



TAKE A BITE *of the* BIG APPLE

The vibrancy of New York City makes it the perfect destination for couples who want a whirlwind honeymoon full of bright lights and gorgeous sights. By Elisa Scarton.

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ith its dramatic skyline, luxury hotels and world-class restaurants, New York City is effortlessly romantic. It's where Harry met Sally and Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr had an affair to remember. Off the silver screen, the city that never sleeps is the perfect setting for your own love story.



THE HEART OF THE CITY

Ease yourself into the intense energy of New York City with a wander around Times Square. Affectionately called 'The Crossroads of the World', the square is an explosion of neon lights and activity.

In the midst of everything is the city's theatre district, Broadway. Even if you don't like theatre, the experience of spending an evening in one of the city's heritage buildings dressed to the nines is incredibly glamorous. Just make sure you get your tickets early. The best shows sell out quickly and tickets can be snapped up for a fraction of the price at the TKTS booth on 47th Street.

Back in the square, the flashing ads, glittering stores and pulsing red glass staircase can bring on a sensory overload, so if you're feeling a bit overwhelmed, seek refuge in Carmine's – the city's legendary Italian restaurant. The intimate crimson booths are the perfect spot to watch the action of the square and the restaurant is renowned for its pastas and cheesecakes.

Unlike other cities of its size, New York truly is made for a lovers' stroll. The Rockefeller Center is a short walk from Times Square and a great alternative if you want to take in the breathtaking city skyline without having to battle the masses.

Of course, a honeymoon in New York City isn't complete without a shopping spree and The Rockefeller Center sits at the feet of what seems like the world's longest shopping strip – 5th Avenue. Even if your budget doesn't include Louis Vuitton, Fifth Avenue is still worth a visit. Stop at luxury department store Saks Fifth Avenue just to sneak a peek at the latest fashion, wander through Tiffany & Co. Sure, you already have the ring, but there's no harm in getting something to match!

URBAN PARADISE

It's hard to think of a more romantic way to start the day in New York City than with breakfast in one of the cute artisan coffee shops that seem to dot every corner. Ess-a-Bagel in Midtown is usually packed with couples snuggling up to a pot of coffee and a pile of bagels.

Get a table by the window and order anything with cream cheese to see what all the fuss is about!

After breakfast make your way to Central Park. This oasis in the middle of the city is more than 150 years old and has everything from beautifully landscaped gardens to wild patches of woodlands that are easy to get lost in. A word to the wise though, Central Park is too big to explore in a day, so it's best to choose what you want to see before you leave your hotel.

Belvedere Castle is a good place to start. Built with the whimsical nature of the park at its heart, the castle looks like it's tumbled out of a fairytale. Climb the stairs to one of the two balconies to admire sweeping views. After that, you could easily enjoy a few relaxing hours in the incredible Central Park Zoo, or, if the weather's nice, rent a row boat and mill about on the waters of the park's reservoir.

But you don't have to commit yourself to any of the attractions in Central Park. A simple stroll through the gardens is romantic enough, and there's a certain pleasure in unexpectedly stumbling across the beautiful bronze statue of *Alice in Wonderland* or the Imagine plaque in the garden's Strawberry Fields, honouring John Lennon.

HARBOUR HONEYMOON

New York City life is not all about sweeping skyscrapers and busy streets. One look at the tranquil waters of the city's harbour is more than enough to make you feel like you've wandered into a sanctuary by the sea.

The waterfront is surrounded by the picturesque Bowling Green park, and the area is one of the oldest in New York City. While the park itself is definitely worth a visit, Bowling Green is better known as the departure point for most of the harbour's ferries.

Depending on the weather, you can cruise to Ellis Island, Staten Island, the Statue of Liberty, and all the way to the Jersey Shore from here.

Lady Liberty with her regal torch and crown is a favourite with tourists, as is Ellis Island's immigration museum, but for a truly enjoyable and romantic experience there's no better place than Governors Island – an unexpected treat in such a big city.

For the perfect end to a day on the harbour, book a dinner and cruise. The World Yacht leaves Pier 81 every evening for a leisurely trip down the Hudson, around the tip of Manhattan, under Brooklyn Bridge and past the Statue of Liberty.

The view of New York City is spectacular and your vantage point from the harbour will deliver a breathtakingly romantic experience.

There is nothing more spectacular than New York City lit up at night and there's no better spot to admire it in than on the harbour.

GREAT ESCAPE

The allure of New York City means you can happily lose yourself for weeks without ever getting bored. But there's no reason to stick to the CBD, especially when gorgeous neighbourhoods like Greenwich Village are only a short subway ride away.

