

Welcome to New York City

A Crowdsourced Guide by Davidson Alumni and Parents

Top “Must Do” Items in the City

- Walk across the Brooklyn Bridge. You get an amazing view of the city between 4 and 6 p.m., get a chance to explore DUMBO (Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass) which has great eats, and then walk back with a beautiful sunset.
- Walk The High Line.
- Ride the Staten Island Ferry.
 - If you need an end destination for that cruise, go to Governor's Island, home to great art and nature installations.
 - The Staten Island Ferry runs every 30 minutes in each direction. It's about 20 minutes each way; you can ride from the southern tip of Manhattan past the Statue of Liberty to Staten Island. For views of the statue, board on the right side of the boat. You can walk around the park after getting off the ferry, take pictures, and get back on the next ferry back to Manhattan.
- Visit the major museums, of course, Met, MOMA, AMNH. But smaller ones like the Frick and the Hispanic Society museum are jewels.
- Visit Ground Zero and the 9/11 Memorial. Troublingly commercialized, but important to see.
- Take your visiting family and friends to the top of the Empire State Building and to the Statue of Liberty.
- Explore live music as much as possible.
 - Free music at Lincoln Center and Madison Square Park in the summer.
 - Smalls in the West Village is great for heavy (or even casual) jazz fans.
- Stay out way too late: you have to. On your way home from staying out too late, get a cheap slice of pizza and don't regret it in the morning.
- Visit Central Park, and take advantage of its many programs, like Film Festival and SummerStage. Have a picnic there.
- See the city from the Top of the Rock, an observation deck in midtown Manhattan at Rockefeller Center.
- Go to Brooklyn in general. Too often Manhattanites are afraid to venture into Brooklyn. Don't let the distance deter you.
- See Manhattanhenge, when the setting sun is aligned with the east-streets of the main street grid of Manhattan.
- Do a Watson Adventures Scavenger Hunt.
- Explore the Financial District in downtown Manhattan. Lots of history and old buildings (mixed in with new residential conversions), which we tend to pave over and ignore.
- Explore the NY Botanical Garden in the Bronx, with 50 acres of virgin forest.
- Take the M4 bus. The ride will introduce you to a lot of Manhattan, from Penn Station, over to 5th Ave., across 100th Street to Broadway and up B'way to the Cloisters, a wonderful museum, part of the Met, with the unicorn tapestries and medieval cloisters and chapels.

- Go to the NY Aquarium.
- Check out Honorable William Wall, Manhattan Sailing Club's floating clubhouse.
- Go to the Hester Street Fair on the Lower East Side.
- Go to the Union Square holiday market and to Eataly.
- Thoughts on Coney Island:
 - I wouldn't recommend swimming but there is a beautiful aquarium, Luna Park adventure park, quick eats, and a nice boardwalk.
 - Go to Coney Island—easily accessible on the subway.
 - See a Coney Island Cyclones minor league baseball game.
 - Eat pupusas after swimming with the Polar Bears on Coney Island on New Year's Day.
 - Don't bother with Coney Island, but if you do go, DO NOT RIDE THE CYCLONE.”
- Visit Yankee Stadium.
- Run the Brooklyn Half Marathon. 20k people on the boardwalk.
- Kayak on the Hudson for free during the summer months. It's fun, interesting, and extremely cool to kayak around the Hudson River with views of the NYC and NJ skylines and the Statue of Liberty within striking distance.
- Watch the NYC marathon. 4th Ave in Brooklyn offers a less crowded view and a chance to see the women front runners. Just go for a 1/2 hour - the energy is infectious!
- Bike.
 - Brooklyn bike paths and Prospect Park are great.
 - Bike around the perimeter of Manhattan.
 - Jump on a Citibike and RIDE!
 - DEFINITELY bike on the West Side Highway - it's safe and beautiful!
- Ride Jane's Carousel (DUMBO) or the SeaClass Carousel at Battery Park.
- Swim in a public pool. Try the Olympic sized pool in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.
- Take a quick trapeze class at South Street Seaport. Cute area to explore and get a beautiful view of the water.
- Watch hoops at W. 4th and 6th Avenue and other playgrounds.
- See a Broadway show. Get discount tickets at the TKS booth.
- Go see a play.
- See the Panorama of NYC at the Queens Museum of Art.
- Find a lecture/art series you like. I'm a big fan of The Moth (radio show) and Secret Science Club.
- See the free exhibitions organized by the Public Art Fund.
- Visit the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.
- Visit The Cloisters museum and gardens.
- Check out Fraunces Tavern. Where Washington bid farewell to his troops, and had decent food at last visit!
- Visit the Intrepid Museum. Fun for all ages.
- Visit the Teddy Roosevelt birthplace.
- Go to AFROPUNK in Brooklyn (August) and the International African Arts Festival in Brooklyn (July).
- See the Daily Show or SNL.

