

TRAVEL

New York City full of Jewish flavour

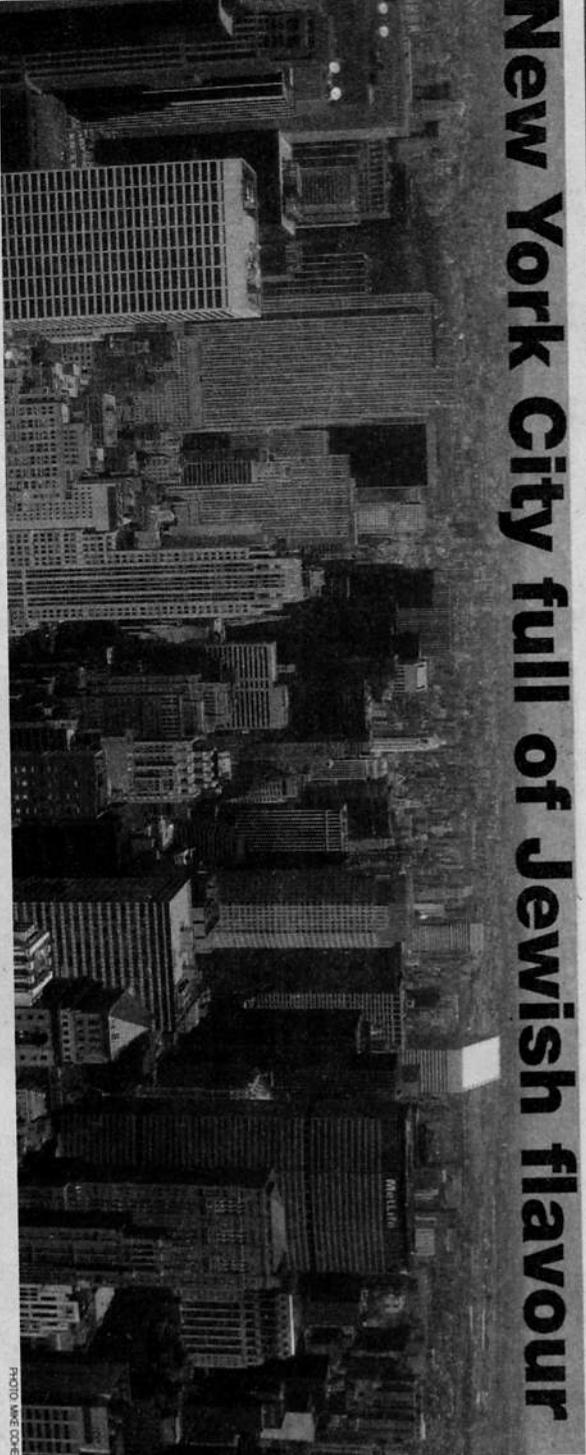


PHOTO: MIKE COHEN

A view of New York from the landmark Empire State Building.

By Mike Cohen
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NEW YORK — With the exception of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, there is no city in the world with as much Jewish flavour as New York.

Jewish presence is everywhere in the Big Apple, from the theatres on Broadway, the restaurant scene, hotels and museums. New York's landmark historic Jewish neighbourhood, 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 neighbourhood 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 memorabilia, especially along Orchard Street in the neighbourhood's centre. The overall New York Jewish community in the metropolitan area has remained stable at 1.4 million people; the Jewish 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 ([\[jewishmuseum.org\]\(http://jewishmuseum.org\)\) at 1109 Fifth Ave. \(northeast corner of 92nd St.\) is dedicated to presenting the remarkable scope and diversity of Jewish culture. The Center for Jewish History \(\[www.centerforjewishhistory.org\]\(http://www.centerforjewishhistory.org\)\) at 15 West 16th St. is part of a five-building, 125,000-square-foot complex, which houses the American Jewish Historical Society, Leo Baeck Institute, American Sephardi Foundation, Yeshiva University Museum, and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Manhattan's Lower East Side supports 11 synagogues. You can also visit the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan \(\[www.jcc-manchattan.com\]\(http://www.jcc-manchattan.com\)\) at The Samuel Priest Rose Building \(334 Amsterdam Avenue at West 76th St.\). The Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust \(\[www.mjhhc.org/museum\]\(http://www.mjhhc.org/museum\)\) first opened its doors on Sept. 15, 1997 at 36 Battery Place.](http://www.the-</p></div>
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Five years after the tragic terrorist attacks, which destroyed the Twin Towers, cost innocent lives and shocked the world, the planet's most exhilarating destination is on fire with electricity. New York City (www.nycvisit.com) has certainly cranked up the volume in 2006, with a dizzying array of new rooms, global cuisine, breathtaking attractions, blockbuster Broadway shows, exceptional exhibitions, and of course, incomparable shopping.

The Affinia Manhattan (www.affinia.com) has become a popular locale for Jewish guests. Located in one of the city's most exciting and accessible neighbourhoods at 371 Seventh Ave. at 31st St., the dramatic lobby is a hub of activity. The Metro Conierge, the hotel's city specialist, stands at a unique multimedia command post offering New York expertise and an insider's perspective. Jewish guests who keep kosher particularly appreciate this venue because they can get a room featuring a full kitchen. "We have many requests for kosher items and are happy to arrange for kosher delivery from some of the finest kosher restaurants and delis in the city," says Allen Kramme, the hotel's general manager.

Getting tickets to Broadway shows is easy. Our advice is to do your search online before going or consider getting in line the day of a production at the Times Square ticket information centre where you might get lucky with seats 25 to 50 per cent off. Perhaps the best bargain is the League of American Theatres and Producers' official Broad-

way Open House (www.broadway.org), a two-hour 'insider's' walking tour through Manhattan's Theater District, which explores the interiors of Broadway theatres, offers theatre fans an opportunity to hear legendary backstage stories, the latest Broadway buzz, and to discover a rarely seen side of Broadway. Tour times vary depending on the time of year.

There are many wonderful restaurants in New York, including the popular Ben Benson's Steak House (www.bensons.com) at 123 52nd St. It is right in the heart of Broadway, and therefore, a favourite stop before and after shows. Ben Benson himself, a hands-on owner, is one of New York's most notable Jewish restaurateurs. During Passover he made sure that matzah was available at every table. In fact, it has become a tradition for him at this time of year to be in each morning and make matzah brei for the staff, most of whom are not Jewish but appreciate it just the same. Besides the steaks and other meat and seafood dishes, Benson's is known for its huge side order portions and generous desserts.

Other places you should have on your list to visit: New York's famous Empire State Building (www.esbny.com), a New York City landmark, which soars more than a quarter of a mile into the atmosphere above the heart of Manhattan. Located on the 86th floor, 1,050 feet (320 metres) above the city's bustling streets, the Observatory offers panoramic views from within a glass-enclosed pavilion and from the surrounding open-air promenade. The Central Park Zoo (www.centralparkzoo.com) is well situated and full of life. From a steamy rain forest to an icy Antarctic penguin habitat, the zoo leads visitors through tropic, temperate and polar regions to encounter fascinating animals — from tiny leucocutter ants to tremendous polar bears. And The American Museum of Natural History (www.amnh.org), located at Central Park West at 79th St., takes a full day to go through properly. Not to be missed is the Rose Center for Earth and Space, the IMAX Theatre, the Butterfly Conservatory and the all-new space show Cosmic Collisions.