

THE BEST OF THE BIG APPLE



conic, hip, trendsetting, and ever-changing, New York City lives up to its superlatives. Underneath the Big Apple's jagged skyscraper skyline, museums dazzle with the latest collections, celebrity chefs unveil their newest creations, and Broadway continues to stage elaborate, glittering shows. Downtown, fashionistas linger on the cobblestone streets of the Meatpacking District, while artists paint urban portraits in Union Square. Beyond the bustle, though, is a diverse population, taking the city in stride and friendlier than you were led to believe.

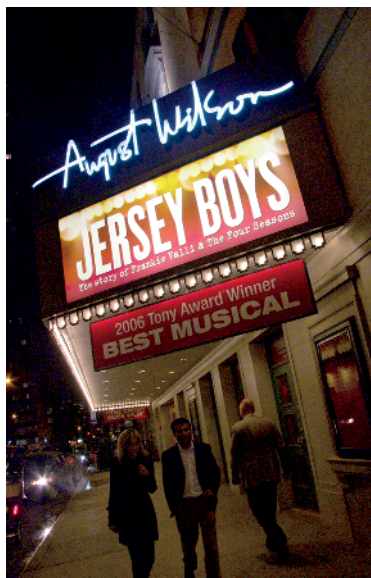
THINGS TO DO When you're planning your activities, think on your feet. Do what New Yorkers do: walk. Wander the angled, tree-lined streets of **Greenwich Village** or the avenues of multimillion-dollar townhouses on the Upper East Side. Art lovers should not miss the Warhols and Pollocks at **MoMA**, or the comprehensive, essential **Metropolitan Museum of Art**. Outdoors, mingle with joggers and skaters in **Central Park** or stop and smell the flowers at the **Brooklyn Botanic Garden**. Head to **Battery Park** for sunset views over the Hudson River, or watch the world below from the top of the **Empire State Building**.

SHOPPING And make sure your walking includes window-shopping. Couture designer shops line **Madison Avenue**, while the major department stores like **Saks Fifth Avenue** and **Bloomingdale's** anchor Fifth Avenue in Midtown. Cutting-edge designers show their wares in the **Meatpacking District**, while high-fashion boutiques and cool housewares peak out behind the cast-iron facades of **SoHo**. Rummage through vintage clothing boutiques on the **Lower East Side** or sift through knockoff sunglasses, purses, and watches on crammed Canal Street in **Chinatown**. Head to **Greenwich Village** to browse music stores and boutique food shops.

EATING & DRINKING To fuel your rambles, you can find your culinary bliss from high end to low budget, in every ethnic cuisine. With small apartment kitchens and a culinary smorgasbord around every corner, it's no wonder New Yorkers eat out so much. Start in **Chinatown** for Cantonese noodles or indulge in a juicy steak at a **Midtown** steak house. Mix with celebrities at a fusion spot in **Chelsea** or tuck into a steaming bowl of mussels at a cozy **Greenwich Village** bistro. If you're on the go, grab a slice of pizza or a bagel with a schmear of cream cheese. For cheap, good, ethnic eats, hop the subway to **Queens, Brooklyn, or the Bronx**.

NIGHTLIFE & ENTERTAINMENT Make sure you save some energy for your nighttime activities. **Times Square's** bright lights shine on elaborate stage productions in **Broadway's** theaters. Dress up for a classical concert at **Carnegie Hall** or **Lincoln Center**. Lovers of soul head to Harlem's **Apollo Theatre**. The legendary **Blue Note** and **Village Vanguard** pack in jazz fans, while cutting-edge bars and clubs in the **Meatpacking District** lure the beautiful people.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Like a shiny gift about to be unwrapped, New York City at Christmas is waiting to be explored and enjoyed.



They say the neon lights are bright . . . on Broadway!



