

New York life

The Big Apple may not be for the faint-hearted, but for any student wanting a lively urban experience, there's no place like New York. GILLIAN EVANS reports.

New York City (NYC) is hectic and full-on, representing a roller-coaster ride of experiences. Made up of a tapestry of distinctly different neighbourhoods, New York, dubbed the capital of the world, embraces numerous different cultures to give it that quintessential cosmopolitan feel.

“Students choose to study in New York City for the cultural diversity, access to creative venues such as Broadway shows, world-class museums, ballets, American Jazz, world cinema and for the opportunity to explore one of the world’s most ambitious cities,” asserts Cesar Rennert, President of Rennert Bilingual.

Eimear Harrison, Centre Director for Embassy CES New York, adds, “The cultural diversity and possibilities here make New York an unparalleled experience anywhere in the world.”

New York exudes a certain familiarity, even for first-time visitors, owing to its celebrity status around the world. The Statue of Liberty, the USA’s famous symbol for freedom, looks out over Hudson Bay, with rows of skyscrapers standing on land like a dense concrete forest; yellow taxis weave their way through the traffic, while street per-

formers entertain the hordes of people who stroll through the city each day.

Despite the familiarity of New York, Harrison says, “I think New York often exceeds [students’] expectations as it has layers of discovery. I’m still [discovering new things] eight years after my arrival here.”

According to Jesse Ro, International Marketing Manager at the American Language Communication Center, students who choose to study in New York City

“are able to have one of the greatest cultural experiences of their lives”. She adds, “Not only are there many great museums and events that students can take advantage of, but there is such a great mix of people and cuisine from all around the world.”

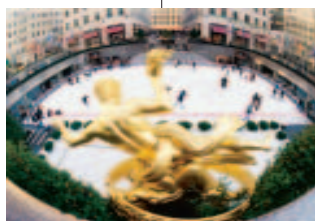
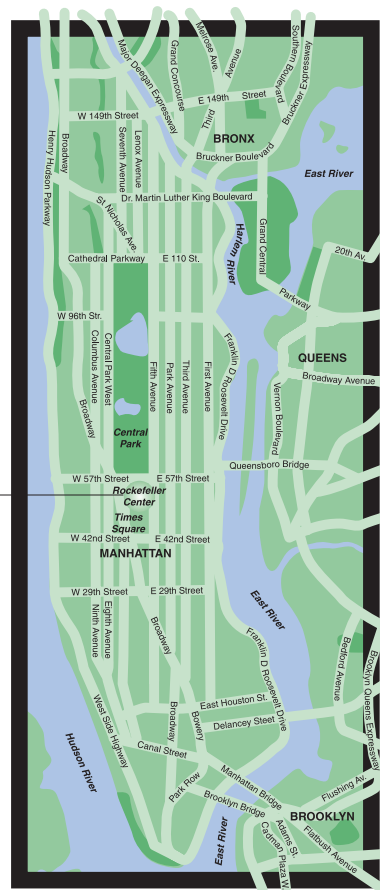
Having such a strong reputation for the arts means that many English language students in New

York want to combine their English studies with, for example, music, art, dance, fashion or film. In fact, Harrison says that many of their teachers, who are all New Yorkers, have additional jobs in the arts. “Our current staff includes a playwright, two painters, a writer, two actors, one musician and an opera singer. They bring New York to the classroom and encourage our students to get out.”

And New York offers students a colourful and different experience around each corner. “Greenwich Village is a very popular area with students

since New York University is located in this neighbourhood and there are many great deals [to be had], from food and drinks to clothes,” says Ro. She continues, “East Village is known as a very diverse and ‘funky’ area where there are tattoo shops and stores that sell unusual clothing and records. Soho is also very popular with its trendy galleries, stores and restaurants.”

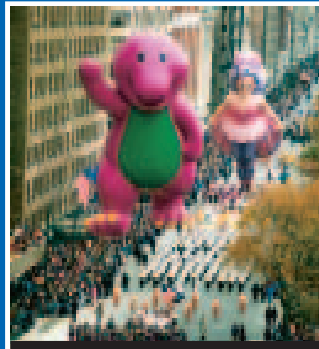
Another popular spot is Central Park. “Central Park is always a centre of activity for exercising or escaping the traffic,” says Harrison, adding that the city’s museums are



Rockefeller Center Skating Rink
The ice rink first opened on Christmas Day in 1936 and has become a popular attraction with New Yorkers and tourists in winter. The rink can hold 150 people.



