

The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

NEW YORK



CHECK IN | THE ROW NYC

BOUTIQUE FEEL OFF TIMES SQUARE

NEW YORK — After two years and a \$140 million renovation, Row NYC (formerly a budget hotel, the Milford Plaza) made its debut this spring.

With a sleek, modern industrial design — complete with eye-catching stainless steel drapes and contrasting wood ceiling — the lobby has the feel of a boutique destination rather than a 1,331-room hotel.

During my recent stay, the lobby was packed with foreign students taking advantage of the free Wi-Fi. “I want to go look at other floors and see if they all have [expletive] awesome paintings like ours,” said one teenager to a group of friends. Upon further eavesdropping, it was clear she was talking about the bright, bold hallway designs on the hotel’s upper floors that transport guests to SoHo, Greenwich Village, the Meatpacking District, and other iconic city neighborhoods.

Add to the wall art a smattering of black-and-white celebrity photographs by Ron Gallela — considered by many the original paparazzo — and this hotel definitely has a coolness factor.

Attached to the hotel and accessible through the second-

floor lobby is the recently opened City Kitchen (pictured above), a very cool food market with a variety of permanent and seasonal vendors from some of the city’s most popular eateries. (Try Dough, where the dulce de leche doughnut is scrumptious, and Ilii Box, a Mediterranean place that serves its Brussels sprouts fried and smothered in sweet fig jam with grapes, walnuts, and mint yogurt.)

Located on 8th Avenue minutes from Times Square, Row NYC has all the basics, including decent-size rooms, 32-inch flat-screen TVs, iPod docks, large windows, and double-tiered shades for extra darkness. Its restaurant, District M, is a cafe in the morning, a pizza place in the afternoon, and a sultry lounge at night. And despite some kinks that need to be worked out (the check-in line was slow and when my key-card wouldn’t work, it took nearly 30 minutes for someone to come let me in), the positives at The Row far outweighed the negatives.

ROW NYC 700 Eighth Ave., New York, N.Y. 888-352-3650, www.rownyc.com. Rates start at about \$200 a night.

JULIET PENNINGTON

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HERE

TOUR AND SAMPLE AT THE CAPE’S LATEST DISTILLERY

Go for a tour and tasting at South Hollow Spirits in Truro, the first legal distillery on Cape Cod since Prohibition, now through Columbus Day. The small-batch rum distillery runs free 20-minute tours daily at noon and 2 p.m., providing information on fermentation, distillation, and ingredient sourcing. For \$10, you can sample the Twenty Boat Cape Cod Amber Rum and the Twenty Boat Handcrafted Cape Cod Spiced Rum (pictured at right), and get a tasting glass to take home. Then grab a lobster roll, duck taco, or burger from Crush Pad, the onsite food truck owned by Black-Fish restaurant in Truro. The distillery is open Mon-Sat 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Sun noon-5.508-487-6200, www.southhollowspirits.com

A BIG EVENT WITH A LONG HISTORY FOR A SMALL TOWN IN MAINE

Little Windsor has held one of the biggest agricultural fairs in Maine since 1888. Join in this year’s fun, Aug. 30 to Sept. 7, when you can watch team penning and barrel racing competitions, see goat and poultry shows, listen to live music by the Cowboy Angels, Down East Brass, and the Poulson Sisters, and offer high fives and cheers for 4H participants from across the state as they vie for prize money. Don’t miss the garden tractor pull, the pig scrambles for kids 8 to 10, and the Ladies Fry Pan Throwing Contest. The event, which takes place on 225 acres, features carnival-like rides, too; buy a bracelet for \$22 (\$15 for Kiddie Land)



anytime after 1 p.m. and enjoy unlimited rides until 10 p.m. Admission: Adults \$8-\$9, under age 16 free; parking free. 207-549-7121, www.windsorfair.com

THERE

NEW ORLEANS TRAVEL PASS SAVES TIME AND MONEY

The Big Easy has just relaunched the New Orleans Power Pass to enable visitors easy access to more than 25 of the city’s top attractions, tours, and experiences. The pass has a new smartphone- and tablet-friendly website, and now offers visitors fast-track entry at some attractions and a free ticket to the Adventures in New Orleans Bus Tour. See rare Louisiana white alligators at the Audubon Aquarium of the Americas, visit Louisiana’s iconic Oak Alley Plantation, and take a boat tour through the alligator-filled Manchac Swamp. One-day pass starts at \$80.49 per adult and \$49.49 for kids ages 2 to 12, with two-, three-, and five-day options. www.neworleanspass.com

