

HOW TO

Make Friends

(OR BE
HAPPY
ALONE)

Find someone (or many someones!) to pal around with at these NYC classes, activities and social groups. And so you don't get sick of your new bestie, discover places where you can spend a little me time.

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Classes

BYOB PAINTING WORKSHOP AT THE PAINTING LOUNGE

Rub elbows with other budding Picassos at this booze-fueled art lesson, where you'll re-create a masterpiece. Each session focuses on a famous work by Van Gogh, Monet or another legend. Teachers go through the brushwork step-by-step, so no need to stress if you're not Da Vinci. Participants are encouraged to bring their own beverage to get creative juices—and conversation—flowing. 438 Union Ave between Metropolitan Ave and Devoe St, Williamsburg, Brooklyn (paintinglounge.com). Schedule varies; \$50–\$65.

BREWSHOP 101 AT BITTER & ESTERS

Learn to make your own craft beer at this two-hour workshop. Instructors will teach you about malt, hops, yeast and styles, then you can chat with classmates and

sample a few pints for inspiration before starting on your own creation. The intro course is a one-session deal, so make the most of the preclass socializing time. 700 Washington Ave between Prospect Pl and St. Marks Ave,

Prospect Heights,

Brooklyn (bitterandesters.com).

Schedule varies; single class \$55.

INTRO CLASSES AT FLUENT CITY

This company offers electives in ten languages (including French, Spanish and Arabic), and the 15-person classes ensure everyone gets personal attention. There's significant focus on partner work, and Fluent City also organizes events outside of class and occasional trips abroad. 143 Skillman Ave between Graham and Manhattan Aves, Williamsburg, Brooklyn (fluentcity.com). Manhattan locations and schedules vary; \$315–\$355.—Rebecca Fishbein

"People I've met are open to new things and curious. It's easy to maintain friendships, because you have mutual acquaintances and things to talk about."—Julia Schweizer, 24, event manager, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Cultural Groups

4TH STREET BAR ASSOCIATION

Broadway powerhouses *Rent* and *Once* started downtown at the New York Theatre Workshop—and so can your next friendship. Join fellow theater lovers in their twenties and thirties for parties with actors, an annual bar crawl through the East Village and discounted trips to Broadway shows. The Fri 7 evening performance (8pm) of *A Civil War Christmas* will be followed by a holiday party with the cast and creative team. 79 E 4th St between Bowery and Second Ave (212-780-9037, nytw.org). Annual membership \$125–\$500.

THE YOUNG PATRONS OF LINCOLN CENTER

Performing-arts buffs unite for discussions, community-outreach programs, sneak

previews of shows and exclusive opportunities to meet performers. Annual galas provide an excuse to dust off your formal wear, get schmancy and sip bubbly. 65th St at Columbus Ave (212-875-5236, lincolncenter.org/YPLC). Members-only holiday party Dec 13; annual membership \$250.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS BOOK CLUB & DINNER

Having hosted open-to-all book clubs, the JCC in Manhattan recently introduced a gathering dedicated solely to people under 40. The two-hour monthly powwow, led by a different member each time, brings together bibliophiles from across the boroughs to share wine, dinner and conversation on a chosen novel. 334 Amsterdam Ave at 76th St (646-505-5727, jccmanhattan.org). Dec 19 at 7pm; \$10.—Caren Oppenheim

"Meeting new people, analyzing literature and having structured, engaging conversation is my idea of a good time. It's a bonus that there's dinner and wine."—Lindsey Blank, 27, attorney, Upper West Side



Coworking Spaces

BAT HAUS COWORKING

Natalie Chan and Cody Sullivan opened this congenial spot earlier this year, after determining that there weren't many places in the area that were serving the needs of freelancers. Fifty to sixty people use the 2,500-square-foot clubhouse each week, taking advantage of perks such as Wi-Fi, mail delivery and a shared kitchen. At least one collaboration, between a Web developer and a graphic designer, has been sparked among Bat Haus members. The venue also hosts events, including monthly Presentation Party Night lectures and a flea market on weekends. 279 Starr St between St. Nicholas and Wyckoff Aves,

Bushwick, Brooklyn (batha.us). Unlimited membership \$149/month, part-time membership \$99/month, day pass \$10.

