

# BROADWAY ON A BUDGET

## An Insider's Guide To New York Theatre In Six Acts

### Act I - Planning Your Trip

The best way to get the most for the least from theatregoing in New York is to decide what you want to see based on the information you can find before you leave, and then when you get there, go to the tkts booths which sell half price tickets on the day of performance - although obviously some shows are never discounted.

Of course, if you don't want to queue outdoors braving the elements, and want to be sure of getting tickets to your 'must see' choices before you leave, then look no further than **New York ShowSavers**, which provides a listing of offers for shows and other sightseeing and leisure events that can be booked before you go.

You can also book in advance for the hot tickets to make sure you are not disappointed.

All the links from **New York TheatreNet** are useful, but here is a roundup of the best of the best to help you plan your trip.

### On-line Guides:

#### **The New York Theatre Experience**

Offers the best listing and information about Broadway and Off Broadway shows. It also includes some 'virtual coupons' offering discounts that you can print out.

#### **NYC & Company**

Is the city's official tourism web site with general tourist information. It includes details of Paint The Town (incorporating Restaurant Week) the annual winter promotion running through January, February and March, with special offers and events including hotels, museums, attractions, shops, restaurants, tours and shows, and NYC: Your Ticket To Summer, which is a similar promotion running through July and August.

#### **New York Travel Advisory Bureau**

Offers a free visitor kit, comprising guide book, map, discount card and 12 walking tour itineraries. There is a £5 postage and packing charge, but it's worth it.

### Organisations:

#### **Theater Development Fund**

Operates the tkts half price ticket booths in Times Square and South Street Seaport, and not only gives information about where the booths are located and their opening times, but also lists the shows available during the previous week, so you know in advance which are likely to be on sale and which you should book before you go. It also runs a concessionary emailing list for groups. You can even buy gift certificates that can be exchanged for tickets on the day.

#### **School Theatre Tickets Program**

Offers discount coupons for Broadway and Off Broadway shows to any educational establishments from junior schools to universities.

#### **Broadway Classroom**

Offers workshops with Broadway professionals and other Backstage On Broadway events for groups, plus group ticket discounts.

#### **The League Of American Theatres And Producers - Broadway Live**

Contains some useful information about New York theatre, plus the Broadway Fan Club, which offers discounts and promotions, and Kid's Night On Broadway when a child can go free with every full price ticket purchased.

### Information

### **Ask A New Yorker**

Already has answers to hundreds of questions, but it also enables you to put your own question to genuine New Yorkers (who aren't shy of giving their opinions).

### **Tours:**

#### **Big Apple Greeter**

A free service of friendly volunteers who show visitors (individuals or families) their neighbourhood through the eyes of a New Yorker by foot, subway and bus, with a free 1 day MetroCard thrown in. Advance notice required.

### **Ticket Agent:**

#### **Telecharge**

Has tickets for all Broadway and Off Broadway shows - so that you can book your must see shows before you go - and the minimum service charge.

### **Travel & Hotels**

#### **Hagstrom Map**

Is the place for maps, as they publish over 150 covering everything from neighbourhoods to the entire tri-state area.

#### **hoteldiscount!com**

Allows you to search for bargain rates at dozens of hotels - if you want to stay on the spot, the Theatre District, where most Broadway theatres are located, is the area bounded by 41st/53rd Streets and 6th/8th Avenues.

#### **The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey**

Gives you the options for travelling to Manhattan from the airport. The cheapest way from JFK is to get the free Long Term Parking & Subway shuttle bus (operates 24/7) to the last stop: Howard Beach/JFK Airport subway station, and then it's just a \$2 subway ride - or if you are buying a MetroCard (available from the station) your transport to and from the airport needn't cost you anything at all. Travel time is approximately 60-75 minutes to midtown Manhattan.

#### **MTA**

Runs the subway and bus network. A 1 or 7 day MetroCard (\$7 or \$21) gives you free run of both the subway and buses - and there are often special promotions of discounts on museum entrance or meals.

#### **Theatre District Map**

Will help you orientate yourself.

### **Publications:**

#### **Time Out New York**

The New York edition of the listings magazine is available at certain locations in London - e.g. some WHSmith station shops and Stanfords travel book shop - failing that make it your first purchase on arrival.

### **Recommended hard copy guides:**

Pocket Guide, Berlitz, £4.95 (genuine pocket size)

Eyewitness Travel Guide, Dorling Kindersley, £15.99 (large pocket required)

New York For Less, For Less Guides, £12.95/£9.95 (large or small pocket)

The Backstage Guide to Broadway, Backstage Books, \$12.95 (medium pocket)

For the really committed enthusiast:

Seats: New York - Seating plans to Theatres Concert Halls and Stadiums, Applause Books \$12.95

Stubs: The seating plan guide for New York theatres, music halls and sports stadia, Stubs \$12.95

## **Act II - How To Hit The Ground Running On Arrival**

Make your first stop the Times Square Visitors Center at the Embassy Theatre (1560 Broadway/W 46th-W 47th Streets - next door to the Palace Theatre) open 8am to 8pm seven days a week. This was formerly a movie theatre - the only one in America managed and staffed solely by women. You can get free subway, bus and theatre maps (including one which has the harder to find Off Broadway venues), entertainment and restaurant guides, flyers for all the shows, Broadway Bucks Twofers (two seats for the price of one coupons), School Theatre Tickets Program coupons for shows, other discount vouchers, a list of shows offering Rush Tickets, free tickets for the taping of TV shows (but not David Letterman!) and book regular priced theatre tickets. It runs show TV commercials, and occasionally cast members from musicals drop in and perform numbers from their show. Plus you can book tours, buy stamps, and surf the internet for free (so that you can keep in touch with TheatreNet) - even send e-postcards or email a 10 second video message for free.

Perhaps best of all, the Times Square Visitors Center provides somewhere to sit down while you plan your next move, and free 'restrooms' - which are in short supply in the Theatre District. Other useful restroom options are Bryant Park (W 42nd Street/5th-6th Avenues), and the 8th floor lobby of the Marriott Marquis hotel (1535 Broadway/46th Street), which houses the theatre of the same name. Plus the basement of the Rockefeller Center, Grand Central Station and the Port Authority Bus Station (emergencies only).

The NYC & Co Official Visitor Information Center at 810 7th Avenue (W 52nd-W 53rd Streets) open Monday to Friday 8.30am to 6pm and Saturday/Sunday 9am to 5pm is another great place to find maps, guides and flyers, Hit Show Club Twofers (two seats for the price of one coupons), and you can also book tours.

Hagstrom Map & Travel Center (51 West 43rd Street/5th-6th Avenues) is the place for maps, as they publish over 150 New York maps covering everything from neighbourhoods to the entire tri-state area.

