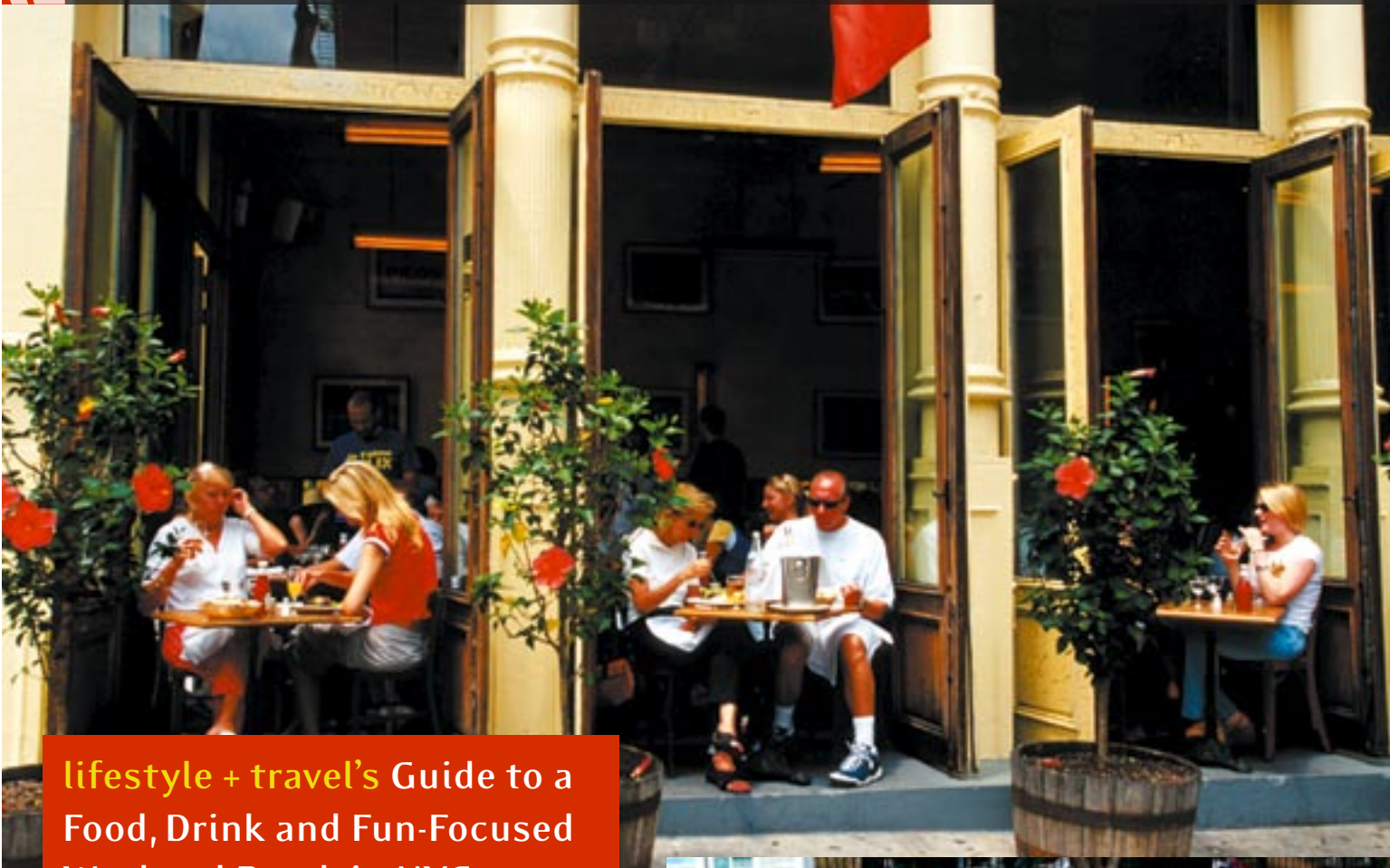




Stateside Breaks

NEW YORK
NEW ORLEANS
BOSTON





lifestyle + travel's Guide to a Food, Drink and Fun-Focused Weekend Break in NYC

Text and pictures by Denielle Sachs

Tiffany's. Bendel's. Saks Fifth Avenue. The Empire State Building. The Big Apple. The City that Never Sleeps. Believe the movies: ice-skating at Rockefeller Center; strolls through neon signs; Broadway shows in Times Square; and horse-drawn carriage rides through snowfall in Central Park. The magazines depicting hip-hop clubs full of models donning cigarettes and couture aren't lying either. Television airs hours of modish-clad patrons sipping cosmos at the latest hot-spots - authentic. New York is the city of dreams, where innovation engenders a metropolitan hub thick with individuals expressing themselves through art and commerce.