NEW WORK CITY

Founded in 2008, this Soho coworking space was among the first in NYC, and it's now one of the biggest, with about 50 people using the venue each day. According to founder Tony Bacigalupo, the idea was to build a community where members are invested in connecting with one another. "Honestly, the best community-building tool we have is our small coffeepot," he explains. "When people get away from their computer screens to make a pot of

coffee, they inevitably bump into new people and start talking." Members enjoy perks such as meeting rooms, a mailing address and access to an online forum. 412 Broadway at Canal St (212-226-1585, nwc.co). Unlimited membership \$300/month, part-time membership \$100/month, community membership \$30/month, day pass \$30.

LIKEMIND

This early-morning networking group was started by tech entrepreneurs Piers Fawkes and Noah Brier more than five years ago, and has since spawned more than 30 offshoots around the world. The idea is simple: Participants show

up and make connections over a cup of coffee. "We're not a 'just come here to exchange business cards' kind of group," explains Alisha Miranda, who cofounded Brooklyn's Likemind group in May. "We're more about meeting friendly people and exchanging interests or ideas." There are

currently two NYC groups, both meeting on the third Friday of each month: Likemind Brooklyn, whose members gather at Hungry Ghost (253 Flatbush Ave at Sixth Ave, Prospect Heights, Brooklyn), and the original Likemind, which meets at sNice (45 Eighth Ave at 4th St). Visit likemind.us for details. —Amy Platt

"People who show up often have connections or, at the very least, shared interests. People don't expect anything and therefore leave pleasantly content." —Jen Bokoff, 26, program associate; Prospect Heights, Brooklyn

Sports Leagues

NEW YORK FUN RUN

Unless you've got the Benjamins for a helicopter ride, there's no better way to see the city than on foot. Find running buddies by jogging around town with this sociable group. Members, who call themselves "Run-Chuggers," meet at a bar in a different neighborhood every Wednesday night and set out along a predetermined route, returning to the same watering hole for a few guilt-free postrun beers. The 30- to 50-minute trot allows plenty of time to think up clever

conversation starters. Locations vary (meetup.com/nyc-fun-run). Wed 7pm; free.

TENNIS NYC

This casual club offers plenty of opportunities to find a doubles partner or just work on your swing. Once you submit your desired weekly schedule and neighborhood, organizers will pair you with a partner of a similar skill level. If you don't want to jump in right away, register for an evaluation or practice session with league director Koko Lani, who has played in the city for more than 25

"I really look forward to meeting new people every week. New people tend to feel really comfortable showing up, even without knowing other participants." —Vinay Pal, 32, tech entrepreneur, West Village

years, or instructor Eric Capuano, who has taught for 30-plus. Locations vary (tennisnyc.com). Monthly membership \$95.

PLAY SOCCER 2 GIVE

Soccer and service go hand in hand with this nonprofit, which encourages players from all over the city to meet for competitive-yet-friendly games of pickup footy. Proceeds fund youth-soccer equipment in underprivileged communities here and around the world. Players of all skill levels can sign up for January's winter indoor season as individuals or as a group of up to five. Locations vary

(meetup.com/playsoccer2give). \$2–\$10 per match.