Take a break from the hurly-burly of the city in Central Park.

most unforgettable **NEW YORK CITY EXPERIENCES**

- **Sailing to the Statue of Liberty**, on Liberty Island in New York Harbor: If you have time to do only one thing on your visit to New York, sail to the Lady in the Harbor. 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. (Note that the Lady is undergoing renovations, so you'll have to admire her from the outside through most of 2012). See p. 102.
- **Walking the Brooklyn 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 true New York experience, walk across from Manhattan to Brooklyn (or vice versa!). See p. 149.
- **Jogging Around the Central Park Reservoir**: Okay, you don't even have to jog it. You can walk the jogging path around the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir and take in the beauty of Central Park, as well as the views of Central Park West, Fifth Avenue, and especially the skyline of midtown Manhattan. See p. 175.
- **Sunday Morning in New York**: This might not sound so unforgettable, but to experience the city minus the noise and activity is something special. I've noticed quite a few tourists, usually jet-lagged Europeans, wandering the parks and streets early Sunday mornings.

- **Walking 125th Street:** Take a walk across this famous Harlem boulevard, and your senses will be overwhelmed with the music, the variety of stores, the restaurants, the stalls selling everything from homemade CDs to bean pies, and the street prophets and musicians. The energy is relentless.
- **New York Harbor at Rush Hour:** Whether it's the morning rush or evening, marvel at the activity in the waterways downtown: the Staten Island Ferry as it treks back and forth, the yellow water taxis that speed to Brooklyn, the various ferries that come from points in New Jersey. All maneuvering in and around Lady Liberty, Ellis Island, and into or out of Manhattan. Best observed from Battery Park.
- **Traveling Underground:** Don't be afraid of the subways. Go underground, MetroCard in hand, and use the fastest means of transport in the city. On the way, you might see music, art, even history in many of the city's refurbished stations.
- **TriBeCa in the Early Morning:** This marvelous part of New York, full of large, brick, rust-colored warehouses and cobblestone streets, looks like Monet painted it in the morning with a strong sun playing off its rich surfaces. This is the heart of the heart of New York, to my mind.

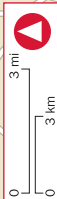


Talk a walk across the East River on the Brooklyn Bridge.

THE **best** FOOD & DRINK EXPERIENCES

- **Bagging a Bagel: Try the ones at Absolute Bagel.** They're not huge like some bagels these days, but they are always hot and baked to perfection. See p. 230.
- **Catching a Knish (or other classic Jewish deli food): Head for Katz's Deli,** on the Lower East Side. This 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. 211.
- **Chowing Down in Chinatown,** at a place like **Big Wong King** on Mott Street. Come here for the true Chinatown experience. You'll share tables with Chinese families, order bowls of *congee* with fried crullers, plates of stir-fried vegetables, and platters of roast pork and duck—all served by brusque no-nonsense waiters. I guarantee it will be unforgettable. See p. 208.

New York Metropolitan Area





Enjoy some dim sum in Chinatown.

- **See and Be Seen at a Hot Spot:** Hang with the foodies at a trendy eatery like the **Dutch** (p. 212). The crowds convene with good cause at the corner of Sullivan and Prince for chef Andrew Carmellini's (Locanda Verde) newest venture, which was intended as a tribute to old New York. The cuisine is unclassifiable; a mishmash of many influences resulting in a rousing success for Carmellini and all those crowds of diners.

best FAMILY EXPERIENCES

- **Central Park:** With its carousel, a zoo, two ice-skating rinks and pools (depending on the season), playgrounds, and ball fields, Central Park is a children's wonderland. See p. 170.
- **Bronx Zoo:** This is one of the great zoos in the world—and you don't have to be a kid to love it. See p. 143.
- **New York Hall of Science:** This Queens museum, in Flushing Meadows–Corona Park, has hands-on exhibits that thrill, from preschoolers on up. The surrounding park offers a carousel, zoo, and boat and bike rentals. See p. 167.
- **Coney Island:** It's not a theme park (yet!), but you can still enjoy longtime survivors of what was once New York City's favorite summer playground, including the landmarked Wonder Wheel and Cyclone roller coaster. Nearby is the New York Aquarium, MCU Park (home of the minor league baseball team Brooklyn Cyclones), and Nathan's Famous hot dogs. And, of course, the beach! See p. 155.



