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The Best of the Big Apple

New York is the concentrate of art and commerce and sport and religion and entertainment and finance, bringing to a single compact arena the gladiator, the evangelist, the promoter, the actor, the trader and the merchant. It carries on its lapel the unexpungeable odor of the long past, so that no matter where you sit in New York you feel the vibrations of great times and tall deeds, of queer people and events and undertakings.

New York is nothing like Paris; it is nothing like London; and it is not Spokane multiplied by sixty, or Detroit multiplied by four. It is by all odds the loftiest of cities.

—E.B. White

Novelist and essayist E.B. White wrote these words in 1948; and in the 56 years since then, his description of New York remains accurate. And though the grandeur and importance of New York has not changed, New York is constantly changing. Restaurants and nightclubs become trendy overnight, and then die under the weight of their own popularity. (As the philosopher Yogi Berra said: “Nobody goes there anymore; it’s too crowded.”) Broadway shows, exercise fads, city politics, even neighborhoods are all subject to the same Big Apple fickleness.

But within this ebb and flow lies the answer to why we New Yorkers persist in loving our city so, despite the high rents, the noise, the crowds, the cab drivers who don’t know Lincoln Center from the Lower East Side, and the more stark realities of high-security-alert days and living in the shadow of great tragedy. Nowhere else is the challenge so tough, the pace so relentless, the stimuli so ever changing and insistent—and the payoff so rewarding. It is why we go on; it is why we proudly persist in living our vibrant lives here.

Come witness New York’s resilience for yourself—it’s reason enough to visit.

1 How This Guide Can Save You Money

New York City is perpetually short on space and overflowing with people. It’s a situation that turns the economy of supply and demand in the seller’s favor, with vendors charging what the market will bear. The result has been stratospheric prices, some of the highest in the country. If you’re used to getting a simple, comfortable motel room for \$60 or so, get set for a shock.

That’s the bad news—but there’s plenty of good news, too. You *can* stay

in New York City comfortably, eat well, and see and do everything you want without blowing your budget. There are plenty of great deals for the intrepid traveler who knows where to look for value and discounts. And there are more travel and hotel bargains now than there have been in years—if you know where to look.

You’ve already taken the first step: buying this book. I’ve done the initial legwork, scouring the city and loading

On New York

The only credential the city asked was the boldness to dream. For those who did, it unlocked its gates and its treasures, not caring who they were and where they came from.

—Moss Hart

the pages that follow with money-saving advice, the top values and bargains, and the kind of New York travel know-how that comes only with years of research and experience.

Accommodations will be your biggest hurdle, although visitors have regained their bargaining power in the post-9/11 world. Every other aspect of New York is manageable if you look before you leap, which is how regular New Yorkers manage. The city tends to snag people who, exhausted, sit down at the first restaurant they see and end up with a huge bill—or those who stumble into a chic boutique to buy a souvenir that can be had for a fraction of the price with a little effort. Keep an eye on the goal, and you'll see New York has more affordable culinary and bargain hunters' delights than you'll have time to enjoy.

With average museum admissions hovering around 10 bucks a pop and guided bus tours starting at \$30 for the basic look-see, you could spend a fortune on sightseeing and activities—but you don't have to. Start perusing these pages, and you'll find more to see and do for free and on the cheap than you could squeeze into one vacation (or two or three or four). I'm not suggesting that you skip everything that has a price tag; certain New York experiences shouldn't be missed. But read the pages that follow and you'll know what's worth your hard-earned dough—and what's not.

THE NEW-YORK-FROM-\$90-A-DAY PREMISE

The idea is this: With good planning and a watchful eye, you can keep your

basic daily costs—accommodations and three meals—down to as little as \$90. This budget model works best for two adults traveling together who have at least \$180 a day to work with and can share a double room. (Single rooms are less cost-efficient.) This way, if you aim for accommodations that cost around \$120 for a double—a reasonable budget—you'll be left with about \$30 per person per day for food (less drinks and tips). Snare a room for less—doable in this economic climate, especially in a less busy season or if you're willing to share a bathroom—and you'll have more left over from your \$180-per-day budget for dining.

