



Office of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Student Services  
60 Washington Square South, Suite 602  
(212) 998 4424 • [lgbt.office@nyu.edu](mailto:lgbt.office@nyu.edu) • [www.nyu.edu/lgbt](http://www.nyu.edu/lgbt) • AIM [nyulgbtoffice](https://www.nyu.edu/lgbt/aim)

## LGBT Walking Tour of the West Village

### ▼ 60 Washington Square South, Suite 602.

*The NYU Office of LGBT Student Services*, founded in 1996. The LGBT Office offers many programs, events, and student organizations for you to be involved in. Be sure to check out the LGBT Lounge and Library as well while you're here. There are over 500 books and films to borrow, computers with internet access and free printing, and plenty of space in which you are invited hang out and socialize!

### ▼ Leave 60 Washington Square South, turn right and walk to the corner of Washington Square South and Washington Square East.

### ▼ Turn Left on Washington Square East, and walk to the corner of Washington Square North.

Looking up University Place you will see NYU flags at *Weinstein Hall*, one of NYU's first-year student residence halls. In 1970, Sylvia Rivera, the mother of the LGBT movement, and activist Jim Fouratt participated in a four-day sit-in in the Weinstein Basement in protest of NYU's refusal to allow the last three of a 5-part gay dance series they had promised NYU's LGBT students. The sit-in ended with a raid by police, and Sylvia defiantly shouting "Gimme a G... Gimme an A... Gimme a Y... Whadda we have? GAY!" to the police, moments before making a grand exit. The awareness aroused by the sit-in led to several protests of NYU's then-homophobic policies.

Out of this tension came NYU's new group, the Student Homophile League (now Queer Union), founded in part by openly lesbian author and NYU student Rita Mae Brown (who wrote *Rubyfruit Jungle*). Queer-Union is the second-oldest LGBT college group (Columbia's was the first).

### ▼ Turn left on Washington Square North.

*The Arch*. The NYC LGBT Pride March and Dyke March are held in June. Until 2003, the Pride March came down 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and turned here. However now the March turns onto 8<sup>th</sup> Street and then heads into the West Village. The Dyke March, which still culminates in the Park, takes place the day before the Pride March.

*The Park* has been a famous beatnik hang out, patronized by the likes of Bob Dylan, Alan Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac. In the 60s, the Park became a hot pick-up spot for gay men, which led City officials to cut down most of the bushes along the West side to prevent public sex. In the early 1900's John Sloan, Marcel Duchamp, and others gathered atop the Arch and declared Greenwich Village a free and independent nation.

### ▼ Walk West to Washington Square West, and make a Left.

*29 Washington Square West* is the former home of former First Lady and supposed lesbian Eleanor Roosevelt - her marriage to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt was seen by many as more of a powerful partnership than a love affair. She had many lesbian friends and had a long-standing relationship with Lorena Alice Hickok—an Associated Press reporter who gave up her career so she wouldn't have to write about Eleanor. Eleanor was crucial in a 1958 petition to close the Park to vehicular traffic. Cars used to drive through the arch and around the fountain! Known to be a strong human rights advocate, Mrs. Roosevelt is said to have moved out of this building in protest after some of her African American guests were asked to enter the building through a side entrance.

### ▼ Continue on Washington Square West and turn Right on West 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

*135 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street* was the Washington Square United Methodist Church and first home of the *Harvey Milk School*, a NYC Public Alternative High School for LGBT students, which moved to Astor Place in the Hetrick-Martin Institute. The Church was picketed by ministers who felt it was not right for the Church to host

such classes. The Church, along with Judson Church at Thompson St. and Washington Square South, has a strong social justice-focused history.

▼ **Continue on West 4<sup>th</sup> St, and turn Right onto 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, continuing to 8<sup>th</sup> Street. At 8<sup>th</sup> Street cross 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. (Ave. of the Americas) to Greenwich Avenue.**

*This intersection* was the site of the first Gay Pride March in June of 1970 - one year after the Stonewall Rebellion. About 10,000 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people assembled in front of the library (the building that looks like a castle) carrying signs and walked up 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Central Park for a rally. Thousands of people gathered on 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. to watch and support the movement, which was then known as Christopher Street Liberation Day.

▼ **Continue on Greenwich Avenue and take a Left on Christopher Street.**

This part of Greenwich Avenue and Christopher Street was a major gay male pick-up boulevard in the 1960s.

*15 Christopher St., The Oscar Wilde Bookstore.* The oldest storefront LGBT bookstore in the world, started by gay rights activist Craig Rodwell in 1967. Originally located on Mercer St, the store moved here in 1973. He bravely maintained the store, standing up to death threats and broken windows. Before the existence of an LGBT Community Center, the Bookstore was filled with notices about activist meetings and many such meetings were held here. Please support them if you can!

