

If Manhattan was a body part, it would be the heart. While there is more to New York than just Manhattan, there's so much diversity in the wonderfully different neighbourhoods in the heart of New York City that exploring them will probably be your priority when you arrive for a whirlwind adventure in the Big Apple.

Manhattan Island is vaguely divided into a number of different districts, all with their own distinctive character and a brief outline of these is below.

Lower Manhattan: Primarily a commercial district at the southernmost tip of the island, the area is home to the financial sector, the New York Stock Exchange, Battery Park and the South Street Seaport. While there are a few fine dining experiences to be had, most people come here to catch a ferry to Staten Island or the Statue of Liberty.

Little Italy: Just north of Canal Street and around Mulberry Street is known as Little Italy due to the many Italian themed restaurants offering fine Italian fare from different parts of Italy. Scenes for 'The Godfather' movie were filmed here and if you like Italian food; here is the place to come.

Chinatown: The intersections of Canal and Mott Streets contain one of the largest populations of Chinese people living outside of Asia. There's also a large population of other Asian communities including immigrants from Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia. Chinatown is well known for its wide variety of Asian style food at reasonable prices as well as Asian food stores and gift shops featuring unique Asian imports.

Greenwich Village: Between 14th and Houston Street, and separated by Broadway are two districts known as the East Village and the West Village. The East Village is well known for its trendy boutiques, rock bars, funky cafes and bohemian vibe. The West Village is more like a small town within the city, it's filled with funky jazz bars and tree lined streets and has a very mellow feel.

Soho: Pretty Soho is full of cobblestone streets, cast-iron buildings, art galleries and designer boutiques and gets very busy at weekends. The affluent residents exist high above the streets

in expensive loft apartments. Soho is a great place to stay in New York if you want to make like the Sex and the City girls and hit the town for a few cocktails in the district's many bars.

If you are looking for a place to stay in the heart of Soho then the SoHo Grand hotel is a great choice and is surrounded by art galleries, restaurants and boutiques and is also in walking distance of Greenwich Village and Tribeca, as well as Soho. It has 24-hour concierge, One Touch guest service response, wireless high-speed Internet access, exercise facilities, laundry and valet as well as the Grand Bar and Lounge, and in true New York style you can even have a pet goldfish upon request throughout your stay.

Tribeca: The triangle between Canal Street, Broadway and West Street is known as Tribeca. Similar in appearance to Soho, but more upmarket, it used to be the industrial part of Manhattan but the warehouses and factories have now been converted to lofty apartments, attracting famous residents such as Robert DeNiro and has many upscale fine dining restaurants.

Midtown: This is the main shopping and commercial sector in New York. Midtown runs between 34th Street and the Southern end of Central Park. The district contains Times Square and the Theatre District, the Empire State Building, Rockefeller Centre, the United Nations and St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Upper East Side: This neighbourhood borders the East side of Central Park and is home to many of New York's socialites and wealthy residents. There are several fine museums here such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Guggenheim Museum. There are exclusive shopping opportunities here and the neighbourhood has a great number of fine dining restaurants.

Upper West Side: Flanking Central Park's west side this neighbourhood is home to many musicians, performing artists and celebrities. John Lennon used to live in this neighbourhood until he was shot whilst out in nearby Central Park. The area also contains the Lincoln Centre for Performing Arts and the American Museum of Natural History.

Harlem: Harlem is based in the upper part of Manhattan and is home to a large community of Afro-Americans and also houses the famous Apollo Theatre. Spanish Harlem is the South-eastern section of Harlem and is home to a large Hispanic community.