



## Travel Stories by Amaru & Suzanne



### New York, New York - Part I

by Amaru & Suzanne, July 10th 2006

New York, New York, here we are.....

Our first stop in the city was Brooklyn. We went to visit my cousin Veronica and she showed us around Brooklyn by night and day. It was lots of fun and interesting as well. Suz had never been to New York before and I've only scratched the surface of Brooklyn previously.

We walked around for a while in Brooklyn Hights, just looking at the buildings, some of them are really nice! We also spent a great deal of time walking in Prospect park, which is different from most parks I've visited in Manhattan, the biggest difference that I noticed was that there was a bigger mix of all sorts of people. Then of course there was also the fact that people were BBQ'n, something that isn't allowed in Central Park for example.

During our walk in the park we were entertaining ourselves by counting the wedding couples that were in the park for photographs, and all of them were Asian as well. We figured out that they came to the park first for photos and later on proceeded on to the pier by the Brooklyn Bridge to get their photos taken with the bridge and the city in the background.



Brooklyn Bridge....  
by night!!



We ended up our Brooklyn tour at the pier as well where we sampled the products from "Brooklyn Ice Cream Factory" (we just had to try them....and they were very good!!).

A few days later we went back to the city, this time it was Suz, my brother Denis and I. We got a ride by my mom to our local train station where we caught the train to the city. There are several ways to end up in New York by train. This time we changed trains in Seacaucus and ended up in Penn Station in New York (located at 32nd street and 7th Ave).

The first thing we saw when we stepped out from the station was Madison Square Garden (Penn Station is located below the Garden). It's bad timing on our part, it would have been lots of fun to catch an Ice Hockey or Basketball game at the Garden.....well, another time I guess.

We now started walking across Manhattan towards 34th street and 5th Ave where the Empire State Building is located. The night before when we were reading up on what we were going to do we surfed on to the website for the Empire State Building and saw there that we could buy tickets online. They were \$2 more when you bought them online but we figured it could be worth it. Anyway, we entered the building, rode the escalator and found a long line (and this was only the line up for the metal detector) and thought that it was going to take forever. But....as we already had tickets we bypassed the line and right after that by passed the queue for tickets as well.....YES!! We ended up saving at least 40min that way.

But we cheered too soon....there was still one line we had to stand in. After riding the elevator to the 80th floor or so we had to catch a second elevator to the 86th floor and here everybody passed in front of a huge poster of the Empire State Building where a photo was taken and a receipt given to you so that you could pick up the photos on your way out from the building.



**Suz and I**  
In front of the Brooklyn Bridge



**Denis and Suz**  
Heading into the city!

Anyway....we finally made it to the top and were able to enjoy the view over New York City!! The view from the Empire State Building is always great, no matter how many times you see it!! We could see quite far on this day as well so we ended up choosing a good day. After walking around at the top, taking lots of photos and doing lots of posing we started our decent. On our way out we found the photo taken of us in front of the building, it was a very nice photo and so we asked what the price was, \$25.....you have to be kidding me, that much for a single shot, no thank you. And they are so sneaky that they don't even let you take a photo of your photo either....ah well.

Once we made it back to the street we walked up to 42nd street and Park Ave where Grand Central Station is located. I've actually never made it here myself either so it was a new experience for all of us. And what can we say,well...it's a beautiful and impressive building. On our way to the station we had been on the lookout for a place where we could have a bite and hadn't been able to find one yet. For that reason we just decided to have lunch at Grand Central, a normal food court, nothing fancy.....but at least it was cheap!

From here we made it all the way to the 1st Ave, where we found the UN building....and we were a bit disappointed to say the least. Sure, we knew that it was just a rectangular building, but we were expecting the flags to be up at least, but nope. So we pretty much left the place straight away.

We found our way to the Rockefeller Plaza, and now we could see what had happen to all the flags from the UN, someone had stolen them and hoisted them here instead.....very nice!! Anyway, we found the Swedish flag quick enough but had problems finding the Australian one....finally we found it, it as across the street....i.e. not on the plaza. Suz was a bit cranky about this little detail =)) Here we also found quite a few police officers in full gear, they almost looked like the SWAT forces you see on TV, and they were really giving everyone the evil eye.....huh, chill out boys!!



**Madison Square Garden**  
Denis checking out the map of the area



**The streets of New York**  
in front of the Madison Square Garden...

Once we managed to sneak away from their suspecting stares we entered the NBC Experience Store. Here they have lots and lots off different crap from all of their TV-shows, we even found "The Biggest Loser Cookbook". In here you can also record a video together with Jay Leno.....well, at least they can make it look as if you are actually on the show, very tacky. We found that you can also get your photo taken in your favourite TV show, yes!!! Very, very tacky.....we just had to do it (and it wasn't that expensive either). So we had our photo taken at the "Central Perk", the cafe from "Friends".

Well, well....we kept moving and it was now time for "Neon heaven" a.k.a. Times Square (on the way there we managed to pass by Radio City Music Hall as well).

