



## CITY BREAK: NEW YORK CITY REVIEW

14th July 2018 Charlie Stong

*Charlie Stong visited New York with his wife, Hayley, and their five-year-old daughter, Nellie, recently. Here he tells the story of the second half of his trip to the Big Apple.*

### DAY THREE:

With our body clocks slowly setting themselves to US Eastern Time – today I woke up at 7am rather than 5.30am – we headed out for breakfast in Bryant Park, one of Manhattan’s few parks outside Central Park.

It’s more like one of London’s West End squares than a park, but a little piece of tranquillity amidst the madness of Midtown, and a place where many New Yorkers enjoy breakfast on the go before a day at the office.

So time had arrived for the scariest moment of the trip – for me at least. The ascent to the ‘Top of The Rock’. Now let me tell you one thing, I am not good with heights. Two weeks ago my legs went slightly jellified when going up the escalator at North Greenwich station on my journey to work. And the last time – and I mean last time – I went on the London Eye, I sat clinging to the central bench in terror.

Number 30 Rockefeller Plaza is the centrepiece of the Rockefeller Centre. It’s not the tallest building in New York – that feat now rests with One World Trade Center. But at 872ft, it’s high enough for me, thank you very much. As we got into the lift – sorry, elevator – the other 15 people were captivated by the light show in the roof, which shimmered and flickered as the box ascended the 70 storeys of its shaft in a mere 43 seconds.

I only knew this because I asked Hayley what was going on. My eyes were firmly fixed to the floor. Before we knew it we were at the top, and to my eternal relief when we got out we were still inside the building in an enclosed area with windows all around revealing the spectacular view.

The sight was magnificent – the sprawling rectangular Central Park to the north taking everyone’s eye – the taxis below like little yellow ants on the horizon. Hayley and Nellie – our five-year-old, let me remind you – went up the escalator a couple of floors higher to the very top,

an area exposed to the elements with people protected by high glass surroundings. But there was no way I was doing that.

We couldn't resist a quick picture which superimposed the three of us on to that famous shot – *Lunch atop a Skyscraper* – the picture of construction workers having lunch with their feet dangling over the edge of a beam 840ft up.

Safely back on the ground we hopped on the Subway to World Trade Center, passed the memorial to the victims of 9/11 and made our way south towards Battery Park, where we enjoyed lunch at Pier A Harbor House before catching the Staten Island ferry.

I probably don't need to give this tip, as it's often the first thing mentioned when you speak to someone who has been to New York, but the Staten Island ferry, which gives you a superb view of New York's number one tourist attraction – the Statue of Liberty – is free, a service provided for the Staten Island commuters but almost always crammed with tourists.

Although it was a rather grey, misty day, the boat passes so closely by the statue we had a great view of the old lady – and with the ride being free the sight looks all that much better.

After another day on our feet we jumped jack on the subway and then the Crosstown bus, which does exactly what it says on the tin at 42nd Street, back to the Yotel. At the end of another exhausting and exhilarating day there was just enough time for a quick change and a bite to eat at the wonderful Meme, a Mediterranean restaurant on 10th Avenue just a block from our beds – we had done enough walking for one month, let alone one day.



#### **DAY FOUR**

Day four of our whistle-stop tour of the Big Apple started with a trip to McDonald's – I'm not proud, you can't avoid them when in the States and, if you're going to go to one, why not the one with giant sparkling letters which spell out the name of the place right across Times Square?

Comfort food was increasingly what we needed – we were well on our way to walking 30 miles in four days. So after a quick breakfast we headed out to cram as much as possible into the final day of this wonderful trip.

We started with a Subway trip to the Upper West Side. We had a little time to kill before the American Museum of Natural History opened at 10am so headed for the Dakota apartment building – the block where John Lennon lived with Yoko Ono – and the beautiful Strawberry

Fields, the 2.5-acre landscaped oasis of Central Park created by Yoko and designed by Bruce Kelly, which is dedicated to John's memory.

After that it was time for a quick tour around the American Museum of Natural history and then a Subway ride to catch the Circle Line, possibly the highlight of the whole trip.

