

Get it. Do it. See it.

# guide

## THESE ARE THE BREAKS

In New York, the birthplace of hip-hop, the city that never sleeps still gets funky.

Words CARLY FISHER

For exclusive party vibes, head to Pianos on the Lower East Side.



SHAWN SHUTTLESWORTH



## Do it

**S**o the story goes: History was made at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue in the Bronx nearly 50 years ago, when a teen known as DJ Kool Herc was asked to play music for his little sister's neighborhood party. Armed with two turntables and a mixer, he began isolating drumbeats and breaks, unintentionally inventing the breakbeat-style of DJing that became the backdrop for rapping.

Drawing a mix of MCs, DJs, graffiti artists, B-Boys and B-Girls, his parties forged a community and a culture that would spread across the city, paving the way for the golden era of hip-hop that would catapult into a global phenomenon. Today, the block is immortalized as Hip Hop Boulevard, recognized by

the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation as the birthplace of hip-hop. "It's like going to Graceland if you're an Elvis Presley fan," says Debra Harris, a Bronx native and founder of New York City's hip-hop-centric Hush Tours.

Harris grew up watching pioneers like Kurtis Blow, Slick Rick, Afrika Bambaataa and LL Cool J open the door for icons like Notorious B.I.G., Wu-Tang Clan, Jay-Z and Nas—all while street art and fashion were taking the world by storm—but she was shocked to realize that no one had really cemented New York's hip-hop history. Taking matters into her own hands, she started Hush Tours. Today, a ride on the tour is a guaranteed way to meet a pioneer or protégé, with

frequent appearances from OGs such as Grandmaster Caz and Mighty Mike C from the Fearless Four, as well as local MC Rayza and the Dynamic Rockers B-Boy crew.

To soak up the past, present and future of 50 years of New York City hip-hop, be ready to pound the pavement. Get started with these essentials vetted by Harris and local community organizer Rasheed Akbar.

**EAT**

Get a taste of hip-hop by starting with a bite. Hot spots like Sei Less, Lucien and Jay-Z's 40/40 Club will have you seated close to hip-hop royalty (a hefty price tag for the honor), but many rappers have set up more accessible options to support their local hoods. Among the most popular: Sweet Chick, a chicken-and-waffles joint backed by Nas with locations in three of the five boroughs, and Juices for Life, Styles P's juice bar in underserved neighborhoods in the Bronx, Brooklyn and Yonkers.

Foodies should head directly to award-winning chef JJ Johnson's community-driven rice-bowl concept, FieldTrip, which frequently plays hip-hop as an homage to its Harlem neighborhood. Two-time Michelin Bib Gourmand winner Beatstro blends the Southern comfort and Puerto Rican flavors of the South Bronx, backed by DJs spinning early hip-hop. Find the cool kids hanging out at Rise Radio, a vegan café, bar and party space in Bushwick where there's always a DJ on hand. Catch raw up-and-coming talent at the Boogie Down Grind in the Bronx, a hip-hop-focused café and event space.

**PLAY**

Hip-hop culture in New York City is still very much word-of-

mouth, hosted in underground DIY spaces, often with last-minute announcements on Instagram or private listservs. Still, it's not hard to catch a vibe in Manhattan and Brooklyn. Lower East Side favorite Pianos is known for hosting exclusive shows and parties that are always crowded as hell and make for decent TikTok fodder. SNS Bar, situated in the basement of streetwear shop Sneakersnstuff in the Meatpacking District, frequently hosts name-drop-worthy DJs that fill a room with a crowd sporting only the finest brands. For something a bit more casual, head over to Schimanski in Brooklyn for deep-cut dance nights with low-key hipsters.

**SHOP**

The good news about streetwear shopping in New York City is that most of it is conveniently found in Manhattan, making it easy to hit multiple shops at once. The downside is that it is also very easy to end up blowing your life savings in a matter of a few hours at staples like Supreme, Stüssy, Aime Leon Dore, Extra Butter and Kith.