Times Square and Broadway.....how to describe it? It's very, very, very tacky.....think Picadilly Circus in London, only 10 times more and you are getting close to it. It's always lots of fun to walk through it though, there's always something going on here. We saw at least 4-5 different camera crews filming right here, from what we could see it wasn't a movie (at least not this time), some of them were just interviewing people walking down the street. Suz was busy looking for "The Naked Cowboy" but was a bit disappointed when we couldn't find him.

Instead we walked into the Toys R Us store here which must be one of the most impressive toys stores ever.... to start with, the first thing you see when you walk in is a big ferris wheel in the middle of the store, how's that for impressive?!? Later on as we made our way into the store we found replicas of the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building and the Chrystler Building all built out of Lego (and they are huge), there was also a huge moving T-Rex in the store who from time to time saw fit to give out a huge roar and scare half the store to pieces. They even had a natural sized house in Barbie style..... and we saw one of the Superman outfits used in the new movie; Superman Returns.

Time had now arrived for Denis to start heading home so we made our way back to Penn Station where he jumped on a train home. We found the subway and made our way down to the East Village.



Here we were to meet up with Evan, so we found a Irish pub in front of his apartment, ordered a drink (Mmmmm....Magners Cider, the best on a hot day) and waited for him to arrive. Once he showed we had a drink together while we talked over what we were going to eat that night.....we decided that instead of just eating, for example, French, Italian etc. we wanted typical New York food.

So, we started out by going to Blue 9 Burgers, the best burgers in town and moved on after that to a place that was selling Belgian Style Chips (or Pommes Frites for some of you). They were hand cut, double fried (1st time they are cooked through and then the 2nd time provides a golden color to make them deliciously crisp) and with plenty of great sauces.....after some consideration we ended up with Roasted Garlic Mayo, Parmesan Peppercorn and Sweet Mango Chutney Mayo (we don't

do Ketchup on our chips).

After all this food we went for a walk with Evan's dog (Winslow) around Alphabet city, which covers Avenues A, B, C, and D. This area used to be quite bad with lots of drug related problems but has been cleaned up and now it's a very trendy area. We walked around for a while, letting Winslow run around by himself at Tompkins Square Park before we headed back to his place where we spent the night.

The next morning we were woken up by Winslow running all over us - licking our faces, lucky for him he's a very cute dog so there's no way to get mad at him.

We said goodbye to Evan who had to run off to work and made it over to 9th street where the Mud Cafe is located (it's said to have New Yorks best coffee), I had a cup and it was actually very good. At the same time Suz was across the road ordering a Bagel with Cream Cheese for us, we have to do NY the right way after all, and what's better than starting our morning this way.

From here we made our way up to Union Square where we found this bizarre clock....the 15 numbers of the digital clock display time going and coming relative to midnight. You read it from the left to the right, so if we look at the photo we've posted the numbers are 1159513260800012, this means that the time is 11:59 and 51 sec, looking from the right you can see that there are 8 sec until it strikes 12, the three numbers in between are a blur of moving numbers.....tricky huh?!?





**Looking towards Downtown**  
Where the Twin Towers used to be...

From here we moved on and passed along Washington Square Park, one of the most well known parks in New York, here we saw some sort of filming taking place as well and went closer to have a look. Once there we just saw some people sitting on plastic couches and just talking. We also saw a disclaimer next to them stating that if we stood near them we agreed to be on the show.....since we didn't want to participate we just moved on.

Now it was time for another snack....and what better than some of the best falafel around. I took Suz to Mamoun's Falafel, a place I ran across during one of my previous treks in the city. And it was just as I one falafel pita (it was hard to resist buying another one though, specially when the price is only \$2).

Soon we found some more food, this time in the shape of a Pizza...and not just any pizza but Joe's Pizza, this place has been in movies such as Along came Polly and Spiderman 2 (the one where Peter Parker gets fired from) and it's not because their product is bad....oh no!! Both Suz and I agree that it's one of the best slices of Pizzas we've ever had.

Once we had stocked up on food (we shared a Pizza slice by the way.....don't thing we've been pigging out....too much) we continued our walk passing Soho, Chinatown, Federal Plaza, City Hall to eventually end up in Ground Zero. And as it is today, there just isn't anything to see...it's just a big construction area. At least the Path station has been rebuilt.

Continuing our walk we passed Trinity Church (and nope.....didn't see any "National Treasure" in there), walked down Wall Street, passed the New York Stock Exchange and ended up in front of the Wall Street Bull, a huge bronze charging bull given to the city as a gift from the artist.

We almost made it into Battery Park but decided against it (we'll try to do it later) since we were planing to cross the Brooklyn Bridge and that's quite a walk in itself. Before we did this we had a cold drink and rested our very tired feet for a while.



**Chrysler Building, you can just**  
make it out....at least the top part of it!



**Grand Central Terminal**  
The main train station in New York...

Eventually we made it back to City Hall and from there we crossed the Brooklyn Bridge, a great walk with some spectacular views of the city. The best about this bridge though is the fact that the cars cross on a lower level, so in a way it feels like it's a pedestrian bridge. We didn't walk back from Brooklyn over the bridge, instead we walked a bit further and cheated by catching the subway into Manhattan again (our feet were really killing us by now).