The Circle Line offers a number of boat trips, one of which is its signature 2½ hour circular trip of Manhattan, which took us south from the pier at the westernmost 12th Avenue with 43rd Street. The tour is an amazingly educational trip around the island. The views of Manhattan are breathtaking and, being a circular tour, you are treated to views of all five of New York's boroughs – Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx and Staten Island, as well as New Jersey.

It passes by a great number of hugely significant worldwide centres of interest. It takes in the monumental buildings of Midtown, the southern financial district and One World Trade Center – the imposing building erected on the site of the Twin Towers, the New Jersey waterfront city of Hoboken – famously home of Frank Sinatra, the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, Brooklyn itself, the 59th Street Bridge – made even more famous by Simon & Garfunkel, Harlem, The Bronx and the scene of the miracle of US Airways Flight 1549, where all 155 people on board the stricken flight were rescued after the pilot successfully landed the plane in the Hudson river in 2009.

Before our return home there was just enough time for a quick walk along the High Line – one of the city's newest attractions. The High Line is a 1.45-mile-long elevated linear park, greenway and rail trail created on a former New York Central Railroad spur on the west side of Manhattan.

And so it was back to Yotel to grab our bags and a taxi ride to Penn station from where we joined the commuters – none too impressed with the size of our bags – on the journey over to New Jersey and, for us, the Liberty International Airport at Newark.

We had been in Manhattan for a mere four days, but we crammed enough in for what seemed like a month. But one of the joys of New York is that no matter how many times you go back, there's still plenty more to do the next time. And that's exactly why we'll be back there before too long.

### ***A modern, funky hotel chain which works perfectly for a quick NYC trip***

For our second and third nights we moved to YOTEL, on 10th Avenue. YOTEL is a modern, funky hotel chain designed for people on the go. It operates with fewer staff than most hotels. There's the YOBOT, a robot which helps you store your luggage if checking out early, check in and out done via screens at the hotel and your mobile phone, and a bed which retracts during the day. But friendly staff are there to help if you need any questions answered.

Our room had a double bed and a bunk above for Nellie – who absolutely loved it. The rooms are small but perfectly formed. At the YOTEL you get seamless intuitive service, a buzzing atmosphere and one of the largest outdoor hotel terraces in New York City – and, of course, all of this in a super central location in Midtown Manhattan.



What sets the YOTEL aside from other NYC hotels is the clever design, which optimises every inch of space and creates contemporary areas for co-working and socialising. The hotel is located in Midtown, just two blocks west of Times Square on the corner of 10th Avenue and West 42nd Street at 570 10th Avenue, NY 10036. There's also super-fast free WiFi throughout the hotel.

Inspired by luxury first class aircraft design, the hotel rooms – or 'cabins' – are super comfortable, smartly designed and adaptable spaces. YOTEL prides itself on not just being a place to sleep, but a place where you can work or be social. It is home to the Green Fig restaurant, cool bars, a co-working lounge and one of the city's largest hotel terraces where you can enjoy everything from hot beverages, a la carte breakfast in the morning, as well as casual sharing plates and amazing cocktails all day long.

The hotel is a great base from which to explore New York. It is just two blocks from the Port Authority bus station, 20 minutes' walk or a quick cab journey from Penn Station and Grand Central, only 45 minutes from LaGuardia, and an hour from both JFK and Newark airports. For more information, plus rates and availability, visit [www.yotel.com](http://www.yotel.com).

### ***See NY with New York City Passes***

We wanted to see as much of New York in our four days as possible, so we picked up some New York City Passes to help us along the way.

Visitors to New York City can find it overwhelming, but not if they're using CityPASS tickets – the very best attractions hand-picked and wrapped up in an easy-to-use package that will save you money and time.



Because CityPASS tickets are valid for nine consecutive days starting with the first day of use, there's no need to feel rushed – you can see the city that never sleeps at your own pace, and truly enjoy the experience.

Read more at <https://www.citypass.com/new-york#kc1OqhODHusWm2qz.99>  
See [www.nycgo.com](http://www.nycgo.com) for more information on the city.