Central Park's Zoo is a great place for the family to talk with the animals.

best **FREE & DIRT-CHEAP** NEW YORK

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Best Free & Dirt-Cheap New York

- **Ride the Staten Island Ferry:** The Staten Island Ferry is used daily by thousands of commuters. Ride it for a great view of the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, New York Harbor, and the lower Manhattan skyline. You can't beat the price: free. See p. 101.
- **Visit Free Museums:** Believe it or not, there are museums in New York that don't charge admission. Two of my favorites are the **National Museum of the American Indian** and the **Federal Hall National Memorial**. (And many of NYC's museums offer a regularly scheduled "free" day or evening.) See p. 98 and 88.
- **Take in a Game at the West 4th Street Basketball Courts:** On West 4th Street and Sixth Avenue, you'll find the legendary public hoops courts. Spectators line the chain-link fence for a glimpse of the b-ball intensity that occurs during weekends (and some weekdays) in warm weather.
- **Walk. Anywhere:** New York City is one of the world's greatest walking cities. Since most of it is planned on the grid system, it's hard to get lost (except in the West Village, where getting lost is part of the fun). Avenues go north and south, streets go east and west. As the "On the Town" sailors once sang (and it's still true): The Bronx is up, the Battery's down. There's no better way to get to know New York. Battery Park at the south tip of Manhattan—where it all began over 400 years ago—is a great starting place. Then stroll up Broadway, the only street in Manhattan that goes from one end of the island to the other. You can actually walk the entire length of Manhattan—a walk that, done briskly, takes upwards of 6 hours. That's a 13½-mile hike, by the way!



Take a free ride . . . on the Staten Island Ferry.

1 THE best WAYS TO SEE NEW YORK LIKE A LOCAL

o **Ride the Roosevelt Island Tram:**

Impress your family and friends with a spectacular view of the skyline from the Roosevelt Island Tram. During the 4-minute ride, you will be treated to a gorgeous vista down the East River, with views of the United Nations and the Queensboro, Williamsburg, Manhattan, and Brooklyn bridges. See p. 113.



The Roosevelt Island Tram gives you a birds-eye view of the East Side skyline.

o **Stroll the Other Fifth Avenue**

(Park Slope, Brooklyn): Just a short train ride from Manhattan, you can enjoy the still-undiscovered-by-tourists vibe of this Brooklyn thoroughfare. The Park Slope neighborhood in general is full of hidden gems, but it's easy to spend a whole day checking out the cool shops, clubs, architecture, and restaurants lining Fifth Avenue between Bergen and 9th streets. Avenues like this are the reason people move to Brooklyn.

o **Go Dancing in Chinatown at Santos Party House.**

Come dance at this low-cover-charge club, with cutting-edge DJs, all kinds of bands, and always a good crowd. See p. 382.

o **Visit City Island:**

New York's, or should I say, the Bronx's own New England-like village where seafood shanties, marinas, and quaint, preserved saltbox homes still stand. New Yorkers know about it, but out-of-town folk aren't aware of this lovely little island. See p. 150.

o **Head for Shakespeare in the Park.**

Shakespeare performed by stars, under the stars, in Central Park—for free! Even though you can put your name into an online lottery for tickets, every summer, thousands of New Yorkers make a day out of waiting in line (and chatting, picnicking, and people-watching) for the tickets to be distributed. While you won't find a real New Yorker at Times Square on New Year's Eve, you will find lots of them on a summer's day waiting for the Bard. See p. 350.

NEW YORK'S best EVENTS & SEASONS

o **Best Season in New York: Christmas.**

Come see the Christmas trees on Park Avenue, the big crystal snowflake hanging above the intersection of 57th Street and Fifth Avenue, the trees at Rockefeller Center and Lincoln Center, the menorah at Grand Army Plaza at Fifth and 59th Street, and the decorations in department store windows, restaurants, and hotels. And even though

the crowds, especially around Midtown and Rockefeller Center, might bring out the Scrooge in you, the atmosphere is almost always festive and like no other time of year.

- Best Time of Year to Come to New York: Summer.** Many people prefer the colorful days of fall to visit New York. But summer, especially July and August, is when many New Yorkers escape the city, leaving less-crowded streets, restaurants, and shows, complemented by countless free outdoor cultural events.
- Best Day to Wander New York: New Year's Day.** The holidays are over; you've had enough festivity—see above—and you've wisely skipped the insanity of New Year's Eve. Get out on the town early; you'll have the city practically to yourself.



Christmas at Rockefeller Center is a New York City treat.