Having lived most of my life under the bright lights of NYC, I'm familiar with its richness - from the multiculturalism which makes it the melting pot of the world - to its abundance



of flavours and fashions, which make it a hub for every variety of tourist and everyone with a dream.

Nestled along two rivers in a city of eight million, it is easy to get lost in New York's clamouring, triumphantly cosmopolitan momentum. Overwhelmed by choice, newcomers trust guidebooks that offer hundreds of everything but few tools for navigation. Here, with the help of local experts, I give you the jewels of New York; some hidden, others well-tested and ordered mainstays by city regulars. All are certain to make any New York experience truly memorable.



Clockwise from top left: Alfresco dining in Soho; shop for 'girl's props'; or tasteful underwear; and NY bohemia: the Big Apple is a truly cosmopolitan place, a world away from 'middle America'

City Flavours

The rumours are true. New York really does have something for everyone. This is nowhere better exemplified than in the city's thousands of restaurants; sometimes numbering 20 on any given block. Here, in a nutshell, are the best of the best:

EUROPEAN

Best Italian: *Il Bagatto*, with its intimate downtown setting and delicious Roman cuisine, this is still a well-kept secret and a favourite for locals. Ideal for those looking to snuggle with their loved one after a serving of yummy wine and perfect veal.

192 E 2nd St, Tel: +1 212 228 0977.

Erminia, a posh uptown spot, is sure to put you in the mood.
250 E. 83rd St, Tel: +1 212 879 4284.

Best Turkish: With its sexy red décor and sinful food, *Turkish Kitchen* is by far the city's most incredible Turkish delight.
386 3rd Avenue, Tel: +1 212 679 1810.

Best Caviar: Boasting one of the longest lists of Vodka and caviar treats, *Pravda*, with its perfect martinis and excellent sampler trays is a fantastic spot for late-night eaters looking for something trendy, tasty and easy on the eyes.

281 Lafayette St, Tel: +1 212 334 5015.

Best Belgian/French Fries: Located in the hip meatpacking district, made famous by *Sex and the City* loyalists, *Markt* has some of the city's most phenomenal Belgian fare, and as this writer can attest, the best French fries in New York City.

401 West 14th St, Tel: +1 212 727 3314.

Best Ukrainian All-Night Diner: *Veselka*, with its mean Goulash, is a superb late-night stop. Expect crowds at 4 am with likely celebrity spots.

144 Second Ave, Tel: +1 212 228-9682.

ASIAN

Best Sushi: For anyone looking for funky, fresh sushi creations, *Blue ribbon Sushi* offers amazing treats.

119 Sullivan St, Tel: +1 212 343-0404.

Best Dim Sum: If you've time early in the day and want an authentic Dim Sum experience (snuggled amongst throngs of strangers screaming as carts whiz by with tasty delights) make your way to *Grand Harmony*.

98 Mott St, Tel: +1 212 226 2603.

Best Chinese: The amazing *Peking Duck House*, especially for duck lovers, is a must-try.

28 Mott St, Tel: +1 212 227-1810.

Best Thai: Both funky and delicious and located in the artist-rich Williamsburg, *Sea* (*114 N. 6th St, Tel: +1 718 384 8850*) and *Planet Thai* (*133 N 7th St, Tel: +1 718 599 5758*) are absolutely scrumptious, with equally yummy cocktails.

Best Asian - Fusion: Asian-fusion seems to be a never-ending fetish for New Yorkers, which makes any visit to the hippest spots a must-do for people-watchers and celebrity hounds alike. *Tao*, an old favourite, is fantastic.

42 East 58th St. Tel: +1 212 888 2288, www.taorestaurant.com.

Clockwise from top left: Manhattan's nocturnal skyline; the neon-lit 42nd Street display in Times Square; and Lucky Strike for the best cosmo's in town

Best Indian: For big spenders, **La Tabla** is the place to be.
11 Madison Ave, Tel: +1 212 889 0667.

For those looking for good cheap-eats, **Panna II Indian Restaurant** (a favourite for cabbies) is also amazing, and boasts some of the most bizarre décor ever seen.
93 51st Ave, Tel: +1 212 598 4610.

FROM THE AMERICAS

Best Cuban: **Café Habana**. Don't miss the corn on the cob.
17 Prince St, Tel: +1 212 625 2001.

