

Introduction: Thank you for purchasing Free Tours by Foot, an 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 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, I'm Katherine with Free Tours by Foot, here to guide you on an audio tour of Times Square and the Theater District in New York City.

Our first stop will be at the original New York Times building, which is right where Broadway and 7th Avenue meet between West 42nd and West 43rd Street. Times Square was originally known as Longacre Square, and in the late 1800s, it consisted of a large open space surrounded by drab apartments.

The arrival of electricity and the subway system transformed the square. Adolph S. Ochs, owner, and publisher of *The New York Times* from 1896 to 1935 opened Times Tower in 1905. It was the second-tallest building in the city at the time, but only eight years later, the Times outgrew the space and moved to a new location, but not before beginning the New Year's Eve Spectacular, a tradition that continues to this day.

The building is topped by a time ball and has been mostly vacant since 1995, apart from a Walgreens on the two lower levels, but it generates more than \$23 million a year in advertising revenue.

The Ball is 12 feet or 3.5 meters in diameter, weighing 11,875 pounds or 5,400 kilograms, and it's covered with a total of 2,688 Waterford Crystal Triangles. It is capable of creating more than 16 million colors and billions of patterns and has been the Ball since 2007, the latest in a long series of redesigns since the ball was first dropped in 1908.

The actual notion of a ball dropping to signal the passage of time dates back to England's Royal Observatory at Greenwich in 1833, where a ball would drop at one o'clock every afternoon to allow the captains of nearby ships to precisely set their chronometers. An estimated one million people fill Times Square every New Year's Eve with millions more watching nationwide and over a billion throughout the world. Once you're done here at the original Times Building, go ahead and head to our next stop, which is the Condé Nast Building at 4 Times Square. That's going to be on Broadway between West 42nd and 43rd Streets.

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

Katherine: While you're looking at the Condé Nast Building, you may recognize it. The building has appeared in the *Amazing Spider-Man* and in the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* films. You can see our free self-guided superhero tour to visit many sites from

your favorite superhero movies. This 809-foot or 247-meter tall building is among the tallest in New York City and one of the finest examples of green energy-saving skyscraper design in the United States. Environmentally friendly chillers along with an insulating and shading curtain wall ensure that the building does not need to be heated or cooled for the majority of the year.

The headquarters of the Condé Nast magazine empire occupied much of this building before they relocated to the new World Trade Center building at One World Trade. Today its current tenants include major international law firms and the Nasdaq MarketSite. The Nasdaq ticker graces the building's lower-level facade. The building's management company may also sound familiar. It's The Durst Organization.

The Durst family is part of a closed circle of real estate owners who date back to the early 1900s and who still dominate Manhattan's prime office space market. The organization is, as of 2017, currently run by Douglas Durst, age 71. He's one of two brothers in the family. Robert Durst, the other brother, is not involved in the family business. Rather, he has been the suspect of three unrelated murders. From here, go ahead and head to our next stop, which is The Knickerbocker Hotel. Its address is Six Times Square and you'll find it at the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street.

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

Katherine: This building was a hotel until 1920, after which it was turned into office space. It was the home of *Newsweek Magazine* from 1940 until 1959, but it's back to its roots. It was converted back into a hotel in 2013. The building is in the Beaux-Arts style, constructed of red brick with terracotta details. It was built by John Jacob Astor IV. There is a rooftop bar, the St. Cloud, with a great view of Times Square, so if you are thirsty or hungry or you just want a great view, head on up. Whenever you've finished up at the Knickerbocker Hotel, whether you are headed to the rooftop or not, go ahead and make your way over to 3 Times Square, which you're going to find at the corner of 7th Avenue and 42nd Street.

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

Katherine: Here on this corner, you can take in Times Square's first environmentally friendly billboard. It was lit up in 2008 and it's powered by wind and solar energy. It is 126 feet or 38 meters wide and 47 feet or 15 meters high, and it's fitted with 64 solar panels and 16 wind turbines, some of which are visible from street level. Times Square is known for its billboards, but this one is special. By generating its own electricity, the sign saves around \$15,000 a month, and annually, it prevents 18 tons of carbon from being spewed into the atmosphere.

