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Normally expensive New York theater tickets can be had for a fraction of the price—even for Broadway productions such as Duke Ellington's 'Sophisticated Ladies' (left)—if you know where to look.

Doing as natives do: an insider's trip to New York

NEW YORK CITY: Out-of-town pay \$16 for the same cab ride, less than \$20 for the same Broadway theater ticket, and they know how to explore new plays by lesser-known authors on the off-Broadway circuit.

You can save money while enjoying the theater scene here if you follow local customs. When in New York, do what the New Yorkers do.

Take Share-a-Cab service from the airport. Buy your Broadway tickets at the TKTS booth. Call the Manhattan Theater Club for last-minute reservations to a new kind of small theater experience.

SHARE-A-CAB: It pays to know your way around an airport, especially in New York City. If you fly into La Guardia, the nearest airport to Manhattan, follow signs to the taxi stand outside your terminal, where a sign will read "Share-a-Cab" or possibly "Group Ride."

Tell the attendant where you are going. He will put you and three others in a taxi and charge you \$6 or \$7 to midtown instead of the regular \$12 or \$13 fare.



Iris Jones
contributing travel editor

You will always find other people waiting from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday to Friday, and often at other times. These cab-sharing services are particularly economical during the morning rush hour, when slow traffic is likely to run up the meter on your cab even more than it would at midday.

This service is also available from John F. Kennedy Airport, but there's a half-price at the TKTS booth. Call the Manhattan Theater Club for last-minute reservations to a new kind of small theater experience.

YOU CAN'T always get four people's luggage into one cab, so the best you can do might be to share a ride with one other traveler, at \$16 each. "Group ride" is also available weekdays from the World Trade Center, in Wall Street, to La Guardia, from noon to 6 p.m. and from some hotels; ask your concierge.

Otherwise, you must pay full fare back to the airport or take advantage of the Carey bus service. The bus

leaves the East Side Terminal, on First Avenue between 37th and 38th Streets, every 20 minutes for La Guardia. It costs \$3.50.

THEATER TICKETS: Those kind of "smarts" can save you the money you need to go to the theater, especially if you buy your ticket at TKTS. TKTS is a service run by the non-profit Theater Development Fund, which has booths at 47th and Broadway, in Times Square, and at 100 William St. in the Wall Street district.

TKTS sells most Broadway and some off-Broadway theater tickets for half price, plus a small service charge, on the day of performance. The names of available shows are listed up front, but you will not know what seating choices there are until you get to the ticket window with your cash or traveler's checks (no credit cards accepted).

You must usually stand in a 15- to 30-minute line at the Times Square booth, which is open from 3 p.m. to the 8 p.m. showtime, and stops selling off-Broadway tickets at 7 p.m. because it could take you an hour to get to the off-Broadway theater.

The wait is usually only five minutes at the Wall Street booth, which opens at 11:30 a.m. and stops selling off-Broadway tickets at 1 p.m.

To give you an idea of the money you can save, I wanted three tickets to "Sophisticated Ladies," a popular Duke Ellington musical.

My hotel concierge called his theater agent and quoted me a price of \$40 for an orchestra seat. That includes a commission for both the hotel and the agent. The theater box office sells the same tickets for \$35 each.

I stood in line at TKTS for 15 minutes and bought the same orchestra seats for \$18.50 each, a saving of \$21.50 per ticket or \$64.50 on the three tickets purchased. That's quite a saving. That's how New Yorkers do it if they are willing to take the good chance that seats will be available on the day of performance.

OFF-BROADWAY tickets are often available from both places; the best in

... and some hints on finding planes and hotels

On Republic flight \$45 from New York:

Barbara Streisand did it just right. I was in a New York State of Mind. The air fare wars have forced airline prices down to \$45 and \$59 one-way so there's no better time to go to New York City.

New York Air started the price wars but at least four other airlines now fly inexpensive flights to New York—Republic, American, Northwest and Pan Am. The airline you choose depends to a large extent on where you are going in the city.

The cheapest flights are to Newark airport in New Jersey. Northwest and New York Air both fly three times a day to Newark for \$45 midweek, \$59 weekends. If you are going to Staten Island, it makes sense, but consider that it will cost you more time and money to get to Manhattan from Newark than it will from La Guardia.

