

AN UNCONVENTIONAL GUIDE TO

NEW YORK CITY'S BEST EXPERIENCES

1

Bring a picnic and watch the sunset from the [Pier 35](#) swing sets on the East River, with views of the Manhattan Bridge, Brooklyn Bridge, and New York Harbor.

Shop for **old-school Italian pastries** on [Court Street](#) in [Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn](#): [Court Pastry Shop](#) (since 1948), [Caputo's Sweet & Cake Shop](#) (since 1904), [Pasticceria Monteleone BK](#) (since 1929, new management 2011). Pick up a cup of Brooklyn-roasted coffee at [D'Amico Coffee](#) (since 1948), and find a bench to hang out on in [Carroll Park](#). Then stroll the shops of Smith Street (between Carroll St. and Bergen St.).

2

3

Walk the entirety of [Bleecker Street](#) from end to end (~1 mile), sampling downtown Manhattan vibes as you traverse four historic districts. From [boxing clubs](#) and [streetwear flagships](#), past NYU's Silver Towers (look for the Picasso sculpture, [Bust of Sylvette](#), in the courtyard), to the posh boutiques of the West Village. Take a break along the way at one of many NYU watering holes, stock up on cheese at [Murray's Cheese](#), or get your cupcake fix at the original [Magnolia Bakery](#).

Taste food from around the world and support up-and-coming food and drink vendors at [Smorgasburg](#), an **epic open-air food market** held on Saturdays in [Williamsburg, Brooklyn](#) and Sundays in [Prospect Park, Brooklyn](#) from 11am-6pm (April-October).

4

5

From the [Battery Maritime Building](#), catch a ferry over to [Governors Island](#) (8 minutes; \$4) and climb [Outlook Hill](#) for a 360° view of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Staten Island, and New Jersey. Sign up for a [free walking tour](#), and be sure to plan your visit around drinks at [Island Oyster](#), the city's best waterfront bar with a Manhattan skyline view (seasonal).

6

Nothing says summer quite like a **Brooklyn Cyclones minor-league baseball game** at Coney Island (April-early September). People-watch on the Coney Island boardwalk, grab a Nathan's Famous Hot Dog, then, as dusk falls, 'root, root, root for the home team' as the amusement park attractions (like the famous Cyclone rollercoaster) light up in nostalgic splendor.

Shop indie and vintage on the best block for browsing in the East Village: East 9th Street between 1st-2nd Ave. Drop by 9th St. Vintage, Fabulous Fanny's, Jane Cookshop, and Pillow-Cat Books. Refuel at neighborhood mainstay MUD SPOT or the legendary Ukrainian diner, Veselka.

7

8

Pick up some snacks, beer, toiletries or lottery tickets at one of **NYC's roughly 7,000 bodegas** (corner stores & community hubs, historically Latinx-owned.) Technically a small store that sells milk, doesn't specialize in any one item, and has no more than 2 cash registers, bodegas are the lifeblood of the city. And sometimes... they serve as a front for a modern day speakeasy. Reserve a table at The Little Shop, buy snacks in the bodega, and enjoy them with your cocktail in the hidden back room.