The Hit Show Club Twofers can be collected direct from their office (Room 808, 630 9th Avenue/W 44th-W 45th Streets) between 9am and 4pm Monday - Friday. The building alone is worth a visit for the splendid Art Deco foyer.

Free guides that can be found in hotels contain lots of useful information, maps and discount coupons:

- Official City Guide (weekly)
- City Info (monthly)
- In New York (monthly)
- New York City Travelguide (monthly)
- Quickguide New York (monthly)
- Where New York (monthly)

There is a free fortnightly Official Broadway Theatre Guide, like the London one, which is available from theatre foyers.

AM New York is a free daily newspaper which has entertainment (including NYC4Free) and TV listings and is available at sidewalk stands.

Metro is a similar free daily but with less comprehensive listings.

Time Out New York has theatre listings like the London version, and is particularly good for Off and Off-Off Broadway shows.

The New York Sunday Times is the original multipart Sunday that the London Sunday Times has always aspired to be. The arts section coverage and listing is excellent.

The Village Voice weekly newspaper, free at bookshops and other locations, has a section that lists deals on some of the wackier cultural events taking place, mostly Off Broadway.

New York Press is another free weekly specialising in coverage of fringe events.

The L Magazine is a free fortnightly listings guide of alternative events happening in the downtown neighbourhoods of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

The best way to get cheap tickets is to go to one of the tkts half price booths on the day of performance. These sell Broadway and Off Broadway shows, usually top price seats for half price plus a \$3 service charge (total around \$60 for Broadway shows and \$40 for Off Broadway shows). They take cash or \$ travellers cheques only. Most shows that are not sold out send tickets to the booths. Some shows that are never at the booth in London are available in New York. It's best to arrive an hour before it opens so you'll be at the head of the queue.

It's a good idea to go to the booth in Lower Manhattan, which is now located at the corner of Front and John Streets at South Street Seaport. It attracts fewer people, is open in the morning, and sells Matinee tickets for the following day (unlike the Times Square booth).

To avoid possible confusion, you may see the Times Square booth referred to as Duffy Square. Times Square is formed by the X shaped intersection of Broadway and Seventh Avenue. The correct name for the northern half of the X (W 45th-W 47th Streets) is Duffy Square, and the booth is located on the traffic island there. This booth is open right up to curtain time at 8pm and sometimes has new tickets and/or different shows added from 5pm onwards after the queue has gone. Full details about locations and opening times are on the tkts web site.

Some theatres retain tickets to be sold cheaply (cash only) on the day - Rush Tickets as they are known - and some sell standing places - SRO (Standing Room Only) for sold out shows. Mostly these are for students and seniors but some sell to civilians as well. They usually involve queuing for an hour or two before the box office opens, and some involve a lottery draw. Check at the Times Square Visitors Center and ask at individual theatres for their policy. The Playbill On-Line web site has a reasonably regularly updated listing of shows that offer these concessions.

Theatregoing in New York is a 7 day a week experience. Most Broadway shows play Tuesday to Sunday (Matinee), but some play Monday to Saturday. A few play 2 shows on Sunday, and some Off Broadway shows play late night on Friday and Saturday. Broadway evening performances are at 8pm, with Wednesday and Saturday matinees at 2pm and Sunday matinees usually at 3pm. Some shows are currently taking part in an experiment of starting Tuesday performances at 7pm. Off Broadway times vary, with some shows playing only one or two days a week.

Although it gives its name to the theatre district, the only Broadway theatres actually located on Broadway are the Winter Garden and Broadway theatres - the others are in the streets off Broadway. To make things more confusing, the Duffy Theatre is an Off Broadway theatre located on Broadway.

The distinction between Broadway and Off Broadway is defined not by the location, but by the number of seats, facilities and contract under which its artists and staff are employed. Off Broadway theatres have 100-499 seats, Off Off Broadway less than 100 seats. There are about 50 Off Broadway theatres with seat prices generally about half that of Broadway theatres.

Most Broadway theatres have only two levels, but are wider than those in the West End, with longer rows. The lowest level is the Orchestra - originally the Orchestra Stalls, we shortened it to Stalls, they shortened it to Orchestra. The second level is the Mezzanine or Balcony - our Dress Circle (they don't dress) - so don't be concerned that Balcony seats are top price. This level is sometimes in two separate sections: Front and Rear - this doesn't mean the front and back of the same block of seats.

Don't bother trying to fathom out the American seat numbering system - life is too short. You will always be shown to your seat (just be careful that you can find your way back if you go to the bar in the interval). But if you must, seats are usually arranged so that odd numbers are situated on one side of the auditorium and even numbers on the other, with seats usually numbered from the centre outwards. It's further complicated by the fact that most theatres have two centre aisles and each block is numbered differently. (I told you not to bother).

Although by British standards the seats are expensive, with a top price of \$110 for musicals, plus in many cases a \$1.50 refurbishment fee, (with so far little refurbishment to show for it) at least the Playbill programmes are free.

Be aware that Times Square becomes very crowded immediately prior to curtain up and it can take 20 minutes just to get from 42nd Street to 47th Street. To avoid the crush, you can go all the way over to 8th Avenue, and up that, and then all the way back, but show folk use a short cut. A series of mid block passages - dubbed the Broadway Express - mean that you can avoid the crowds. Take Shubert Alley from 44th to 45th Street, the Marriot Marquis passage to 46th Street, the Edison Hotel Lobby to 47th Street, the Dean Witter passage to 48th Street, and the Crown Plaza carport to 49th Street. In addition you can use the lobby of the Times Square Hilton Hotel from 41st to 42nd Street and the Gershwin Theatre passage from 50th to 51st Street.

No one likes to think about getting sick in a strange city but if it happens, NY Urgent Medical Services (952 5th Avenue/E 76th Street or call 212 737 1212) can help. Day or night, dedicated, board certified physicians

and dentists can assist visitors at their office or in the privacy of your hotel room, with fees and waiting times substantially lower than at hospital emergency rooms.

### **Act III - Free Events**

The Public Theater presents Shakespeare (and others) in Central Park, often with Broadway and Hollywood names, during the summer at the open air Delacorte Theatre. Tickets available on the day of performance at 1pm are free - the queue has been known to start at 7am but 11.30am is a reasonable choice. (Nearest entrance Central Park West/W 81st Street). The company also stages shows all the year round (for which it charges) at its home base at 425 Lafayette Street (W 4th Street-Astor Place) - originally New York's first public library. The venue has five performance spaces, and also presents music and cabaret at Joe's Pub (named after the theatre's founder Joseph Papp) in the same building.

Shakespeare in the Park(ing) Lot is a grittier free outdoor Bard fest, with plays performed in a parking lot on Ludlow Street (Broome Street-Delancey Street) Thursdays to Saturdays at 8pm between June and August.

