

Speaker 1: Thank you for purchasing free tours by foot and at Atlantis Audio Tours, self-guided audio tour. I wanted to let you know how this works before you get started. The audio tour is one long audio file. You can pause between stops as you walk there, allowing you to take your time and to stop to explore something more if you'd like. I'll let you know as we move between stops. You'll also find a Google map and a PDF in your confirmation email in case you'd like to check where you are or read along with your guide. Now let's get started with your tour, and I'll let you know when to pause to get to your next stop.

Katherine: Hi, this is Katherine with Free Tours by Foot here to guide you on a tour of Midtown Manhattan. Our tour begins at One Times Square at 43rd Street in Broadway. The closest subway is the 123, NQRW, or 7 Trains to Times Square 42nd Street. Prior to 1904, this area was known as Long Acre Square, and it was the primary home of the horse and carriage industry in New York City. Much of the land was owned by John Jacob Astor, who had made a fortune in the fur trade.

He made a second fortune as the city expanded into this once-remote area, selling off his land in lots to hotels and developers. Cigar manufacturer turned theater impresario Oscar Hammerstein I opened the Olympia Theater at 44th Street in Broadway in 1895. The beginning of a long relationship between this neighborhood and theater. Hammerstein was the grandfather of Oscar Hammerstein II, who became one of the best-known musical theater lyricists of all time.

In 1904, the owner of the New York Times Adolph Ochs moved the new paper's headquarters from Park Row across from City Hall to a new skyscraper at the base of the square. He persuaded New York City Mayor George B. McClellan Jr. to have a subway station constructed there and to rename the area Times Square in honor of the paper. The original times building at Park Row is still there and is now a part of Pace University. Following the paper's move uptown, the area quickly expanded, becoming a center for entertainment and advertising.

The North end of the Square is known as Duffy Square after World War I Army Chaplain Father Duffy. By the late 1920s, there were 80 Broadway theaters operating in the area, and Wrigley's Gum was paying \$9,000 per month to have a massive electric advertisement. The area fell into decline in the 1960s and became a symbol of urban decay. The transformation from gritty crime-ridden area to the family-friendly spectacle you see today began in the 1990s.

The New York Times for who all this is named actually moved out of their original building in 1913, but created a lasting impact for this pocket of Manhattan. Times Square is officially considered 40th through 53rd streets between Sixth and Eighth avenues. This is just 1% of the city's total land area but produces 10% of its economic output, \$90 billion a year. Times Square provides 5% of New York City's jobs. Between workers and visitors, about a half a million people pass through here every single day, along with 30,000 vehicles leading to the area's nickname Crossroads of the World.

This has become one of the top must-see spots for tourists leading to about 35 million visitors annually. Many come to the area because of its world-renowned theater. There are 39 Broadway theaters in the area, but don't go looking for all of them on Broadway the street. The designation Broadway Theater has nothing to do

with geographic proximity to the street Broadway or even to the Times Square area. There's a Broadway theater up at Lincoln Center on the Upper West Side.

It just means New York theaters with 500 seats or more off-Broadway theaters have anywhere from 100 to 499 seats and off-off-Broadway theaters have less than 100 seats. While Times Square is most associated with Broadway theaters, it actually contains venues of all three categories. While many come for the theater, some also come just to take in the bright lights and the hustle and bustle. At Peak Illumination, Times Square uses 161 megawatts of electricity. For a frame of reference, just one megawatt could power about 1000 US homes.

Number one Times Square, the building you're next to was the first Midtown home of the New York Times. When the building was completed, it was the tallest in the city and marked the beginning of major changes in this area. Around the building, you will see orange words zooming by. This is The Zipper, a minute-by-minute news bulletin that was added to the building in 1928. Its very first words announced the election of Herbert Hoover For president.

The Zipper made Times Square a popular gathering spot to wait for momentous news. People came here to get the news on everything from sports scores to election results. The largest crowd in the history of Times Square was August 15th, 1945 to see The Zipper announce that Japan had surrendered and World War II was drawing to a close. You'll notice that now most of the windows are completely covered by advertisements. This is because there are no tenants inside this building except for the Walgreens on the first couple of floors.

Times Square is considered some of the best advertising space in the country. Renting space on the side of the building is more profitable than having a tenant inside. Companies pay \$300,000 per month for the privilege of having an ad on this building. Now walk to the backside of your building to the next point on your map. Look across the street to the sign above the Chase Bank.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This was the first fully green billboard in Times Square installed in 2008 and designed to work using only the sun and the wind. It weighs in at 35,000 pounds and is 55 feet off the ground. It is fitted with 16 wind turbines and 64 solar panels. This was a first in Times Square's long history with billboards or spectaculars and other forms of advertising. The first taker for the sign was Ricoh Americas Corporation, an office equipment supplier. They took out a three-year lease and were said to be paying about \$200,000 a month for this space.

This price is actually considered pretty normal for the area, and Ricoh said that the green design would prevent approximately 18 tons of carbon going into the air every year. Ricoh said that they hoped this would be a message to others that resources and energy can be used creatively even with Billboard advertising. Of course, there is a downside. The sign potentially going dark if there isn't enough wind or sun, but the turbines generate enough power to keep the sign going even if there are four days without wind or sun.

