

NEW YORK

In the 1650s, about 500 people lived in the quiet little Dutch town of New Amsterdam. Now, in the twenty-first century, New Amsterdam is the city of New York. Seven and a half million people live there, and more than twenty million people come to visit it every year.

Why do they come? They want to see the New York of Jennifer Lopez, George Gershwin, and King Kong. They want to visit some of New York's fine museums, or shop in Macy's and Bloomingdales. They want to eat hot dogs, take the Staten Island ferry, see the Statue of Liberty, and remember 9/11.

There are hundreds of things to do in New York. What do *you* want to do? Your tour begins here . . .

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1 The Big Apple

More than twenty million people from all over the world visit New York every year. Most of them say, 'It's the most exciting city in the world!' They know many of the streets, avenues, and famous buildings before they come. How do they know them? From American movies, old and new – *King Kong*, *On the Town*, *Annie*, *Manhattan*, *Spiderman*, and many more.

New York is not the capital of New York State. Albany, 154 miles to the north of the city, is the capital. But New York is much more famous than Albany. People often call it 'The Big Apple'. Why? In the 1920s and 1930s, jazz musicians in the United States all wanted to work in New York.

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‘There are a lot of apples on the tree,’ they said, ‘but when you take New York City, you take The Big Apple!’

Lots of famous people live or lived in New York: actors the Marx Brothers, Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Whoopi Goldberg, and Tom Cruise; musicians Christina Aguilera, Alicia Keys, 50 Cent, Jennifer Lopez, Jerome Kern, and George Gershwin.

Yes, everybody wanted some of The Big Apple – and they want some today, too!

When visitors think about New York, they usually think about Manhattan – an island 13 ½ miles long and 2 miles across. But New York has five boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island. The city has 6,500 miles of streets, and seven and a half million people live there. Another three and a half million people travel in to New York to work every day.

But New York was not always a big city . . .

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2 In the beginning

Four hundred years ago, Manhattan Island was the home of the Native American people called the Algonquin Indians. In 1609, a man called Henry Hudson came up the river to Manhattan. He was British but he was on a Dutch ship, the *Half Moon*. Today, that river is called the Hudson River.

In 1626, a Dutchman called Peter Minuit gave the Algonquin Indians about twenty-four dollars for the island of Manhattan. Minuit built some houses, and called the little town New Amsterdam after the city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. Twenty years later, about 500 people lived there.

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But in 1664, the British took the town from the Dutch and changed its name to New York. Then there was the War of Independence (1775–1783) – a war between the British and some of the people of North America. It finished in 1783, the British left, and the United States of America had its first president – George Washington.

In 1790, about 33,000 people lived in New York, but then millions more men and women began to leave their countries and come to America from all over the world. These immigrants all wanted to be part of the new country, and many of them wanted to live in New York. The first immigrants came from Germany and Ireland; later, more came from Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Africa, and China.

These ‘New Americans’ often lived in the same streets with other people from their own country – Irish with

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Irish, Italians with Italians, Chinese with Chinese. Today, there are parts of New York called Chinatown and Little Italy.

The immigrants worked very hard, and many of them helped to build the first skyscrapers and bridges. Brooklyn Bridge, more than 6,000 feet long, opened on 24 May 1883. Thousands of New Yorkers watched, and 150,300 people went across the bridge on the first day.

In 1898, the five boroughs made a new city. Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx and Staten Island were now New York City – the second largest city in the world.

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The 1920s are often called the ‘roaring twenties’. With dancing, jazz, the first talking movies – America was an exciting place. And nowhere was more exciting than New York. From 1920 to 1933 people could not make or sell alcohol in New York – but of course you *could* find it in dark streets or behind the doors of small clubs.

In 1930 the Chrysler Building opened, then the Empire State Building in 1931. For many years, it was the tallest building in the city – until 1972, when the World Trade Center was built.

The two skyscrapers of the World Trade Center, on Church Street and Liberty Street, were the tallest buildings in New York. There were more than one hundred floors, with offices, shops, and restaurants inside. The ‘Windows on the World’ restaurant was one of the most famous restaurants in the city.

But on 11 September, 2001 – ‘9/11’ to Americans – everything changed. At 8.46 a.m. on that day an American Airlines plane crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Seventeen minutes later, at 9.03 a.m., a United Airlines plane crashed into the South Tower.

Nobody can forget 9/11. People all across the world watched on TV and saw the last minutes of the two big towers. Thousands of people died in and near the Center.

Today this place is called Ground Zero. Many visitors to New York like to go there and remember 9/11. It is one more story – one of the unhappiest stories – from this city.

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