If you are going to Manhattan, Republic and American fly four daily flights into La Guardia for \$59 midweek, \$69 weekends.

You can also fly a daily \$59 flight on Pan Am but it will take you to JFK airport, twice the distance away.

I flew Republic flight \$40 from Detroit because I liked the idea of leaving Detroit at 8:10 a.m. and getting to La Guardia at 9:33 a.m. My friend Julie Candier of Birmingham flew, the same day, on American, because she liked the idea of leaving at 10 a.m. and getting in about 11.

As it turned out, my flight was delayed, so we arrived at the same time, which is a possibility that every traveler should always be prepared for. See the accompanying story for a discount method of taxiing from La Guardia to midtown Manhattan.

WHERE DO YOU STAY when you get there? I stayed at the beautifully restored Halloran House at 49th and Lexington, built by Arthur Loomis Harmon seven years before he designed the Empire State Building.

The 34-story hotel, built as the Shelton Hotel, was an exclusive private residence for men, and then the tallest hotel in the world. It has the polished-wood-and-crystal ambience that we so often associate with grand old hotels.

The Halloran House starts at \$108 a night for two; a weekend honeymoon package costs \$155 for two nights. Old grandeur dominates this corner: The Waldorf Astoria rises across the street at \$108 a night for two; the plain but still habitable Doral Inn is on another corner for \$76.

The weekend package is the most cost-effective way to buy accommodations in New York City. The New York Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2 Columbus Circle, NY 10019, will send you a selection of weekend hotel packages on request.

Travel writer Mary Augusta Rodgers of Birmingham has another good suggestion for those who would like a personal touch: the excellent bed-and-breakfast possibilities in New York City.

For information, contact Urban Ventures, 322 Central Park West, New York, NY 10025, which offers 80 rooms and apartments in the city for \$35 to \$45, double room, or \$56 to \$100 for an apartment.

The Bed and Breakfast League, 2855 29th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, has New York City accommodations for \$20 to \$40 double.

— Iris Jones

off-off-Broadway is seldom available, but those tickets are only half as expensive anyway. If you are as confused as I was about these terms, here is a brief explanation.

There are 40 Broadway companies, with 800- to 1,000-seat theaters, and 350 off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway companies with smaller, more intimate theaters. Both Broadway and off-Broadway performances are produced under union contract, and last as long as the public will pay for tickets.

At off-off-Broadway theaters, the union permits "showcase performances" to be produced at non-union wages if the show has a limited run, usually 4-5 weeks.

There are at least 20 off-off-Broadway companies, the best of which are Joseph Papp's Public Theater, which has seven theaters under one roof; CSC, which produces the classics; Circle Rep and the Manhattan Theater Club, which produce modern original plays.

The non-profit Manhattan Theater Club (MTC) was established in the early 1970s to encourage new playwrights and develop new plays in an intimate theater setting, where the production is not expected to make a profit.

The club's goal is not to develop plays for Broadway, but three of its productions have moved to the commercial theater there just the same: the Pulitzer Prize-winning "Crimes of the Heart" and "Mass Appeal," both of which are still on Broadway, and "Ain't Misbehavin'," which is now on the road.

Well-known producers and actors are sometimes eager to work with the MTC, because it gives them a chance to do things they cannot do in the commercial theater.

What this means to you is that if you can be part of the inside group that buys season tickets for such performances, but you must know how to get them.

Broadway plays are reviewed as soon as they open, but a play at the Manhattan Theater Club runs three weeks before it is reviewed and is open for only a week or two after review. You are not likely to hear about it outside New York, and even New Yorkers have limited viewing time between the reviews and the closing of the show.

Season ticket holders practically fill both the 100-seat Uptown Theater and the 150-seat Downtown Theater, so out-of-towners should either put themselves on the mailing list, or call 472-0600 in New York City.

Tickets range from \$14 to \$24 and are only occasionally available through TKTS. Theaters like this have an influence on theater trends throughout the country.

WHEN in New York, do what the New Yorkers do, except for one thing: New Yorkers seldom visit the Visitors Bureau, but that bureau is your best friend. They'll give you lists of hotels, restaurants, theaters, museums, and other things to do.

Smart travelers use all the help they can get. For advance information, write to the New York Convention and Visitors Bureau, 2 Columbus Circle, New York, NY 10019.

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