

# TRAVEL

Let's dance  
Waiting Waters — water that dances to classical music — will be the newest attraction for tourists this summer in Pigeon Forge, Tenn./D-2

Piazza Navona  
Romans call it their living room — the Piazza Navona, where you can watch artists drawing caricatures or kids playing soccer./D-4

## HOTELS

By Hunter Drohojowska

It's true that New York City is friendlier than it used to be. But even at its most friendly, it's still...

Aunt Mennie, the contentious relative who is dreaded at large family functions. By the end of a day with Manhattan, after you've argued with cabbies, newspaper jockeys, waitresses, fellow sidewalk travelers, both locals and strangers, who needs confrontation with the staff of your hotel? Yet, that is exactly what can happen at the larger hotels, often managed by anonymous bureaucrats employed by chains which in turn have been swallowed in some recent corporate merger. As a result, the elevators are slower than the local subway, the room service is ineffectual to the point of being non-existent, your phone messages are mislaid, garbled or both, the food and decor in the restaurants are banal. For hundreds of dollars a day, you are made to feel like Pruefrock or Dangerfield, but definitely someone who gets no respect. Yet, our Aunt Mennie, being old and cultivated, as well as difficult, still has some charms. There are smaller, independent hotels with a character and independence of spirit usually associated with Europe. They are not inexpensive, and often have quirks of their own, but at least it's an eccentric and particular inefficiency, the sort that real people with names, faces and life histories can attend to. That in itself is more reassuring than mailing a customer complaint card to the corporate presence in Marion, Ohio. We stayed in five such modestly sized hotels, none of them remotely similar, and all of them bustling with business. Each of them made a visit to Manhattan feel like a holiday.

Hotel Elysee, 60 E. 54th St., (212) 753-1066. This quaint operation, built in 1927 and still privately owned by Leon Quain, has a number of extraordinary features. Each of the 97 rooms is decorated in an entirely different motif, with the name of the room prominently — sometimes embarrassingly — posted on the door. We had Japanese, which meant a vaguely Oriental fabric pattern on the bedspread and drapes, some Bamboo accents. Otherwise, it was a very Occidental double room with hair dryer, TV set and three telephones. Other room choices on our floor included Persian, Candy Stripe and Sparta, each outfitted with a room buzzer of a totally different timbre. La Veranda Restaurant, which is part of the hotel, was being renovated to accommodate the second best gourmet kitchen in New York, but the Monkey Bar was open for business. The theme of this room is, as you might expect, simian with more than a dozen '50s-style caricatures of monkeys, mostly playful chimpanzees, leafy jungle wallpaper and leopard-spotted carpet. There is also a piano player. This bar deserves a star on the National Register of Historic Places. (Singles, \$110-\$175; doubles, \$125-\$190; suites, \$250-\$500.)

The Lumbarly, 111 E. 56th St., (212) 753-8600. More home than a hotel, each room is owned and has been decorated by an individual. Carl Reiner and Phyllis Diller live here, and many of the guests are regulars, returning to visit the hotel for over 30 years. Our suite was vast by New York standards, with spacious and airy rooms, decorated in chintz and fine wooden furniture. It's an elegant, elderly ambience reminiscent of the perfectly coiffed and sable-wearing women who stroll Madison Avenue. Other rooms,



## NEW YORK, NEW YORK

A primer on smaller hotels, seafood restaurants and the city's delights

The New York skyline includes some of the world's most recognizable buildings, such as the World Trade Center, in background.

## THEATER

By David Colker

NEW YORK — Broadway may be selling out the ticket situation but it's not a "sell-out" in recent years for theatergoers. It used to be that without "connections," it was tough to get a good seat for a hit show on short notice unless you were willing to pay an exorbitant amount of money for an evening of legal entertainment.

