

# A Cheapskate's Guide to New York

By Jet Salalima

Visiting the greatest city in the world can literally cost you an arm and a leg. One of the most common complaints against New York City is how expensive it is. The cost of living is relatively higher than most major U.S. cities. Just check out the hotel rates and you will have an idea that it's no joke to visit the Big Apple. Even residents complain about rising rents and more expensive basic commodities. Though the city government would prefer that you spend during your stay in our city, there are ways of experiencing New York at its best with minimum expense. Yes, it is possible. Just because you are running low in the dollar account, doesn't mean you can't enjoy New York City. Here are some recommendations:

## Broadway Shows



The bright lights of Broadway would be dim if it weren't for the tourists. Indeed, you need to book ahead to get good seats for the best shows. "The Lion King" is still booked months ahead. Orchestra seats are, on the average, about \$150-\$200. The cheapest seats are about half that. Unless you're a serious theater fan that must see the latest musical or play, the Theater Development Fund operates

three TKTS offices (one on Duffy Square, 47<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway; the second on South Street Seaport and the third on Downtown Brooklyn) They offer discounted tickets for on going Broadway plays or musicals. The only drawback there is that tickets are for that day itself. The long lines may be a deterrent but patience can yield up to 50% - 75% discount on tickets. If you are not picky with the shows, you can watch Broadway classics such as Phantom of the Opera and Annie for as low as \$40.

## Times Square

Yes, it's Times Square! Yes, it's been sanitized. Yes, the sleazy peep shows are gone. Yes, it's now family friendly. Yes, it's still an exciting place to visit with its neon lights and pulsating life even at the wee hours of the morning. And yes, it's still a tourist trap. The restaurants and shops around Times Square are more expensive. Our recommendation is to visit the MTV and ABC studios and have your mandatory picture amidst the bustle and then get out. Avoid buying anything and eating at any restaurants on Times Square. You'll get a better deal somewhere else in the city. Need souvenirs? Chinatown has them at half the price. Hungry? Then venture out to the different neighborhoods in the city. There are thousands to choose from. Don't worry.



## Statue of Liberty & Ellis Island

Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty remain closed due to damages from Hurricane Sandy. The Statue of Liberty, though, is scheduled to reopen on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Ferry service is available from Battery Park. Another, less crowded option is the ferry from Liberty State Park in Jersey City. Either way, round trip tickets to both islands costs about \$17. Since you can't climb to the top of the crown anyway, our recommendation is to take the Staten Island Ferry (Take the 1 or 9 Train to South Ferry Station or the N or R Train to Whitehall Station) to Staten Island.



The ferry runs every 15 minutes on peak times. The one way 25 minute ride will offer you spectacular views of the Statue of Liberty and the magnificent skyline of downtown New York. You may want to take the ferry at dusk, right after the rush hour during summer months. Downtown Manhattan is just starting get illuminated and yet there is still enough light to enjoy Lady Liberty amidst the setting sun. The view is indeed priceless. Upon reaching Staten Island, head right back to the city and experience it one more time. Oh yes, did we mention that the cost is nothing! Yes, its free!

## Brooklyn Bridge

Its Gothic inspired stone pylons and intricate steel cable webs have inspired thousands of writers, artists and photographers. The Brooklyn Bridge remains as one of the symbols of New York City. Begun in 1867 and ultimately completed in 1883, this massive engineering feat still astounds people by simply linking two boroughs together by this monumental span.



You can enjoy seeing it from South Street Seaport or from many other vantage points on the Lower East Side. The absolute best way to appreciate the bridge is by being on it. A wide wood plank pedestrian walkway is elevated above the traffic, making it relatively peaceful and popular walk. It provides a great vantage point from which to contemplate the New York skyline and the East River.

There is a sidewalk entrance on Park Row, just across from City Hall (take the 4,5 or 6 Train to City Hall-Brooklyn Bridge Station).

Cross the bridge all the way to Brooklyn and appreciate the magnificent view. Upon reaching Brooklyn, at the foot of the bridge is small promenade wherein you can rest your weary feet. Feeling hungry? Walk a few meters to Grimaldi's Pizza (our second best pick, our first and best would have to be Sciortino's in Perth Amboy, NJ).

Consistently on Zagat's Best, the large pie will only set you back by \$16.00. Need desert? Next door, is the Brooklyn Ice Cream Factory. Enjoy a cone or two (\$4.00 for a single scoop) and head back to the promenade. Sit back, relax and appreciate the unrivaled view of lower Manhattan for free.

# Chinatown

New York's Chinatown is another world within the city. Situated right beside the City Hall area and Little Italy on the Lower East Side, is the little enclave of traditional Chinese shops, restaurants and food markets. Little is actually an understatement. As the number of Asian Americans in New York increases, Chinatown has grown bigger and has even invaded parts of Little Italy. In fact, there are three other smaller Chinatowns spread all over New York City. The other two are in Queens (Flushing & Elmhurst), the other one in Bay Ridge in Brooklyn.

This main Chinatown in Manhattan is accessible by taking the N,R or W Trains and the 4,5, or 6 Trains to Canal Street Station. Venture outside and notice that the view is so different from Times Square or any other neighborhood in Manhattan. This is Hongkong or Shanghai, with food market stalls everywhere. It is dirty and loud. Forget peace and tranquility. Be sure that you are ready to encounter throngs of people trying to get the freshest fish, newly harvested fruit and vegetables and newly arrived fake merchandise.

Fendi, Ferragamo, Louis Vuitton and Gucci bags and watches are being sold here for the fraction of the cost. Then again, these are knockoffs of which even the Italians appreciate. Need souvenirs and gifts? This is the place to get them. Shirts, magnets, and all other New York memorabilia can be found on the sidewalks of Chinatown. Remember the cardinal rule, haggle to the best of your ability. They may be a bargain compared to Times Square but you can still get them at a lower price if you know how to haggle.



Finally, a visit to Chinatown is not complete unless you have sampled the local cuisine. Aside from Chinese, Malaysian, Japanese, Thai and Vietnamese food are also available. Filipino food may not be available in Chinatown but the rest assured the Filipinos have



left their mark here. Store owners and vendors already speak a sprinkling of Tagalog due to the thousands of Pinoy who buy their food on a weekly basis. Snack, try the traditional siopao, yes, they call it siopao too at Mei Li Wah on Bayard Street, just off Canal Street. The asado is only 80 cents while the bola bola is \$1.60.

The Chinatown Ice Cream Factory across the street offers traditional Chinese ice cream flavors like Red Bean and Green Tea for only about \$3.75 per scoop. In the mood for something fuller, try dim sum. Literally translated, dim sum is Cantonese for “little bit of heart”. Dim Sum is best appreciated at the Golden Unicorn, 18 East Broadway. This cavernous, multi floored restaurant offers the best varieties of little pieces or small meals being served on rolling carts. It is best to be adventurous and try everything. After all, it is only about \$3.50 per dim sum.