

## Boys Vs Girls

There are plenty of venues all over the island worth checking out. As in most cities, gay men and lesbians rarely mix and there's much more variety for men; however, lesbians will find a thriving scene in Brooklyn's Park Slope neighbourhood.

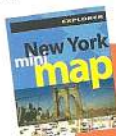
Furthermore, recent times have seen the closing and opening (and sometimes closing again) of a number of places. For the most current listings, check out the city's two main weekly gay party rags, *HX* and *Next*, which are free in most gay venues. A city teeming with gaiety awaits!

## Gay & Lesbian

The gay scene in New York is as eclectic as the city's residents. Hipster bars, leather nightspots, throbbing dance clubs, fashionable restaurants – it's all here and terrifically queer. While gay hotspots exist in all five boroughs, the vast majority of fun awaits in Manhattan, where you'll find you can easily stroll from venue to venue in a particular neighbourhood. And while light public displays of affection on the street are generally acceptable, as New York is the nation's safest large city, occasional hate crimes against gays do take place.

Having a good time should be your number one priority, and there's no better place to start than Chelsea, the city's main 'gaybourhood'. It's hard to walk a few blocks here without spotting a rainbow flag, especially along the area's main catwalk, Eighth Avenue between 14th Street and 23rd Street, which boasts tons of bars, restaurants, clothing stores, and gays and lesbians strutting along. The area is also home to some of the most popular gay spots, from mega-club Roxy to mega-bar Splash, the only place featuring dancing each night of the week. When you're done exploring Chelsea, you can go to Hell – Hell's Kitchen, that is. Sometimes dubbed 'Hellsea' or 'Chelsea North', due to the increasing popularity and number of trendy gay establishments popping up here, Hell's Kitchen brims with a hot after-work crowd that only gets spicier as the night goes on.

If you crave a scene that isn't, well, so much of a scene, then head to the East Village, where you'll discover a more low-key vibe along with guys whose primary focus isn't how many reps they've done at the gym. Whereas some places here cater to alternative guys and gals, others ooze with scandalous sleaze. For a campier feel, there's always the West Village, whose main artery is Christopher Street. You'll be able to step back in time – and not just because patrons here tend to be older – as this is where the gay movement began, with the 1969 riots outside the historic Stonewall Inn. Today, you don't have to fight for your right to party at one of the street's numerous flaming bars. Actually, the only struggles still going on here involve fitting into the tight shirts and trousers in the various colourful apparel shops dotting the area.



## Need Some Direction?

The *Explorer Mini*

*Maps* pack a whole city into your pocket and once unfolded are excellent navigational tools for exploring. Not only are they handy in size, with detailed information on the sights and sounds of the city, but also their fabulously affordable price mean they won't make a dent in your holiday fund. Wherever your travels take you, from the Middle East to Europe and beyond, grab a mini map and you'll never have to ask for directions.

## 275 West 22nd St

Chelsea  
Map 6-D4

## Barracuda

212 645 8613

Drag yourself along to Barracuda for some of the hottest drag shows in town - they happen nightly here at this popular gay bar. 'Star Search' on Thursdays (hosted by the inimitable dragster Shequida) pulls a crowd - amateur drag queens (some good, some bad) take to the stage to sing for the \$100 prize. Other nights are also good, and not just for the acts: Barracuda is famous for being friendly - men will actually smile back at you here! So if you're looking for a place where you can just be yourself and have a great time, here's where you'll find your team mates. Just remember - leave your attitude at the door or you won't fit in. To help things along, a cute and attentive team of waiters makes sure that getting a drink here is as easy as getting a guy.

## 249 4th Ave

Brooklyn

## Cattys shack

718 230 5740 | [www.cattys shackbklyn.com](http://www.cattys shackbklyn.com)

With a name like Cattys shack, you'd think the gays and lesbians who frequent this joint would have their claws out ready to

start all sorts of drama. Luckily, that's not the case at this pleasant Park Slope bar. While most nights attract locals, Fridays reel in ladies from all over for one of the city's most happening lesbian nights. Wednesday's Oink party, meanwhile, is for the boys, who come for a karaoke contest hosted by drag diva Sherry Vine; the winner receives a \$50 bar tab. But it's Sunday's outdoor BBQ party, where \$15 buys all the food and beer you can drink, that really draws a crowd. More of a neighbourhood bar than a destination hangout, Cattyshack nonetheless offers a great escape from Manhattan.

