Welcome to NYC Free Tours by Foot's Lower East Side Self Guided Tour.

The Lower East Side might just be the most historic neighborhood in the United States. Home to millions of immigrants throughout the 19th and early part of the 20th century, this area was said to be the most densely populated neighborhood on earth. Not only does this classic enclave feature many legendary establishments from its past, but it has also emerged into one of the most desirable places in the world to live and play.

The Lower East Side has it all: family-owned and operated delis over 100 years old; synagogues and tenement buildings from the mid-19th Century; super hip and trendy hotels, apartments, boutiques, bars, and cafes. If you are not fortunate enough to be led through the Lower East Side by one of our fabulous tour guides, here is the next best thing.
(A) Yonah Schimmel Knishery  
137 East Houston Street  
Open daily, 9AM-7PM.

Start at Yonah Schimmel’s Knishes and have a knish (pronounced: [ka-nish]). Located on Eldridge and Houston just off the 2nd Ave F train subway station. If asking for directions, make sure to pronounce Houston Street like a local. It is pronounced [House-ton], as the street in New York is named after William Houstoun, not after the namesake of the city in Texas Sam Houston.

Yonah Schimmel’s Knishery has been baking a dazzling array of big round delicious knishes since 1910. Its namesake Yonah Schimmel, a Romanian immigrant, started selling his wife’s knishes in Coney Island in the 1890s while training to be a religious scholar. He then abandoned his religious callings and opened this store with his cousin, Joseph Berger. Later Yonah went back to religion and Berger and his wife, Schimmel’s daughter, Rose took over the store. These really are the greatest knishes known to mankind; round and baked, the way they oughta’ be.

Along with the traditional classics like potato and kasha, there’s sweet potato, spinach, mushroom, and even jalapeno. In the mood for a sweet knish? They have blueberry cheese! Chocolate cheese! Apple and Cheese! Yum! The dumbwaiter (the elevator that brings the freshly baked knishes up from the basement) is one of the oldest in the city. That tin on the ceiling is original. This iconic Jewish New York eatery also has egg creams, latkes, kugel, and many more delights.

(B) Russ & Daughters  
179 East Houston Street  
Hours: M-F: 8AM-8PM; Saturday: 8AM-7PM; Sunday: 8AM-5:30PM.

Continue east on Houston and stop at Russ & Daughters. This fabulous gourmet Jewish grocery has stood the test of time. Go inside! Smell everything. Breathe it in. Eat something! Gefilte fish, sturgeon, herring, trout, salmon, bagels, white fish, caviar… Joel Russ, a polish immigrant, started selling mushrooms out of a pushcart and opened this store in 1914. He put his daughters in the title and put all three to work behind the counter. Russ and Daughters just

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celebrated 100 years and they just opened up a cafe on 127 Orchard Street. His grandson, Mark, now runs the business. That neon sign was made in 1951 and is one of the oldest in the city. The key word here is “Schmear” which means to coat a bagel with a small amount of cream cheese. Russ & Daughters Cafe also hosts musical events every now and then.

Now we come to Orchard Street, named after James Delancey’s apple orchards. From here you can see the tenements. They are everywhere! These buildings, typically 5 to 7 floors, 25 ft. across and 100 feet long were built (DELETE in and add ‘from) the mid-1800s to the early 1900s to house millions of newly arriving immigrants. Slumlords took advantage of the tenants in many ways. The conditions were filthy, dangerous, and at times, life threatening. The Tenement Museum on Orchard and Delancey Streets is a must for anyone interested in this important part of NYC history.

(D) Katz’s Deli
205 E Houston St
Hours: Mon-Wed 8am-1045pm, Thurs 8am-245am, Fri 8am open 24 hours until Sun 1045pm

When it comes to Jewish delicatessens, Katz’s is the undisputed champion. Located on the corner of Houston and Ludlow Street in the historic Lower East Side of New York, this iconic eatery (actually, the very first Jewish delicatessen) has been serving up the best pastrami and corned beef sandwiches in the world, not to mention great hot dogs, knishes, and knockwurst, since 1888. - It's also where Harry met Sally.

(E) Red Square
250 East Houston Street

As you walk East on Houston Street, just past Avenue A, look across the street and you will find Red Square, a 130-unit apartment building. Now look up. See that guy on the roof? Vladimir Lenin, one of the leaders of the Communist Revolution. Next to him is Askew, a massive clock with out of sequence numbers. “It (the clock) fit the building’s image as being a little off-center,” said one of the owners, according to a NY Times article.
Lenin purposefully faces Wall Street and the Lower East Side, according to one of the owners, to illustrate the contrast between capitalism and socialism. Red Square (this building on East Houston Street) is named for the fall of the Soviet Union and was built just about then in 1989. Vlady has been up there since 1994.

