

# A WEEKEND IN: New York City

The Big Apple is just that—big—but don't let the sheer size overwhelm you. Done right, New York City can make for a weekend jaunt so enjoyable, you'll count the days until your next trip.

By Angelene Orth

## DAY ONE

**Downtown/Midtown**—Wake up early, grab a classic bagel and coffee from the first street cart you see and take the subway to **Battery Park**, where you'll catch a ferry to the Statue of Liberty. For the down-and-dirty on Lady Liberty's history, take the free 45-minute ranger-guided tour. (2 hrs.)

Back in **Manhattan**, a 10-minute scenic walk along the East River leads to the South Street Seaport, a bustling maritime center-turned shopping and entertainment destination. The Seaport's TKTS booth offers same-day Broadway or Off-Broadway show tickets at up to 50 percent off and only accepts cash. There's also a TKTS booth in Times Square, but lines tend to be much longer. (1 hr.)

**Lunch—The Heartland Brewery** offers hearty home cooking and lots of it, including decadent macaroni and cheese and smoky-sweet pulled pork. **The Voyage of Beers** features a tasting of six fresh brews from fruity Indian River Light Ale to espresso-black Farmer John's Oatmeal Stout. (1 hr.)

A maze of narrow streets and new developments make it easy to get lost in Lower Manhattan. Take an unconventional tour like **Accomplice: NY** to get the lay of the land. This modified scavenger hunt gives clues at various stops on an unpredictable adventure through the **Financial District, Little Italy and Chinatown**. Sign up in advance and receive a pre-tour call from a "suspicious" character with meeting place details. (3-4 hrs.)

The mile-high dollops of sugary icing at **Magnolia Bakery** have made New York's cupcake scene world famous, but it's the banana pudding that rivals the

best recipes from back home. Or skip the calorie fest and backtrack to **Canal Street** to haggle for crazy bargains on bags, sunglasses and jewelry. (1 hr.)

In **Times Square**, score 15 minutes of fame with dinner and a song at **Spotlight Live**. This interactive karaoke experience features tableside voting for the "One Hit Wonder" of the moment. Professional backup singers help even shower-only singers feel like Broadway stars. (1.5 hrs.)

Afterwards, see a Broadway show using your TKTS selection of choice. (2 hrs.)

For an unparalleled view of the city, walk to **Rockefeller Center** and take the elevator to Top of the Rock for stellar 360-degree vistas of the glittering skyline. The world-famous view makes a momentous end to a whirlwind day. (1 hr.)

## DAY TWO

Despite sometimes lengthy waits, brunch, the scrumptious meal between breakfast and lunch, is a weekend tradition for New Yorkers. **Isabella's**, the **Eatery** and the **Delta Grill** are tasty options, or choose the **Film Center Café** for an inexpensive all-you-can-drink Mimosa special and their delicious fresh fruit-topped waffles. (1.5 hrs.)

Next, the Stage Door experience at art deco landmark **Radio City Music Hall** highlights the facility's high-tech hydraulics and unbelievably massive stage. At the tour's end, meet a world-famous Rockette for an unforgettable photo opportunity. (1 hr.)

Hop in a yellow cab for an afternoon with dinosaurs at the vast **American Museum of Natural History** or with mummies at the enormous **Metropolitan Museum of Art**. No need to be an art or science buff: both museums offer guided tours and/or audio guides, and



Brooklyn Bridge and Manhattan skyline.

Photo by Jeff Greenberg

the tech-savvy can download either museum's educational podcast for a self-guided tour. (2-3 hrs.)

Whether on ice skates, from a pedicab or via horse-drawn carriage, a trip to NYC wouldn't be complete without a carefree outing in **Central Park**, the city's 843-acre oasis. For lunch, order a chicken empanada or a banana and Nutella crepe at Bethesda Terrace. For a laugh, watch the AFRObats, a trio of talented gymnasts who wow crowds with astounding acrobatics. (1-3 hrs.)

Soothe tired muscles with a trip to spa Bliss. Make an appointment for the Jet-Out massage, designed to relieve jet lag, or the Foot Patrol pedicure. Traipsing the City That Never Sleeps has never ended so sweetly. (1-2 hrs.) **GP**

## AAA Travel Professional Tips

- Unlike the rest of the country, NY restaurants don't fill your soda for free. At about \$3 a piece, that can really add up on the final bill.
- New York runs on cash. Always have plenty of small bills and don't rely solely on credit cards.
- Mass transportation in New York is safe, efficient, convenient and much cheaper than taxis or parking (and renting) a car.

To plan a New York vacation, call or visit your local AAA branch.