

# The Best of the Big Apple

*New York is the concentrate of art and commerce and sport and religion and entertainment and finance, bringing to a single compact arena the gladiator, the evangelist, the promoter, the actor, the trader and the merchant. It carries on its lapel the unexpungeable odor of the long past, so that no matter where you sit in New York you feel the vibrations of great times and tall deeds, of queer people and events and undertakings.*

*New York is nothing like Paris; it is nothing like London; and it is not Spokane multiplied by sixty, or Detroit multiplied by four. It is by all odds the loftiest of cities.*

**N**ovelist and essayist E. B. White wrote these words in 1948; and in the more than half-century since, his description of New York remains accurate. And though the grandeur and importance of New York has not changed, New York is constantly changing. Restaurants and nightclubs become trendy overnight, and then die under the weight of their own popularity. (As the philosopher Yogi Berra said: “Nobody goes there anymore; it’s too crowded.”) Broadway shows, exercise fads, city politics, even neighborhoods are all subject to the same Big Apple fickleness.

But within this ebb and flow lies the answer to why we New Yorkers persist in loving our city so, despite the high rents, the noise, the crowds, the cab drivers who don’t know Lincoln Center from the Lower East Side, and the more stark realities of high-security-alert days and living in the shadow of great tragedy. Nowhere else is the challenge so tough, the pace so relentless, the stimuli so ever changing and insistent—and the payoff so rewarding. It is why we go on; it is why we proudly persist in living our vibrant lives here.

Come witness New York’s resilience for yourself—it’s reason enough to visit.

## 1 How This Guide Can Save You Money

New York City is perpetually short on space and overflowing with people. It’s a situation that turns the economy of supply and demand in the seller’s favor, with vendors charging what the market will bear. The result has been stratospheric prices, some of the highest in the country. If you’re used to getting a simple, comfortable motel room for \$60 or so, get set for a shock.

That’s the bad news—but there’s plenty of good news, too. You *can* stay in New York City comfortably, eat

well, and see and do everything you want without blowing your budget. There are plenty of great deals for the traveler who knows where to look for value.

You’ve already taken the first step: buying this book. I’ve done the initial legwork, scouring the city and loading the pages that follow with money-saving advice, the top values and bargains, and the kind of New York travel know-how that comes only with years of research and experience.



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## On New York

*The only credential the city asked was the boldness to dream. For those who did, it unlocked its gates and its treasures, not caring who they were and where they came from.*

—Moss Hart

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Accommodations will be your biggest hurdle, although visitors have regained their bargaining power in the post-9/11 world. Every other aspect of New York is manageable if you look before you leap, which is how regular New Yorkers manage. The city tends to snag people who, exhausted, sit down at the first restaurant they see and end up with a huge bill—or those who stumble into a chic boutique to buy a souvenir that can be had for a fraction of the price with a little effort. Keep an eye on the goal, and you'll see New York has more affordable culinary and bargain hunters' delights than you'll have time to enjoy.

With average museum admissions hovering around 10 bucks a pop and guided bus tours starting at \$30 for the basic look-see, you could spend a fortune on sightseeing and activities—but you don't have to. Start perusing these pages, and you'll find more to see and do for free and on the cheap than you could squeeze into one vacation (or two or three or four). I'm not suggesting that you skip everything that has a price tag; certain New York experiences shouldn't be missed. But read the pages that follow and you should glean enough insight to know what's worth your hard-earned dough—and what's not.

## THE NEW-YORK-FROM-\$90-A-DAY PREMISE

The idea is this: With good planning and a watchful eye, you can keep your basic daily costs—accommodations and three meals—down to as little as \$90. This budget model works best for two adults traveling together who have at least \$180 a day to work with

and can share a double room. (Single rooms are less cost-efficient.) This way, if you aim for accommodations that cost around \$120 for a double—a reasonable budget—you'll be left with about \$30 per person per day for food (less drinks and tips). Snare a room for less—doable in this economic climate, especially in a less-busy season or if you're willing to share a bathroom—and you'll have more left over from your \$180-per-day budget for dining.

In defining this premise, we assume you want to travel comfortably, with your own room rather than a hostel bunk (even if it does mean a shared bathroom), and dining on good food. This book will serve you well even if you don't need to keep your two-person budget to a strict \$180 a day, but you want to get the most for your money. It will, on the other side of the coin, also meet your needs if you want to travel on the ultracheap—for less than \$90 a day—by staying in hostels and eating super-inexpensively.