▼ **Continue on Christopher St and then turn Right onto Waverly Place. Walk one block to the corner of West 10<sup>th</sup> St.**

*159 West 10<sup>th</sup> St., Julius' (yellow textured plastered façade).* One of the oldest gay bars in the city. It was in existence before Prohibition and was a speakeasy during Prohibition. On April 21, 1966, Dick Leitsch, president of the New York Mattachine Society and two other members staged the "Sip-In" at Julius', which resulted in the anti-gay accommodation rules of the NY State Liquor Authority being overturned in subsequent court actions. These SLA provisions declared that it was illegal for homosexuals to congregate and be served alcoholic drinks in bars. Prior to this change in the law, the business of running a gay bar had to involve paying bribes to the police and Mafia. As soon as the law was altered, the SLA ceased closing legally licensed gay bars and such bars could no longer be prosecuted for serving homosexuals. The Mattachine Society pressed this advantage very quickly and NYC Mayor Lindsay was confronted with the issue of police entrapment in gay bars, resulting in this practice being stopped. On the heels of this victory, the mayor cooperated in getting questions about homosexuality removed from NYC hiring practices. The police and fire departments resisted the new policy, however, and refused to cooperate. The result of these changes in the law, combined with the open social- and sexual-attitudes of the late Sixties, led to the increased visibility of gay life in New York. Several licensed gay bars were in operation in Greenwich Village and the Upper West Side.

It is important to point out that this was also the site of a gay bashing in 1993 - two men were holding hands and were attacked by three men with golf clubs, fracturing the skull of one of the victims. NYC is a great place to be LGBTQ, but it is still a big city, and is not perfect. Always be aware of your surroundings, travel with others and be safe and smart.

▼ **Turn around and walk back down Waverly Place to Christopher St. Take a right onto Christopher St.**

*53 Christopher Street, The Stonewall Inn.* On June 27, 1969, police raided this bar for not having a liquor license, which was a common practice by police at the time, and the patrons had had enough. Led by Sylvia Rivera (previously mentioned during this tour!), a transgender activist, the crowd trapped police inside and started throwing rocks and bottles at them. Many were arrested. The riots and protests continued the next day in Sheridan Square and continued for several days. On the second night, about 400 policemen battled a crowd of over 2,000. This event is seen as the birth of the Modern Queer Rights Movement and is the marker for many Pride celebrations around the world. LGBT groups such as Gay Liberation Front and Gay Activists Alliance sprang up around the country and the world powered by the energy of the Civil Rights, Feminist, and Anti-Vietnam War movements. In the late 1980s, Stonewall, which had been shut down after the riots, reopened as a bagel shop and is now a queer nightclub again.

*Sheridan Square Park* is across the street from Stonewall, and was the actual site of the riots. The statues of gay and lesbian couples were added in memorial to this historical event. Walk into the park to check them out!

**▼ Exit the Park and cross 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and continue on Christopher Street.**

Walking down Christopher St. you will notice many LGBT and LGBT-friendly shops, bars, restaurants and cafes. For many years, Christopher St. was seen as the center of queer life in New York City. The NYC Pride March proceeds all the way down Christopher St. and the sidewalks and fire escapes are packed with people cheering on those in the March! It is believed that the West Village became the center of LGBT activity because it was somewhat cut-off from the rest of the city. Its confusing streets and the lack of a major Avenue coming through the Village (at the time) discouraged many people from going into the Village, allowing queer people here to live in a more private environment.

**▼ At the end of Christopher St., you will come to West St. (the West Side Highway). Cross West St.**

*The Christopher Street Piers.* Long used as a commercial port, since the 1970s the Christopher Street Piers have provided queer teens a safe public space to escape discrimination, hang out together and “be themselves.” Although the queer youth who congregate at the piers have always conflicted with the local residents, in recent years this tension has escalated. In 2003, the city renovated the piers (and renamed them part of the Hudson River Park), enforced a 1:00 am curfew, and increased police presence there. Residents claim that they simply want to curb the teens’ rowdiness and the illegal activities (such as drug use and sex work) that take place at the piers. Supporters of the teens, such as the queer youth organization FIERCE!, argue that the new rules have increased police harassment of them and pushed them out of one of their only public safe spaces. They also allege that the crackdown on the piers is racist and classist as it coincides with an increase in the number of low-income queer teens of color who meet there. They call for less policing of the piers and a 4:00 am curfew. Although the issue was brought before the Community Board last year, the conflict has not yet been resolved.

As part of the Hudson River Park development, the piers are a great place to hang out and relax – enjoy them for a bit, if you like!

**▼ Cross back over West St. and walk down Christopher St. to Hudson St. Take a left onto Hudson St.**

Along Hudson St. you will continue to see some more LGBT and LGBT-friendly shops and restaurants.

