

72 HOURS IN THE BIG



Steve V reports on this year's Stonewall Equality Walk...

ON this particular trip, part of my 72 hectic and fun-filled hours in New York was to do the Stonewall New York Equality Walk. With the opening party being held in the swanky **Soho House**, how Sex And The City could I get?

This well planned and executed event is actually a fabulous way to discover Manhattan if you are a NYC virgin. As the route took you into **Central Park** then up as far as 66th St. and on to the **Dakota Buildings** where, as a memorial to John Lennon, a mosaic with the poignant word 'Imagine' is set into the sidewalk. There was celeb spotting at Tavern On The Green where I stopped for a coffee and bagel, I double glanced to as I caught Billy Joel 'Uptowning' it.

Then it was on to the longest part of the walk, straight down Broadway, the famous avenue that divides Manhattan in two. We passed the **Empire State**

Building – marvelling at how tall the structure is – before reaching **Macy's** (resisting the temptation to shop in the world's largest department store) before arriving at **Washington Square** (Friends territory).

As you enter the finance district, the route of the walk brings you to **Ground Zero** and the vast hole left behind by what was the tragedy of 9/11. A moment to reflect on the scene and the cross that has been created out of two steel girders that once formed part of the Towers.

With the walk finishing at the famous **Stonewall Bar** in the heart of Greenwich Village, all the walkers were presented with their certificates and stories were exchanged. Gaydar Radio's Robin Crawley had a brief chat with Michael Cashman and to quote the MEP,

"It's a great way to raise a lot of money without being angry. It's proactive. We've raised a lot of money this weekend to make sure the world doesn't spin backwards. It's great to be out with a group of people, learn about them and realise that we are individuals trying to live our own lives and that we should enjoy the rights and privileges others take for granted."

Rested and rejuvenated after the walk, our hotel, the **Ameritania** (West 54 and Broadway) was an ideal mid-town location from which we spent the rest of our trip shopping, dining, drinking and dancing. No trip to New York would be complete without seeing a show and a group of us managed to get tickets to **The Colour Purple**, the Oprah Winfrey produced musical based on the novel by Alice Walker. To say that this was a jaw-dropping, toe-tapping, heart-wrenching experience would not do the show justice. Take advantage of rush seats (last minute, unsold seats normally available from theatres rather than TKTS booths in Times Square) for a great saving – we got \$240 tickets for \$66 on the day of the performance. If you ever cross the pond, go see it!

Abercrombie & Fitch on the Down Town end of Fifth Avenue is a gay man's paradise. It's very clear that the sales staff are hired for looks, as most of the male staff grace the pages of the store's catalogue. When you enter into a transaction it's very clear that they are trained in ensuring you leave A&F blissfully happy.

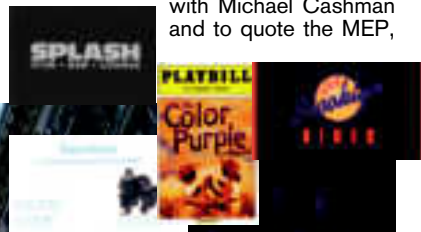
Nearby, and right next to Ground Zero, **Century 21** is a vast warehouse of a superstore where all manner of designer clothes, underwear, luggage and fragrances are at such low prices, I found myself having to purchase another suitcase so I could get my 'booty' back to the UK. Uptown, **Bloomingdales** and **Tiffany's** are minutes apart, which could possibly mean that the credit card continues to receive a severe battering - but let's face it, sometimes it just has to be done.

Eating out in New York, all tastes and budgets are catered for with an incredible diversity of options – where do you begin! **Brooklyn Diner** for breakfast, brunch and deserts or **Shelley's** for oysters, fish and surf'n'turf on (104 W 57th St at 6th Avenue).

Gay nightlife in Manhattan is now very tailored to specific needs following the previous Mayor's clean up, the effects of which are still very noticeable. Long gone are the pimps and hustlers of 42nd St and Times Square. With a so many venues to choose from, you might start at **Splash** (50 West on 17th St), **Stonewall** (history was made there, 53 Christopher St 113 7th Waverly) and **Cosmo** on (359 W 54th between 8th and 9th Avenue).

Get a copy of **HX** at any of these bars, it's the equivalent version of QX in New York and covers the surrounding boroughs. **Next** and **Metro**, two other free magazines, are also very useful for listings, discount coupons and how to get the most out of your stay.

> **Travel and accommodation for the Stonewall Equality Walk was arranged by www.gaydartravel.com. If you are interested in fundraising for Stonewall, check out their website www.stonewall.org.uk.**



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GaydarRadio and GaydarTravel would like to thank everyone involved in making the Stonewall Walk For Equality such a huge success and great fun.

It was an honour to walk with so many great people for such a worthy cause and we look forward to seeing you all again in 2006.


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