The Metropolitan Opera and the New York Philharmonic present two different operas and two concert programmes in free open air evening concerts in Central Park and other parks across the five boroughs that make up New York during the summer.

New York Grand Opera (less grand than the name suggests) presents simple but fully staged opera performances at the Naumberg Bandshell in Central Park during the summer.

Central Park SummerStage is a programme of free weekend afternoon concerts, dance, spoken word and entertainment events, also sometimes on weekday evenings, at Rumsey Playfield (nearest entrance 5th Avenue/E 72nd Street) June-August.

New York Classical Theatre stages roving performances of Shakespeare productions in Central Park, starting just inside the entrance at 103rd Street and Central Park West, at 7pm on Thursday to Sunday evenings in June and August.

The Lincoln Center Out Of Doors festival in August presents a free daytime and evening programme of music of all kinds, dance and entertainment on the plazas of the Center (8th Avenue/W 61st-W 64th Streets).

The Winter's Eve at Lincoln Square celebration on the last Monday in November includes a free concert at the Christmas tree lighting ceremony, plus evening restaurant, shopping and entertainment promotions in the area.

The New York Philharmonic holds open rehearsals, usually on Thursday mornings, in the Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center at very low prices.

New York City Opera presents VOX, free performances at various locations showcasing new work by American composers each spring.

Students of the Julliard School of Music give free concerts in Alice Tully Hall on Wednesdays at 1pm, plus other music and dance events in the various halls at Lincoln Center.

Times Square Expose is a free walking tour of the theatre district, describing its history and visiting landmark buildings. Fridays at noon (rain or shine) from the Times Square Visitors Center - register at the information desk. The full tour lasts for about 3 hours, but you can leave early if you flag.

Sidewalk Surprises is a similar tour of the Lincoln Square area on Saturdays at 11am from June to November, starting at the Maine Monument, Merchant's Gate Columbus Circle (W 59th Street/Broadway).

The Village Alliance also offers a free tour of Greenwich Village on Saturdays at 11.30am from May to September, starting at the north west corner of 2nd Avenue and St Marks Place.

Carnegie Hall (154 W 57th Street/7th Avenue) holds workshops and other free events from time to time and entry to its Rose Museum is free daily 11am - 4.30pm.

St Paul's Chapel (209 Broadway/Fulton Street) and its partner Trinity Church (74 Trinity Place Broadway/Wall Street) stage free classical concerts at 1pm on Mondays.

Movement Research is an experimental dance programme staging free performances on Mondays at 8pm at Judson Church (55 Washington Square - Thompson Street-Sullivan Street).

Bargemusic, a concert space created in a converted barge moored at Fulton Ferry Landing in Brooklyn by the Brooklyn Bridge, presents free pot luck chamber music concerts monthly on Saturdays at 1pm.

Shubert Alley (W 44th-W 45th Streets), which runs alongside the Shubert and Booth theatres - where the opening number of *The Producers* is set - is named after the company that owns many Broadway theatres. A plaque above the Shubert stage door dedicates the thoroughfare to "all those who glorify the theatre". In early June, on the Wednesday morning of Theatre Week, which precedes the Tony Awards ceremony, there is an event called Stars In The Alley, when performers from current Broadway musicals take part a free outdoor concert of highlights from their productions. Annual star studded fundraisers are also held there: Broadway Barks is an adopt-a-thon for dogs and cats benefiting animal shelters in on a Saturday in early July. The Flea Market and Grand Auction, with stalls packed with everything from theatrical memorabilia to home made cakes, takes place on the third Sunday in September.

On the Sunday after Labour Day (the first Monday in September) the new Broadway season is launched with Broadway On Broadway, a free concert on a stage constructed in Times Square, with excerpts from the current musicals and sneak previews of upcoming shows. The event is webcast on the Times Square Visitors Center web site.

The Broadway Blessing, an interfaith service usually held on the third Monday evening in September, at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, brings together members of the theatre community to ask for a blessing on the new season, and features songs performed by Broadway artists and the Broadway Blessing Choir.

Broadway performers also join in the Christmas tree lighting ceremony singing carols and Christmas songs near the tkts booth in Times Square between matinee and evening shows on the first Wednesday in December. The tree is decorated with ornaments representing current Broadway and Off Broadway shows and theatres.

Manhattan Theatre Club presents Spring Boards, a free reading series, made up of five plays and one musical at City Center of Music and Dance (131 W 55th Street/6th-7th Avenues) during April, May and June.

Bryant Park (6th Avenue/W 40th-W 42nd Streets) the park running along the back of the New York Public Library is a great lunchtime experience, offering similar free Broadway In Bryant Park events during the summer, with classical and jazz concerts, and dance performances, plus open air evening film performances.

The Winter Garden of the World Financial Center (West Street/Vesey Street-Albany Street) - rather like the Covent Garden Floral Hall on steroids - offers free lunchtime and early evening films, concerts and other entertainments, plus free tours of the building.

In the adjoining Battery Park City there are outdoor poetry readings, cabaret, blues and classical music concerts at various locations from June to September.

Union Square Park has free performances of music, dance and children's storytelling on Wednesday afternoons and evenings during the summer. A free walking tour leaves the Abraham Lincoln Statue every Saturday at 2pm.

The Washington Square Music Festival presents free outdoor classical and jazz concerts in July.

The Hudson River Park (Hudson River - Battery Place-W 59th Street) is the setting for free open air film shows - they even have free popcorn - on Wednesdays at Pier 54 and Fridays at Pier 27, plus concerts, barbeques and fireworks during July and August.

Brooklyn Bridge Park (East River/Water Street, Brooklyn) also offers free open air films at dusk on Thursday nights during July and August, under the Gothic span of the bridge with the Manhattan skyline in the background.

The East River Music Project offers free rock concerts on the last Saturday afternoons in the month from May to August in the 1,000 capacity East River Amphitheatre (East River/600 Grand Street).

Ice Theatre of New York performs free shows at Bryant Park, Rockefeller Centre and Riverbank State Park between November and April.

Some of the larger museums and galleries have music evenings that can be enjoyed at no extra cost (or coincide with free entry times): Guggenheim - Fridays and Saturdays 5pm-8pm (free entrance Fridays 6pm-8pm); American Museum of Natural History Planetarium - Fridays 5.45pm-8.15pm; Whitney Museum of American Art - Thursdays 6pm-9pm (free entrance Thursdays 6pm-8pm), Metropolitan Museum of Art - Fridays and Saturdays 4pm-8.30pm, The Frick Collection - Sundays at 5pm also lectures Wednesdays at 6pm (free entrance to events only). Some have movie nights where admission is included in the entry price.