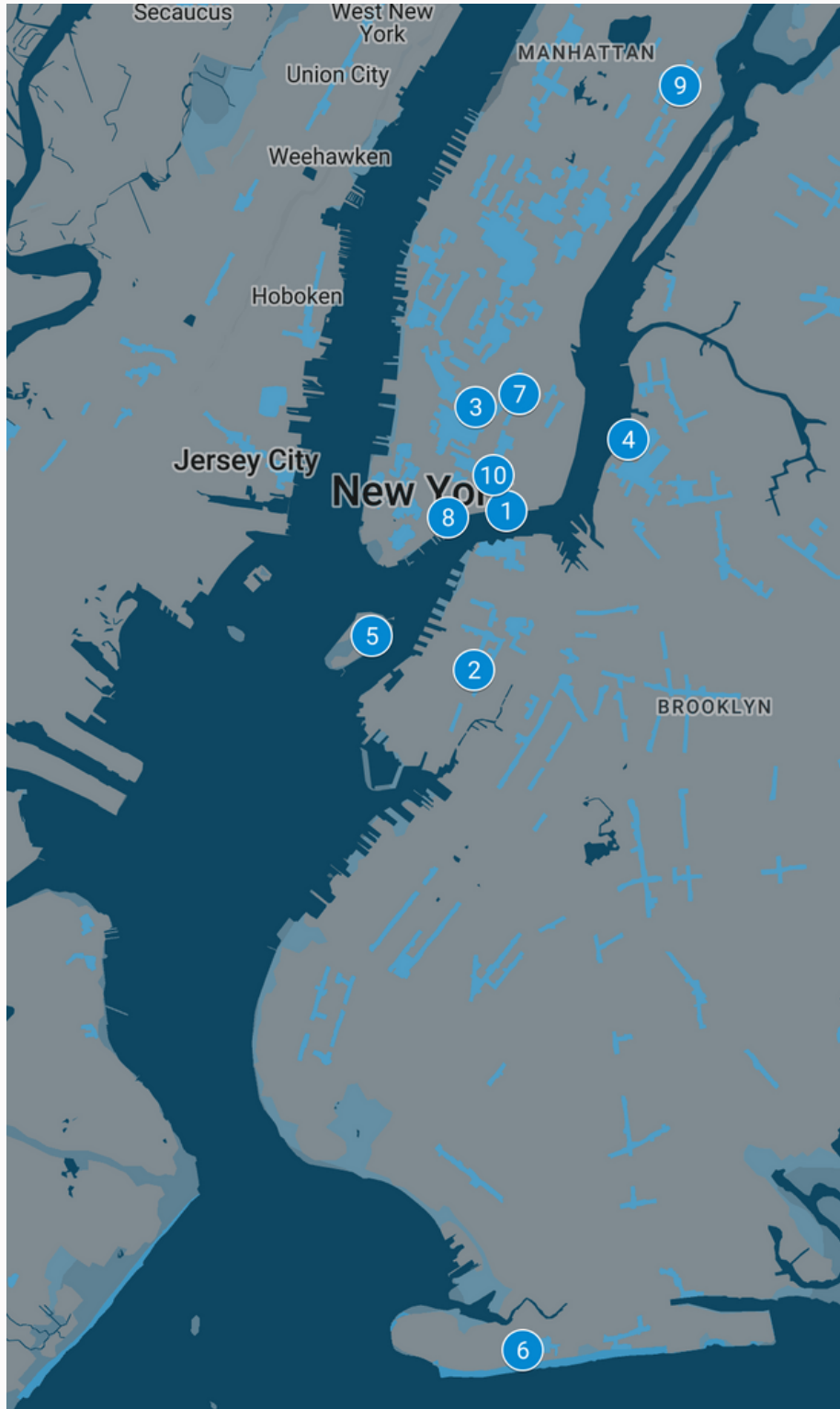
Go on an underground art crawl. Use the free Bloomberg Connects app (search under "MTA Arts & Design") to explore more than 400 hundred site-specific public works of art in the subway system. Take a ride on the Q train to 86th St. & 2nd Avenue to see 12 giant mosaic Subway Portraits by Chuck Close, 2017.

9

10

Elevate 'Dinner & A Movie' at Nitehawk Cinemas (locations in Williamsburg & Prospect Park, Brooklyn) where waiters bring your dinner to your seat. Or, for the **most stylish cinema-going experience in the city**, catch a repertory film at Metrograph, then head upstairs for steak frites at the Commissary, inspired by the studio eateries of Hollywood's golden age.

10 QUINTESSENTIAL NYC EXPERIENCES



INSTAGRAMS

[@shopsofnewyork](#)

[@nygroove.nyc](#)

[@secret_nyc](#)

[@nyctourism](#)

[@humansofny](#)

APPS

[TodayTix](#) - Discount theater tickets to Broadway and Off-Broadway shows.

[Resy](#) - Best app for restaurant reservations.

[The Official MTA App](#) - Navigate the subway, untangle service disruptions, and find out how many minutes until the next train.

[Bloomberg Connects](#) - Audio guides and interactive content for hundreds of museums, parks, and cultural spaces, such as: American Museum of Natural History, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Central Park Conservancy, Governor's Island, Guggenheim, High Line, The Met Fifth Avenue, MOMA, The New York Public Library, Museum of the City of New York, and many more.

[StubHub](#) - Trusted ticket reseller for sports, concerts, and big events.

WALKING TOURS

The best way to explore New York is on foot.

[Big Onion Walking Tours](#) - History tours led by smart & engaging graduate students.

[Broadway Up Close](#) - Not just for theater lovers, there's even a tour about ghosts.

[Municipal Art Society](#) - Art & architecture focused tours.

[New York Adventure Club](#) - Quirky and rare-access tours and experiences.

[Turnstile Tours](#) - Tours that "showcase how New York City works" and offer unique access to places like the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

[Untapped New York](#) - History & food focused tours.

GUIDE ON GOOGLE MAPS

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/zx1D3YSn9MRBJvSD9>



TAKE A CLASS

Get your hands dirty, learn a new skill, take home a unique souvenir.

