



TAKE IT ALL IN: Enjoy a walk across the Brooklyn Bridge or visit Strawberry Fields where John Lennon lived and died.



# Fun, free things to do in New York

By JOHN BISHOP

NEW York looks like an expensive place to have fun. But it doesn't have to be.

There are lots of fun, cheap and free things to do which make a visit to the Big Apple interesting, entertaining and enlightening.

Here are some ideas that won't break the bank – in fact, most are free:

## Walk the Highline

The Highline was a stretch of railway track built above the street in the meat-packing district to keep the live animals and the dead meat away from the dirt and muck on the streets below.

It ran for several miles around various warehouses.

The meat trade has long gone and now the track has been transformed into a magnificent walkway which takes you through a rapidly reviving and very expensive neighbourhood.

The 2.3km walk goes from just below 14th Street through Chelsea to 34th Street, and can be joined (or left) at other points.

As well as providing an inside view of the suburb not visible from street level, there's street art and sculptures commissioned to enhance the setting.

## Walk the Brooklyn Bridge across the East River to Manhattan

A great activity enjoyed by hundreds if not thousands of New Yorkers and

It doesn't have to cost a fortune to discover the delights of New York.

visitors every day – walkers and cyclists abound at weekends.

About 1.3 kilometres long, or about an hour at a leisurely walking pace, you climb up the bridge above the traffic and walk down the other side taking in spectacular views of the East River and city, marred only a little by the structural steel and wire rope that keeps the bridge in place.

Locals reckon the views are better going Brooklyn to Manhattan.

## Ground Zero and the Survivor Tree

A massive skyscraper now replaces the Twin Towers in another testimonial to America's determination to reaffirm its values and strength.

It stands above the 9/11 Memorial and garden, and next to the Memorial Centre and Museum.

The garden is tranquil and the sunken pits are inscribed with the names of all who died there.

A callery pear tree was found at Ground Zero badly damaged, its roots snapped and with many broken branches. After its rehabilitation (just like a wounded vet) it was replanted in the Memorial Garden in 2010, the only tree of its type in the garden and a

popular one with visitors.

## Times Square

Hang out in Times Square. The '70s seediness of Times Square with addicts, pickpockets and prostitutes is long gone, replaced by a garish display of multiscreen images.

The Square now continuously explodes with light. Everything flashes, dissolves and bursts with colour, imagery and technological marvels. All the world's brands are there and on most days half the city's population seems crammed in there too.

## Grand Central

Marvel at the light in Grand Central Station. This is a mystical moment where you stand in awe in the midst of a hugely busy terminal thronging with people going every which way and look at the shafts of light coming through the windows high above the platforms and playing on the marble.

## Strawberry Fields

Visit Strawberry Fields. This is the field in Central Park at 78th Street opposite the Dakota Building where John Lennon lived, and was shot and died back in 1980.

The Lennon remembrance industry lives on. Pause at the Imagine star at the entrance to the park, where tourists pose partly in remembrance, but mostly to show that they have been there.

Take a stroll around the Strawberry Fields part of the park. It takes only a

few minutes, and perhaps buy a t-shirt on the way out.

## Coney Island

Go out to Coney Island. It's not quite the Boardwalk of Nucky Thompson's Boardwalk Empire (that was in New Jersey anyway), and you won't see Robert de Niro's Jake la Motta (from the 1980 film Raging Bull) training, but some of the places still have the '40s-'50s feel that films and TV series set in the past manage to evoke.

Coney Island isn't actually an island. It is a long stretch of sandy beach on the south-west end of New York, way past Brooklyn, but still the nearest large beach to the city. The Coney Island hotdog is an American icon.

## Museum of Jewish Heritage

Catch the Museum of Jewish Heritage. Entry is a small cost (US\$12, but free if you have the New York Pass), and it offers much more than an account of the Holocaust.

The exhibits give a broad sweep of Jewish life in New York from first-hand accounts of the early immigrants to later contributions to the commercial and cultural life of the city.

\* John Bishop visited New York at his own expense. He blogs on his travel experiences at [www.eatdrinktravel.co.nz](http://www.eatdrinktravel.co.nz)

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