

M8 THE VILLAGER

The M8 bus ride, “The Villager,” offers a charming and intimate ride through Greenwich Village and the East Village. From the Hudson River to the East River, this 25-minute excursion captures the essence and atmosphere of two of New York’s most popular and colorful neighborhoods.

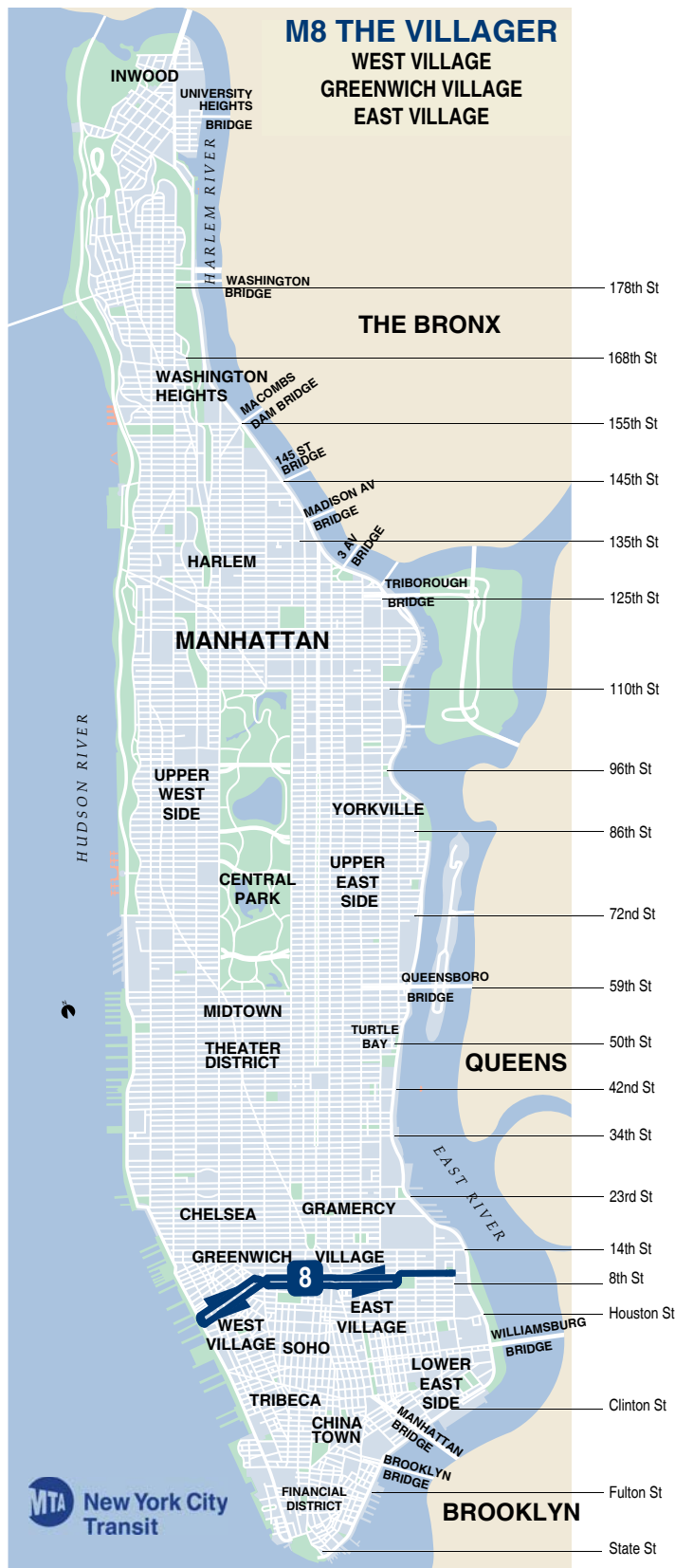
The M8 bus operates between Av D/E 10 St and West St/ Christopher St daily.

MAJOR SIGHTS ALONG THE WAY – Hudson River Park, the West Village, Jefferson Market Library, Greenwich Village, Cooper Union, St. Marks Place, the East Village, Tompkins Square Park and East River Park.

