

# TRAVEL

*Making The Most*

**OF 30 HOURS IN  
MANHATTAN**



## **Making the most of 30 hours in Manhattan**

**I've learned that some of the things we plan for the most work out poorly, while other things we don't expect to work, wind up being great experiences.**

**This trip shattered that theory: The plan was a 36-hour trip to New York—and I'm happy to report, everything worked out:**

**We left Sarasota at 6am, bound for a direct flight to Newark. I asked the gate agent if she could upgrade us from our seats that were nearly in the bathroom. She laughed and gave us emergency row seats at no extra charge—where we met an off-duty pilot and had an interesting conversation as we flew up the eastern seaboard. Our first stroke of good luck. We took a New Jersey Pathway train from the airport to Manhattan's Penn Station that brought us a block from our hotel near Madison Square Garden. (I'll never use Uber from LaGuardia or JFK airports again now that I've learned about this excellent method of mass transit.)**

**We arrived at 10am—too early to get our room...unless we'd be willing to sacrifice our king bed for two queens. Sold. We were able to unpack, freshen up from our flight and hit the streets less than four hours after leaving SRQ.**

**We headed south and found the High Line, a 1.4-mile rails-to-trails project that allowed us to see the lower west side of Manhattan without having to stop every block for traffic. This is an amazing pedestrian walkway with great views and wasn't too crowded. Once we left the trail, we weaved our way through Chelsea, SoHo, Greenwich Village and back to our hotel in time to change for dinner and a show.**

**We have a go-to restaurant in the theatre district called the West Bank Café. We met a longtime friend there, had a nice visit and walked a few blocks to see "Hamilton. (I used to say "Les Misérables" was my favorite musical—until I saw "Hamilton." Catchy music, clever lyrics and a lot of history woven in.)**





The next—and final—day began early. First stop was NBC’s “Today Show” where the anchors come out to the plaza during the show and receive a rock star ovation. One of the lead anchors, Hoda Kotb, and I worked together in Ft. Myers in our first TV jobs out of college—and we had a chance to re-connect briefly before she was pulled back inside.

From there, Erin and I went across the street to ice skate on the Rockefeller Plaza rink. This is something I’ve always wanted to do. I played hockey growing up in Buffalo--but this was my Southern belle’s first time on ice. We got there early enough (9am) to miss the crowds. Bucket list: Check.

We crossed the street again to take an architectural tour of Rockefeller Center. It’s much more than just 30 Rock. Fascinating! Our terrific guide, Mika, told us about John D. Rockefeller making his fortune in oil and buying up several city blocks of Midtown Manhattan. A couple of the dozen-plus building owners wouldn’t sell to developers—and you can still see those odd brick buildings among the blocks of limestone high-rises. We also learned that architects built a few floors of 30 Rockefeller Center without windows, anticipating the invention of TV studios. Brilliant!

After our tour we went seventy stories up to the “Top of the Rock” for a bird’s-eye view of Manhattan. Magnificent views of Central Park, the Empire State Building and other landmarks. (You can learn more about the skating, the tour and the roof-top peak at [www.rockefellercenter.com](http://www.rockefellercenter.com)) Starting to fade after our whirlwind 26-hours in Manhattan (44,000 steps on my Fitbit!) it was time to head back to the hotel and pack up. We took the train back to the airport and flew directly back to SRQ.

As we came out into the balmy night off University Parkway, it was surreal to think we had just left the day before. It was one of those sensory illusions where—we jammed so much in—it seemed like we were gone for a week.

Despite all the planning that went in, it was still a great trip—which isn’t always the case.

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