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## The High Line: A Place to See and Be Seen

*Glimpses of life in the apartments along the 1.45-mile park are often unavoidable. That's part of the attraction, some residents and visitors say.*



*Joshua Bright for The New York Times*

For confirmation that all the world is indeed a stage, consider the High Line, the elevated park that threads among buildings in West Chelsea.

Amid a squeeze of large-windowed apartments and a stream of passers-by, where shades often go unused and cameras snap furiously, residents and visitors can seem locked in a perpetual state of performance.

Reliable stars, residents say, include a woman in the curtainless unit on West 23rd Street who regularly blow-dries her hair in the nude. Other shows seem more improvised. On a recent afternoon, under a chandelier on West 19th Street, a brown dog hopped on and off a table, prompting a park-goer to whip out her iPad.



*By The New York Times*

A young girl who likes to blow bubbles on a balcony at West 24th Street has also drawn upward stares over the years, said Cheryl Skura, a neighborhood resident who also happens to be the girl's grandmother. "I think that tourists have more photos of her than we do," said Ms. Skura, 68, a retired jewelry importer.

But far from complaining about the downside of living in a fishbowl, Ms. Skura, like others, had high praise for a lively, well-kept enclave that finally seems to be coming into its own, nearly a decade after the park's first section opened.

"The High Line is pretty, all the plantings are beautiful, and it's idyllic to look at — at least at seven in the morning," she said. "Maybe not when 20 million people are walking."

Ms. Skura's first apartment was a two-bedroom, two-bathroom condo, with the balcony that functioned as a stage. It cost \$1.4 million in 2006, when Ms. Skura, recently widowed, left suburban Long Island to be closer to her SoHo office. The night life in the area, once thick with restaurants and clubs, was appealing. The High Line? Not so much, Ms. Skura said, as it was then an abandoned freight track awaiting conversion.



*Even on cold days, tourists flock to the walkway, which winds from the meatpacking district to Hudson Yards. In 2017, about eight million people visited the High Line, where views into nearby apartments are almost unavoidable. Joshua Bright for The New York Times*

The first phase of the 1.45-mile park, which runs from Gansevoort Street up to West 34th Street, opened in 2009, with the bulk completed by 2014; a spur at 10th Avenue and West 30th Street is still in the works and expected to open next year.

Once the park was up and running, Ms. Skura quickly became a fan. In fact, after selling her condo for \$2.8 million in 2015, she bought another in the neighborhood, on the other side of the tracks. It is not exactly hidden away. The three-bedroom, three-bathroom condo, for which she paid \$5.5 million, has a park-facing terrace where Ms. Skura sits a couple of times a day.

Noise can be an issue. “There’s a slightly elevated buzz. You can hear people talk,” said Atith Pagdi, whose one-bedroom, one-bathroom cond-op, which cost \$800,000 in 2017, has a balcony that serves as a veritable opera box for the action.

Mr. Pagdi, 36, who works for a bank, wasn’t seeking the spotlight when he moved from New Jersey after a divorce. Indeed, to make sure his home-to-be was private enough, he asked a friend to stand in the apartment while he paced the High Line.

“But this is New York City,” he said. “You are bound to be seen at some point anyway, in any apartment, in any neighborhood.”

Besides, Mr. Pagdi added, the convenience of the High Line, which allows traffic-light-free passage from one block to the next, can’t be beat. In addition to hitting the park for early-morning jogs, he uses it for speedy commutes to the beer garden at the Standard Hotel and to his gym near West 17th Street. “The location is awesome,” he said.



*Eye-catching works along the High Line include the blinking “C.R.E.A.M.,” a play on the Hollywood sign, by Sable Elyse Smith. Joshua Bright for The New York Times*

## **What You’ll Find**

The High Line touches Hudson Yards and the meatpacking district. But in a city with a tendency to chop neighborhoods into ever smaller pieces (all with their own names), the block-wide district should be considered a stand-alone place, say many who live and work there.

That wasn’t always the case. Lined with storage facilities for clothes, meat and mail, the area was for decades mostly indistinguishable from the industrial West Side, or the “Wild West,” according to a common sobriquet.

In the early 2000s, about the time the Friends of the High Line organization began agitating for the preservation of the elevated metal trestle, large-scale rentals began arriving in the area. Condos followed.



*515 WEST 23RD STREET, NO. 4 | An 1,870-square-foot condo with two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a keyed elevator, in a doorman building, listed for \$3.6 million. 347-297-1022C Joshua Bright for The New York Times*

Today, the neighborhood, which the city rezoned in 2005 to cap heights and lure apartments, has lost much of its grit. Longtime parking lots are gone, as are most of the bars and clubs where music thumped late into the night. Bungalow 8, a mid-2000s mainstay on West 27th Street, is now the site of an art gallery whose concrete shape resembles an oversized picture frame.

But Marquee New York, a bottle-service joint on 10th Avenue, and Scores, a strip club on West 28th Street, endure.

Some developers have paid homage to the past, including Tamarkin Co., whose 508 West 24th Street, a 15-unit condo, and 550 West 29th Street, a 19-unit version, feature casement-style windows reminiscent of factories.

Mostly, though, the High Line seems like a keeping-up-with-the-Joneses type of showcase for whimsy.

