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## Staycation: NYC's Top Ten Must-Sees for Locals

By: [Kathleen J. King \(View Profile\)](#)

Rather than going on a costly vacation, I'm sticking around a while and taking in the best NYC has to offer. The staycation is easy to do in a place like NYC. Here even old haunts can be seen with fresh eyes—and new places are constantly waiting to be discovered. Of course, going on a staycation in Manhattan can be costly; luckily it's summertime and lots can be had for free.

### 1. Chinatown

I'm a romantic. I like to walk the Brooklyn Bridge toward Manhattan and breathe in the views. I then usually cross into Chinatown for dim sum. My favorite spot is Oriental Pearl Restaurant (103 Mott, between Canal and Hester), which means cheap prices in a rowdy and fun banquet hall setting. In Chinatown, I often just like to wander the streets and check out the multiple kinds of fish; dried noodles of all kinds; nuts, dried plums, and berries; and sweets like Chinese New Year butter cookies and guava candy. If I haven't had my fill of sweets, I usually head to one of the many bakeries for coconut buns and Bubble Tea (try K and D Bakery at 143 Mott). Even better—the [Chinatown Ice Cream Factory](#).

### 2. Lower East Side

Ever since watching the movie *Crossing Delancey* (1988), I've been fascinated with this ever-changing neighborhood. This summer I'm going down to the LES to revisit the [Tenement Museum](#) (call ahead to reserve) at 108 Orchard Street, which has added many more exhibits over the years. I'll then wander over to the landmarked [Eldridge Street Synagogue](#) for breathtaking architecture, which I haven't seen since its renovation. I'll follow it up by a visit to the [Essex Street Market](#) and [Economy Candy](#) for—you guessed it—old-school candy.

### 3. NoHo/Village

Browsing at the [Strand Bookstore](#) (Broadway and 12th Street) is one of my greatest pleasures. Expect miles of books, great bargains, and very knowledgeable, though admittedly sometimes inefficient, service. There's always a great lineup of nightly readings to boot. Stroll south on Broadway and indulge in the sweetest street food—the [Dessert Truck](#) (8th Street University Place). For a casual and inexpensive dinner, I often visit 'Ino Café and Bar (21 Bedford Street) for their extensive wine list and mouthwatering panini, tramezzini, and

bruschetta. I then head over to the [Film Forum](#) to check out a classic or independent film—unless I decide to keep imbibing at 'Ino.

#### 4. Central Park and Its Environs

The beauty of Central Park is that nothing is ever the same, so you can wander forever and see something new (or so it seems). The park was made for people watching, too. I like to enter at Strawberry Fields and see as much “wildlife” as I can. Tuesdays through Saturdays in the summer, check out [Shakespeare in the Park](#) at the Delacorte Theater (enter the park at 81st and Central Park West). It's magically free; but you must book your tickets ahead of time, which has its own challenges. [SummerStage](#) is also a good bet, serving up music, dance, poetry, and comedy—mostly for free.

#### 5. The Met

There's nothing like the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](#) (Fifth Avenue at 82 Street), especially on Friday and Saturday nights when it's open late. (On Fridays there is a suggested \$20 museum admission, though most pay at their own discretion.) Check out the roof garden for amazing views of Central Park and the City—and sculpture (*Jeff Koons* is on view now)—while indulging in martinis. Now *that* feels like vacation to me.

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#### 6. Upper West Side

The Upper West Side is continually changing. I'm nostalgic for a time when there were far more small bookstores and cafes than there are now. Still, there are some old standbys that I never tire of. The [American Museum of Natural History](#) (Central Park West and 79th Street) where there's currently *Lizards and Snakes: Alive!* on view as well as a film called *Sea Monsters: A Prehistoric Adventure* through January 2009. Go early or late in the day to avoid crowds. At night, I like to take in a classic or independent film at [Lincoln Center](#)'s Walter Reade Theater.

#### 7. New York Public Library

The main library (Fifth Avenue at 42nd Street) is such a calming place to read for a few hours. This summer I also plan to see the Gutenberg Bible exhibit as well as *Eminent Domain: Contemporary Photography and the City*. A copy of the Declaration of Independence is on display, too! It's all free by the way. On Mondays during the summer, I'll catch free movies like *Superman* or *Arsenic and Old Lace* at neighboring [Bryant Park](#). (Get there before five o'clock or risk not scoring a place to plunk down your blanket!)

#### 8. Fifth Avenue

There's nothing like strolling up Fifth and window shopping. I avoid it during the holidays, though increasingly it's getting too crowded to walk throughout the year. To get out of the chaos, I plan to pop into [Takashimaya](#) (Fifth Ave, between 54th and 55th Streets), the world-renowned Japanese department store. But instead of shopping, I'll head downstairs to a long leisurely lunch at Tea Box Restaurant, or if I'm being frugal, just afternoon tea service! Either way, it feels decadent; but a staycation requires *some* luxuries, doesn't it?

#### 9. Chelsea

Chelsea has gotten fancy-fancy over the years, and some of the antique and flea markets are smaller now. This summer I'm going to return and seek out The Garage: 112 West 25th Street (between 6th and 7th Avenues) and The Annex: West 25th St. (between 5th and 6th Avenues). I also want to explore winding [Chelsea Market](#) (former National Biscuit Co./Nabisco) to see bread and other savories being made before my eyes (enter at 75 9th Avenue, between 15th and 16th Streets). The many [art galleries](#) in the neighborhood, stretching from West 13th Street to West 29th Street and from Tenth Avenue to the West Side Highway are worth a look too.

#### 10. Hudson River Park

In the summer heat you can catch a breeze off the Hudson. I would like to start at Battery Place and walk the

promenade in its entirety for once! The [Hudson River Park](#) (Battery Place to West 59th Street) is a great place to picnic, ride my bike, or stroll. This summer, the park offers RiverFlicks, movies for kids and adults (weeknights on Piers 45 and 54; check schedule) as well as RiverRocks, free music concerts. I've also been meaning to return to [El Faro](#) (823 Greenwich St, at Horatio/Jane Streets), an inexpensive and tasty Spanish restaurant in the far West Village, not far from the Hudson.

First published July 2008

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