



adventure in the big apple

New York City: exciting, different and accessible

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It was my first bite of the Big Apple. And it was delicious.

For many years I have snubbed New York. Snubbed it because it is American. Snubbed it because I'm a European wannabe snob and snubbed the Big Apple because I figured I'd learned all I needed to know about New York from watching 'Law and Order.' So on this occasion, I eat crow.

We flew in to LaGuardia from Buffalo and grabbed a forty-dollar cab ride to our hotel, the Radisson Martinique at the corner of West 32nd Street and 6th Avenue.

We loved the hotel for its location, the always friendly, helpful staff. The feel good atmosphere is further enhanced by an old time player piano producing Gershwin tunes in the lobby.

The musical Billy Elliot...the best piece of theatre I have ever experienced. I was dreading going because normally I start falling asleep just before the curtain rises. My eyes were slowly closing; I could faintly hear the referee counting to ten. I was down and out when the opening words of the show snapped me to attention. And for the next three hours I was totally captivated by the story, songs and dance of Billy Elliot.



There are loads of shows to choose from on Broadway and just as many Off-Broadway productions, but seeing something in New York is a must. I couldn't have cared less what we saw, but I knew Cath wanted desperately to take in something big. Something bigger than big. Billy Elliot the ten time Tony Award winner proved to be that big. So my new motto is: Go to New York. Go to something. Anything!

If God were going to create a subway system for Heaven, he'd model it after New York's.

The transit system is clean, fast and simple. Cath and I had some trepidation about tackling the N.Y. transit, but any fears dissolved as soon as we descended the steps.

"Hi, folks. Where you all from? Ya need any help?"

We got that kind of help at every station we entered and from passengers riding in our cars. It was fantastic. Not a ripple of fear in any of our journeys up and down Manhattan.

Ahhh...the food in New York. I ate, we ate, and then somehow we'd muster up the strength to waddle back to our hotel. The food, it can be any kind and it can be any price.

Our first food pit stop was at Carnegie's Deli. The menu was overwhelming, I wanted to order, order, order, but to eat all the things that had me salivating, I'd have to be three of me. However after much agonizing debate with Cath, I chose a sandwich called the 'Woody Allen.' It seemed fitting, him being a comic and all.

The sandwich cost seventeen bucks! Seventeen red, white and blue smackers! It was like eating a five pound roast jammed



between two slices of rye bread. It was corned beef piled to the height of Cath and on top of that was pastrami stacked to the ceiling. I couldn't eat it like a normal sandwich. I just sort of drove my face into the slabs of meat with my mouth wide open and chomped, chomped, chomped. I was like a wood chipper in high gear.

I finish the first half, leaving some of the crust cause I didn't want the waiter to think I was a real piggy. But at that point I was stuffed. Now I knew I had to put on a better show than eating half a stinking sandwich. I couldn't eat just half and walk away with any kind of pride. I'd be the laughing stock

of New York. So, after a pause, not a long enough pause because a suitable pause would have been three or four days, I went to work on that second chunk of meat. When I finally threw in the towel, our waiter said, "Not bad, kid. I'd say you got three-quarters of it."

I felt victorious. And if it was possible to pay homage to Woody Allen by choking down half a cow, then I had done so.

We did not journey out to the Statue of Liberty because the lineups were too long and the effort to purchase tickets to do the climb to her crown was far too great.

Our travel agent had steered us to a 'hop



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From left: An old gazebo in Central Park. Gord and Catherine take in the sights, I love New York!

not only survived, but was unscathed by the Armageddon surrounding it.

St. Paul's was a real surprise to both Cath and I. The displays of letters, poems and prayers for those missing or lost, the photographs of the nightmare and some personal items collected from the scene, compelled us to reflect on our own good fortune and to take a moment to offer our own silent prayers for all the victims of that cowardly attack.

We did not go to the top of the Empire State Building because the guy said it would cost us thirty-five bucks each. I said that was a lot for a blind guy. He said, "You'll feel it in your heart."

I said, "Yeah, well maybe, but I ain't gonna feel thirty five bucks worth."

We strolled through Saks Fifth Avenue, looking very much like tourists as we gawked at all the pretty people and guffawed at little, light weight wraps, scarves and dresses. "Just when the hell would somebody wear that thing, Cath?" We got more fun out of trying to guess an item's price and we were never even close. I kept on wanting to stop one of these Saks shoppers and ask them, "Have you ever heard of Wal-Mart?"

We dropped in at Tiffany's because they'd asked us to do so whenever we were in town. Good folks those Tiffany's. From across the room and from two floors up, Cath spotted a piece of jewelry. We asked a store clerk if we could see it. He was happy to oblige. Cath loved it. I began to sweat.

"How much is this trinket?" I asked.

"It's on sale, sir, for forty-seven thousand dollars."

I ask you, who carries around forty-seven thousand bucks for a black pearl necklace? Probably the same dweeb that coughs up seventeen bucks for a frigginn sandwich.

I loved escaping to Central Park or Battery Park or Washington Square or even Times Square as they all offered places to sit, cool off and take in life. In Washington Square, Cath and I were intrigued by the countless games of chess going on. The players were of all ages and all so serious. In another corner of the square a jazz trio entertained for donations. Basketball courts seemed scattered throughout the city and all in use. But I got the greatest amusement from a group of kids playing around these fountains in Battery Park. They were standing on these jets of water and running through their spray, all soaking wet and ridiculously happy.

The scream of sirens, whether police, ambulance or fire were heard constantly and all were quite distinctive, but somehow we never found them unsettling. They seemed an appropriate accompaniment to the crush of people and cars, to the towers of concrete and steel.

New York, the Big Apple, exciting, different and accessible. I wish I'd gone to New York sooner, but better late than never.

I tip my hat to you, New York. The Big Apple, good to the core.

on-hop off" tour bus called Gray Line and it proved worth every penny. We purchased two forty-eight hour passes and with open topped double-decker buses swinging by every five or ten minutes, we traveled uptown Manhattan through Harlem, past Grant's tomb, Columbia University and Strawberry Fields. We used the service to tour Brooklyn and downtown to south Manhattan. Jumping off in Greenwich Village we slowly sank into the rhythm of Bleeker Street.

We walked down to Ground Zero and St. Paul's Chapel. This tiny chapel was used as a safe haven for rescuers and the injured. It



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