Sightseeing, transportation, and entertainment are all extra. But I've got plenty of suggestions on how to keep those costs down, too. What you choose for entertainment will have a huge effect on your overall budget. If you go to nightclubs every night, you'll come home with a lighter wallet than if you spend time taking in free concerts or browsing galleries. If you seek top-name entertainment on Broadway or the cabaret circuit, you'll pay more than if you take a risk on tomorrow's stars at an Off-Broadway show or a no-cover bar. Only you know how much money you have to spend—but if you follow my advice,



you'll be able to make informed decisions so that it's money well spent.

Even if you stick with freebies, the Big Apple guarantees a memorable

time. After all, to the late, great Quentin Crisp, every flat surface in New York was a stage—and you're guaranteed a nonstop show.

## 2 Cheap Thrills: Frommer's Favorite Free & Affordable Experiences

- **Best Attraction:** If you have time to do only one thing on your visit to New York, sail to the **Statue of Liberty**. No other monument embodies the nation's, and the world's, notion of political freedom and economic potential more than Lady Liberty. It is also the ultimate symbol of New York, the personification of the city's vast diversity and tolerance. See p. 202.

- **Best Building:** The **Empire State Building**, once again the tallest building in New York, is one of the city's definitive icons.

Runners-up include the Art Deco masterpiece, the **Chrysler Building**, and the triangular **Flatiron Building**. See chapter 7.

- **Best Street:** This is a tough choice. Fifth Avenue has the reputation, but has lost some luster the past few years with the proliferation of chain and theme stores, so my pick is **Broadway**. Beginning at the southern tip of the island downtown, Broadway runs from Wall Street, up through Chinatown, SoHo, and Greenwich Village, past the Flatiron building at 23rd Street, into the heart of Times Square, and then up to Columbus Circle, past Lincoln Center and the Upper West Side, all the way to the northern tip of the island. No street better captures the diversity of Manhattan than Broadway.
- **Best Bridge:** Manhattan has five major bridges connecting the island to other shores, and the most historic and fascinating is the **Brooklyn Bridge**. For a

close-up look at what was a marvel of civic engineering when it was built in 1883, and a real New York experience, walk across the bridge from Manhattan to Brooklyn. See p. 196.

- **Best Historic Building:** Despite all the modern steel and glass skyscrapers in New York, there are still many historic marvels standing, and the best of those is the Beaux Arts gem, **Grand Central Terminal**. This railroad station, built in 1913, was restored in the 1990s to recapture its initial brilliance. Even if you don't have to catch a train, make sure you visit. See p. 198.
- **Best Museum:** You could spend your entire visit to New York at **American Museum of Natural History** and not run out of things to see. From the famed dinosaur halls to the wondrous *Hall of Ocean Life*, the 4-square-block Museum of Natural History houses the world's greatest natural science collection. See p. 195.
- **Best Art Museum:** The **Metro-politan Museum of Art** is not only the best art museum in New York, but also the best in North America. The number of masterworks here is mind-boggling. See p. 199.
- **Best Park:** Though New York has many very wonderful parks, there is no real competition here. **Central Park** is one of the world's greatest urban refuges, a center of calm and tranquillity amongst the noise and bustle that is Manhattan. See p. 227.



- **Best location in Central Park for a picnic:** **The Pool**, at 100th Street, is like being in another world. It's relatively quiet and undiscovered, and with weeping willows, ducks, geese, egrets, and a hawk or two, an oasis of tranquility. See p. 231.
- **Best Park excluding Central Park:** **Riverside Park**, a 4-mile-long park along the picturesque Hudson River, is a welcome alternative to the sometimes overcrowded Central Park. See p. 234.
- **Best Place to Take the Kids:** With a carousel, a zoo, two ice-skating rinks, and numerous playgrounds and ball fields, **Central Park** is a children's wonderland.
- **Best Neighborhood to Stroll:** Though I'm partial to the Upper West Side, I have to give the nod to **Greenwich Village**. With its historic streets, hidden cafes, cozy restaurants, and eccentric characters, Greenwich Village is a constant but pleasant barrage on the senses. See chapter 4.
- **Best Mode of Transportation:** There's no better way to see New York than **on foot**. It is certainly the cheapest way to get around, and at times, it's also the fastest.
 

