

# Chinatown, Little Italy & Lower East Side



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## LOWER EAST SIDE, CHINATOWN & LITTLE ITALY

### A True Melting Pot

**M**ore than 200 years ago, extended families from around the world pursued the American Dream by coming to New York and living on the Lower East Side. A place where dreams materi-



*The first major settling place for Chinese immigrants on the East Coast, the Lower East Side's Chinatown remains one of the largest, most active Asian gathering points in the world.*

alize, this area just south of the East Village and east of SoHo has once again blossomed into a destination for writers, artists, musicians, and professionals of all varieties.

¶ Opportunity abounds amidst a bustling restaurant scene, a stage for emerging fashion designers, a montage of boutiques, discount shopping, food markets, and night-

life hot spots, making the Lower East Side a popular destination today. The area has been rejuvenated with a youthful spirit and an economic revitalization. From Houston Street to Division Street between the East River and the Bowery, the neighborhood is steeped in history and portrays America as the true melting pot that it is. ¶ More popular than ever, neighboring Chinatown and Little Italy beautifully exemplify the Lower East Side. These highly-populated, flavorful neighborhoods not only bring ethnic groups together as a community, but also draw tourists and visitors from all over Manhattan and the world.

### Chinatown

Spanning from Canal to Worth Streets and the Bowery to Church Street, Chinatown serves as home to more than 150,000 immigrants from all over Asia. Its main businesses are restaurants and garment factories, and more than half of its residents still mainly speak languages other than English. The first major settling place for Chinese immigrants on the East Coast, self-sufficient Chinatown remains one of the largest, most active Asian gathering points in the world, boasting an exceptional community-wide camaraderie and work ethic, as well as great appeal for outsiders. For those of us who love to visit, Chinatown is a visually vibrant sight to see with its abundant dining and marketplaces, especially during the Chinese New Year.

### Little Italy & NoLiTa

Amid cobblestone streets and historic tenement houses, Little Italy is bustling with Italian cuisine and culture, from authentic Italian trattorias to supreme shopping. Bounded to the North by Houston Street, to the East by Mulberry



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## Schools

**Beth Jacob Schools,**  
142 Broome Street

**Henry Street School,**  
220 Henry Street

**Junior High School 56 Corlears,**  
220 Henry Street

**Our Lady of Sorrows School,**  
219 Stanton Street

**PS110,** 285 Delancey Street

**PS134,** 293 East Broadway

**PS140,** 123 Ridge Street

**PS142,** 100 Attorney Street

**PS2,** 122 Henry Street

**PS42,** 71 Hester Street

**Seward Park High School,**  
350 Grand Street

**Yehudah Wolf Institute  
Incorporated,**  
317 Henry Street

**Yeshiva Tifereth Israel-Rizhin,**  
247 East Broadway

## Restaurants/Bars

**Café Habana,** 17 Prince Street at Elizabeth Street. Cuban-Mexican dishes for the flavor and cost-conscious downtowner. 212.625.2001

**Congee Village Restaurant & Bar,** 100 Allen Street between Delancey & Broome Streets, offers 26 versions of congee, a dish said to be even older than rice in Chinese history, along with a full menu of Cantonese dishes. 212.941.1818