In defining this premise, we assume you want to travel comfortably, with your own room rather than a hostel bunk (even if it does mean a shared bathroom), and dining on good food. This book will serve you well even if you don't need to keep your two-person budget to a strict \$180 a day, but you want to get the most for your money. It will, on the other side of the coin, also meet your needs if you want to travel on the ultracheap—for less than \$90 a day—by staying in hostels and eating super-inexpensively.

Sightseeing, transportation, and entertainment are all extra. But I've got plenty of suggestions on how to keep those costs down, too. What you choose for entertainment will have a huge effect on your overall budget. If you go to nightclubs every night, you'll come home with a lighter wallet than if you spend time taking in free concerts or browsing galleries. If you

seek top-name entertainment on Broadway or the cabaret circuit, you'll pay more than if you take a risk on tomorrow's stars at an Off-Broadway show or a no-cover bar. Only you know how much money you have to spend—but if you follow my advice,

you'll be able to make informed decisions so that it's money well spent.

Even if you stick with freebies, the Big Apple guarantees a memorable time. After all, to the late, great Quentin Crisp, every flat surface in New York is a stage—and you're guaranteed a nonstop show.

2 Cheap Thrills: Frommer's Favorite Free & Affordable Experiences

- **Best Attraction:** If you have time to do only one thing on your visit to New York, sail to the **Statue of Liberty**. No other monument embodies the nation's, and the world's, notion of political freedom and economic potential more than Lady Liberty. It is also the ultimate symbol of New York; the personification of the city's vast diversity and tolerance. **Note:** At press time, visitors can tour the grounds only at Liberty Island; the statue itself had not yet reopened to visitors. Whether this status will change is unknown at press time. Even if it doesn't, standing at the feet of Lady Liberty makes a more-than-worthwhile journey, especially in these reflective, patriotic days. See p. 210.

- **Best Building: Empire State Building.** Like the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, once again the tallest building in New York, is one of the city's definitive icons.

Runners-up include the Art Deco masterpiece, the **Chrysler Building**, and the triangular **Flatiron Building**. See chapter 7.

- **Best Street:** This was a tough choice. Fifth Avenue has the reputation, but has lost some luster the past few years with the proliferation of chain and theme stores, so my pick is **Broadway**. Beginning at the southern tip of the island downtown, Broadway runs from

Wall Street, up through Chinatown, SoHo, and Greenwich Village, past the Flatiron building at 23rd Street, into the heart of Times Square, and then up to Columbus Circle, past Lincoln Center and the Upper West Side, all the way to the northern tip of the island. No street captures the diversity of Manhattan better than Broadway.

- **Best Bridge:** Manhattan has five major bridges connecting the island to other shores, and the most historic and fascinating is the **Brooklyn Bridge**. For a close-up look at what was a marvel of civic engineering when it was built in 1883, and a real New York experience, walk across the bridge from Manhattan to Brooklyn. See p. 203.
- **Best Historic Building:** Despite all the modern steel and glass skyscrapers in New York, there are still many historic marvels standing, and the best of those is the beaux arts gem, Grand Central Terminal. This railroad station, built in 1913, was restored in the 1990s to recapture its initial brilliance. Even if you don't have to catch a train, make sure you visit. See p. 205.
- **Best Museum: American Museum of Natural History.** You could spend your entire visit to New York at this 4-square-block museum and not run out of things

to see. From the famed dinosaur halls to the newly renovated *Hall of Ocean Life*, the Museum of Natural History houses the world's greatest natural science collection. See p. 202.