NYC SOCIAL

This popular league, formerly known as New York City Social Sports Club, introduces active types under 40 to each other via several sports each season. Join as a free agent and register for the winter session (choose from basketball, soccer and volleyball, among other options), and you'll be assigned to a team with other players looking to make friends and enjoy the game. 40 W 29th St between Broadway and Sixth Ave (212-929-5353, nycsocial.com). Season \$125. —Jordan Walker

Volunteer Projects

MANY HOPES

Founded in 2007 by a pair of ex-journalists, Many Hopes is dedicated to housing, educating and empowering orphaned girls in Kenya. In just a few years, the organization has built four homes in the coastal town of Mtwapa for 44 kids who had been living on the streets. The long-term goal: raising young women to be leaders who will help bring their country out of poverty. Participants who contribute \$10 to \$25 monthly—all of which directly supports Many Hopes' initiatives—meet once a month, culminating in the yearly Breaking Ground fund-raising

campaign. The organization also hosts get-togethers for local chapters and annual retreats, and even takes three groups to Mtwapa each year. Visit manyhopes.org or e-mail ny@manyhopes.org for details.

826NYC

Behind Brooklyn Superhero Supply Company, a whimsical shop for imaginative crime-fighting enthusiasts, you'll find the New York chapter of this Dave Eggers-founded youth writing center. Run

by both staff and volunteers, 826 is always on the lookout for new recruits; sign up to teach a workshop, assist kids with their homework, or help out in the store or with administrative duties.

Fill out an application on the center's website and you'll be invited to an orientation, to determine where your skills can be best utilized. 372 Fifth Ave between 5th and 6th Sts, Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-499-9884, 826nyc.org)

"I've met a lot of my closer friends through Many Hopes. It's a great way to get introduced to people in New York other than the bar scene." —Kyle Thousand, 32, sports agent, Lower East Side

OCCUPY SANDY RECOVERY

The storm may have passed and the floodwaters receded, but the

recovery from Hurricane Sandy isn't even close to finished. This coalition between 350.org and Recovers.org is Occupy Wall Street's contribution to community relief efforts; the democratic, grassroots initiative was able to provide aid in hard-hit areas before even FEMA arrived on the scene. Fill out a volunteer form online (you can register as an individual or as a group), then stop by one of OSR's two Brooklyn nerve centers: the Church of St. Luke and St. Matthew (520 Clinton Ave between Atlantic Ave and Fulton St, Clinton Hill) or St. Jacobi Church (5406 Fourth Ave at 54th St, Sunset Park). Locations vary (interoccupy.net/occupysandy). —Jenna Scherer



Offbeat Events

THE GROUP THAT SHALL NOT BE NAMED

Happily debate the finer points of casting a Patronus with the fellow Hogwarts wanna-bes in this nearly seven-year-old organization, one of the city's largest Harry Potter meet-ups. The New York chapter regularly sponsors events such as discussion groups and viewing parties; members also mingle at wizard-rock shows (including the upcoming Yule Ball at the Bell House on Dec 15) and Quidditch tournaments held by other fan groups. *Locations and times vary; visit hp-nyc.com for details.*

SOCIAL EXPOSURE MEDIA EVENTS

Break out of your cocktail-party comfort zone with one of this two-year-old group's intimate "Naked Painting" soirees, where guests strip down to their birthday suits and decorate each other's bare bodies. Founder Sally Golan devised the signature event as a way for the

organization to garner attention and new members. For those not ready to drop trou in the name of friend-finding: Social Exposure's other events throughout the year involve way more clothing but draw the same kinds of adventurous souls. *Locations and times vary; visit facebook.com/socialexposuremedia for details.*

LEGACY OF LOVE: MICHAEL JACKSON FANS UNITED

Nearly a year after the Gloved One passed away, megafan Iaisha Smith founded this club celebrating the superstar's life and music. More than 200 members regularly attend MJ-related meetings, such as film screenings, dance parties and readings of his lyrics. December festivities include a King of Pop Karaoke Celebration (Dec 16 at 5pm). *Locations and times vary; visit meetup.com/legacyoflovenyc for more information.* —Rachel Sokol