Since the subway accidentally dropped us of in the vicinity of Joe's Pizza and Mamouns Falafel we felt we just had to try them again (still delicious).

Speaking about the subway.....it's not the easiest system to understand. I've been to New York several times and still don't see the logic in it. The lines have different colors, ok that good.....but then they start mixing up the lines with both letters and numbers. And you have to keep track of which trains are express and which ones aren't, otherwise you might end up very far from your actual destination. It's however, very efficient once you learn how to use it.

Returning to our visit to the city, the last thing we did before going home was passing by 8th street and 6th Ave to try the best Hot Dogs in New York.....Grays Papaya!! So simple and so good!!

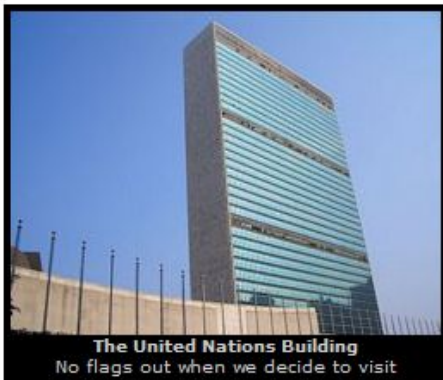
New York is such a great city, it has everything you can wish for in a city.....and more!!! The people, while they might seem a bit rough on the surface, are just great and you can really tell that when they say something they mean it!! Not like their superficial cousins in LA. The food.....there is so much to say about it, you can get anything you want, we just wanted to try out NY specials and managed very well in that department.

To sum it all up, we've had lots and lots of fun, seen great things and tasted even better foods.....and this is just Part I of our exploration of New York. What else can we expect!?



**Inside Grand Central**  
...just like in all the movies

Stay tuned for more!!!





**Times Square**  
Neon heaven!



**Suz and I**  
at Times Square



**The location for MTV's TRL**  
We saw some filming outside of it



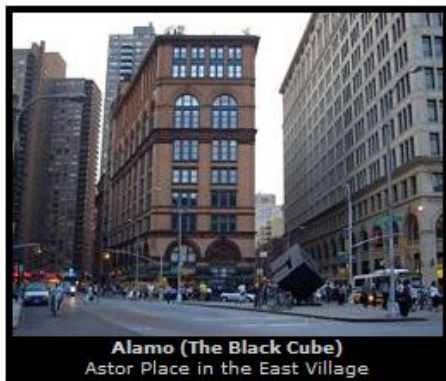
**At the toy store...**  
big buildings made out of Lego



**Superman**  
The original suit from "Superman Returns"



**A cop and his horse**  
Just in front of the Madison Square Garden!



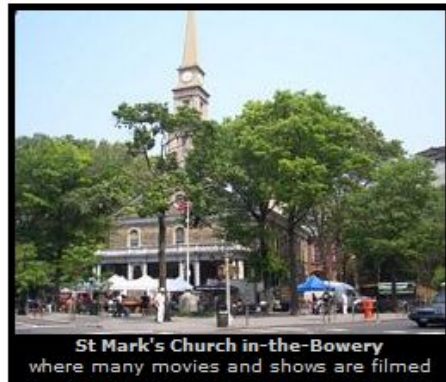
**Alamo (The Black Cube)**  
Astor Place in the East Village



**We met up with Evan..**  
for drinks before heading out for food!



**We found some good chips!!**  
Belgian....of course!



**St Mark's Church in-the-Bowery**  
where many movies and shows are filmed



**Union Square and one weird clock....**  
see if you can figure it out!!



**Washington Square Park**  
A well known park in the city!!



**Mamoun's Falafel**  
I took Suz to my favorite Falafel place in NY!



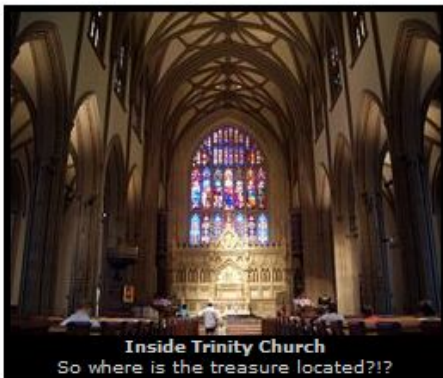
**Mmmmm!!**  
It doesn't get much better than this...



**And then we went for Pizza....**  
at Joe's Pizza, the best in town!!



**Foley Square**  
The park at "Five Points"





**New York Stock Exchange**  
You think that flag is big enough?!!



**Got the Bull by it's horns**  
Never mind that it's just a statue...



**Crossing the Brooklyn Bridge**  
On our way over...



**On the Bridge...**  
it's a lot bigger than it looks at a distance!



**South Street Seaport**  
Pretty much just a big shopping mall!!



**New York from the bridge, looking up at**  
the area where the Twin Towers used to be!



**Gray's Papaya**  
the best "Dog" in town!!

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