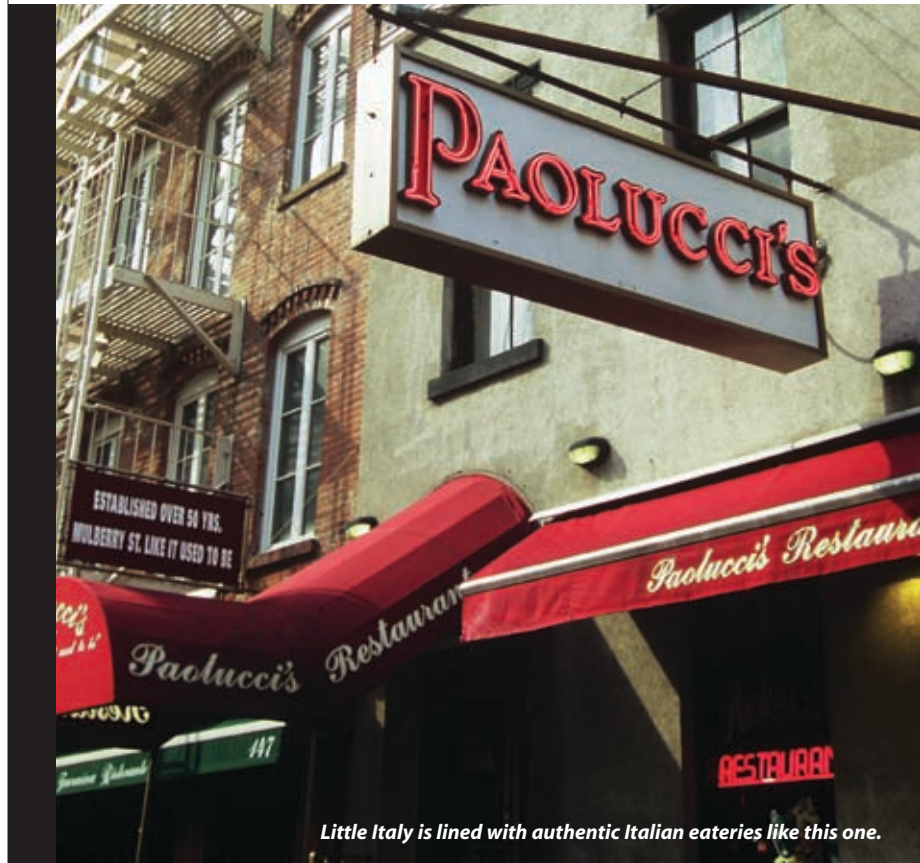
**Double Happiness,** 173 Mott Street at Elizabeth Street. A former speak-easy, this hipster favorite features open brickwork, arches, and hidden corners which add to its underground allure. 212.941.1282

**Ferrara Café,** 195 Grand Street between Mulberry & Mott Street, is a pastry shop first opened in 1892 that ships its creations all over the world. 212.226.6150

**'inoteca,** 98 Rivington Street at Ludow Street, pairs Italian nibbling with a terrific wine bar and spirited, attentive wait staff. 212.614.0473

Street, to the South by Canal Street and to the West by Broadway, this neighborhood is packed with outstanding restaurants and is made up of predominantly original brownstones and structures not more than five stories high. Little Italy becomes even more exciting with abundant sights, sounds and smells during the San Gennaro Festival in September.

North of Little Italy, or NoLita, was coined in the 1990s by real estate brokers looking to give the up-and-coming area more caché. It has since attracted a young and trend-setting upwardly-mobile clientele of artists and professionals who have also gravitated toward its neighboring Little Italy. Within recent years, boutiques, galleries, cafés and nightclubs have sprung up, as have several mid-size apartment buildings.



*Little Italy is lined with authentic Italian eateries like this one.*

## Neighborhood History

In the 18th century, much of what is now the Lower East Side belonged to the city's great landowning families, the Rugerses and the De Lanceys. After the American Revolution, the area still remained semi-rural, with pleasant homes and a considerable amount of open space, but 1800 row houses sprang up to accommodate the merchants and sea captains seeking proximity to South Street. By 1850, the pressures of immigration caused social strife on the Lower East Side.

First, the Irish were forced to the Lower East Side from the potato blight. Then the area became a haven for Russian and Polish Jews fleeing religious persecution in Central Asia during the 1880s. At one point, it was the most densely populated area in the world. Families were crammed into tenements, with virtually no privacy. But after years of solidarity and hard work in unsafe and

unsanitary conditions, immigrants rose above it all and finally improved their standing. In fact, the history of many worker strikes and trade unions finds roots here.

A glance down Orchard Street gives an idea of what life once was like on the Lower East Side, with vendors selling everything under the sun on the sidewalk. There are still plenty of traces of the past there – like the jewelry shops near the approach to the Manhattan Bridge from the days of a once-bustling outdoor diamond market, and the stores selling bedclothes on Grand Street which survived from the old bed linens market in the Romanian district.

