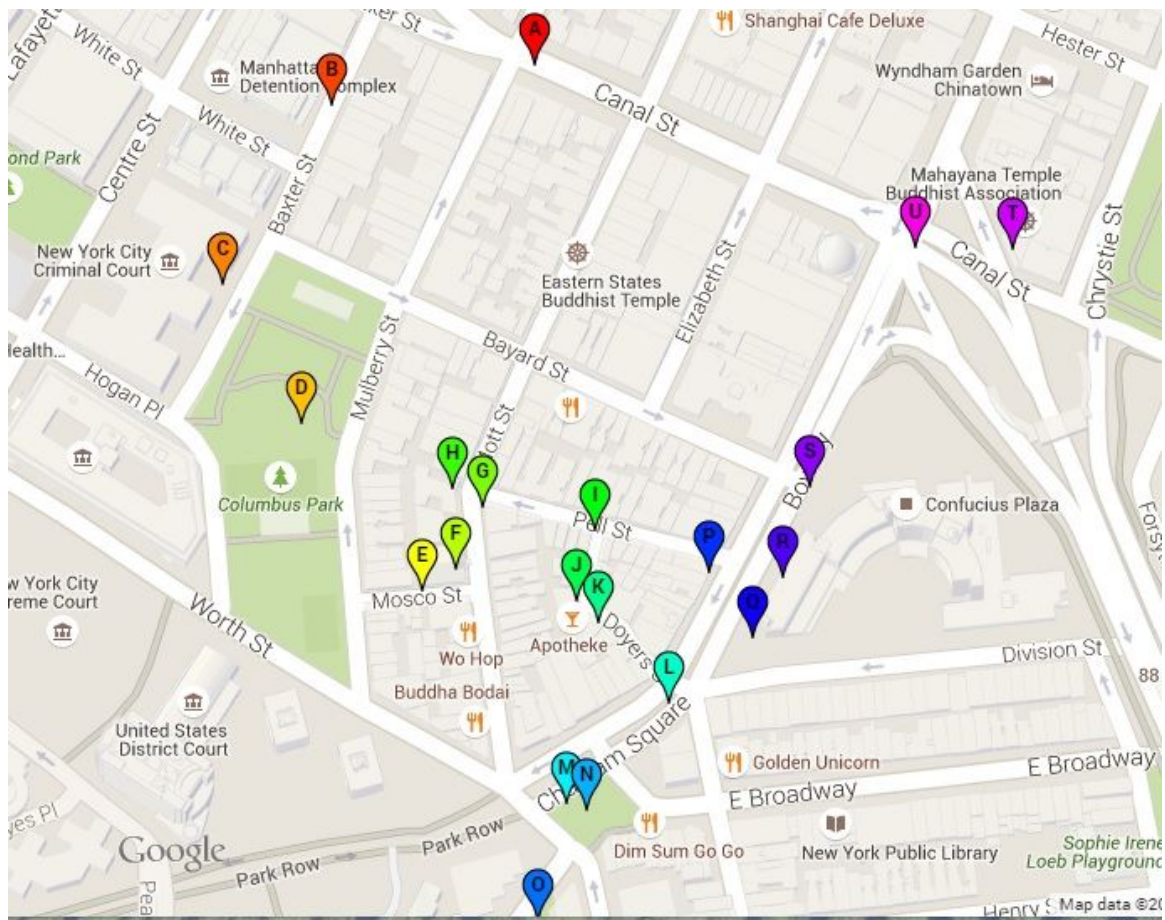


How to get to Chinatown

There are many ways to arrive in Chinatown and the Canal Street subway station is the closest to the starting point of this tour, the NYC and Company information kiosk at 210 Canal Street. We recommend using this link for [directions to the tour starting point](#). All the major hop-on, hop-off buses offer at least one stop in Chinatown. Read our comparison post on [which bus company might be right for you](#).

[Full Size Movable Map](#)



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Self-Guided Tour



Start your tour at the Visitor's Kiosk where they often have free copies of Time Out Magazine and also nifty pocket-sized foldable subway maps!

Baxter Street

Throughout the 1700s, the area west of Baxter Street and south of Canal Street was a swampy area known as **Collect Pond** which provided drinking water to Colonial New York. In 1811, the City drained the area by building a canal which was later covered over in 1821 and was named, of course, Canal Street.

