

TRAVEL

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Sex and the City has lured women to New York since the programme first appeared on television 10 years ago, and the recent movie has reignited interest in Manhattan. The film opens with the line, "Every year, twentysomething women come to New York City in search of the two Ls – labels and love." Never more so than now.

A trip to New York City can let you explore the lives of the movie characters and give an insight into the Big Apple's hottest trends.

If you want to see how *Sex and the City's* main character, Carrie Bradshaw, lives, start on her doorstep. Although she is supposed to live on the Upper East Side, her "stoop" used in filming is in the West Village – on Perry Street between Bleecker and West 4th streets.

But let's face it, Carrie is all about fashion. To put yourself in her shoes – literally – you can't go past the Manolo Blahnik store on Fifth Avenue. Coincidentally – or perhaps not – it's just opposite the Museum of Modern Art, and the window displays the most creative footwear: stunning stilettos that are like sculptures for the feet. The famous street is lined with the best shops: Tiffany's, Barneys and Saks Fifth Avenue, to name a fabulous few. If your budget doesn't stretch as far as your imagination, international travellers can get 11 per cent off at Macy's.

Maybe you're more like the television series' Park Avenue princess, Charlotte. Be sure to drop into Hotel Plaza Athenee, in refreshingly quiet 64th street between Park and Madison. The penultimate episode of the series was filmed in its lobby bar. As New York City's only bar with a leather floor, Bar Seine is worth a visit for its decor – a cross between Moroccan, African and Indonesian – and its



Visitors to New York are following in the well-heeled footsteps of Carrie and her cohorts. Louise Goldsbury maps out a likely itinerary

signature drink, the Crystal Cosmopolitan. As any fan knows, the Cosmo was enthusiastically endorsed by the *Sex and the City* girls, and this delicious version sparkles with white cranberry juice. The bar's dim lighting and tucked-away location attracts celebrities such as Nicole Kidman, Pierce Brosnan and Robert De Niro.

In the movie, Charlotte reassures another character, Miranda: "New York magazine said Brooklyn is the new Manhattan." The largest of the five boroughs of New York, Brooklyn is certainly flavour of the month. It's a hip alternative to Manhattan, which, for many people, has become too big and crowded, so try to escape here for at least one day and night. A Brooklyn Pass gets you entry to the botanic garden, Prospect Park Zoo and several museums.

They say you haven't been to New York if you haven't walked over the Brooklyn Bridge, and it plays a key part in the movie too. Day or night, the view is breathtaking, and the Promenade provides a perfect vantage point to look back at Lower Manhattan and the harbour.

Although Samantha, the fourth character in the movie, has moved to Los Angeles, in the television show she lived in the Meatpacking District. This area is super-cool, with the best nightclubs, wine bars and restaurants. Hotel Gansevoort's

rooftop bar has panoramic views of the city's skyscrapers and the Hudson River. In the basement is another quirky bar where VIP lounges are set up in the day spa treatment rooms. Who knows, the "spa-bar" may be the next big thing! The hottest restaurants include Spice Market, Pastis and Vento Trattoria – the latter has a tiny hidden club downstairs, known as Level V, which is lots of fun.

If Carrie and her fiancé Big's pending wedding was your favourite storyline, begin where she announces her engagement: the Museum of Modern Art's restaurant, The Modern (9 West 53rd Street). Then have dinner at Buddakan, in Chelsea, where the wedding rehearsal is held (9th Avenue at West 16th Street). Buddakan is one of New York's newest restaurants and it's a Chinese stunner.

The centerpiece is a two-storey grand hall with huge chandeliers and a banquet table seating 34, which has become the place to dine. Don't miss the infamous wedding venue, New York City Library. Visitors can walk around the building free of charge (Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street). The most impressive part is the mural on the ceiling of the main reading room.

No movie set in, nor trip to,

Day or night, the view from Brooklyn Bridge is breathtaking. The bridge also featured prominently in the film. Photo courtesy New York & Co

New York is complete without taking in Central Park. It's where Carrie and Miranda discuss their man troubles and Charlotte goes jogging. The latest way to explore the park is by using podcasts and downloadable maps – an initiative of Jumeriah Essex House and CentralPark.com. Hotel guests can borrow an MP3 player for interactive walking tours, and other visitors can download the free podcasts from the CentralPark.com website.

So, that's the "City" covered – what about the "Sex"? Over the years, the girls have revealed a few unofficial tips for finding a man in Manhattan. Remember that episode where they hit the jackpot at a sports bar full of men? The scene was filmed at the Coffee Shop in Union Square. It's divided into two sections: one side is lined with booths for those who want to eat, and the other side has a bar for those who want to meet.

Mingle with the young and friendly crowds at Brother Jimmy's, Gin Mill and Bourbon Street, or look out for pubs with big-screen TVs.

To stick to the *Sex and the City* theme, head to Bar 44 at the Royalton Hotel (44 West 44th Street). This is where the wrap party for the movie was held, and its inventive cocktail list puts Cosmo to shame.

In the movie's closing scene, the four women are sipping Cosmo and celebrating Samantha's 50th birthday. Happy at last, they make a toast to the next 50 years. It's a sobering thought. Whatever you do, don't wait half a century to have your New York adventure.

Getting there: Cathay Pacific (cathaypacific.com) has regular flights to New York.

Where to stay: Hotel Plaza Athenee, 37 East 64th St, plaza-athenee.com, Jumeriah Essex House, 160 Central Park South, jumeirahessexhouse.com.



Bar 44, which has an impressive menu of cocktails, is where the wrap party for the movie was held. Photo courtesy of the Royalton Hotel

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