

Made in MANHATTAN

Fillian Bolger skips the tourist trail to eat, drink and live like a local on a once-in-a-lifetime city break to New York



Dining is an experience at Eleven Madison Park



GETTING THERE
Aer Lingus (aerlingus.com) flies four times daily to New York, with three departures from Dublin and one service from Shannon. The newest flight departs Dublin at 7.50am arriving in New York at 10.20am, making a day trip possible... in theory, at least! Fares start from €229pp each-way, including taxes.



WHERE TO STAY
Park Avenue's famous Loews Regency ([above, loewshotels.com](http://above.loewshotels.com)) is back on the hot list after a \$100m revamp. Art Deco-meets-21st-century style, it's the home of the original Power Breakfast, set two blocks from Central Park, and offers some of the biggest bedrooms in Manhattan. Rooms from \$299/€274 a night.

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WHAT TO PACK
New York novices looking to see the sights should pick up a CityPASS (citypass.com; \$114pp) before leaving home. Buy online and you'll save 42pc on landmarks like the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Guggenheim and MoMA. You can choose six of nine attractions.

and colours combined to deliver a truly sensational dish.

Reservations for Humm's hotspot only open 28 days in advance, and we needed help from our concierge to land a table. New York's concierges are some of the city's best-connected people. I bring chocolates for ours, as she's also managed to bag us seats in the city's most talked about new opening: *Cosme*.

Exploring is the key to getting the best of New York (and walking off any dining indulgences) so we venture out to Brooklyn both days, hitting a cool seafood bar for Saturday brunch, where hipsters drop by to select fish for their loft dinner parties (greenpointfish.com).

Charmed by the chilled neighbourhood vibe, we return the next day to try a popular Asian-American joint,

TALDE (taldebrooklyn.com). We land a table amongst young families and hung-over creatives ordering Asian Bloody Marys and legendary chicken wings. For a brief moment, we're living the dream.

If there's one thing New Yorkers love even more than a cool restaurant opening, it's a cool new gallery, and the rather shiny Whitney Museum of American Art is currently the talk of the town. On the day we arrive the ribbon is cut on this 220,000sq ft-gallery that seems to have more sparkling facets than a prized diamond. Queues snake down the block as we approach via the High Line, one of New York's simplest and newest attractions.

Running along Manhattan's West Side, this disused rail track has been reinvented as a wonderful public park that weaves between the buildings. We grab coffees and stroll along the elevated track, the sunlight playing off pretty wild flowers, colourful art installations and glossy buildings. Stopping to lounge on curved seats I turn to my husband. "So, how was it for you?" I ask hopefully.

The grin that greets me suggests one thing: The City that Never Sleeps has stolen yet another man's heart.



Burn off those calories with a stroll on New York's High Line

Happy Birthday! I shriek, handing my husband an envelope containing four cryptic notes: 'Tracker Plan', 'Esquires Mat', 'Ape Termites', and 'Huff Naivete' they read. "They're all two-word anagrams," I grin. "See if you can figure them out."

Once he works out Central Park the game is up. He doesn't need to decipher Times Square, Empire State or Fifth Avenue to know that I've booked him a surprise birthday trip to New York, a city he's never visited. With our kids farmed out, time surreptitiously booked off work and a swanky hotel lined up on Park Avenue, I'm pretty confident I'm in Wife of the Year territory. And that's before the Business Class upgrade.

Two weeks later, Manhattan greets us like an exotic black tourmaline glowing in the sun. Rising from the Hudson, clusters of multi-faceted skyscrapers shimmer like crystals in the intense light. When you visit one of the most filmed cities in the world, every second streetscape delivers an exhilarating sense of déjà-vu.

We're here without the kids, so we agree to skip the tourist sights to make like Manhattanites. "What do locals do on their weekends?" I ask via social media.

The ideas come thick and fast from Big Apple-based friends — some ex-pats, others native Noo Yawkahs. Brunch in Brooklyn. Hit the High Line. Cocktails in the Meatpacking District. Jog in Central Park. A few digital exchanges and our itinerary seems complete.

"Sold!" we agree, as we check into the Loews Regency, our historic digs on Park Avenue. Yellow cabs zip past, honking impatiently. The traffic may be manic in Manhattan, but somehow, the chaos simply adds to the charm. Come here expecting noise and energy, and the city won't let you down.

Working with our jet lag, we rise early, unfurl our sports gear and pound two blocks West to Central Park. Ever seen joggers with huge grins on their faces? Well here we are, looping around a park we've never set foot in before but seem to know intimately. It's surreal.

Before you dub us fitness freaks, let me

explain. Notwithstanding the fact that we never get to work out together in Dublin, nor that jogging seems to be a New York rite of passage, we have ulterior motives. Did I mention that I booked five restaurants before leaving Ireland?

Don't judge me: I love my food and only a fool will come to the restaurant capital of the world without lining up a few reservations. First up, there's Eleven Madison Park (elevenmadisonpark.com), with its three-Michelin stars. Not only is it the number one restaurant in North America, and fifth in the world, (according to San Pellegrino's World's 50 Best Restaurants) but Daniel Humm's tasting menus are the stuff of legend. Lunch or dinner, everyone is served 15-course extravaganzas (at \$225/€233pp, it's best to come hungry and with 3+ hours to spare), championing seasonal and local produce.

Despite wonderful lobster, foie gras and veal dishes, our standout course was succulent fresh pike covered in a flower of paper-thin radishes and served with a vibrant green nasturtium leaf sauce. Original and delicious, the flavours, textures

3 must-dos...



COCKTAILS AT COSME

Opened by top Mexican chef Enrique Olvera, Cosme's dark minimalist interior is full of stylish couples ordering the same dish — duck carnitas (\$59/€54 to share), a feast of shredded meat and warm corn tortillas. The Paloma, a tequila grapefruit cocktail, had my name all over it. cosmenyc.com



FOOD TRUCK FUEL

New York's famous for its food truck culture. Not in a hurry? Join the lunchtime queues and enjoy the buzz and banter of hungry office workers on their breaks. From tacos to lobster rolls, dumplings to souvlaki, you'll find your favourite cuisine on street corners all around the city. nycgo.com



PROBE THE PAST

Take a day trip to Ellis Island, where over 12 million immigrants arrived by ship between 1892 and 1924 — the superb museum offers a powerful link to their stories. My great-grandmother made this trip over 100 years ago: it felt humbling to tread in her footsteps. libertyellisfoundation.org