NEW YORK'S best MUSEUMS

- Best All-Around Museum: American Museum of Natural History.** You can spend your entire visit to New York at this 4-square-block museum; there is that much to see. From the famed dinosaur halls to the Hall of Ocean Life, the Museum of Natural History houses the world's greatest natural science collection. See p. 139.



The 70th St. Garden provides an elegant exterior view of the Frick Museum.



Visit jazz great Louis Armstrong's Queens home, now a museum.

- **Best Art Museum: Metropolitan Museum of Art.** Not just the best art museum in New York, but the best in North America. The number of masterworks is mind-boggling. See p. 131.
- **Best-Looking Museum: Museum of Modern Art.** Though the exterior of the Guggenheim is certainly memorable, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art is oddly attractive, MoMA's \$450-million renovation makes it the coolest-looking museum, inside and out, in town. See p. 120.
- **Best Art Museum that People Outside New York Love to Tell You They Love the Most:** The Frick is stately, restrained, elegant, and humble. It's also home to an unrivaled collection that focuses on quality over quantity—making visitors feel like we discovered a secret art haven. See p. 129.
- **Best New York Museum about New York: Museum of the City of New York.** Start here and get a feel of what the city is like—from past to present. There are always fascinating exhibits. See p. 133.
- **Best Home Posing as a Museum: The Louis Armstrong House Museum.** This unassuming house in Queens was Satchmo's home for almost 30 years, and it's been preserved almost exactly as it was when he died in 1971. See p. 161.

best NEW YORK CITY BUILDINGS

- **Best Historic Building: Grand Central Terminal.** Despite all the steel-and-glass skyscrapers, many historic marvels are still standing, and the best is this Beaux Arts



The Chrysler Building is an Art Deco wonder in Midtown.

gem. This railroad station, built in 1913, was restored in the 1990s to recapture its brilliance. See p. 112.

- **Best Skyscraper: The Chrysler Building.** There is no observation deck, but this Art Deco masterpiece is best viewed from outside or from other observation decks, such as the Empire State Building's. See p. 110.
- **Most Impressive Place of Worship: Cathedral of St. John the Divine.** Construction began on the world's largest Gothic cathedral in 1892—and it's still going on. But this is one structure that benefits from being a work in progress. See p. 140.



Above the streets of Manhattan, the High Line has become one of Manhattan's favorite parks.

best NEW YORK CITY PARKS

- **Central Park:** Period. One of the world's great urban refuges—a center of calm and tranquility among the noisy bustle that is Manhattan. See p. 170.
- **Riverside Park:** This 4-mile-long park along the Hudson River is a welcome alternative to the sometimes-overcrowded Central Park. See p. 183.
- **High Line:** Located in the Meatpacking District of Manhattan, this marvelous park (new in 2009, with an additional section that opened in 2011, and another section set to open in 2013–14) was once an elevated structure for freight trains. It's become immensely popular and shows how New York City is constantly reinventing itself. See p. 182.

best NEIGHBORHOODS TO STROLL IN NEW YORK CITY

- **Brooklyn Heights:** A designated historic district, when you stroll this 'hood, you will be awed by the pristine condition of 19th-century row houses, brownstones, and mansions. Plus there is no better view of Manhattan and New York Harbor, including the Statue of Liberty and the Brooklyn Bridge, from the Heights's famous promenade.
- **Greenwich Village:** With its historic winding streets, hidden cafes, cozy restaurants, and eccentric characters, Greenwich Village is a captivating, romantic barrage on the senses.
- **Chinatown:** The relentless selling and crowded sidewalks may make Chinatown seem like less than ideal strolling territory, but it's so colorful and multi-sensory, it's worth the adventure.



Beautiful brownstones line many of Harlem's streets.

- **The Upper West Side:** Dotted with great shops, museums, parks, inexpensive restaurants, and old buildings and brownstones, the UWS has a great balance for a lovely neighborhood stroll.
- **Harlem:** Harlem encompasses a large landscape, but historic homes, lovingly preserved abound. Whether you are exploring the Mt. Morris Historical District, Astor Row, Striver's Row, or head up to Sugar Hill, you will wonder at the architectural beauty that was (and still is) Harlem.

best STREETS TO WALK UP OR DOWN

- **West 4th Street:** This street runs east-west (more or less) through the heart of Greenwich Village. It skirts the southern end of Washington Square Park and then plunges into the heart of the West Village. This street, on the stretch between Seventh Avenue and West 12th Street (yes, W. 4th St. runs into W. 12th St.) is the most beautiful in New York. If you're lucky enough to walk it on a snowy evening with the lamplights illuminating the falling flakes or at dusk on a warm summer evening with leafy shadows everywhere, you'll be transported.