During the Museum Mile Festival on the second Tuesday evening in June, the nine museums offer free entry, and 5th Avenue is closed to traffic from 82nd to 104th Street and given over to live bands, musicians and street entertainers.

Many branches of the New York Public Library service offer a free film show on one (or more) afternoon or evening every week, and have programmes of talks and discussions on a wide variety of topics.

The Donnell Library Center (20 W 53rd Street/5th-6th Avenues) has on display Christopher Robin's actual Pooh, Piglet, Eeyore, Kanga and Tigger - the original stuffed animals that inspired A A Milne to write the books. It also stages Songbook, a series of free concert performances of new musicals by up and coming writers, and other events.

The Cooper Union (Cooper Square 8th Street/Bowery-Third Avenue) offers free lectures on a wide range of subjects, held in the splendid surroundings of its Great Hall.

The City University of New York has an extensive programme of performing arts and film events at its various locations, many of which are free.

There is a free light show, choreographed to seasonal music, projected on to the famous sky ceiling and walls of the main concourse at Grand Central Terminal (42nd Street/Park Avenue) every half hour from 11am to 9pm each day from mid November to the end of December.

The Citigroup Center (153 East 53rd Street/Lexington Avenue) features The Station, a huge free model railway installation featuring 30 trains in its atrium, from late November to the end of December.

Open House New York allows the public free access to architecturally interesting but usually private buildings across the city, including theatres and performance related spaces, on the second weekend in October.

Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade (Central Park West W 77th Street to Columbus Circle, then Broadway to Macy's at W 34th Street) is the world's greatest street parade bar none - real street theatre. 9am on Thanksgiving Day (the 4th Thursday in November). Less crowded and good fun is to watch the giant inflatables being assembled the evening before on Central Park West.

More informal is the Easter Parade (5th Avenue between W 49th and W 57th Streets) from 11am on Easter Sunday.

New York's Village Halloween Parade (Sixth Avenue from Spring Street to W 23rd Street) is a much wilder affair, as befits its Greenwich Village origins and location, at 7pm on 31st October.

Similarly The Mermaid Parade in Coney Island (Surf Avenue from W 15th Street to W 10th Street) is a return to the 'kiss me quick' roots of its 1920s heyday as New York's man in the street recreation option. 2pm on the first Saturday after the summer solstice.

There are Seaside Summer Concerts on Thursday evenings during July and August at Asser Levy Seaside Park in Coney Island (West 5th Street/Surf Avenue opposite New York Aquarium).

Macy's Fireworks Display is the highlight of Independence Day, as \$1m goes up in smoke in the world's biggest display, from four barges in the East River between 23rd and 42nd Streets, at 9pm on 4th July. New York Fire Department joins in shooting red, clear and blue water 300ft over the river, and the musical accompaniment can be heard on 1010 WINS radio.

Times Square is where America celebrates New Year. Events start at 6pm and include a live show with music, pyrotechnics and 2 tons of confetti, culminating in the 6ft crystal, mirror and light ball descending the 77ft flagpole above One Times Square, as it has done since 1907.

Complementing this is Solstice In Times Square celebrating the longest day in June, with day long programmes of activities on the day itself - 21st June - and the nearest Sunday, including music and street performance.

There is a time honoured way of seeing Broadway shows for free, taken by the great Broadway writer and director Moss Hart, as admitted in his autobiography Act One, and that is to hang around outside a theatre at intermission (they don't have intervals) and then go in with the audience when they return, and find an empty seat. Legally and morally wrong, and of course I couldn't possibly condone it - just watch out for the eagle eyed front of house staff. By the way, as some theatregoers discard their Playbill programmes (presumably because they didn't pay for them) and there are often piles left at the rear of the orchestra, and since most exit doors open directly onto the street, it is possible to dodge in at the end of a show and pick one up. Armed with one of these, you would look more authentic 'returning' at the end of the interval some other night.

You may rub shoulders with the 'gypsies' (chorus members) after the show on the subway - the stars tend to have cars - at the Times Square station, entering from the corner of Broadway/W 42nd Street, particularly if you 'hover' between the two staircases that lead to the uptown/downtown 1/2/3 trains between 10.30pm and 11.15pm (depending on what time the show comes down). And Finally... Check out the young lady who regularly plays the musical saw at Union Square subway station on the interchange level with the L train.

## **Act IV - Legends & Myths**

There is a long running debate as to why Broadway is known as 'The Great White Way'. Some say it is in honour of impresario George White, who mounted some of its earliest extravaganzas. Others say that it refers to the installation of electric street lights in the 1880s, which made it glow white at night. It is also claimed that outdoor advertising executive O J Gude, responsible for the first flashing light bulb sign in Times Square in 1905 coined the phrase.

Forbidden Broadway at the 47th Street Theatre (304 W 47th Street/8th-9th Avenues) has been poking fun at Broadway for 20 years. Continually reinventing itself, it is a revue that presents wicked parodies of shows and showbiz personalities, both current and old favourites.

The Radio City Christmas Spectacular is one of the wonders of the world, featuring not only the 36 Rockettes performing their Parade of the Wooden Soldiers routine, but a Nativity scene finale with real animals, including a donkey, sheep and camels.

The Jazz At Lincoln Center programme in the new Time Warner building at Columbus Circle, has three spaces: a lyric concert hall the Rose Theater, the nightclub style Dizzy's Club, and the Allen Room, an amphitheatre with a stunning 50ft by 90ft glass wall overlooking Central Park at the rear of the stage.

Theatre Row (W 42nd Street/9th-10th Avenues) is made up by a group of Off Broadway venues, which include: the new home of Playwrights Horizons, the company dedicated solely to the creation and production of new American plays and musicals; the Little Shubert Theatre, the first Off Broadway venture of the Shubert Organization, owner of 17 Broadway theatres; and the Theatre Row building itself, which comprises 5 theatres and rehearsal studios.

The New Victory Theater (209 W 42nd Street), the first building restored as part of the Times Square regeneration programme, specialises in children's theatre.

City Center of Music and Dance (131 W 55th Street/6th-7th Avenues) is an ornate Moorish style building that was originally a Masonic temple. Once home to New York City Opera and Ballet (before they moved to the Lincoln Center), it is now a venue for dance companies such as Mark Morris and Alvin Ailey, houses the Manhattan Theatre Club, and also hosts the Encores! forgotten American musicals in concert series (which spawned the current production of Chicago) each spring, and the Fall For Dance Festival, which features 30 companies performing every kind of dance over six nights, with tickets at just \$10.

Bargemusic, an intimate concert space with 125 seats, created in a converted barge moored at Fulton Ferry Landing in Brooklyn by the Brooklyn Bridge, presents chamber music concerts every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons, with views of Lower Manhattan behind the performers.

