



Take a bite!

Start spreading the news, New York's the place to be in the run up to Christmas...

New York is so good they named it twice, so even if you've been there once, surely it's time for another bite of the Big Apple?

This neon-lit, action-packed city that never sleeps offers a myriad of experiences and sights, whether you're a shopaholic, fashionista, culture vulture or celeb spotter. Despite only having a couple of days in town, *OK!* managed to pack in a fair few sights, a river cruise, some museum visits and even a spot of retail therapy!

When should I go?

In the run-up to the festive season New York is sprinkled with Christmas magic and sometimes even a dusting of snow. Santa Claus kicks off the festive season during the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade (November 24). You'll find Christmas markets on Union Square and Grand Central Station, ice skating rinks at the Rockefeller Center and in Central Park and festive shop windows at all the big department stores. To get you in the mood, book tickets for New York City Ballet's *Nutcracker* at the Lincoln Center.

Festive visitors will love the ice rink and Christmas tree at the Rockefeller Center



Where should I stay?

The Bryant Park Hotel has an enviable location on 40 West 40th Street, right in the middle of all the midtown Manhattan action. It's three blocks from Times Square, six blocks from the Empire State Building and a short stroll to the upmarket shopping streets of 5th and 6th Avenue.

Despite the 128-room hotel's historic exterior, the interior of this 22-storey building is contemporary, with the entrance lobby blood red with black tiled flooring. *OK!* was exceptionally well looked after by the well-chiselled, incredibly helpful staff. As our trip coincided with a significant birthday, the hotel kindly sent a bottle of champagne and a chocolate cake to our room, which was a lovely touch. Our spacious balcony room overlooked Bryant Park, which plays host to a festive ice rink and handicrafts market. Our room was well-equipped with all the mod cons, including a huge plasma screen TV. There was even a sleep therapy bedside pebble that emitted a variety of soothing sounds to relax you, as well as lots of lovely Molton Brown potions in our marble bathroom.

The hotel's vaulted Cellar Bar is a popular haunt with the fashion pack, while the Japanese fusion restaurant Koi, all dark woods and orchids, is also the place to be seen. Kelly Osborne and Nicole Ritchie have both been spotted here.



Above: *OK!* stayed at the Bryant Park Hotel in midtown Manhattan. Below: Lady GaGa played live in NYC recently

Which stars might I see?

While we were in New York a galaxy of stars were saying *Good Morning America* with free concerts in Central Park. Lady GaGa kicked things off in a spectacular way by swinging onto the stage on a rope slide, while the Backstreet Boys and New Kids On The Block played the Rockefeller Center as part of the breakfast show's summer concert series. During Fashion Week, *Gossip Girl* Blake Lively and Katy Perry were spotted hanging out by the Bryant Park Hotel, while Sarah Jessica Parker calls NYC home.

Where can I eat?

Next door to the Bryant Park is Le Pain Quotidien, a rustic-chic cafe which is an ideal breakfast spot, serving up delicious pastries as well as healthier options. Do brunch at Balthazar, a popular Parisian-style





Main: There are plenty of sights, sounds and shops to keep even the most discerning traveller occupied in New York. **Right:** For star-spotting, head for Public in the trendy Nolita district. **Bottom:** Head to Macy's, where we bought some bargain Levi's



bistro, or its sister Pastis in the trendy Meatpacking District. At the Salmon River Restaurant (5th Ave and 40 St), OK! feasted on fish and chips and a sumptuous seafood medley of cod, scallops and shrimps, while over in Grand Central Station you can enjoy top-notch Italian cuisine at Cipriani Dolci, seafood at the Oyster Bar & Restaurant or steak at Michael Jordan's The Steakhouse NYC. Afterwards pop into the nearby Campbell Apartment, an elegant cocktail bar built as an office in the '20s and restored to its former glory, for a nightcap.

For star-spotting try Il Cantinori (32 East 10th St), an Italian trattoria where Gwyneth Paltrow, Sarah Jessica Parker and James Blunt have all dined. Other A-list haunts include Avenue (116 10th Ave), a cool gastro lounge with great music and a lengthy cocktail menu, and Public, a bar-restaurant housed in a industrial-chic venue in trendy Nolita.

What can I do?

We made full use of our New York CityPass. First off we hopped aboard a 75-minute city cruise to get a river view of the iconic Manhattan skyline and the Statue Of Liberty. As an Art Deco fan, visits to the Rockefeller Center and the Empire State Building were a must. With the pass you get fast-tracked at both attractions.

We were also impressed by the opulence of Grand Central Station before boarding a train to Rye Playland, just 40 minutes away. It was America's first purpose-built amusement park when it opened in 1928. Amazingly it still features five of its original attractions including the wooden Dragon Roller Coaster, where Mariah Carey



filmed the video for her hit *Fantasy*. We also spent a few hours at the Museum Of Modern Art, home to works by Van Gogh, Warhol and Monet.

Where can I shop?

OK! stocked up on T-shirts at Abercrombie & Fitch and American Eagle Outfitters on 5th Avenue, then we popped into several of the famous department stores – we got our hands on a pair of Levi's (less than half the UK price) in Macy's, browsed the denim bar in Barneys, checked out the shoes in Bloomingdales and admired the potions in Bergdorf Goodman's vast beauty emporium.

For one-off fashions, head to the cobblestones of SoHo or the Meatpacking District, where you'll find an Alexander McQueen and Stella McCartney store. For bargains (go early, with stamina), make a beeline for Century 21, it's the American equivalent of TK Maxx.

What are the best tours?

For an inside track on the best neighbourhood shops, sign up for the SoHo and Nolita Shopping Tour (www.nyctrip.com). Showbiz lovers should take a movie walking tour with Location Tours (www.screenstours.com). Themes include *Sex And The City* and *Gossip Girl*, while the newest one is a movie-themed walk around Brooklyn. Celebrity Planet (www.thecelebrityplanet.com) offers musical-themed walking tours that take in famous musical venues as well as John Lennon's first New York City apartment, Studio 54 and Frank Sinatra's favourite restaurant.

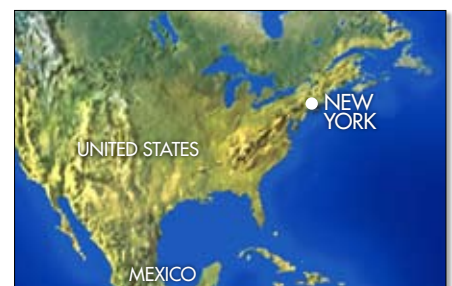
How do I get there?

Virgin Atlantic (www.virgin-atlantic.com; 0844 209 2770) fly five times daily from London Heathrow to New York – twice to Newark and three times to JFK. BA (www.ba.com/newyork; 0844 493 0787) fly from London Heathrow to New York up to 11 times per day and also from London City to JFK. Room rates at the Bryant Park Hotel (www.bryantparkhotel.com; 001 877 640 9300), start at £245.

OK!

REPORT BY PHIL GOULD EDITED BY ANNABEL MACKIE,
OK! TRAVEL EDITOR PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALAMY,
PHOTOLIBRARY.COM, REUTERS

Where is New York?



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