

WHAT'S NEW

Visitors to New York are in for some big surprises

BY JAY CLARKE

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If you haven't visited New York City for a while, you're in for a real surprise when you go to Times Square: No traffic. Since May, Broadway from 42nd to 47th Street has been turned into a pedestrian mall. Hundreds of red and gray chairs and tables along with silver benches sit where traffic used to zigzag.

"It's been well received," said Chris Heywood, vice president of NYC and Company, the city's tourism arm. Though some New Yorkers aren't happy with a traffic-free Times Square — New York Post's Steve Cuozzo called it a "squatter's camp" — a Quinnipiac University poll in late July found that two-thirds of Manhattan voters approved of it.

The traffic-free zone makes it easier for tourists to navigate through the city's most famous gathering place or find a place to sit, Heywood said.

The "Crossroads of the World" will remain a pedestrian zone at least until the first of the year, when Mayor Michael Bloomberg is to decide whether to close it to traffic permanently. He will also rule on another new pedestrian zone created at Herald Square, home of Macy's department store and a brand new JCPenney store, Manhattan's first.

Another new gathering place getting a lot of attention is High Line Park, opened in June. Built on a former rail line, this ele-

vated pathway with lush plantings has created a 1.5-mile-long grand promenade through the Meatpacking District between 10th and 11th Avenues.

Sights of another kind are attracting visitors to the new 9/11 Memorial Preview Site, opened near the destroyed World Trade Center last month. Here visitors can see a four-minute film, view exhibits relating to the attack and learn about plans for the memorial and museum to be built there.

And the crown of the Statue of Liberty, which had been closed to the public since the 9/11 attack in 2001, reopened July 4. Only 30 people per hour are allowed to climb the 354 steps to the crown, and reservations quickly sold out for weeks in advance. Tickets to the crown cost \$3 (in addition to a ferry ticket). 877-523-9849 or www.statuecruises.com.

If you're a devotee of *Gossip Girl*, On Location Tours has a new 3½-hour bus tour of more than 40 locations where the TV series was filmed. 212-209-3370, www.screen-tours.com.

The Big Apple also is celebrating several anniversaries this year. Lincoln Center, New York's premier performing arts complex, marking its 50th anniversary with celebrations through May of 2010. The newly renovated Guggenheim Museum also is marking its 50th year with events through May. And Harlem's Apollo Theater is staging an 18-month series of special programs to

commemorate its 75th anniversary.

HOLIDAY SEASON

Autumn is a wonderful time to visit New York. Summer's heat is gone, but winter's chill is still weeks away. And it's the prelude to the holiday season, a joyous time for both visitors and residents.

Bloomingdale's, Bergdorf Goodman, Barneys, Saks Fifth Avenue, Lord & Taylor and Macy's in Manhattan create stunning holiday displays. Saks is first, unveiling its window displays in late November. The lighting of the Rockefeller Center Christmas tree comes Dec. 2, a few days after the tree at South Street Seaport is lit (Nov. 27).

Here are other highlights:

● **Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade:** New York's Christmas season kicks off with the parade Nov. 26, and this year it is taking a new route. Beginning at 77th Street, the bands and balloons will move south on Central Park West, but instead of continuing down Broadway, they will turn east onto Central Park South to Seventh Avenue, head downtown to 42nd Street, then east to Sixth Avenue and down again to 34th Street, site of Macy's. www.macysparade.com.

● **The Nutcracker:** New York City Ballet presents the seasonal classic, *The Nutcracker Suite*, from Nov. 27 to Jan. 3 at Lincoln Center. Tickets \$20-\$215. www.nycballet.com.

● **Radio City Music**

Hall: Now in its 77th year, the Radio City Christmas Spectacular runs Nov. 12-Dec. 30. Tickets are \$45-\$250. www.radiocitychristmas.com.

● **Cirque de Soleil:** A boy's quest for snow is told in this acrobatic show at the WaMu Theater at Madison Square Garden Nov. 11-Jan. 3. Tickets \$30-\$220. www.cirquedusoleil.com/en/shows/wintuk.aspx.

● **Big Apple Circus:** An all-new show with clown Bello Nock will run through Jan. 18 at Lincoln Center. www.bigapplecir

cus.org. Tickets are \$15-\$150.

● **New this year:** The One of a Kind Show and Sale NY, a holiday shopping show, features home-made arts and crafts. Preview night Dec. 10, show Dec. 11-13. www.oncofa-kindshowny.com. Tickets are \$12.

NYC INFORMATION

NYC & Company, the city's tourism arm, has opened a new state-of-the-art information Center at 810 Seventh Ave. and has a new web site. 212-484-1200, www.nycgo.com.

Going to New York City

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