- **Best Art Museum: Metropolitan Museum of Art.** Not just the best art museum in New York, but the best in North America. The number of masterworks here is mind-boggling. See p. 206.
- **Best Park:** Though New York has many very wonderful parks, there is no real competition here. **Central Park** is one of the world's greatest urban refuges; a center of calm and tranquility amongst the noise and bustle that is Manhattan. See p. 237.
- **Best Place to Take the Kids:** Again, **Central Park**. With a carousel, a zoo, two ice-skating rinks, and numerous playgrounds and ball fields, Central Park is a children's wonderland.
- **Best Neighborhood to Stroll:** Though I'm partial to the Upper West Side, I have to give the nod to **Greenwich Village**. With its historic streets, hidden cafes, cozy restaurants, and eccentric characters, Greenwich Village is a constant but pleasant barrage on the senses. See chapter 4.
- **Best Jogging Path: The Reservoir in Central Park.** Also known as Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir, this 1½ mile path is the preferred path of presidential candidates, among others. See chapter 7.
- **Best Parade:** New York is famous for its parades, notably the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the St. Patrick's Day Parade, but the best parade in New York is the lesser-known **West Indian-American Day Parade**. Held on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, this is the biggest parade in the city. The music—calypso, soca, reggae, and Latin, the carnival costumes, and incredible Caribbean food make this an unforgettable experience. If you are lucky enough to be here on Labor Day, don't miss it. See chapter 2.
- **Best Street Festival: Ninth Avenue International Food Festival.** For one weekend in the middle of May, the Ninth Avenue Food Festival is the perfect illustration of ethnic diversity in the city. You'll be able to taste foods from restaurants and cuisines from Afghani to Peruvian. See chapter 2.
- **Best New Year's Eve Celebration: Fireworks in Central Park.** Avoid the madness of Times Square and head to **Central Park** where, at midnight, fireworks are set off and a midnight running race commences. See chapter 2.
- **Best Free Event:** Perennial favorites **SummerStage** in Central Park, now drowning in corporate sponsorship and slowly becoming a "paid" event; and **Shakespeare in the Park**, which is becoming more of a showcase for the celebrity of the moment; are losing their luster, leaving **Lincoln Center Out of Doors** as the winner. I've seen many great performances at the 4-week festival each August, on the plaza of Lincoln Center, including jazz great Sonny Rollins, the traditional Spanish dance troupe, Danzas Espanolas, and a children's sing-along my son still talks fondly about. There is something for everyone at this wonderful free event. See chapter 9.
- **Best Performance Space:** There are few greater spaces in the world than **Carnegie Hall**. Visually and acoustically brilliant, Carnegie Hall attracts an amazing array of

talent. But remember: Never ask a New Yorker how you get there. (Practice, practice, practice!) See p. 305.

- **Best Jazz Club: Village Vanguard.** The acoustics and sight lines aren't great, but you can't do better for finding consistently good-quality jazz. The Vanguard is a New York institution. See p. 317.
- **Best Budget Jazz Club: Smoke.** This cozy Upper West Side jazz club is emerging as one of the best in the city. There's no cover charge Sunday through Thursday, with Tuesday, for the tremendous

"Hammond Organ" night and Wednesday, for the "Hot Pants Funk Sextet," not to be missed. See p. 316.

- **Best Underground Musicians:** You can hear a wide variety of music by undiscovered talent in subway stations, much of it very good. My favorite is **Classic Soul**, a melodious doo wop group. Try to catch them, or others, at one of the major subway stations like Columbus Circle, 34th Street, Times Square, or Union Square. For more on underground musicians, see chapter 9.

3 Best Low-Cost Hotel Bets

You'll likely spend more than you like on a hotel room; it's a fact of life in the big city. But New York has a wealth of wallet-friendly choices for bargain hunters who know where to look. For the details on these and other affordable hotels, see chapter 5.

- **Best Overall Value—Downtown:** It's hard to beat the **Cosmopolitan Hotel—TriBeCa**, 95 W. Broadway (☎ 888/895-9400; www.cosmohotel.com), for value. Each of the small, comfy, modern rooms comes with its own petite but immaculate private bathroom for as little as \$119 a night. The high-rent neighborhood is hip as can be and subway-convenient to the rest of the city. See p. 99.

Also of note is the **New York City Howard Johnson Express Inn**, 135 E. Houston St. (☎ 800/406-1411 or 212/358-8844; www.hojo.com), which has introduced reliable hotel comforts to the gentrified Lower East Side. This new-in-2002 hotel has newly outfitted rooms and a friendly staff, both nicer than they have to be for the money. See p. 100.