- Visit the Museum of Natural History on the Upper West Side. You'll never get bored here. The Hayden Planetarium is connected to the museum and has great programs too.
- Circle Line Tour (boat tour around island of Manhattan). You'll learn a lot about the city and enjoy great views the whole way.
- Go to First Saturdays at the Brooklyn Museum (free and jampacked with events).
- Check out the Studio Museum in Harlem for Free Sundays.

The Must-Dos OUT of the City

- Get out of NYC and visit Jersey. There is so much to offer there.
- Go hiking at Breakneck Ridge, accessible by MetroNorth.
- Go to The Dickens Festival at Port Jefferson, Long Island. A lovely old port and shipbuilding town, although a bit crowded during the festival. Accessible by LIRR and cab and by ferry from Bridgeport, CT.
- Take the Metro-North train up the Hudson River Valley.
- Visit Dia: Beacon (modern and contemporary art museum) in Beacon, New York.
- Visit Olana (painter Frederic Church's historic home) in Hudson, New York.
- Visit Rhinebeck, New York.
- Take a two-hour bus from Penn Station to New Paltz - Upstate. Winter Wonderland—Somehow I've only been in the winter despite other seasons being so beautiful! Big climbing community, hiking, cross country skiing...
- Visit Montauk in Long Island. A 2-3 hr. train ride from Penn Station. Absolutely magical. Take a surf lesson! Even late into the fall...the sunsets are the most beautiful I've seen anywhere in the world. The light is gorgeous and the people are laid-back and friendly. Amazing local seafood. Best to have a car but you can get around on bikes if you're central enough.
- Visit Fire Island.
- Go to Long Beach for a beach day. You can get there on the LIRR (Long Island Rail Road).
- Find a few friends and get a time share in the Hamptons for the summer. But plan ahead!
- Hike at Rockaway Beach in Cold Spring. Take the Beach Bus to the Rockaways.
- Go to Vermont in the winter for the skiing or the fall for the foliage.
- Take kids to The North Fork and Shelter Island Woodland Valley campground.
- Visit Robert Moses Beach / State Park on Long Island.
- Visit Four Freedoms Park on Roosevelt Island.
- Go to Jersey Gardens. A great day trip for some really close outlet shopping. You can drive or use public transit.
- Hike in the Palisades along the Hudson River—just across the George Washington Bridge into NJ.
- Visit the Storm King Art Center in the Hudson River Valley.
- Go see a Red Bulls Soccer Game at the Red Bulls Stadium in NJ (NJ Path Train).
- Visit the wineries on the North fork of Long Island (accessible by bus).
- Attend the fall festival and maple weekend festival at Critz Farms (Cazenovia, NY).

