

SIGNPOSTS

INN-ESCAPABLE

Manhattan deal

As our cab drove from the airport into New York City, the sun reflected just so in the glass side of a tall building, registering a golden glow that brought immigrants flocking here for streets paved with gold.

This seemed a prescient sight. We were about to be dropped off on the Lower East Side at a restored eight-story brick tenement building that opened last year as the Blue Moon Hotel. The Lower East Side welcomed many an immigrant. Once a densely populated slum, today's cutting-edge, hip neighborhood is now less populated than many New York neighborhoods, thanks to its smaller-scale, low-rise buildings.

Only rarely did we hear the usual constant din of sirens and garbage trucks. Instead, the mornings brought the occasional birdsong and the nights were as close to silent as is possible in a city of 9 million people.

My husband and I were in town to visit our daughter, who lives in nearby Little Italy. We either walked or took the subway to her teeny, tiny apartment. But we took a few cabs too — the most memorable of which was driven by a mellow guy with long hair (an aging hippie like us) who was playing great music ("Painted Black" followed by "Werewolves of London")

I enjoyed returning each day to our lovely, quiet hotel, the kind you find in New York only once in a blue moon. We stayed in the spacious Duke Ellington room, which featured cheery, golden, sun-colored walls, new black furniture with drawers that moved easily and an iron-frame queen-size bed. We could look out the window at the Williamsburg Bridge or look instead at the flat-screen TV. The always immaculately clean black-and-white mosaic tile bathroom had a deep tub.

In the morning we took the charming old-fashioned elevator — updated with colorfully painted,



TAKE A PEEK

- **What:** Blue Moon Hotel
- **Quick take:** Small, 22-room bed-and-breakfast-style hotel on Manhattan's Lower East Side, within easy walking distance of Chinatown, Little Italy and Greenwich Village.
- **Good location for:** Experiencing a quieter, gentler Manhattan.
- **Room rates:** From \$199.
- **Contact:** 212-533-9080; www.bluemoon-nyc.com

original Victorian pressed tin and a hand-painted "Starry Night" ceiling — down to the cheery, spacious, lemon-yellow lobby for the complimentary kosher continental breakfast. As Manhattan's only kosher hotel, Blue Moon offers the area's best: bagels and bialys from Kossar's and cookies and sweets from Gertel's (each room here also has a Jewish mezuza — rolled-up parchment with an inscription from Deuteronomy — on the entry door frame).

While we ate, we listened to Frank Sinatra tunes, read the New York Times, watched

passersby through large windows, and marveled at our good fortune.

For other meals, plenty of restaurants are nearby, including legendary Katz's Delicatessen, where that memorable "I'll have what she's having" scene took place in "When Harry Met Sally."

When not at the hotel, we were out frolicking in the amusement park for adults that is New York City. We brunched at trendy Pastis in the meatpacking district and caught a glimpse of actress Julianne Moore; we toured the Lower East Side Tenement Museum and discovered that our room at the Blue Moon was about the size of a family's entire apartment for the original immigrants; we dined on thin-crust pizza made in a 100-year-old coal-fired oven at Lombardia's, which is said to be America's first pizzeria; we sipped thick Italian hot chocolate near Union Square at the cavernous, roaringly popular Max Brenner Chocolate Bar.

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