[Brooklyn Brainer](#) - Make friends with curious Brooklynites as you learn Charcoal Drawing, Tree Identification, Improv, or How to Make Hot Sauce.

[Kettl](#) - Learn your senchas from your matchas at this esoteric Japanese tea shop in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.

[Loop of the Loom](#) - Weave a meditative Zen tapestry in a 2-hour introductory course, in Dumbo or on the Upper East Side.

[Murray's Cheese](#) - Cheese making & tasting at NYC's iconic cheese shop in the West Village.

[Shani's Drink & Draw](#) - Learn the basics of figure drawing on Monday evenings at Book Club Bar in the East Village.

CULINARY EXPERIENCES

Taste your way around the city.

[Atelier Sucre NYC](#) - Learn to make real New York bagels from scratch.

[Culinary Back Streets](#) - Epic food tours of Queens.

[EatWith Culinary Experiences](#) - Learn to prepare Chinese dumplings, Turkish coffee, or fresh pasta, then enjoy a meal with new friends.

[League of Kitchens](#) - Spend an afternoon with an expert home cook and make a meal from Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Ukraine and elsewhere. Filter classes by in-person.

[Scott's Pizza Tours](#) - Take a deep dive into NYC pizza culture and eat a lot of pizza. Walking tours focus on pizza joints by neighborhood; committed pizza nerds can opt for the 4.5 hour Sunday bus tour to multiple boroughs.

BEHIND-THE-SCENES

Discover what makes New York City's finest institutions tick.

[Carnegie Hall Tours](#) - Concert venue since 1891.

[Lincoln Center For The Performing Arts Tours](#) - Home of the Metropolitan Opera, NY City Ballet, & NY Philharmonic.

[Madison Square Garden Tour Experience](#) - Home of the New York Knicks (basketball) & legendary concerts.

[New York Public Library Tours](#) - Beaux-Arts landmark Stephen A. Schwarzman Building & Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

[Radio City Music Hall Tour Experience](#) - Home of the Rockettes & largest indoor theatre in the world.

BIG MUSEUMS, PAY WHAT YOU WISH BIG PARKS

Plan ahead and time your visit for special admission hours. (Subject to change.)

Brooklyn Museum - Free First Saturdays 5-11pm, featuring music & special programs. Register in advance.

Cooper Hewitt Design Museum - Pay what you wish daily from 5-6 p.m.

Guggenheim Museum - Pay what you wish on Mondays & Saturdays, 4-5:30 PM. Limited advance tickets released online at 10am day of.

Museum of the Moving Image - Free general admission every Thursday, 2:00-6:00 p.m. No reservations required.

Whitney Museum - Free Fridays 5-10 PM and the 2nd Sunday of every month. Reserve in advance.

SMALL MUSEUMS

Highly-recommended niche museums that never disappoint.

The Morgan Library & Museum (Midtown) - Inside the opulent home of financier Pierpont Morgan, the majestic once-private library will transport you to the dawn of the 20th century. New additions house exhibition space and an airy cafe.

Museum at Fashion Institute of Technology (Midtown) - Dedicated to the art of fashion, exhibitions showcase FIT's collection of more than 50,000 garments and accessories. Fun, free, & teenager-approved. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

Museum of Food & Drink/MOFAD (Dumbo) - Newly opened in 2024, this small interactive museum celebrates the idea that "food is culture™." Located upstairs at 55 Water Street (the same building as Time Out Market.)

New York Transit Museum (Downtown Brooklyn) - Located in a decommissioned subway station, this museum tells the fascinating story of the construction of the subway system and invites visitors to climb aboard their collection of historic railcars.

Tenement Museum (Lower East Side) - Tells stories from the immigrant experience in a tenement building that, when discovered by the museum's founders, had been shuttered for more than 50 years. Learn about the lives of the ordinary, working-class people who lived there between the 1860s and 1930s. Tour reservations required.

Slow down and spend an afternoon strolling, relaxing, picnicking, people watching, & getting a taste of life in the city.

Battery Park City Esplanade & Rockefeller Park (Downtown Manhattan) - Beautifully landscaped green space with views of the Hudson River & Statue of Liberty. Pick up a picnic at the Hudson Eats food court in Brookfield Place.

Brooklyn Bridge Park, Piers 1-6 (Dumbo) - Opened in 2010, this mile-long waterfront park offers sports, wild spaces, public art, public barbecue grills, & outdoor summer movie screenings.

Central Park (Manhattan) - The park of all parks. Don't miss it.

