

48 Hours With My Teen in New York City



I still remember my first visit to New York City more than two decades ago. Even though I lived in a big metropolitan area at the time, there was something about the buzz of the Big Apple that was unlike anything I'd ever experienced. Instantly, I felt my senses heighten with the hum of cars and taxis, the waft of freshly baked treats coming from street vendors, the flashing billboards of Times Square and the sheer energy in the masses of pedestrians filling the streets.

So, with my son's 16th birthday coming up, I decided to give him his first glimpse of this magical city. On our trip home, after soaking in as much as we could in two days, he turned to me and said: "I can see why you like this place and I'm definitely coming back!" That's all I needed to hear.

Where to stay

New York City has some wonderful boroughs worth exploring, but if you only have a weekend, you may want to splurge on a hotel in Manhattan to save on commute time. We stayed midtown at the family-owned Roger Smith Hotel and weren't disappointed. Established in 1929, this charming boutique hotel—where none of the 132 rooms are alike—features all the necessities when travelling with teens (free Wi-Fi, huge showers and complimentary snacks in the lobby). Plus, it was ideally located within walking distance of Grand Central Station, Times Square and dozens of great eateries.

What to do

Buy a CityPASS to see most of the top tourist attractions at more than 40 per cent off regular admission. The pass gives you access to six of nine attractions, including the Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. Best of all, you get to bypass those lengthy lines of tourists.

As a fashion fiend, my son enjoyed scoping out the second-hand shops for bargains. Our favorite was Beacon's Closet, where all items are conveniently colour-coded, and my son found a pair of sneakers (Air Jordans) at a fraction of their retail cost. Soho is another prime neighbourhood for shopping with everything from cheap street fashion to high-end designer goods.

For free entertainment, head to Times Square to see an mélange of street performers, ranging from mimes and Donald Trump impersonators to incredible hip hop dancers. And

Where to eat

Grand Central Market was our pit stop after a long day of exploring with its locally prepared foods, fresh fruit juices, sweets and other snacks on the go. We also loved the pizza throughout Manhattan, available by the slice and accompanied by a generous piece of New York cheesecake.

On his birthday, I took my son to The Smith , which has four locations throughout the city, and features delicious, hearty portions of steak, pasta and seafood in an environment casual enough for teens.

How to get around

Comfortable walking shoes are key. Between the two of us, we clocked 44,000 steps in the first day alone. The subway was a good option when we figured out how to navigate its 27 different lines. But we found Uber Pool (where we rode with others heading in the same direction), the best deal for getting around the city quickly.

One day we also took a 2.5-hour boat tour around Manhattan with Circle Line Cruises , which cost us only an extra \$5 each with our CityPASS. Not only did we get some spectacular views of the skyline, our tour guide was a long-time New Yorker who told us all kinds of interesting tidbits about the city's history.

For more ideas on what to do with your teen while you're in NYC, go to NYCgo.com

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