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Where next?

A travel guide for the new era

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RAISING *the* BAR

Words | MARK SARIBAN

Whether you're a guest staying a few floors below or you're simply looking for killer views to go with your cocktails, here's our pick of the New York hotels with the best rooftop bars.

WITH those famous thickets of skyscrapers, there's no shortage of vantage points in New York City. You could pop up to the public observatories at One World Trade Center, the Empire State Building or the Comcast Building at 30 Rockefeller Plaza for a bird's-eye view of the Big Apple. But if you want to sip a well-crafted cocktail while you're taking in the views, you'll need to find a bar that's equally high up in the sky.

Go with the theme

The boutique Library Hotel in midtown Manhattan is home to more than 6,000 books, so you'll probably won't need to pop into the New York Public Library, one block away, for reading material. But you may well want to loiter in the Writer's Den and Poetry Garden on the 14th floor in the late afternoon, when this cosy space transforms into the intimate **Bookmarks Lounge**. The chilled-out rooftop bar and terrace serves up literary-inspired cocktails like the Tequila Mockingbird, with agave nectar,



fresh lime and minced ginger, and the Pulitzer, featuring New York Distilling Company's elderberry-infused Dorothy Parker gin.

When the McKittrick Hotel in Chelsea was completed in 1939, it was meant to be the city's most luxurious hotel. The building was condemned before it could welcome guests, and never actually opened its doors. Now safely resurrected, the McKittrick is home to Sleep No More, an immersive-theatre space, and the rooftop bar **Gallow Green**. This leafy outdoor space is a popular spot for weekend brunch, which is generally a boozy event for New Yorkers. Just getting to Gallow Green is an experience in itself: after announcing yourself in the old-school hotel lobby on the ground floor, you're taken to the rooftop in a wood-panelled lift by a uniformed elevator attendant who maintains a theatrically mysterious air, declining to answer any questions about the 'hotel'.

Get past the doorman

In New York, the liveliest hotel rooftop bar and nightclub is surely **Le Bain**, on the top floor of the Standard High Line. The oh-so-cool hotel straddles the High Line elevated walkway in the Meatpacking district, looking down at the Whitney Museum of American Art, so Le Bain has great views of the Hudson River and midtown Manhattan. It's popular with celebrities and the moneyed crowd, so dress up and be aware that the doormen are very security-conscious. (I once arrived at Le Bain carrying my DSLR, thinking I'd get some atmospheric skyline shots while I was there, but was told I wouldn't be allowed in with photographic equipment. I was staying at the Standard, so I said I'd drop it at my room a few floors down and come back. But while waiting for the lift *outside* the bar to arrive, I went to take a snap of the city below from the hallway window – and was promptly told by the unimpressed doorman to put the camera away.)

Snuggle up in an igloo

While New York winters and rooftop bars generally don't mix all that well, at centrally located Arlo NoMad's **Arlo Roof Top**, or **A.R.T. NoMad**, you can book a heated igloo and enjoy bottle service and cocktails while taking in the view of the Empire State Building, just two blocks away. Try a Hot Stuff cocktail, with tequila

Tall drinks

Opposite: A winter-proof igloo at Hyatt Centric Times Square's Bar 54. This page, from top: A signature Poptail at the Conrad New York Downtown's Loopy Doopy Rooftop Bar; the leafy Gallow Green bar at the McKittrick; the pool at the two-level Somewhere Nowhere bar on top of Renaissance New York Chelsea Hotel.





NEW YORK CITY

“Take in the vista of downtown Manhattan, the Hudson River and the Statue of Liberty while sipping on summery Poptails.”

Drinking in the views

From top: The Cuban-themed Azul Rooftop Bar at Hotel Hugo; settling in for the afternoon at Arlo NoMad's Arlo Roof Top; sweeping views from the inside bar at Somewhere Nowhere.



and Aleppo pepper cordial, mango and lime to warm the cockles on a snowy New York night.

You'll also find cosy igloos at Hyatt Centric Times Square's **Bar 54**. It's one of the highest bars in New York – it's on the 54th floor of the Hyatt, hence its name, with sweeping views from Hudson River to East River and the Art Deco Chrysler Building. Bar 54 is best known for its hand-crafted cocktails and a seriously impressive collection of whiskeys.

At **Somewhere Nowhere**, a two-level bar, nightclub and pool with 360-degree views over the city from the top of the Renaissance New York Chelsea Hotel, you can take over a “Teardrop Igloo” to shelter from the elements in the colder months.

And if you happen to be in town with 11 of your closest friends, you can book a Skypod at the rooftop **St Cloud** bar at the Knickerbocker Hotel, also on Times Square. The Skypods, tucked into the corners of the beautifully restored Beaux Arts building, seat 12 to 20 guests.

Turn up the heat

Not all New York rooftop bars trade through winter. Case in point: the **Loopy Doopy Rooftop Bar** at the Conrad New York Downtown hotel, which closes for the colder months and reopens in spring. Take in the panoramic vista of downtown Manhattan, the Hudson River and the Statue of Liberty on a hot summer day while sipping on the bar's signature Poptails. These moreish drinks combine alcoholic frozen treats by Brooklyn-based Mom & Icepops with your choice of Moët & Chandon Ice Impérial, prosecco or rosecco.

Also open seasonally, **Azul Rooftop Bar** at Hotel Hugo, a bohemian-chic retreat in SoHo, is a playful oasis of Cuban music and stay-a-while lounges looking out over the financial district and the Hudson River. Complementing the Havana cantina vibe are rum cocktails like passionfruit mojitos and nibbles such as tuna tacos. When Azul shuts for winter, there's always its sister venue **Bar Hugo Rooftop**, a glass-enclosed space over two floors of the hotel. This is New York, after all, the city that never sleeps and only stops pouring drinks in the wee hours of the morning. **Q**