The winding streets of Greenwich Village are a great place for a stroll.

- **Prince Street:** This SoHo street has a brief run of just 10 blocks, from Bowery to MacDougal, and it's a gorgeous walk. It's chock-full of atmosphere and history. You'll pass the Old St. Patrick's Cathedral—the city's first—and its gorgeous old brick wall. Just a few steps west is McNally Jackson, a marvelous independent bookstore where you can pause and browse. And you certainly won't be short of shopping choices.
- **Irving Place:** This is another small gem, running a mere 6 blocks between 14th Street and Gramercy Park, not terribly far from Union Square. It takes you by Pete's Tavern, a grand old dive that's been around for 150 years. When you reach the street's apex, you can finish off this lovely little walk with a stroll around Gramercy Park, a tiny green gem that, alas, is surrounded by a wrought-iron fence and can only be entered by those who live in the neighborhood.

best OFFBEAT NEW YORK EXPERIENCES

- **Museum of Sex:** How many cities can claim their own Museum of Sex? Not many, that's for sure. As for New York, we got your museum of sex right here! But you must be 18 or older to enter. See p. 115.
- **Bike Along the Hudson River:** A wonderful alternative to walking is to rent a bike and ride the length of Manhattan via the work-in-progress **Hudson River Park**. As of this writing, you can bike from Battery Park to Fort Tryon Park, near the George Washington Bridge. (There are detours along the way, which occasionally take you off the paths.) For bike-rental info, see p. 176.
- **Take a Food Tour:** Mmmmm! You'll find lots of groups that offer tours centered around food, and it's a fantastic way to learn about a specific



You can bike . . . or bake . . . along the river at Hudson River Park.

neighborhood. What could be better than seeing Brooklyn by way of its pizzerias, or exploring Harlem by sampling African, Caribbean, Latin American, and soul foods along the way?

- **Ride the International Express:** The no. 7 train is sometimes known as the "International Express." Take it through the borough of Queens (where it runs aboveground for most of its length), and you will pass one ethnic neighborhood after another, from Indian to Thai, from Peruvian to Colombian, from Chinese to Korean.
- **Bastille Day in the City:** That's July 14, for you non-Francophiles. A consortium of French organizations puts on a big fête on East 60th Street between Fifth and Lexington avenues on the Sunday just before or after July 14. The fun starts at noon and continues until 6pm. Sample the cuisine of France and other French-speaking countries, browse the French-themed market stalls, and dance in the street in a French-style "*bal-musette*." There are even can-can dancers! Check out the details at <http://bastilledaynyc.com>. Other Bastille Day festivities take place in TriBeCa and in Cobble Hill, Brooklyn.
- **Visit Governor's Island.** You can ride a free ferry to this island in New York Harbor from May through October. There are many plans afoot for just what to do with this former military installation that included Navy captains' majestic homes, a prison, and two 1812-era fortresses; for now, you can rent a bike and explore the island's 172 acres at a your own leisurely pace, or attend a fair, show, or concert. See p. 181.

best DAYS IN NEW YORK'S OTHER BOROUGHS

- **In the Bronx:** Spend the morning at the **Bronx Zoo** (p. 143) or the **New York Botanical Garden** (p. 145). Or ride the D, B or 4 trains to **Yankee Stadium** for a Yankee game; get there early and take a walk up to the wondrous Grand Concourse and try to squeeze in a visit to the nearby eclectic **Bronx Museum of the Arts**.
- **In Brooklyn:** You can take a look at what's on at the always-exciting **Brooklyn Museum of Art** (p. 153), then get some fresh air with a stroll in nearby, lovely **Prospect Park** (p. 157). Cap it off with a sandwich and a slice of cheesecake at **Junior's** (p. 270), on Flatbush Avenue. Or, head for **Coney Island** (p. 155), whose face will change forever within the life of this book. Go in the summer, hit the beach, the amusement park, the aquarium, Nathan's Famous hot dogs,



Take a ride through rapidly changing Coney Island at Luna Park.



