



Over the river: Socialize in Brooklyn Bridge Park or hunt for vintage finds at the Brooklyn Flea.

48 HOURS

Exit to Brooklyn

Don't bypass this borough if you're looking for cool shops, pop-up art galleries, and authentic eats. | **By ALISON LOWENSTEIN**

WITH A CONTROVERSIAL new NBA arena slated to open in late spring/early summer 2012, the first major-league sports team (the Brooklyn Nets) is coming to Brooklyn since the Dodgers left in 1957. But it doesn't take a new basketball team to make Brooklyn stand out. Across the East River from Manhattan, the borough hums with innovation and transformation. Old warehouses and churches morph into performance spaces. Independent bookstores and art galleries sprout in almost forgotten industrial neighborhoods. Writers and actors—Jhumpa Lahiri, Jonathan Safran Foer, Maggie Gyllenhaal, John Turturro—hang their hats here. Absolut even named a red-apple-and-ginger-flavored vodka after the borough, complete with a bottle designed by Spike Lee. From the classic Coney Island boardwalk to Williamsburg's busy Bedford Avenue, home to both hipsters and Hasidic Jews, Brooklyn's neighborhoods are the real stars.

WHAT TO DO No matter what the season, a stroll across the wooden pedestrian walkway of the 19th-century Brooklyn Bridge is an inspiring way to start a day.

Once you're off the bridge, head toward DUMBO (for Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass), an arty area filled with restaurants, bookstores, and galleries like **Smack Mellon**. Nearby is the Fulton Ferry Landing, home to **Bargemusic**, a docked barge turned floating concert hall for chamber music performances with the Manhattan skyline as backdrop.

Wander the streets of Brooklyn Heights, eyeing the historic brownstones and the stellar views of Lower Manhattan from the **Brooklyn Heights Promenade**. Nearby Atlantic Avenue, long known for antiques shops, now lures fashionistas to **Barneys Co-op** and stylish brides to **Kimera**, with its globally inspired wedding gowns. On select weekends, head underground for an **Atlantic Avenue Tunnel Tour** (www.brooklynrail.net) of the world's oldest subway tunnel, which was built for early Long Island Rail Road trains.

Purchase a restored manual typewriter or

jewelry made from vinyl records at the weekends-only vintage and antiques market **Brooklyn Flea**, housed in a former bank in Fort Greene.

In Prospect Heights, the **Brooklyn Museum** displays a rich and wide-ranging collection as well as temporary exhibits like Norman Rockwell's photographs and paintings (November 19–April 10). Next door, the 52-acre **Brooklyn Botanic Garden** marks its centennial this year.

WHERE TO EAT One block from the Williamsburg Bridge, the restored 1920s **Diner** serves not very diner-like fare, such as East Coast halibut with apricot, red potatoes, and basil pesto and even produces its own magazine, *Diner Journal*. The **Good Fork** is well worth the detour to rough-around-the-edges Red Hook for its homemade pork-and-chive dumplings and seared duck breast. You can smell the salty air when you approach **Totonno's**, a Coney Island pizzeria that has been serving authentic Neapolitan pies at its Neptune Avenue location since 1924. Vintage-style soda shop **Brooklyn Pharmacy** in Carroll Gardens produces Brooklyn's classic drink, the egg cream—which

contains neither egg nor cream but rather a mix of milk, seltzer, and flavored syrup. Go Old World at Russian restaurant **Tatiana** on the Brighton Beach boardwalk, with authentic blini and a dinner theater floor show that rivals Vegas.

WHERE TO STAY Brooklyn's increasing popularity has sparked a hotel boom. Overlooking Prospect Park, **Bed and Breakfast on the Park** (from \$155; www.bbnyc.com) is located in a charming seven-room brownstone. Guests help themselves to anything

in the fridge in the 24-hour community kitchen. At the **Nu Hotel** (from \$199, www.nuhotelbrooklyn.com), each floor has quotes from famous Brooklynites on the walls. The 665-room **New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge** (from \$199; www.marriott.com) features a large pool and fitness center. Book a room on the 16th floor or higher for unfettered views of the Statue of Liberty and Lower Manhattan. ■



The Good Fork's fried oyster po'boy.



Brownstones in Brooklyn Heights.