



WHAT NOT TO DO

The 6 biggest mistakes tourists make when visiting New York City (and what to do instead)



Photo: Joseph Yates

Kate McManus

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HERE are a few tips to avoid local wrath and make the most of your visit to the greatest city in the world.

Mistake: Never leaving tourist areas.

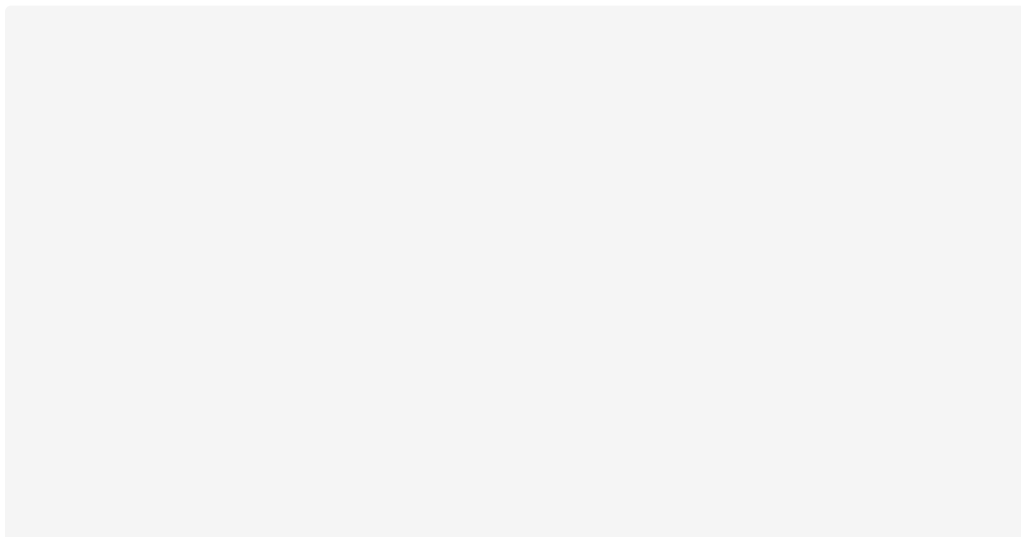




Photo: [Maarten van den Heuvel](#)

I wouldn't expect you to come to NYC without braving Times Square's Menacing Elmos or taking a selfie on top of the Empire State Building. Yes, the new Freedom Tower is spectacular and the view from the Brooklyn Bridge is unparalleled. But if you limit yourself to the areas clogged with fellow tourists, you're missing out on some of the city's hidden magic.

Walk two or three blocks west from Times Square and you'll find bars, restaurants, and cafes on Ninth and Tenth Avenues that are reasonably priced and not crowded. If you're in the mood for meat, try [Hallo Berlin](#) for beer and sausages or [Ariana](#) for authentic Afghan kebabs and friendly service. Or, if you're feeling overwhelmed by the city and dreaming of the beach, try [Réunion](#) for great Happy Hour specials and a laid-back surfer vibe. Regroup before dinner with a late-afternoon espresso or glass of wine at [Tartina](#).

Take the 2, 3, B or C train to 110 Street for the lesser-known but beautiful north part of Central Park, which has a [swimming pool that becomes an ice skating rink](#) in the winter. From there it's just a short walk to [Morningside Park](#) and [St. John the Divine Cathedral](#), one of the five largest church buildings in the world.

If you want to check out an outer borough, take the N or R train to Astoria (Queens), and find [Aliada](#), one of the neighborhood's many renowned Greek restaurants, and [Bohemian Hall](#), NYC's oldest beer garden. If you like history and pastoral surroundings, take the R to 25th Street in Brooklyn to [Green-Wood Cemetery](#), the permanent resting place of composer Leonard Bernstein, artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, and other historical figures.

If you really want to go to Staten Island, well okay. You can take the [Staten Island ferry](#) for free while getting unbelievable views of lower Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty. The forgotten borough is also home to the Staten Island Yankees, the Bronx Bombers' minor league affiliate, where you can see a baseball game with a great view at a fraction of the cost of Yankee Stadium.

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Mistake: Expecting to get anywhere on time on the subway.