**61 Christopher St**  
West Village  
Map 8-E3

### The Duplex

212 255 5438 | [www.theduplex.com](http://www.theduplex.com)

The Duplex may be located nowhere near the theatre district, but that doesn't stop gays and lesbians from belting out their favourite show tunes at this friendly West Village piano bar. Open mic starts at 21:00, so you've got plenty of time to work up some Dutch courage at the bar. Even if singing is not your thing, it's great fun to watch – and make fun of – those who slur off-key. The cabaret room often hosts some real talent, in case your ears need a break, and the games room is the one to head for if you're just not feeling the music at all (although they do have a stomping sound system in there!). But perhaps one of the best features about the Duplex is its terrace overlooking the West Village's cruisiest intersection – perfect for settling down to gaze at the gays passing by.

**554 West 28th St**  
Chelsea  
Map 6-C3

### The Eagle

647 473 1866 | [www.eaglenyc.com](http://www.eaglenyc.com)

Chelsea's Eagle is really a bear. The slightly older leather-and-denim men who flock to this mothertrucker of a bar are anything but the fashionistas, twinks, and reality TV stars who populate other hotspots. Instead, you'll find plenty of daddies eager to teach you all sorts of lessons. Thursday night's Code party is especially popular among the leather crowd. A dress code is enforced, but don't fret if you've come in your chinos – the bar houses a Leather Man store where you can pick up a harness and some chaps. The legendary outdoor roof deck is always packed (when the weather is warmer of course – a harness doesn't provide much protection against the elements!) partly thanks to the low-key but much-needed food served up there.

**156 Seventh Ave**  
Chelsea  
Map 8-E1

### Elmo

212 337 8000 | [www.elmorerestaurant.com](http://www.elmorerestaurant.com)

At this gay-friendly restaurant there's never any shortage of scenesters. Whether at night or during a weekend brunch, the club vibe is definitely stronger than the restaurant vibe here, thanks in part to the loud (and oh so hip) music. With its chic decor and hot waiters, you'll begin to think you came here to go out rather than simply eat out. In fact, for those who prefer to drink their meals, a highlight on the menu is the raspberry lemonade (with lots of vodka). But the food should not be ignored: sesame-crusted tuna and the fried chicken, along with a wide assortment of typical diner, comfort, and slightly more upscale American entrees will keep your energy levels high. However, what Elmo serves up best is 'cool', so if you've ever wondered – or want to relive – what it's like to sit at the popular kids' table in grade school, then this is the place to pull up a chair.

**149 Eighth Ave**  
Chelsea  
Map 8-D1

### Food Bar

212 243 2020

This restaurant knows all the right ingredients to serve to its predominantly gay clientele. By starting with some friendly locals, adding some fun music, stirring in what must be the cutest wait staff in all of New York, and, of course, mixing in enough tasty dishes, Food Bar cooks up a terrific dining experience. In fact, judging by the nightly boisterous scene inside and how some tables are 'thisclose' to each other, it's easy to

mistake Food Bar for an actual bar. Then again, real bars usually don't have such tempting dishes on their menus. And they certainly don't usually serve up the perfect meal for those on a low-carb regime: the Chelsea Boy Special is a muscle-building combo of grilled chicken breast, scrambled egg whites and spinach. So it would seem that Food Bar is almost certainly a restaurant then. But on the other hand, real restaurants don't usually have such an amazing bar. There's only one thing for it: to work out whether this is a restaurant that serves drinks, or a bar that serves (delicious) food, you'll just have to head down there to solve the riddle yourself.

### g Lounge

212 929 1085 | [www.glounge.com](http://www.glounge.com)

This perennially popular bar may be a bit pretentious and haughty at first glance, but where else are you going to wear your new Prada pants? Though the men may initially seem stand-offish, a few of the bar's famous cocktails (Appletini, anyone?) will do wonders to help lubricate conversation. Cosy couches await at the front of this drinkery, but g's best part is its shapely rear, where a circular bar makes for a loopy cruising experience. And while your wallet may suffer as much as your liver here, since drinks can be slightly costly (many are \$8 and up), g remains an ideal place to hang out before heading out for some further debauchery.