In 1838, the land where the swamp once was became the site of New York City's jail. Because the building was built to resemble an Egyptian mausoleum, the jail came to be called "The Tombs". The original building was torn down and eventually a new modern Manhattan House of Detention was erected. It is still referred to as "the Tombs" by attorneys and prosecutors today. The building next to the jail is **Manhattan's Criminal Court** building. It is open to the public and you can sit in on trials during the day or night court from 5 pm-1am. Keep your eyes open in the area as you may see film crews shooting scenes for one of the many "Law and Order" type TV shows that take place in New York.

Columbus Park - Immerse yourself in Chinese culture by spending a few minutes in this small but lively park where many elderly Chinese people come to play cards, *mahjong* and other Chinese games. You will hear musicians singing traditional Chinese songs and playing lutes. Early in the mornings you may spot a group of people doing *tai-chi*.

Though this park feels distinctly Chinese, it wasn't always the case. The area where the park stands now and the surrounding streets was known as **Five Points**, an infamous, crime-ridden slum depicted in the book and movie “Gangs of New York.” The area earned the name of Five Points because five of its streets converged at one point, on the site of what is now Columbus Park. City officials decided to raze most of the

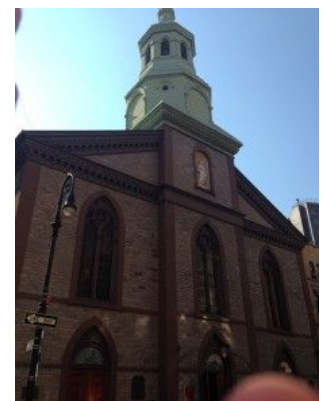


neighborhood in order to eliminate this hub of gang warfare, violence, poverty and crime. The park was built where the streets once existed in 1896. Of the original five streets, only three remain. Worth (formerly Anthony) Street on the south, Baxter (formerly Orange) Street on the west and Mosco (formerly Cross) Street on the east.

Mosco Street - This very short sloped street resembling an alley was once a much longer thoroughfare but was reduced to its current size when Five Points was torn down. In 1982 it was renamed Mosco Street in honor of Lower East Side community Activist Frank Mosco. Today Mosco Street is a prime destination for those who searching for the best and cheapest New York Food. It's impossible to miss the tiny shop simply named 'Fried Dumpling'. Here you can get what some say are the best Chinese fried pork dumplings in town. \$1 for 5 dumplings!

Mott Street - Walk up Mosco Street to the corner and you will be on Chinatown's unofficial "Main Street" where many of the first Chinese-owned shops and restaurants opened in the early days of Chinatown. Today it is lined with Chinese restaurants, trendy bubble-tea shops, tourist-type gift shops.

Church of the Transfiguration (corner of Mosco and Mott Sts.) - This multi-denominational, multi-lingual church has served immigrants here for more than two centuries. The building was erected in 1801



by a Lutheran congregation. By the time the spire was added in the 1860s, the church was Roman Catholic with a congregation of Irish and Italian immigrants. The church is still Roman Catholic but its congregation is mainly Chinese making it one of the largest Chinese Roman Catholic congregation in the Western world. Sermons are held in English as well as two dialects of Chinese, Mandarin and Cantonese.

32 Mott Street site of the former *Quong Yuen Shing* General Store - From 1891 to 2003, this was the site of the longest continuously family-operated store in Chinatown. The store was opened by a man named Lok Lee and was more than just a place to buy goods. It served as social center of sorts, a place where Chinese immigrants could come to talk, where illiterate immigrants could get assistance from literate immigrants to write letters back home, or to rent a bed by the night in the back of the store. In 2003, the General Store closed due to the effects of 9/11. The proximity of Chinatown to the Twin Towers resulted in street closures in the area, cutting off much business to Chinatown. With the Chinatown economy now in recovery, new owners have opened up a gift shop at the location.

Aji Ichiban Candy Store 37 Mott Street - Despite the Japanese name, this Chinese chain candy stores sells hundreds of kinds of Asian and Western candies and dried fruits, nuts, jerky, seafood and a fabulous selection of all things gummy! There are small sample dishes next to most items – we recommend you sample the pre-served rose petal, a wasabi peanut and the candied baby-crab.



of

Pell Street - This narrow colorful street, lined with 100 year old brick tenement apartment buildings, small storefronts and awnings and flags with Chinese writing is a favorite locale among photographers and filmmakers, as no street more than Pell



screams out “This is Chinatown!” Due to the numerous barber shops and hair salons, locals sometimes refer to Pell Street as ‘Barbershop Alley’. By the early 20th century, like many of the smaller streets branching off of Mott Street, Pell Street had its share of vice in the form of brothels, gambling houses, gang hideouts and opium dens, two of which were located at 11 and 13 Pell.