Now walk to 42nd Street and turn left to go east down 42nd. Listen to the next segment about New Year's Eve in Times Square as you make your way to the next map point where you'll be able to see the ball on top of number one Times Square. When the New York Times came to the area in 1904, they wanted to have a large celebration of their historic move uptown. They hosted a New Year's Eve celebration complete with fireworks. Attendance was roughly a quarter of a million people, and the celebration was popular enough that they decided to carry on with a tradition.

They ran into an issue a few years later in 1907 with the New York City Police Department ruled that they could not set off fireworks. In need of another way to mark the transition into a new year, the first Times Square ball drop occurred. The first ball was made of iron, was five feet in diameter, and was covered with 125-watt light bulbs. It was lowered down a 141-foot 43-meter pole during the final minute of the year. The first drop proved to success, and one of the most iconic New York City celebrations was born.

The ball drop has occurred every year since with the exception of 1942 and 1943 in compliance with World War II blackouts in the city. The ball stayed roughly the same for many years until it was transformed into a red apple in the 1980s as a nod to the city's nickname the Big Apple. The next major change from the ball came with the millennial New Year when the first Waterford Crystal and LED light ball was introduced. The crowd that turned out to see that ball drop was the largest ever recorded for New Year's Eve in Times Square, 2.1 million people.

The ball that you see today looks very similar to the Millennial Ball. The difference is that it's about double in size and weatherproofed so that it can stay out year-round. It contains 2,688 Waterford crystal panels and weighs nearly 12,000 pounds. Now continue down 42nd Street and cross over Sixth Avenue to the next point on your map. Standing at the corner, look diagonally across the street where you'll be able to see the Bank of America Tower.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This modern skyscraper is the fourth tallest in New York City coming in after one World Trade Center, 432 Park Avenue, and the Empire State Building. It is 59 stories and reaches a height of 1200 feet or 365 meters. The spire on top is 254 feet or 80 meters. Construction costs reach a total of \$1 billion, and the project was finished in 2009. In addition to its height the building is noteworthy for having some of the best green credentials in the city. It is made of largely recyclable or recycled materials with 55% concrete and 45% slag, a byproduct of blast furnaces. The reduction in concrete reduces the emissions created by the concrete manufacturing process.

The building has systems for reusing both rainwater and greywater and features special thermal glass designed to reduce energy loss. The building also features a daylight dimming system ice storage to help cool the building of 4.6-megawatt cogeneration plant and waterless urinals, which are calculated to save 8 million gallons of water per year. The building filters all air coming in which is typical, but it also filters the air **[unintelligible 00:10:47]** acting as a air freshener for Midtown Manhattan.

All of this comes together to create the first skyscraper ever to receive a platinum LEED certification. A building such as this one requires a fair amount of window washing. The daring people who clean windows high above street level on buildings like these make approximately \$36,000 a year. From where you are looking at the Bank of America building, turn around and you'll see an entrance to Bryant Park.

Listen to the next clip, a brief history of the park while you walk, follow the pathway into the park, and then turn left. When you get to the next map point, you will be in a spot where you can see the Empire State Building looking to the south. This nine-acre public park is one of the most popular spots in Midtown Manhattan. This was originally quite far north of the city of New York, and in 1823, the area was used as a potters field or a free public burial ground.

In 1840, all of the bodies were moved towards island, and in 1847 this area opened as Reservoir Square, so named because it was next to the Croton Distributing Reservoir, the source of New York City's tap water. In 1853, Reservoir Square was the site of the exhibition of the industry of all nations, which included New York's Crystal Palace inspired by the London Crystal Palace of 1851.

This exhibition is where Alicia Otis first displayed an elevator with a safety break changing the future of elevators and buildings forever. The Crystal Palace was meant to stand permanently but burned down in 1858. The total cost of the destruction between the buildings and the exhibits inside was over \$350,000. The area was renamed Bryant Park in 1884 after William Cullen Bryant, a newspaper editor and one of the major advocates for the creation of Central Park.

In 1899, the reservoir structure was torn down and construction began on the New York Public Library, which is adjacent the park today. By the 1930s, the park was seriously neglected and in need of work. The restoration of Bryant Park was a great depression era public Works project designed to create employment. The project included adding tall hedges and an iron fence to shield the park from the rest of Midtown.

It did that, but it also created a relatively isolated area that by the 1970s, was a hotbed for illegal activity, including drug dealing and prostitution. Bryant Park in that time was considered an area to avoid by most New Yorkers. In 1980, the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, a private nonprofit organization was created by some of New York's most prominent families, including the Rockefellers.

After taking immediate action to improve the safety of the park, in 1988, the park was shut down entirely for a four-year renovation. This renovation included lowering the park closer to street level, making it less conducive to illegal activity. They also reopened the restrooms that had been closed for 35 years.