Best Brazilian: Make sure to leave a tonne of room in your belly before visiting the incredible **Plataforma**. A miss for vegetarians, this meat-drenched meal will never end, unless you say stop.
221 W Broadway, Tel: +1 212 925 6969,
www.churrascariaplataforma.com.

Best Mac and Cheese: For the traditionalist, try the **Hog Pit**.
22 Ninth Ave, Tel: +1 212 604 0092.

Best Brunch: Brunch is a must-do in NY, so indulge in an Eggs Benedict at the **Mercer Kitchen**
99 Prince St, Tel: +1 212 966-5454.

Best Celebrity-Spotting Venue: **Blue Ribbon Bakery** is absolutely amazing and is nestled within the windy west village streets - hard to navigate, but well worth the voyage. This area is a favourite for locals and celebrities, perfect for its privacy and authentic New York brownstone buildings.
33 Downing St, Tel: +1 212 337 0404.

Best Barbeque: Huge with the after-work types who like good grub and sexy waitresses in tight tops, **Dukes** is a favourite for BBQ lovers.
99 E 19th St, Tel: +1 212 260 2922.

Best Hot Dog: Whether you're looking for lunch under USD 2 or just hoping for an authentic NY dog - try **Gray's Papaya** (402 Sixth Avenue, Tel: +1 212 260 3532) or the always amazing **Nathan's Foot-Long's** at Coney Island (1310 Surf Ave, Tel: +1 718 946 2202).

Best Bagel: This local likes 'em doughy and drowned in toppings: **Ess-a-Bagel**.
359 1st Ave, Tel: +1 212 260 2252.

Best Pizza: The best NYC 'slice' is **Joe's Pizza** at 7 Carmine Street, open late.

Best Deli Sandwich: Famous for Meg Ryan's orgasm in *When Harry Met Sally*, **Katz's Deli**, with all of its authenticity still intact, is undeniably the best deli sandwich in New York.
205 E Houston St, Tel: +1 212 254 2246.



For Those on a Liquid Diet

Best Martini: Known as the historical haunt for writers at the *New Yorker*, the **Oak Room** at the **Algonquin** offers a mean martini in a fantastic setting.
59 West 44th St. Tel: +1 888 304 2047, www.thealgonquin.net.

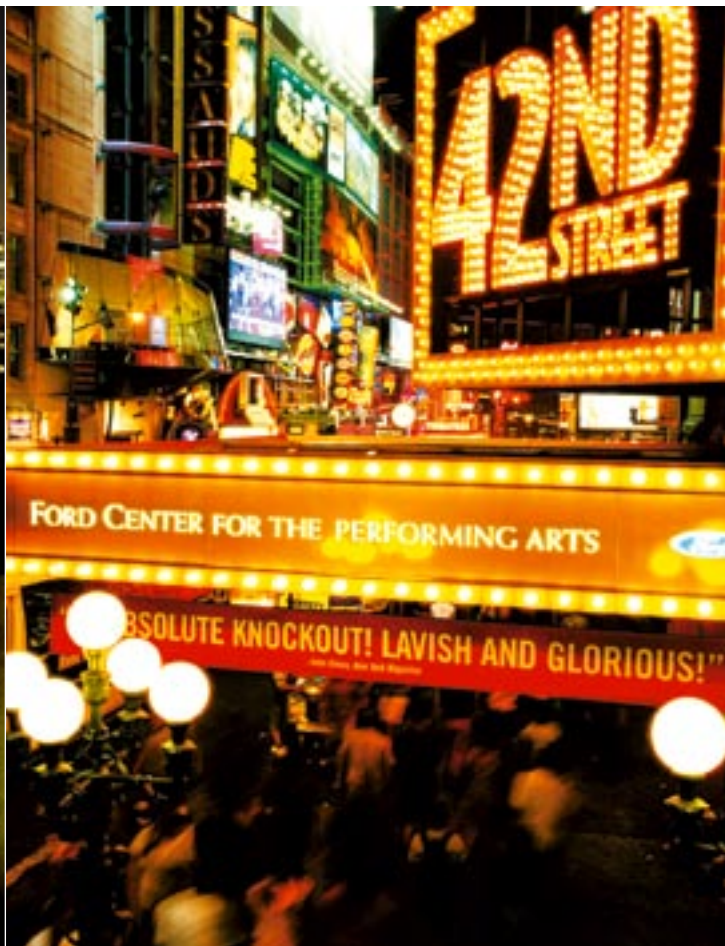
Angel's Share, hidden within the confines of a Chinese restaurant in the east village has yummy martinis (try anything lychee). Make sure to get exact directions before venturing to this highlight and also make sure not to come with more than four people.
8 Stuyvesant St.

