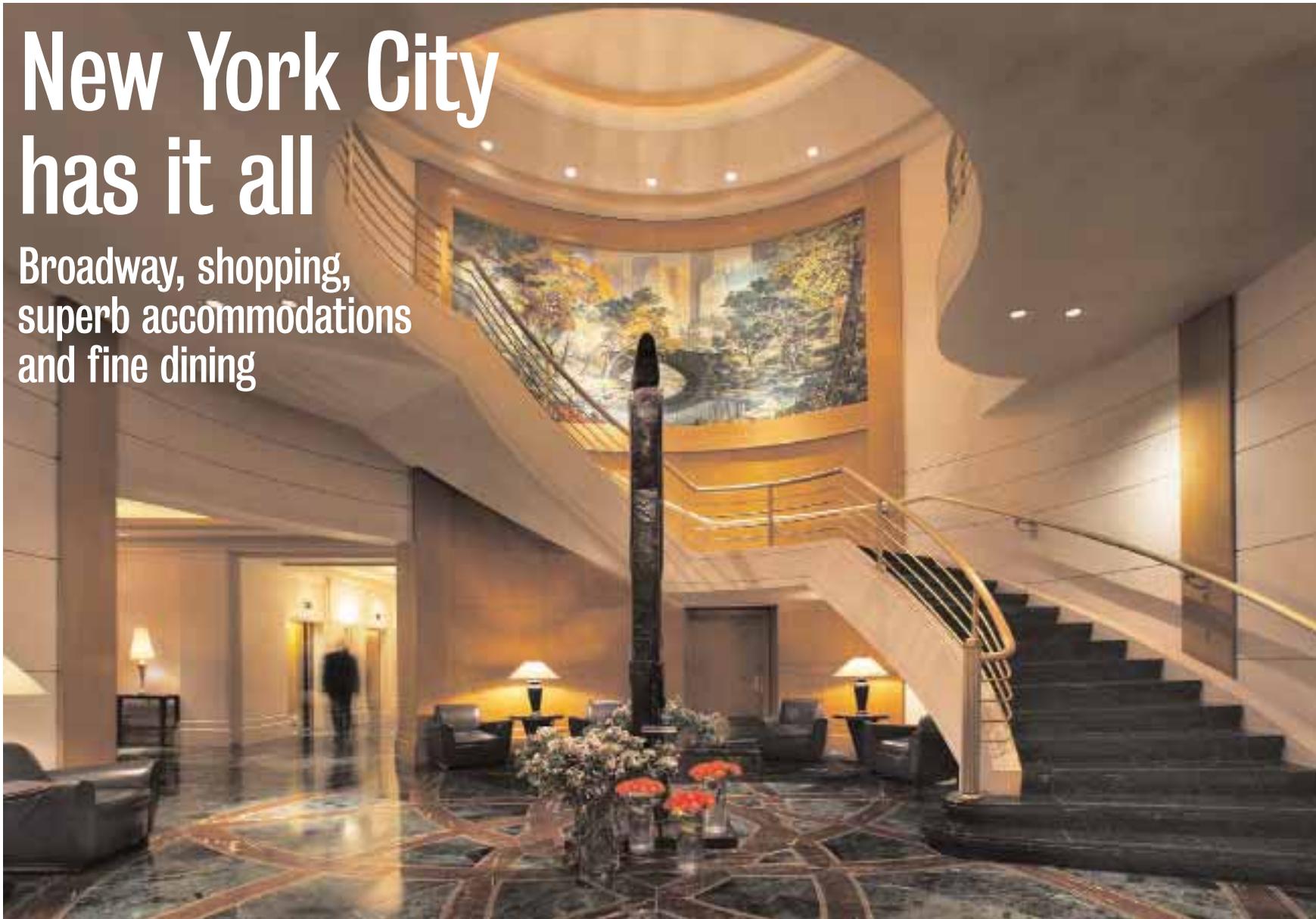


# New York City has it all

Broadway, shopping,  
superb accommodations  
and fine dining



The lobby of the Sofitel New York Hotel.

By Mike Cohen  
The Suburban

My family and I recently returned from a busy four day stop in New York City ([www.nycgo.com](http://www.nycgo.com)), where we saw some spectacular Broadway musicals, stayed at a sensational luxury hotel (The Sofitel) and enjoyed a restaurant experience (TAO) we won't soon forget.

