



Thanksgiving in **NEW YORK CITY** >

KICKING-OFF THE HOLIDAY SEASON

ESCAPES by Reisha Zang

View of Central Park and the Hudson River from the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

Nothing says "Happy Holidays" like New York City. Unless you have been living under a rock, you are no doubt familiar with the images. You've woken up on Thanksgiving morning to watch the Macy's Parade make its way through the streets of the city and have gathered around the television set to see Al Roker light The Tree at Rockefeller Center. From the Christmas windows on Fifth Avenue to *The Nutcracker* at Lincoln Center, the spirit of the holidays surrounds you. Whether you are a New Yorker or not, a trip to the Big Apple is one of the best places to experience the full flavor of the season.

"One of my most vivid memories is of the Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York," explains Jill Martinson. "Not the day of the parade, but the night before. I remember going out with my father. My mother would give us a thermos of hot chocolate, and we would head out to watch them inflate the balloons. It was magical."

This used to be a not-so-well-kept secret for New Yorkers, but now the secret is out and an experience of its own. On the Wednesday before the Parade visitors are welcome to watch the Macy's Parade Balloon Inflation event at 79th Street and Columbus Avenue. They start inflating the balloons at 3:00, and the public can stay until 10:00 p.m. to get an up close peek at the giant balloons as they come to life.

After watching the balloons get ready, you have to see them in all their glory. "We recommend getting to the route early for a front row view," says Orlando Veras, senior manager, national media relations for the parade. "Early risers like to camp out



The Christmas Tree at Rockefeller Center, courtesy of Tishman Speyer, photo by Gregory Scaffidi.



The Turkey Float at the Macy's Day Parade.



The Rockettes' *Parade of the Wooden Soldiers*, photo courtesy of MSG Entertainment.



starting at 6 a.m. along the west side of the street on Central Park West from 59th to 75th Streets, where the parade starts to march shortly after 9 a.m. If fans prefer to arrive a bit later than 6 a.m., then the best options for them are further down the route on Sixth Avenue, as the Parade begins to reach those parts of the route sometime around 9:30 a.m.”

In addition to the traditional marching bands, Broadway performances and floats, this year will hold a few surprises. “The nation’s most beloved parade will feature a host of new balloons, floats and special performances that will thrill millions of spectators,” explains Veras. “As the parade marches on, fans will enjoy seeing the newest version of the iconic character Snoopy, Adventure Time’s Finn and Jake and new balloon head characters from *The Wizard of Oz*; among other new balloon stars. Rolling down the center line, the famed



The Warwick Hotel.



The Royal Terrace Suite at the Plaza Hotel.

spectacular's newest magical floating stages will transport viewers to worlds of whimsy and delight. For the 87th march, new floats include the dazzling Cirque du Soleil, the scrumptious Lindt Chocolates and the adventure filled Royal Caribbean float."

If braving the cold isn't for you, pick your hotel strategically. The Mandarin Oriental is right on the Parade route and offers an "I love a parade" package which includes exclusive access to the Mandarin Ballroom where guests can view the festivities through the hotel's magnificent floor-to-ceiling windows. Suites on the upper floors also have fantastic views of the parade.

The Warwick Hotel on Sixth Avenue is another favorite midtown Manhattan hotel that is perfect for parade watching and more. Rooms and suites on the Sixth Avenue side have street views that overlook the parade. Once the parade is over, you will be able to explore the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) right across the street. And nearby,

you will find Rockefeller Center, Fifth Avenue and Central Park.

celebrate Thanksgiving dinner at one of New York's most iconic restaurants, The Russian Tea Room, a staple in the city for over 80 years. Their special Thanksgiving menu starts with the traditional Tea Room Red Borscht or Foie Gras and continues with a choice including their classic chicken Kiev, butternut squash risotto, Boeuf à la Stroganoff or, of course, roasted turkey. Finish with Tea Room blintzes, a chocolate pyramid or traditional cheesecake. The restaurant has an extensive wine list along with more than 40 varieties of vodka.

Rockefeller Center also knows how to celebrate the season. Ice skating on the rink is a classic winter activity. Nothing is more exciting than circling on the ice and seeing the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree. This year the tree will be lit on Dec. 4, the Wednesday after Thanksgiving. The tree is decorated with over 30,000

“Nothing says ‘Happy Holidays’ like New York City.”

energy-efficient LED lights. Whether you can make it to the lighting ceremony or not, seeing the tree in all its glory is a must.