"My experience as a guest was as unique as the concept itself. I embraced the freedom I felt as I was painted into a work of fluorescent art."
—Jennifer King, 34, stylist, Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Hobby Groups

SOAPMAKING AT MAKE WORKSHOP

Diana Rupp's crafty center draws DIY acolytes of all levels. You'll not only learn such bragworthy skills as embroidery and sewing, you'll also have the opportunity to chat with other creative souls. At this 12-person workshop, led by experts from Prem Soaps, you'll have two hours to talk to your classmates, while stirring and molding batches of cold-processed cleanser. 195 Chrystie St between Rivington and Stanton Sts (makeworkshop.com). Thu 6 at 6:30pm; \$80 plus supplies.

GOTHAM ROCK CHOIR

Whether you're a former chorus nerd or you harbor a secret desire to be on *The Voice*, it's time to serenade something other than your conditioner bottle. While this ensemble's high-profile performances have included singing the national anthem at Madison Square Garden, founder Mark Cannistraro keeps the environment fun and low-

pressure. Members from all vocal sections (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) can often be found

socializing before and after weekly Tuesday rehearsals. E-mail gothamrockchoir@gmail.com for meeting location (gothamrockchoir.com). Tue 7pm; \$7-\$10 per meeting. Through Dec 18.

"My Gotham Rock Choir friends are among the best in my life. We started out going to karaoke, and now we go to movies, happy hour, brunch and parties."
—Teresa Candori, 46, media director, Harlem

SECRET SCIENCE CLUB

If your current pals don't share your interest in the nuances of astrophysics, join up with the devotees of the Secret Science Club. Organizers Margaret Mittelbach and Dorian Devins created a free monthly lecture series for scientists to discuss dinosaurs, neuroscience, black holes and other scholarly topics with upwards of 300 attendees. After each event's Q&A session, there's plenty of time for socializing with your fellow nerds. *The Bell House, 149 7th St between Second and Third Aves, Gowanus, Brooklyn* (secretscienceclub.blogspot.com). Tue 11 at 8pm; free. —Luisa Rollenhagen

Escape the herd: The best things to do Alone

SEE A MOVIE AT FILM FORUM

As anyone who's caught a blockbuster on opening weekend knows, moviegoers can be a chatty, loud-chewing, cell-phone-addicted lot. Thankfully, Film Forum attracts a respectful, quiet and often solo-flying audience to its expertly curated showings of classics (frequently presented in new prints) and indies from around the globe. Enjoy an eye-opening flick and a nose bag of fresh popcorn—to be eaten quietly. *209 W Houston St between Sixth Ave and Varick St (212-727-8110, filmforum.org). \$12.50, seniors (Mon–Fri before 5pm) and members \$7.*

CATCH AVANT-GARDE MUSICIANS AT THE STONE

No bar? No advance tickets? No promoters? No phone number? No listed address? This is still a music venue in Manhattan, right? John Zorn's tiny, no-frills East Village space attracts serious music devotees—not the ones fixated on hobnobbing and tweeting. Here you'll be free to focus on envelope-pushing acts encompassing free jazz, experimental classical music and drone guitar work. *Ave C at 2nd St (thestonenyc.com). Most shows \$10.*

DIG THROUGH THE CRATES AT OTHER MUSIC

Because this East Village institution occupies small quarters, you can check out almost every title in less than an hour. This is great for lone shoppers because (a) the selection is

solid—especially of recent vinyl releases, and (b) friends and loved ones don't typically want to spend a chunk of their afternoon watching you bob your head to staff picks at the listening station. *15 E 4th St between Broadway and Lafayette St (212-477-8150, othermusic.com)*

PLAY VIDEO GAMES AT BARCADE

Drinking alone can be kind of...sad. But throw the ultimate indoor-kid activity into the mix and you've got a fun, nostalgic booze session. This cavernous Williamsburg drinkery boasts 35 classic video games—including *Donkey Kong* and *Contra*—and a daily-changing list of 24 American brews on tap. A bonus to going solo: You can gloat about your high score without fear of alienating friends. *388 Union Ave between Ainslie and Powers Sts, Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-302-6464, barcadebrooklyn.com). 25¢ per play.*

