



WALL STREET

Status, power and harbour views. Wall Street is stealing the scene in the Big Apple

Words Leo Bear

Wall Street embodies power. With more national and international headquarters than any other square mile in the world, it's where captains of industry do billion-dollar deals and where iconic skyscrapers converge with historical neo-gothic and art deco landmarks. It was the focus of day-to-day life in Bret Easton Ellis' cult novel *American Psycho* and the essence of *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. It's where cads in pinstriped suits traded, swapped and spent. And it's where, more recently, financial whiz kids got carried away, started churning out toxic assets and caused a global economic crisis.

Wall Street on the southern tip of Manhattan is the veritable birthplace of New York. The Street dates back to 1792, when stockbrokers signed an agreement under a buttonwood tree outside number 68. The Buttonwood Agreement created what became the modern-day New York Stock Exchange, the largest in the world. Of course, skyscrapers eventually replaced the trees but the Financial District still has a distinct skyline, separate from but not soaring to quite the same heights, as midtown a few miles north.

Strolling around the streets is akin to

walking through a real-life museum. Big guns include Federal Hall, 14 Wall Street (the Bankers Trust Company Building), 40 Wall Street (the Trump Building) and the New York Stock Exchange on the corner of Broad Street. Sign up for a 'financial crisis tour' with Andrew, a former VP at Deutsche Bank for \$50 or a 'Scoundrels of Wall Street' tour with Wallstreetwalks.com, and you'll get the picture.

Standing shoulder to shoulder with the Statue of Liberty, NYSE and 1 World Trade Centre, Lower Manhattan is geographically a good base for seeing some of the city's more interesting attractions. You can catch a Knicks game, take a ferry cruise, or spend a night out in the Meatpacking District (think Soho House). Tribeca, Chinatown and Little Italy are also just a cab-whistle away. Nevertheless, it's always been a soulless corporate maze of blocks that no self-respecting Manhattanite would be seen dead in after 7pm. Until now.

The loss of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre is in many ways responsible for triggering an upturn in Lower Manhattan. The yawning hole in the skyline has spurred

development on a scale that hasn't been seen in decades, thanks to tax incentives from the government. The centrepiece is, of course, the phoenix-like 1,776-foot 1 World Trade Centre (formerly the Freedom Tower), but surrounding it, new residential buildings are sprouting up and towers that were previously office space are being converted into apartments.

Most notably, two good-looking new hotels mark the landscape. Andaz Wall Street (which opened earlier this year) and W Downtown, opening this summer.

Andaz, designed by David Rockwell and Rockwell Group, is the big apple's first hotel with a Wall Street address. The décor is contemporary and dare we say it, fun. The whole place is so full of boom, sex and power that you could easily forget the financial crisis ever happened. Open spaces flooded with light are spread over thirteen floors of what used to be the JPMorgan building. The rooms are generous, especially by NYC standards (around 345 square feet) with factory-style sash windows, loft-style ceilings, dark stained oak floors and comfy camel armchairs.



Best of all are the black marble bathrooms – Gekko would definitely approve. And if you're lucky, you'll get a room with a custom-built rotating closet housing a wardrobe, full-length mirror and brilliantly, a minibar, so you can reach for a beer while you lather up.

Andaz's bar (Bar Seven Five) has fast become a hit with the new breed of locals filtering into the area. In a nod to old New York, classic American cocktails are brought to your table in shakers, carried in caddies, and poured in front of you. Very stylish.

The question is, is there anything to do after said cocktails? There is. Although Lower Manhattan bristles with money, concrete and glass, there are corners that retain 19th century charm and house some of the oldest restaurants in NYC. Stone Street, a narrow, cobblestone road boasts two neat rows of low-rise brick buildings dotted with the city's trademark fire escapes. Insiders head to the Libertine for decent beer and burgers; Bobby Van's Steakhouse and Grill for a succulent 28-day dry-aged hunk of meat; Adrienne's Pizzabar (actually on Stone

Street) for an old-fashioned Quattro Formagi, or Bridge Café, a former brothel, for soft shell crab.

There's also Delmonico's on Beaver Street, which opened in 1837 and claims to be NYC's first fine dining restaurant. Its signature dish Lobster Newberg remains unchanged to this day. And if you're looking to impress, there's always Cipriani Wall Street.

So this once rigid neighbourhood is at last developing a personality. Moreover, it's clean, safe, not over-run with tourists and you can get a decent sized room. And with Gordon Gekko making a comeback in *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* at cinemas soon, it's also got the world's attention. So dig out your braces and slick back your hair, smart guys: Wall Street is back in business.

Flights on BA's new business class-only service (www.ba.com) operate from London City to JFK. For more on Andaz Wall Street go to www.hyatt.com