

The Big Apple, New York City

Faster moving than any other city in North America! More dynamic than most cities in the world! More diverse and exciting than the World's Fair! From iconic attractions such as the Statue of Liberty and the Rockefeller Center, New York is brimming with sights to see. Anyone who has ever watched a movie with New York as a backdrop will feel at home with the recognizable sights, whether looking out over the New York skyline from the Empire State Building, reading billboards in Times Square, or strolling through Central Park. Watch a show on Broadway, admire the animals in the Central Park Zoo, look for celebrities, or simply people-watch while sipping a coffee at a Bistro in Soho.

We arrived at LaGuardia Airport in New York on a clear afternoon in September from our holiday on Hilton Head Island departing from the Savannah airport. The view of New York City from the plane was a sight we'll never forget. A virtual sea of sky scrapers concentrated on the majestic island of Manhattan seemed to reach up to us as we descended. Circling around as we lined up for the runway, we could see Long Island, the Hudson and East Rivers, Central Park and of course the 'Lady Herself'. This is where the action is – this is where you can go 24 – 7 if you want to.

In New York City you do not ever have to worry about waiting long for a taxi cab. Every second or third vehicle in Manhattan is a taxi and they are lined up outside the arrivals at LaGuardia. But – you will have to be patient getting from A to B. Traffic is always gnarled – so we settled in and enjoyed the sights on our drive from the airport to our hotel – **The Hilton New York, Midtown**, at 1335 Avenue of the Americas.



Hilton New York Hotel
In the heart of Midtown Manhattan



Executive Suite
↑Living Room & Bedroom↓



Conveniently located at **Radio City Music Hall & Rockefeller Center**, the **Hilton New York** has the perfect location in the heart of midtown. The hotel is within walking distance of **Broadway theaters** and **Times Square**, one block from **Fifth Avenue** shopping, and steps from legendary attractions such as **MoMA**, **Central Park** and **Carnegie Hall**. New enhancements include: an expanded lobby, a full-service Fitness Club and Spa, two lounges and two restaurants - including Etrusca and New York Marketplace, which is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Spacious guest rooms offer stylishly contemporary décor featuring wall-to-wall windows with views of the city skyline, while the upgraded accommodations in the Executive Level offer private check-in, complimentary Continental breakfast & a "hotel-within-a-hotel" experience.

We enjoyed the spacious accommodations of a two bedroom suite offering luxurious comfort and classic sophistication. Every spacious suite includes private bedroom(s) and bathroom(s), high-speed internet access and two-line telephones with data port. Each room features the Hilton Serenity Collection® including an exclusive Suite Dreams mattress and box springs, Super Topper mattress pad, down duvet, Touch of Down™ pillows, luxurious linen program, bed throws. The Serenity Bath features Crabtree & Evelyn® La Source bath amenities. In addition, all accommodations have high-tech and high-TOUCH guestroom features including the Hilton Alarm Clock Radio, two televisions, in-room safe, coffeemaker, iron, ironing board and hair dryer.

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On our first full day in New York – we knew it had to be a shopping day. **Saks, Macys, Barneys, Bloomingdale's, Century 21 and Tiffany's.** Drop in any of the boutiques along **Fifth Avenue, Madison Avenue**, in and around **Times Square** or the upscale designer shops in **SoHo**. If you enjoy shopping and browsing – take a full day to explore all of these wonderful world famous districts and stores. It's an experience you'll have fun with while you keep your eyes open for celebrities who are often spotted in these well known department stores and boutiques.

While exploring, we stopped for lunch at the **Bubba Gump Shrimp Restaurant in Times Square** – the 'Forrest Gump movie-themed' chain that has gained in popularity. The restaurant is on the second level and a table by the window offers an excellent overhead view of Times Square. If you are dining on the right day, you may be able to catch some of the entertainment that is often performed in the Square. The atmosphere is casual, upbeat and lively and the food is Cajun/seafood. If you're a fan of the movie, you'll have fun with the trivia questions your server will ask you. Menu items are named after interesting events or characters in the movie and we enjoyed all the mouth watering dishes that we ordered.

The more reasonably priced department store, **Century 21**, is located next to '**Ground Zero**'. We viewed the area and activity of re-construction of Ground Zero from a viewing point on the pedway at the World Financial Center. The Museum on Liberty Street offers an Audio Tour that is informative and insightful. We had the sense that everyone passing by was sensitive to what had happened here – whether they were tourists or New Yorkers – and there was an overall feeling of quiet respect.