[According to NYC's Public Advocate](#), 75,000 trains were delayed in 2016, up from 65,000 in 2015. If you are using MTA during a weekend, any pretense of a "schedule" or "route" disappears completely. You think you're on your way, then you hear, "Because of construction..." Usually about half of the 25 lines will be rerouted or canceled on any given weekend.

So, what's the solution? Matador Network has a whole bunch of options for you in their [NYC transportation guide](#).

Mistake: Getting in the way.



Photo: [Christopher Burns](#)

You're probably in our way. We get it. You're here on vacation and you have all day to admire the Christmas windows at Saks or Bergdorf's, or maybe take a selfie in the middle of Seventh Avenue. All we ask is that you move a little faster, step to the side when you decide to stop suddenly, and never walk more than two abreast. New Yorkers are always in a hurry, whether it's to close a billion-dollar deal, or more likely, get to [El Azteca](#) before \$5 frozen margarita happy hour ends. So, we implore you to move over and let us get on with our business.

Mistake: Paying full price for drinks.

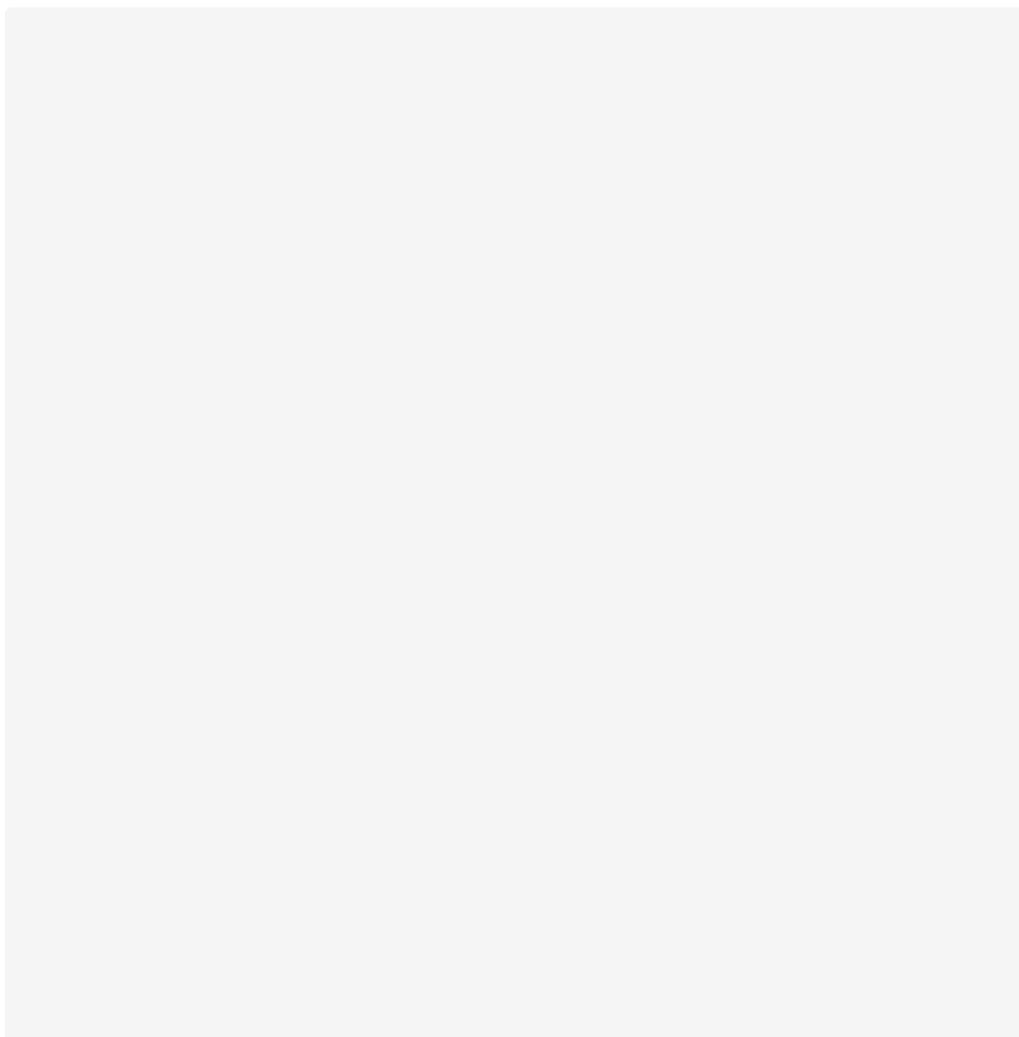
A glass of wine or a top shelf martini in Manhattan could run you between \$13 and \$35. That's not a typo. If you want to avoid paying more for one *Pinot Grigio* than some people (i.e. me) would pay for an entire bottle, you must embrace happy

hour.

