

NEW YORK CITY



NEW YORK

New York, New York! Such a famous city - and one we had to visit; and since I didn't get to go for our wedding anniversary in November, we decided to spend Christmas in New York City.



A Macy's Christmas window display

I'm not sure if there is a best time to visit New York, I'm certain that this city has much to offer at every season. Christmas time in NYC is spectacular with all the decorations about the city streets, the Christmas trees and shop window displays, but it is also bedlam. There is so much to do at almost any time of the day- with most places open until late into the evening. Crowded, bustling sidewalks are the norm, so be prepared, know where you are going and plot your route. If during the day, NYC is busy, at night it is absolutely chaotic! This is, after all, the city that never sleeps.

We visited all the iconic sites in NYC: The Rockefeller Center, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, the World Trade Center site, the Museum of Natural History, the Empire State Building; we visited the markets and watched the ice-skating at Bryant Park and also saw ice-skating at the Rockefeller center and Central Park.



Central Park from Top of the Rock

Central Park is huge and you cannot appreciate the size of it from ground level. The best way to appreciate its vastness is from the "Top of the Rock" (atop the Rockefeller Center). This is a great view and was probably my favourite place to visit in NYC.

We also walked around Times Square, took the subway, took a cruise around Manhattan Island and went to see a show! Make sure you take good walking shoes, because there is plenty of walking to be done! This newsletter is a record of what we did, and how we saw New York.



Here's a rundown of what we did in NYC:

We flew into La-Guardia airport on Christmas day and caught a taxi into the city (which cost ~ \$50). After checking into our hotel - The Premier Hotel on W 44th Street - we took a little wander around to get acquainted with the area and our surrounds and were immediately thrown into the hustle and bustle of NYC! The location of the hotel was great - so close to Times Square, the Subway and within walking distance of most attractions.

Our first full day- Day 1:

1. *Top of the Rock* - this was our first major attraction in NYC, and I think



The Rockefeller Center building

it was the best. The "Top of the Rock" is the brilliant observation deck of the 70-storey art-deco skyscraper at 30 Rockefeller Center. The building was conceived by John D. Rockefeller Jr. as a "city within a city" and was constructed during the worst of

the depression years, employing 40,000 men during that time; it opened in 1933.

The Top of the Rock is open from 8am to 12 midnight and we got there relatively early in the morning (~9am, I think) and didn't have to wait too long. The observation deck affords excellent views across the city, to the Empire State building, the Statue of Liberty and over Central Park. Because we were there during the festive season, outside the Rockefeller Center was the very impressive Christmas Tree and

skating rink. If in NYC, don't miss the views from the Top of the Rock!



View from Top Of the Rock

2. *Circle Line Cruise around Manhattan Island* - This "Best of NYC" cruise was recommended to us and I would recommend it also.



It is a 2.5 hr long tour with live commentary that circumnavigates Manhattan Island, so you get a great alternative view of the city and surrounding areas (as well as New Jersey); you also get a fabulous view of the Statue of Liberty from the water (so if you don't get the chance to get over to Liberty, then this is a good way to see her).

3. *Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum* - This museum is adjacent to the Circle Line terminal on the Hudson River, so we got off the cruise boat and walked across to it. This is actually a collection of 4 different exhibits: the aircraft



The USS Intrepid

carrier Intrepid, the Space Shuttle Pavilion, the Submarine Growler and the British Airways Concorde.

a. *The Intrepid* was launched in 1943, fought in WWII, survived 5 kamikaze attacks and one torpedo strike. It was decommissioned in 1974. This is an amazing vessel with an awful lot on display to look at, touch and experience. There are 2-dozen aircraft on the flight deck, which even I found very impressive.

b. *The Space Shuttle Pavilion* houses the Enterprise Space Shuttle and has a great display on all things associated



The Space Shuttle - Enterprise

with space and space travel.

