

# GRAND CENTRAL TURTLE BAY

## 42 Street Station



*Have you seen the well-to-do, up and down Park Avenue?*

*– Irving Berlin, Puttin' On The Ritz*

Grand Central/Turtle Bay is a fascinating neighborhood of world-famous skyscrapers and hotels, two planned communities, luxury housing, townhouses, secret gardens and corporate headquarters. It even includes another country! (Well, sort of.) The boundaries range from E 42 to E 51 St and from Grand Central Terminal to the United Nations Headquarters along the East River.



**YOUR GUIDE** – Urban historian Justin Ferate was honored as “New York’s Most Engaging Tour Guide” by NY Governor George Pataki and the New York State Tourism Council. Ferate was also selected as the author of the Official New York City Tour Guide Licensing Examination. His tour of Grand Central Terminal was awarded “New York’s Best Walking Tour!” by the “AAA Guide to New York City. In November 2007, *Time Out New York* selected Ferate as “One of New York’s 50 Essential Secrets!” Info: [www.justinsnewyork.com](http://www.justinsnewyork.com).

**BEST DAYS FOR THIS WALK** – Seven days a week

**START** – Take the S, 4, 5, 6, or 7 train to Grand Central – 42 Street Station and walk to E 42 St and Vanderbilt Av across from the Terminal.

### I. GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL

*E 42 St btwn Vanderbilt & Lexington Avs*

*As a bullet train seeks its target, shining rails in every part of our great country are aimed at Grand Central Station, heart of the nation’s greatest city... Crossroads of a million lives! Gigantic stage on which are played a thousand dramas daily.*

*– Opening, Grand Central Station, NBC Radio Blue Network*



Grand Central Terminal (the actual name of the building) is often considered to be the symbolic gateway to New York City. In 1913, Cornelius Vanderbilt’s New York Central Railroad, once America’s greatest railroad system, built this magnificent Beaux Arts structure. Look above the

triumphal arches and the Tiffany glass clock to see the impressive sculpture of Mercury (Transportation) flanked by Minerva (Wisdom) and Hercules (Labor). The bronze statue is of Mr. Vanderbilt. Hailed at its opening as the “greatest railway terminal in the world,” Grand Central and Park Avenue (the thoroughfare where it sits) served to amazingly transform Midtown Manhattan with luxury apartments, hotels and office complexes. But, by the 1950s, the era of long-distance rail travel had passed, and various skyscrapers ranging from 55 to 80 stories were proposed

as replacements for Grand Central. In 1967, however, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designated Grand Central Terminal as a NYC Landmark – temporarily halting development plans. The railroad filed a lawsuit against the City of New York. *The Committee to Save Grand Central* rallied to save the structure. Committee members included hundreds of concerned citizens and city leaders – notable among them, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. At the end of the nearly-10-year court battle, the Supreme Court upheld Landmark designation, and Grand Central was saved! In 1994, the current tenant, Metro North Railroad, began cleaning and refurbishing Grand Central – adding an extensive assortment of shopping and dining opportunities.



Enter the Terminal and step into Grand Central's Main Concourse and look up to enjoy the **Starry Sky** containing over 2,500 stars. Curiously, the constellations – except for Orion – are backwards. Some suggest the painters had the blueprints upside-down! More believably, the artist Paul Helleu was inspired by a medieval manuscript, which depicted the stars as God might see them.

Travel across the Main Concourse to the **New York Transit Museum Gallery**, located near the Station Master's office. View an exhibition, visit the gift shop or pick up free bus and subway maps.

Stroll down the ramp to the lower level, following the signs to the Oyster Bar. Just outside the Oyster Bar is **The Whispering Gallery**. There are no signs, but just wait. Someone will probably demonstrate the "secret." When two people stand in diagonally opposite corners of the large vaulted space and then face the walls and whisper into the corners – they can hear every word as if they were standing next to each other. Try it!

Next, walk partway up the ramp to the elevators. Press the

"E" button to discover one of the Grand Central's remarkable surprises: **The Campbell Apartment**. Today, The Campbell Apartment is an elegant cocktail lounge, but originally it was the office of John W. Campbell, a millionaire financier, railroad executive and chairman of the Credit Clearing House. Designed like a 13th-century Florentine palace, the office originally included a musician's gallery, a piano, a pipe organ and even a wine cellar. Check it out.

**Exit Grand Central and cross E 42 St.**

## 2. CIPRIANI 42<sup>nd</sup> STREET – 110 E 42 St

Across from Grand Central is Cipriani 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, formerly the Bowery Savings Bank. If the door is open, peek inside. This magnificent Romanesque space is richly ornamented with different kinds of marble. The 1920s bank was designed to entice Fifth Avenue residents who became wealthy during the booming economy of the 1920s.