Computerized ticketing at select theaters, has made the difference. It's a lot less likely, now, that a vast number of good tickets will be sidetracked into a black market of unscrupulous agencies and independent scalpers. Of course, tickets for the Broadway musical hits aren't cheap, even when purchased directly from the box office, but you stand less of a chance of being gouged these days. Even better, if you want to see a show that isn't one of the huge hits, you can even get a bargain-priced seat for most performances.

The TKTS half-price ticket service, sponsored by the Theater Development Fund, has greatly changed the economic landscape on Broadway. Established in 1973 in the heart of Times Square (at Broadway and 47th) to encourage theater attendance by people who couldn't afford the full price of a Broadway ticket, it collects unsold tickets on a daily basis from Broadway and off-Broadway theaters and offers them on a first-come-first-served basis.

TKTS has been extremely suc-

cessful — on some days the line of discount ticket buyers stretches over a block long, and checking the board in front of the TKTS booth to see what shows are available has become a Broadway ritual. Ironically, its success probably, some Broadway regulars believe, contributed to the continuing escalation of ticket prices because producers now expect a sizable percentage of their seats to be sold for half price.

Currently, every Broadway show and those in theaters officially designated as off-Broadway

## SIGHTSEEING

By Anne Cooke

NEW YORK — Where do New Yorkers take out-of-town friends for the obligatory BIG TOUR of Manhattan highlights is a fair enough? To visit the hidden, unspoiled corners of the city, of course.

Compiling a list of favorite Big Apple hideaways is a risky business. You're inviting a disputatious New Yorker to debate preferences. New Yorker to debate preferences.

square-mile island where people have lived for more than 350 years, no spot remains unexamined by relentless aficionados.

Still, many special museums, museums and parks are off the major tourist circuits. For travelers with time and energy, they're character-revealing facets of a great world city.

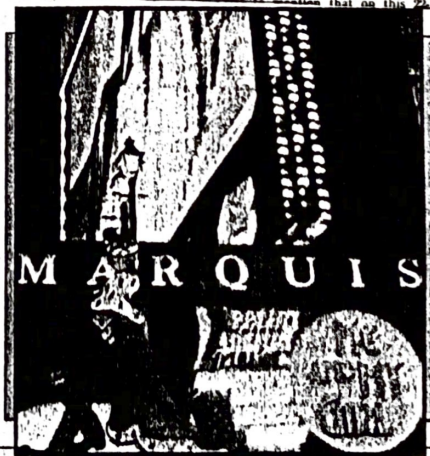
If you haven't got a friend in New York to guide you, try a few of the destinations on this list. They're in order, from south to north, but you can't see them all in one day. Grab a cab or subway to the closest point, unfold your street map and walk. The blocks fly by are wide open, taking in people, places and things.

St. Paul's Chapel and Churchyard, Broadway at Fulton Street. Over-shadowed but not diminished by its outsized neighbor, the World Trade Center, this historic Georgian church built in 1764 is the only church to survive from pre-Revolutionary War.

A chapel of nearby Trinity Church, it was built of native stone. After Washington was inaugurated as our first president, he prayed here in his own pew, now marked with the seal of the United States. Lit by antique Waterford crystal chandeliers, the original interior is quietly solemn. Open daily from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Orchard Street Market, between Houston and Canal streets on the Lower East Side. Here is a delightful madhouse of small stores and outdoor bazaars selling quality clothes and accessories at half-price. Crowded with buildings and alive with people, it's hard to

Sites/D-2



Computerized ticketing makes it easier to enjoy Broadway.

easy to find fresh there; in fact, eating Atlantic seafood in anything but a fresh state back East is downright criminal.

Actually, one of the best things about the great seafood restaurants of the eastern states is the degree to which they're filled with age and tradition. They each go back a solid century, give or take a few years, with a staff that looks as if it's worked there for the better part of that time.