- **Best Overall Value—Midtown:** The **Super 8 Hotel Times Square**,

59 W. 46th St. (☎ 800/567-7720; www.applecorehotels.com). With its combination of location, quality, comforts, and space, at rates that are a bargain in any town, much less the Big Apple—as low as \$89 double, with breakfast—this one is hard to beat. See p. 119.

The **Chelsea Savoy**, 204 W. 23rd St. (☎ 866/929-9353; www.chelseasavoynyc.com), is another great choice, offering reliable comforts for an affordable price—no small thing in a hotel market where "budget" goes hand in hand with "quirky." The hallways are attractive and wide, the elevators are swift and silent, and the rooms have big closets and roomy, well-kept bathrooms with lots of counter space. See p. 105.

- **Best Overall Value—Uptown:** The **Hotel Newton**, 2528 Broadway (☎ 888/HOTEL-58; www.newyorkhotel.com), doesn't expect you to put up with a tiny room or myriad inconveniences because you aren't spending a fortune. With rates starting at \$85 double, you'll get more than your

money's worth here—and you'll save an additional 10% if you're a AAA member. See p. 126.

The **Comfort Inn—Central Park West**, 31 W. 71st St. (☎ 800/228-5150; www.comfortinn.com), can be the best deal in town if you book at the right time. It's loaded with comforts and is in one of the city's best residential neighborhoods. You can sometimes find rates as low as \$72 double—with breakfast! See p. 124.

- **Best Value for Bargain Hunters Who Don't Mind Sharing:** If you're willing to share a bathroom, you'll be pleased with the **Larchmont Hotel**, in the loveliest part of Greenwich Village at 27 W. 11th St. (☎ 212/989-9333; www.larchmonthotel.com). See p. 104.
- **Best Value for Bargain Hunters Who Do Mind Sharing:** Kudos to **SoHotel**, 341 Broome St. (☎ 212/226-1482; www.pioneerhotel.com), which has done something no one else has managed: offer clean, friendly accommodations with private bathrooms for just \$77 double year-round. The staff is professional, the decor is more attractive than most hotels in the shoestring category, and the edge-of-Chinatown location is safe and convenient. See p. 99.
- **Best for Bargain Hunters Willing to Compromise: Chelsea Lodge**, 318 W. 20th St. (☎ 800/373-1116; www.chelsealodge.com), offers the perfect compromise: You'll have an in-room sink and shower, so all you have to share is a toilet in the hall. If you're willing to do that, you'll find yourself in one of the cutest, cleanest, most comfortable hotels in New York—and at one of the cheapest rates in town. One of my all-time budget favorites! See p. 104.
- **Best Service for the Budget-Minded:** The staff at the **Broadway Inn**, 264 W. 46th St. (☎ 800/826-6300; www.broadwayinn.com), might be the most helpful in the city. They're so committed to making their guests feel welcome that they give you a hot line number to call when you're out and about if you need directions, advice on where to eat, or any other assistance. And you thought New Yorkers weren't friendly! See p. 112.
- **Best for Creative Spirits:** Reminiscent of Warhol's Factory at the height of its creativity and style, the supercool **Gershwin Hotel**, 7 E. 27th St. (☎ 212/545-8000; www.gershwinhotel.com), is the winner in this category. Billy Name is the house photog; what more do I need to say? See p. 110.
- **Best for Families:** On the Upper West Side, one of the city's most kid-friendly residential neighborhoods, is **The Milburn**, 242 W. 76th St. (☎ 800/833-9622; www.milburnhotel.com), which offers the best value-for-dollar ratio on suites in town. A queen-size sleeper sofa in the living room makes the junior and one-bedroom suites large enough to accommodate four, and a kitchenette with microwave, mini-fridge, and coffeemaker means you can save on breakfast bills. Kids under 13 stay free. See p. 128.
- **Best for the Style-Conscious:** The **Habitat Hotel**, 130 E. 57th St. (☎ 800/497-6028; www.habitatny.com), is carving out a niche as the "upscale budget" choice among style-conscious consumers. The narrow rooms are fresh and outfitted with flair, and the neighborhood is about as high fashion as it gets. See p. 121.



