, and superior shopping in the West Village. Anything you want to do can be done here – so kick ass and take names and go exploring!

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Swooning over the newest park on Manhattan's West Side, the **High Line** (p89)
- Tasting and bargain hunting your way round the **Brooklyn Flea Market** (p113)
- Sipping cocktails and admiring the view of Central Park from the 7th floor café of **Bergdorf Goodman** (p111), New York's chicest department store
- Taking in the most beautiful man-made landscape in the world in stunning **Central Park** (p91)
- Traversing the cobblestone streets of Jane Jacob's urban utopia, the **West Village** (p89)



■ POPULATION: 8 million

■ AREA: 304 sq miles

## HISTORY

Henry Hudson gets all the credit for discovering what we now call New York. Actually, it was first explored by a Florentine named Giovanni da Verrazano in 1524. And, of course, before Giovanni showed up there were the Lenape, the tribe of Native Americans who occupied the islands before the New World became the New World.

But the story of modern New York starts with good ol' Henry Hudson on his mission to explore the New World for the Dutch West India Company and with the founding of New Amsterdam on the southern tip of Manahatta Island. Flash forward a few decades and we get the English coming in and usurping the power, at which point the settlement gets re-christened New York.

After that came the American Revolution (though New York was 'occupied' territory for much of that time) and for a brief spell New York was the capitol of the United States. That designation didn't last long, but the harbor and the Hudson River continued to guarantee New York its status as a financial capitol of trade, and with that came its eventual transformation into the cultural capitol it is known as today.

In the intervening centuries the city has seen its fair share of ups-and-downs – industrialization during the Gilded Age, unionization of the working class, Prohibition, the building of the UN, President Gerald Ford famously telling the city to 'drop dead' during the fiscal crisis of the 1970s, the booming financial and art markets of the 1980s and '90s and perhaps the most recent down in 2001 when hijacked airplanes scarred the city in such a deeply terrifying event that the city has yet to heal completely.

Gotham is a resilient place and no matter how gnarly each situation seems, the city has always picked itself up and dusted itself off in its inexorable march towards the future.

For more history, see p32.

## ORIENTATION

New York City consists of five 'boroughs' that bound themselves together in 1898 to form Greater New York City. The traditional visitor looking to trip the light fantastic on the sidewalks of New York will be primarily interested in exploring the borough of Manhattan. Fortunately, thanks to some early city planners the island of Manhattan

is generally divided up into 'the Grid.' Numbered Avenues and their brethren like the Park and Amsterdam run north and south with First Ave on the East Side and Twelfth Ave on the West. (Let it be known that Sixth Ave is alternately known as Avenue of the Americas.) Anything labeled a 'Street', on the other hand, runs east and west with the lower numbers in the Village rising ever upwards towards Harlem and the Bronx. It is commonly used local shorthand that 20 blocks uptown or downtown equals a mile, with three or four cross-town blocks (the Avenues) equaling roughly the same distance.

Manhattan is primarily separated into three sections: Downtown (anything south of 14th Street), Midtown (south of 59th St) and Uptown (north of 59th St). Places are also commonly classified as on the East Side or the West Side with Fifth Ave providing the dividing line. These designations can all be further deconstructed into the various neighborhoods like Tribeca, Chelsea, and Hell's Kitchen along Manhattan's West Side (along with the slightly more obvious ones like the West Village and the Upper West Side) and Chinatown, Gramercy Park, and Murray Hill running up the east side.

On Manhattan, things get a bit screwy south of Houston St that divides Greenwich Village from Soho and the Lower East Side. Most of downtown Manhattan's streets are named not numbered and it can get a bit wonky. We'd recommend keeping a map handy when venturing downtown.

Across the East River from Manhattan are the boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. These actually sit on the landmass more commonly known as Long Island, but its western edge is incorporated by New York City (with Brooklyn to the south and Queens to the north). Both of these boroughs are brimming with activities and are exceedingly navigable by subway. The farther east one gets into both boroughs, the harder it is to use public transportation, but most truly interesting sites will be within easy walking distance of a subway stop.

Buses are just about the only public way to navigate Staten Island, which is southwest of Manhattan. Travel here is difficult without a car (and, frankly, a GPS system). The easiest way for the car-less traveler to reach Staten Island is by the ferry.