The designers for the new and improved Park insisted that the 2000 chairs be movable, saying that people feel a sense of empowerment being able to sit in whatever formation they like. Today, the park includes an outdoor reading room. The original Bryant Park reading room was created in 1935 in response to the Great Depression. The idea was to give those who were out of work a place to go that didn't require money or any identification.

The original reading room closed in 1944 because employment was back up during World War II, but in 2003, the reading room was brought back. It is modeled on the original free for all and with no ID required. Bryant Park also offers ping pong, backgammon, chess, and many other games and activities. Chess playing costs \$3 for a half hour, backgammon costs \$4.

In the wintertime, Bryant Park is the site of a large holiday market and an ice skating rink. From where you are standing in Bryant Park, you can see arguably the most iconic building in New York City. The Empire State Building was built by a group of investors who named themselves Empire State Incorporated, and they hired architect William F. Lamb to design the building.

The spot chosen was the site of the original Waldorf Astoria Hotel, which was relocating further uptown. The location at 34th Street in fifth Avenue was considered ideal because of its proximity to transportation hubs and the city center. The building was designed from the top down with the tiered art deco top being designed first. This was so that setbacks could be incorporated in accordance with the 1916 city zoning laws.

The Empire State Building was originally planned to be 50 stories high, which was later increased to 60 stories and then 80 stories. This was occurring at a very interesting time for building in New York City. Several buildings were locked in a race to become the tallest building in the world, including 40 Wall Street and the Chrysler Building.

At one point, the Empire State Building was only designed to be four feet taller than the Chrysler Building. It was redesigned for a final time to be its current height of 102 stories. Altogether, there were 15 different versions of the Empire State Building design. Construction began on St. Patrick's Day 1930, and it took one year and 45 days to complete.

The building rose at an average of four floors per week, but the quickest pace on site saw 14 floors rise in just 10 days. The steel for the building was made in Pittsburgh, and on average it only took three days for the steel to go from the mill to being added to the building.

A total of 3000 workers put in a combined 7 million man-hours. Because they were trying to complete the building as quickly as possible, a restaurant was added to the top floors. This was so that workers could eat right there on site and not waste time going up and down the building. An order was placed for the Empire State Building with the Otis Elevator Company who had debuted their big elevator breakthrough in Bryant Park In 1854.

66 elevator cars were ordered that could travel at a speed of 1200 feet or 366 meters per minute. This was the largest elevator order ever placed at the time. The construction side of the Empire State Building could be dangerous. There were 14 people killed during the building process. When it was completed, the Empire State Building stood as the tallest in the world for nearly 40 years.

It is 1,250 feet or 381 meters to the 102nd-floor observatory and 1,453 feet or 443 meters to the tip of the antenna. If you were to walk to the observatory on the 102nd

floor, it would take 1,860 steps. The building is so large that it requires its own zip code. There are a total of 6,500 Windows, 3,200 miles of telephone wire, 475 miles of electrical wire, and 70 miles of water pipes.

With 2.85 million square feet or 315,000 square meters of rentable space, it is the second largest office space in the United States after the Pentagon, approximately 21,000 people work inside the building. In 1945, a B25 bomber crashed into the Empire State Building between the 78th and 80th floors. The pilot was headed for Newark Airport but became disoriented because of heavy fog. The offices he crashed into were those of the National Catholic Welfare Council.

The fire caused by the crash was put out in 40 minutes. Though there wasn't any permanent structural damage, 14 people were killed and several others were injured. Elevator operator, Betty Lou Oliver was injured when the elevator car fell 75 stories due to the cables being weakened. The cables and wires collected into a pile and cushioned the fall. Today, this was recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records as being the longest-survived elevator drop. In 1983, for the 50th anniversary of the film *King Kong*, a giant vinyl inflatable, King Kong was attached to the top of the Empire State Building.

There was much fanfare surrounding this stunt, so it was deeply embarrassing when attempts to secure King Kong to the building failed for eight days. For a brief moment on that eighth day, it seemed like the plan had worked, but shortly after, the winds picked up again and with too many tears in the vinyl, King Kong was once again limply hanging on the side of the building. By this time, so many hours have gone into this, that the \$650,000 cost was more than the budget of the film they were celebrating. For more information on these stories like Betty Lou Oliver, or King Kong, check out the included links. Now look to the left of where you see the Empire State Building. You should see a black and gold building right on the south end of the park. This was built as the American Radiator Building, and today is the Bryant Park Hotel. The building was completed in 1924. Right at the beginning of the Art Deco era, the black brick was chosen to represent coal and the gold to represent fire. The building is adorned with allegorical figures representing matter transforming into energy.

The architect was Raymond Hood, who also designed 30 Rockefeller Plaza and the Daily News building. The building is 338 feet or 103 meters tall and has 23 floors. In 1998, the building was purchased for \$150 million and converted to the Bryant Park Hotel, which has 130 rooms. Now continue walking east in the park. You will see a small stone building on your left right at the edge of the park.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This small building houses the Bryant Park public restroom. While this may seem like an odd stop for a tour, it is consistently cited as the nicest restroom in the city and voted third best in the nation. Fountains on locust ice cream parlor in St. Louis is number one. Bryant Park restroom features crown molding, imported tile work, a full-time attendant and fresh floral arrangements. Classical music is played throughout the day.