Fort Tryon Park (Washington Heights) - Take an excursion to The MET Cloisters, and unwind in this 67-acre ridge-top park, home to 8 miles of pedestrian paths, Manhattan's largest dog run & the world-class Heather Garden. Stunning views across the Hudson River to the Palisades.

Prospect Park (Brooklyn) - Brooklyn's version of Central Park, and just as worthwhile.

Riverside Park (Upper West Side) - An officially designated scenic landmark & featured in umpteen movies, this park stretches along the Hudson River for 4 miles, from 72nd to 158th Streets. Fans of You've Got Mail will recognize the lush flower beds at the 91st Street Community Garden.

SMALL PARKS

These bite-sized gems offer pockets of nature and calm, tucked in unexpected places.

Bryant Park (Midtown) - An oasis for office workers smack in the middle of things. Below the park, more than 4 million books are stored in the New York Public Library Milstein Research Stacks.

Community Gardens of the East Village - The result of a movement in the 1970s to combat urban decay & transform abandoned lots into tiny green spaces. Spend an afternoon exploring them all (using [this map](#) by Lungs NYC), or sample one of the biggest at 6th Street & Avenue B.

Elevated Acre (Financial District) - Hidden one-acre meadow with pretty paths and views of the Brooklyn Bridge. Take the escalator at 55 Water Street.

(continued next page...)

Franklin D. Roosevelt Four Freedoms State Park (Roosevelt Island) - This serene, tree-lined park at the southern tip of Roosevelt island offers solitude and views of the East River & Long Island City's Pepsi-Cola sign. For a dramatic arrival, take The Roosevelt Island Tramway.

Pier 57 Rooftop Park (Hudson River/Meatpacking District) - Nearly 2 acres of secret green space on the rooftop above Google HQ, on the Hudson River, near Little Island.

THEATER DISTRICT DINING

Good food is notoriously hard to come by in Times Square. Make a pre-show reservation at one of these solid spots.

5 Napkin Burger (45th & 9th Ave) - Burgers.

Dos Caminos Times Square (47th & Broadway) - Mexican.

Marseille (44th & 9th Ave) - French bistro.

Trattoria Trecolori (47th & 8th Ave) - Italian.

The Lambs Club (44th between 6th-7th Ave) - American classic, upscale.

FAST-CASUAL RESTAURANTS

For a quick mid-day bite without a reservation, scan your map for the closest branch of one of these reliable fast-casual restaurants.

Le Botaniste (5) - Entirely plant-based, organic food & wine bar. 100% gluten free.

Tacombi (11) - Authentic Mexican tacos.

Naya (16) - Middle Eastern Counter & Grill.

Sweetgreen (36) - Simple, seasonal, healthy salads and grain bowls.

Le Pain Quotidian (30) - French style bakery & cafe, with eggs, open-faced sandwiches, salads and quiche.

If you enjoyed this free guide, please:

- Subscribe to the JM Travel Studio Newsletter on Substack
- Follow @jmtravelstudio on Instagram
- Share the guide with a friend!

Thanks for being here! Go Yankees!

INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES

What better way to spend a rainy afternoon than browsing in an indie bookstore.

Bonnie Slotnick Cookbooks (East Village) - For lovers of cookbooks.

Books Are Magic (Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn Heights) - Lives up to the name.

Book Club Bar (East Village) - Laptops by day, booze by night, books always.

McNally Jackson (Nolita, Williamsburg, Seaport, Downtown Brooklyn, Williamsburg) - What a bookstore should be.

The Drama Book Shop (Midtown) - For theater lovers.

The Strand (Union Square) - 18 miles of new & used books.

NICHE NEW YORK BOOKS

There's always more to discover.

Art Hiding in New York (2020), by Lori Zimmer

That's So New York (2024), by Dan Saltzstein

Secret New York: An Unusual Guide (2024), by T.M. Rives

A Book Lover's Guide to New York (2019), by Cleo & Pierre Le-Tan

The Eater Guide to New York City (2024), by Eater

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Emergency: Call 9-1-1 for fire, police, or medical emergencies.

NYC Information: Call 3-1-1 or 212-NEW-YORK (639-9675) for non-emergency city services, or if your car gets towed. (It happens.)

Drugstore/Pharmacies: CVS, Duane Reade, RiteAid. For toiletries, medications, shoelaces, sunscreen, tissues, magazines, notebooks, umbrellas.

Major Supermarkets: Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, Key Foods, Wegmans, Fairway, Gristedes, Foodtown.

Public Restrooms: Try public libraries, public parks toilet directory, Starbucks, hotel lobbies (just act like you belong!), and toilet finders Got2GoNyc and the Toodleloo app.