**Runner-Up:** Fast and still economical and despite the constant upheavals in schedules and routes, the **subway** is the fastest way to get from point A to point B in New York.
- **Best Jogging Path:** The 1.5-mile **Reservoir in Central Park** (also known as Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir) is the preferred path of most New Yorkers, this one included. See chapter 7.
- **Best Parade:** New York is famous for its parades, notably the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the St. Patrick's Day Parade, but the best parade in New York is the lesser-known **West Indian-American Day Parade**. Held on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, this is the biggest parade in the city. The music—calypso, soca, reggae, and Latin—the carnival costumes, and incredible Caribbean food make this an unforgettable experience. If you are lucky enough to be here on Labor Day, don't miss it. See chapter 2.
- **Best Street Festival:** For one weekend in the middle of May, the **Ninth Avenue International Food Festival** is the perfect illustration of ethnic diversity in the city. You'll be able to taste foods from restaurants and cuisines from Afghani to Peruvian. See chapter 2.
- **Best New Year's Eve Celebration:** Avoid the madness of Times Square and head to **Central Park** where, at midnight, fireworks are set off and a midnight running race commences. See chapter 2.
- **Best Free Event:** Perennial favorites **SummerStage** in Central Park, which is now drowning in corporate sponsorship and slowly becoming a "paid" event; and **Shakespeare in the Park**, which is becoming more of a showcase for the celebrity of the moment; are losing their luster, leaving **Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors** as the winner. I've seen many great performances at the 4-week festival each August, on the plaza of Lincoln Center, including jazz great Sonny Rollins, the traditional Spanish dance troupe Danzas Espanolas, and a children's sing-along my son still talks fondly about. There is something for everyone at this wonderful free event. See chapter 9.
- **Best Performance Space:** There are few greater spaces in the world than **Carnegie Hall**. Visually and



acoustically brilliant, Carnegie Hall attracts an amazing array of talent. But remember: Never ask a New Yorker how you get there. (Practice, practice, practice!) See p. 302.

- **Best Jazz Club:** The acoustics and sight lines aren't great, but you can't do better than **The Village Vanguard** for finding consistently good-quality jazz. The Vanguard is a New York institution. See p. 314.
- **Best Budget Jazz Club:** **Smoke**, a cozy Upper West Side jazz club, is emerging as one of the best in the city. There's no cover Sunday through Thursday, with Tuesday, for the tremendous "Hammond Organ" night and Wednesday, for the "Hot Pants Funk Sextet," not to be missed. See p. 314.
- **Best Harlem Jazz Club:** I like my jazz without hassle. At **St. Nick's Pub** I can come in just about anytime, not worry about reservations, sit at the bar, and hear great music. And you never know who, from the neighborhood, might join in and jam. See p. 314.
- **Best New Club:** **Satalla** is an intimate club that features music from around the world. In a cozy, comfortable setting, you'll hear music from everywhere from Finland to Cameroon. See p. 314.
- **Best Dive Bar:** Sure, we know you came to New York to go to a dive bar. Enter the **Subway Inn** and it's as if you stepped into a 1940s moody film noir—minus the cigarette smoke. See p. 321.
- **Best Crime Bookstore:** New York is fodder for crime writers and as result, the city has many crime bookstores. With its spiral staircase and musty rows of manuscripts, **The Mysterious Bookshop** is not only a fun place to

browse, but also the perfect setting for a crime novel. See p. 268.

- **Best Way to Spend a Day in the Boroughs:**

**The Bronx:** Spend the morning at the **Bronx Zoo** or the **Bronx Botanical Gardens** and then head to Arthur Avenue, the Little Italy of the Bronx, for an authentic Italian feast.

**Brooklyn:** First take a look at what's on exhibit at always exciting **Brooklyn Museum**, and then get some fresh air with a stroll in nearby, lovely **Prospect Park** capped off by a sandwich and a slice of cheesecake at **Junior's** on Flatbush Avenue.

**Queens:** Take the 7 train, the International Express, out to the **Queens Museum of Art**, on the grounds of the 1964 World's Fair, or the new **Louis Armstrong House Museum**. On your way back, stop for a meal at any number of ethnic restaurants you will find within close proximity of the 7 train. See p. 247.

- **Best Day to Come to New York:** You've skipped the insanity of New Year's Eve and arisen fresh and sober. On **New Year's Day** get out on the town early; you'll have the city practically to yourself.