Gage and Tollner wear long aprons, as was the style of the period, and jackets that bear stars and stripes indicating how long a particular staff member has been with the restaurant. It's not unusual to be waited upon by a fellow with more than 40 years of serving chowder to his credit. The place looks like old restaurants should look — there are burnished cherry-wood railings, flocked garnet red wallpaper, etched mirrors, gas-

la Dewey (cream sauce with pimientos), even mutton chops and a decent version of that old standby, lobster thermidor. There's a Brandy Alexander pie for dessert. If you can imagine such a thing; it is food better fit for the girth of Diamond Jim Brady than for our depleted waistlines.

At the relatively youthful age of only 70, the Grand Central Oyster Bar (Grand Central Station, lower level, 42nd Street and Vanderbilt Avenue, 212-490-8650) is just a kid in comparison to Gage and Tollner. But it's also probably the best-known — and the best — seafood restaurant in Manhattan. Aside from chewing corned beef at Carnegie Hall, eating shellfish at the Oyster Bar is one of those absolutely essential New York experiences. The place, in the bowels of Grand Central Station, is awesomely massive, with curved tile ceilings that reflect sound like a shower stall — the noise level in lunch makes the Hard Rock Cafe seem nearly silent by comparison.

Eats/D-3

By Merrill Shindler

It was Bernard Germain Etienne de La Ville, better known as the Comte de Lacedepede, who once said, "The herring is one of those products whose use decides the destiny of empires." The coffee bean, the tea leaf, the spices of the torrid zones, the worm that spins silk, had less influence on the wealth of nations than the northern ocean. The Comte might have mentioned any of a hundred other fish that leap about in that amazing watery stew called the North Atlantic — from lumpfish and gray mullet, through black sea bass, Atlantic silverside, blue whiting, Arctic char and thousands more.

Like it or not, though there's good seafood to be found on the West Coast, the sheer fertility of the North Atlantic makes the Eastern Seaboard one of the greatest seafood eating territories in the world. Fish that are regularly eaten in a frozen state out here are



In New York, for instance, you can devour any of 76 clam and oyster dishes, 10 different preparations of coquilles St. Jacques, and 11 lobster dishes at Gage and Tollner (372 Fulton St., Brooklyn, 718-875-5181), a restaurant that first opened its doors to the fish-eating public back in 1870. Waiters at

burning copper chandeliers and a massive marble bar that could never be moved — it must weigh as much as the entire population of Brooklyn. The dishes here have names born in another era, prepared in manners long out of style — crab meat Virginia (baked with cheese), oysters casino, crab meat a

# Hotels

Continued from page D-1

however, are decorated in entirely different styles, and all have small kitchens with refrigerators. But you won't want to cook if you can dine at the Restaurant Laurent. Scheduling prevented us from taking advantage of this old world dining room, but it is considered to be one of the best French restaurants in a city that is glutted with them. The service is among the best in any hotel. (Studio with bath: single \$115, double \$130; Two-room suite: living room, bedroom, bath \$250.)

**Morgans, 237 Madison Ave., (212) 686-0300 or (800) 334-3408:** We leaped from *ancien regime* to up-to-the-minute styles of the '80s. This hotel can best be described by the interior design cliché: done to death. The bellboys are beefcakes from central casting, outfitted by Giorgio Armani; the interiors are all gray flannel, moire patinas and minimalist luxe by designer Andree Putman, and each room, tiny as it may be, is equipped with stereo cassette deck, VCR, cable TV and art — black and white prints — by Robert Mapplethorpe. Art collectors, dealers, artists, rock stars, TV and film producers, brat-pack stars, the young, the hip and the monied meet here. What else to expect from owners Steve Rubell and Ian Schrager, notorious in the '70s for Studio 54 and now for their ultra-

club Palladium? They know the requirements of their clientele: 24-hour room service with a special lunch-dinner menu loaded with goat cheese, crab cakes and other post-modern delicacies. Complimentary continental breakfast is served but the hours of the actual restaurant are more complicated than a schedule for the New Haven line. Fabulous. You have to see it to believe it. (Single rooms: \$145-\$180; double rooms \$165-\$195; one-bedroom apartments \$250-\$360; weekend rates for singles and doubles \$115; one-bedroom apartments \$160.)