The Manhattan Theatre Club, a not for profit company dedicated to the production of contemporary plays and musicals, recently restored the historic but long derelict Biltmore Theatre (261 W 47th Street) where Hair first played, as its Broadway home.

The Joyce Theater (175 8th Avenue/W 19th Street) is a more intimate venue, created in an Art Deco former movie house, which presents small and medium scale dance companies.

Roundabout Theatre Company presents limited run revivals of classic plays and musicals and new work by established writers. It is housed in the refurbished Selwyn Theatre - sadly now re-christened the American Airlines Theatre (227 W 42nd Street). This lies within a complex called the New 42nd Street Studios which houses a studio theatre, rehearsal studios and office space for performing arts companies. The company also has a lease on Studio 54 (524 W 54th Street) the famous/infamous '70s disco as a further showcase for its productions.

New World Stages, an Off Broadway theatre complex (340 W 50th Street/8th-9th Avenue), created from an underground film multiplex, contains five performance spaces, ranging in size from 199 to 499 seats. Broadway theatre producer and operator Dodger Stage Holding funded the venture as a well resourced and comfortable centre within the theatre district where new works in all the performing arts can be launched.

The Nokia Theatre is a new state of the art 2100 capacity rock concert venue, which has been created from the former Loews Astor Plaza movie theatre in the Viacom/MTV building at 1515 Broadway, on the corner of Broadway and 44th Street.

The Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre in Central Park, just south of the Delacorte Theater (W 79th Street/West Drive - nearest entrance Central Park West/W 81st Street) presents a programme of original productions based on classic fairy tales, in the wooden building originally constructed as Sweden's pavilion at the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia.

If you are adventurous enough to leave Manhattan, the Brooklyn Academy of Music (30 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn) is the New York equivalent of Sadler's Wells - the premier venue for visiting drama, opera and dance companies.

The American Theatre Wing presents seminars with actors, directors, producers, authors, choreographers, and designers under the title Working In The Theatre at the Elebash Recital Hall in the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (365 5th Avenue/W 34th Street) on Thursdays at noon.

The mystery thriller Perfect Crime, the story of a psychiatrist's wife accused of murdering her wealthy but unwell husband, is now in its 18th year at the Duffy Theater - the Off Broadway theatre that is actually located on Broadway at number 11627. It stars Catherine Russell, who has missed only 4 performances out of over 5,000, and is also general manager - taking tickets and looking after running the theatre (this is Off Broadway after all).

The longest-running play in Off Off-Broadway history is Israel Horovitz's Line, now in its 33rd year at the 13th Street Rep, about five people as they wait in a line with no apparent purpose.

The York Theatre Company (The Theatre at St Peter's, Citicorp Center, 619 Lexington Avenue/54th Street) specialises in small scale musicals and regularly stages free showcases of new work.

Food For Thought Productions presents Lunch Hour Theatre, comprising a one act play, sandwich lunch and discussion with the participants (often famous names), plus monthly Cocktail Hour Theatre, at the historic National Arts Club (15 Gramercy Park South/E 20th Street).

The Blue Man Group at the Astor Theatre (434 Lafayette Street/W 4th Street-Astor Place) in which three blue bald headed men present an extraordinary visual multimedia performance, has become a must see event.

Ellen's Stardust Diner (1650 Broadway/W 51st Street), which looks like a '50s red subway car, features singing waiters and a nightly cabaret.

Tony N' Tina's Wedding (St Luke's Church, 308 W 28th Street/6th-7th Avenues) is an interactive comedy experience. Tony has been marrying Tina nightly since 1988 - you can join the service and reception, and try to figure out who are the actors and who are the "real" people. Buffet included.

Carolines on Broadway (1626 Broadway/W 49th Street) is the number 1 stand up comedy venue, open 7 nights a week, including late shows.

Chicago City Limits (1105 1st Avenue/61st Street) is the premier improvisational comedy venue.

The Town Hall (123 W 43rd Street/6th Avenue-Broadway) hosts meetings, lectures, films, music and dance performances.

The Supper Club (240 W 47th Street/Broadway-8th Avenue) presents dinner, show and dancing with a '40s style big band in the historic ballroom and theatre of the Edison Hotel from 5.30pm-4am on Friday and Saturday nights.

Seth's Broadway Chatterbox, in which pit pianist Seth Rudetsky interviews and accompanies performances by Broadway stars, is held on Thursdays at 6pm at Don't Tell Mama (343 W 46th Street/8th-9th Avenues) piano bar and cabaret venue.

The Algonquin Hotel (59 W 44th Street), whose Rose Room was home to Dorothy Parker and the Round Table of writers in the 1920s, still presents cabaret in the Oak Room.

The Jekyll & Hyde Club (1409 6th Avenue/57th-58th Streets) "an old enchanted mansion full of eccentric and mysterious characters" offers thrills and chills along with the food.

Murdered By The Mob is a mafia style interactive murder mystery dinner theatre experience at Arno Restaurant (141 W 38th Street/Broadway-7th Avenue) on Friday and Saturday nights.

The 92nd Street Y (Lexington Avenue/92nd Street) is a cultural legend, hosting a diverse programme of concerts, dance, lectures, discussions, readings, performances and walking tours, which are remarkably cheap and some even free.

The Drama Center is a new theatre company established at the West Side YMCA (5 W 63rd Street/Broadway-Central Park West) associated with the Writer's Voice programme, whose aim is to develop and produce new plays and musicals.

They Gypsy Of The Year Competition features New York's 'gypsies' (chorus members from Broadway and Off-Broadway shows) in an annual charity fundraising competitive variety show, usually on a Monday and Tuesday afternoon in late November or early December.

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, at Lincoln Center (40 Lincoln Center Plaza - 8th Avenue/W 61st-W 64th Streets), which at over 9 million items and growing, contains the biggest collection of theatre books, designs, recordings and memorabilia in the world, including the archives of producer Billy Rose and choreographer Jerome Robbins. It stages exhibitions, readings, recitals, talks and performances, which are usually free.

If you queue at the tkts booth in Times Square you will see statues of Broadway composer George M Cohan of "Give My Regards To Broadway" fame, and the priest 'Fighting' Father Duffy, both played on film by James Cagney.

The Palace Theatre (1564 Broadway) the New York equivalent of the London Palladium, the country's foremost variety theatre, has a display of memorabilia from its illustrious past on the 2nd (our 1st) floor.

The Museum of the City of New York (1220 5th Avenue/W 103rd Street) has a permanent exhibition about Broadway theatre, including costumes and props from original productions of famous shows, previous Gypsy robes (the decorated dressing gown passed from musical to musical) and a temporary display about a featured show, writer or performer.

## **Act V - Curiosa & Locales**

Sightseeing is mostly free (although you may spend money in the shops).

