

# LEISURE

OCTOBER 2020

GROUP TRAVEL

## FABULOUS FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

Women have created businesses that are  
must-visit destinations

### Tokyo is Ready for its Close-up

The host of next year's  
Olympics is primed to  
entertain groups

### Arkansas Group Travel Planner

Hike, fish, kayak and soak in The  
Natural State's scenic beauty

### Missouri Group Tour Guide

This charming state invites you  
to celebrate its bicentennial



# EAST REGION

Photo courtesy of Library Hotel Collection



Breakfast is served in the Library Hotel's second-floor Reading Room, which also hosts an evening wine and cheese reception.

## BOOKWORM'S NEW YORK

**Libraries and literary points of interest appeal to culturally minded travelers looking to ferret out some of the city's under-the-radar gems**

By Randy Mink

**C**all me a nerd or label me a bookworm, but I've always felt at home in libraries, those quiet, secure refuges brimming with bound volumes and populated by studious patrons and helpful people behind the desks. There I find peace and order and seem to come away smarter simply by osmosis.

As a traveler, I'm always looking for the less obvious sights, not the ones on everyone else's checklist. On my most recent trip I decided to follow my passion for the printed word and theme it along literary lines.

My base of operations: The Library Hotel, where each of the 10 guest room floors is dedicated to one of the 10 major categories of the Dewey Decimal System. Every guest room has its own collection of books and art exploring a topic within the category. Located at Madison Avenue and East 41st Street, the cozy nest is a book lover's paradise and just minutes from one of the world's great libraries.

From my hotel room I could see the stately Fifth Avenue facade of the iconic flagship of the **New York Public Library**. Called

the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, the masterpiece of Beaux-Arts architecture awes visitors with its majestic public spaces, which can be enjoyed on a free docent-led tour. A 23-minute film about the library plays on the hour and half hour.

The tour highlight is the third floor's Rose Main Reading Room, nearly the length of a football field. A celestial ceiling mural and massive windows overlooking the 42 oak tables give the room a jaw-dropping grandeur.

Also featured on the tour: Astor Hall, the palatial lobby noted for its expanses of white



marble, soaring arches, intricately carved wood and two broad staircases; DeWitt Wallace Periodical Room, with its richly paneled walls and murals of the historical headquarters of great New York publishing houses; and the Map Collection Room, one of the world's largest repositories of maps, atlases and globes. An exhibit on the ground floor's Children's Center preserves the well-worn stuffed animals that inspired British writer A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* stories.

Outside on Fifth Avenue, visitors pose for photos next to one of the marble lions guarding the entrance of the building, which was dedicated by President William Howard Taft on May 23, 1911, and hailed then by the *New York Herald* as "a splendid temple of the mind." At the time it was the largest marble building in the country.

The library's shop has the perfect gifts for bibliophiles, from bookmarks to scarves. One canvas bag for sale is inscribed with these words from Cicero: "If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need."

The New York Public Library shares a city block with bustling **Bryant Park**, a midtown Manhattan gathering spot not far from Times Square. The park has indoor and outdoor restaurants, food kiosks, gardens, a carousel, a lawn for sunbathing and picnicking, chess and ping pong tables, and free music performances.

Street signs and red-and-white banners on the two-block stretch of 41st Street between the library's front steps and Park Avenue declare the promenade as **Library Way**. Bronze sidewalk plaques, placed at regular intervals, celebrate the written word with quotations, verses and literary passages from famous authors, poets and thinkers—not that many tourists or locals take notice of them as they hurry on their way.

The **Library Hotel**, a 14-story brownstone dating from 1900, stands at the heart of Library Way, which is visible not only from guest rooms but from the second-floor lounge where breakfast is served. In the small, unassuming lobby furnished with bookshelves, a wall of replica card catalog drawers backs the front desk.

On my stay in January, I occupied the Ancient Language room on the fourth, or Language, floor. My bookshelves held tomes such as *Cassell's New Latin Dictionary*, a Latin version of Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh*

and Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. A framed painting showed the detail of a house ruin in Pompeii. Around the room were inspirational quotations like: "I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library," a thought expressed by Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges. The oblong throw pillow had this message: "Book lovers never go to bed alone."