What We Wish We'd Known / Advice for Alumni New to the City

- Reach out to alumni - they want to help!
- I think perhaps more so than any other city, there are some extreme highs and extreme lows to living in NYC as a young alum. The cost of living makes the day-to-day that much more of a grind, but the advantages of all the city has to offer -- the diversity of job opportunities, of cultures, and of activities -- makes it all worthwhile in my opinion.
- Don't stick to the 'hipster'/popular locations but venture out to the hidden gems.
- Consider commuting to save money. Hoboken is awesome! Also, New York City can be big and overwhelming, so I think it's important to find your niche or your communities.
- If you don't know what neighborhoods you like, sublet for a month or so and figure it out before committing long-term.
- Get out there, and don't stay in your apartment.
- Live in Jersey for cheaper rent, taxes and living expenses.
- No bigger waste of money than taking cabs. Learn to love the subway.
- Embrace the city and its idiosyncrasies. It might initially be outside your comfort zone because NYC is a tougher place to live than most places in the country.
- Make friends outside of Davidson network.
- Take advantage of all the city has to offer, but don't get overwhelmed. You really don't have to go out every night!
- Get out of your neighborhood and explore all five boroughs. They're a treasure and you don't want to miss them.
- You stand "on line," not "in line."
- You don't have to live in Manhattan to get the NYC experience—with public transportation, everything is a hop, skip, and a jump away! Also, there is a huge difference between living comfortably and comfortably living.
- That even if you do not love it or it's tough for you in the beginning, if you hang in there and stay if it's the right place for you to be for your career and you give it all you've got socially and professionally, and you reach for the stars ...it will love you back!
- I wish I'd gotten out of the city to be out in nature for weekend breaks MUCH sooner than I did. My happiness in NY is largely due to the balance I find on the coast and in the mountains.
- Public transportation is really very easy--don't be afraid of it. It's the cheapest and quickest way around town. That and walking. Sometimes walking 20-30 blocks is quicker than any form of public transportation.
- Brooklyn is the best borough. I avoided it the first year or so I was here, and now I go there at least once a week. Great restaurants, museums, parks, bars. Less crowded.
- Buy a good pair of high rain boots—the puddles accumulate and don't drain at the crosswalks, and stay for days. Can be worn when it snows or rains.
- Buy a nice, heavy winter jacket. It gets cold and there are wind tunnels and you walk outside a lot, so it's a worthwhile investment.
- Don't be afraid of haggling with brokers.
 - The price that they list is always higher than needed, so you should fight back against broker fee percentages, monthly rents, and security deposits. It might be intimidating at first because you don't want to lose that dream apartment, but let's be honest, it

probably isn't your dream apartment anyway. If you can afford your dream apartment, then you probably don't mind the few extra dollars you might save from haggling.

- Brokers are shady; be ready to compromise when it comes to your living space but prioritize your “must-haves” and don't feel like you have to jump on the first place you find.
- How the streets and avenues work and that 5th Avenue is the divide between the east and west sides.
- Sell your car. Pay for professional movers.
- Use your employer's wage works for pre-tax public transit.
- EVERYTHING can be negotiated.
- Get discounted Broadway tickets at TKTS (brave the cold and there is no line).
- A yellow taxi cab with its roof light on is available; if its roof light is off, that means the cab is occupied. This will save you lots of frustration!

Where to Eat

- Check out some of the donut shops like Doughnut Plant and Dough.
- Take the Cupcake Tour of New York.
- Have lunch in Bryant Park.
- Eat Korean BBQ.
- Eat a Nathan's hot dog.
- Have a peeled mango on a stick.
- Check out the Frying Pan, a docked boat in Chelsea that has great views of the city and has good bar food, drinks.

What to Read

- *New York Magazine*
 - It's the Bible.
 - I use it for restaurants. Search by neighborhood, cuisine critics picks...and their Best of NY issues for best- rated anything and everything from the most practical to the most specialized.
- *The New Yorker*. Search by neighborhood, critics pick, etc. for events near you on any given day. I use it mostly for critic's picks - dance performances, gallery visits...
- *New York Magazine*, *The New York Times*, and *The New Yorker* all cover what's happening in NYC from arts to politics to real estate.
- Read the SUBWAY PAPERS (metro and AMNY). They have awesome ideas and info about concerts and exhibits and all sorts of things going on in the city.
- Eater NY
- Curbed NY
- Racked NY
- EV Grieve
- Gothamist
- Gotham Gazette
- www.brownstoner.com

- *The Village Voice* is a storied alt-weekly that has less influence in NYC than it might have 40 years ago, but still has exhaustive lists and ads for all the upcoming concerts, comedy shows, etc. in various boroughs and venue sizes, and includes articles on material that other papers may not cover. You can find free paper copies around the city.
- NYCGO.com
- Howaboutwe.com has really great local date ideas.
- Catchafire.com is a great way to match skills with ideas for giving back.
- Seamless is a terrific app for ordering in (which most New Yorkers do).
- Streeteasy is a helpful source for finding an apartment.
- Bib Gourmand List - Michelin Guide's Cheap Eats
- NYCT Subway Service Twitter feed
- PONCHO Twitter feed for weather updates
- The Skimm - email newsletter for summary of current events
- www.nonsensenc.com / The Skint
- Playbill.com
- AM New York
- Time Out
- Thrillist
- DNAinfo.com

Note from Alumni Relations: While we don't keep these guides updated year round, we do ask alumni and parents in our chapters for updates to them each fall when we send out our Welcome to the City invitation. If you'd like to add something, we'd love if you could hold your recommendation until next fall!