This exhibit costs a little extra, but who could pass up seeing a Space Shuttle (even

though you can't see or go inside of it).

c. *The Growler* is a guided missile submarine – unfortunately we didn't have enough time to explore this.

d. By the time we got to look at the *British Airways Concorde*, the museum



The BA Concorde

was getting ready to close – we had already spent hours here, but still didn't get to look inside this great

airplane – all we could do was look around it.

Leave plenty of time to explore this if this is the sort of thing that interests you – you could easily spend many hours here.

Day 2:

We caught the subway down to South Ferry to catch the ferry from Battery Park that takes in both the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. New York's subway system is huge and it can be a bit daunting, but it is an excellent way to get around. The ride was an interesting one – you see all sorts of characters on the platforms and riding the trains!

- The *Statue of Liberty* stands on Liberty Island – access to the crown is limited and you need to make an advanced reservation – there are limited tickets available for access to the pedestal of the monument – so get



Statue of Liberty

there really early, it is a first come, first served basis. Although we were there reasonably early (I think by 9:30am), and there were no tickets left so we had to settle for a wander around the monument! The queue to get on the ferry was already an hour long and it was twice as long when we got back.

- A trip across to *Ellis Island* is included with the purchase of the Statue of Liberty ticket.



Ellis Island

Ellis Island was the first port of call for those wishing to immigrate to the US and the facility provides an insight into what life was like for the immigrants held at Ellis Island and then once they moved on. It was interesting, but we didn't spend too much time here – if you

had relatives that passed through Ellis Island, then this place would be well worth the visit.

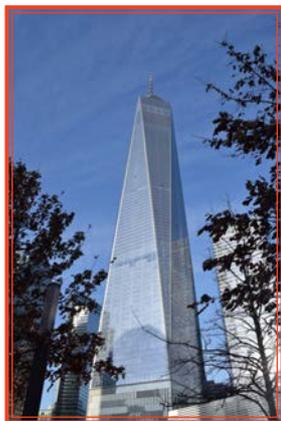
- After returning to Battery Park, we walked across to the site of the *World Trade Center*. The two towers have been replaced by 2 large sunken water



WTC memorial pool

'fountains', which are capped with the names of all the people who died in the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. Nearby we

visited the 9/11 Tribute Center which is a museum dedicated to events that occurred on 9/11. The center sets out the time-line of events and has a video running with actual footage of events of the day in a room full of artefacts and photos on display, and many personal accounts of what happened. The experience was very moving – it is difficult not to be affected by the horror of what happened that day.



the new One World Trade Center



Museum of Natural History

Day 3:

The only day we had wet weather, so we went off to do an in-door activity.

- Another subway ride (or 2, since we got on a local express train that took us past where we wanted to get off) to visit the *American Museum of Natural History*

(a-la “A night at the Museum”). A nice old building and typical of most museums, there is plenty to see here and you could easily spend all day looking at the exhibits.



Central Park - ice skating rink

- After leaving the museum we walked across the road to *Central Park* and meandered our way towards the southern end, stopping to buy a bag of hot nuts along the way. Our walk through Central Park was interesting, even if a little cold and wet. The carriage rides looked wonderful- very fairytale like and there were even a few street performers; Andrew got roped into participating in an entertaining dance troupe’s routine.



Andrew & street performers

Central Park is huge and I am sure it would be beautiful in spring and spectacular when covered in snow. After stopping for lunch, since there is plenty to look at, we actually walked all the way back to our hotel which was quite an effort since it was 15 blocks!

- Whilst out for a walk that evening, we decided to visit the *Empire State Building* as the queues weren’t out



Top of Empire State by night

the door and around the corner (as we had seen previously). However, this was a deception! It still took 2 hours to get to the observation deck and nearly an hour to get back down again. It was a spectacular view and I am glad we got to see it at night, but I wouldn't do it again.



View from top of Empire State by night

Day 4:

Our last full day in NYC:

- I wanted to do the Radio City Music Hall tour and I am glad we did. We



were very lucky as we only had a small tour (just 7 of us), so we got a lot of personal

attention and got to see a bit more than if we were in the tour that left before us that had about 30 people in it. The building itself is lovely and the tour takes you behind the scenes, explains the history of the original theatre and allows you to meet personally with one of the famous Rockette dancers. We even got to see part of a performance from an observation booth. This was a great back stage tour. If you want to know more about the Rockettes and the Christmas Spectacular, check it out.