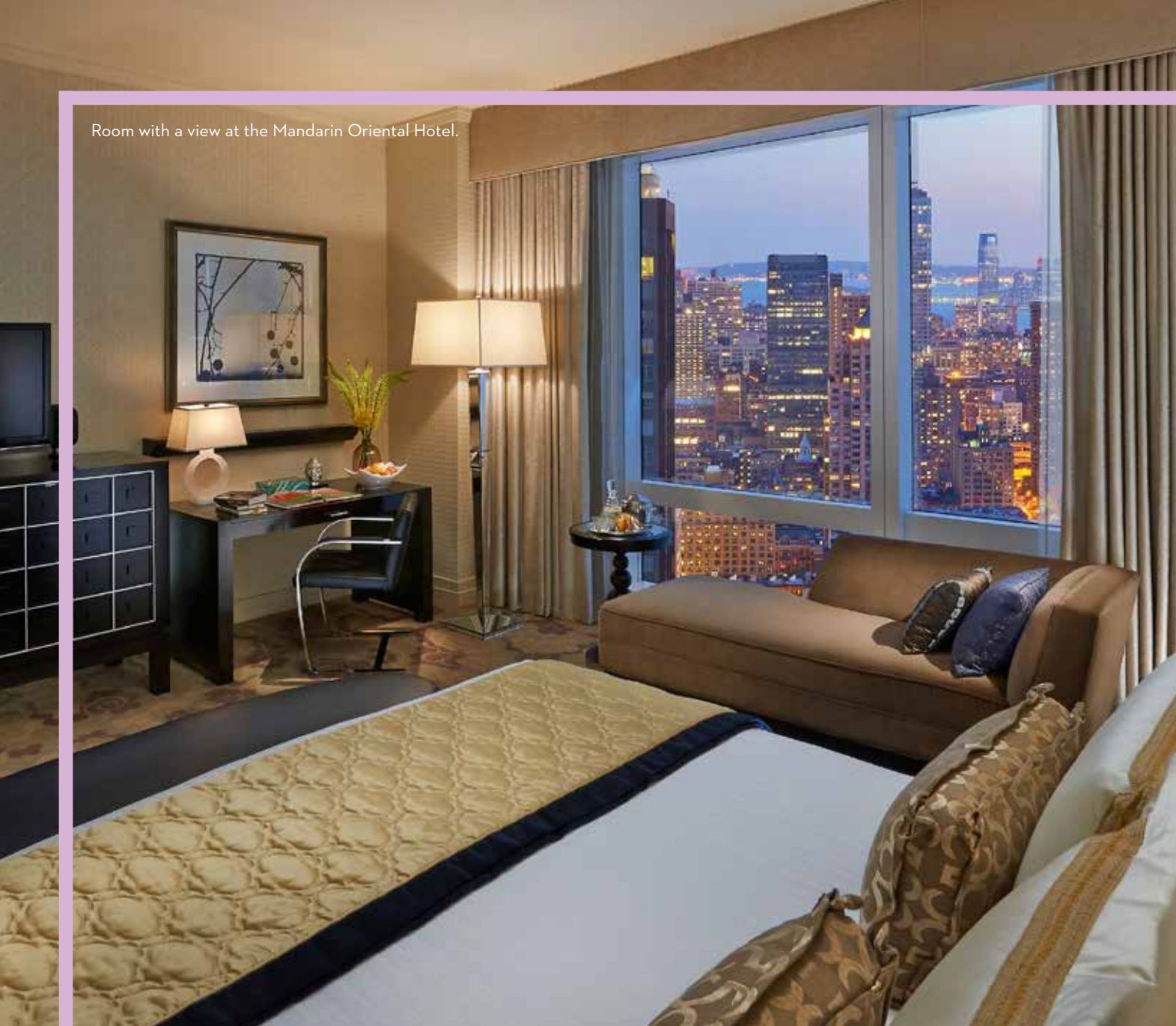
For a little sightseeing, duck into St. Patrick's Cathedral, an inspiring example of the American Gothic Revival style. Take in the scenery from a horse-drawn carriage ride through Central Park. Or, hop on ferry to visit Ellis Island for a new appreciation of what some of our families went through to get to here. "For many a visit to Ellis Island is a very emotional journey - it marks the first footprint in America for the 40 percent of Americans who trace their roots back to an ancestor who first arrived in the U.S. at Ellis Island," explains Peg Zitko, senior vice president of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Inc. "People leave with a better understanding of what their ancestors



The Palm Court at the Plaza Hotel.



Room with a view at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.



York experience. Try the Fitzgerald Tea for the Ages, with curried lobster salad, deviled quail egg salad, sandwiches, scones with double Devonshire cream and assorted pastries. Be certain to check out the 18-foot tall tree in the Fifth Avenue Foyer. And, during December, Eloise, The Plaza's most famous six year old resident will host Rawther Fancy Teas with Santa, who will be on hand to take photos.

Santa will also be at Radio City Music Hall, home to another holiday classic event. "The magic of the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular* brings joy and happiness to generations of families each holiday season, and we are extremely proud to present the most dynamic Christmas Spectacular yet," says Don Simpson, executive vice president of productions, MSGE. "We are committed to providing audiences with a one-of-a-kind, memorable

experience that begins the moment they arrive at Radio City so that fans of all ages look forward to continuing the tradition of returning with their families year after year."

To get the most out of your visit to Radio City, arrive at least an hour before the show to see the world-famous twin Wurlitzer organs and the Swarovski Christmas Tree covered with over 10,000 sparkling crystals suspended above the Grand Foyer. On the first mezzanine you can also have your picture taken with one of the Rockettes.

No matter what you choose to do when you are in the City, you are in for a fabulous holiday experience.

experienced and a great deal of gratitude for the courage and determination of those who came before them and provided them with the opportunities we all too often take for granted today."

hopping is another "must-do" in the city. From Saks and Barney's to Bloomingdales and Macy's, you will be overcome by the festive decorations and amazed at the selection of beautiful fashions and gifts. "Saks in New York is magical. Nothing puts one in the mood faster than Saks in New York," says Amy Videan, marketing director of the Phoenix store. "The snowflake light display on the building is so charming. You can see it all the way down 5th avenue."

New York is one of the best places to look for those difficult-to-buy-for people on your list. Check out Rizzoli Bookstore for an extensive collection of beautifully illustrated books. For music lovers and movie buffs, Academy Records & CDs is a New York City landmark, with a selection of collector's items, compact discs, LP records and classic Hollywood movies, film noir and foreign films on DVD. Dylan's Candy Bar has something for everyone, from a tower of chocolate covered pretzels to "time capsules" filled with favorite treats from each decade.

After a little shopping, head over to The Plaza hotel for afternoon tea in The Palm Court, a quintessential New



The Russian Tea Room.