

MANHATTAN

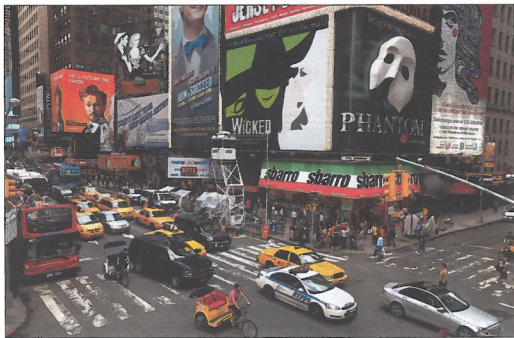


Photo by Chris Sormodewicz/Getty

One of New York's most recognizable sites, Times Square attracts tourists by the thousands. In fact, 80 percent of the city's 49 million visitors stopped by the neighborhood last year. The area has more to offer than the typical tourist trap. Skip the Sbarro and go for something really good.

Times Square for natives

AVOID THE TOURISTS—AND FIND SERIOUSLY GOOD FOOD

By Jake Lemkowicz for USA TODAY

Why New Yorkers avoid Times Square is no mystery. It's one of the few places in the city where sightseers perpetually outnumber locals, a non-stop bonanza of schlock-and-awe consumerism packaged for tourists as a cultural destination. And yet, if you know where to look, there are plenty of places for New Yorker-than-thou natives to enjoy themselves.

If you're a local, or you just want to act like one, this is your guide to the Times Square bars and restaurants that have too much

character to be mass-produced. These are places that serve regulars as much as first-time visitors.

BREAKFAST

► **CAFÉ EDISON:** As morning breaks in Times Square and neon gives way to the first rays of natural light, it's time to eat. Head on over to the Café Edison. Affectionately known in Broadway circles as the Polish Tea Room, the café is a dingy, art-deco palace of a diner. Skip the pancakes and bacon. (What is this, Nebraska?) Go for the New York Jewish spe-

cialties: Matzo brie—is the sort of dish only grandmas know how to make—is a fluffy, crunchy matzo and egg frittata served with apple sauce. Blintzes, stuffed fat with cheese, blueberries, or cherries, come browned on the griddle. The fried salami with eggs is an excellent hangover cure.
» 228 W. 47th St., Manhattan; 49th Street Subway; 212-849-5000; edisonhotelnyc.com

► **GREEN SYMPHONY:** Not everyone is looking for a greasy meal first thing in the morning. New Yorkers who like to start the day on the lighter side should try Green Sym-



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The smallest and oldest of the boroughs packs a powerhouse of commercial, financial, and cultural ventures. Home to famous landmarks and more than 1.5 million people, Manhattan is one of the world's most vibrant places.

POPULATION: 1.6 million

PRESIDENT: Scott M. Stringer

SQUARE MILES: 23.7

FAMOUS NATIVES:

Claire Danes	Paris Hilton
Robert De Niro	Sylvester Stallone
Bobby Flay	Jon Stewart
Lady Gaga	Oliver Stone

SIGNATURE FEATURES:

9/11 Memorial	Central Park
Empire State Building	Times Square
Grand Central Station	Guggenheim

DID YOU KNOW:

The Fashion Institute of Technology is the world's only school offering a Bachelor of Science Degree with a major in Cosmetics and Fragrance Marketing.

The first public brewery in America was established by Colonial governor Peter Minuit at the Marckvelt, what's now the Financial District.

Manhattan's Chinatown has the largest collection of Chinese residents in the Western Hemisphere.

CURRENTLY FILMING:

Low & Order: Criminal Intent,
Gossip Girl, *Louie*, *Ringer*

BY THE NUMBERS

2

The stories of New York City's tallest structure—a windmill—in 1660.

MANHATTAN



Photo by Mario Tama/Corbis

The Times Square McDonald's may have a Statue of Liberty replica and diorama of the city, but you can do better. Opt for lunch at a Cuban cafe (Margon) or dinner at an old-school steakhouse (Frankie & Johnnie's). You'll feel like an insider while filling up on authentic New York food.

phony, Times Square's oasis of healthy foods. Choose a fresh-squeezed juice like the Green Monster, a sweet and tart concoction of green apple, ginger, spinach, and spirulina (a nutritional powder). The Acai Breakfast Bowl has steered many a New York Times employee for a long day at the office and is packed with pumpkin seeds, acai fruit puree, and oatmeal. Grab a couple of organic hard-boiled eggs, swap witty remarks with the gregarious owner, and try to ignore the Scientology books.