**Continue to walk east on E 42 St.**

## 3. CHANIN BUILDING – 122 E 42 St

Step inside this world-famous Art Deco building to see the dazzling lobby. On the exterior, striking bronze panels depict the *Story of Creation*.

## 4. CHRYSLER BUILDING – Corner of E 42 St & Lexington Av



One of the world's most beloved treasures, the Chrysler Building has a spectacular lobby. Go inside and explore! Later in your tour, be sure to look back at what was once the world's tallest building. The Chrysler Building's exterior is noted for its lighted zigzag spire, eagle "gargoyles," 1929 Chrysler hood ornaments and the little roadsters (complete with hubcaps) that seem to eternally race around the upper floors of the building!

## 5. FORMER DAILY NEWS BUILDING – 220 E 42 St



Step inside the lobby of this famous Art Deco building to view the immense globe. This former newspaper building inspired Superman's "Daily Planet." The exterior bas-relief extols the beliefs of Abraham Lincoln: "God must have loved the common man; He made so many of them."

## 6. FORD FOUNDATION – 321 E 42 St

There's a jungle inside! The 12-story glassed office area surrounds a lush terraced garden with full-grown trees and a pool. Step in and enjoy.

*Walk up the stone steps on E 42 St past 1 Av.*

## 7. TUDOR CITY



In the 1920s, Fred French developed Tudor City, a complex comprising 12 buildings, private parks, restaurants, shops and even a post office. Today, the buildings overlook private gardens, providing repose in the bustle of Midtown. Apartments

are cooperatively owned and house about 5,000 residents. Don't forget to look back and view the Chrysler Building from the bridge! Walk to the north end of Tudor City to the **Scharansky Steps** (named for the Soviet dissident and human rights activist) and descend the stairs to **Ralph J. Bunche Park**. This small public space with benches and ivy-clad trees was named after the first African-American UN official. Bunche served as secretary to the Palestine Peace Commission and

was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize three years later. Located across from the UN, this park is frequently the site of UN demonstrations. **The Isaiah Wall** celebrates peace with the inscription, "They shall beat their swords into plowshares."

## 8. UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS

*1 Av from E 42 to E 48 Sts*



Across the street (and a country away), the United Nations headquarters was built in 1946 on an 18-acre site donated by John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Legally a separate political entity from the United States, the UN even has a separate postal system. For fun, stop

and purchase some post cards to mail to your friends from a "foreign" country. The UN complex was designed by an international team of architects whose cooperative endeavors were symbolic of the mission of this international organization. Public tours are available and the **Delegates Dining Room**, with its a sweeping views of the East River, is open to the public. Info: 212 963 8687.

*Turn left and walk north on 1 Av.*

## 9. DAG HAMMARSKJOLD PLAZA PARK

*E 47 St btwn 1 & 2 Avs*



This a nice place to rest and perhaps enjoy light refreshments. Some days there's even a green market offering farm-fresh produce. TIP: Step *inside* the gate of the Katharine Hepburn Garden and discover a secretive forest, right here in Midtown!

**10. UNITED NATIONS PLAZA** – *1 Av at E 48 & E 49 Sts*

These modernist apartments were designed in concert with the United Nations. Noted residents have included Johnny Carson, Robert Kennedy, Cliff Robertson and Truman Capote as well as many consulates to the UN.

**Turn right at Mitchell Place.**

**11. BEEKMAN TOWER** – *3 Mitchell Place*

Originally, this Landmark Art Deco delight was built as the Panhellenic Hotel for sorority women. Note the Greek letters at the entrance. Travel to the rooftop lounge for a panoramic vista of the East River.

**Walk up Mitchell Place to Beekman Place & E 50 St for a view across the East River.**

Across the water are two beloved bits of historic advertising: The **Pepsi-Cola** sign is a designated landmark, and the former **Silvercup** bakery now houses **Silvercup Films**.

**BEEKMAN PLACE**

This area is one of Manhattan's most discrete yet desirable addresses. Here, New York's "old money" mingles with United Nations diplomats, writers and theatrical personalities. **One Beekman Place** is one of New York's choice residences. Built by the Rockefeller family, the building has been home to Huntington Hartford, John P. Marquand, Aly Kahn, Jane Pauley, Garry Trudeau, Arnold Scaasi and Parker Ladd. This is also where the real-life Auntie Mame lived! **The Irving Berlin House** at *No. 17* was home to composer Irving Berlin and his family for over 40 years. It is now the Permanent UN Mission of Luxembourg. **The Paul Rudolph House** at *No. 23*, with its "jungle gym" superstructure, was home to this world-famous architect. Before its distinctive alteration, the house belonged to actress Katherine Cornell, long referred to as "The First Lady of the Theater."