The first Chinese immigrants were primarily railroad workers who came from the West in the 1870s to settle in a limited section of the Lower East Side. Chinatown came to be in the late 1880s when male Chinese immigrants settled in a small section of tenements on the lower end of Mott Street, as well as nearby Pell and Doyer Streets. For nearly a century, anti-immigration laws forbid most men to have their families join them, making the neighborhood a “bachelor society” with a static population. At the end of World War II, Chinese immigration quotas were increased, bringing about neighborhood expansion. New arrivals continued to pour into this noisy, crowded area to live and work, and now Chinatown is as lively as ever, filled with souvenir shops and authentic restaurants in pagoda-style buildings.



*The Chinatown streets are ripe with exotic food, souvenirs, sights and smells.*

Little Italy is also packed with charm and history dating back to the late 19th century, when a wave of Southern European immigrants settled in this once crime-ridden area. A strong, self-sufficient community of blue collar workers relied on the strength of their Italian culture to rise from the slums and create a place with an identity of its own. Little Italy today still has wonderful restaurants and atmosphere, but pays tribute to the way things used to be. Recently, creative types have found Little Italy and its sister NoLita – north of Little Italy – as a convenient, hip place to live.

The Lower East Side has quickly blossomed, including the stretches of its northern portion beyond Houston Street known as Alphabet City, or part of the East Village, around Avenues A-D. Also, the area known as NoHo (North of Houston) has gained popularity. The Lower East Side still maintains a slightly slower pace than the rest of downtown Manhattan. Sundays on the Lower East side are the best times to get some great bargains. Essentially everything under the sun can be found here if you know where to look.

**Katz's Deli**, 205 East Houston, is known for its mile-high pastrami sandwiches. Still as good as it was when it opened in 1888, Katz's is filled with authentic original features like formica tables, a long self-serve counter, and unique signs. Plus, the menu is just as enticing as ever. 212.254.2246

**Le Père Pinard**, 175 Ludlow Street & Houston. A lively and authentic French bistro that is a great place to relax for an unpretentious bite. 212.777.4917

**Les Enfants Terribles**, 37 Canal Street at Ludlow Street, is a deliciously unlikely restaurant at the nexus of the Lower East Side and Chinatown serving African/Moroccan, French and Brazilian fare. 212.777.7518

**Libation**, 137 Ludlow Street between Stanton & Rivington Streets. Attractive, prone to misbehavin' 20-somethings fill the three levels of this upscale bar, night club, lounge and restaurant. 212.529.2153

**Li Hua**, 171 Grand Street at Baxter Street, is serves full-on Korean dishes, many of which pack a punch and aren't for the tame of taste-bud. 212.343.0090

**Mercury Lounge**, a popular club located at 217 East Houston Street at Essex Street. This lounge continues to be a favorite for the Lower East Side rock community, with a back room that presents two to four bands a night. 212.260.4700

**Oriental Garden**, 14 Elizabeth Street between Bayard & Canal Streets. At this Chinese seafood restaurant, your dinner literally swims in the fish tank until it is cooked. Fantastic seafood in a raucous, upbeat atmosphere. 212.619.0085

**Paesano of Mulberry Street**, 136 Mulberry Street between Grand & Hester Streets, is the place to eat in Little Italy. The Celebrity photo gallery is not to be missed. 212.965.1188

**Paladar**, at 161 Ludlow Street between Houston & Stanton Streets, is a budget-friendly favorite known for its Cuban-South American food and mad mojitos. 212.473.3535

**Puglia**, 189 Hester Street at Mulberry Street, has everything, including waiters who sing, delicious, hearty portions of Italian favorites, plus unbelievable homemade wine to

complete the experience.  
212.966.6006

**Rice**, 227 Mott Street between Prince & Spring Streets, where all meals are built on a bowl of rice, any kind you choose. Features a multicultural mix of food and a cozy atmosphere.  
212.226.5775

**Sal Anthony's SPQR**, 133 Mulberry Street between Grand & Hester Streets, dishes out traditional Italian food in a spacious, relaxed environment.  
212.925.3120

**Schiller's Liquor Bar**, 131 Rivington Street at Norfolk Street. This no frills restaurant and bar serves up attractively priced food and a to-the-point wine list consisting of 3 selections: cheap, decent and good; cheap being "the best."  
212.260.4555

**Suba**, 109 Ludlow Street between Delancey & Rivington Streets, features a happening grotto and bar scene, not to mention delectable Nuevo Spanish food. 212.982.5714