>> 255 W. 43rd St., Manhattan; 42nd Street-Port Authority Subway; 212-391-4747

LUNCH

► **MARGON:** By noon, Times Square is in full swing. This is a lunch neighborhood, and it feels like everyone on the street is either trying to get a bite to eat or deliver it. There are plenty of choices but not so many superlatives. Here's an exception: some of the best Cuban food in the city.

Don't be fooled by Havana Cafe's flashy neon palm tree across the street. You are going to Margon, a cafeteria-style gem. Its

Cuban sandwich deserves to be famous. Layers of hot roast ham, salami, melted cheese, and thickly sliced pickles, all on crisp Cuban bread and dripping with various house condiments. Most of the restaurant is taken up by a long buffet of hearty Cuban cuisine. Have your red beans and rice topped with pink pickled onions and a wedge of avocado. Rotating specials include oxtail and shrimp ceviche. The blissfully unhealthy chicharron (fried chicken chunks) and refreshing sliced Octopus Salad are both on the menu every day.

>> 136 W. 46th St., Manhattan; Rockefeller Center Subway; 212-354-5013

► **SHAKE SHACK:** If you want to go all-American in New York, there's no better option than the new Times Square branch of Shake Shack, Manhattan's definitive burger joint and the gold standard of fancy fast food. Go for a Concrete, a dense frozen custard milkshake with optional mix-ins like fresh donuts and chocolate truffle cookie dough. But the real star here is the Shack Burger. A juicy, nostalgia-inducing affair that doesn't try to be anything more or less than the per-

fect version of a simple, good thing. Make it a double. If the crinkled fries start triggering weird childhood carnival flashbacks, you can always buy a bottle of Prosecco to bring you back to adult reality.

>> 691 8th Avenue and 44th Street, Manhattan; 212-889-6600, shakeshack.com

DINNER

► **JIMMY'S CORNER:** Times Square lights up at night like a slot machine jackpot, and the crowds can get boisterous. If you're looking to hide away in a bar, try Jimmy's Corner, a lowdown place that feels like home.

The sign over the bar says "Let's Not Talk Politics." In this pub, you talk boxing. The place is covered wall to wall with fight posters, newspaper clippings, memorabilia, and photos of Jimmy posing with pugilists like Ali and Tyson. Jimmy himself has been in boxing for fifty years. He's a trainer, a promoter, a cut man, and the owner of this bar. Let him pour you a beer. It's not uncommon to see an up-and-coming heavyweight being interviewed in the back or a pownow of sports journalists comparing press passes. The rattling air con-



Shutterstock

The Shaggy dog is a version of a classic Chicago hot dog served by Shake Shack, a popular New York-based burger joint.

ditioner is almost as loud as the excellent Motown-heavy jukebox.

>> 140 W. 44th St., Manhattan; Times Square-42nd Street Subway; 212-221-9510

► FRANKIE & JOHNNIE'S STEAKHOUSE:

This restaurant feels hidden because it was designed to be. It was founded as a speakeasy during prohibition in 1926. Up a narrow, tiled stairway is an old-school world where men dress for dinner and surly waiters deliver dishes like the dry-aged Porterhouse For Two and Creamed Spinach. You can imagine the same room 80 years ago filled with gamblers and wise guys. Do you have a New Yorker and make your reservation for just after eight o'clock, to artfully avoid the pre-theater dinner rush.

>> 289 W. 45th and 8th Ave., Manhattan; 42nd Street Subway; 212-997-9494; frankieand-johnnies.com

AFTER HOURS

► **BIRYANI CART:** First stop is the legendary Biryani Cart. The winner of countless Vendys, an annual award bestowed upon the city's best food vendors, Biryani Cart's Indian-style street food is a natural late-night choice. The Spicy Buradi Kati Roll, a grilled chapati flatbread rolled with spicy grilled chicken and habanero mint sauce, is a flavorful standout. The vegetarian Aloo Golbi Kati Roll, stuffed with curried potatoes, is also good.

>> 46th Street and 6th Ave., Manhattan; 47-50 Streets-Rockefeller Center Subway

► **MY BIRYANI:** Street food loyalties run deep here, which is why My Biryani caused a stir when it set up shop last year just two blocks south of the legendary Biryani Cart. The newcomers went straight for the crown and have won their own following. The obvious choice here is the eponymous Bombay Spicy Biryani, a platter of rice, chicken, and roasted vegetables topped with a homemade hot sauce. The Kati Rolls are excellent but messy, so be prepared to use a fork.

>> 46th Street and 6th Ave., Manhattan; Conde Nast Building Subway