(F) Angel Orensanz Foundation
172 Norfolk Street

Continue past Red Square and make a right on Norfolk. In the middle of the street block stands the oldest synagogue building in New York City (fourth-oldest in America) and the country’s largest synagogue at the time of its construction (it could hold up to 1,500 worshipers). The land had originally been part of Peter Stuyvesant’s estate. Built in 1849 for Ansche Chesed (the people of kindness) in the Gothic Revival style, inspired by the Cologne Cathedral in Cologne, Germany, it was the third Jewish congregation in New York City, and the first German-Jewish synagogue in New York.

The Congregation was formed in 1825 and was made up mostly of immigrants, primarily of immigrant German Jews, but also Dutch and Polish Jews. In the 1850s, it had the largest membership of any synagogue in America. By the 1970’s membership dwindled as the neighborhood changed and the building was eventually abandoned and vandalized. Then along came Jewish Spanish sculptor Angel Orensanz. He bought the building in 1986 and turned it into an art gallery and event space, but not just any event space. Luminaries such as Whitney Houston and Maya Angelou performed here. Mathew Broderick and Sarah Jessica Parker were married there in 1997. The building was designated an historic landmark by New York City in 1987.

(G) C & C Prosperity Dumplings
69 Clinton Street
Hours: daily, 10AM-10:30PM

Walk south on Norfolk, turn left on Stanton, turn right on Clinton. You’ll find Prosperity Dumpling. This is one of the great gems of New York City. This Lower East Side spot as well as the original Chinatown location on Eldridge Street serves up some prosperously fantastic Chinese dumplings and pancakes for preposterously great prices. If you’re not a carnivore, no problem. The vegetarian selections are worth the trip. Try the cabbage and pork dumplings, chive and pork dumplings, vegetable dumplings, and last but not least, the duck pancake
(#13), which is more like a duck sandwich wedge: it’s amazing!!! Continue a half a block on Clinton to Rivington Street, which is named after Patriot spy, James Rivington. Turn right, and head to Sugar Sweet Sunshine Bakery. Along the way, take note of Streit’s matzo factory.

**H) Streit’s Matzo Factory**  
148-154 Rivington

Streit’s, the one and only family-owned and operated matzo business in the country, has been making matzo at this spot on Rivington since 1925. Streit’s bakes 16,000 matzo a day but then kicks into high gear in preparation for Passover. During this time, they run the shop 20 hours a day and produce 30,000 pounds a day! If the window is open, ask for a taste. The matzo guys always like to share the delights!

**I) Sugar Sweet Sunshine Bakery**  
126 Rivington Street  
Hours: M-Th: 8AM-10PM; Fri: 8AM-11PM; Sat: 10AM-11PM; Sun: 10AM-7PM.

Sugar Sweet Sunshine Bakery might have the best cupcakes and puddings around. An intoxicating array of flavors and a sweetheart of a staff make this one of favorite sweet spots. Co-owners, Debbie and Peggy, both alumni of Magnolia, opened this goody shop in 2003 and it’s been a hit since the get-go. Recommendations: not easy. Put it this way: the first time (delete you’ll and add ’you.’) try the chocolate chip pudding you might (replace felt with feel) like you should be eating it in private. Cupcakes: Pinch Me, Lemmon Yummy, Ooey Gooey. Pudding: Chocolate chip, banana, Chocolate Bomb. Basically, everything. Continue to Essex Street. Make a left. Pass the Essex Street Market, which takes up the entire block. An indoor market since 1934, it will have a new home at the Essex Crossing in the not too distant future. Stop at Delancey and Essex Street. James Delancey was a loyalist to the crown. His land was confiscated before the American Revolution, but we still have Delancey Street. Cross Delancey and when you have some time, enjoy the film Crossing Delancey, a popular romantic comedy.

**J) Williamsburg Bridge (built 1903).**

One of three bridges that link Brooklyn to Manhattan (the Brooklyn Bridge (1883) & Manhattan Bridge (1912) are the other two), the Williamsburg Bridge was the world’s longest suspension bridge until 1924. As you cross Delancey, heading south on Essex, look to your left and there she is! The northern most of the three bridges that link Brooklyn to Manhattan (from south to north think BMW {Brooklyn, Manhattan, Williamsburg}) it transports folks back and forth via foot, bicycle, subway, and automobile, from Williamsburg, Brooklyn to the Lower East Side.
Side of Manhattan. Williamsburg, Brooklyn is home to Peter Luger’s world renowned steak house (cash only, reservations strongly recommended) and one of the coolest ‘hoods on the planet. On a nice day... we suggest biking or walking. From Manhattan: there are two lanes to enter: one for walking. One for cycling. Enter both at Clinton Street and Delancey, and make sure you're in the correct lane!