### Gym Sportsbar

212 337 2439 | [www.gymsportsbar.com](http://www.gymsportsbar.com)

This Gym is definitely worth joining if you're eager to score home runs with some laid-back, jeans-and-T-shirt-type men. Surprisingly, there's no Fashion TV or E! here - instead the several big-screen televisions show all the big games. Most of the patrons are not there to simply spectate of course, and would rather get in on the biggest game of all: checking out the tight ends in the bar itself. Or if all the sporting action gives you a testosterone headache, you can always saunter out onto the outdoor terrace overlooking 'Hot Homo Highway' (that's Eighth Avenue) and check out the passing scene. There's a much-used pool table at the back - handy for making 'sticks and balls' innuendos more than anything else. You don't want to miss \$5 Svedka Tuesdays and \$5 Absolut Thursdays because, after all, every athlete needs to stay hydrated.

### Henrietta Hudson

212 924 3347 | [www.henriettahudson.com](http://www.henriettahudson.com)

This West Village lesbian hotspot is all about girl-on-girl action, just for the girls. On weekends it is packed tighter than a subway car during rush hour (but much more pleasant), although drinks specials and theme nights keep the weekday trade brisk as well. Come on Mondays for \$3 draft beer, or revel in the decadence of the monthly singles night (on the last Thursday of the month). Other nights feature eye-popping delights like Jell-O wrestling, thong-athons and go-go girls aplenty. Two full-size bars and an early-evening happy hour keeps things well lubricated. Whether you take your chances and arrive late when the queues might be long, or come early when the cover charge is usually lower, the crowd at Henrietta Hudson is always loud, proud and rowdy.

### Metropolitan

718 599 4444 | [www.gaybarsnyc.com](http://www.gaybarsnyc.com)

There's nothing really special about Metropolitan - and that's exactly what makes it special. Sometimes it's refreshing to actually be underwhelmed and step into a bar that doesn't boast its fabulousness. There's more than just geography separating this local watering hole from your typical Manhattan bar. With no overpriced drinks and no attitude, this Brooklyn bar is for the big-town dude with a small-city attitude. Average

#### 225 West 19th St

Meatpacking District

Map 8-D1

#### 167 Eighth Ave

Chelsea

Map 8-D1

#### 438 Hudson St

West Village

Map 8-D4

#### 559 Lorimer St

Brooklyn

gays and lesbians in their 20s and 30s for whom 'average' isn't a four-letter word come here to enjoy cheap drinks, a pool table, two fireplaces in the winter, and an excellent jukebox. The outdoor patio is particularly popular, especially in the summer when Metropolitan hosts a lively BBQ on Sundays. Yet regardless of the day, you're always guaranteed to find a friendly face to talk to about something other than the gym, protein supplements, and whatever else is being discussed at more fancy-shmancy gay venues.

**643 Broadway**

West Village

Map 9-A4

**mr. BLACK**

212 253 2560 | [www.mrblacknyc.com](http://www.mrblacknyc.com)

mr. BLACK describes itself as 'a quirky music savvy dancebar' that is 'neither too big to lose yourself nor too small that you can't dance in'. As such, this dark, cavernous venue attracts a young, energetic crowd nightly. The only thing easier than getting swept up in the music here are the patrons themselves. As the dancefloor fills with a sea of bodies, sex is definitely in the air, though in a playful, mischievous way. The sleazefest gets even wilder as waiters periodically walk around offering free shots, which helps compensate for the \$10 cover charge on Fridays and Saturdays. Best of all, this is one of the few venues where dressing in outrageous attire is as common as the standard gay uniform of a t-shirt and jeans. From the music to the eclectic men that come here to the clothes, at mr. BLACK, anything goes.

**447 East 13th St**

East Village

Map 9-C3

**Phoenix**

212 477 9979 | [www.gaybarsnyc.com](http://www.gaybarsnyc.com)

You'd think you were in a straight Upper East Side bar rather than a gay East Village one after stepping into this place. Surrounded by a plain, nondescript decor, with beer in hand and wearing baseball caps, the patrons here are some of the straightest gay boys you'll find. But rest assured, your favorite Cher song will come on the jukebox in no time. A low-key vibe is matched by low-priced drinks, from \$1 Buds on Wednesdays to \$2 domestic beers on Sundays. While a pinball machine, video games, and a pool table help draw in a decent number of patrons during the week, Phoenix really takes flight on weekends, when it seems every guy here has his gears set to major cruise control. All of which makes Phoenix the ideal antidote when you get tired of bar-hopping in Chelsea.