AN APP THAT GUIDES YOU WHEREVER YOU GO

Avenza’s PDF Maps app lets hikers navigate while off the grid and travelers stay on track without cell or data service. The invaluable app, geared to Apple and Android users (Windows version coming soon), gives you access to more than 200,000 free or low-cost maps, including ones created by National Geographic, the National Park Service, and the United States Geological Survey. Install the app on your

GPS-enabled phone or tablet and then download maps of college campuses (great for first-time students), cities (perfect for travelers), and hiking trails (ideal for backpackers, skiers, and other outdoor enthusiasts), for instance. Your device uses satellites to track your route and locate your position, so you don’t need to pay exorbitant data or roaming fees while traveling or worry about losing cell access. You’ll find everything from large-scale road maps to 1:250,000 topographic maps from around the world. Use the interactive maps for geocaching, to retrace your steps if lost, and to way-point or tag photos along your route. www.pdf-maps.com

EVERYWHERE

FUN AND INDESTRUCTIBLE KIDS’ LUGGAGE

Travel Buddies 3D luggage can take a beating from pint-size travelers and remain intact and ready for the next adventure. These roll-aboard suitcases and backpacks, made by TrendyKid, come in fun shapes and designs, with butterfly, penguin, ladybug (pictured at right), robot, and other options. The 17-inch hard-shell wheeled suitcase comes with a telescoping handle (adjustable to suit an adult or child), sturdy skateboard-like wheels, an easy-to-operate zipper for little fingers, an inner pocket for organizing and stashing toys, and garment straps for keeping other items in place. The 13-inch matching backpack comes with a hard shell on one side and a

canvas back with comfy adjustable shoulder straps on the other. Suitcase \$64.99, backpack \$29.99, both \$89.99. www.trendykid.com

DEVICE MONITORS YOUR HOME’S ENERGY USE

Find out just how much power you’re using while you’re away with Blue Line Innovations’ PowerCost Monitor. The monitor easily hooks up to your existing power meter (no professional installation necessary) and tracks electricity usage in your home or office. This info gets sent to your smartphone, tablet, or computer, so you can access it from anywhere in the world and then make informed decisions on how to reduce your electricity costs. Track how much energy you’re using while having the lights, irrigation system, and various appliances like air conditioners running. The device lets you track historical data, so you can monitor usage over time. Connect your sensor to your Wi-Fi network for transmitting real-time electricity data to your smartphone. Works with Apple and Android devices, and PCs and Macs. \$179. www.blue-lineinnovations.com

KARI BODNARCHUK



NECEE REGIS FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

THE LIST

IN THE OYSTER PARADE

Oysters lovers rejoice in the fall, not only since cooler waters mean plumper bivalves but also because it means festival season has arrived. One can travel the country — or the world — to events designed to slurp, celebrate, and sometimes teach about the humble oyster.

1

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND INTERNATIONAL SHELLFISH FESTIVAL
Charlottetown, PEI; Sept. 17-20

Enjoy all-things-shellfish at this celebratory bash including cooking demos, culinary competitions, live entertainment, and two oyster shucking competitions at this three-plus day event overlooking the sparkling waters of Charlottetown Harbor. peishellfish.com

2

GALWAY INTERNATIONAL OYSTER & SEAFOOD FESTIVAL
Galway, Ireland; Sept. 24-27

Now in its 61st year, this is one of Europe’s longest running food extravaganzas, featuring a masquerade Mardi Gras dinner, entertainment galore, and a lively parade through the town’s medieval streets. The winner of the shucking competition is crowned World Oyster Opening Champion. www.galwayoysterfest.com

3

WELLFLEET OYSTERFEST
Wellfleet; Oct. 17-18

You’ll find oysters, oysters everywhere at this family friendly festival. Enjoy cooking demos, educational programs, live music, local cuisine, arts and crafts booths, kid activities, a road race, and the much-anticipated Oyster Shuck-Off competition — all produced by the nonprofit SPAT, Wellfleet Shellfish Promotion and Tasting. www.wellfleetoysterfest.org

4

ST. MARY’S COUNTY OYSTER FESTIVAL
Leonardtown, Md.; Oct. 17-18

This festival on the county fairgrounds offers old-time country-fair delights such as a farm museum, arts and crafts displays, a midway with food venues, carnival rides, and amusements, and the US National Oyster Shucking Competition, whose winner will represent the United States in the international competition in Galway. usoysterfest.com

5

CLAYQUOT OYSTER FESTIVAL
Tofino, British Columbia; Nov. 19-22

Celebrating the harvest off the west coast of Vancouver Island, events include a Mermaid’s Masquerade party, oyster farm tours, and a gala night, where local restaurants showcase favorite dishes and chefs compete with their oyster creations. www.oystergala.com/events