CYCLE IN PROSPECT PARK

Really pushing yourself with a proper workout is best achieved alone. On weekends, you'll want to seek out the middle lane of Park Drive, reserved for cyclists. The loop around Prospect Park stretches for more than three miles, offering a tree-canopied, carless course with a punishing uphill section and a longer, rewarding, wind-in-your-hair downhill stretch for speedy coasting. *Prospect Park West to Flatbush Ave between Prospect Park Southwest and Ocean Ave, Brooklyn (718-965-8951, prospectpark.org)*

PAMPER YOURSELF AT OASIS DAY SPA

You work hard. You deserve to—say it with us—“treat yo'self!” Unwind with complimentary tea at this posh subterranean spa in Murray Hill, where you can soothe tight muscles with a massage; choose from Swedish (30mins \$70, one hour \$115, 90mins \$150), lava-stone (one hour \$145, 90mins \$190) or deep-tissue (30mins \$75, one hour \$125, 90mins \$160). If your mug's in need of some TLC, revive your skin with Oasis's signature facial (one hour \$115, 90 minutes \$150). *1 Park Ave between 32nd and 33rd Sts (212-254-7722, oasisdayspanyc.com)*

EXPLORE THE MET

Trying to stick with a group while winding through the typically tourist-swamped Metropolitan Museum of Art is no way to experience the landmark's works. Ditch your friends and tackle the Met solo—that way you can fully absorb its period rooms (dating to the 1600s) from around the globe and new exhibits (we recommend “Faking It: Manipulated Photography Before Photoshop,” through Jan 27) at your leisure. *1000 Fifth Ave at 82nd St (212-535-7710, metmuseum.org). Suggested donation \$25.*

PICK OUT KICKS AT THE NEW BALANCE EXPERIENCE STORE

Don't be that person who drags someone around shopping for hours on end. If you're serious about running—or long to be—you will commit said social crime at the New Balance Experience Store if you don't arrive alone. The 4,000-square-foot megashop, which opened last year, even includes a track, so you can test out shoes under the watchful eye of employees. *150 Fifth Ave at 20th St (212-727-2520, newbalance.com/nyc)*

READ AT THE AUSTRIAN CULTURAL FORUM

Make your way to the library on the fourth and fifth floors of this skinny, sleek architectural marvel—which reaches 24 stories and is less than 25 feet wide. Pick a book from the stacks, nestle into the window-facing white chair or couch and alternate between the tome and contemplatively gazing at 52nd Street. *11 E 52nd St between Fifth and Madison Aves (212-319-5300, acfny.org). Free.—Tim Lowery*



Ways to meet that Special Someone

92YTRIBECA

Whether you're looking for your other half or simply in need of a fun night out with other unattached New Yorkers, the nonprofit community center offers monthly events through its singles program. Hit up the downtown location to see Dave and Ethan: Dating Coaches (Dec 20 at 8pm; \$10), a comic duo imparting valuable courting lessons through song and dance. The two bachelors provide a chance to interact with fellow audience participants via onstage demonstrations. 200 Hudson St at Canal St (212-601-1000, 92ytribeca.org)

SINGLE AND THE CITY

Founded with the intent of separating singles from their computers, this NYC company brings local guys and gals together through well-attended trivia nights, boat cruises and career-based mixers. Upcoming gatherings include a New Year's Eve soiree (Dec 31 6pm–3am, \$50), a fireman party (Jan TBA \$30) and a hot-or-not bash (Jan TBA, \$40). Locations vary; visit singleandthecity.com for more information.