**Runner-Up:** The city clears out during the dog days of August and on the weekends in particular. On **Sunday mornings in August** the city is as close to deserted as it ever is.

**And:** Start any **Sunday morning** early and experience a calm, quiet, almost serene feel to the city that can be positively invigorating.

- **Best Photo Op:** On the **Brooklyn Heights Promenade**, with the New York skyline behind you, your friends won't have any difficulty knowing where you are.



### 3 Best Low-Cost Hotel Bets

You'll likely spend more than you like on a hotel room; it's a fact of life in the big city. But New York has a wealth of wallet-friendly choices for bargain hunters who know where to look. For the details on these and other affordable hotels, see chapter 5.

- **Best Overall Value—Downtown:** It's hard to beat the **Cosmopolitan Hotel—TriBeCa**, 95 W. Broadway (☎ 888/895-9400; [www.cosmohotel.com](http://www.cosmohotel.com)), for value. Each of the small, comfy, modern rooms comes with its own petite but immaculate private bathroom for as little as \$119 a night. The high-rent neighborhood is hip as can be and subway-convenient to the rest of the city. See p. 98.
- **Best Overall Value—Midtown:** The excellent Apple Core Hotels group's premier property, the **Red Roof Inn**, 6 W. 32nd St. (☎ 800/567-7720; [www.applecorehotels.com](http://www.applecorehotels.com)) is a combination of location, quality, comforts, and space at rates that are a bargain in any town, much less New York—as low as \$89 double, with breakfast, this one is hard to beat. See p. 118.
- **Best Overall Value—Uptown:** The **Hotel Newton**, 2528 Broadway (☎ 888/HOTEL-58; [www.newyorkhotel.com](http://www.newyorkhotel.com)), doesn't expect you to put up with a tiny room or myriad inconveniences because you aren't spending a fortune. With rates starting at \$85 double, you'll get more than your money's worth here—and you'll save an additional 10% if you're a AAA member. See p. 124.
- **Best Value for Bargain Hunters Who Don't Mind Sharing:** If you're willing to share a bathroom, you'll be pleased with the **Larchmont Hotel**, in the loveliest part

of Greenwich Village at 27 W. 11th St. (☎ 212/989-9333; [www.larchmonthotel.com](http://www.larchmonthotel.com)). See p. 103.

- **Best Value for Bargain Hunters Who Do Mind Sharing:** Kudos to **SoHotel**, 341 Broome St. (☎ 212/226-1482; [www.pioneerhotel.com](http://www.pioneerhotel.com)), which has done something no one else has managed: offer clean, friendly accommodations with private bathrooms for just \$77 double year-round. The staff is professional, the decor is more attractive than most hotels in the shoestring category, and the edge-of-Chinatown location is safe and convenient. See p. 99.
- **Best for Bargain Hunters Willing to Compromise: Chelsea Lodge**, 318 W. 20th St. (☎ 800/373-1116; [www.chelsealodge.com](http://www.chelsealodge.com)), offers the perfect compromise: You'll have an in-room sink and shower, so all you have to share is a toilet in the hall. If you're willing to do that, you'll find yourself in one of the cutest, cleanest, most comfortable hotels in New York—and at one of the cheapest rates (from \$105 for a double) in town. One of my all-time budget favorites! See p. 103.
- **Best Service for the Budget-Minded:** The staff at the **Broadway Inn**, 264 W. 46th St. (☎ 800/826-6300; [www.broadwayinn.com](http://www.broadwayinn.com)), might be the most helpful in the city. They're so committed to making their guests feel welcome that they give you a hot line number to call when you're out and about if you need directions, advice on where to eat, or any other assistance. And you thought New Yorkers weren't friendly! See p. 112.
- **Best for Creative Spirits:** Reminiscent of Warhol's Factory at the



height of its creativity and style, the supercool **Gershwin Hotel**, 7 E. 27th St. (☎ 212/545-8000; www.gershwinhotel.com), after a recent renovation and the addition of a hip bar, is the winner in this category. See p. 109.

