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The Faithful Shopper: Never Underestimate Our Diverse Destination

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New York City is an Urban Escape

What a way to celebrate a 400th birthday! Founded in 1609, New York is celebrating its quadricentennial by defying the odds and predictions of economic doom: just walk around Times Square any day of the week, at any hour of the day, and you're going to see hordes of happy tourists. For every local who works in a nearby office building, dozens of out-of-towners are enjoying our streets, and event the experimental pedestrian promenade

around the square.

It's a sharp contrast to what many predicted when the economy tanked last fall. Most figured that the challenges facing the local economy would be compounded by the loss of significant tourist dollars. Many observers believed that planned hotel and restaurant projects would fall by the wayside.

Fortunately for all of us, that didn't happen. Most hotel projects already on the books continued as planned, and literally dozens of new restaurants have opened in the year since the Wall Street shocks. New York remains a prime tourist destination, particularly as U.S. residents who might otherwise have traveled overseas have opted to stay closer to home. More than 47 million people visited the city in 2008, says NYC & Company, the city's marketing, tourism, and partnership organization. Even if a predicted 5% drop in tourism proves true in 2009, our streets are still paved in gold.



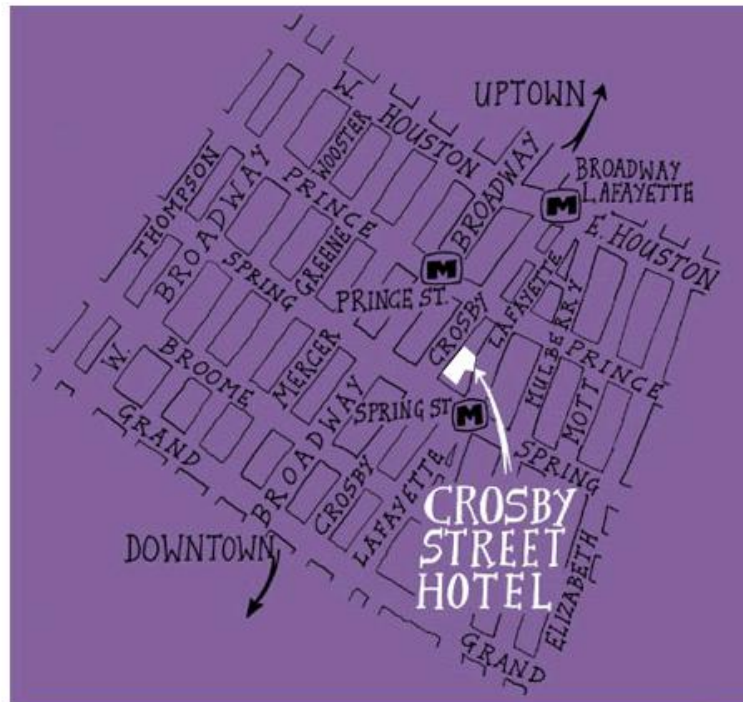
The Chatwal

These visitors will have new places to stay. Opening this month -- on schedule -- will be the "baby grand" of hotels, Chatwal New York. Located in the landmark Stanford White limestone manse at 130 West 44th Street, formerly the Lambs Club, it has been given a stunning modern Deco makeover by master architect Thierry Despont.



Hotel Indigo

The Fairfield Inn New York/Fifth Avenue will open at West 37th Street with 92 rooms and suites at affordable prices. Finally, moving a little south and west, the much-anticipated Hotel Indigo Chelsea, featuring murals and photography by Marco Glaviano, is set to open at the end of October 2009. NoMad Hotel, a conversion of a 1903 residential hotel at 1170 Broadway will be the first LEED-certified hotel renovation in the City when it opens in 2010.



Crosby Street Hotel

But the real action is downtown. By early October at the latest, the Crosby Street Hotel will open in the heart of Soho at 79 Crosby St., offering 86 Kit Kemp-designed rooms. The equally dazzling Andaz Wall Street, designed by the ultra cool Rockwell Group, is slated to open 345 rooms at 75 Wall Street. The stylish Hyatt brand will offer some of the largest rooms in the city, i.e., 345 square feet, plus over-the-top amenities, corporate meeting space and a restaurant boasting local market-to-table cuisine of the Hudson Valley. A 2,500-square-foot mezzanine lounge with 20-foot windows reminiscent of the glamor of a bygone era will overlook the heart of the Theatre District.

Another Chatwal offering, Dream Downtown, is slated to debut in 2010. Judging from the success of the Dream brand in Midtown, with its ultra-hip modernist design, cool lounges and great service, it's bound to do equally well downtown.

Next year will be equally exciting in Lower Manhattan, with a host of new offerings, including the spring opening of the much-discussed Mondrian Soho at 9 Crosby Street. The New York flagship of a hip Los Angeles-based boutique hotel, it will be operated by the Morgans Hotel Group. Designed by Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz, it will feature 270 rooms, plus an indoor/outdoor bar and restaurant. There's even more big scale hospitality debuting downtown with the W Downtown at 123 Washington Street, which will rise 57 floors to encompass upscale urban luxury on a grand scale. Perhaps the grandest of all is Trump Soho, the controversial condo hotel with 46 stories of luxury, 400 suites with custom furnishings by Fendi Casa, and floor-to-ceiling windows from which to view some of the city's most gorgeous panoramas. It also will open Quattro, a five-star restaurant, and spas, boutiques and art galleries.

Restaurant openings will be coming fast as fall kicks in. Among the openings this month are: Lever House's newest iteration, Casa Lever; A Voce Columbus, another hot offering at Time Warner Center; Ed's Chowder House, a joint venture by Jeffrey Chodorow and super chef Ed Brown, at the Empire Hotel (44 West 63rd Street); a new face for the Florent space at 69 Gansevoort Street, befittingly named Gansevoort 69; and also in Meatpacking, Abe & Arthur's at 409 West 14th Street.

So once again, New York City is opening its proverbial arms to visitors, anticipating great times ahead. A tradition of extending a welcome to visitors, as the original native New Yorkers did to the Dutch in the 17th century, remains intact. But now we have accommodations and restaurants to suit all needs and all budgets. Happy visiting!