Once you're done taking a look at the billboard, go ahead and head back to Broadway so you can visit the Broadway Pedestrian Plaza, a great place to sit and take a break if you need one.

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

Katherine: This area is one of the best places for people-watching in New York City. It wasn't always like this, though. It wasn't until 2009 that Times Square was transformed into a pedestrian plaza to ease traffic congestion and cut down on pedestrian accidents. As I said, if you do need a break, this is a great place to sit down and watch the world go rushing by. There are plenty of tables and chairs.

When you are done relaxing here, taking in the scenery and the people, go ahead and head over to the next stop, which is the United States Armed Forces Recruiting Station. It's pretty easy to pick out in Times Square because there is a giant illuminated US flag on the side.

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

Katherine: This recruiting station is situated on a small traffic island between Broadway and 7th Avenue, just north of 43rd Street, and it is the most famous recruiting station in the country. When it was first erected in 1946, it was a simple cottage-style building, and it was so small it didn't even have a bathroom for the recruiters. In 1999, the current station building was created. This is a state-of-the-art structure that resembles a three-dimensional US flag. It has a high-tech sleek design and it really fits pretty seamlessly with the neon lights of Times Square. It is much more than just another sign, though, this recruiting station receives over 1,000 applicants every single year.

When you're finished at the recruiting station, you can head on over to our next stop, which is the former Paramount Theater, and it's on Broadway between West 43rd and West 44th Street. It's pretty easy to pick out by the Hard Rock Cafe on the ground floor.

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

Katherine: This former illustrious stage and movie theater opened in 1926. There was a film showing of the Paramount film, *God Gave Me Twenty Cents*. During its 40-year run, the Paramount showcased some of the most famous and talented performers and movies of the day, including Frank Sinatra. The theater itself was magnificent in design, having been modeled after the Paris Opera House, with white marble columns, red velvet drapes, a grand staircase, and an enormous crystal chandelier in the lobby.

Despite its splendor, the theater fell victim to the times and closed in 1966. The auditorium was raised and converted into office space and the once majestic entrance and lobby were gutted to make way for retail space. Today the ground floor of the former theater is the Times Square Bridge of the Hard Rock Cafe. From here, go ahead and head over to our next stop, which is One Astor Plaza. This is at 7th Avenue between West 44th and West 45th Streets.

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

Katherine: The skyscraper here was completed in 1972. It's 745 feet or 227 meters tall and it's currently the headquarters for Viacom and houses MTV Studios, the Minskoff

Theater, the Best Buy Theater, and some retail outlets. The three MTV studios are used to record segments for MTV, VH1, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central, and other affiliated networks. This is also the location where one of the most famous photographs in New York City's history was taken. The photo was taken as New Yorkers were celebrating the surrender of the Empire of Japan, Victory Over Japan Day. From here, go to 44th Street, and you're going to actually walk away from Times Square West down 44th Street until you come to the Shubert Theater.

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

Katherine: Running in front of the Shubert Theater is Shubert Alley. This is named after the famed Broadway Theater and Presarios, the Shubert Brothers. This alley and the two streets that it connects, 44th and 45th Streets, are home to numerous beautiful and famous theaters that were managed by the brothers, which have produced some of the most iconic plays and musicals in American history. On 44th Street, right in front of you, you'll see the Shubert Theater where a Chorus Line premiered.

You'll also find along this stretch the St. James Theater, which housed *Oklahoma!* and *Hello, Dolly!*, and the Majestic Theater further down 44th Street, home to *Phantom of the Opera*, the longest-running Broadway musical in history. They also managed the Broadhurst Theater where *Cabaret* debuted. Nearby is also Sardi's, the famous Italian restaurant that became a mainstay of Broadway stars. There are cartoon likenesses that adorn its walls of all of its famous regulars throughout the years. Turn and walk up Shubert Alley, making your way up to 45th Street, your next stop will be at just the other end of Shubert Alley, it's the Booth Theater.

