

PROFILE Brooklyn

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SILVIA OTTE

Across the Bridge

New York City's most populous borough is the new cool — the new Manhattan.

by Sarah D. Bunting

When you're planning a trip to the Big Apple, don't forget the big borough — Brooklyn. In fact, pick the parts of the New York City experience you love and can't live without, and you can find something equal to love about Brooklyn.

Obsessed with the newest bands or the obscurest white teas? Get your hand stamped at the Music Hall of Williamsburg, or get your leaves steeped at the Roebling Tea Room, a short walk away. Spend hours in vintage stores? Comb the racks at Very Vintage in Carroll Gardens or Collect/Her in Fort Greene. Need to run the kids ragged? Turn 'em loose in Prospect Park or one of the borough's many playgrounds, or stroll along the Promenade in Brooklyn Heights, sometimes called "America's first suburb" (its place in that line sure paid off with the best city views).

Italian food? We've got a Brooklyn for that: plain pizza slices at My Little Pizzeria on Court Street downtown, fine dining at Al Di La in Park Slope, classic old-school eggplant rollatini at the Greenhouse in Bay Ridge, and cookie heaven at Rispoli in Bensonhurst. We've got a Brooklyn for baseball fans, both classic (Flatbush, where

Brooklyn is known for its resident artists in neighborhoods like Dumbo, or "Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass."

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Ebbets Field used to stand) and contemporary (KeySpan Park, where the Cyclones play, now home to the Brooklyn Dodgers museum).

We've got an architectural-history Brooklyn, with four famous bridges; we've got a film-history Brooklyn, with myriad recognizable locations (*Do the Right Thing* in Bedford-Stuyvesant; *Sophie's Choice* on the Brooklyn Bridge); we've got an American-history Brooklyn, with battle sites (the Battle of Brooklyn in 1776, commemorated by a statue of Minerva in Green-Wood Cemetery) and burial grounds (Cypress Hills, where Jackie Robinson is buried).

It's not perfect, of course, whichever Brooklyn you land in. It's noisy sometimes — just like Manhattan — and hard to park, and depending on your point of view, it's too far to the nearest Starbucks or too close to the nearest chain store. (You'll find both at Atlantic Center, should you have a frappuccino-and-Old Navy hankering.)

But like any other place, it's about the people, and in Brooklyn, you can meet up with every ethnicity and every religion. Every hobby, too. You say your only pastime is correcting other people's grammar? You can win prizes for it at Union Hall's monthly spelling and grammar bee — and you can bring Grandpa along to play bocce ball upstairs.

I've lived in three different Brooklyns so far: first a leafy corner of Windsor Terrace, tucked between Prospect Park and Green-Wood Cemetery, where the breezes felt cooler than anywhere else in the city, and the families



picnicking along the park's southwest border offered me paella as I walked by. Then Bensonhurst, half a block from the elevated subway tracks, where everyone in the neighborhood went to bed at 10:30 except me and the D train. These days, home is a stretch of Fourth Avenue on the border of Park Slope and Gowanus that used to have nothing but tire stores and bodegas. Then came the hotels, and the latte shops, and now it's a new town, but it's

still my home. Maybe it's the slightly slower pace that I love; maybe it's the slightly bigger space, a better square-footage ratio that allows folks to spread out, to settle down both literally and figuratively. Whatever the reason, Brooklyn has a

Above, clockwise from top: sitting a spell in Prospect Park, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted; sating a sweet tooth with cotton candy at Coney Island; a storefront in Brooklyn Heights. Below: A child's horse ride at a Coney Island arcade.



America's Playground

REST IN PEACE, ASTROLAND ... but a trip to Coney Island is still time well-spent, even without the beloved amusement park. Attractions at the South Brooklyn resort area include classic rides (the Wonder Wheel, a 144-passenger Ferris wheel, and the Cyclone, one of the country's oldest operational wooden coasters); hot dogs (invented here, legend says); the Brooklyn Cyclones, a Class A Affiliate of the New York Mets; the annual Mermaid Parade; and of course, the beach. — Sarah D. Bunting

PHOTOGRAPHY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP): BY VO DURA, TONY ANDERSON, SETH KUSHNER. BOTTOM LEFT PHOTOGRAPHY BY SETH KUSHNER

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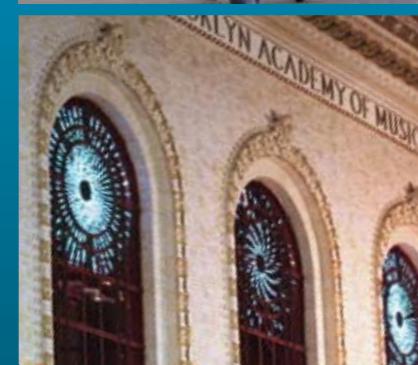
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small-town feel, because it is a small town — dozens of them, actually, mini-Brooklyns strung together to make up the greater whole.

When famous resident Walt Whitman penned “I am large, I contain multitudes,” in his poem “Song of Myself,” he could have also been describing Brooklyn. If it were a city, the Borough of Kings (so named for Charles II) would be the fourth-largest in the United States, home to almost 2.5 million people — 71 square miles — which means that it has to offer a lot of diversity.

Still, Brooklyn is unified in its local pride: We love to remind visitors, and each other, about the Cyclone at Coney Island, the egg cream, the U.S.S. Maine (whose construction was begun at the Brooklyn Naval Yard) and famous residents Jackie Robinson, Chris

Subway Sense

New York City's transit system, the MTA, is an inexpensive — and easy — way to get around the city. But the network of buses and trains can intimidate visitors and newcomers. For help, visit HopStop.com, and plug in your first and last addresses. You'll get directions to and from the nearest stations and clear information on which subway lines to take. HopStop customizes your trip to include buses or incorporate more walking.

MetroCards, the MTA's currency, give you options: pay-per-ride or unlimited ride (ride for a day, a week, or a month for a flat fee). Transferring between lines is free. Maps are plentiful, posted in each station, train car, and bus. The MTA's Web site, www.mta.info, has more info on fares and schedules, plus maps of the whole system.

Visit the New York Transit Museum, at the corner of Boerum Place and Schermerhorn Street in Brooklyn Heights, to learn about the system's history — or to buy some subway-token cuff links. — Sarah D. Bunting

Rock, Carl Sagan, and Shirley Chisholm. And we love to visit the other Brooklyns, the ones we don't live in, to try the ribs, watch the handball, or

envy the brownstones. A trip to a whole new New York, a whole new part of the world, is just a bus ride away in another Brooklyn.



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