Of course, New York is also one pretty terrific place to shop, from the boutiques of Madison Avenue, the iconic department stores on Fifth Avenue, the world's largest Macy's, the two bargain-packed Century 21 locales and the fashion-forward shops in SoHo and the Village. There are many great museums to choose from, but on this trip there just was not any time for that.

Among the most popular tourists stops in the Big Apple are the 9-1-1 Memorial, the Empire State Building, the Museum of Civilization, Ellis Island, The Statue of Liberty, Central Park/the Central Park Zoo and the Bronx Zoo

## Securing Broadway Tickets

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 route 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.

If you want to save some significant money, consider lining up in Times Square at the TKTS Discount Booths which offer tickets to Broadway and Off Broadway musicals and plays at up to 50 percent off. With dozens of productions on sale every day, there's something for everyone

Kinky Boots and Pippin represent two "can't miss" choices. These Tony Award winning musicals were so good you can count me in to see them again if the opportunity presents itself. In Kinky Boots (www.kinkybootsthemusical.com), Charlie Price has reluctantly inherited his father's shoe factory, which is on the verge of bankruptcy. Trying to live up to his father's legacy and save his family business, Charlie finds inspiration in the form of drag queen Lola. A fabulous entertainer some sturdy stilettos, Lola turns out to be the one person who can help Charlie become the man he's meant to be. As they work to turn the factory around, this unlikely pair finds that they have more in common than they ever dreamed possible and discover that when you change your mind about someone, you can change your whole world.

Pippin, meanwhile, is back on Broadway for the first time since it thrilled audiences 40 years

ago, having won the 2013 Tony Award for Best Musical Revival. It tells the story of a young prince on a death-defying journey to find meaning in his existence. Will he choose a happy, but simple life? Or will he risk everything for a singular flash of glory? It arrived on Broadway direct from an acclaimed run at Boston's American Repertory Theater. This captivating new production is directed by Tony winner Diane Paulus (Hair and The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess). It features sizzling choreography in the style of Bob Fosse and breathtaking acrobatics by Les 7 doigts de la main of Montreal.

## Where to Stay

My family and I have indeed experienced heaven. That is because we spent four nights in a gorgeous luxury suite at the Sofitel New York (www.sofitel.com), located at 45 West 44th Street, a very short walk from Times Square and Broadway theatres. For us, the location could not have been better.

This elegant 30-storey midtown Manhattan hotel is just a stone's throw from Fifth Avenue. There are 398 spacious rooms on 30 floors, including 52 suites and one presidential suite all featuring Sofitel's luxurious feathertop and duvet sleep system - SoBed. The executive suites encompass a bedroom with a separate seating/work area, which can be closed off from each other for in-suite meetings. Most suites have southern exposure, s offering a downtown view. Five terrace suites have outdoor terraces

with commanding views of Manhattan. While the bed in our main bedroom was as comfortable as can be, the sofa bed also got very high marks. Seldom have I seen a hide a bed mattress as perfect as this one. There is excellent cupboard space, bathrobes and slippers to use during your stay and an in-room safe with plenty of room to place your valuables.

Elegantly decorated with Paris-meets-New York motifs, all guestrooms have a spacious marble bathroom, three telephone lines, broadband Internet access and fully stocked minibars. Room service is available 24 hours along with international newspapers; nightly turn-down service with Evian water; and imported French bath products. There is a fully equipped fitness centre on the basement floor.

The Sofitel New York first opened on July 14, 2000. It caters to upscale business and leisure travelers seeking a classic, yet contemporary, "home away from home" while travelling. From the moment you check in, via a series of "Bonjour," you are treated like royalty. The lobby is large, warm and welcoming, with the concierge ready to guide you. Staff here speaks 52 different languages and there is a French-speaking ambassador in each hotel department. Upon check-in, the hotel will valet park your car at the Hippodrome facility across the street and have it ready for when checking out.

The hotel boasts seven meeting rooms perfect for small to mid-sized meetings, with rooms ranging from 365 to 760 square feet.

Rooms are designed to meet specific meeting needs, from video-conferencing to breakout work sessions and computer access for company training sessions. The Grand Ballroom offers 2,500 square feet of space to seat up to 180 people.

There are handicapped rooms available while all rooms can accommodate wheelchairs as well as the visually and hearing impaired. All kosher meals are out sourced. The hotel is used for kosher functions.

For reservations, call 1-800-Sofitel (763-4835).

### Dining Out

On the evening we arrived we decided to dine at Gaby, a traditional French brasserie and bar named for a Parisian model who made a name and career for herself in New York in the 1920s. Just off the lobby of the Sofitel, the restaurant seats 128 people. There is easy interior access for hotel guests and an entrance on 45th Street. There is a special lift at the Gaby entrance for those in wheelchairs.