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

Katherine: This beautiful 1920s theater right at the edge of Shubert Alley was named after Edwin Booth, 19th century America's most famous Shakespearean actor and brother to Abraham Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth. This theater premiered such classics as *Sunday in the park with George* by Steven Sondheim, and the play, *Butterflies Are Free*. If you look across the street from the Booth Theater, you can see one side of the Marriott Marquis Hotel.

While you're listening to this next section, you can turn right from Shubert Alley and actually make your way back towards the center of Times Square so you can see the Times Square-facing side of the Marriott Marquis as well. The construction of this hotel in the 1980s overlooking Times Square required the demolition of several historic and beloved Broadway theaters. This was an act that was dubbed the Broadway Massacre by New York City theater lovers.

The new hotel featured a theater on its ground floor, the Marquis, however, almost every Broadway show to open there has failed, leading to a belief in a curse on the theater for having been founded on the ruins of earlier theaters. To be fair, there are a lot of superstitions in the theater community. For example, the well-known expression break a leg, which you say to a performer before a show, is based on the belief that if you wish

them something good, the opposite will happen and vice versa. Also, it's bad luck to whistle or say the name Macbeth in a theater.

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

Katherine: Once you make it back around to the Times Square-facing side of the Marriott Marquis, you'll probably find that it is packed with people. Times Square is one of the most popular tourist destinations in New York City. Because it's packed with tourists at most hours, Times Square is also popular with scammers, frauds, and tricksters who will try almost anything to separate tourists from their money. There are counterfeit goods for sale as well as fraudulent show tickets and passes to some of the most suspect comedy shows in town.

Times Square is also host to many topless women and costumed characters who pose for photos in the hopes of receiving tips. There's also the famous naked cowboy dressed only in tighty whities and carrying a guitar. Robert John Burck struts his stuff while playing country tunes and posing for photos with passer-bys. The naked cowboy gladly accepts gratuities,

but unlike his aggressive neighbors, Burck simply relies on the word tips written on his boots and on the kindness of visitors from all over the world.

Besides crowds, one of the things you are sure to see in Times Square is billboards. The advertising billboards that surround Times Square are called Spectaculars, and they comprise some of the most expensive outdoor advertising spaces on the planet. They raise approximately \$23 million per year in revenue with the average cost per Spectacular of around \$1.1 million to \$4 million a year.

It's actually quite a bargain considering that advertising during the Super Bowl costs up to \$3.8 million for just 30 seconds. All of those Spectaculars consume about 161 megawatts. That's enough to power 161,000 average US homes, and it's three times the power used by all of Sierra Leone and twice the electricity used to power all the casinos in Las Vegas.

The most spectacular of the Spectaculars should be right here where you're standing now, and that's going to be on Broadway from West 45th Street to West 46th Street. This was opened in late 2014. It's a massive billboard spanning the entire block between West 45th and West 46th. It stands eight stories tall and is nearly as long as a football field. It is also a higher resolution than any television on the market. If you walk the full length of the Spectacular there in Times Square, you'll find yourself at 46th Street in Times Square.

This area to the north of here is referred to as Duffy Square, and if you walk up here, you will notice the red steps ahead, the iconic Red Steps, but also a statue of a man. I want to tell you a little bit about this area, where the name comes from and who the people in these statues are. Two of America's favorite Irish Americans stand right over the TKTS ticket booth right there in the heart of Times Square.

This area I said was called Duffy Square. Father Duffy was an Irish chaplain and a military hero. He was a part of New York City's all-Irish 69th Regiment, the fighting Irish in the Spanish American War and in World War I. He was the local priest here in the neighborhood back when it was a heavily Irish immigrant working-class area and he was one of the few Catholic priests willing to give the sacrament to actors and theater people working right here in the district. Theater people were long considered to be as low as prostitutes or criminals in the late 19th-century society.

The other statue of a man is the George M. Cohan statue. He stands just to the south of Father Duffy. George M. Cohan was immortalized by Jimmy Cagney in the film *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. Now, he was the first major Broadway star, but he was also an actor, a songwriter, a playwright, a producer. He wrote standards like, *Give My Regards to Broadway* and *You're a Grand Old Flag*, and dozens of other American classics. He is the only musical theater actor to ever be honored with a statue in New York City.