**8 Christopher St**

West Village

Map 8-E3

**Pieces**

212 929 9291 | [www.piecesbar.com](http://www.piecesbar.com)

You definitely can't mistake this place for a straight bar. An abundance of rainbow decorations helps to ensure that Pieces reigns as Christopher Street's most flaming bar, which also means that it's also one of the area's most popular. Tuesday's karaoke party draws an especially raucous crowd as gays and lesbians who really should know better eagerly take the stage to embarrass themselves in front of gay New York. Pieces also has something going on during other nights, from drag acts to games, where you can win anything from a penny to \$500. Meanwhile, friendly staff contribute to a lively atmosphere, ensuring big fun at this little nightspot. It's the kind of place where you might need a friend to be your designated memory: particularly if you partake of the daily happy 'hour' (14:00-20:00), which might just wipe your slate clean.

**515 West 18th St**

Chelsea

Map 8-C1

**Roxy**

212 645 5156 | [www.roxynyc.com](http://www.roxynyc.com)

Roxy is a gay institution that ranks right up there with Madonna. In fact, Madonna has even performed here a couple of times. Talk about homo-nirvana! Every Saturday night, this mega-club lures a super-sized crowd of chiselled gym queens, as well as tons of twinks with drinks, happy hipsters, and everyone in between. Dollar drinks from 23:00 to midnight intoxicate the crowd for a night of shirtless dancing to techno and house

sounds on the main floor. Meanwhile, the DJ upstairs gets everyone into the groove by spinning pop music that includes – shockingly! – plenty of Madonna. Though general admission is usually \$30, a voucher printed out from [www.jblair.com](http://www.jblair.com) will get you a \$10 discount. The club also hosts a roller-skating night on Wednesdays. While the event isn't exclusively gay, you still shouldn't have any problems 'inadvertently' colliding with a fellow hot homo in the roller rink.

**50 West 17th St**

Chelsea  
Map 8-F1

**Splash**

212 691 0073 | [www.splashbar.com](http://www.splashbar.com)

Cute guys LOVE Splash, probably because they usually pay less to get in. But with all the eye candy guaranteed to be inside, you won't hear the ugly guys complaining as they fork out extra dollar. And once you're in, who cares who's cute and who's rich? Splash is the kind of place where you'll create your own legends - it's all about having fun, from the hotties dancing under showers to the see-through bathroom doors - and your mission is clear: set your cruise control to full throttle and make the most of it. If the watery theme starts to go soggy on you, be sure to check out their other theme nights: frat-style parties on Thursdays (including a 'Stud Search' competition), 'Full-Frontal' Fridays, and Karaoke on Tuesdays keep Splash ahead of the party pack and you in the good times. And if that doesn't do it for you, the amazing happy hour (16:00-21:00) certainly will.

**348 West 52nd St**

Hell's Kitchen  
Map 4-E3

**Therapy**

212 397 1700 | [www.therapy-nyc.com](http://www.therapy-nyc.com)

Do your parents worry that you're acting crazy? Make them feel better by telling them you're in Therapy. They don't need to know that it's actually one of the hottest gay hotspots and that the 'medication' is actually a mind-expanding selection of raunchy cocktails. And definitely don't tell them that this is where the 'nice' boys go wild, thanks to Thursday night keg parties, super-lengthy happy hours (17:00-20:00), or Wednesday night's 'Cattle Call' talent contest, where you're invited to 'sing, dance or show off your underpants' to win the grand prize of \$100. Telling them about the raucous dance nights involving swarms of sexy men will only upset them and cause them more worry. So just tell them that you're in Therapy on a regular basis, and that you've never been happier.



**331 West 51st St**

Hell's Kitchen  
Map 4-E3

**Vlada**

212 974 8030 | [www.vladabar.com](http://www.vladabar.com)

It's hard to tell what makes this purportedly Russian-style bar Russian – that is, until you look at the drinks menu. 15 infused vodkas remind you how much fun Russia's number one export can be, even when you don't know exactly what's in them to make them taste so good - that information is known only by the KGB, if the menu is to be believed. To ensure you drink your vodka like a true Russian (very, VERY cold!), the folks at Vlada have thoughtfully slapped a thick layer of ice down on the bar. If that leaves you feeling chilly, a weekly schedule of DJs, Broadway stars and drag artistes will heat up your night, as will the happy fact that Vlada seems to attract a very sexy crowd of clubbers.