**The Stanton Social**, 99 Stanton Street between Ludlow & Orchard Streets. Here, sharing it's delectably fun where two levels of super stylish space is host to groups who can't stop ordering "just one more" from the extensive menu. 212.995.0099

**Thor**, 107 Rivington Street between Ludlow & Essex Streets, sits under an incredible glass ceiling. Located in The Hotel on Rivington, Thor is the result of noted chef Kurt Gutenbruner's affinity and prowess at making refined, small-plate dishes from the Greenmarket's finest. 212.796.8040

**Umberto's Clam House**, 178 Mulberry Street at Hester Street, is a legendary authentic Italian restaurant. Famed for serving known mobster Joey Gallo his last meal.  
212.343.2053

**WD-50**, at 50 Clinton Street between Rivington & Stanton Streets, wows all with its experimental dishes and original combinations in artful presentations. 212.477.2900

### Museums/Galleries/ Theaters

**Abrons Art Center of the Henry Street Settlement**, 466 Grand Street between Pitt & Willett Streets, a red brick building which has won many



### Notables

**The Williamsburg Bridge** (Manhattan terminus on Delancey Street) was the second span to cross the East River to Brooklyn, and was once considered quite unattractive.

**Manhattan Bridge** on Canal Street, the third East River crossing, was built by Carrere & Hastings (also designers of the New York Public Library and Frick Museum), and Gustav Lindenthal, bridge engineer. The bridge, with its 1,470-foot span, opened in 1909.

**Orchard Street** Once a center of the pushcart market, Orchard Street, which intersects Hester Street beyond Allen Street, is now the main shopping drag of the district, and is known as a magnet for bargain hunters.

**The Bowery** One of Manhattan's oldest streets, the Bowery began as an Indian trail and got its name during the Dutch colonial period when the area was mostly farmland, known as bowerij. In 1651, Governor Peter Stuyvesant bought much of the property. In the mid-19th century, the Bowery thrived with theaters, oyster bars and taverns. But in the late 1870s, the addition of the elevated steam engine line made the street undesirable to middle-class pedestrians because they were constantly showered with hot oil and coals, and soon slums inhabited both sides. The influx of businesses from Chi-



natown, the colonization of young professionals in Little Italy and the East Village, and the continued success of the area's thriving traditional lighting and restaurant supply houses has led to the facelift of this once less desirable neighborhood.

**Mott Street**, the principal business street of Chinatown, has appeared in countless movies and television programs as the street that portrays the overall neighborhood. Today Mott Street overflows with fish and vegetable markets, bakeries, restaurants and more.

**Mulberry Street**, the heart of Little Italy, crowded with restaurants, cafes, bakeries, imported food shops and souvenir stores. The blocks between Houston and Spring Streets fall within the territory known as NoLiTa, and are increasingly becoming filled by contemporary stores and restaurants as well as others dedicated to staying just the way their longtime customers remember.

**Chatham Square**, is a labyrinthine intersection where 10 streets converge. A memorial, the Kim Lau Arch, stands on an island in the middle to honor Chinese casualties in American wars.

**Shul of New York**, is the city's oldest synagogue, at 172 Norfolk Street between Stanton & East Houston Streets, dating to 1850.

awards for architectural excellence. The center has changing exhibitions of contemporary artists, usually reflecting the Lower East Side's ethnic interests.

**Asian American Arts Centre**, 26 Bowery between Bayard & Canal Streets, which has impressive contemporary works by Asian-American artists, Chinese folk-art exhibitions during the Chinese New Year, plus dance performances and video presentations.

**Children's Museum of the Arts**, 182 Lafayette Street. Founded in 1988, this colorful, fun institution consists mainly of participatory exhibits and activities. Arts and crafts creations, a reading alcove, a costume corner, multi-media area and performance space are but a few of the many offerings here for children.

**Landmark Sunshine Cinema**, 143 East Houston Street is part of Manhattan's thriving art house scene. The theater was originally built in the 1800s and served as a Yiddish vaudeville house. After being closed for 50 years, it reopened as a cinema in 2001.

**Lower East Side Tenement Museum**, 108 Orchard Street, the nation's first urban living-history museum that preserves and interprets the life of immigrants in New York's Lower East Side. You can actually view apartments of specific families who lived and worked in the area, and enjoy a walking tour around Orchard Street. Slide shows, video presentations and changing exhibits are also on display.