Site Seeing: The Big Apple on the Web

The New York Convention & Visitors Bureau's official site, www.nycvisit.com, is an excellent resource offering information on the city, from trip-planning basics to tips on where to take the kids. But there's far more to be learned about New York in cyberspace.

Citysearch (www.newyork.citysearch.com) is the city's hippest general-information site, with reviews and listings for restaurants, shopping, hotels, attractions, and nightlife. It's not as up-to-the-minute as it used to be, but it's still an excellent source for current happenings. Beware the search engine: If you're looking for a specific restaurant or shop, you're best off heading to the "Restaurants" or "Shopping" page and searching from there—and it still may take a few tries to find what you're looking for.

New York Today (www.nytoday.com) is the online arts, leisure, and entertainment arm of the *New York Times*. The *Times* created this site for those of us who wanted access to their excellent cultural coverage and restaurant reviews without having to wade through the main site (www.nytimes.com), which requires you to register.

Tops these days may be **New York Metro** (★) (www.nymetro.com), the online arm of glossy weekly magazine *New York*. New York Metro is the most up-to-date site covering city happenings. (Although keep in mind that these things can change by the moment.) The site is strong in restaurant and shopping coverage; the magazine's shopping columnists update the site daily with news of sales and bargains.

All of the city's high-profile weeklies also maintain sites that are very useful for current happenings, including:

- **Time Out New York:** www.timeoutny.com
- **The Village Voice:** www.villagevoice.com
- **The New Yorker:** www.newyorker.com
- **Paper:** www.papermag.com
- **New York Press:** www.nypress.com

For more on these city-focused magazines, see "Publications" in "Orientation," in chapter 4.

Digital City New York (www.digitalcity.com/newyork) is much like Citysearch, and good for an alternative view. **About.com** also maintains a somewhat useful New York page at www.gonyc.about.com.

For the most up-to-date information on Lower Manhattan and Ground Zero, visit the website of the **Downtown Alliance**, the stellar Business Improvement District so productive in Lower Manhattan both before and after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, at www.downtownny.com.

In addition, you'll find subject-specific sites listed in the appropriate chapters of this book.

Another excellent choice is **The Marcel**, 201 E. 24th St. (☎ 888/66-HOTEL; [\[hotels.com\]\(http://hotels.com\)\), whose mod designer-outfitted rooms go for just \\$125, sometimes less—and the lounge](http://www.nyc</p>
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downstairs is one of the hottest in town.

Fashionistas who don't mind sacrificing space for style might try for one of the handful of \$95 rooms at Ian Schrager's super-hip **Hudson**, 356 W. 58th St. (☎ 800/444-4786; www.ianschragerhotels.com). See p. 116.

- **Best for Gay & Lesbian Travelers:** New York is such a hub of gay life and culture that virtually all of the city's hotels welcome gay and lesbian visitors. But if you're looking for like-minded folks, try the fabulous Hollywood-themed **Chelsea Pines Inn**, 317 W. 14th St. (☎ 888/546-2700; www.chelseapinesinn.com; see p. 105), or the more low-key but equally welcoming **Colonial House Inn**, 318 W. 22nd St. (☎ 800/689-3779; www.colonialhouseinn.com; see p. 107).
- **Best Freebies:** The **Travel Inn**, 515 W. 42nd St. (☎ 800/869-4630; www.newyorkhotel.com), wins on *two* counts. First is the free garage parking—a \$25-a-day value at minimum for visitors driving to the city and free

in-and-out privileges. Summer visitors can take advantage of the rooftop swimming pool and sun deck. The **Skyline Hotel** (see directly below) offers similar value-minded perks. See p. 119.

- **Best for Travelers with Disabilities:** The comfortable, budget-minded **Skyline Hotel**, 725 Tenth Ave. (☎ 800/433-1982; www.skylinehotelnyc.com), has seven generously sized wheelchair-accessible rooms, ramps, and fire-safety alarms for deaf and blind visitors, plus free parking. See p. 119.
- **Best Splurge:** The Art Deco-style **Hotel Metro**, 45 W. 35th St. (☎ 800/356-3870; www.hotelmetronyc.com), is a midpriced Midtown gem that feels much more expensive than it is, with stylish furnishings, marble bathrooms, an attentive staff, and a rooftop terrace with the best view of the Empire State Building in town. You'll get a surprisingly good value for your dollar here, and free continental breakfast softens the blow. See p. 116.

