

WINTER WONDERBOROUGHS


Passing through New York City streets in pursuit of the finer things in life

By Laura Brown

It's not a secret that New York City's boroughs have had a dramatic facelift over the past decade, and with it a reawakening of the structures within. What better time to revisit, then, when the residents are getting ready for their winter hibernation, and hotels are in full festive spirit to beat the snowy cold? We're in pursuit of festive happiness and will be gathering round the fireplaces of some of the finest hotels in (outer) town.

Walking the walk

Framed by three bodies of water, Manhattan is the epicentre of the finer things in urban life, with its neighbourhoods such as Chelsea, SoHo and Lower East Side where the old-world charm has not worn off in the midst of new developments. The refined details of modern-day developers have left their quirky and sophisticated marks on the interiors as well as the city streets. Still, the soul of the boroughs has kept its charm. Convivial cafés and elegant boutiques with dazzling couture collections alternated by sturdy industrial builds are bringing an eclectic sphere together on the city's sidewalks.

These sidewalks are New York's finer USP, where the avenues from north to south create a rhythmic grid of broad lanes and the numbered streets weave themselves through the generous framework from east to west – becoming catwalks during fashion week and fast-paced running tracks on workdays, places to flaunt new purchases and an urban background for many a movie scene or picture frame. And in winter, when cold winds gust by, the beautifully decorated shopfronts create windows of innovative storytelling and jolly scenes. Passing through town, pause to admire outdoor frames of elite retail giants such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman (with its BG Radar )





making shopping child's play!) and Barney's, while exquisite jewellers such as Harry Winston bedazzle with massive, luxury diamonds and stunning timepieces. Here, on the roads to success for many living the American Dream, high street brands, elegant fashion houses and tiny boutiques cater for fashion New York-style and provide quirky gifts and heavenly scents, while foodie favourites bring fine dining to the streets in cool sidewalk cafés where to-go coffees become your new found access card to NYC life.

On corners and near zebra crossings tourists become more distinct from the New York dwellers. Here, the rush of the city becomes apparent, as locals on their way to work have exchanged their classy footwear for sturdy sneakers, pacing through the routines to get to their first meeting of the day. This city is made for walking, even though taxi cabs are visible at each entrance and on every city's block, especially enticing on a winter's day. All the while, tourists are keen to take in the city, slowing down their pace and enjoying their casual stroll, chins tucked into woolly scarves enclosed by winter jackets, through festive lit neighbourhoods while gasping at the skyline filled with historic remnants and metal, window-paned titans.

Sparkling splendour

It is here where splendour makes its way through hotel lobbies and exquisite taste flaunts itself on rooftop terraces – where guests escape the sidewalks below. Rumour has it that in the olden days, ice rinks were created on these top terraces to woo the aristocrats, while elevators carried private cars and even elephants to the opulent ballrooms. Now, people can relax and enjoy the views of the city that never sleeps.

Ideally situated in the midst of the city, opposite the Museum of Modern Art, the terrace of the lavish Baccarat welcomes guests and residents alike. In the grandeur of its time, the hotel's entrance sparkles through ceiling-hung chandeliers revealing the crystal company's heritage and the 250 years of history translating its essence into contemporary culture, whilst the Harcourt vitrines showcase works by commissioned artists. The exquisite art knowledge and taste of glamour embellish the hotel, resulting in a collection spanning from the 18th century to the present day. The suites are decorated in subtle colours, elevating the carefully curated artworks and finer materials. Floor-to-ceiling windows subdue the city lights bringing in the right amount of cosmopolitan vibe – all together the perfect setting for a private haven of calm after a day out on the town.



Amicable ambiances

For a younger vibe along Manhattan's pavements, head to the Lower East Side, leaning against the Financial District and cornered by Little Italy and Greenwich Village. This lesser known district, with triple access to the mainland via three suspension bridges (Brooklyn Bridge, Manhattan Bridge and Williamsburg Bridge on the north end), mixes galleries, charismatic shops – where you find the latest trends and unusual designs – and utterly refined hotels and eateries; it is where old-school builds have been given an overhaul and room has been made for a kaleidoscope of details. Materials, scents, even the surroundings all perfectly combined to bring in the correct ambience. The Ludlow's presence with its private terrace suites, loft spaces and eclectic mix of old and new marks a deep-rooted heritage, where interiors are uber chic and subtle hints of long-gone eras can be found – the marble mosaic flooring, for example, is a given. Here, Dirty French calls for reservations as the French bistro brings in crowds from near and far. The allure of simple food has far surpassed the bistro elements and now holds its own with a beautifully curated menu, packed with timeless dishes and bold flavours.

These rustic charms have made it across the water, where boutique hotels have had the chance to flourish away from Manhattan's grasp. Individually operated hotels cater for exquisite tastes and bring fresh visitors. The newly opened Brooklyn's 1 Hotel gives guests their own private suites with a Manhattan skyline view over the East River. Designed by local artists and inspired by nature, from building materials to room furnishings and living green features, each detail is intended to bring the outside in, creating a pure and natural environment – all under the watchful eyes of the city's giants across the water. Every single detail has been given an element of thought: room keys are made of five different types of wood and clothes hangers are made of recycled consumer materials, and each room even comes with a yoga mat. These mindful moments come with excellent service and fresh produce for breakfast, lunch and dinner from nearby farms; this is urban luxury on a whole other level, and the green approach somehow feels jolly good.

baccarathotels.com

ludlowhotel.com

1hotels.com