**Howard Hotel, 127 East 55th St., (212) 826-1100 or (800) 221-1074.**

This Barclays-owned hotel is shiny and brand-new but not overly determined. The lobby is flashy but pretty with an abundance of marble and mirrors, Oriental rugs, Old Master-type paintings and English oak chairs. A British rigor and formality affect the staff, which hovers discretely, waiting for your next request. The rooms are quite modern by comparison, and very comfortable, decorated in bold primary colors and patterns, with spacious baths, armchairs, windows swagged by drapes, prints of Matisse cutouts. This building was originally slated for the condo market, and as a result, the rooms are more spacious than usual. The dining room is average but the lounge, the Zodiac bar, is a textbook example of architectural accommodation. Due to a New York State ruling that alcohol cannot be sold

within a certain radius of a house of worship, and the fact that a synagogue is on the corner of the block, the bar has been ingeniously installed at the side of the building. Taller than it is wide, with etched glass panels of zodiac signs, the addition itself has the character of a temple. (Single rooms: \$150-\$260; double rooms \$170-\$280; studio suites \$330.)

**Hotel Algonquin, 59 W. 44th Street, (212) 840-6800.**

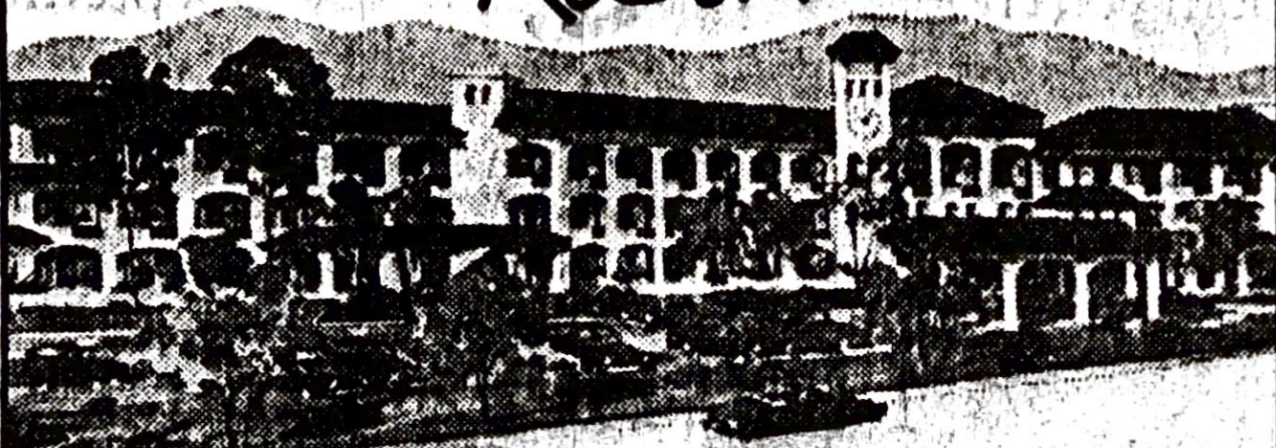
This hotel is small — 190 rooms — but its reputation is larger than the U.N. Plaza. It is known to all of literary bent as the 1920s watering hole for such writers as Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woolcott, Robert Benchley and Harold Ross because of its proximity to the New Yorker offices. The hotel lobby still sports a well-stocked magazine rack, the cat Hamlet and a few other enduring reminders of a by-gone era. To get a drink, you still slam your palm down on a bell at each table; the chairs and sofas in the lobby are arranged for easy surveillance of the endless parade of customers; crab toasts are served during cocktail hour; the only thing older than the waiters is their jokes.

At the Algonquin, you feel at home. The traditionally shabby rooms are being refurbished these days, but never anything radical. This hotel reminds you that, despite everything, you love that crotchety old Aunt Marnie.

*Hunter Drohojowska is a free-lance writer in Los Angeles.*

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