



Why Not New York

It's a city, it's a state, and what's more, it's a state-of-mind.

By Lisa Stahl

Everything in New York pales beside Manhattan, the namesake of a Woody Allen movie and, in recent years, the target of gentrification a la Donald Trump and a few terrorist plots. While this may all seem somehow surreal, it really underscores the essence of New York: cerebral. Unlike their distant cousins in LA, New Yorkers inhabit their minds more than their bodies. You won't find them poring over steam rooms in health clubs, but you will find them poring over an issue of the New Yorker or pawing one another perhaps in an after hours club.

The European style cafés are breeding grounds for the lost art of conversation; here you won't find one laptop hook-up - and you might even meet someone new (New Yorkers are far friendlier than people think). Contrary to popular belief, "true" New Yorkers avoid the subway at all costs.

Winding streets and avenues are race tracks for insolent cabbies and carefully sculpted copper brownstones define the border of the gentile - i.e. fashionable Manhattan vs. - that other "breed" of people - those in the "Boroughs." Here, speech patterns are not merely patterns of practicing actors - but rather pretensions of social class.

As an ex-New Yorker, I eye my past with some nostalgia. While the lifestyle is decidedly less healthy, New York has its points. And - it's clear from the constant exodus of east coast types to California and back that I'm not the only one that entertains

bi-coastal ambivalence.

As for the rest of the state, you'll find your usual scenic mountains replete with real snow for a good six months of the year, fresh air, and even some practicing Catholics.

Pre or post 9/11, Chelsea to SOHO to Central Park, the New York pulse is quick. To talk the talk and walk the walk, you have to do it - fast. Here you can find a job in a day - or see a play on Broadway. The traffic is better than Los Angeles - and so is the smog. Remember, while you're here, tune in to the Late Late Show. Avoid the boroughs, take plenty of showers, get out at night, and get some deep, dark humor and even a touch of irony in your talk. Getting in and out of here is a project - as is finding a habitable apartment - but aside from that, things are not that bad when you're here, and when you're not, you're always a New Yorker. ■