You can take a harbour cruise for free - the Staten Island Ferry no longer has any charge - and you can come straight back if you want to (Staten Island Ferry Terminal Battery Park). Look out on the left for Castle Williams the circular stone fortress on Governor's Island. There are plans to turn into a Globe style theatre with the participation of architect Norman Foster. A free ferry will take you there on Fridays and Saturdays from June to September.

Similarly a subway ride across the East River on the J, M or Z lines across the Williamsburg Bridge, or the B, D, N or Q lines across the Manhattan Bridge, provides a wonderful vista of the Manhattan skyline by day or night.

If you buy a MetroCard for subway travel, you can make up your own 'hop on hop off' tour for free, as it includes bus travel too, and three key routes take in most of the main sights: M1 East Harlem to Battery Park, on the east side via Museum Mile, Grand Central/Chrysler Building and Union Square; M5 Washington Heights to West Houston Street, on the west side via Lincoln Center, Rockefeller Center and Madison Square; and M104 Harlem to United Nations, along Broadway and 42nd Street via Lincoln Center, Times Square and Grand Central/Chrysler Building. Bear in mind that because of the one way traffic system, depending on the direction of travel, the route may be a block away from the sights.

It's a fascinating experience to Walk Broadway. Starting from Battery Park in Lower Manhattan and travelling uptown, Broadway forms the east/west boundary between many of the famous districts - Financial and Civic, TriBeCa and Chinatown, Soho and Little Italy, East and West Greenwich Village, Chelsea/Flat Iron and Gramercy Park, Garment and Murray Hill, passing through Union Square and Herald Square (home of Macy's) on the way. It then forms the heart of the Theatre District, passing through Times Square, leading to Central Park and the Lincoln Centre, and up to the arts enclave around W 72nd Street in the Upper West Side. Best not attempted all in one go though.

Alternatively you can take the cross town River To River walk along 42nd Street. Starting off at the East River, with views of the United Nations, you pass the enclave of Tudor City (a sort of Oxford on stilts), the NYC icons of the Chrysler Building, Grand Central, New York Public Library and Times Square, the regenerated 'New 42nd Street' entertainment centre between 7th and 8th Avenues, Off Broadway's heart in Theater Row between 9th and 10th Avenues, and end at the Hudson River with the Circle Line Tour pier - views of the USS Intrepid, with Concorde on a pontoon alongside are suspended until 2008 while it is being refurbished.

If you do nothing else, walk down Broadway from Columbus Circle to Times Square after dark (taking the left hand sidewalk) - you'll be glad you did.

As you go around keep an eye out for street names. There are many individual blocks of the rather anonymous numbered streets and avenues that are named in honour of show folk, such Rogers and Hammerstein Row and Fred Astaire Way.

Theatre Alley (Ann-Beekman Streets) near City Hall shows no remaining signs of its 19th century origins as the heart of New York theatreland. It was made the city's first one way street because of the congestion created by all the carriages dropping off theatregoers at the Park Theatre. What appear to be original theatre signs are actually from a recent film shoot there.

The restored clock below the globe on top of 1501 Broadway at the lower end of Times Square, which has stars instead of numerals, gives a warning chime of "Give My Regards To Broadway" prior to curtain time at 7.45pm each evening, and at 1.45pm on matinee days. The building houses a number of press and artist's agents, and other creative, production and management companies.

The Lyceum Theater (149 W 45th Street) dating from 1903 is the oldest surviving Broadway theatre still in use (although infrequently). It was built for producer David Froman who had an apartment at the top of the building, with a trap door looking down over the stage.

The Winter Garden Theatre (1634 Broadway) was formerly the American Horse Exchange in the 19th century when Times Square, then Long Acre Square, was the centre of New York's coaching trade.

At the top of the stairs in the lobby of the Gershwin Theater (222 W 51st Street) is the Theater Hall of Fame, with plaques commemorating Broadway stars and creatives - each year a few new names are inducted. A display of memorabilia is located nearby.

Embedded in the sidewalk outside the Helen Hayes Theatre (240 W 44th Street) - not the original that was torn down some years ago - there are the star's autographed brass shoe prints of her tiny feet.

The art nouveau Belasco Theatre (111 W 44th Street/Broadway-6th Avenue) is rumoured to be haunted by the impresario who built it, David Belasco.

Al Hirschfeld, the legendary show business caricaturist, received the ultimate tribute from the Broadway theatre community on the 100th anniversary of his birth, when the Martin Beck Theatre (W 45th Street/8th-9th Avenues) was renamed the Al Hirschfeld Theatre. It has an exhibition of Hirschfeld's work in the Mezzanine bar. Nice for him, but a shame that Martin Beck, the theatrical producer who built the spectacular Byzantine style theatre (check out the stained glass doors to the Orchestra) - had to lose the honour. Beck's name can still be seen on the display frames at the front of the building.

Second Stage Theatre (307 W 43rd Street/8th-9th Avenues) designed by Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas is in the former State Street Bank building. The box office is located in the former vault, the door of which remains.

The Beacon Theater (2124 Broadway/W 75th Street) was built as a movie palace, but is now a concert venue. Its interior is a designated landmark.

Playwrights Sidewalk, in front of the Lucille Lortel Theatre (12 Christopher Street) celebrates Off Broadway writers with their names in Hollywood Boulevard style stars.

The foyer of the AMC Embassy cinema complex (234 W 42nd Street//7th-8th Avenues) is what was the auditorium of the Eltinge Theatre which was moved 50 yards along the street to its present position as part of the New Times Square regeneration programme.

The lobby of the Times Square Hilton Hotel (234 W 42nd Street/7th-8th Avenues), which runs between W 42nd and W 41st Streets, contains photographs of old Broadway theatre interiors.

The passage that runs behind the Marriott Marquis hotel between 45th and 46th Streets has a 20ft high 107ft long photomural spanning its entire length featuring Broadway dance legends - sadly currently obscured by a hording for The Drowsy Chaperone.

The Miller Building at 1552 Broadway (W 46th Street) once housed "The Show Folk's Shoe Shop", but four statues of Mary Pickford, Ethel Barrymore, Rosa Ponselle and Marilyn Miller are all that remain.

The Times Square Hotel 255 W 43rd Street (Broadway-8th Avenue), a low rent residential hotel for actors and artists, has a splendid Louis XV style foyer, with a gold angel flanked by cherubs that were salvaged from a demolished theatre.

MTV New York Studios are in Viacom/MTV building at 1515 Broadway, on the corner of Broadway and 44th Street, where you may bump into rock stars on their way in to perform (or more likely groups of teenagers waiting to see them).

The Actors Equity Building (165 W 46th Street) - actually above the Times Square Macdonalds - may be a place to spot stars, while The League of American Theatres and Producers in the Theatre Guild Building (226 W 47th Street) is the place to find a producer. The legendary impresario David Merrick and Cameron Mackintosh both had offices there.