Right on the edge of Duffy Square, at the corner of West 47th Street and 7th Avenue stands the Palace Theater. When the Palace Theater opened in 1913, it was the most famous vaudeville theater in the United States. Every performer dreamed of playing in the Palace. If you landed a gig here, you could say you finally made it. The who's who list of celebrities who have performed on the Palace stage include legends like Ethel Barrymore, Harry Houdini, Will Rogers, Ethel Merman, Judy Garland, Shirley MacLaine, and Diana Ross.

In the late 1980s, a 45-story DoubleTree Hotel Tower was built above the theater, and now the theater facade is practically invisible behind an enormous wall of billboards. Only the Marquis is visible. From the Palace Theater, turn around and head back to the south end of Duffy Square to 46th Street. Turn right and cross over to walk west down 46th Street heading for the Lunt-Fontanne Theater.

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

Katherine: The Lunt-Fontanne Theater was designed by Carrère and Hastings who also built the New York Public Library. This is a beautiful Beaux-Arts theater, and it's named for the husband and wife Broadway acting legends, Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontaine. Formally known as The Globe, this theater featured the Broadway debut of Fred and Adele Astaire in 1919. More recently, the theater's presented revivals of *The Sound of Music*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *The Little Mermaid*. It originally featured a unique sliding oval roof that could be open to let in fresh air and moonlight.

Continue down 46th Street until you come to the Hotel Edison. When you get to the Hotel Edison, go ahead and go right inside. When you walk through the entrance into the Hotel Edison on 46th Street, you'll be treated to a heavily renovated but still highly evocative art deco hotel.

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

Katherine: This hotel opened in 1931, and it was one of New York's largest and most modern hotels at the time. It had over 1,000 rooms, three restaurants, and a theater and

ballroom. The hotel's namesake, Thomas Alva Edison himself inaugurated the opening of the hotel by switching on all of the building's lights. You can actually walk all the way through the lobby of the Edison Hotel to come out on 47th Street.

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

Katherine: When you get to the 47th Street's side of the Hotel Edison's lobby, you'll come to the Cafe Edison, or affectionately called the Polish Tea Room. This famous cafe located in the lobby of the Hotel Edison is called the Polish Tea Room in honor of its European immigrant owners, but also as a jab at the elite and much more highly-priced Russian Tea Room, which is next to Carnegie Hall. The cafe has been a meeting place since the 1940s for many Broadway actors, stagehands, directors, and producers. A roped-off section in the front is still reserved for theater directors and producers only.

People come here looking for a good bowl of matzo ball soup, an old-style hamburger with coleslaw, chopped liver, or many other classic old-school New York City diner offerings. You can definitely note the sign at the register, "In case of fire, one, stay calm, two, pay the bill, three, run." It doesn't get much more New York than this.

On the other side of 47th Street, across the way from the Hotel Edison, you'll be able to see the Barrymore Theater. The Barrymore Theater was built in 1928 by the Shubert brothers for the great actress Ethel Barrymore of the famous Barrymore Theater family. She's also great aunt to Drew Barrymore. Befitting her stature as a star actress and iconic beauty of her day, the theater is extremely ornate. There's a lot of varied and rich detailing, including the striking metal work underneath the sidewalk awning.

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* premiered at this theater in 1947, starring a virtually unknown 24-year-old Marlon Brando. This was the role that would propel him to stardom. Now turn and walk east down 47th street. You're going to be walking right back into the heart of Times Square, and right there in the center of it of all in Times Square at 47th Street you will find the red steps covering the TKTS Discount Ticket booth.

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

Katherine: The TKTS ticket booth right there at the intersection of Broadway and 7th Avenue at 47th Street is a booth that sells same-day discount Broadway show tickets. The shows with availability are listed via the TKTS mobile app, and other TKTS booths that are located in New York City. If you're looking to save money on a show, this can be a great place to come. You can get up to a 50% discount, but remember, these are day-of tickets only here in Times Square.

For more information, you should check out our post on how to get discount Broadway tickets. From here, continue to walk up to 48th Street. When you get to 48th Street, turn west, you'll be making your way over to the Longacre Theater.