**Turn left on E 51 St, then right at 1 Av and right again on E 52 St.**

**12. THE CAMPANILE** – *450 E 52 St*

For nearly four decades, this small 1920s brick building with Gothic arches and leaded glass windows was home to the ever-elusive Greta Garbo. Other notables in the building included Alexander Woollcott, Rex Harrison, Henry and Clare Booth Luce and the Russian couturier Valentina.

**13. RIVER HOUSE** – *435 E 52 St*

Protected by an ornate iron gate that enters onto a formal driveway, River House is considered by some to be the world's finest apartment building. Historically, it even had its own yacht basin. Erected in 1931 when the area still teemed with tenements, the building was mocked in the popular 1936 Humphrey Bogart movie "Dead End", which addressed the "co-existence" of the rich in their luxurious towers and the poor who swam in the adjacent East River. Residents have included Henry and Nancy Kissinger, Clare Booth Luce, Bobby Short and, reputedly, Charlie Chaplin.

**Return to 1 Av and turn left, then turn right on E 49 St and walk west.**

**14. TURTLE BAY GARDENS HISTORIC DISTRICT**

*226-246 E 49 St, btwn 2 & 3 Avs*



During the 1920s, an "artistic" compound comprising 20 historic row houses was created. Set back-to-back on E 48 and E 49th Sts, these houses all share a private communal garden. Turtle Bay Gardens has long provided a haven for numerous celebrity residents. Until recently, **Katharine Hepburn**

lived at *No. 244*, next door to her long-time neighbor, **Stephen Sondheim** at *No. 246*. Across the street at *No. 225-227* is the **Efrem Zimbalist House**. Originally erected in 1926 as



the home of world-famous violinist Efrem Zimbalist and his wife, operatic soprano Alma Gluck, this unusual building was later divided into apartments. Note the violin carved over the doorway.

### 15. INSTITUTO CERVANTES AT AMSTER YARD

211-215 E 49 St



Instituted by the Spanish government, this organization promotes Spanish and Hispanic American culture throughout non-Spanish-speaking countries. The site is the former *Amster Yard*, an enclave of one- to four-story brick houses set around an L-shaped garden beautifully landscaped with flowers, trees and shrubbery. Rest in the garden, see a film, or view an art exhibition! Info: 212 308 7720.

### 16. MARRIOTT HOTEL EAST

SE corner Lexington Av at E 49 St

Initially erected for bachelors and known as the Hotel Shelton, the building sported reading rooms, solariums, roof gardens, a swimming pool and three squash courts. However, this all-male bastion soon became a regular hotel, available to one and all. Now known as the Marriott Hotel East, the hotel gained added celebrity from being depicted by two of its most legendary tenants – photographer Alfred Steiglitz and painter Georgia O’Keefe – in some of their works.

### 17. HOTEL WALDORF=ASTORIA – 301 Park Av at E 49 St

Let’s go “*Lounging at the Waldorf!*” Synonymous with wealth, glamour and prestige, the Waldorf=Astoria is legendary worldwide. It even has its own train platform! The Waldorf – an Art Deco masterpiece – is the hotel of choice for US presidents and international dignitaries. Enjoy the lobby murals, the beautiful mosaic marble floors, the Art Deco details and the delightful lobby clock from the Chicago World’s Fair.

### 18. ST. BARTHOLOMEW’S CHURCH – Park Av & E 50 St



The decision to move St. Bart’s – one of the city’s wealthiest congregations – to this site in 1918 signaled (and aided in) the remarkable transformation of Park Avenue from its former state as an industrial wasteland to one of the world’s most famous thoroughfares.

Architect Bertram Goodhue created this delightfully original free-style Byzantine church – a complex tapestry of brick, stone, mosaic and tile.

***From here, look south to view the New York Central Building.***

### THE NEW YORK CENTRAL BUILDING

Park Av btwn E 45 & E 46 Sts

This “Empress of the Boulevard” (just look at its regal crown!) straddles Park Av. It was built as the headquarters for the New York Central Railroad. This regal building reigns grandly over an amazing realm: Park Avenue is a vast real estate empire created entirely out of thin air! Most people don’t know that the buildings along Park Av (and indeed Park Av itself) – stretching from Grand Central Terminal to E 97 St – are built on a “bridge.” They sit right over the New York Central Railroad tracks. In 1903, when the railroad was required to electrify their trains, architect William Wilgus came up with a brilliant solution: blast out a large trench in the center of Manhattan, place electric trains in that trench and then sell the air above the railroad tracks for development. The railroad continued to maintain ownership of the land; it sold only the air *above* the land. The concept of selling air rights instead of physical property transformed the very meaning of “real estate” in Manhattan.

**FINISH** – Take a stroll down Park Av to return to Grand Central and the 42 Street Station, or refer to the map for other travel options.