- **Best for Families:** On the Upper West Side, one of the city's most kid-friendly residential neighborhoods, is **The Milburn**, 242 W. 76th St. (☎ 800/833-9622; www.milburnhotel.com), which offers the best value-for-dollar ratio on suites in town. A queen-size sleeper sofa in the living room makes the junior and one-bedroom suites large enough for four, and a kitchenette with microwave, minifridge, and coffeemaker means you can save on breakfast. Kids under 13 stay free in parent's room. See p. 124.
- **Best for Gay & Lesbian Travelers:** New York is such a hub of gay life and culture that virtually all of the city's hotels welcome gay and lesbian visitors. But if you're looking for like-minded folks, try the fabulous Hollywood-themed **Chelsea Pines Inn**, 317 W. 14th St. (☎ 888/546-2700; www.chelseapinesinn.com; see p. 104), or the more low-key but equally welcoming **Colonial House Inn**, 318 W. 22nd St. (☎ 800/

689-3779; www.colonialhouseinn.com; see p. 105).

- **Best Freebies:** The **Travel Inn**, 515 W. 42nd St. (☎ 800/869-4630; www.newyorkhotel.com), wins on *two* counts. First is the free garage parking—a \$25-a-day value at minimum for visitors driving to the city—and free in-and-out privileges. Summer visitors can take advantage of the rooftop swimming pool and sun deck.
- **Best for Travelers with Disabilities:** The comfortable, budget-minded **Skyline Hotel**, 725 10th Ave. (☎ 800/433-1982; www.skylinehotelnyc.com), has seven generously sized wheelchair-accessible rooms, ramps, and fire-safety alarms for deaf and blind visitors, plus free parking. See p. 119.
- **Best Splurge:** The Art Deco–style **Hotel Metro**, 45 W. 35th St. (☎ 800/356-3870; www.hotelmetronyc.com), is a midpriced Midtown gem that feels much more expensive than it is, with stylish furnishings, marble bathrooms, an attentive staff, and a rooftop terrace with the best view of the Empire State Building in town. You'll get a surprisingly good value for your dollar here, and free continental breakfast softens the blow. See p. 116.

## 4 Best Low-Cost Dining Bets

- **Best Newcomer:** **Bread Tribeca**, 301 Church St. (☎ 212/334-8282). This bigger version of SoHo's delicious Bread features great sandwiches, but also a wood-burning oven that spins out specialties from the Ligurian region of Italy.
- **Best Chinese Cuisine:** With all the culinary wonders that Chinatown has to offer, this is a tough choice. **New York Noodletown**,

28½ Bowery (☎ 212/349-0923), where the soups are always fresh and comforting and anything that's salt-baked is guaranteed to be sublime, is my favorite of the moment. See p. 139.

- **Best Diner:** The eclectic **Big Nick's Burger and Pizza Joint**, 2175 Broadway (☎ 212/362-9232), has offered culinary comfort any time of day or night for over 40 years. The variety of



burgers is as mind-boggling as the collection of unidentifiable celebrity photos on the walls.

- **Best Burger: Burger Joint**, at Le Parker Meridien hotel, 118 W. 57th St. (☎ 212/708-7460), serves great burgers at great prices. Who woulda thunk a fancy hotel like Le Parker Meridien would be the home to a place like that?
- **Best Pizza: Patsy's Pizzeria**, 2287 1st Ave. (☎ 212/534-9783), has been cranking out coal-oven pies since 1932. It was a favorite of Frank Sinatra, who used to have Patsy's pizzas shipped to him from East Harlem. You can also order by the slice, but do it only if the pie is fresh out of the oven.
- **Best Breakfast: Uptown**, head to **Good Enough To Eat**, 483 Amsterdam Ave. (☎ 212 496-0163), but try to avoid weekends when the wait sometimes can last until lunch. See p. 174.

Downtown, head to the trendy Lower East Side and the **Clinton St. Baking Company**, 4 Clinton St. (☎ 646/602-6263), where the pancakes are worth tasting any time of day. See p. 142.

- **Best Late-Night Hangout: Half authentic French bistro, half all-American diner, Florent**, 69 Gansevoort St. (☎ 212/989-5779), is the hipster crowd's favorite after-hours hangout. Thanks to its good food, great people-watching, and sense of humor, it's mine, too. See p. 150.
- **Best Times Square Restaurant: Virgil's Real BBQ**, 152 W. 44th St. (☎ 212/921-9494; [www.virgilsbbq.com](http://www.virgilsbbq.com)). Times Square is a restaurant wasteland with bad theme restaurants or overpriced national chains. Virgil's, in a sense, is a theme restaurant; the theme being barbecue, but they do an excellent job smoking their

meats. The barbecued lamb is not to be missed. See p. 167.