In 2016, it received an estimated 1.2 million visitors. There was a decadent upgrade heading into 2017, and it is now considered to be on par with the facilities in a luxury hotel. Now continue walking straight. Go up the stairs and ahead to your left, you will see a sidewalk that goes along the side of the library. Follow that until you come to another set of stairs on your right. That will take you to the front or the Fifth Avenue side of the building.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This building is the main branch of the New York Public Library, which consists of 91 libraries total 53 million items and services 18 million library card holders. It is the second-largest library in the country after the Library of Congress. The library was initially created by the joining of two private libraries, the Astor Library and the Lenox Library. Former governor of New York, Samuel Tilden left his fortune to the city with instructions that it should be used to establish a free public library and reading room.

Andrew Carnegie donated \$5.3 million to build branch libraries throughout the city. This main building was built over the site of the Croton Reservoir, and construction began in 1902. The entire facade is made of marble, and the building is done in the Beaux-Arts style. In 1910, 75 miles or 121 kilometers of shelves were installed, and the next year was spent moving the approximately 1 million books into place. The opening ceremony in 1911 was presided over by President Taft with nearly 50,000 people in attendance.

Some iconic features of this building include the rose main reading room inside and the two famous lions guarding the front entrance. Their names were originally Astra in Lenox, but since the Great Depression, they've been called patience and fortitude. Then Mayor of New York, Fiorello LaGuardia said New Yorkers would need those qualities to weather the depression. The library has been seen in several films including *The Whiz*, *Sex in the City*, and *Ghostbusters*, where the extensive underground storage area is shown.

The basement storage of the library extends all the way underneath Bryant Park. In 2008, the library announced that the main building would be renamed the Stephen A Schwartzman building in honor of his generous \$100 million gift. Now go to the corner of 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue. Cross at the light to the other side of fifth looking diagonally across the street, you should be able to see number 505th Avenue. It's the building with Azara on the ground floor.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This 60-storey building constructed from 1929 to 1931 is another great example of both Art Deco architecture and setbacks used in building. Setbacks state back to a law created in 1916 as buildings in the city got taller, there was concern about sunlight not being able to filter down to street level by dictating that the tops of buildings needed to be smaller than the base, light was able to come through. Many people achieved this by using setbacks and creating a tiered shape with their buildings. This building was designed by the firm of Shreve Lamb and Harmon.

William Lamb was also the architect of the Empire State Building, and the two share a similar design minus the spire. In fact, in the planning stages, this building was planned to be about the same height. Plans were scaled back due to the onset of the Great Depression. In 1941, this building became the transmitter site for CBS Radio's New York City Station. From here, start walking East down 42nd towards the next point while you listen to the following segment.

The beautiful Chrysler Building is considered to be an Art Deco masterpiece. It is consistently cited by architects as their favorite skyscraper in the world. When this 77-story building was being constructed, it was in competition to become the tallest building in the world. It was being built at exactly the same time as 40 Wall Street in lower Manhattan. The architects of the two buildings, William Van Allen, for the Chrysler Building in H. Craig Severance for 40 Wall Street, where former partners turned competitors in this dramatic race to the top.

As construction progressed, it appeared that Severance would be the victor with his building of 927 feet or 283 meters. He had progressively increased the plan height of 40 Wall Street, alongside plans for the Chrysler building to ensure that his would be the tallest in the world. Van Allen had a trick up his sleeve however. He obtained permission for the ornamental spire, which was assembled secretly inside the crown of the building.

Once 40 Wall Street reached its final height, it looked to be just two feet taller than the Chrysler building. Once Van Allen spire was raised, the height of the Chrysler Building went from 925 feet to 1,047 feet or 319 meters. The spire went up the same week as black Thursday in October 1929, which saw the onset of the Great Depression. Severance argued that the spire was just decorative and that his building actually had the higher usable floor, but Van Allen maintained that he was the winner.

This argument became moot less than a year later when the significantly taller Empire State Building was completed. Though the Chrysler Building was only the world's tallest for a short period of time, the design and attention to detail continue to draw praise. While most of the elements are very classic Art Deco, Van Allen chose details that specifically celebrated the company that would make their home in the building, the Chrysler Corporation. The Eagles that adorned the 61st floor are replicas of the hood Ornaments of the 1929 Chrysler Line.

The winged mercury caps at the 31st floor resemble the radiator covers of the day. Gray and white brickwork on the building depicts wheels with mudguards and hubcaps, and the famous shiny top of the building features a seven-tiered sunburst pattern. It is done in stainless steel to mimic the appearance of the chrome on an automobile. Though the building served as the headquarters for the company, Walter Chrysler owned the building privately so that he could pass it down to his family.

Chrysler was one of the giants of the 1920s. He had made a fortune with his company and owned a mansion on Long Island, right where the fictional Jay Gatsby was said to have lived. Though the idea was to keep the building in the family, the Chrysler sold it in 1947. Though he had gotten a beautiful building and the tallest in the world, Walter Chrysler did not pay William Van Allen for his work and accused him of taking bribes from contractors.