• Manhattan landing: Delancey and Clinton, Lower East Side.
• Brooklyn landing: Grand Street and Broadway, South Williamsburg.
• Span: 1,600 feet (490 m) long.
• Entire bridge length: 7,308 feet (2,227 m)
• Deck: 118 feet (36 m) wide.
• Heights of towers: 335 feet (102 m)

(K) Ludlow Street Jail from 1862-1920s
350 Grand Street, currently the Seward Park Campus, with five different schools.

Past Delancey on the corner of Essex and Broome is the site of the former Ludlow Street Jail. Politician Boss Tweed, the head of NYC's infamous Tammany Hall, the powerfully corrupt political machine that reigned over the city in the 1800s, died in here in 1879.

(L) Pickle Guys
49 Essex Street, corner of Grand Street
Hours: M-Th: 9AM-6PM; Fri: 9AM-4PM; Sat: closed; Sun: 9AM-6PM.

At the turn of the 20th Century, Essex Street was teeming with pickle stores. But now it’s only the Pickle Guys, who opened their shop in the 21st Century. You will never find a snappier, juicer or more delectable pickle than the full sour pickle right here. This really is a throwback to the time when pickle kings like Izzy Guss still had their doors opened. Enter this storefront, and soak in the wonderful aroma. Nothing but barrels of pickled treats and a great staff. The guys are at your service and ready to answer any questions. Want something besides a full sour or half sour pickle? How about a spicy pickle? How about pickled mango, garlic olives, peppers, pineapple? Cross Essex Street. Walk East on Grand Street.
(M) Kossar’s Bialys
367 Grand Street, since 1936
Hours: M-Th: 6AM-8PM; Fri: 6AM-2PM; Sun: 6AM-8PM.

The bialy was named after Białystok, Poland (at the time under Russian occupation). Russian Jewish bakers started baking these delicious treats at the turn of the 20th century right here on the Lower East Side. In the glory days of Bialys there was actually a Bialy Bakers Association!! Kossar’s has been at this location at Grand and Essex Streets since the early 1960s Morris Kossar’s son-in-law and daughter, Daniel and Gloria Kossar Scheinin sold the business in 1998. The interior is true baker’s bliss. In addition to bialys, bagels, bulkas and pletzels come fresh out of the giant oven. Bialys usually measure up to 15 cm (6 inches), it’s a chewy yeast roll similar to a bagel, but the bialy is baked, not boiled like a bagel. Bialy center is depressed, but happily filled with garlic, poppy seeds, bread crumbs, or onions. Other things to try: bulkas (small loaves), or pletzels (Jewish flatbread, with onion and poppy seed). Walk a few doors east and you’re at the Doughnut Plant.

(N) Doughnut Plant
379 Grand Street
Open daily: 6:30 AM-8PM

In 1994, Mark Isreal said it was time to make his donuts. He turned the basement of his tenement apartment into a bakery and swept New York City up into tidal wave of mass donut addiction. For five years he baked in his basement by night and sold his donuts to gourmet spots like Balducci’s and Dean and DeLuca by day. Word caught on fast. People gobbled up more and more and so he baked. Cake filled, creme brulee, dough seed, and fresh fruit. Then the time had come. He thought big and expanded. There are stores on Grand Street, Chelsea and Brooklyn (just about to open!) The delicious donuts are handcrafted daily, with no eggs or preservatives and no trans-fat. Here are some mouthwatering delights you might look forward to:

- Filled doughnuts: filled with house made jams, creams and custards.
- Yeast: Light, airy, fluffy yeast-raised doughnuts, with a slight chew.
- Ice cream summers
- Gourmet coffee
- Red eye affogato espresso over handmade coffee ice cream.
- Blackout — chocolate cake doughnut, filled with chocolate pudding, dipped in chocolate glaze and sprinkled with chocolate cake crumbs.

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- Tres Leches — the sweet taste of the authentic “three milks” cake, delivered in a round cake doughnut.
- Carrot Cake — traditional carrot cake with lots of real carrots, raisins, walnuts and spices, with a cream cheese filling.
- Doughseeds — mini, round filled doughnuts. Launched with their signature Creme Brûlée, flavors now include Rose (with a rose water pudding and dipped in a rose water glaze, topped with an edible rose petal), Hazelnut Chocolate, Matcha Green Tea, Peanut Butter & Blackberry Jam, Pistachio, Strawberry & Cream and Wild Blueberry & Cream.

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