In the 1950s, Greenwich Village gave birth to the Beat Generation – a group of talented and eccentric artists idealising over new means of expression. It was home to Bob Dylan, Jack Kerouac and Dylan Thomas, and before them iconic American authors Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman and Mark Twain.

At the heart of the village is Washington Square Park. Part garden, part circus, it's always bustling with jugglers, stand-up comedians, sweethearts, chess players and fortune tellers. Soak up the charm of Greenwich Village's secret courtyards and cobblestone alleys by yourself, or enlist the services of tour guide doyenne Martha Danielle Lanzillotti. *The Official New York City Guide* recommends Martha as one of the best tour guides and the sprightly Manhattan local will take you to the village's most beautiful parks, super-hip shops, music clubs, experimental theatres and coffee houses.

New York is also a diner's dream, and when it comes time to eat in, you can't go past One if by Land, Two if by Sea in Greenwich Village.

Fall in love with Melbourne-born chef Andrew Matthews and his signature dish, grilled soft shell crab with pear puree and black trumpet mushrooms. But if you're looking for something a little more traditional, wander over to Little Italy, Chinatown, Little India or the other local districts serving up the hearty fare the city is famous for.



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WEEKEND RENDEZVOUS

New York on the weekend is a completely different city. Saturday is the day to get in touch with America's country roots at the Union Square Greenmarket, where fresh fruit, cheese and breads are *de rigueur*.

A New York weekend is also the chance to take in the city's many high-end and avant-garde galleries. The very chic APF Lab exclusively handles some of the country's finest artists from Richard Phillips to Jessica Craig-Martin. While you might have to be a lover of fine art to shop at the APF Lab or other city galleries, you don't have to have anything more than a passing interest in the subject to visit New York's many museums and exhibitions.

Whatever you do, don't miss The Metropolitan Museum of Art. It's open until 9pm on Saturdays and you'll need every second to appreciate the collections of art history. As the sun sets on the New York City weekend, take the subway to Brooklyn Bridge or maybe even Coney Island. Despite its name, the island is actually a New York City neighbourhood, with amusement rides, a circus and burlesque show.

It's like being at a 1950s carnival, complete with Ferris wheel, cotton candy and games. And while it might not sound like it, Coney Island is the perfect way to end your honeymoon in New York. Especially if you're lucky enough to enjoy the fireworks on the beach. ☺



Opposite page: Ice skating at the Rockefeller Centre and Guggenheim Museum.

Above: Peak hour on Fifth Avenue. Below: A must see, Times Square light show.



Staying IN STYLE

NEW YORK CITY HAS MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE OF BOUTIQUE HOTELS THAT WON'T BLOW THE BUDGET, BUT ARE LUXURIOUS ENOUGH TO ENSURE YOU'LL NEVER WANT TO LEAVE.

GRAMERCY PARK HOTEL

In its own words, this Manhattan hotel has all the haute bohemian heritage of a French provincial palace. That means plush velvet carpeting and custom-made antique furniture, accented by the odd marble fireplace and clearly expensive crystal chandelier. When not admiring the Renaissance colour palette of your room, admire the city from the hotel's iconic rooftop garden and bar, The Gramercy Terrace. It's part gentleman's club, part Amsterdam coffee house in design, and completely eclectic in its furniture choice.

THE GREENWICH HOTEL

Robert de Niro's luxury hotel in TriBeCa has everything that is hot in hotel design. There's no cookie cutter minimalist design here. Instead the rooms are finished with Tibetan silk rugs, Moroccan tiles and stylishly mismatched furniture. The entire effect is tranquil and comforting, especially if you're lucky enough to land a room with a sauna. But the hotel's best feature is its 250-year-old bamboo farmhouse, transported from Kyoto and rebuilt by Japanese craftsmen to become a spa centre and pool.

SOHO HOUSE

New York's Meatpacking District is buzzing, electric and beyond chic, and the Soho House fits that bill perfectly. Its cool British vibe is complemented by mod seventies furniture and signature egg-shaped bathtubs and gorgeously polished timber flooring. This laidback atmosphere is continued at the rooftop pool, where you can sip an array of custom cocktails on green-and-white-striped chaise lounges.

THE SURREY

This Upper East Side hotel has all the style of a 1940s glamour girl, and indeed it has hosted some of the very best, including Bette Davis and Claudette Colbert. Since then, its interior has undergone a very modern renovation and grey-speckled marble, leather and glass roofs now define the décor, but you could still imagine JFK booking a room.