Van Allen finally was successful in securing his payment, but he never recovered from the blow to his reputation. The Chrysler Building was the last major project that he ever worked on. When he passed away, the *New York Times* did not even run an obituary for him. Today, this building is 90% owned by the Abu Dhabi Sovereign Wealth Fund and 10% by Tishman Bayer. The land that the building sits on is owned by the Cooper Union, a university downtown, and the school receives millions of dollars in rent annually.

From where you are now standing point 11 on your map, you can see Grand Central in front of you, and also the large MetLife building looming above it. The skyscraper above Grand Central Terminal is the MetLife building. This 59-storey building was completed in 1963. At the time, it was the largest commercial building in the world at 3 million square feet or 290,000 square meters. This building almost meant the destruction of Grand Central Terminal. Beginning in the 1950s plans were made for a 108-story tower designed by I.M Pei. People were upset at the idea of losing the station and a fight for landmark status began. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, former first lady, was one of the major advocates for preserving the building. As the fate of Grand Central was being decided, a proposal was presented for a shorter building that would preserve the station.

The official decision to landmark the terminal led to the current building. The resulting octagonal building was originally called the Pan-Am Building, and it was the corporate headquarters of Pan-American Airlines, which had previously been headquartered in the nearby Chrysler Building. MetLife acquired the building in 1981, but Pan Am retained 15 floors of the building until they went bankrupt in 1991. This building was the last office tower to be constructed before New York City's laws prevented company names or logos on the tops of buildings.

The building originally had the Pan-Am name as well as their Blue Globe logo on top, now were placed by MetLife. In 2005, Tishman Spare bought the property for \$1.72 billion, a record-breaking sale at the time. The style of this building is considered brutalist architecture, which was gaining popularity at the time, particularly with public and government buildings.

The name of this style, which is a descendant of early 20th-century modernism, is derived from the French word for raw. Buildings of this style tend to be imposing and fortress-like appearance, which you can definitely see in this massive office building Grand Central Terminal. The train station in front of you is considered a **[unintelligible 00:31:41]** masterpiece and opened to the public February 2nd, 1913th. It is the third train station to be on this site. The first was Grand Central Depot in 1871, the second was Grand Central Station opened in 1900. Trains used to run above ground North of this station where Modern Day Park Avenue is.

A train accident in 1902 caused the push for new underground trains that would run on electricity, thus leading to the creation of the building you see today. This current building is Grand Central Terminal, and it is the largest train station in the world with 44 platforms and 67 tracks. When the current plan to merge the Long Island Railroad with Grand Central is completed, that will go up to 48 platforms and 75 tracks. The station covers an area of 48 acres and has 33 miles of track inside.

The sculpture grouping on top of the building is called transportation, and it depicts Minerva, mercury, and Hercules representing wisdom, speed, and strength according to Roman mythology. These were considered the essential characteristics for an effective train station. Though the design was created by a French sculptor, he refused to come to New York to oversee the completion because he feared that American architecture and art would distress him.

Instead, the design was executed by a firm in Queens. The clock underneath the sculpture is the largest piece of Tiffany Glass in the world at 13 feet or 4 meters wide. It is also the only clock at Grand Central set to the correct time.

All of the interior clocks are set just a little fast to ensure that everyone is safely on the train when it is ready to pull away from the station. This simple Trek is very effective. Grand Central boasts an impressive on-time rate, even though it services 660 Metro North Commuter trains. Now head into the entrance right underneath the bridge, stop in the first large room that you come to. We are going to see a little bit of the inside, but for something more in-depth, check out our self-guided audio tour of Grand Central.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This room is called Vanderbilt hall, and it used to serve as the main waiting room for the terminal. It is named for the Vanderbilt family. Cornelius Vanderbilt, also known as the Commodore, made his fortune in shipping and built the original Grand Central Depot in 1871 after acquiring ownership of several major New York City railroads. The Vanderbilts were responsible for the next Grand Central Station, as well as the current building. Vanderbilt hall is currently being used as a food hall. Now proceed into the largest space in Grand Central, the main concourse. Walk until you get to the main information booth with the foresighted clock on top.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This is one of the largest interior spaces in Manhattan, measuring 275 feet long by 120 feet wide. The large windows at either end are 60 feet tall. The pains can be opened up, which in the days before air conditioning helped create ventilation in this crowded space. These windows were covered with blackout paint during World War II, which remained there until Grand Central got a major renovation in the 1990s.

The grand staircases at either end of the concourse were modeled after the stairs at the Paris Opera House. The starry ceiling is one of the most famous features of this station. It depicts the constellation seen in the Mediterranean sky with the March through October zodiac. It features 2,500 stars total. Some are lit with bright lights, which are meant to demonstrate which stars are closest to Earth and thus appear brightest in the sky. Shortly after Grand Central Terminal opened, an astronomy-savvy commuter noticed that the sky actually appeared to be backwards.