Best Cosmo: Served by the pint, under the alias of a French martini, be sure not to miss **Lucky Strike**.
59 Grand St, Tel: +1 212 941 0479.

Best Champagne Selection: **Bubble Lounge** is located right in the heart of Tribeca, a sure thing for champagne lovers and lounge hounds.
228 West Broadway - White St, Tel: +1 212 431 3433, www.bubblelounge.com.

Best Cocktails: Be sure to visit the bathrooms after sipping cocktails at the chic **Bar 89**.
89 Mercer St, Tel: +1 212 274 0989.

Best Sake Selection: **Chibi's Sake Bar**.
238 Mott St, Tel: +1 212-274-0054 www.chibisbar.com.



After Dark

New York has a lot to offer after dark. Here are some sure-fire ways to get down in the thick of New York's nightlife.

Best Dancing: Try Flow for a place-to-be-seen night out.
150 Varick St, Tel: +1 212 929 9444.

Mehanata (Bulgarian Bubu Bar) is brill for a let-your-hair down and boogie with belly dancers night.
416 Broadway, Tel: +1 212 625 0981.

Best Music: South Paw is a relatively new favourite - located in Brooklyn with a steady flow of impressive talents.
125 5th Avenue, Brooklyn, Tel: +1 718 230 0236, www.spsounds.com.

Jazz Connoisseurs: Make sure to try Iridium (Les Paul still plays every Monday).
1650 Broadway, Tel: +1 212 582-2121, www.iridiumjazzclub.com.



Best Alternative: Galapagos in Williamsburg offers anything from floating Vaudeville to amateur nights, to film screenings and burlesque. Been thinking about doing some hip-hop karaoke? Well, Sunday nights make your way to the basement here. Be prepared to laugh for hours.

129 Havermeyer St, Tel: +1 718 782 5188.

Best Hidden Secret: A former speakeasy, Chumley's is it.

86 Bedford St, Tel: +1 212 675 4449.

Best Place to Light-Up: Although cigarette smoking is outlawed in NY, Circa Tabac somehow out-cooled the rest of them, and they'll even bring you an ashtray!

32 Watts St, Tel: +1 212 941 1781.

Best Ambiance/Speakeasy: Joe's Pub is a personal favourite.

425 Lafayette St (Astor Place and 4th St)

... and for the After, After Hours Crowd

Bring in the morning at the Paris Bar on Fulton Street, as you watch the fisherman brave the seaport's odours.

Best Late-Night Singing Joint: Japas 38. Open until 5 am, this is a favourite for late-nighters looking to belt a few out over cocktails and Dim Sum.

9 East 38th St, Tel: +1 212 679 4040.

Best Late-Night Dancing Joint: Le Souk, complete with belly dancers, hookahs, fantastic mixed drinks and a loud, diverse crowd, is a great place to keep the party going.

47 Avenue B, Tel: +1 212 777 5454.

After Dawn

New York is for walkers and taxi-grabbers alike, so stay above ground as much as possible and you're sure to run into something you'll love.

Best Museums: Take a stroll to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and see one of the largest collections in the world, with works spanning 5,000 years of art history. *1000 Fifth Ave, Tel: +1 212 535 7710, www.metmuseum.org.*

For the hip modernist, make your way to P.S.1 in Queens and discover its funky installation art and cool alternative edge. For the gallery lover, grab a *Time Out* guide to discover current exhibits and make your way to Chelsea for an afternoon of art-hopping.

22-25 Jackson Ave, Tel: +1 718 784 2084, mail@ps1.org.

Best Sightseeing: Rent a bike in Central Park and make your way from the tip-top of the city all the way down along the Hudson River Waterfront Path to the Staten Island Ferry. You can stop in Central Park to partake in its many splendours - from yoga on the grass to rock-climbing and dining at the Boathouse (a favourite for the *Sex and the City* gang). (Call



+1 212 348 4867 for more information). And, if you feel like going all-out, helicopter tours can be arranged through the Downtown Manhattan Heliport by calling +1 212 361 6060.

Best Shopping: The best high-brow, no-hassle, department store shopping is at Bergdorf Goodman.

754 5th Ave, Tel: +1 212 753 7300.

For the Rare-Book Collector: Or for someone looking for something different, The Strand Rare Book Shop is a fantastic stop-over and a well-kept secret.