YOUR GUIDE – Ed Koch, former Mayor of the City of New York, lawyer, author and long-time Village resident, is your guide for this tour. He describes the sites along the way, interspersed with comments about his political life and insights into events that helped shape the Village as we know it today.

Eight million people call New York City home. Most people know it as “The Big Apple,” but few realize that, despite its size, the city is really a collection of small diverse “hometowns” and that New York is one of the few remaining cities in America that still supports a middle class. Greenwich Village and the East Village are two of those hometowns – primarily residential neighborhoods.

Greenwich Village was once a rural hamlet that was entirely separate from New York, and it still maintains its village charm. The East Village was once considered part of the Lower East Side, an immigrant working-class neighborhood that, with gentrification, has taken on a character and charm all its own. Both Greenwich Village and the East Village are known for their avant-garde and alternative cultures, bohemian lifestyles and as hotbeds of radical and innovative ideas. Eugene O’Neill, John Reed, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Marcel Duchamp, Isadora Duncan, Dylan Thomas, Bob Dylan, Nina Simone, Allen Ginsberg, Jimmy Hendrix, e.e cummings, Jackson Pollack, John Sloan and Peter, Paul and Mary are just a few people associated with Greenwich Village.



I have lived in Greenwich Village since I moved here from Brooklyn in 1956, and I've seen its flavor change. In the 1960s, the Village was a platform for political activism, in the 70s it was a gathering place for hippies and flower children, and in the 80s and 90s, it was a place where artists felt most at home.

During the 60s, Jane Jacobs and Bella Abzug were leaders of Village activists – with Bella taking the political path as a member of Congress, and Jane, a civic gadfly, championing the creativity of the individual over bureaucratic government planning. Both appeared ten feet tall to their adversaries. Bella and I ended up living in the same apartment house, she in the left tower and me in the right tower. We both served in the U.S. Congress at the same time.

Bella, Jane and I, along with many others, fought civic battles with the famous, or *infamous*, Robert Moses, depending on which side you were on. Moses wanted to put a highway through Washington Square Park and call West Broadway “Fifth Avenue South.” We beat him in both cases, thanks to Mayor Robert F. Wagner. In the Washington Square Park victory, we had as our leader Shirley Hayes, another great Village activist. We also fought City Hall when it wanted to ban the colorful pushcarts that were selling fruit and vegetables on Bleecker Street. We were victorious, but it was only a temporary reprieve - the pushcarts are now gone. All three of these women are now dead, but you can bet they are still fighting for the people wherever they are. Although these civic battles go on everywhere in New York City, they are especially fierce in Greenwich Village, which is populated by bohemians, artists and independent thinkers.

M8 EASTBOUND

To start our trip, we board the M8 bus at West St and Christopher St, across from Hudson River Park. It will take about 25 minutes to cover the route in each direction.

HUDSON RIVER PARK

Look toward the Hudson River, and you will see the beginnings



of Hudson River Park, a lovely path along the river that extends all the way up to W 57 St on your right, and down to Battery Park on your left. The park is a part of the Manhattan Waterfront Greenway, 32 miles of park and recreation areas that will

circumnavigate Manhattan island, when completed. The new park came into being when a federal offer to build a tunnel in the Hudson River, which would have been covered over by a new park, was defeated. The project was to be called “Westway,” would have cost billions, and would likely have come in over budget due to overruns. The money originally authorized by Congress for the successfully opposed Westway was ultimately used for mass-transit improvements. Before becoming mayor, I opposed Westway. Several years later, I joined Governor Carey in support of the project. As they say, sometimes you eat the bear (win) and sometimes the bear eats you (lose).

WEST 10 STREET – West St to Greenwich Av

This section of W 10 St in earlier times was known as Amos St, after Richard Amos who owned a farm in the area. Now the street sees mixed use – both commercial and residential. At Waverly Place, you will pass **Julius’** – or, you can choose to interrupt your trip and stop in for a drink. Julius’ used to be a speakeasy where Fats Waller played. It’s one of the oldest gay bars in the Village, once frequented by Truman Capote, Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee.

