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# TRAVEL TIPS

HELPFUL HINTS FOR THE JEWISH TRAVELLER

By **MIKE COHEN**

**NEW YORK CITY:**  
New York City remains one of the most exciting destinations in the world. When my family and I travelled there over the winter holiday break, it marked our first trip to the Big Apple in six years.

New York appreciates its Canadian tourists. This has been underlined in recent years by the establishment of an NYC & Company office right at 99 Blue Jays Way in Toronto. By logging on to [www.ncogo.com](http://www.ncogo.com).  
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**TRAVEL TALES**

*(Continued from page 8)*

com you can begin planning your activities. Unquestionably, New York remains one of the most exciting cities in the world. I recommend you start things off at the official NYC information center (<http://www.nycgo.com/venues/official-nyc-information-center>) where you can be pointed in the right

direction.

If it is shopping you like, the boutiques of Madison Avenue, the iconic department stores on Fifth Avenue and the fashion-forward shops in SoHo and the Village, are the favorites. Sporting 100 upscale retailers, Madison Avenue is a slice of heaven, New York's most luxurious shopping experience. From 57th St to 72nd, this haute strip where the wealthy shop, boasts 15 blocks of designer boutiques and specialty retailers. The Century 21 Department store at 22 Cortlandt Street has bargains galore. But here is a tip. If you are driving in you will pass through the New Jersey town of Paramus, where a Century 21 is right on the main drag.

**BROADWAY :** Unquestionably "the draw" in New York City remains its extraordinary Broadway productions. Be prepared to pay big dollars, even for a seat that is the second to last spot in the house at the top. Here is a tip though. Go online via Ticketmaster or Telecharge, check out the precise availability and call the toll free number so that you can get a more accurate description of what is available. While they offer to mail the tickets at least 48 hours before the show, we recommend that you either print them out online or ask to pick them up at will call. In some cases you can even buy cancellation insurance.

We got to see one of the final New York showings of the Addams Family, which is now part of a North America tour (<http://theadamsfamilymusicaltour.com>.) The two lead producers, Stuart Oken and Roy Furman, are Jewish. So is Douglas Sills, who stars as Gomez on the North American tour. Log on to [www.nycgo.com/broadway](http://www.nycgo.com/broadway)

*(Please turn to page 28)*

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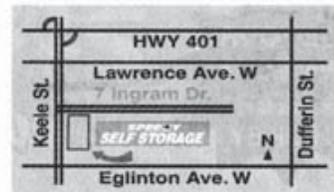
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**TRAVEL TALES**

(Continued from page 21)

and <http://www.nycgo.com/off-broadway> for ticket information.

**JEWISH CONNECTION:** New York's landmark historic Jewish neighborhood, the Lower East Side was once home to the world's largest Jewish community. Covering the area between Houston and Canal Streets east of the Bowery, this neighborhood is where New York's garment industry began. Today it is a bargain hunter's paradise, with great deals to be found on everything from souvenir tee shirts to menorahs, especially along Orchard Street in the neighborhood's center. The overall New York Jewish community in the metropolitan area has remained stable at 1.4 million people; the population of New York City is just below a million.

Indeed, the world-class museums and collections found throughout Manhattan are not to be missed. The historic synagogues should be toured. But in New York City,

Jewish life is just a walk down the street. The Jewish Museum ([www.thejewishmuseum.org](http://www.thejewishmuseum.org)) at 1109 Fifth Ave. (northeast corner of 92nd St.) is dedicated to (Please turn to page 30)

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## TRAVEL TALES

(Continued from page 28)

presenting the remarkable scope and diversity of Jewish culture.” **DINING OUT:** New York City is indeed the place to dine, with an endless

array of choices to please your palate. Needless to say, there are no shortage of kosher restaurants here either.

This was my fourth trip to New York City over the 16 years and each time I have made it a point to dine at the Jewish-owned Ben Benson's Steak House ([www.benbensons.com](http://www.benbensons.com)). Opened in 1982, it is one of the top 100 independent restaurants in America. Manhattanites and visitors rub elbows with celebrities, politicians, sports stars and business executives, over huge juicy steaks and fantastic Benson crispy hashed browns. Conveniently located in the theatre district, at 123 W 52nd St., Ben Benson's is considered one of New York's top steak houses. Its eclectic collection of authentic Americana fills the two roomy floors with casual elegance and charm. This handsome, clubby restaurant is home to many regulars. Benson is a hands on owner. He created the menu himself, offering only USDA Prime steaks and chops and premium-quality poultry and seafood. He tastes and approves every food, including the bread. I enjoyed the filet mignon. But there were other tempting choices, which you can view online. Children will love the appetizers and a piece of tilapia represents a perfect choice for them as the main entrée. Ben Benson's serves huge portions, including a gigantic baked potato. In terms of salads, there are a variety of choices: baby spring mixed greens, hearts of lettuce, endive and arugula, Rancher's salad, tomato and onion, hearts of romaine, a special tomato salad and cucumber, sweet onion and tomato. The Ben Benson chopped salad went over best with our party. As for side orders, try the lightly battered fried zucchini and onion rings or the

creamed spinach and the Brooklyn Blackout cake or key lime pie for dessert. The restaurant is also noted for its exclusively seasoned steak sauce.

I had the chance to speak to Ben Benson himself, a proud Jew who makes sure to have matzah at each table during Passover. In fact, it has become a tradition for him at this time of year to come in each morning and make matzah brei for the staff, most of whom are not Jewish but appreciate it just the same.

**WHERE TO STAY:** We stayed at The Benjamin ([www.thebenjamin.com](http://www.thebenjamin.com)), a boutique luxury hotel centrally located in midtown Manhattan at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 50th Street, with quick, direct access to Fifth Avenue restaurants and shops, Grand Central Station, MoMA, Rockefeller Center, St. Patrick's Cathedral and Bloomingdales, among a myriad of other premiere city attractions. Known for its comprehensive sleep program, The Benjamin features the industry's first and only Sleep Concierge, a 12-choice pillow menu and custom Benjamin Bed.

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*Mike Cpohen can be reached at info@mikecohen.ca. See his travel advice column at www.sandboxworld.com/travel and follow him on Twitter @mikecohensl.*

**WORLD IN REVIEW**

*(Continued from page 3)*

The Bernsteins, of course, deny all the allegations. They maintain that they were always open about their intentions in India, which was to provide religious services to the local community after its long-time rabbi passed away. They said they made no secret of the fact that they would be organizing prayer services, helping celebrate Jewish festivals and looking after the day to day operation of the synagogue. As for spying for Israel, this was, as Israeli consul Eyal Siso, said "absolute nonsense".

Rabbi Bernstein

speculated that the Indian government took the action because owners of nearby boutique hotels and restaurants wanted to get rid of Chabad House because it was offering Shabbat dinner at no charge and was therefore taking away business from local merchants.

The Jewish community of Cochin, in the Indian state of Kerala, at one time numbered around 2400. But most emigrated to Israel in the 1954 and today, without the presence of Rabbi Bernstein, there are not enough men for a minyan.

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