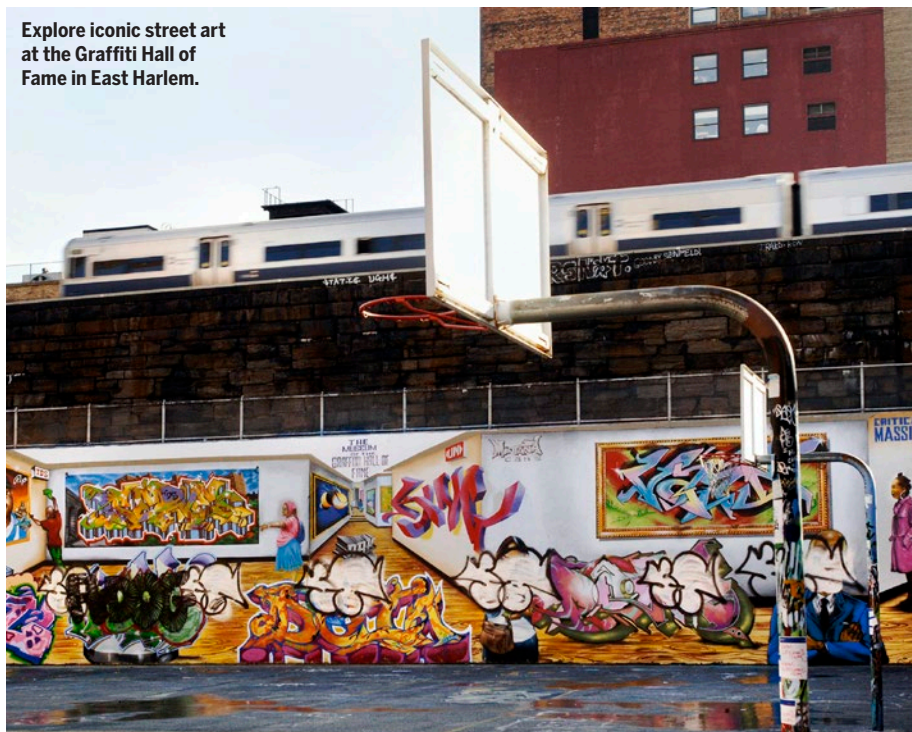
If you're young and trendy and into hip-hop, skate culture, modeling or rapping, you and your friends are already en route to the LAAMS Boutique. Hawking art, clothes and accessories from coveted brands and ambitious newcomers, the shop has been dubbed a community center for artists who want to mess around with screenprinting. Find your next statement piece at concept shop Bowery Showroom, featuring exclusive drops and vintage finds, or VFiles, an incubator for up-and-coming designers that launched Off-White and Hood By Air. Even if you buy nothing, it's worth a trip to the NYC outpost of Dutch



The official birthplace of hip-hop in the Bronx.



Explore iconic street art at the Graffiti Hall of Fame in East Harlem.



The Bushwick Collective is a magnet for trendy artists.



streetwear company Daily Paper to snap a pic of its stunning exterior made entirely of flattened Arizona Iced Tea cans.

High-end sneakerheads should put Dover Street Market, Solestice, Flight Club and Stadium Goods on the list for exclusive Jordans, Yeezys and other coveted drops. Fitted-hat collectors will find the best selection of limited editions at Hat Club. Vinyl snobs should hit the bins at legendary A-1 Records, the popular record store co-signed by everyone from Chuck D of Public Enemy to Mike D of the Beastie Boys, as well as Legacy, a cozy shop in DUMBO featuring new and used hip-hop, soul, jazz, funk, R&B, reggae and Soca.

### LANDMARKS

After making the pilgrimage to Sedgwick Avenue, dive into a history lesson at the *[R]evolution of Hip Hop* exhibit at the Bronx Terminal Market, the temporary home of the future Universal Hip

Hop Museum (slated to open in 2024). Then swing by the Graffiti Hall of Fame in East Harlem to explore iconic street art. While you're in Harlem, a visit to the Apollo Theater is a must—a legendary venue that launched the careers of everyone from Kid 'N Play and Biz Markie to Lauryn Hill and Questlove.

Chase your hoop dreams at the Cage, New York's landmark basketball court off West Fourth Avenue, which is always a solid bet for people watching. From there, it's a quick train ride to Brooklyn, where you can pay homage to the Beastie Boys at Adam Yauch Park in Brooklyn Heights or visit the stomping grounds and commemorative mural of the Notorious B.I.G. in Fort Greene. Go deeper into Bushwick for a look at the modern scene at the Bushwick Collective, a magnet for up-and-coming artists from around the world to show off their art on large-scale murals.

Die-hards would be remiss to pass up a visit to Queens



The new Universal Hip Hop Museum is slated to open in the Bronx in 2024.

and Staten Island. Roll up to the corner of Linden Boulevard and 192nd Street in the St. Albans neighborhood of Queens, which is now dubbed Phife Dawg Way for the late Tribe Called Quest member. Frequently used as a hip-hop-video backdrop, the World's Fair and Queens Museum in Corona Park makes for a chill afternoon stroll before visiting the

hawker stalls for street eats at Queens Night Market. Bring the ruckus to Staten Island, visiting the stomping grounds of Wu Tang Clan, celebrated at the corner of Vanderbilt Avenue and Targee Street, which is now known as the Wu Tang Clan District, and NYC Arts Cypher, a nonprofit graffiti art studio and creative arts event space for MCs, DJs, breakers and more.