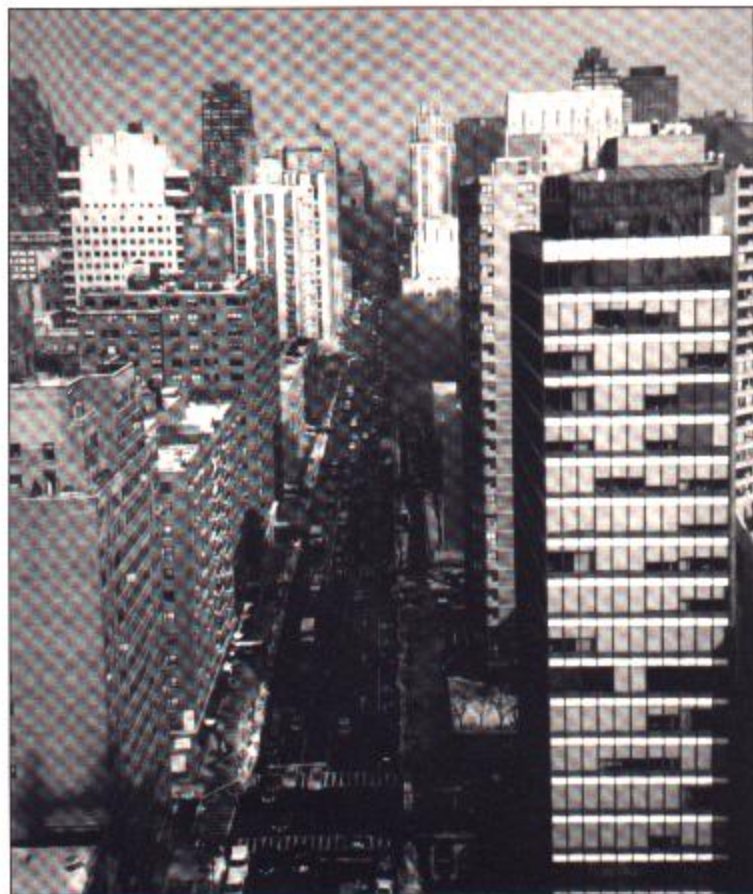


New York and Naked Boys Singing?

by Roger Wheeler



Christmas and the round of happy Kemp Town partying loomed at us and something said - not this year - we'll spend the money going away. All the hot beach destinations are too expensive so why not New York. The www.nycvisit.com site, the official NYC visitor bureau, was great with endless lists of attractions, restaurants and hotels. Being an independent couple we always prefer self-catering and yes New York has a huge variety of apartments to rent.

Through www.westvillagebb.com, a very gay friendly site, we found the perfect loft in the West Village, one block from Broadway, five minutes walk from Greenwich Village and close to two subway stations. Literally the typical New York loft - very 'Sex and the City' - with a fully stocked bar and everything you could imagine and a few things that we hadn't. It could sleep three officially, but with its huge sofa four could easily be accommodated all for only \$180 per night and you can

pav that per person per night in very ordinary hotel.

Christmas Morning we walked the length of 5th Avenue in glorious sunshine with no one else in sight, the City was ours but not for long. Most of the coffee shops were open and on a caffeine fuelled stroll we made it all the way up town before we encountered the crowds gazing

at the amazing window displays in all the stores and the Christmas Tree at the Rockefeller Centre - now that's a Christmas Tree.

Central Park was buzzing and, starving hungry by now, we went into a TGI Fridays on Times Square. Big Mistake, quite awful food and very poor service - Happy Christmas folks! That night we dined in The Village - Greenwich that is - had the full traditional and strolled home truly stuffed.

Broadway shows are expensive, most seats average around \$80 to \$125 (£50 - £100) but the real bargains are Off Broadway and even Off Off Broadway. Naked Boys Singing is a fabulous review and is just what it says it is. Eight of the hunkiest young men, stark naked, singing in an hilarious review. This is a "must see" although the boys are gorgeous, they have great voices and the sketches are very funny, gay it isn't. but who cares, just go and see it.

We also took in the famous Blue Man Group show, also off Broadway, another indescribable evening and one of the hottest tickets in town. We booked all our shows online before we arrived, made life easier, if you really want to queue for a couple of hours at TCKS in either Times Square or the World Trades Centre

for half price seats you can, but we were too busy enjoying the City. Radio City is another must, very tourist I know but you have to see it for the full - on original over the top production, its a cliché but it was breathtaking.

Greenwich Village's famous gay scene is as good as it gets, 'Splash' a great bar, very 'kewl', where all the staff are hunky of course, are only wearing underwear. We loved one of New York's most traditional bars - The Monster, on Christopher Street, now they know how to party. New Year's Eve and for just \$20 (£15) we had possibly the best time ever.

In short New Yorkers do nothing by halves, its a city where you can feel the excitement in the air. You can eat in the most fashionable restaurants like the Townhouse very uptown and cool go around the corner to the Gaiety, a 'theatre' in the loosest possible way which features some very interesting all male dancers. Drink margaritas and mix with the young and not so young in the 2nd Avenue gay bars, cruise the streets of Chelsea, Little Italy, Chinatown where you can buy your original designer watches and Calvins straight from street stalls!!

And next day the sales and the snow started, but that's another story.