828 Broadway, Tel: +1 212 473 1452, www.strandbooks.com/home.

For the Bargain-Hunter: Searching for Gucci or Prada at unbelievable prices? Head downtown to Century 21 and be prepared for the mayhem.

22 Cortlandt St, Tel: +1 212 227 909, www.c21stores.com.

AD



The Tailored Itinerary

Here are some suggestions for those with limited time and a particular agenda.

'The Weekender' - Book a room at one of the **W Hotels** (Union Square or Times Square are my favourites, www.starwoodhotels.com/whotels), a Friday night dinner reservation at **Tao** or **66**, and then be prepared to saturate yourself in New York City's bar scene. For the late-nighters, make your way to one of the city's after-hours eateries for a 4 am snack and then, if you're still awake, wander down to the **Paris Bar** and watch the sun come up. Spend your Saturday shopping before getting decked out for a night at the theatre or jazz it up at **Iridium**. Make sure not to miss Sunday brunch, followed by a voyage to the museum or a trip to Central Park.

'The Expense Account' - Doze at the **Peninsula** (700 Fifth Ave at 55th St, Tel: +1 212 956 2888, www.peninsula.com); wrangle tickets to a sporting event (depending on the time of year: try baseball at **Yankee Stadium** (www.yankees.com) or basketball at **Madison Square Garden** (www.thegarden.com) and have your secretary make reservations for dinner at all of the hottest restaurants. For the cigar lover, light one up at **Barclay-Rex**, (75 Broad St, Tel: +1 212 962 3355, www.barclayrex.com) one of the few shops where you can still have a drag.

'The Pampered Woman' - Make sure to stay at the hip **Soho Grand** (www.sohogrand.com), organise spa treatments at **Bliss** (www.blissworld.com); visit **J. Sisters** (35 West 57th St, Tel: +1 212 750 2485) for a manicure/pedicure and, if you're not terrified, get ripped with their famous Brazilian wax. And, don't forget to shop - you can either stroll along fifth avenue for **Cartier** gowns and **Tiffany's** jewellery or meander the streets of the Lower East Side to find unique creations by trendy new designers. Soho also offers the best of the best - from American staples such as **J-Crew** (91 Fifth Ave, Tel: +1 212 255 4848, www.jcrew.com) and **Betsey Johnson** to designer favourites, such as **Joseph and Dolce & Gabbana** (130 Thompson St, Tel: +1 212 420 0169).



Clockwise from top left: Pop into Tiffany's for some credit card maxing-out fun; a famous, yellow NY taxi drives past the Washington Arch in Washington Square Park; neon-lit advertising enshrouds Times Square; Joe's Pub, best place for an ambient night; taxis in a jam; and gothic St. Patrick's Cathedral is the largest and most decorated of its kind in the USA

'The Romantic Getaway' - Snuggle-up at the new and glamorous **Ritz Carlton** (www.ritzcarlton.com) downtown (ask the Bath Butler to prepare one of their luxurious romantic soaks). Make sure to stroll over the Brooklyn Bridge with a bottle of red; stopping and sipping as you enjoy some of the most spectacular views of the NYC skyline before making your way to the **River Café** (1 Water St, Brooklyn, Tel: +1 718 522 5200). Try a French Martini at **Lucky Strike**, cosy up to dinner at **Il Bagatto** and take in a fabulous dance at the **Joyce Theatre** (175 8th Avenue at 19th St, Tel: +1 212 242 0800) or the **Joyce Soho** (155 Mercer St, Tel: +1 212 431 9233, www.joyce.org).

'The Budget Traveller' - Walk. Walk. And keep on walking. Try dining delights such as Dim Sum, Hot Dogs or the cheap eats in Williamsburg. Make sure to catch a show at **South Paw**; bargain hunt at **Century 21**. Venture on the train for USD 2 and take a wander through Coney Island before getting down and dirty with delicious Russian treats at **Primorski Restaurant** (try the USD 4.99 lunch special). Find yourself back in Manhattan and stroll down Sullivan Street, stopping in the chess shops, where the masters of speed chess dog-it-up in their downtown dives. If you're around on a Sunday, grab an **Ess-a-Bagel**, a Sunday *New York Times* and cop a squat on the Hudson River Waterfront Path. 🍷





The Life Behind the Party

Story and pictures by Steven Pettifor

Although no longer the seedy city it once was, New Orleans retains its debauched, bohemian air - and a short stay here reveals a visitor-friendly destination rich in culture which deserves to be known for more than just the infamous annual carnival it hosts.