4 Best Low-Cost Dining Bets

One of the joys of being in New York is that there's fabulous food at nearly every turn—and you don't have to whip out a platinum card to pay for it. Go ethnic—Chinese, Japanese, Jewish, Italian, Mexican, and much more—to indulge in the best cheap eats anywhere. For the details on these and other terrific affordable city restaurants, see chapter 6.

- **Best Newcomer:** **Celeste**, 502 Amsterdam Ave. (☎ 212/874-4559). Small but special, Celeste's homemade pastas, special "frittis" (fried appetizers), and a wood-burning oven that turns out incredible pizzas make this a welcome addition to not only

the Upper West Side, but all Manhattan.

- **Best Chinese:** With all the culinary wonders that Chinatown has to offer, this is a tough choice. But **Joe's Shanghai**, 9 Pell St. (☎ 212/233-8888), is the best of *many* good options. Now, how do they get the soup inside their famous soup dumplings? See p. 142.
- **Best Affordable French:** The charming, affordable Chelsea creperie **Rue des Crepes**, 104 Eighth Ave. (☎ 212/242-9900), is my favorite in this category, thanks to a winning combination of food, setting, service, and low prices. See p. 163.

- **Best Affordable Italian:** **Lupa**, 170 Thompson St. (☎ 212/982-5089), a fantastic Roman-style trattoria and *salumeria* (Italian grocery store). Kudos to Batali for being the one celebrity chef in town who doesn't think you should have to spend a fortune on a first-class meal. See p. 158.
- **Best Diner:** The eclectic **Big Nick's Burger and Pizza Joint**, 2175 Broadway (☎ 212/362-9232), has offered culinary comfort any time of day or night for over 40 years. The varieties of burgers you can order are as mind-boggling as the collection of unidentifiable celebrity photos on the walls.
- **Best Burger:** **Burger Joint**, at Le Parker Meridien hotel, 118 W. 57th St. (☎ 212/708-7460). Who woulda thunk a fancy hotel like **Le Parker Meridien** would be the home to a place that serves great burgers at great prices?
- **Best Pizza:** **Patsy's Pizzeria**, 2287 First Ave. (☎ 212/534-9783). This great East Harlem pizzeria has been cranking out coal-oven pies since 1932. It was a favorite of Frank Sinatra, who used to have Patsy's pizzas shipped to him in Las Vegas. You can also order by the slice, but do it only if the pie is fresh out of the oven.
- **Best Early-Bird Dining Bargain:** French bistro and wine bar **Le Pere Pinard**, 175 Ludlow St. (☎ 212/777-4917), offers three courses—starter, entree, and dessert—for just \$14 to diners who order between 5 and 7pm. It's an excellent deal, especially since you could spend that much on just a main course. Pair it with a glass of *vin* from the extensive, affordable list, and you have a memorable meal for 20 bucks. See p. 147.
- **Best Breakfast:** Uptown, head to **Good Enough To Eat**, but try to avoid weekends when the wait sometimes can last until lunch. See p. 184.
Downtown, head to TriBeCa fave **Bubby's**, 120 Hudson St. (☎ 212/219-0666)—and don't be surprised if Harvey Keitel is chowing down on a monster-size omelet at the next table. See p. 140.
- **Best Late-Night Hangout:** Half authentic-French bistro, half all-American diner, **Florent**, 69 Gansevoort St. (☎ 212/989-5779), is the hipster crowd's favorite after-hours hangout. Thanks to its good food, great people-watching, and sense of humor, it's mine, too. See p. 158.
In a neighborhood notoriously underserved in the late-night department, we-never-close **Pigalle**, 790 Eighth Ave. (☎ 212/489-2233), deserves props for offering affordable French fare to after-hours Theater District crowds. See p. 173.
- **Best Fast Food:** For value, it's hard to beat the terrific, health-minded Tex-Mex fare at local chain **Burritoville**, at 36 Water St. (☎ 212/747-1100) and throughout the city. See p. 138.
It's also hard to beat **Emerald Planet**, 2 Great Jones St. (☎ 212/353-9727), whose wraps and smoothies are made with fresh ingredients and a world of ethnic influences. The Rockefeller Center location makes a delicious, healthful lunch stop during a day of Midtown sightseeing. See p. 158.
- **Best Old New York Experience:** **Eisenberg's Coffee Shop**, 174 Fifth Ave. (☎ 212/675-5096), has served the same retro fare since 1929—and prices are retro, too. New Yorkers consider this the best tuna salad in town, but the