**Museum of Chinese in the Americas**, 70 Mulberry Street. Set in a century-old schoolhouse at the corner of Bayard and Mulberry Streets, which once served Italian-American and Chinese-American children. It is the only U.S. museum dedicated to preserving the history of the Chinese people throughout the Western Hemisphere.

## Parks

**Columbus Park**, a peaceful spot on Mulberry Street where many practice Tai Chi in the morning in the shady paved space. Once occupying the area was swampy ground known as the Five Points – after the

intersection of Mulberry Street, Anthony (now Worth) Street, Cross (now Park) Street, Orange (now Baxter) Street, and Little Water Street (doesn't now exist). As depicted in the movie *Gangs of New York*, this was a tough slum ruled by gangs in the 19th century, until a neighborhood improvement campaign in the 1880s brought about the creation of a park.

**East River Park**, which sports green space, tennis courts and open amphitheatres beneath the Williamsburg Bridge also offers baseball diamonds and a running path along the river. Lots of trees provide shade for visitors who just want to sit and enjoy the scenery and river breeze.

**Hamilton Fish Park**, on Pitt Street between Stanton & East Houston Streets includes a recreation center complete with pool and gymnasium. Built on 4.3 acres of land, this park was originally completed in 1900.

**Sara Delano Roosevelt Park** on Hester Street. A seven-block-long, one-half block wide park dating back to the Depression era. Unique to this park is its bird garden, built with the help of neighborhood youth in 1995. Those who practice the art of Tai Chi can also be found in this park.

**Seward Park** on the South End was created from land acquired in 1897 and opened officially in 1903. The park was named after William H. Seward, governor of the State of New York, a U.S. senator, and eventually secretary of state under Abraham Lincoln. Today basketball and handball courts keep visitors active.

## Shopping

**360 Toy Group**, 239 Eldridge Street  
646.602.0138

**Alife Rivington Club**,  
158 Rivington Street 212.375.8128

**Asia Market**, 71 1/2 Mulberry Street  
212.962.2020

**Built by Wendy**,  
7 Centre Market Place 212.925.6538

**Calypso**, 280 Mott Street  
212.965.0990

**Calypso Home**, 199 Lafayette Street  
212.925.6200



*Shopping for Asian delicacies can be a real adventure in Chinatown.*

**Confucius Plaza**, north of Chatham Square up the Bowery. A bronze statue of the Chinese sage created by sculptor Tiu Shih sits there, right in front of the red brick high-rise apartment building named after him.

**St. Patrick's Old Cathedral**, the oldest Roman Catholic church in New York City, at Mott & Prince Streets, and the center of NoLita. Founded by Irish immigrants in 1908, the church has served as backdrop for several movies, including two in Francis Ford Coppola's Godfather series.

**Puck Building**, at East Houston & Lafayette Streets. This imposing brick Romanesque Revival edifice long served the printing industry, first as the home of the humor magazine Pick, then later for producing steamboat and railway posters, stationery and certificates. In 1983 it reopened as a condominium with offices, studios, galleries and showrooms for graphic designers, filmmakers, photographers, etc.



**Doughnut Plant**, 379 Grand Street  
212.505.3700

**E. Rossi & Co.**, 191 Grand Street  
212.226.9254

**Economy Candy Market**,  
108 Rivington Street 800.352.4544

**Find Outlet**, 229 Mott Street  
212.226.5167

**Foley + Corinna**, 114 Stanton Street  
212.529.2338

**Gigantic Brand**, 59 Franklin Street  
212.966.2361

**Harris Levy**, 98 Forsyth Street  
212.226.3102

**INA**, 21 Prince Street 212.334.9048

**Italian Food Center**, 186 Grand Street  
212.925.2954

**Lighting by Gregory**, 158 Bowery  
212.226.1276

**Sigerson Morrison**, 242 Mott Street  
212.941.5404

**Yonah Schimmel Knishery**,  
137 E. Houston Street 212.477.2858

### **Health Clubs**

**Dolphin Fitness Clubs**,  
18 Avenue B, 94 East 4th Street

**Crunch**, 404 Lafayette Street

**Xie He Jian Kang Center, Inc.**,  
302 Broome Street

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