New Orleans immediately rouses stereotypical perceptions of the debauched behaviour that is Mardi Gras: a haven to hedonism with scenes of wasted American youth and wild young girls wrapped in garish feather boas bearing it all for the gift of a string of cheap coloured pearls. However, those arriving in the Big Easy outside the mayhem of the annual festival quickly discover that this southern bayou on the banks of the Mississippi River has a distinct personality and charismatic charm unlike any other American city.

After driving from California to Louisiana, New Orleans felt like Nirvana after the rigid, law-obsessed, insular attitude of the neighbouring Texas state troopers. And why wouldn't it? After all, this is a city that allows - even condones - walking around the streets with 'huge ass' plastic cups frothing with beer that you can openly chug down with pride at whatever time of day. In fact, with all the constant pressure to have fun





Clockwise from top left: A horse and carriage tour of Bourbon St and the French Quarter; you have the green light to chug down an explosive Hand Grenade cocktail; ornate ironwork facades dress up 19th century mansions around the Garden District; and a street artist immortalises local jazz legend Louis Armstrong

and imbibe here, you'd think there might be some adverse psychological affects on the local populace. Definitely not: everyone I encountered seemed only too happy to fuel the frivolity.

New Orleans feels more like a European city than a city of Stars and Stripes, and with its principle tourist draw named the French Quarter; freedom fries are definitely not high on the menu here. Established in the 17th century, the former French and Spanish colony with its Creole, Cajun, and African slave populations gradually nurtured its own unique brand of architecture, music, cuisine, and inevitably, vice.

New Orleans has had made great efforts in recent years to sweep its seedy, crime-laden reputation to the fringes. Along well-trodden tourist trails there appears little of the steamy grit that instilled this old frontier port with its salacious reputation and became such an inspirational source to literary talents over the years. But there is still a definite energy and vitality here that makes the ink flow from a scribe's pen, stirring the creative juices in many an artist and musician.

In this 'burb of social excess it's hardly surprising that the heartbeat of the city is along the boozy-named Bourbon St, which actually derives its name from the French royal family. And, after a long night on the tiles, you too will feel as if your head has been unceremoniously separated from your regal shoulders. The 'strip' is a heady mix of tasteful eateries, racy strip clubs, tacky tourist shops and loud music bars, all tinged with the slightly noxious waft of drunken vomit trickling through the gutter of the cobbled street.

Takeaway guzzle booths line the strip, pumping out cheap beer and slurpy-style cocktail potions for those trawling the scene. Concocted in gimmicky yard-shaped bile-green containers, the sweet but potent Hand Grenades are to the strip what the mint *julep* once was to the plantation ladies.

Even dismissing the *bon vivant* behaviour, the quarter is also a very pretty and historically captivating area to explore. Verdant ferns hang down from intricate iron frame balconies, below is a curious mix of costume shops, galleries and open-fronted cafes. Decidedly tacky but nonetheless pleasant, exploring the quarter by horse and carriage gives you an insider's angle from the informed guides. For a different kind of discovery, the small New Orleans Voodoo Museum quirkily informs and rectifies many of the misperceptions towards this local spiritual practice, as well as selling voodoo dolls and other related paraphernalia.

New Orleans is the birthplace of jazz and the home of one of its greatest legends, Louis Armstrong. The cornet maestro's mark is indelible upon the city, recognised in the park of the same name that fringes the top end of the quarter. With



wayward young kids tap-dancing to any beat for spare change, music pulsates constantly through the air in the Big Easy. Whether you dance to the beat of jazz and blues, or the more hokey twang of Cajun and the washboard scrape of zydeco, you don't have to stumble far to hear impromptu jam sessions in hidden laid-back live music joints.

Amble a couple of blocks from Bourbon St and you enter the carnival atmosphere of Jackson Square. The bustling square of street performers, buskers, artists, fortune-tellers, and general hangers-on is skirted by the elegant wrought ironwork facades of America's first ever apartments, the Pontalba Buildings. The square dates back to 1721 and is named after General Andrew Jackson, a legendary soldier who defeated the British army in the 1815 Battle of New Orleans. A dramatic sculpture of Jackson rearing up on horseback is a fitting tribute to the man who went on to become the seventh US president.

The lush manicured park that centres the square, with carriage rides queuing up on the street and the three modest spires of the white-fronted St. Louis Cathedral piercing the skyline blend to create the almost Disney-esque view of the quarter from the riverbank. About-face on the embankment and you may catch sight of an authentic steamboat paddling her way out from the Toulouse Street Wharf into the muddy brown wash of the Mississippi.