↑Century 21 Department Store
Ground Zero taken from Pedway↓



↑View of Brooklyn Bridge
while on the Cruise around Manhattan Island.



↓Our New York City Hansom Cab

On our second day in New York we took a taxi to the pier for a **three-hour cruise around Manhattan Island**. We saw all the sights on this cruise that circumnavigates Manhattan in its entirety. A tour guide offers commentary on the history of the island, important landmarks and, naturally, information about the celebrities that call New York their home. We passed seven major bridges including the Brooklyn Bridge, the five boroughs of New York and a grand photo opportunity of the Statue of Liberty. Beverages, food and souvenirs are available for purchase on board.

If you visit Venice, Italy, a gondola ride is a must. The same holds true for a **horse-drawn carriage ride** through **Central Park** when visiting New York. No matter what the weather – this New York activity is fun, romantic and will be something you'll remember forever! The '**Hansom Cabs**', as the carriages are called, run year round and you can choose your Hansom Cab from the line-up just outside of the Plaza Hotel on Fifth Avenue. Your driver is also your tour guide and gives some insightful commentary on the history, events, monuments and buildings around the park. Reminiscent of days gone by when all the streets of New York were filled with horse-drawn buggies and carriages you'll be sure to enjoy this leisurely tour back in time!

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Columbus Circle, one of New York's major landmarks, is located at the south west corner of Central Park. The monument in the center commemorated Columbus' 400th anniversary of his first voyage to the Americas when it was erected in 1892. The magnificent buildings around this busy hub house a number of major corporations such as Time Warner, CNN, Trump International Hotel and Tower with its famous steel globe and Paramount Pictures. Occupying the 38th to 54th floors of the Time Warner building is the **Mandarin Oriental New York Hotel**. This luxurious hotel offers spectacular views of Central Park, Columbus Circle, midtown Manhattan and the Hudson River. The Mandarin's restaurant '**Asiate**' overlooks the Circle and the Park. We decided this would be a most interesting spot for lunch after our carriage ride. The menu boasts an exciting selection of European and Asian dishes and the atmosphere is warm and welcoming. Comfortable lounge seating next to the floor to ceiling windows, panoramic views, outstanding service, divine cuisine and an extensive wine list makes this one of New York's finest restaurants. We lingered for a couple of hours just drinking in the views!!

Our visit to New York City in September allowed us the unique pleasure of being able to attend the '**Feast of San Gennara**' in **Little Italy** held mid-September every year (the salute to the patron saint of Naples). The streets are blocked off for the festival and the neighbourhood comes alive with music and parades. Vendors are at every corner with souvenirs, games, Italian specialties and treats. The restaurants all have their patios decked out for the occasion and enjoying a meal of the best Italian food outside of Italy while watching the action on the streets is an exciting event. Memorial Day and Fourth of July musical groups and contests liven up the annual Sorrento Cheese Summer in Little Italy with food vendors lining the streets from Memorial Day weekend to Columbus Day weekend.



Central Park from our Hansom Cab



Central Park from Mandarin Hotel



Little Italy's Feast of San Gennara



Gordon Ramsay at the London

This area of New York was the first home for thousands of Italian immigrants arriving from Italy at the turn of the century hoping for a better life in America. Old world traditions remain alive and if you haven't been to Italy – you will experience the next best thing right here!

The ultimate dining experience for us in New York was at the restaurant of the world-renowned chef, Gordon Ramsay. **Gordon Ramsay at the London** and **MAZE by Gordon Ramsay at the London** (151 West 54th Street located inside the London Hotel). The more formal of the two is *Gordon Ramsay at the London*. This tastefully decorated dining room features classic elegance in a quiet private setting and exquisite French cuisine. In keeping with the same service excellence as the 3 Michelin Starred Restaurant by Gordon Ramsay in London UK, the dining room is limited to seating for 45 guests. Reservations can only be made 2 months prior to your preferred dining date. We chose to dine in the more casual MAZE Restaurant which offers a 'tasting menu' with the same delightful dishes as the formal dining room. The service is flawless; gracious and attentive with a personal touch and the atmosphere is a little more lively with the 'Bar at the London' located adjacent to the MAZE. Gordon's chefs did not disappoint. Our request to stray from the menu slightly with a few different preferences was gracefully accommodated. The wine Sommelier was expert in her field and the selections were outstanding. This was one of the most enjoyable dining experiences I have ever had!