An aerial view of Manhattan's famous skyline (main picture)



Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade

The famous parade has been taking place since the 1920s and is now broadcast on TV. European immigrants began the tradition, borrowing zoo animals at one time!

another attraction. "You can never finish visiting the Museum Mile on 5th Avenue, [which includes] the Metropolitan Museum, The Frick Collection and the Guggenheim."

Sports activities are also available throughout the city. For those students who like to exert themselves, biking and inline skating are popular in Central Park, while the New York Yankees Baseball games at-

tract students wanting to take part in American sporting culture. "Our Japanese students are thrilled to have the chance to see Hideki Matsui, the Japanese baseball star, play with the New York Yankees at Yankee Stadium," says Rennert.

And when hunger calls, you are never far from food – from street vendors selling hot dogs and doughnuts to restaurants, cafés and bars offering all sorts of food from around the world. Rennert mentions eating "a delicious dim sum brunch in Chinatown on the weekend followed by a walk around Soho on the hunt for shopping bargains" or

sampling some of the 20 different types of oysters at the famous Oyster Bar restaurant.

As New York is a huge city with a population of 18 million, some students may find it hard to integrate with New Yorkers. Rennert admits, "In a recent survey [of] foreign students through the city, [students] indicated that it was very difficult to meet and connect with New Yorkers. "But he adds that even "New Yorkers often find it difficult to meet and mix with one another".

Harrison believes students who choose to study in New York have to be quite brave. "[New York] is not always a place where

PHOTOGRAPHS: NYC & COMPANY

Agent viewpoint

"New York City is one of the most popular cities in the USA, even though people feel that it has become a more dangerous [place to study] due to September 11, 2001 and the Iraq war. Among my clients, a majority still choose NYC. Students usually enjoy Broadway musical performances and watch a baseball game at the Yankees Stadium and visit the various museums and art galleries in their free time. Especially during the holidays, they take a trip to nearby cities like Boston, Buffalo or even some Canadian cities."

Wonju Kim, Sungmoon Study Corp, Korea

"[In 2002 at our agency], New York was the second most popular city in the USA, [after] Los Angeles. However, we think New York is one of the most exciting cities in the world and some people believe they can make their dreams come true there. In addition, the public transport system is one of the best in the USA. Our students like going to museums, watching musicals, drama, sports games and shopping. There are so many attractive activities in New York that students have to [work hard to] concentrate on their studies."

Yumiko Fukuda, ICS, Japan

"New York is one of our most popular destinations together with Boston and San Diego. New York speaks for itself, combining culture, shows, shopping and beauty. Students like to visit museums, go shopping and take part in sports activities in Central Park. New York is the perfect combination of being a great metropolis, one of the most important in the world, with excellent schools. There is still some fear of a new terrorist attack despite the fact that there is a feeling that it's the most protected place in the USA."

Andrea Pinotti, Central de Intercambio, Brazil

those who don't speak English get special consideration. They have to dive in and communicate," she says, adding, "New York is also encouraging for students in that no one is going to gasp and look around if you make a mistake."

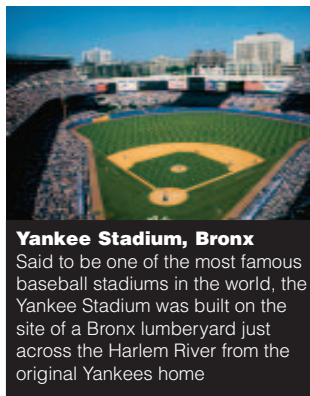
And Ro is keen to stress that New Yorkers are happy to help students. "New Yorkers are very friendly and willing to help tourists or new students by giving them directions or helping them in other ways. Many people in stores will also give students advice on where to go for fun, food and drink while they are in New York City."

Harrison says the richness of New York life is an ideal backdrop to learning English

in the classroom. "New York is one of the most communicative cities in the world so you can learn English outside the classroom – just be sure to open your eyes and ears to take in and participate," she says. "New Yorkers' subway conversations are often at full volume and can be very interesting – better than the movies!"

Sonia Martin of Zoni Language Centers agrees. "You never know what strange thing you may bump into, even on a regular day on the subway."

Although New Yorkers need no excuse to party, there are numerous memorable events throughout the year, such as the lighting of the Christmas tree at the



Yankee Stadium, Bronx

Said to be one of the most famous baseball stadiums in the world, the Yankee Stadium was built on the site of a Bronx lumberyard just across the Harlem River from the original Yankees home

Rockefeller Center, Time Square on New Year's Eve, or the colourful processions of the Mermaid Parade, the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade and the Halloween Parade.

All in all, as Harrison concludes, a language student in New York will have a "mind-expanding experience". □