Unlike a lot of American sprawls, New Orleans is a joy to discover on foot, and should sticky afternoon temperatures start tiring the limbs, the famous streetcar is a cheap, practical and ambient mode of traversing the main thoroughfares.

The Desire streetcar line may not exist anymore, except on the pages of Tennessee Williams' steamy play of the same name, but the St Charles streetcar rattles commuters from Canal Street at the edge of the quarter, along St Charles Avenue and the grandiose mansions of the Garden District. With chatty and tourist-tolerant drivers, it is also the oldest continuously operating street railway in the world.

Spending an afternoon nosing through the fences of the wealthy might seem a bit like green-eyeing how the other half lives, but the neighbourhood of architecturally stylish 19th century mansions makes for a fascinating pavement patrol. Under the canopy of long creeping branches, these showy castles with their tropically dressed gardens were established by brash, cashed-up Americans, who in the 1800s settled themselves aside from the less-than-friendly French-parleying locals.

The area has a more mellow mood to the quarter with some laid-back dine and drink spots, as well as a few charismatic

New Orleans feels more like a European city than a city of Stars and Stripes, and with its principle tourist draw named the French Quarter; freedom fries are definitely not high on the menu here.





The lush manicured park that centres the square, with carriage rides queuing up on the street and the three modest spires of the white-fronted St. Louis Cathedral piercing the skyline blend to create the almost Disney-esque view of the quarter from the riverbank.

accommodation options like the charming old St. Charles Guesthouse. On the subject of rest, the district also nestles one of the city's several homes to the deceased, Lafayette Cemetery No. 1, whose towering rows of characteristically elaborate stone crypts are all built above the inhospitable marshy terrain. Oven baking the dead in the scorching southern heat - such eerie haunts certainly fuel the imagination, providing inspiration for the macabre novels of local resident Anne Rice, author of *Interview with the Vampire*.

Mark Twain once wrote: 'New Orleans' food is as delicious as the less criminal forms of sin' - and eating out is definitely an essential ingredient to the experience here. If you've never sampled Creole or Cajun cuisine, then you're sure to leave the South with your belt buckle bulging and a suitcase full of hot sauces, rubs, and spices. With Creole cooking drawing influence from European French and Spanish, as well as African cuisine, the city is dotted with elegantly dressed, authentic feeling restaurants. Typically laden with a variety of freshly caught seafood, staples on the menu include *gumbo*, *etouffee*, and *jambalaya*.

If you find yourself needing a detox break from all the excesses of the city then there are several day trips that give you a better sense of Louisiana's heritage and the marshy geography that Cajun settlers once eked a living from. One of the most popular tours is a boat trip through the Barataria swamps followed by a visit to one of the expansive 19th century plantations. Many of the sweeping antebellum estates are built in the showy Greek revival style and were founded on the profits of cotton, sugar cane, and the toil of African-American slave labour.

The swamps become more atmospheric the more narrow and remote you meander; you almost feel a sense of adventure lurking in the Spanish moss that dangles from the trees, although it's never quite as sinister as the dense mist-shrouded marshes depicted in movies like *Southern Comfort*. Then there's the thrill of spotting a lazy gator slouched atop a sunken log, that is until the drawling roughneck boat captain pulls a bucket of bait out and starts working the reptilian predators into a feeding frenzy. If time is of the essence then swap the riverboat for the whirring thrill of a gliding airboat - guaranteed to put you ashore in time for another night of southern-style revelry. 🍷



Clockwise from top: More of that beautiful ironwork; elaborate stone crypts at Lafayette Cemetery No. 1; and don't mess with the roughneck airboat captain or he'll feed you to the gators!



Attention all Brains: Drain to Boston

Story and pictures by Steven Pettifor

America's higher education capital, Boston reminds us of the cultivated, Euro-centric Old World culture of America's colonial beginnings.

Hailing from England but having lived overseas for more than a decade, arriving in New England in Autumn felt almost the same as a trip back home to Blighty. The cradle of liberty and seed of American culture, (although indigenous Americans tell otherwise) Massachusetts' principal conurbation, the port city of **Boston**, dates back to 1630. And while this historic city may have centuries-old foundations; today, young blood pumps steadily through the 30-plus higher educational establishments here, making Boston the country's university capital.

