

Not Your Average Bus Tour: New York Splash Tours

by Sara Varney, PassPorter Guest Contributor

It's a Bus, It's a Boat, it's a ... AquaBus? If you are planning a trip to New York City and are looking for a new way to explore, then a [New York Splash Tour](#) may be for you.

New York Splash Tours is part of the Gray Line family of New York City tours - they also operate the red, double-decker, open air buses that you will see everywhere around the city. But to my mind, the Splash Tour is the way to go! You board your amphibious vehicle in Times Square. Upon boarding you are handed a poncho and a whistle. The whistle you may or may not need (to get your tour guide's attention if you have a question), but the poncho you definitely will need!

Your tour first takes you down Broadway as your Tour Guide explains some of the history of Times Square and its buildings. You will see the MTV Studios, the ABC Studios, and the old New York Times Building where the ball is dropped every New Years Eve. Your AquaBus then heads across town towards the east, past the New York Public Library, past the Empire State Building, and back across town to the west where you will pass Macy's and Herald Square where the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade terminates each year. With each neighborhood you pass, your Tour Guide will be giving you the history of the various buildings, pointing out architectural details and providing you with bits of trivia.

When you reach 12th Avenue on the West Side, you pause briefly to switch your bus driver for a boat captain and your vehicle then enters the AquaBus Theater - a multi-media drive-in movie theater. You will view a brief film that recreates Henry Hudson's exploration of the River that bears his name. You will experience the sights, sounds and even a bit of the weather that Henry Hudson may have experienced on his voyage aboard his ship - The Half Moon. (By now, you've hopefully put on your poncho!)

Once the film is complete, the real fun begins! Your captain revs the engine and drives your AquaBus straight into the Hudson. They don't call it the Splash Tour for nothing! This portion of the tour was by far my favorite part. As your boat motors around the river, you get an unforgettable view of the New York City skyline. Not to mention the docks on the West Side where you can find ferries crossing, cruise ships docking and pleasure boats sailing by. (The water can get a little choppy at times so if you are prone to motion sickness, make sure to take some

Bonine before boarding.) Your tour guide will give you some of the history of the river and how it has been cleaned up in the years since it was lined with factories, but most of your time on the water is spent simply enjoying the views while New York-themed music plays over the speakers.

After about 20 minutes, your AquaBus heads back to the docks where it drives up the ramp and you swap your captain for a bus driver once more. The tour continues up 12th Avenue and through Hell's Kitchen (not nearly as scary as it sounds) as your driver continues to regale you with stories of old New York. Then it is back across town through the theater district and back to Broadway and Times Square, where you disembark your AquaBus.

The Splash Tour leaves Times Square from the east side of Broadway between 47th & 48th streets, approximately every 45 minutes. Tickets are available for pre-purchase online for \$27/adult and \$18/child. Or you can do what we did - take a brochure from one of the many ticket agents roaming Times Square, ask "How much?" and when he tells the price that is on the flyer (\$29/adult), shake your head and start to walk away. He will then immediately cut you a better deal. We paid \$19/adult for our tickets. Either way, the Splash Tour is a unique way to experience New York, perfect for both locals and visitors alike.

About The Author: Sara is the Editor of PassPorter News and PassPorter's Online Coordinator. She lives in New England with her husband and their three year old son. They are looking forward to their next Disney trip - MouseFest 2007!

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