- After the tour we walked down to *Grand Central Station* for a wander around. This is rather grand! And extensive - plenty to see here and a great place to people watch!



Inside Brand Central Station

- After our Radio City Hall experience, I just had to see the Rockettes Christmas Spectacular, particularly since I wasn't going to get to see a Broadway show (they are very expensive, so be prepared). So, we went along to see the show that night; I thought it was great and I think Andrew might admit he enjoyed it too.

So, that was our visit to New York City. There is just one more thing that I would mention - as most people would know New York has a large Irish ancestry, and hence there are many Irish pubs to visit to quench your thirst and have a meal.



Chrysler building

In the five days we were in NYC, we visited at least 5 of them! They are great, the one that stands out (and I've forgotten the name) is one that was full of locals - no tourists (it was down towards the Hudson River) and a great place to just observe and listen to true New Yorkers talk. New York City was a truly amazing place to visit, there is SO much to do; you could spend a month there and not see all you would like to. I would also liked to have seen the likes of

Little Italy, Greenwich Village, Staten Island, visit MOMA, shop on Madison & 5th Avenues, walk the High Line (a park built on a 1 mile section of a former elevated railway) and see some of the historical sites.

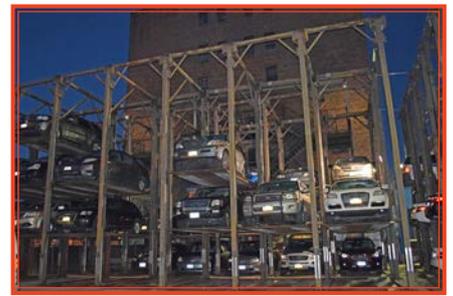
NYC is like no other city I have seen. It affected me like no other. For days after our return I had images and experiences invading my thoughts and dreams. I can't say I loved NYC, I liked it; it was interesting, amazing even, with so much to see and do, but it was also dirty, crowded, and noisy and the busiest place I have ever been. I know some of those characteristics would appeal to many, but if I went back, and having seen the major attractions, I think I would like to experience the quieter side of NYC.

A little History of NYC:

New York Harbor was originally discovered in 1524 by an Italian explorer and in 1609 the Englishman Henry Hudson sailed up the Hudson River. The first European settlement of NYC was by the Dutch in 1624 it when they established a trading post at the tip of Manhattan Island selling mainly skins. The town was originally named New Amsterdam. By 1664, the English had taken control of the colony and renamed it New York. New York's history is long and I won't go into any further details here, but if you're interested take a look at <http://www.localhistories.org/newyork.html>. I can also recommend the book "New York" by Edward Rutherfurd, which is an excellent read.

New York has gone on to establish itself as a "global power city"; it has been described as the cultural and

financial capital of the world and has become the largest city in the United States, with a population of 8.5 million people.



Parking in NYC!

A little more about NYC:

NYC is made up of 5 boroughs - Manhattan, Staten Island, Queens, Brooklyn and the Bronx. Manhattan and Staten Island are individual islands and Queens and Brooklyn exist within Long Island, while the Bronx is part of the US mainland. All are interconnected via many bridges, tunnels and ferries. We only visited Manhattan (NYC is vast and we didn't have time for more) - pity! Manhattan Island is 13.4 miles long and is 2.3 miles at its widest point.

Understanding the streets of NYC: Avenues run north/south & Streets run east/west. 5th avenue divides the city into east & west, so addresses on streets that run across 5th Avenue are designated as 123 West (or East) 45th Street (for example). There are many one-way thoroughfares with odd numbered one-way streets travel east & even numbered - west. Streets are closer together than the avenues - so walking 6 street blocks is about 1/4 mile, but walking 6 avenue blocks is 4 times the distance.



Subway map - Manhattan