

Two New [and Very Different] Ideas IN MANHATTAN



MANY OF US HAVE BEEN to Manhattan more times than we can count. The double-decker bus, Times Square, a Broadway Show, Central Park, people watching. How about something new and different?

We found just what you're looking for—and again, we can't emphasize how extremely different these two activities are:

THE RIDE

This is a bus tour like no other. We went into it blindly, not knowing why this has gotten so popular. We boarded a nice air conditioned bus that looks like any other touring bus—but when you get on, it's entirely different: The usual seats are all taken out and the bus is retrofitted with stadium-like seating facing out one side of the bus. The windows extend through to the ceiling. Even before the bus leaves the curb, it's already a unique sensation.

A curtain separates the driver's area from the rest of the bus. Two guides get on head-sets on either end of the bus—and it turns into part-roast, part-comedy for those of us in the audience.

The guides play off each other. It's clear to see they're performers. They talk

about the passing scenery, and when an icon—like the Empire State Building or Grand Central Terminal—comes into view, they roll a video on the monitors and a recorded voice with dry wit gives a few bullet point facts about the place, and then they move on.

But it's what happens next—and throughout the ride—that makes this experience so memorable.

The first time it happened—the guide was "picking on" a pedestrian in a business suit. "Hey, sir, lighten up, how about a smile?" The guy keeps walking, looking over at the bus annoyed. "Oh come on, how about a wave?" Finally the guy drops his brief case, squares off at the bus, and breaks into a dance, bouncing off the benches, light poles, mail box—as the music on the bus matches his movements.

He is a "plant." Part of the show. And half a dozen times over the 75 minute ride, others broke into their own "solo flashmobs." It was so entertaining!

If you want something fun, unique and educational—check out The Ride! For more information, log on to www.TheRideNYC.com. Tickets are \$74.

9/11 MEMORIAL MUSEUM

On the other side of the spectrum, you should know the 9/11 Memorial Museum is worth seeing.

Organizers have done a solid job preserving history, telling the story of that national nightmare and honoring the innocent victims who lost their lives through no fault of their own.

We spent over two hours walking through the underground facility. Of the thousands of artifacts, one stuck out the most to me: It was a string of 40 voice-mail messages left on a victim's answering machine. You can pick up a receiver and listen. They start with "Hey Dave, it's Tim, hearing some crazy things this morning, just want to make sure you're all right." That graduates to, "Hi David, it's your mother. Please call me right away. I'm worried about you." That inevitably deteriorates to, "Dave...I heard the news. I know you won't hear this. I just wanted to tell you how much you meant to me."

You get the idea. It's very well done. Log on to www.911Memorial.org for more information. Tickets are \$24 – *Ray Collins*