NEW YORK EASY DATES

This website takes much of the guesswork out of speed dating by detailing each event's type of crowd (which ranges from the general "young professionals" to the more

specific "women dating younger guys"). Nights follow one of three formats: a small two-hour shindig for 10 to 20 people, who chat with a new potential mate for three to eight minutes; an extended event where 60 to 100 people chat for however long they like; or a series of quick minidates, each lasting between two and three minutes. Locations, times and prices vary; visit nyeasynyc.com for more information.

SILLY DATE

If you're not one to hide your wacky side from a new significant other until it's "safe," join this fun-loving group that embraces all things goofy and twee. Events have included movie outings to see *The Muppets*, sing-alongs in the West Village and "geek days" at the American Museum of Natural History. With any luck, you'll find the Statler to your Waldorf in no time. Locations, times and prices vary; visit sillydate.com for more information.

GRUBWITHUS

Find a gastronomic soulmate at a group dinner date organized through this online community. Once you've signed up, you can browse online discussions, which lead to themed meals with at least three other like-minded diners. For instance, sign up for dim sum at Nom Wah Tea Parlor (Thu 6 at 7pm; \$29) to chat about discovering

"awesome new eats in NYC."

Trending topics for possible future dinners include hilarious pickup lines, dancing Gangnam style and nonfiction books. Locations, times and prices vary; visit grubwithus.com for more information.

NY MINUTE DATING

The sister website of Singles Boat Party NYC, which hosts boat cruises on the Hudson from spring through fall, offers a range of indoor speed-dating events and parties. Attend the group's annual New Year's Eve party at Stitch Lounge (247 W 37th St between Seventh and Eighth Aves; \$100, advance \$50) to join 500 unattached New Yorkers for booze, bites and dancing. Locations, times and prices vary; visit nyminutedating.com for more information.

300 NEW YORK

If you're tired of typical dinner-and-a-movie dates, head over to Chelsea Piers for a fresher take on a night out. Hit up this bar-meets-alley on Tuesdays for weekly bowling bashes (8pm–2am, \$28 per person), which include unlimited games, those slick shoes and a deejayed soundtrack. Get to know your fellow spinsters over naked wings (\$15) or a Lemon-Berry Swagger martini (\$10–\$13). Pier 60 at 23rd St and West Side Hwy (212-835-2695, threehundred.com/newyork)—Allison Merzel



MORE ONLINE!

Find tons of other ways and places to meet people (or revel in your own awesomeness) at timeout.com/newyork.

The best restaurants to experience solo

HEARTH

This New American's coveted kitchen-pass seats, which offer an up-close peek at chef Marco Canora working his magic, are walk-in only—prime solo-dining real estate and one of the best dinner views in Manhattan. 403 E 12th St at First Ave (646-602-1300, restauranthearth.com)

ELEVEN MADISON PARK

Though parties of one may shy away from formal settings, this should be your exception. The staff here is especially generous to solo

diners, so enjoy chef Daniel Humm's array of modernist, seasonal dishes. 11 Madison Ave at 24th St (212-889-0905, elevenmadisonpark.com)

LOCANDA VERDE

Scoring a reservation is tough at Andrew Carmellini's rustic Italian spot, but a single bar seat is usually available with little to no wait. When you arrive, ask the bartenders to add you to their list, and spend a few moments deciding what to order. 377 Greenwich St at North Moore St (212-925-3797, locandaverdenyc.com)

JOSEPH LEONARD

Gabriel Stulman's cozy restaurant has a convivial bar to match. Nab a stool around the L-shaped focal point; the close quarters make striking up a conversation refreshingly easy. 170 Waverly Pl at Grove St (646-429-8383, josephleonard.com)

FRANNY'S

The no-reservation policy at this Brooklyn institution means the wait can be harsh, but the large bar provides seating for one in a fraction of the time. 295 Flatbush Ave between Prospect Pl and St. Marks Ave, Prospect Heights, Brooklyn (frannysbrooklyn.com)—Jasmine Moy