- **Best Old New York Experience: Eisenberg's Coffee Shop**, 174 5th Ave. (☎ 212/675-5096), has served the same retro fare since 1929—and prices are retro, too. New Yorkers consider this the best tuna salad in town, but the Reuben is my ticket to culinary happiness. See p. 157.
- **Best Deli: Katz's Delicatessen**, 205 E. Houston St. (☎ 212/254-2246), is the choice among those who know their kreplach, knishes, and pastrami. No cutesy sandwiches named for celebrities here—just top-notch Jewish classics. See p. 142.
- **Best for Families: Kids of all ages love Serendipity 3**, 225 E. 60th St. (☎ 212/838-3531), a classic ice-cream parlor like your childhood memories, but *better*. See p. 177. For more kid-friendly choices, see “Family-Friendly Restaurants,” in chapter 6.
- **Best Hot Chocolate: The lines begin forming as soon as the doors open on weekends in the winter at Jacques Torres Chocolate**, 60 Water St., Brooklyn (☎ 718/875-9772; [www.mrchocolate.com](http://www.mrchocolate.com)). And for good reason: rich, creamy, satiny smooth; really indescribable. Also at 350 Hudson St. in TriBeCa. See p. 276.
- **Best Post-Museum Treat: After visiting the very interesting Lower East Side Tenement Museum**, 90 Orchard St. (☎ 212/431-0233; [www.tenement.org](http://www.tenement.org)), and seeing how some of New York's early-20th-century immigrants struggled to make ends meet, reward yourself by going next door to sample New York's best gelato at **Il Laboratorio del Gelato**, 95 Orchard St. (☎ 212/343-9922; [www.laboratoriodelgelato.com](http://www.laboratoriodelgelato.com)).



- **Best Bagels: Absolute Bagels**, 2788 Broadway (☎ 212/932-2105). They're not huge like some bagels these days, but they are always hot and cooked to perfection.
- **Best Baked Goods & Sweets:** There's a lot of competition in this category, but the ultimate kudos go to Franco-Brussels import **Le Pain Quotidien**, 100 Grand St. (☎ 212/625-9009), for its fresh-baked breads (baked in small batches five times daily) and scrumptious pastries and sweets, served in a SoHo-loft-goes-farm-house setting. (You'll find locations in the Flatiron District and on the Upper West and Upper East Sides, too.) See p. 144.
- **Best Cheap Meal:** Though the \$2.45 "recession special"—two hot dogs and a fruit drink—at **Gray's Papaya**, 2090 Broadway (☎ 212/799-0243), is almost a \$1 increase from the previous recession, it's still a bargain. But is it any good? Witness the lines out the door every day for lunch.
- **Best Ice Cream:** A stop at **Brooklyn Ice Cream Factory**, Fulton Ferry Landing Pier, Brooklyn (☎ 718/246-3963), is the perfect reward for a brisk walk across the Brooklyn Bridge. A rich, home-made ice cream with a view of the Manhattan skyline is a hard combination to beat.
- **Best 24-Hour Restaurant:** Ukrainian diner **Veselka**, 144 2nd Ave. (☎ 212/228-9682), will meet almost all your food needs any time of day or night. If you want borscht at midnight, you can get it. If you want French toast at 4am, you can have it. It's a comfort to know they will make pretty much whatever you want when you want it. See p. 148.
- **Best Soul Food:** Not only is **Charles' Southern Style Kitchen**, 2841 8th Ave. (☎ 877/813-2920), the best soul food in the city, it's also the best buffet. For \$9.95 on weekdays and \$12 on weekends, the down-home offerings at this tiny Harlem restaurant will tempt you to make an obscene number of visits to the buffet line. See p. 178.
- **Best Taqueria:** With the influx of Mexican immigrants to El Barrio (East Harlem) a number of very good Mexican restaurants and groceries have opened. **El Paso Taqueria**, 1642 Lexington Ave. (☎ 212/831-9831), is the best of the bunch.
- **Best Neighborhood for Food: Hell's Kitchen**, the area comprising 9th Avenue from the 30s through the 50s, features so many inexpensive and exciting ethnic choices (so devilishly good!), you'd need at least a month's visit here to sample them all.