At Greenwich Av, the bus turns right toward W 8 St and crosses 6 Av.

JEFFERSON MARKET LIBRARY 6 & Greenwich Avs ... on your left

As the bus turns onto Greenwich Av, you will see a wonderful building that looks like a castle. Once a courthouse, today it is the Village branch of



the New York Public Library. Villagers, led by Margot Gayle, e.e. cummings and Louis Mumford, saved the building and its signature clock by giving the building its new use as a library. At one time, the Women's House of Detention stood next door, but with the consent of the Villagers, it was demolished. Those active citizens made sure a beautiful small park took its place, rather than some monster apartment house that would have overwhelmed the area. The tranquil park is well-cared-for by a group of Villagers.

At Jefferson Market Library, one has the option to get off the bus and take the Greenwich Village walking tour by Judith Stonehill, author of *Greenwich Village: A Guide to America's Left Bank*. (See page 182.)

WEST 8 STREET – 6 Av to 5 Av

This block was once a nexus for the arts, music and nightlife in Greenwich Village. It is where the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* played for 25 years at the 8th Street Playhouse, where Jimmy Hendrix lived and had his Electric Lady Studio and where Barbara Streisand, Phyllis Diller and Woody Allen got their start at the Bon Soir. The 8th Street Bookstore, famous as a hangout for the Beat Poets, once existed here, and the Whitney Museum of Art was originally located at 7-14 W 8 St.

UNIVERSITY PLACE

University Place is filled with New York University students and the dormitories and stores that serve them. NYU was founded in 1831 by a group of New Yorkers who believed that admission should be based on merit, not on birthright. Today, it is a major presence in Greenwich Village. The main campus is just a block south of E 8 St at *Washington Square*. At University Pl, town and gown meet in a friendly way. On the corner of W 12 St and University Pl is the best Japanese restaurant in the city, in my opinion – **Japonica**. I'll mention one great appetizer – eggplant. Try it! It's absolutely wonderful and different because of the sauce.

THE EAST VILLAGE

As we cross Broadway, we enter the East Village. The East Village, once settled by Eastern European Jewish immigrants and called the Lower East Side, is now occupied by their Jewish descendants in the area surrounding Grand St, further downtown. The balance of the current East Village is occupied primarily by Hispanics – not only from Puerto Rico but from countries all over Latin America.

COOPER UNION – Cooper Sq & 4 Av ... on your right



The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art remains a university without tuition fees. In its Great Hall, where I spoke in 1977 (along with other candidates), while running for Mayor, I saw a pie thrown at Mayor Abe Beame. Historically more important, though, The Great Hall is where Abraham Lincoln spoke delivering his “Right Makes Right” speech in 1860.

At Cooper Square, one has the option to get off the bus and take the East Village walking tour by Marci Reaven, coauthor of *Hidden New York: A Guide to Places that Matter*. (See page 172.)

As the bus crosses 3 Av, E 8 St turns into St. Marks Place.

ST MARKS PLACE – 3 Av to Avenue A



The block of St. Marks Place between 3 and 2 Avs was, and still is to some extent, “Main Street” for the counterculture – as evidenced by the eclectic shops, restaurants and clubs that line the street. While Greenwich Village is known for beatniks, bohemians and folk

singers, the East Village is known for Hippies, Yippies and Punk Rock. **Gem Spa**, *on your right* on the corner of 2 Av, lays claim (as do some others), to being the place where the egg cream was invented. The egg cream, once a popular New York drink, contains chocolate syrup and seltzer – but no eggs!

TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK

Tompkins Square Park at Avenue A was once, during my mayoral administration, the scene of several riots involving the police and self-designated anarchists who wanted to establish their right to sleep in the park. They also squatted in city-owned buildings. Today, though, the park is a peaceful place where children play and residents relax. The annual Charlie Parker Jazz Festival is held in the park each August to honor the famous jazz musician who once lived next to the Park. The Tompkins Park Dog Run was named one of the top five dog parks in the U.S. by *Dog Fancy* magazine.

At Tompkins Sq Park, the bus turns left onto Avenue A, then right onto E 10 St. When you get off the bus at Avenue D, the final stop on the ride, you can catch the westbound bus on the other side of the street to return to Greenwich Village, or you can opt for a walk along East River Park. To get to East River Park, walk east on E 10 St through the Jacob Riis Housing Project to the pedestrian bridge over the FDR Drive.

EAST RIVER PARK



Like Hudson River Park, the East River Park is a part of the Manhattan Waterfront Greenways. East River Park was built to provide parkland for the overcrowded residents of the Lower East Side in the 1930s. This fantastic

park is under-utilized today. On one of the major Jewish holidays, Rosh Hashanah, (the Jewish New Year), ultra-orthodox Jews throw breadcrumbs into the East River, transferring their sins onto the breadcrumbs. A small number transfer their sins to live chickens, which they then hold over their heads. Later, the chickens are slaughtered in butcher shops and given to poor people to eat.

If you walk north along the East River, you will experience the beautiful vistas of the Manhattan skyline and the East River Bridges. You can either take the M23 back to town at W 20 St and FDR Drive, or you can return to E 10 St to continue the “The Villager” tour.

M8 WESTBOUND

Our trip westbound starts at Avenue D and E 10 St, across the street from the Jacob Riis Housing Project. Except for a brief section along E 10 St and Tompkins Square Park, the westbound bus takes a different route than the eastbound one. It travels along 9 St to 6 Av and then turns down Christopher St to West St and the Hudson River.

JACOB RIIS HOUSING PROJECT – Avenue D & E 10 St

In his day, Jacob Riis – with his photography depicting poverty in New York City – had a tremendous impact on the reform of the tenement laws. Active around the turn of the 20th century, Riis was one of the first great social reformers. Public housing – low-rent, government-subsidized housing like the Jacob Riis Housing Project – grew out of those reforms.

ALPHABET CITY/LOISAIDA

The section of the East Village comprised of Avenues A, B, C and D is known as “Alphabet City” and “Loisaida,” derived from the Latino pronunciation of the Lower East Side. The musical *Rent*, about the ongoing battle between struggling artists and gentrification (the process by which landlords upgrade low-rent, deteriorating buildings to increase property values) was set here.

EAST 9 STREET – Avenue A to 3 Av

While not containing any major sites, E 9 St is a very pleasant residential street filled with restaurants, unique shops and boutiques. Keep an open eye for colorful wall murals along the way, many of them painted by Chico, a former

graffiti artist, who now paints murals commercially for stores and restaurants. Chico painted the mural located at E 6 St and Avenue C especially for the cover of this Guide.

As the bus crosses Broadway, it passes from the East Village into Greenwich Village. As you cross 5 Av, you will see the Washington Square Arch on your left.

WEST 9 STREET – 5 Av to 6 Av

This block of W 9 St is considered part of the “Gold Coast,” a real estate euphemism for the area in Greenwich Village centered around Fifth Avenue, just north of Washington Square Park. It contains some of the most beautiful townhouses and apartment buildings in the City. Some of the famous residents who have lived on this block include humorist S. J. Perelman, poet Marianne Moore and children’s book author and illustrator Maurice Sendak. An interesting note: 125 W 9 St was the non-existent address of the apartment in Alfred Hitchcock’s movie *Rear Window*, which was actually filmed on location in Hollywood.

At 6 Av, the bus turns left onto Christopher St.

CHRISTOPHER STREET

Originally named “Skinner Road,” Christopher St was once a dirt path used by Native Americans to carry lobsters and oysters inland from the Hudson River. Today, because of the Stonewall Riots in 1969, it is a gay mecca that is home to many bars, restaurants and shops that cater to the gay community.

GAY STREET

As you turn the corner onto Christopher St, you will pass Gay St *on your left*. One of the most charming streets in the Village, it was named for an early landowner, not for sexual orientation. It was once home to African-Americans who served the wealthy white

families on Washington Square, and it is where Ruth McKenny wrote *My Sister Eileen*, a story about the madcap adventures of two girls from Ohio living in Greenwich Village in the 1930s. The book became a play and later a musical called *Wonderful Town*, with a score by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Betty Comden and Adolph Green.

THE STONEWALL INN – 53 Christopher St ... *on your right*

The Stonewall Inn is where, in 1969, the incident took place that sparked the Stonewall Riots, which in turn, gave birth to the Gay Liberation movement in the United States. The bar became world- famous when the police

entered it on June 29 to arrest its clientele, many of whom were transvestites and cross-dressers, gays and lesbians, who were peacefully standing at the bar when ordered to leave, and then arrested. Instead of accepting the arrests peacefully, the angry crowd, fed up with the discrimination of the cops, fought back, both inside the bar and on the street. Out of that melee sprang a new era - with the city, then under Mayor John Lindsay - changing its attitude toward the gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered community. No longer were the police used to entrap the LGBT community in bars and restrooms and particularly in the subway system. In 1978, when I became Mayor, I issued an executive order prohibiting discrimination by the City of New York based on sexual orientation.

CHRISTOPHER PARK – *Waverly Pl ... on your left*

Christopher Park, which is often mistaken for Sheridan Square around the corner, is across from the Stonewall Inn. In it are four statues of same-sex couples – two male and two female – created by the great artist George Segal. They were placed there during my mayoral administration. Many

feared these statues would be subject to graffiti or worse, but they were not. The community, gay and straight, understands how valuable and important they are and watches over them.

KETTLE OF FISH – *59 Christopher St ... on your right*

Not far down the block from the Stonewall Inn is a restaurant now called the Kettle of Fish. Formerly, this was the Lion's Head, a Village institution before a rent increase forced it to close. I ate there regularly, as did many writers and newspaper reporters whose book jackets were displayed on the walls. A former employee tells the story of a visitor who, when asked if this is "where a lot of writers with drinking problems hang out" was told, "No, this is where a lot of drinkers with writing problems hang out."

THE DUPLEX – *Christopher St & 7 Av ... on your right*

The Duplex is a popular cabaret and piano bar where Joan Rivers and Woody Allen have played. It occupies the same low-rise building that was once home to the *Village Voice* office before its original owners – editor Dan Wolf, publisher Ed Fancher and writer Norman Mailer – sold the paper. Dan and Norman are dead, but Ed is still around. I am proud to call all three my friends.

VILLAGE INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATS

Across 7 Av, a little way down W 4 St which runs on an angle, is the **Riviera**, a bistro and sports bar. Across from it, No.

224, one flight up, was once the headquarters of the reform Democratic club, Village Independent Democrats. It was formed in 1956, and I was one of the original founders. This was the club that took on Carmine DeSapio, known as the last boss of Tammany Hall. I was its candidate in a race for the Assembly and later for District Leader. First beaten by James Lannigan in 1961, DeSapio was beaten by me in 1963, 1964 and again in 1965.

LUCILLE LORTEL THEATRE

Christopher & Bedford Sts ... on your right



The Lucille Lortel Theatre is located near where I once lived on Bedford St. It was formerly the Theatre de Lys, which is where the *Three Penny Opera* had its American premier with Lotte Lenya. What a great show! I was there. In front of the theater is the Playwright's

Sidewalk honoring the great playwrights whose works have been performed at the Lucille Lortel and other Off-Broadway theaters.

BAILEY-HOLT HOUSE – *180 Christopher St ... on your left*

Finally, as we get to the end of the trip, we pass Bailey-Holt House on the corner of Christopher and West Sts. It was one of the first facilities created by the private sector to house people with HIV/AIDS in 1986, during my mayoral administration, and it's still going strong.

All the Best,
Ed Koch

When you get off the bus at the foot of Christopher St, you are back at Hudson River Park where you can either stretch your legs by taking a walk along the Hudson River, or walk back through the Village to get a closer look at some of the sites you have passed along the way.