The artist Hallu defended the ceiling by saying that it was inspired by a medieval manuscript depicting the sky from the perspective of God looking down. There are some that think that the ceiling was painted backwards accidentally by workers

placing the diagram on the floor and that the medieval perspective of God was just a convenient cover. Whichever is true, it is admired by millions of people every year. That used to not be possible, however, until the 1990s renovation, the ceiling had become covered with grime predominantly from cigarette smoke over the years.

A careful cleaning was completed, but if you look at the ceiling in the corner above the Michael Jordan steakhouse, you can see a dark rectangle. That was left as a reminder of the color before the restoration. This information booth is another iconic feature of Grand Central, mainly due to its foresighted clock. The clock was cast in Waterbury, Connecticut and the faces are rumored to be made out of opal worth millions of dollars.

At the top of the clock, you can see a carving of an acorn and an oak leaf. These can actually be seen all over the terminal. They are the emblem of the Vanderbilt family. Self-made man Cornelius Vanderbilt loved the saying from tiny Acorns grow Mighty Oaks. The workers in this information booth are kept very busy, an estimated 750,000 people across this floor every day. That's roughly the population of San Francisco.

They get an average of 1000 questions per hour. With that many people coming and going, things are bound to get left behind. Lost and found receives an average of 2000 items every month and manages to reunite about 80% of them with their owners making it one of the most successful lost and finds in the world. Several stories Beneath Your Feet is the most mysterious room at Grand Central, M42. Its location is considered so top secret.

It does not appear on any blueprints, and its existence was not officially admitted until the 1980s. It contains the massive AC to DC rotary converters that help power the station to this day. M42 was the target of a World War II spy plot. Spies were caught with plans to cripple the converters, thus cutting the power to Grand Central and disrupting all troop movement on the Eastern seaboard.

Ruining the converters is actually not all that difficult. It can be accomplished by simply throwing a bucket of sand over them. The intense heat from the converter would instantly turn the sand into glass and jam the rotary effectively ruining it. This was considered such a serious threat that guards posted here during World War II were given orders to shoot to kill anyone who came down here.

From the main concourse, take the escalator up where it says MetLife building above. At the top, exit through the doors and continue straight until you find yourself in the lobby of the MetLife building. Exit outside. Across the street, you'll see the Helmsley building with a tunnel ahead to your right. Cross the street and walk through the tunnel until you find yourself on Park Avenue and walk until you reach point 13 on your map.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This street was originally called Fourth Avenue and was the site of the railroad tracks for the New York and Harlem Railroad lines, beginning in the 1830s, an area where the railroad runs through to the South of here was covered in park

space leading to the current name. The character of the area changed as the railroad became electrified and began running underground in this part of Manhattan.

Today, this is a broad avenue featuring greenery and flowers on the medians. In the area just to the North of Grand Central, it is home to several large banks and corporations, such as JP Morgan Chase, City Group, Colgate-Palmolive, Heineken International, and American Airlines. Further North in the sixties and seventies, Park becomes more residential, and it's one of the most expensive zip codes in the United States to live in.

If you turn around, you will see the Helmsley Building, which you passed underneath. The 35 Story Helmsley Building was built in 1929. It was designed by Warren and Wetmore, who also designed Grand Central Terminal. When it was completed, it was the tallest of the cluster of buildings built around Grand Central, known as Terminal City. This was originally called the New York Central Building and was the headquarters of that railroad. It was later purchased by the General Tire and Rubber Company and renamed the New York General Building, a simple task of just chiseling off a few letters and replacing them. The real estate company Helmsley Spear later bought the building and Leona Helmsley, nicknamed the Queen of Mean, known for leaving her fortune to her dog, decided that this would become the Helmsley Building. Even though it has been sold many times over, the deal negotiated when Helmsley sold in 1998 made it so that the building could not be renamed.

It sold in 2015 to RXR Realty for \$1.2 billion. Now continue north on Park Avenue towards the Waldorf Astoria, the next point on your map. It is actually easier to see the Waldorf from across the street when you get to 49th street, cross over park to stand in front of the Colgate-Palmolive Building.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: The hotel you see today is actually the second Waldorf Astoria. The first was at 34th street and Fifth Avenue, right where the Empire State Building is today. The corner was originally the site of two mansions owned by different members of the Astor family. A family feud caused William Waldorf Astor to tear down his house and put up a 13-storey hotel called the Waldorf to overshadow his Aunt Caroline's house next door.

After complaining about living next door to a tavern, Caroline moved uptown and left her house to her son John Jacob Astor the Fourth. He promptly tore down the house and put up the 17-storey Astoria Hotel in 1897. The cousins eventually joined forces, and the Waldorf Astoria became the preeminent luxury hotel of its time.

It was the first hotel in the world to offer room service, private bathrooms, a telephone in every room, and full electricity. It soon became a go-to spot for galas, fundraisers, and other events. Senate investigations into the sinking of the Titanic began at the Waldorf Astoria. Owner John Jacob Astor IV was among the people killed in the disaster. The hotel moved uptown to its current location in 1929 when the area around 34th street was no longer as fashionable as it once was.