Executive Chef Sylvain Harribey has been in New York for five years, having previously worked for the Sofitel in Philadelphia and Bordeaux, France. His culinary achievements include winning first place on the hit Food Network show called Chopped. This is a classy restaurant, popular not only with hotel guests but those going to a Broadway show. Pre-theatre menus do exist here. The restaurant is open all day, beginning at breakfast and for lunch as well. Among its special menus is 30-minute business lunches served in bento boxes for executives on the go.

"I cook with my heart, and my French heritage," said Harribey. "I look for new ways to refine classic French recipes and techniques, trying new combinations of ingredients, experimenting with culinary traditions, and procuring only the fresh ingredients from local farms."

We enjoyed an absolutely outstanding dinner at Gaby, having the great advantage of meeting Harribey in person. He first prepared a marvellous and tasty butternut squash cap-

puccino, with truffle oil and fleur de sel. This was followed by a unique spring lobster salad, featuring some sumptuous lobster, fruits, avocados and greens. There were two main courses: oven roasted lamb loin, crusted with Dijon mustard, white bean puree with pumpkin seed oil, vegetable tian gratine and Harribey's own creation called the Franburger. This was served on a crispy baguette with melted brie cheese, caramelized onion and piment d'Espelette pepper aioli and French Fries on the side. We shared some extraordinary desserts: a crème brulee, a chocolate lava cake with vanilla ice cream and a chocolate chip and raisin pudding with cinnamon ice cream. Harribey is also proud to promote De-Light by Sofitel, a gastronomic adventure in healthy eating. Developed by Thalassa Sea & Spa, the recognized nutrition and wellness experts in France for over 40 years, the menu features an innovative array of well-balanced, low calorie meals to help individuals meet their health and weight goals in delicious style.

New York City is indeed the place to dine, with an endless array of choices to please your palate.

The one restaurant we had heard a lot about was TAO ([www.taogroup.com](http://www.taogroup.com)), the pioneers of the Pan-Asian trend that swept New York City over a decade ago. We dined at TAO Uptown; the chain recently unveiled TAO Downtown and they are in Las Vegas as well.

Since its inception in 2000, TAO Uptown at 42 East 58th Street, has become well-known for spurring the trend of "vibe-dining," has been a national and international hotspot. TAO Downtown is located beneath the Maritime Hotel.

Upon entering the restaurant, one is immediately struck by a 16-foot Buddha floating above a reflecting pool filled with Japanese carp. The Pan Asian restaurant specializes in authentic Hong Kong Chinese, Japanese and Thai cuisines. There are three levels of dining, including the prized "Skybox" which offers views of what once was a movie theatre. Tao has 300 seats, a sushi

bar, lounge and two bars at which to enjoy the food and the show. Be sure to make reservations. As GM Keith Dorrow told us, "we are always busy."

There is a wonderful ambiance here, with trendy music and a charismatic serving staff. The menu here is truly designed for sharing. Our waiter, Hutch, made life so much easier for our group by recommending a series of courses. It is as if he read our minds. We started off with some appetizers: hot edame and roasted shishito peppers. That was followed by spicy tuna tartar on crispy rice, six pieces we split among us happily. The Peking duck spring rolls, with hoisin sauce, were deliciously crispy but the outstanding item of the night which I strongly recommend was the satay of Chilean sea bass with wok roasted asparagus. I cannot remember tasting any kind of fish this good. The lobster and shrimp spring roll with shiitake mushrooms and spicy pineapple sauce was a treat, a bit spicy but nothing too difficult to handle.

TAO has a magnificent sushi menu. You can study the options via their menu. Hutch selected some fantastic pieces for us.

There was still more to come. The wok-seared New York sirloin with shiitake mushrooms cut like butter and was served with some crispy roasted potato wedges. An order of crispy orange chicken, beautifully prepared scallops and some white rice rounded out the main course.