The series of silvery fins along 520 West 28th Street, a 39-unit condo from the architect Zaha Hadid, who died in 2016, gives the facade the look of an egg slicer. Its developer was the Related Companies, a firm whose huge footprint in the neighborhood is about to get bigger with 515 West 18th, an under-development condo that will flank the park with a pair of towers, akin to the 505 West 19th Street building designed by Thomas Juul-Hansen. Related has also broken ground on another condo, at 555 West 22nd.



*245 10TH AVENUE, NO. 6E | A 1,500-square-foot condo with two bedrooms and two bathrooms, in a doorman building with a gym, listed for \$2.695 million. 917-209-4550 Joshua Bright for The New York Times*

In a similar spirit is the XI, a condo-and-hotel complex at 76 11th Avenue from the architecture firm Bjarke Ingels Group, with two towers that lean and twist so much they seem on the verge of falling over. The 236-unit complex, which started sales this fall, is slated to open in 2020.

At the splashy Soori High Line, at 522 West 29th Street, from the architect Soo K. Chan, some living rooms come with saltwater pools. There is also the 14-unit Fitzroy, at 514 West 24th Street, whose jade-colored, terra-cotta exterior was designed by Roman and Williams, a firm known for residential interiors and hotels.

It's all enough to make the few tenements remaining, like those on West 23rd and West 29th Streets, seem small and plain by comparison.



*231 10TH AVENUE, NO. 7B | A 1,421-square-foot condo with two bedrooms and two bathrooms, in a building with a part-time doorman, listed for \$2.3 million. 917-747-5646 Joshua Bright for The New York Times*

## **What You'll Pay**

On Dec. 5, there were 85 apartments listed in the area, according to StreetEasy, almost all of them condos, for an average of \$6.92 million. The least expensive was an alcove studio for \$780,000; the priciest was a triplex penthouse for \$50 million.

Sales are cooling. In 2018, through Dec. 5, 49 apartments had sold, for an average of \$3 million, according to StreetEasy. During the same period in 2017, 73 units sold, for an average of \$3.7 million. Still, the neighborhood is no bargain compared with the rest of Manhattan, where the average sale price in the third quarter of 2018 was \$1.93 million, according to Douglas Elliman Real Estate.

Rental options in the area include contemporary high-rises like the Tate, Ten23 and Abington House. As of early December, the average rental studio in the neighborhood was asking \$3,800 a month, according to StreetEasy, while the average one-bedroom was listed for \$4,300.



*520 WEST 23RD STREET, NO. 9H | A 650-square-foot cond-op with one bedroom, one bathroom and a balcony, in a building that allows subletting, listed for \$845,000. 917-568-5664 Joshua Bright for The New York Times*

## **The Vibe**

Around the High Line, art and retail can blur. The stylish interior seen through tall windows on West 28th might at first seem to belong to a gallery, but it is actually Il Piccolo Ristoro, a new cafe. Likewise, the cartoonish colors of a carwash at 10th Avenue and West 24th Street, with blue walls and a lighted red sign, suggest a clever set piece, but autos do get cleaned there.

The sculpture-lined park, which closes at 7 p.m. in winter, hosts about eight million visitors a year. A more vexing issue, some say, is the relentless construction activity nearby.





*Art and commerce often seem to blend here: Il Piccolo Ristoro, on West 28th Street, is a coffee shop, although it resembles a gallery. Joshua Bright for The New York Times*

Restaurants that once largely catered to gallery patrons still dot 10th Avenue. Their ranks are thinning, however, with the closure of Trestle on Tenth, in May, and the Red Cat, which will close at the end of December. But Cookshop and the High Line Hotel, both at West 20th, remain popular draws.

For pharmacies, haircuts, manicures and groceries, residents mostly have to trudge east.

### **The Schools**

Students are zoned for two public schools, both outside the neighborhood.

P.S. 33, or Chelsea Prep, offers prekindergarten through fifth grade. On last year's state exams, 67 percent of students met English standards, versus 46 percent citywide; 65 percent met math standards, versus 47 percent citywide.

P.S. 11, the William T. Harris School, also offers prekindergarten through fifth grade. There, 72 percent met English standards on last year's state exams, and 74 percent met math standards.

The zoned middle school is M.S. 297, on Morton Street in the West Village. Students can choose their high school; several are on West 18th in the multi-school Bayard Rustin Educational Campus.

A private option is Avenues: The World School, a for-profit that opened in 2012 on 10th Avenue. Annual tuition at the school, which enrolls around 1,600, is \$54,000.

## The Commute

For subway service, most residents hike to Eighth Avenue, which offers C and E service, at West 23rd Street, and A, C and E service, at West 14th Street.



*The High Line can seem like a seat from which to watch New York perform. Joshua Bright for The New York Times*

## The History

The final cargo on the High Line train, which was in service from 1934 to 1980, was three boxcars of frozen turkeys.

Originally, the railroad — officially, the New York Central viaduct — ended at the St. John's terminal near Spring Street. But in the 1960s, sections along Washington Street began to come down; in 1991, the city razed a five-block span from Gansevoort to Bank Streets.

But some railroad stops remain, including 95 Horatio Street, now part of TF Cornerstone's West Coast rental complex. A tiled section of its otherwise yellow-brick facade, at the second floor, is a tip-off to where turkeys once rumbled through.