The current building was done in the Art Deco style and opened in 1931 as the tallest hotel in the world at 47 floors. There were 2200 rooms and throughout its history, several famous names have kept permanent suites at the Waldorf, including Cole Porter, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, and Frank Sinatra. The most opulent suite is called the Presidential Suite. It is 2,250 square feet or 209 square meters.

It's done in the Georgian style to emulate the White House and is traditionally where US Presidents have stayed when visiting New York City. There is a private elevator from the Presidential Suite to track 61 below the hotel, an extension of Grand Central several blocks south. The occupant of the Presidential Suite could leave the hotel and be on a train out of the city without ever setting foot outside. Every US President since Herbert Hoover has stayed at the hotel.

Some, including Hoover and Dwight D. Eisenhower, liked it so well that they lived there permanently after leaving the White House. It is also traditionally where visiting heads of state stay when they are visiting New York, as well as the delegations from the United Nations when the UN is in general assembly. Until recently, the official residence of the US ambassador to the United Nations was on the top floor of the hotel.

The Waldorf Astoria was purchased by a Chinese insurance group for \$1.95 billion in 2014, making it the most expensive hotel sale in history. They announced that the hotel would undergo a renovation, including converting some hotel rooms into condominiums, and that the hotel would be closed until 2020. Now walk north up park to 50th street and turn left. Walk over to Madison Avenue and then cross over to the other side of 50th. Walk north about halfway up the blocks that are in the middle of the stately Valard House.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This beautiful building appears to be one large mansion, but it's actually six townhouses put together. The houses were built for Henry Valard in 1884 by the firm Mead, McKim White. Valard was a German immigrant who made a fortune in the railroad industry. Cornelius Vanderbilt was among his business partners.

In 1881, he purchased this land across from St. Patrick's Cathedral for \$260,000. He moved into the largest of the houses himself, which occupied the entire right side of the structure. This area at the time would have been dominated by large, luxurious mansions, palaces built for railroad barons, and banking tycoons. Fifth Avenue, just one block over, was called Millionaires Row.

Eventually, as this area became increasingly commercialized, families moved further uptown on the east side of Manhattan, and many of the old mansions no longer stand. Vallarta only lived here for a short time before the entire complex was finished, his railroad empire collapsed, and he sold the house to politician Whitelaw Reed. The Reed family owned the property until 1935. In 1974, businessman Harry Helmsley bought the property. Behind it, he developed the Helmsley Palace Hotel, now called the New York Palace.

As a part of a preservation agreement, the original mansion was restored in 2003 for a cost of \$140,000,000. It exists today as an extension of the hotel and one of the

best-preserved examples of New York's gilded age. Now cross over Madison Avenue at 50th street. Walk until you get to Fifth Avenue. Turn to the right, and you will be in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: This neogothic cathedral is the seat of the Catholic archdiocese in New York. The Catholic population of New York City began growing exponentially in the mid-19th century, largely due to mass Irish immigration following the potato famine. In 1853, the Archbishop of New York, John Joseph Hughes, announced that he planned to have a cathedral constructed on this spot to replace old St. Patrick's Cathedral down on Mulberry Street.

This was a bold move for the time, as Midtown Manhattan wasn't the city center that it is today. People called this location too remote and nicknamed the plan Hughes's Folly. Despite the naysayers, the cornerstone was laid in 1858 and the cathedral was completed in 1879. Construction on the Cathedral took about twice as long as expected because of the outbreak of the American Civil War, which depleted both manpower and funds. Despite the obstacles, the Twin-spired Cathedral with designed by James Renwick remains among the most visited churches in New York City today.

The Cathedral had a recent renovation beginning in 2012. The work, which included cleaning the exterior tuckahoe marble, replacing stained glass windows, and repainting the ceiling, took three years and cost about \$177 million. The work was finished just in time for Pope Francis's visit to New York in September 2015. St. Patrick's offers guided tours of the Cathedral every day at 10:00 A.M., as well as a self-guided version of the tour. If you are interested in attending a mass at St. Patrick's, you can check out the schedule at [St. Patrick's cathedral.org](http://St.Patrick's.cathedral.org).

From here, you can look across the street at Rockefeller Center's International Building with the sculpture of Atlas out front. Rockefeller's center was built by John D. Rockefeller Jr., Son of Standard Oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller. The idea began in the 1920s when the Metropolitan Opera approached Rockefeller about developing a center for a new opera house and office complex in the late 1920s. The site chosen had been a botanical garden in the 19th century and had devolved into the biggest red-light district in New York.

Rockefeller leased 12 acres of land in 1928 for approximately \$3 million a year, which was owned at the time by Columbia University. Columbia offered a lease of 27 years with 321-year renewals. When the Great Depression began, the Metropolitan Opera Company backed out of the plans, leaving Rockefeller Jr. Holding the lease. He decided to proceed with the development anyway. The initial cost, including the land, demolishing buildings, and building the new complex, was about \$250 million.

