



Connoisseur's New York

In-depth & behind the scenes

3–10 November 2026 (MM 222)

7 nights

Lecturer: Gijs van Hensbergen

Appealing for both the first-time visitor and those with a degree of familiarity.

Wide-ranging visits including galleries, museums, libraries, parks and architectural walks — including a visit to the Frick Collection in its newly renovated building.

A day is spent outside New York at the Rockefeller Estate in the Hudson Valley and Philip Johnson's Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut.

Special access is a feature including a visit to MoMA when it is closed to the public.

In 1870, at the launch of the Metropolitan Museum, speaker Joseph Choate called for his wealthy audience to do their patriotic duty by turning 'pork into porcelain'. Little could he know that two generations later it would be transformed into the greatest museum in the world. Prior to the American Civil War (1861–65), the old New Amsterdam 'patroons' and the new merchant élite had bought into the charms of the Hudson River school; seen best, and exclusively, in the archives of the New York Historical Society. After the war collectors moved in on the Barbizon school, pioneered support for the Impressionists, and gradually New York became synonymous with the avant-garde.

'Connoisseur's New York' recognises that the Empire City has created an entire cultural universe that is best understood when viewed with world experts and with the luxury of the private view. Just prior to the First World War J.P. Morgan shipped his collection back to New York. Taking a year to pack – it had filled the entire basement of the V&A – it finally found its home in his renaissance-style mid-town palace. The curators at the Morgan Library can pull out a Gutenberg Bible, a Folio Shakespeare, a tenth-century hispano-arab Codex or the *Très Riches Heures*.

The Gilded Age, or the age of the Robber Baron, built its regal aspirations to connoisseurship on the blood and sweat of a million lives. Nowhere is the contrast between past and present more striking than in the juxtaposition of the Whitney Museum of American Art —bold, modern, and restless— and the timeless Old Master treasures of the



New York, view of bridge

Frick Collection; and few things reveal the city's diversity as a walk through Chelsea, with all the latest 'hot' warehouse galleries such as Gagosian and Boone. When the Rockefellers took to art, there was enough money and range of taste within one New York 'tribe' to supply a patron for the mediaeval Cloisters, to create a gallery of Oceanic art at the Met, or to provide a founder of the Museum of Modern Art. A private view at MoMA guides us through the world's 'exemplary' collection. Art Deco skyscrapers lead us through vertiginous views to Grand Central's Oyster Bar.

Central Park – a verdant urban paradise – prepares us for a day's escape to the Hudson Valley with a view of the Rockefellers' hilltop estate, Kykuit. Perhaps most moving of all is Philip Johnson's Glass House in New Canaan. This autobiography in three dimensions comprises a dozen buildings that skilfully essay the history of twentieth-century architecture from Mies van der Rohe to Frank Gehry.

Itinerary

Flights from London are not included. Your room at the hotel is available from 4.00pm on 3rd November. The tour leaders fly from London on a British Airways flight departing Heathrow at 11.20am on this day should you wish to join

them. There is an airport transfer to meet this flight. See 'Practicalities'.

Day 1. The tour begins with a drink in the hotel bar around 6.30pm before leaving for dinner.

Day 2: Upper West & Upper East. Walk to the New York Historical Society; founded in 1804 it was the city's first museum and is the logical place to begin the tour. The visit includes the library and paintings of the Hudson River School. Walk across Central Park to the Upper East Side. Here there is a special visit to the Payne Whitney Mansion, now the French Embassy, with opulent interiors and sculpture by Michelangelo (subject to confirmation). On nearby Fifth Avenue is the Frick, the salubrious mansion housing a small but brilliant collection of paintings (set to reopen in its renovated building on 17 April 2025).

Day 3: the Met. The day is dedicated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Visits to the Greek and Roman galleries and excellent 19th-century galleries are interspersed with free time for independent viewing and exhibitions.

Day 4: Lower Manhattan, Lower East. A morning walk through Lower Manhattan's Financial District, followed by a visit to the Whitney Museum and the contemporary galleries in Chelsea.

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Day 5: Hudson Valley, New Canaan. The Rockefeller Estate at Kycuit has fine views of the river valley and Catskill Mountains beyond. The tour provides an insight into the tastes and wants of the family. Cross into Connecticut to the recently restored Glass House (Philip Johnson, 1949). The tour here studies the architecture, art and sculpture collections, in its beautiful woodland setting.

Day 6: Washington Heights. The Cloisters is set in a tranquil part of north Manhattan overlooking the Hudson River. A branch of the Met and devoted to the Middle Ages, it incorporates arcades from five cloisters and other salvaged architecture, and is a marvellous home for sculpture, tapestries, stained glass and panel paintings. Continue to the Hispanic Society of America, one of the greatest collections of Spanish art outside Iberia.

Day 7: Midtown, MoMA. On foot in Midtown with a local architectural historian, from the UN Headquarters through the city's scrapers to Grand Central Station, which celebrated its centenary in 2013. An after-hours visit to the Museum of Modern Art, one of the greatest collections of 20th-century art in the world.

Day 8: Murray Hill. In Murray Hill is the Pierpont Morgan Library, former office of the financier and home to his immense collection of books, manuscripts and artworks. Completed in 1906 the building was overhauled a century later by Renzo Piano. Some free time before the transfer to JFK airport, in time for the suggested direct flight to London departing 7.00pm.

Lecturer

Gijs van Hensbergen. Art historian and author specialising in Spain and the USA. His books include *Gaudí*, *In the Kitchens of Castile*, *Guernica* and *La Sagrada Familia*, and he has published in the *Burlington Magazine* and *Wall Street Journal*. He read languages at Utrecht University and Art History at the Courtauld, and undertook postgraduate studies in American art of the 1960s. He has worked in England, the USA and Spain as exhibitions organiser, TV researcher and critic and is a Fellow of the Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish Studies at the LSE.

Practicalities

Included: travel by private coach for transfers and some excursions; hotel accommodation; breakfasts, 2 lunches and 5 dinners with wine, water and coffee; all admission charges; donations for private visits; all tips; all state taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

Flights: international flights between London and New York are not included in the price of the tour. This is both because they can only be booked 355 days before travelling and, more significantly, upgrades from World Traveller (economy) are now rarely granted on a group booking. We therefore recommend you book your own flight at ba.com. **We can help you with this.** Our tour manager is on the flight detailed in the itinerary. At the time of going to press (March 2025) the cost of a World Traveller (economy) seat with British Airways at a similar time in November 2025 is c. £650. This is likely to increase for 2026.

Visas: British citizens can enter the USA without a visa by applying for a visa waiver online. We will advise on this. *If you have travelled to Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, Syria or Yemen since March 2011 you are not eligible for the waiver and will need to apply for a visa. You will also need to apply for a visa if you have visited Cuba on or after 12 January 2021.*

Music: there may be performances in New York. Details will be available nearer the time.

Accommodation. The Michelangelo, New York (michelangelohotel.com): located in the heart of Manhattan, near Times Square and

Rockefeller Center, the Michelangelo Hotel combines elegance and practicality, design features and classic luxury details. Room upgrades and extra nights can be requested; contact us for a quote.

Single rooms are doubles for sole use.

How strenuous? New York is vast, busy and chaotic. You should be prepared to walk for 30 minutes at a time and to stand around in museums. Fitness and stamina are essential. Average distance by coach per day: 4 miles.

Group size: between 10 and 20 participants.