

Marilyn Monroe first visited New York in 1954, when she was filming as “The Girl” for *The Seven Year Itch*. She’d later move to New York for the same reason many of us do: she hoped doing so would change her life. After years of grinding away in the Hollywood studio system, Monroe wanted to study with legendary instructors at The Actors Studio and launch her own production company. Her years in New York certainly did change her — over the next seven years of her life, Monroe married and divorced Arthur Miller; walked Lexington Avenue with Truman Capote, her friend and confidante; sang “Happy Birthday, Mr. President” at Madison Square Garden; and launched that eponymous production company, making history when she did so.

This self-guided tour through Marilyn Monroe’s Manhattan doesn’t hit all the highlights, but you’ll walk the Midtown East streets made up her formative time in New York City. You don’t have to strictly adhere to the itinerary below, and you should feel free to walk at your own pace. Perhaps you’ll feel inspired to don Monroe’s New York disguise: a chiffon headscarf and “owlish black sunglasses,” as observed by Capote.

Marilyn Monroe Productions HQ

480 Lexington Avenue

In January 1955, Monroe and Milton Greene officially announced the creation of Marilyn Monroe Productions, Inc. Only one woman before Marilyn had ever started her own production company (in 1919, Mary Pickford partnered with Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks and D.W. Griffiths to launch United Artists). Monroe and Greene headquartered MMP at this nondescript office building, but the company would only officially produce a single film (1957’s *The Prince and the Showgirl*).

The Hotels

The Gladstone Hotel, 114-122 East 52nd Street

The Ambassador Hotel, 345 Park Avenue

The Waldorf-Astoria, 301 Park Avenue

Several New York hotels claim to have hosted Monroe, but three play an especially important role in her Manhattan biography. Upon first moving to New York, Monroe lived at the Gladstone, which was later demolished in the 1960s. And while Monroe never resided at the Ambassador Hotel, admirers will remember the now-iconic “balcony photo,” snapped at the hotel in March 1955.

That April, she booked a three-room suite at the Waldorf-Astoria. The hotel allowed for longer-term stays on its 27th floor, where Marilyn stayed in suite 2728 until September 1955.

Monroe liked to use Waldorf-Astoria stationery for journaling and note-taking, even for writing poems. In one fragment of verse, she wrote of nighttime in New York:

Sooooo many lights in the darkness
making skeletons of the buildings
and life in the streets
what was it I thought about yesterday
in the streets?
it seems so far away long ago
and moon
it's better they told me as a child what it was
for I could not understand it now

The Subway Grate

590 Lexington Avenue

No Marilyn Monroe tour of New York would be complete without a stop at the subway grate she made famous in *The Seven Year Itch*. Monroe shot the scene on September 15, 1954, to the shock of pedestrians (and, apparently, the anger of her then-husband Joe DiMaggio).

The site of the former Universal Funeral Home

597 Lexington Avenue

Monroe and Truman attended the funeral of Constance Collier, Monroe's acting coach, at this chapel in April of 1955. Katharine Hepburn, Vivien Leigh, Audrey Hepburn and other starlets counted themselves among Collier's pupils. But she liked to refer to Monroe as "my special problem."

After the funeral, Monroe and Capote Truman window shopped around Midtown East and eventually cabbied to the South Street Pier. He wrote of their day together in his short story, "A Beautiful Child."

Marilyn's New York Apartment

2 Sutton Place

In September 1955, Marilyn left hotel life behind and moved into her first New York apartment, an 8th floor unit on Sutton Place. She frequented neighborhood haunts like Gino's and the Subway Inn (both sadly closed).

The Millers' Apartment

444 East 57th Street

Monroe wed Arthur Miller on June 29, 1956. After the wedding, the couple moved into this apartment, on the building's 13th floor. Miller wrote the script for *The Misfits*, Monroe's last film, here. After the couple divorced in 1961, Monroe kept this apartment as her New York base. From here, she liked to take her terrier — a gift from Frank Sinatra, named "Mafia Honey" — on walks along the East River.