You may also spot stars rehearsing or taking classes at the New Dance Group Arts Center (254 W 47th Street/Broadway-8th Avenue) or the Broadway Dance Center (221 W 57th Street (Broadway-7th Avenue)).

If you want to put on a show, two of the major theatre owning and producing companies are based in their theatres, the Shubert Organisation in the Shubert Theatre (225 W 44th Street), and Jujamcyn - named after the founder James Binger's children: Ju(dith), Jam(es), and Cyn(thia) - in the St James Theatre (246 W 44th Street), while the Nederlander Organisation has offices in 1450 Broadway/W 41st Street and Dodger Stage Holdings is based at 230 West 41st Street (7th-8th Avenues).

You can take a self-guided tour of the Art Deco masterpiece Rockefeller Center for free - just pick up a map in the main lobby of the GE Building 30 Rockefeller Plaza (49th-50th Streets). At Christmas in Rockefeller Plaza you can see the biggest Christmas tree in the world and the skaters beneath it.

Verdi Square (Broadway/W 72nd Street) contains a statue of composer Giuseppe Verdi.

The original home of the Fame school - New York High School Of Performing Arts (120 W 46th Street/6th-7th Avenues) which was its location at the time the film and television series were made, is still in use as the Jacqueline Onassis Overseas High School, although the school has since moved to the Lincoln Centre area. Filming was actually done elsewhere as the school refused permission for it to be used as a location.

The Chelsea Hotel (222 W 23rd Street/7th-8th Avenues) has many artistic connections, commemorated in brass plaques on its facade. Dylan Thomas spent his last years there - and drinking at the White Horse Tavern (567 Hudson Street/11th Street) - Arthur Miller wrote *After The Fall* and *The Price* there, Arthur C Clarke wrote *2001 A Space Odyssey* there, and Allen Ginsberg, Mark Twain and Tennessee Williams also lived there.

St Malachy's Catholic Church/The Actor's Chapel (239 W 49th Street/Broadway-8th Avenue) in the heart of the Theatre District is a church often attended by performers.

Two blocks up Broadway, the Times Square Church (W 51st Street/Broadway-8th Avenue) is housed in what was until 1994 the Mark Hellinger Theater - named after the critic - where *My Fair Lady* premiered.

Downtown, the Little Church Around The Corner (1 E 29th Street/5th-Madison Avenues) - featured in *Sex And The City* - has had links with the theatre community since 1870 and is the home of the Episcopal Actors Guild. It contains memorial windows and plaques to several theatre figures, including P G Wodehouse, and holds free lunchtime concerts at 12.30pm on Tuesdays.

Green-Wood Cemetery (25th Street/5th Avenue Sunset Park, Brooklyn) is the final resting place of many of New York's finest, including P T Barnum, Leonard Bernstein and Mae West.

Less well known that the legendary Macys, the Christmas window displays at Lord & Taylor (424 5th Avenue/W 38th-W 39th Streets), a tradition since 1938, feature complex animated scenes that are claimed to be the most spectacular in the world - worthy of Disneyland.

## **Act VI - Tours, Shopping & Eating**

Various theatres run backstage tours (for which there is a charge):

Lincoln Center (8th Avenue/W 61st-W 64th Streets) - which houses the Metropolitan Opera House, New York State Theater (home of New York City Ballet and New York City Opera), Lincoln Center Theatre (comprising Vivian Beaumont and Mitzi E Newhouse Theaters), Avery Fisher Hall (home of the New York Philharmonic), Alice Tully Hall and Walter Reade Theater, offers 3 different tours: Classic, Art & Architecture and Piano Forte.

Carnegie Hall (154 W 57th Street/7th Avenue) - the premier classical music venue. How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice!

Hilton Theatre (320 W 43rd Street) - a new theatre created on the site of (and using architectural features from) the Lyric and Apollo theatres.

New Amsterdam (214 W 42nd Street) - formerly home of the Ziegfeld Follies, and recently restored as home for *The Lion King*, has fantastic art nouveau plasterwork.

Radio City Music Hall (Rockefeller Center 6th Avenue/W 50th Street) - an art deco theatre on the grandest scale, again recently restored. This tour can also be combined with the participatory Rockette Experience Master Class.

NBC Studios (Rockefeller Center 49th Street/5th-6th Avenues) - a look behind the scenes of New York's major television production centre.

Apollo Theatre (253 W 125th Street/7th-8th Avenues) - the legendary Harlem variety and music venue built in 1913. It still features an amateur night every Wednesday if you want to tread the boards.

Madison Square Garden (7th Avenue/W 32nd Street) - includes a theatre as well as the sports arena.

At the Gershwin Theatre (222 W 51st Street) the spectacular musical Wicked runs a Behind The Emerald Curtain tour on Saturdays at 10am in which two cast members reveal some of the secrets of its creation with an exhibition of original costumes and props.

On Location Tours runs four different tours of locations used in the filming of TV series and movies: The Sopranos, Sex And The City, Manhattan TV & Movie (Friends, NYPD Blue, Seinfeld) and Central Park Movie.

Inside CNN is a 50 minute tour of the news channel's new studio complex on 3rd floor, Time Warner Center, Columbus Circle, departing every 20 minutes from 9.30am to 5pm daily.

Walkin Broadway is a self guided tour audio tour that brings the history, architecture, music, and backstage stories of Broadway theatres to life, with the voices of over twenty five legendary theatre personalities. Available from the Colony Record & Music Center (1618 Broadway/W 48th Street).

Broadway Open House Tours, run by the League of American Theatres and Producers is a two hour walking tour of the theatre district including access to at least two theatre interiors, departing from the Times Square Visitors Center on Wednesday, Friday and Saturdays at 10am costing \$25.

The Greenwich Village Literary Pub Crawl visits the watering holes frequented by legendary Village writers, guided by actors from the New Ensemble Theatre Company, who perform pieces from the authors works. Saturdays at 2pm starting at the White Horse Tavern (567 Hudson Street/11th Street).

Manhattan Movie Memories is a walking tour that visits more than 16 sites associated with films. Saturdays and Sundays at 1pm. Call Gotham Walks for details of the meeting place: 212 629 1886.

The Municipal Art Society runs an extensive architecture based programme of tours around historical and landmark buildings and neighbourhoods, led by professional architects and urban historians, weekdays and weekends.

Big Onion Walking Tours, in association with the New York Historical Society, runs tours most days starting at 1pm, including a Times Square tour every week.

Broadway New York runs four of the best theatre memorabilia/book shops:

One Shubert Alley (346 W 44th Street) in the alley running alongside the Shubert and Booth Theatres is the best known name, but curiously the smallest.