Reuben is my ticket to culinary happiness. See p. 164.

In the *Noo Yawk* deli wars, **Katz's Delicatessen**, 205 E. Houston St. (☎ 212/254-2246), is the choice among those who know their kreplach, knishes, and pastrami. No cutesy sandwiches here—just top-notch classics. The all-beef wieners are the best in a town known for its dogs. What's more, prices are a fraction of what those tourist-targeted Midtown delis charge. See p. 146.

- **Best for Families:** It's hard to beat **Virgil's Real BBQ**, 152 W. 44th St. (☎ 212/921-9494), for eat-with-your-hands fun. See p. 175.

Kids of all ages love **Serendipity 3**, 225 E. 60th St. (☎ 212/838-3531), a classic ice-cream parlor just like your childhood memories, but *better*. See p. 188. For more kid-friendly choices, see "Family-Friendly Restaurants," in chapter 6.

- **Best for Vegetarians:** A perennial favorite among vegetarians is the Asian-inspired fare at **Zen Palate**, 34 Union Square E. (☎ 212/614-9345). See p. 166.

I prefer **Pongal**, 110 Lexington Ave. (☎ 212/696-9458), which re-creates the flavorful vegetarian fare of southern India—and thanks to a daily visit from a rabbi, it's kosher, too! See p. 177.

- **Best Baked Goods and Sweets:** There's a lot of competition in this category, but the ultimate kudos go to Franco-Brussels import **Le Pain Quotidien**, 100 Grand St. (☎ 212/625-9009), for its fresh-baked breads (baked in small batches five times daily) and scrumptious pastries and sweets, served in a SoHo-loft-goes-farmhouse setting. (You'll find locations in the Flatiron District and on the Upper West and Upper East Sides, too.) See p. 148.

- **Best Cheap Meal: Gray's Papaya**, 2090 Broadway (☎ 212/799-0243). Though the \$2.45 "recession special," two hot dogs and a fruit drink, is almost a \$1 increase from the previous recession, it's still a bargain. But is it any good? Witness the lines out the door every day for lunch.

- **Best Ice Cream: Brooklyn Ice Cream Factory**, Fulton Ferry Landing Pier, Brooklyn (☎ 718/246-3963). This is the perfect reward for a brisk walk across the Brooklyn Bridge. Have a rich, homemade ice cream with a view of the Manhattan skyline; a hard combination to beat.

- **Best Bagel: H&H Bagels**, 2239 Broadway (☎ 212/595-8003; www.handhbagel.com). Competition is fierce in this category, but despite breaking the \$1 barrier for the price for a bagel, H&H still makes the best. For more on bagels, see the box "Bagel Power" on p. 183.

- **Best 24-Hour Restaurant: Veselka**, 144 Second Ave. (☎ 212/228-9682). This Ukrainian diner will meet almost all your food needs any time of day or night. If you want borscht at midnight, you can get it. If you want French toast at 4am, you can have it. It's a comfort to know they will make pretty much whatever you want when you want it. See p. 153.

- **Best All-You-Can-Eat Buffet: Charles' Southern Style Kitchen**, 2841 Frederick Douglass Blvd. (☎ 212/926-4313). Not only is this Harlem restaurant the best all-you-can-eat buffet, it is also the best soul-food restaurant in the city. For \$9.95 on weekdays, \$11.95 on weekends, the down-home offerings here will tempt you to make an embarrassing number of visits to the buffet line. Come hungry!