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

Katherine: The Longacre Theater was built in 1913 and it was designed to look like an 18th-century Paris townhouse. This theater was built by the owner of the Boston Red Sox, who notoriously sold Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees to help finance the theater. Bad Move. Shows like *Eight Misbehavin'* and *Talk Radio* are two of the many famous productions that are premiered here at this theater. When you're finished admiring the facade of the Longacre Theater, continue walking down 47th Street until you come to 8th Avenue.

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

Katherine: Right at the corner of 8th Avenue and 48th Street is the Broadway Fire Department. This fire station, which is FDNY Engine 54, Ladder 4, and Battalion 9 is Broadway's local fire station. You can notice the bronze relief plaque commemorating the firemen from this station who lost their lives on September 11th, 2001, a reminder that firehouses all over New York City lost firemen that day, not just those in lower Manhattan. From here, you're going to turn right and make your way up to 49th Street and 8th Avenue. Turn right again to walk east down 49th Street. You're going to be heading back toward the center of Times Square.

In the middle of the block, you'll come to St. Malachy's Chapel. This is nicknamed The Actors' Chapel. Now, here in the neighborhood, not too far away, on 47th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues, there is also an Actors' Temple, a synagogue that was once frequented by entertainment industry greats like the Marx Brothers and Oscar Hammerstein. St. Malachy's is a Roman Catholic church. It was opened in 1902 to serve a large working-class community in the area. Then later it welcomed some of Broadway's and Hollywood's most Notable stars as this area became a theater district.

Rudolph Valentino, Joan Crawford, Bob Hope, Florence Henderson are just a few of the stars who attended services here while performing on Broadway. It still caters to the Catholic theater community, offering masses at special times to accommodate those who perform in Sunday matinees and thus cannot attend Sunday morning mass. From here, continue walking a little ways down the street till you come to the corner of 49th Street and Broadway, which is where you'll find the Brill Building.

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

Katherine: The Brill Building right here at the corner of 49th Street and Broadway was built in 1931. This art deco office building once housed the major songwriters, publishers, and producers of the American popular music industry, from the big band era of the 1940s all the way through to the rock and roll era. The Brill Building offices produced more top 40 billboard hits than any other building. From here, you're going to turn left and start making your way north up Broadway. Make your way until you come to 53rd Street in Broadway where you'll see the Ed Sullivan Theater

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

Katherine: This 13-story theater was built in the 1920s by Arthur Hammerstein. Opening night was November 30th, 1927, and since then, it has been a place for top-notch

performances and talent to perform. The Central Broadcasting Network or CBS bought the theater in 1935 and it was a radio broadcast station. With the invention and spread of television in the 1950s, CBS transformed the theater into a television studio. For the next 17 years, the theater was named CBS TV Studio 50.

Then in 1953, the most significant change to the theater occurred. CBS moved one of its lesser-known TV personalities from a show held at CBS' Maxine Elliot Theater. That man, of course, was Ed Sullivan. Thus the *Ed Sullivan Show* was born and would broadcast for the next 23 years and be seen by millions of people across the nation. Perhaps the most famous moment in musical history took place in the theater on February 9th, 1964 when the Beatles made their US television debut. Approximately 73 million viewers tuned in to watch the show.

In 1993, David Letterman began a 22-year run as the host of the wildly popular *Late Show*. In 2015, comedian Stephen Colbert took over the nightly slot and is carrying on Letterman's Late Show Legacy. If you're interested in seeing something taped here at the Ed Sullivan Theater, you can check out our post on getting tickets to see *The Late Show* with Stephen Colbert.

That's the end of our tour for today. Thank you so much for joining me. I hope you'll consider checking out some of our other audio tours in the area such as the Midtown Manhattan Audio Tour. You could also make your way up to Central Park where we also have a self-guided audio tour. Also, consider on your next trip to New York City, joining one of our pay-what-you-wish group walking tours. You can check out all of the information about all of the tour options available at freetoursbyfoot.com. Thank you so much, and we'll see you next time.

[00:30:09] [END OF AUDIO]