Girl and gorilla at the Bronx Zoo.

and/or maybe a Cyclones baseball game. It's a schlep, but one you will never forget.

- **In Queens:** Take the 7 train, the **International Express** (see “Best Offbeat New York Experiences,” above), to the **Queens Museum of Art** (p. 164), on the grounds of the 1964 World's Fair, or the **Louis Armstrong House Museum** (p. 161). If it's the right time of year, take in a **Mets game** (p. 389) or wander the grounds of the **U.S. Open**. On your way back, stop for a meal at any of the ethnic restaurants you will find within close proximity of the no. 7 train.

best SHOPPING IN NEW YORK CITY

- **Best Store: Saks Fifth Avenue.** For versatility, Saks has it all—without being overwhelming like other big stores. And don't miss those legendary holiday window displays. See p. 295.
- **Best Clothes Store: Barneys.** This store (and its Co-ops) is the pinnacle of big-ticket fashion, with twice-yearly warehouse sales. See p. 293.
- **Best Bargain Store: Century 21.** Come early on weekdays to avoid the crowds at this wild designer-markdown emporium. See p. 294.
- **Best Vintage Store: Beacon's Closet.** Its Brooklyn and Manhattan outposts stock some of the city's most stylish, affordable clothing, shoes, and accessories. See p. 302.
- **Best Shopping Zone: SoHo, NoHo, and Nolita.** Three neighborhoods together create the best single area for roaming and shopping among the newest, trendiest boutiques. See chapter 6.
- **Best Bookstore: Bluestockings.** This “radical bookstore, fair-trade cafe, and activist center” on the Lower East Side packs a full arsenal of literature and events into its Allen Street storefront. See p. 299.



Barneys has some of the best styles (and best windows) in New York.

- **Best Music Store: Other Music.** Come to this sweet little shop to fill in the gaps on your alt-rock, jazz, funk, and international musical repertoire. See p. 322.
- **Best Old-World Italian Food Store: DiPalo's Dairy.** This 1910-originated store is one of the last vestiges New York's Little Italy—just ask lifelong owner Louie DiPalo. See p. 310.
- **Best Old-World Jewish Food Store: Russ & Daughters.** This smoked-fish purveyor has been a mainstay on the Lower East Side since 1914 (or 1908, if you count its pushcart days). Like DiPalo's above, the Russ family has been in charge since the beginning. See p. 313.

best CULTURE & NIGHTLIFE IN NEW YORK

- **Best Performance Space: Carnegie Hall.** One of the world's great concert halls, with an array of world-class talent on display almost every night. See p. 346.
- **Best Children's Theater: Paper Bag Players.** For children 4 to 9, the imaginative players put on colorful performances on homemade sets. See p. 334.
- **Best Jazz Club: The Village Vanguard.** This subterranean landmark is like passing through a time portal where real-deal jazz sizzles nightly. See p. 361.
- **Best Rock Club: The Bell House.** Manhattan rock shows are easily outdone by this Gowanus, Brooklyn, venue, whose great sound attracts an impressive range of performers. See p. 355.
- **Best Comedy Club: Gotham Comedy Club.** Comfortable and sophisticated, this is where the best comedians come to hone their acts. See p. 364.
- **Best Cocktail: Flatiron Lounge.** Manhattan's best Manhattan is served up in this classic Deco lounge. See p. 372.
- **Best Pub: Ear Inn.** An old hanger-on in chic SoHo, this rumored-to-be-haunted joint continues to survive among the lush lounges that surround it. See p. 368.



Jazz aficionados flock to the classic Village Vanguard.

- **Best Dive Bar: Subway Inn.** Nothing matches the noir-like atmosphere that permeates this, believe it or not, Upper East Side mainstay. A shot at the bar will fortify you for shopping at Bloomingdale's across the street. See p. 376.
- **Best Beer Bar: Spuyten Duyvil.** This Williamsburg, Brooklyn, bar is nirvana for beer fanatics. Kick back with a draft and enjoy the killer jukebox. See p. 381.
- **Best Hotel Bar: Salon de Ning.** This rooftop bar at the Peninsula Hotel has an outdoor terrace where you can take in the Midtown scenery from 23 stories up. See p. 379.