**▼ After several blocks, Veer off onto 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue (stay on the right side of the street to make the veer easier).**

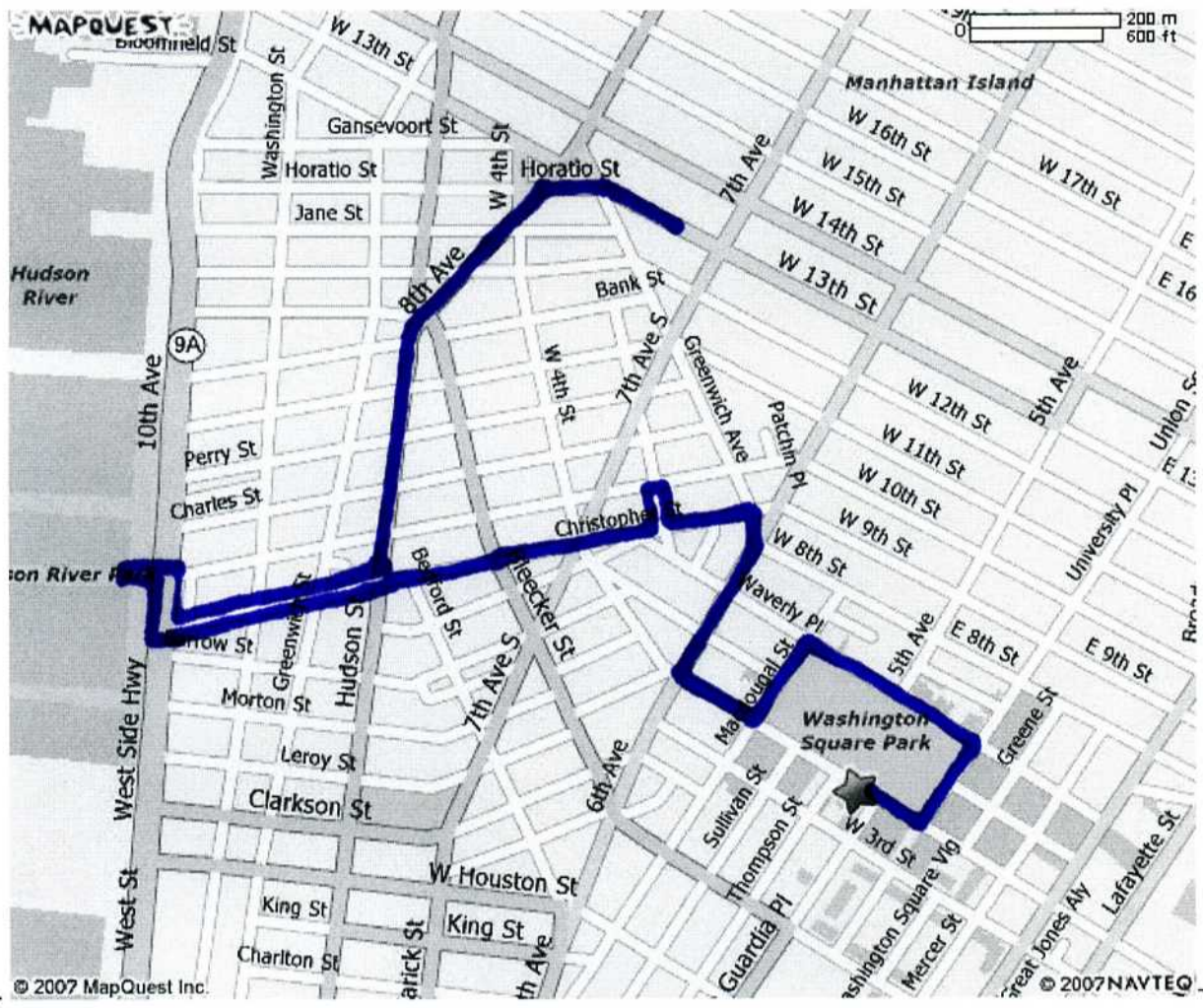
You should be able to see *The Cubby Hole* down West 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the right - the lesbian bar where Madonna and Sandra Bernhard hung out and declared their bisexuality.

*52 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Art Bar.* Formerly Sea Colony, a lesbian bar in the 40s, 50s and 60s. This bar, often a target for police raids, was a haven for women who wanted to wear pants and dance with their lovers - which was illegal in New York until the late 60s/early 70s.

**▼ Turn Right onto Horatio St. Walk one block, cross Greenwich Avenue and continue down W. 13<sup>th</sup> St.**

*208 West 13<sup>th</sup> St., The NYC LGBT Community Center,* a.k.a. “The Center.” Feel free to stop in for lots of information about community involvement, support groups, social and political events, etc. You can attend an orientation offered each month at the Center to learn even more about organizations in the NYC area.

This brings us to the end of the LGBT Walking Tour of the West Village! We hope it was informative and enjoyable! Be sure to check out our website at [www.nyu.edu/lgbt](http://www.nyu.edu/lgbt) for more resources and information on any upcoming events. Welcome to NYU and to NYC!



Notes: