

Christmas in New York offers many delights

Contributed by Sheree Zielke

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I love being self-employed. I love being a Baby Boomer. And I love the freedom afforded by those two elements. Such as the freedom to decide where to spend Christmas Day.

This year my husband and I have decided to spend this Christmas in New York. That's right. NYC. The Big Apple.

Our children are grown and have their own children and their own plans. So, once we clear our heavy December commitments, we can travel at will. A New York City Christmas seems to be just the ticket for two adventure-seeking photography buffs.

I have my expectations.

I want to see snowflakes shower Central Park, dressing the trees in a brittle blanket of diamonds. I want to see the neon lights of Broadway reflected like gumdrops in damp icy puddles. And I want to see the Manhattan skyline beneath a luminescent winter moon.

I want to go window shopping at Tiffany and Co. (not much else the average person can do at Tiffany). I want to savour the holiday dressings in the windows of Saks on Fifth Avenue and Macy's tribute to that beloved film classic, *Miracle on 34th Street*. And I want to see a Macy's store Santa Claus in "Santaland."

I want to eat matzo ball soup at Mr. Broadway's kosher eatery and nosh on chili at Ellen's Stardust Diner where Broadway hopefuls are also its waiters. And I want to eat a gooey cheese-filled pretzel from a street vendor (not necessarily a Christmas-oriented event, but one of my favourite NY treats.)

I want to see Rockefeller Plaza's 75-foot, seven-ton illuminated Christmas tree with its 30-thousand lights and five miles of wire. I want to see the 25-foot white Spruce tree on Broadway. I want to see the 140 light-encrusted animal sculptures at the Bronx Zoo. And I want to see two fairytale miles of Christmas trees on Park Avenue.

I want to see the tacky aluminium Christmas décor in Little Italy. I want to hang out at Grand Central station, park my butt on a wooden bench and just watch the world rush by. And while I'm there, I'll visit the Holiday Fair vendors and take in the Grand Central Kaleidoscope laser light show.

I want to see the skaters on the pond at Bryant Park, now open to the public for the first time in history. And I want to go shopping at its French-themed "Fêtes de Noël" outdoor marketplace.

I want to see the giant snowflake on Fifth Avenue. I want to see all the glitter and glamour of Lincoln Center and maybe take in the Nutcracker presentation. I want to re-visit Ground Zero to see how it looks with a Christmas mantle. And while in the area, I want to check out the 100,000 lights display at the Winter Garden.

I want to see Radio City Music Hall's Christmas Spectacular with the Rockettes featuring in the Parade of the Wooden Soldiers. I want to listen to the Big Apple Chorus aboard its 50-foot Christmas tree on Fulton Street. I want to hear the deep resonance of church bells pealing throughout the city on Christmas Day. And I want to have Christmas breakfast at Norma's in the Parker Meridien Hotel.

We aren't staying for the New Year's dropping of the crystal ball at Times Square. Being frugal comes with being a Baby Boomer. The difference in the price of flying on or near Christmas Day or flying nearer to New Year's Day is hundreds of dollars. We prefer the savings. So, we're coming home early.

In the meantime, the plane tickets are booked and the hotel is booked. I will sleep tonight with visions of cheese-filled pretzels dancing in my head.