Ting’s Gift Shop 18 Pell Street - This corner store with its dusty windows and traditional Chinese trinkets and ornamental ware has been in business since 1957. Compared to the other gift shops of Chinatown filled with Hello Kitty bags and “I Love New York” t-shirts, Ting’s looks as if they haven’t changed their store windows for a decade. Nor have their prices which means if you want a bamboo backscratcher, chopsticks, and other Chinese trinkets, this shop is for you.

Doyers Street - For such a small street, Doyers has big history. The street is named for Hendrik Doyer, an 18th-century Dutch immigrant who owned the land on which the street sits. He operated a distillery where the post office now stands. Doyers is an oddly curved street, the result of having been laid out prior to the City’s official street creation policy, the Commissioner’s Grid Plan of 1811 mandating that any new streets conform to the still existing grid pattern. Like Pell Street in the early 1900s, Doyers Street was a bed of vice as well as violence. Because of the number of shoot-outs, ambushes and murders in the battle for dominance between two rival *tongs* (gangs), the *On Leong* tong and the *Hip Sing* tong, Doyers’ and its infamous curve came to be known as “the Bloody Angle.

Nom Wah Tea Parlor 20 Doyers Street - This is Chinatown’s first tea parlor, opened back in 1920. The interior resembles an American coffee shop with vinyl booths and a counter with stools. Unlike other food establishments in early Chinatown with their

exotic mysterious appearance, Nom Wah's décor was familiar to non-Chinese diners and made it more enticing for people to come in and try this new type of food. Though the restaurant has had different owners of the years, the current owners have been involved with it since the 1940s. Read the news articles posted on the restaurants windows to learn about the family's history and the hard times and good times the restaurant has endured over the decades.

5-7 Doyers Street formerly the Chinese Theater - Also known as the Chinese Opera House, the very first Chinese-language theater in the United States east of San Francisco opened in this building in 1893 to meet the needs of a rapidly growing Chinese population. A trip to the theater became somewhat of a fad among cultured New Yorkers but in 1905 a vicious gun battle between the Hip Sings and the On Leongs erupted inside the theater leaving four people dead. The theater suffered greatly and eventually closed in 1901.

Chatham Square - Prior to the birth of Chinatown in the late 1800s, Chatham Square was an open market. As the area became more and more Chinese at the run of the 20th century, the area around the square became seedier as flop houses and tattoo parlors cropped up. Today Chatham Square is viewed as the eastern hub of Chinatown, much like Columbus Park on the western border.

Kimlau Memorial Arch - In 1962, this statue was erected by the American Legion and is dedicated to Chinese Americans who died fighting for democracy in World War II. The arch is named for Benjamin Ralph Kimlau, a Chinese-American lieutenant who lost his live when his plane was shot down during a mission in 1944.



Statue of Lin Ze Xu - Chinatown was, until the second half of the 20th century, primarily Cantonese. But in the past few decades more and more Chinatown residents are from the *Fuzhou* province and the area east of Bowery, particularly East Broadway (known as “Fuzhou Street” and Eldridge Street are dominated by *Fujianese* owned shops. Thus it is no coincidence that Lin Ze Xu, a Chinese politician who fought to keep the opium trade out of China in the 1830s-40s, happens to be Fujianese. The statue was erected in 1997 and is a source of pride for the Fujianese residents of the neighborhood.\

Shearith Israel Graveyard - This small, hardly noticeable sliver of land is the oldest cemetery in New York, dating back to 1683. At that time, this area was outside the



boundaries of New York proper and thus suitable for a graveyard. Spanish and Portuguese Jews were the original founders of the Shearith Israel congregation, the only one in New York for nearly 200 years until 1825. Though you cannot enter this tiny cemetery, you can see some headstones with Hebrew writing.

This is one of the very few pre-colonial sites left in the city yet most New Yorkers have never heard of it. It is a treasure of history tucked away and should not be missed.

The Bowery - This was once the main road in Dutch-settled New York, New Amsterdam. The word Bowery is derived from the Dutch word for farm, *bouwerie*. During colonial times and after, Broadway replaced Bowery as the main street of Manhattan and by the 1800s the Bowery had grown into an entertainment district. However, this historic street became known as ‘skid row’ for the down and out. Seedy hotels and soup kitchens lined the street throughout the 1900s.