Wild it certainly isn't, but this provincial-feeling city reveals a delightful mix of architecture and notable landmarks that confirm its historic credentials - America's oldest public park in Boston Common, America's oldest baseball field at Fenway Park, and the country's first restaurant at the Union Oyster House - to name just a few. While few American cities can boast so many firsts, Boston gives you a true sense of how the Old World grew into the brash New World that is modern America.

Although extremely touristy, a great way to get a unique introduction to Boston's sights is to jump aboard the Boston





Frustrated thespian drivers provide animated commentary, and upon passing another Duck group, passengers are encouraged to quack in unison.

Duck Tour. The authentic restored World War II amphibious landing vehicles chug their way round Boston's principal attractions before splashing into the Charles River for a waterborne view of the city. Frustrated thespian drivers provide animated commentary, and upon passing another Duck group, passengers are encouraged to quack in unison.

Beantowners (the locals apparently have a penchant for baked beans) certainly aren't the warmest folk you'll ever encounter, but after the over-the-top friendliness of California and the South, their reserved nature comes as something of a respite. Perhaps their cool bravado stems from the puritanical conservatism inherited from their forefathers, but with so many brainiacs converging on the city, it could just be the distracted distance of deep intellectual musing.

Getting to know the city on foot is easy, with the well-marked Freedom Trail an enlightening route to unravel Boston's colonial-era determiners. The path starts in the heart of verdant Boston Common, which is fringed by the handsome residential neighbourhoods of Back Bay and Beacon Hill. Built on a huge landfill, the former is full of boutiques and eateries dotted between rows of smart Victorian brownstone houses with bow-front facades, all warmed with nostalgic gas streetlights.

The Freedom Trail continues through downtown to the Old State House, where in 1776 the Declaration of Independence was made. Today, the shiny facades of modern skyscrapers dwarf the significant yet humble looking structure.

After a day beefing up on historic legacies, head to the narrow cobbled streets of North End, Boston's 'Little Italy,' where there are dozens of aromatically enticing Italian eateries to choose from. Make sure you arrive early otherwise it's a tight squeeze.

Not surprisingly in the town where the much-loved TV comedy *Cheers* was set, Boston's bar scene is very much a part of the city's character. Beacon Hill's Bull & Finch pub provided the inspiration for the TV show, though nowadays it's become little more than a tourist stop and the city swells with more authentic watering holes to quaff away in. Named after Boston's revolutionary hero Sam Adams, the popular ale of the same name is definitely one of America's choice tipples.

With Boston being so compact, it's worth taking time to cross the Charles River and explore the student-busy city of Cambridge, the home of Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The action in Cambridge centres on Harvard Square and surrounds, with bookshops galore and resident chess players taking on all comers, but by and large the neighbourhood is livened by busy terrace coffee



Clockwise from top left: The Robert Gould Shaw and 54th Massachusetts Regiment Memorial honours America's all-black company who fought in the Civil War; rowing the Charles Rover in Cambridge, MA; walking the dog in Provincetown, Cape Cod; and Harvard students swap homework notes on campus.



After a day beefing up on historic legacies, head to the narrow cobbled streets of North End, Boston's 'Little Italy,' where there are dozens of aromatically enticing Italian eateries to choose from.

houses, bars, and plenty of college-averted students sunning themselves beside the grassy, geese-popular banks of the Charles River. Perch on one of the scenic bridges and ogle at the steady river traffic of oarsmen and women thrusting their way up and down stream.

A little further afield, the countryside surrounding Boston is besieged with historical references and it's worth taking a day or more to discover several important sites that helped mould America into the nation of today. The towns of Lexington and Concord are marked as important battlegrounds where American revolutionaries fought off the colonial Brits in the struggle for independence, while the port of Salem has a notorious reputation for its horrific persecution of supposed witches in the trials of 1692.

South of Boston lies the small town of Plymouth, famous as the landing spot of 102 English Pilgrims here in 1620, and on the breezy tip of Cape Cod is the funky seaside burgh of Provincetown, where the puritanical Pilgrims first came ashore.

Provincetown is a pretty little coastal village that, ironically, has a thriving gay scene with rainbow flags, pet grooming salons and afternoon tea dances. The lively melange of daily tourist hordes, local artists, and campy-residents pile into the many beachfront eateries to scarf down fresh seafood washed down with some inventive cocktails. After a warming bowl of chowder, board the evening Fast Ferry for the 90-minute cruise back to heart of Boston. 🍷



Clockwise from top left: Harvard Square; chess players milk fresh-faced students of their allowance; Cheers, a bar where everyone knows your name; and the Jurassic-looking WWII Duck Tour vehicle is an effective way to see the surrounding civility