The best way to find a good happy hour is to just walk around – bars and restaurants usually have chalkboards out front listing their drink specials. One of the greatest days of my life was discovering the [TGIF](#)'s next to Grand Central Terminal had \$4 wine until 8 pm.

If you don't feel like leaving your hotel without a plan, check out www.nyhappyhours.com, which lets you plug in your neighborhood, the time of day and day of the week and tells you where you can find drink specials. Even better, this "[Happy Hours](#)" app (unfortunately only available for IOS) can provide the same service on your mobile phone, based on your location.

Mistake: The TKTS booth



According to the [Broadway League](#), the 2015-2016 season was its highest-grossing of all time. In the past, if you wanted to get in on that hot Broadway action, you would have to order tickets ahead of time and pay full price (anywhere from \$69 to \$199 and more, depending on the show) or wait on line at the [TKTS booth](#) for same-day seats. The problem with TKTS, aside from the wait, is they have a limited selection of shows, the seats aren't always that great, and the discounts aren't the best available.

A better option, if you know what you want to see, is to check out [BroadwayBox.com](#) or [Playbill.com](#), which allow you to pick the show and date you want ahead of time — and you can choose your seats. They offer discounts up to 50 percent off. These two sites don't always offer discounts for every show playing at any given time, but they do have a good assortment. A hint: If you have a couple of days in the city, print out the discount code and go directly to the box office. You will avoid the extortionate Ticketmaster service fees.

If you're flexible about which show you want to see and don't care where your seats are, another great option is the [TodayTix app](#). They used to only offer tickets for same-day shows or within one week, but they've recently upped the timeframe to 30 days. While you can't choose your seats, you can pick your price level (orchestra, mezzanine, or balcony) and they promise not to sell obstructed views. At first, it seemed a little shady to meet their red-jacketed rep in front of the theater to pick up my tickets, but the process went smoothly and I've been able to see popular shows such as *Wicked* and *Fiddler on the Roof* on my budget.

Mistake: Waiting in a two-hour line for anything.

This one is optional, because New Yorkers love to wait on line. I don't know if it's self-loathing, but my fellow Upper West Siders will wait for anything, whether it's to get into Trader Joe's on 72nd Street to buy organic seaweed snacks or outside Good Enough to Eat on a Sunday morning in a blizzard just to get scrambled eggs. I don't understand it, because there is a perfectly good [French Roast](#) up the street with great food and no lines and you can be in and out before you even get to the front of the line at Good Enough.

If you want to actually eat a meal in a reasonable amount of time, there is always a better option. Whatever the overrated restaurant you're waiting for, google "alternatives to [name of overrated restaurant]" and you'll find something. Or just cross the street. It's NYC, there are good brunch restaurants every three feet.

When it comes to food fads — your Cronuts, Ramen Burgers, scoops of raw cookie dough, you're going to have to use your own judgment. If you absolutely need that Levain chocolate chip cookie to impress your Insta followers, you're going to have to be patient. 🙄

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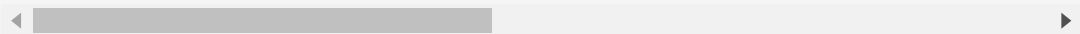
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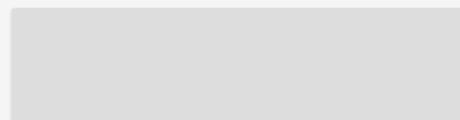
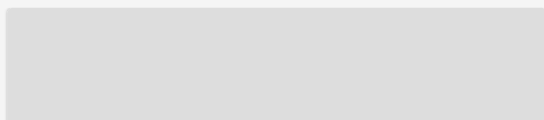
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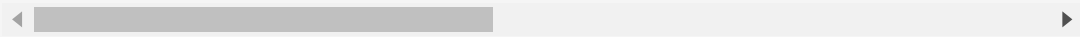
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