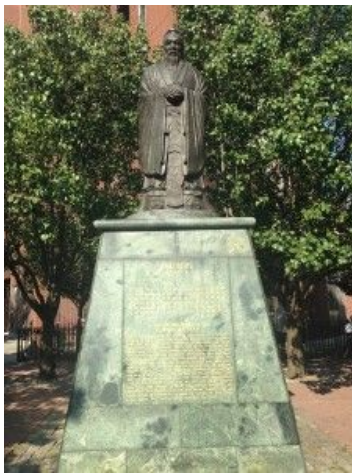
Edward Mooney House corner of Bowery and Pell Street - This two-story red brick building is the oldest townhouse in New York City and was built in 1785 after the

Revolutionary War by Edward Mooney, a butcher. Walk on Pell Street to see the wooden door frame, so dramatically different from the other building entrances surrounding it. Look up and you will see small, arched quarter-windows typical of the late Georgian and early Federal styles of the era in which it was built. Since the 1820s the building has housed a tavern, a hotel, a pool parlor, a restaurant, a Chinese club and currently is a community bank.



Confucius Plaza Apartments - The 44-story co-op complex with 762 apartments was constructed in 1975 to accommodate the growing number of Chinese immigrants flocking to America. The building was the first major publicly funded housing project built for almost exclusively Chinese Americans. Inside the building there are shops, a public school and a day care center.

Confucius Statue - In front of Confucius Plaza is a 15-foot bronze statue of Confucius, the Chinese philosopher. Sculpted by Liu Shih, the statue was dedicated in 1976 by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association to commemorate the bicentennial of the United States. On its base, there is a Confucian proverb praising a fair government with leaders of wisdom next to an American flag.



Manhattan Bridge Entrance - Though the first thing you will notice about the entrance to the Manhattan Bridge is the traffic and constant gridlock, take a moment to admire the grand archway and colonnade, designed by one of the most famous architectural firms of the early 20th century Carrere and Hastings, who designed the magnificent New York Public Library at 5th Avenue and 42nd Street. The Manhattan Bridge built in 1908 is not as beautiful as

the nearby Brooklyn Bridge, but it provides an invaluable service to New Yorkers as it allows cars, pedestrians, cyclists and subways to cross from Brooklyn to Manhattan.

Mahayana Buddhist Temple 133 Canal Street - Opened in 1997, this is the largest Buddhist Temple in New York City and home

to the City's largest Buddha statue. You can enter the temple's foyer for free (dressed appropriately – this is a house of worship).

But to go into the temple itself, it is requested that you donate \$1 for which you get a fortune scroll and the opportunity to gaze up at the 16 foot-tall golden Buddha. The walls are lined

with large, elaborate portraits depicting the life of the Buddha. Ironically, this building used to be an adult movie theater in the 1980s and early 1990s.



Citizens Savings Bank corner of Bowery and Canal Street - This grand 110-foot-tall Beaux Arts-style domed structure was built in 1924 and is now owned by HSBC bank. It is an officially landmark building.

Eastern States Buddhist Temple of America 64 Mott Street - The temple is the oldest Buddhist temple on the East coast of the United States. It was founded in 1962



along by Annie and James Ying. The temple is housed in a storefront so it is quite small, which is why Annie Ying opened the much larger Mahayana Temple in 1997 on Canal Street, included in this tour. Toward the back is an elaborate altar with benches for kneeling and a red box for donations for which you get a fortune scroll in exchange. The wall of more than 100 small golden

Buddhas make it worth it to take a peek inside, especially since it is

free to enter.

Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association 62 Mott Street - This is the oldest community organization in Chinatown founded in 1883 by wealthy Chinese merchants who spoke English and who wanted to assist newly arrived Chinese immigrants open their own businesses by providing financial assistance and skills training. It still serves the community over 130 years later offering social services, language classes and cultural preservation activities.

Ten Ren Tea Time 75 Mott Street - A fantastic shop for tea connoisseurs where you can sample hundreds of different varieties of whole-leaf teas.

Mott Street fish and food market Mott Street between Canal and Grand Sts.

The market is actually just shop after shop selling fresh fish and seafood at very competitive prices. You can also find a massive array of dried goods, from different types of mushrooms, squid, shrimp, and many items you probably won't recognize. There are a few stores that selling greens and fruit but mainly it's the fish that bring the locals in to do their weekly shopping.



Warning: if you are squeamish, do NOT look inside the large plastic garbage bins next to the fish displays.

[Museum Of Chinese In The Americas](#) 215 Centre Street - This museum is housed in a late 19th-century schoolhouse. It is one of the most important national archives of Chinese history in America, it offers special exhibits and public programs.