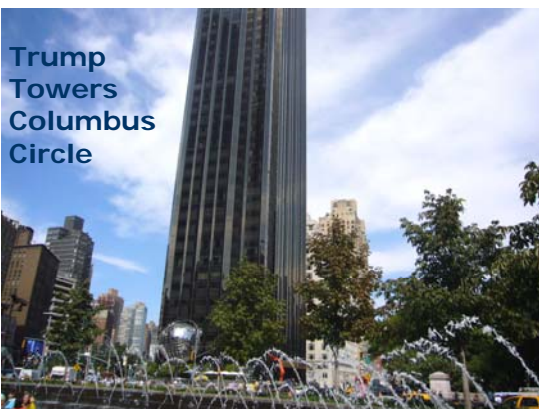
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One more dining event we did not want to miss was at the restaurant of another famous chef, **Mario Batali**, called **Del Posto** (85 Tenth Avenue). Truly Italian from the ambience to the menu to the staff. Elegant without being pretentious, Del Posto offers its patrons one of the best Italian dining experiences in New York. Distinctive regional and seasonal variations with the freshest ingredients with an Italian-American style. Each dish we chose was expertly prepared with top-notch service. If we had anything to say about the restaurant that we were a little disappointed in was the fact that the chefs would not stray from the menu for any specific requests, so expect to enjoy the dishes as they are prepared and presented. I highly recommend these two amazing restaurants for supreme New York dining. And – your chances are good of spotting a celebrity at either one – **we did!** *Buon Appetito!*

Although I didn't take the boat tour to **Liberty Island** and **Ellis Island** on this trip, I did enjoy this excursion on my first visit to New York and highly recommend it to anyone visiting the Big Apple. You can take any mode of transportation from your hotel (taxi, subway or Gray Line bus) to **Battery Park** where the ferry boats leave for the islands. There are a number of different types of tours; some include visits to the **Statue of Liberty** and the Ellis Island **Immigration Museum**, some tours offer one island or the other, and there are boat tours that do not stop at the islands but offer some amazing photo opportunities as you sail around **Liberty Harbor** and **Lower Manhattan**. You can take your chances and go to Battery Park and line up for the next ferry boat leaving for a tour, or you can pre-book your excursion before your trip to New York. The choice is yours – but advance reservations are recommended because on busy days the ferries can fill up fast and you could be disappointed.



Statue of Liberty from our boat on the Harbour Cruise



Trump Towers Columbus Circle



Old Yankee Stadium



Time Warner Bldg. Columbus Circle

If this is your first visit to New York, a **Gray Line 'Hop-on Hop-off' Bus Tour** is an excellent introduction to the city and the best way to see as much of it as you can. There are a number of stops enroute throughout the city where you can purchase tickets and enjoy the convenience of being able to hop-off where ever you please and spend some time sightseeing, then hop-on the next available bus coming along the route. See it all onboard their deluxe open top double-decker buses, reminiscent of London in the UK. Your tour guide will offer commentary and interesting facts along each route. Another option is a full day guided luxury motorcoach tour of the city or a shopping excursion. There are multiple choices to suit your preferences.

Of course, no trip to New York is complete without a visit to the top of the world famous **Empire State Building**. Brace yourself for a high-speed trip to the top in the glass enclosed elevators and enjoy a panoramic view of New York from the observation deck. Completed in 1931, this architectural wonder rises nearly a quarter of a mile above Fifth Avenue and from the top on a clear day you can see for almost 80 miles!

Broadway Shows! Whether you are a theatre buff or looking forward to experiencing an exhilarating performance for the first time – you are in the right place. For the more popular productions, you will want to pre-book your tickets well in advance of your travel date. Otherwise, a good option is to visit the box offices either the day of or the day prior to a show when you can sometimes take advantage of amazing last minute deals. Most of the Broadway Theatres are adjacent to Times Square but don't forget the Off-Broadway venues which can also offer some amazing choices.

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New York City has so much to offer, one trip doesn't seem to be enough. I have visited this amazing destination twice and still look forward to the next time I can plan a trip to **The City that Never Sleeps!** New York is an adrenaline-charged, extraordinary city that holds a passionate appeal for visitors!

We look forward to assisting you in the planning of your holiday to the most captivating destination in the world. Ask our knowledgeable Travel Consultants about Air & Hotel Packages, Broadway Show Tickets and Sightseeing Excursions.

