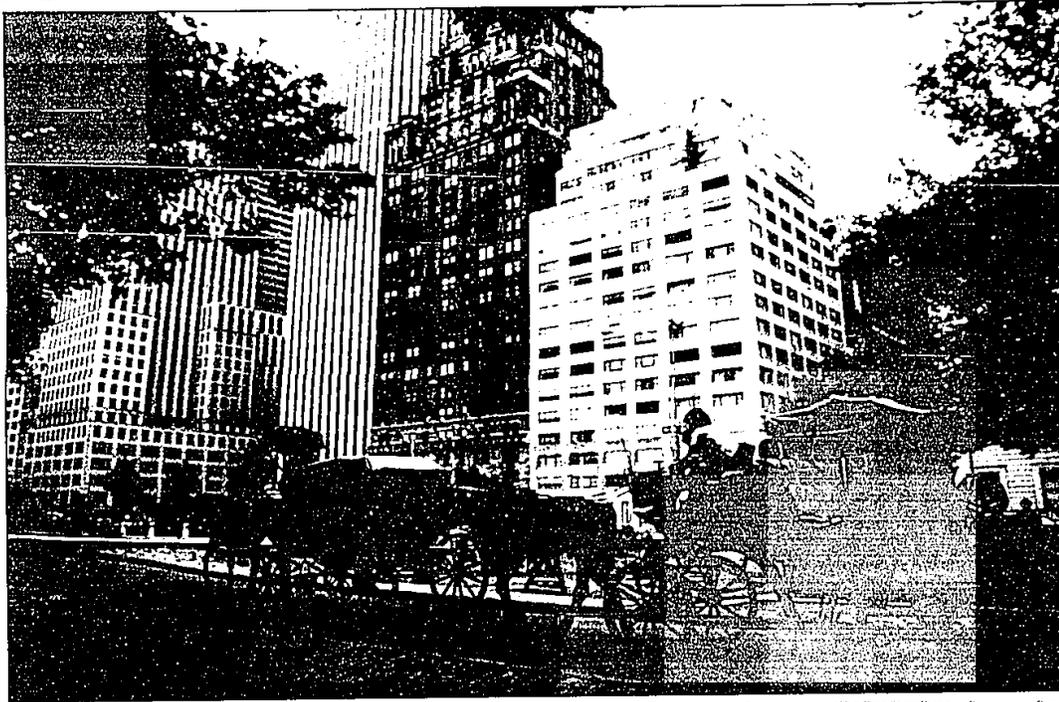


TRAVEL



Reining In: Tourists enjoy a horse-drawn carriage ride through New York City's beautiful Central Park.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW YORK STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Step around the heart of it NYC doesn't sleep during summer

BY TERRY TRUCCO
NEW YORK TIMES SYNDICATE

For some New Yorkers it's almost a reflex action to leave the city in the summer. But for those who stay — and those who visit — summer in Manhattan has a distinctive set of charms.

Even with big events such as the Democratic National Convention, summertime Manhattan has a little less bustle, a little less hassle. And this summer, in particular, New York City has lots to offer, including a buzz or lineup of plays on Broadway.

Manhattan is looking good at the moment. The frenzied building of the late '80s has slowed considerably.

Instead, the city is upgrading what it's got. Familiar museums, notably the Guggenheim and the Morgan Library, have enlarged their premises and restored old buildings with splendid results.

And in the past two years more than a dozen old hotels, including Beekman Towers, the Drake and the Plaza, have been renovated top to toe, often with stunning results. A number of pleasant, modestly priced hotels have sprouted up as well.

Manhattan is also trying hard to

please its guests. Times Square recently unveiled two portable information kiosks. Each is an outsize steamer trunk on wheels with a multilingual concierge inside who hands out maps, brochures and advice.

Manhattan can be intimidating, of course. One way to make it manageable is to concentrate on what's new. This guide, while hardly comprehensive, will give a hint of the intriguing sights, shops and entertainments that may not have existed on your last visit.

Sightseeing

A happy addition to Central Park last month was the 90-minute guided trolley tour. Air-conditioned and painted a jaunty red, the trolley holds 32 passengers, costs \$12.50 and departs weekdays at 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. from Grand Army Plaza at Fifth Avenue and 59th Street. Information: (212) 360-2727.

Bryant Park, the elegantly landscaped square behind the New York Public Library at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue, isn't exactly new. But it was officially rededicated in May after an \$8.9 million restoration and looks terrific, with cleaned

statues, mended wrought-iron fences and 2,000 perennials in the garden.

The stately new Garden Court at the Morgan Library, 29 East 56th St., (212) 685-0008, is a glass-enclosed conservatory where visitors can admire the ginkgo tree and ficus- and bougainvillea-covered wall year round.

Opened in October, the conservatory is a pleasing bridge between the neoclassical library and Morgan House, the adjoining 45-room Victorian brownstone. Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. There is a suggested contribution of \$5.

The Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Avenue at 88th Street, (212) 423-3500, reopened last week after two years of renovations, with new galleries, a smart cafe and an expanded shop. An architectural highlight is Frank Lloyd Wright's sky lit small rotunda, previously closed to the public. "Masterpieces From the Guggenheim Collection" is on view to Aug. 27. Open daily except Thursday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission: \$7.

Opening on the same day was the Guggenheim's new SoHo branch, 575 Broadway, near Prince Street,

currently showing "From Brancusi to Bourgeois," modern and contemporary works from the collection, to Aug. 27. Open Sunday, Monday and Wednesday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday to Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Admission \$5.

A new Broadway theater season is under way with a full house of recent hits, including "Falsettos" at the John Golden Theater, 252 West 45th St., "Jelly's Last Jam," at the Virginia Theater, 245 West 52nd St., and the megahit revival of "Guys and Dolls" at the Martin Beck Theater, 302 West 45th St. Tickets, \$45 to \$65, can be bought by phone at (212) 239-6200.

For movie buffs Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theater, 165 West 65th St., at plaza level, (212) 875-5626, opened in December, offering vintage and international films. Screenings start at 2 p.m. Admission is \$7.

Shopping

The past two years have been rough ones for many Manhattan merchants as an alarming number of vacant stores, large and small, attest. But SoHo, now a hip shopper's haven, is thriving.



All fixed up: The Guggenheim Museum reopened recently after two years of renovations, displaying new galleries, a smart cafe and an expanded gift shop.

The right binoculars can bring a vacation into focus

By EVERETT POTTER
SPECIAL WRITER



A good pair of binoculars is a highly underrated travel accessory.

Some weigh less than 8 ounces and can be carried in a shirt pocket or tucked into a knapsack.

Binoculars can add to the pleasure of a cruise — for observing sea birds, whales and dolphins, watching port activities or identifying ships on the horizon.

Vacationers can take binoculars hiking, cycling, cross-country skiing, to the racetrack or the opera.

They can make an avid bird-watcher out of travelers who don't know a heron from a bluejay.

And costs vary to suit a range of budgets that is nearly as great as the available ranges of magnification.

An inexpensive pair of binoculars may cost as little as \$85; a pair with more sophisticated optics can easily reach \$500 and up.

But price is not everything. An inexpensive pair of binoculars may cause undue eyestrain or "eye fatigue." An expensive pair may be more state-of-the-art than the casual buyer ever will need.

Before buying any pair of binoculars, it's important to understand how they differ.

First of all, binocular models are identified by two numbers, such as "7 x 35" or "8 x 20." The first number indicates the degree of magnification. For example, "7 x" means the image is magnified seven times its normal size; "8 x" means eight times.

As with camera lenses, the larger the magnification, the more important it is to hold the binoculars steady. Otherwise, the image will blur and shake. Usually, any lens greater than "10 x" calls for a tripod

to keep the image steady.

The second number refers to the millimeter size on the front, or objective, lens. The larger that lens is, the more light it can gather — and the larger and heavier the binoculars will be.

Binoculars come with various fields of view: the width of the image area. The wider the field of view, the easier it is to track moving objects, such as birds or racehorses.

The binoculars should be comfortable. Those who wear eyeglasses and find binoculars difficult to use may need to look for models with rubber eyecups that can reduce the distance between the eyes and the lenses.

Finally, binoculars should be easy to focus. The distance between eyecups should be adjustable for maximum comfort.

Most of today's models offer central focusing, usually by turning a wheel between the eyecups. Many also come with "diopter correction"

on the right eyepiece. This allows the right eyepiece to focus separately to accommodate eyesight variations.

In terms of models on the market, probably the most significant and sophisticated new binoculars have been introduced by Carl Zeiss Optical Inc., the famed German manufacturer.

For the first time, the company has applied its advanced optics technology to compact travel binoculars in a line called the Zeiss Design Selection, with "8 x 20" and "10 x 25" binoculars, each weighing a mere 6.5 ounces.

Zeiss also uses "phase-shift multicoating" to cut down on glare. The glasses can be used for long periods of time without causing eye fatigue.

They fit comfortably into the palm of one's hand and fold into a lightweight, hard-shell case for protection. But the quality has a healthy price tag: the "8 x 20" lists at \$530; the "10 x 25" is \$476.

Many dealers will discount these prices, but it's best to think of Zeiss as the BMW of binoculars. For information contact Carl Zeiss Optical Inc., 1015 Commerce St., Petersburg, Va. 23803 or call (800) 33-2954.

Minolta Autofocusing Binoculars use the same technology that's found in Minolta Maxxum SLR cameras.

The "8 x 22" model, which retails for \$302, automatically focuses on images at distances from 6.6 feet away infinity. The sleekly designed "10 x 25," at \$342, is good for images at a distance of 9.2 feet to infinity.

For information contact Minolta Corp., 101 Williams Drive Ramsey, N.J. 07446.

Nikon offers a wide range of binoculars for travel. Their new Sportstar series is affordably priced. The all-purpose binoculars fit into a pocket or purse.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERETT POTTER

Good view: A good pair of binoculars is a much-underrated travel accessory