Theatre Circle (268 W 44th Street) is the best for books and music.

Broadway NY (1535 Broadway/W 45th Street) has the most merchandise.

Gotham Gifts (210 W 45th Street) also has general New York and discount gifts.

The Drama Bookshop (250 W 40th Street/7th-8th Avenues) open Monday-Saturday 10am-8pm and Sunday noon-6pm, houses 40,000 theatrical titles. One of the great resources of the world, it is a theatre practitioner's favourite - you never know who you might bump into while you're there. It has a performance space on its lower floor and stages regular free events with writers, playwrights, actors and teachers.

Samuel French, the publisher and performance licensing company, have a bookshop in their offices at 45 West 25th Street (Broadway/6th Avenue) - don't be put off by the fact that it is an office building.

The Margo Feiden Galleries (699 Madison Avenue/E 62nd-E 63rd Streets) is run by the agent of caricaturist Al Hirschfeld, and his original drawings, paintings, etchings and lithographs are on permanent exhibition and for sale.

Triton Gallery (Suite 808, Film Center, 630 9th Avenue/W 44th-W 45th Streets) is a theatre poster shop with new and vintage selections at realistic prices.

La Belle Epoque (280 Columbus Avenue/73rd Street) has around 3,000 authentic Art Nouveau and Art Deco theatre, opera, circus and magic posters from around the world - but the prices mean it's a "look" rather than "buy" destination.

Posteritati (241 Centre Street/Broome-Greene Streets) has a wide selection of original movie posters, although again not cheap.

Music Row (W 48th Street/6th-7th Avenues) is a group of speciality instrument, repair and sheet music shops, of which Sam Ash (160 W 48th Street) is probably the most famous, and offers discount prices. Again you might rub some famous shoulders here.

Matt Umanov Guitars (273 Bleeker Street/6th-7th Avenues) in Greenwich Village is the place for vintage guitars, frequented by both collectors and professionals.

Colony Record & Music Center (1618 Broadway/W 48th Street) is a sheet music and record treasure trove, and Broadway institution. It is located in the Brill Building, which housed many music publishers, songwriters and arrangers in the days of Tin Pan Alley, and whose brass and mirror foyer at 1619 Broadway is worth a look.

Halloween Adventure (104 4th Avenue/11th-12th Streets) is an Aladdin's cave of costumes, make up, wigs, and magic that lives up to its slogan "Masters Of Masquerade".

Abracadabra Superstore (19 W 21st Street/5th-6th Avenues) is a similar treasure trove where a visit is an entertainment in itself.

Fantasma Magic (421 7th Avenue (2nd floor) at W 33rd Street) is a treasure trove of magic tricks, optical illusions and juggling supplies, with free classes for 7-14 year olds and a lecture programme for adults.

Village Comics (112 W 3rd Street/6th Avenue-MacDougal Street) features an astonishing collection of comic, film and pop ephemera, original artwork, action figures, models and collectables. It shares premises with Bleeker Bob's Records, which specialises in rare records and CDs of all genres - including soundtracks.

Capezio Dance-Theater Shop (1650 Broadway/W 51st Street) - on the 2nd (our 1st) floor - has a wide range of shoes, dance clothes and streetwear, in what was once Irving Berlin's office.

ActorCrafts is a one day fair of paintings, photographs, sculpture, clothing, jewellery, dolls, cards and other items, all made by theatre folk in their spare time, together with theatre memorabilia and even food. The fair is held twice a year, featuring around 40 exhibitors, usually at the Holy Cross School Gymnasium (332 W 43rd Street/8th-9th Avenues) and admission is free.

If you want to keep in touch with the outside world, Universal News at 1586 Broadway (W 47th-48th Streets) and 234 42nd Street (Broadway-8th Avenue) carries newspapers and magazines from all over the world.

There must be more restaurants, diners and delis in Manhattan than anywhere else on earth. Restaurants cover all cuisines and budgets, generally diners and delis offer huge portions of good basic food at very reasonable prices.

Restaurant Row (W 46th Street/8th-9th Avenues) is the most famous area, with 23 restaurants, including the original Joe Allen and Orso, housed in Manhattan Brownstones - former houses.

Sardi's (234 W 44th Street/7th-8th Avenues) is the legendary theatre restaurant where many a first night party has been held, and the notices have been nervously awaited. The walls are adorned by Al Herschfeld caricatures of Broadway stars. Not really a budget venue.

Delis are a New York institution, and some of the most famous are:

Leo Lindy's (825 7th Avenue/W 53rd Street) which appeared barely disguised as Mindy's in Guys And Dolls. No longer at its original location next door to the Winter Garden Theatre, but still serving huge club sandwiches named in honour of show folk, and the best cheesecake in the world.

Stage Deli (834 7th Avenue/W 53rd-54th Streets) has been popular with show people for 60 years, many of whose photographs adorn the walls, and shares many of the qualities (and portion sizes) of Leo Lindy's.

Carnegie Deli (854 7th Avenue/W 54th-55th Streets) allegedly Jackie Mason's favourite. Choose the Ruben (a cheese/sauerkraut/pastrami combination the size of a bowler hat) and you will definitely need a doggie bag. Note Carnegie doesn't take credit cards.

Katz's Deli (205 E Houston Street/Ludlow Street) was the location for the famous scene in When Harry Met Sally. Grab a ticket at the door, choose one of the practitioners behind the long counter, and order "what she's having".

Hello Deli (213 West 53rd Street/Broadway-8th Avenue) whose owner Rupert Jee has featured in gags on the Late Show with David Letterman, which is taped in the Ed Sullivan Theatre, on the same block.

John's Pizza (260 W 44th Street/7th-8th Avenues) is located in a former cathedral built in the 1880s that retains stained glass windows and ceiling.

Smiths Bar and Restaurant (701 8th Avenue/W 44th Street) is a traditional diner - it's even painted the correct shade of green - and winner of the Best Breakfast In Manhattan Award. It features Jazz on Wednesday evenings.

Broadway Joe Steakhouse (315 W 46th Street/8th-9th Avenues) has been a showbiz favourite for 50 years, boasting a 20ft Wall of Fame mural celebrating over 150 Broadway celebrities in the bar, and more Al Herschfeld caricatures.

The Russian Tea Room, (145 W 57th Street) almost next door to Carnegie Hall, featured in the film Tootsie amongst others, which closed down in 2002, has been reopened, thankfully its lavish theatrical decor remains entirely in tact.

The Polish Tea Room, as the Cafe Edison coffee shop in the Edison Hotel (228 W 47th Street/Broadway-8th Avenue) is known, is a budget priced rendezvous for showbiz types, and includes a VIP area for producers and theatre owners. Neil Simon's play 45 Seconds From Broadway was set there.