Even though the cost was astronomical and the project was risky, Rockefeller Jr. continued with the project as a show of his belief in the future of America. In the process of constructing the original 15-building complex, 229 buildings were demolished and over 4000 people were displaced. Even though it was one of the biggest projects of its time, the complex was built in just nine years, from 1931 to

1940. The only modern New York City project of a comparable scale is the ongoing Hudson Yards development.

Rockefeller Center is currently owned by Tishman Speyer. There are four low-rise buildings along the fifth avenue sides of Rockefeller Center. They are the British Empire Building, la Maison Frances, Palazzo de Italia, and the International Building. There was another building planned for the complex the Deutsche House.

However, as tensions with Germany mounted, Rockefeller Junior decided he would not offer space to the Nazi government, and the building was built as the International Building instead. The Palazzo de Italiano was rented to the Italian government, but artwork featuring Mussolini was later removed after Pearl Harbor and the US entry into World War II. A companion work, also featuring Mussolini, remained on the International Building. Now, you're going to go across the street to the courtyard of the International Building. You will need to go to the corner to cross over 5th Avenue and then turn to the right to get to the Atlas sculpture.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: The courtyard of the International Building features the Art deco-style statue of the Titan Atlas, holding the weight of the world on his shoulders. This piece was done by Lee Lawrie and has become an iconic figure to many particularly devotees of the work of Ayn Rand. Ayn Rand was a novelist and philosopher, and arguably her most famous work is *Atlas Shrugged*. The statue's positioning directly across from the front doors of St. Patrick's Cathedral caused some outcry from those who said a pagan figure shouldn't be across from a church. Others believe that the piece works nicely there and that Atlas' posture is evocative of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Once you have checked out the sculpture, head into the lobby of the building. Take a moment once inside to take in your beautiful surroundings. The impressive lobby of this building is four storeys high and is done in Greek Tinos marble. It also features four enormous columns and a reflective copper leaf ceiling. The material was chosen after one of the architects working on the complex noticed the look of the material when his daughter used it in an art project, an ashtray. The art installation on the walls is called Light and Movement and was created for the space in 1978 by Michio Ihara. It is comprised of 1,600 pieces of stainless steel reflecting light.

This was commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller, a great patron of modern art. It gives a sense of movement and throws a haze of light into the lobby of the International Building. The lobby also features a bust sculpture of aviation pioneer Charles Lindbergh. When you are finished in the lobby, head outside and turn right to walk back to the corner of 50th Street and crossover to walk south. About midway down the block, you will see the entrance into Rockefeller Plaza on your right. Walk to the next point on your map.

Speaker 1: Pause here until you get to your next stop.

Katherine: The view of Rockefeller Plaza from the Channel Gardens is spectacular, and it's a great photo opportunity. When you're finished taking in the view, walk in the direction of 30 Rock, the tallest tower, and you'll come across the skating rink.

The skating rink at Rockefeller Center is very likely the most famous rink in the city due to being featured in several holiday movies like *Elf*, but this was never intended to be a skating rink. Just an entrance to the buildings via the underground concourse. It wasn't used very much early on, and so it became a temporary roller skating rink. Because of the out-of-the-way location, the rink became known as an area for petty crime.

Its first use as an ice skating rink came on Christmas Day 1936 and now it is open as an ice skating rink from October through April every year. Skating at Rockefeller Center has become one of the most popular activities for tourists who visit New York around the holidays. The rest of the year, the skating rink becomes an outdoor cafe. The gold statue above the rink is Paul Manship's Prometheus. It depicts Prometheus stealing fire from the gods to bring it to mankind. It is said that the myth of Prometheus was a favorite of Rockefeller Jr., hence this statue's prominent spot in the complex.

Though the statue was derided by someone it was unveiled, today it is considered the fourth most recognizable statue in the United States after the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore, and the Lincoln Memorial statue in DC. 30 Rock which you see straight ahead, is the main building of the complex. It is the 9th tallest in the city, 113th in the world, at 850 feet tall. The nickname of the building comes from the address 30 Rockefeller Plaza, and its distinct shape comes from setback laws, which we discussed earlier at 505th Avenue. The building is designed so there are no dark corners in any room with a window which is effective to distances of up to 27 feet.

The original anchor tenant of the building was RCA, Radio Corporation of America. That's where the nickname Radio City comes from. That is also why the building features carvings by Lee Lawrie showing sound, wisdom, and light. This is meant to show the enlightening of the world through television and radio. The lobby features murals by Jose Maria Sirte, including American Progress and Time on the ceiling. American Progress was commissioned to replace the original work by Diego Rivera, which included a depiction of Lennon and was seen as controversial. The mural Time on the ceiling is done so it seems to move when the viewer moves.

Many television shows are filmed at 30 Rock including NBC Nightly News, SNL, Jimmy Fallon, NBC for New York, Dr. Oz, and much of MSNBC. The Plaza out in front, which you can see now is used for many events, most famously the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree Lighting every year. The Plaza has also been seen in episodes of television shows *30 Rock* and *The Office*. That's the end of our tour. Thank you for joining me. If you had a good time, check out our other audio tours such as Brooklyn Bridge, Lower Manhattan, and Greenwich Village or consider signing up for one of our Pay What You Wish walking tours. Go to www.freetoursbyfoot.com for more information. See you next time.

[00:56:01] [END OF AUDIO]