Down the hall were the Slavic, Middle Eastern, Romance, Asian and Germanic language rooms. Each of the 10 floors has six rooms, and guests may request a specific one. Perhaps you want the Political Science room on the Social Science floor or Biography room on the History floor.

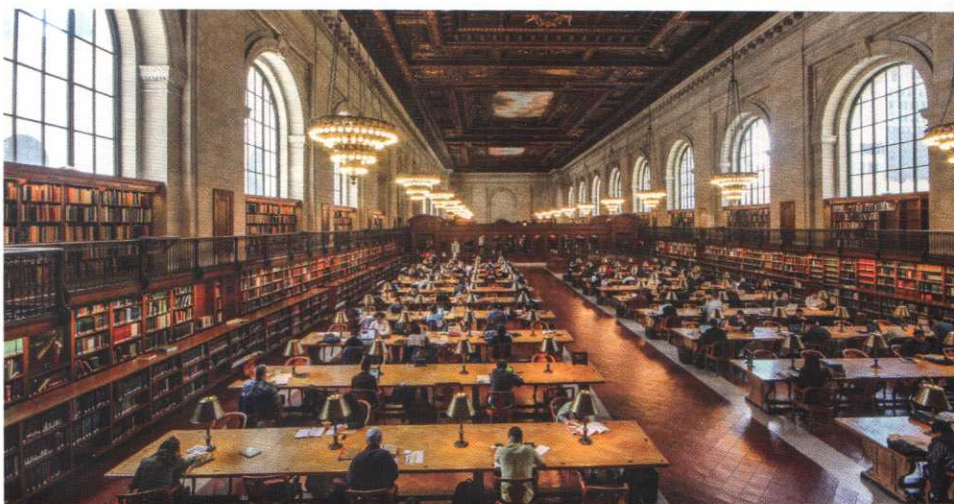
Literary references extend to the boutique hotel's rooftop Bookmarks Lounge, an indoor/outdoor space whose menu lists specialty cocktails like Tequila Mockingbird (Sauza Blue tequila, agave nectar, fresh lime juice, minced ginger). The hotel's on-site restaurant, Madison & Vine, has sidewalk tables for warm-weather dining right next to the bronze plaques of Library Way.

A few blocks away, at West 44th Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues, it's worth popping into the historic **Algonquin Hotel**. The 12-story hotel, which opened its doors in 1902, pegs its fame to the Algonquin Round Table, a group of writers, critics, artists and theatrical elites who met there every day for lunch and stimulating conversation in the 1920s. A plaque by the hotel entrance lists some of the literati—Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, *New York Times* theater critic Alexander Woollcott,

Harold Ross (founder and editor of *The New Yorker*), William Faulkner, Gertrude Stein, James Thurber—who "found a haven within its oak-lined walls." To soak in the history, stop in for a drink under the blue glow of the famous Blue Bar. Perhaps you'll spot Hamlet, the resident cat who represents a long lineage of felines who have lived at the hotel since 1923.

In the Murray Hill neighborhood of Midtown East resides the **Morgan Library & Museum**, one of New York's great overlooked gems. The legacy of Gilded Age financier J.P. Morgan (1837-1913), it is a treasure house of rare manuscripts, artwork and ancient relics. On display in Mr. Morgan's original three-story library, with its inlaid walnut bookshelves and magnificent ceiling, is one of the institution's three Gutenberg Bibles and a rotating collection of other artifacts. On any given visit, you might see illuminated medieval manuscripts, drawings by Leonardo da Vinci, musical scores by Beethoven or Mozart, or letters written by U.S. presidents. A visit to Morgan's study, a lordly room covered in red brocade wallpaper, includes a peek into the vault where the wealthy tycoon kept his most valuable pieces.

A central atrium created by famed architect Renzo Piano, part of a 2006 expansion that doubled exhibition space, links the original 1906 library and 1928 Annex to an 1852 Italianate brownstone, the home of J.P. Morgan, Jr. from 1905-1943. The residence, at Madison Avenue and 36th Street, houses the museum shop and restaurant. **LGT**



The New York Public Library's magnificent Rose Main Reading Room

Photo courtesy of New York Public Library