Did we have room for dessert? First came the sugar dusted doughnuts with a trio of dipping sauces – caramel, chocolate and vanilla. This was delicious beyond descrip-



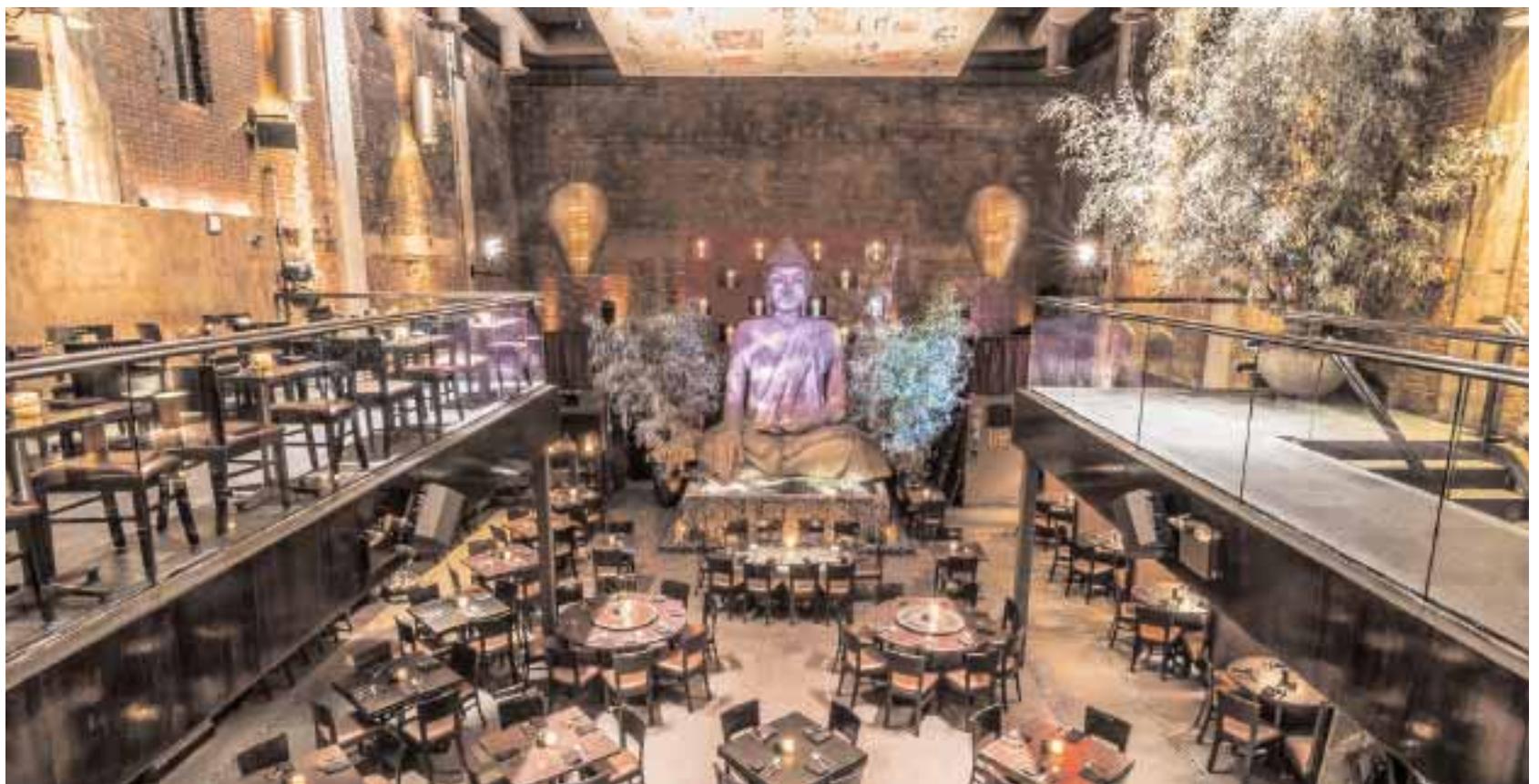
The TKTS Discount Booths offer excellent deals on Broadway tickets.

tion. The banana pudding with fortune cookie crust and the lemongrass crème brulee were dandy as well.

There is easy street-level access by wheelchair. When making your reservation, ask for table at the main level where there are no stairs.

Partner Rich Wolf talks excitedly about their newest downtown New York location. "This isn't just a 'second location' of TAO in New York City; it is the next iteration of our brand," he says. "Devoted fans will still feel at home, but there are many elements that distinguish the restaurant from its sister locations. This is what guests can expect from us moving forward."

TAO Downtown seats up to 400 throughout the restaurant, with approximately 300 in the main dining room alone. TAO Downtown is located at 92 Ninth Avenue (between 16th and 17th Streets). You can check out [www.taodowntown.com](http://www.taodowntown.com). I guess I will have to put this location on my list for the next trip to New York. I am still very happily digesting my Uptown experience.



The Tryall Club in Montego Bay boasts a world-class golf course.

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