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NYMAR's Man About Town

This Issue: "**Ferry Riders and Spectacular Waterfront Dining in the City**"

By Barry D. Parker for NYMAR



In an exhibit currently at the Museum of Modern Art ("MOMA", at 53rd Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues) called "**Rising Currents: Projects for New York's Waterfront**", urban planners present maps of the harbor criss-crossed with ferry routes. Before the advent of tunnels and bridges bringing cars and trains directly to Manhattan, water craft offered a primary mode of freight and passenger transport. Over the past decade, as landside infrastructure around the New York area has become a bottleneck, ferries have made a modest comeback. If the MOMA futurists are correct, ferries' importance will grow greatly in the decades ahead.

The **Staten Island ferry**, which offers free rides for passengers on the five mile voyage across New York harbor, has long been a fixture linking lower Manhattan with the waterfront of Staten Island- one of New York's outer boroughs. Ship-spotters on the ferries' ample decks will enjoy views of deepsea vessels anchored off Bay Ridge, Brooklyn and Stapleton (just off the Staten Island shore under the Verrazano Bridge), waiting for the transit to their berths. For readers leaving their business on land, the half hour ride offers views of Governor's Island (once a Coast Guard base, now an inchoate cultural hub), the Statue of Liberty, and Ellis Island (where incoming immigrants, many arriving from Europe on steamships in the early 1900's, were processed).

An inveterate ferry rider would be able to use the various islands as a springboard for harbor travel. **Liberty and Ellis Islands** are easily accessible from the dock in lower Manhattan near Battery Park. **Governor's Island** can be reached by free ferries (on weekends) operating from the Battery Maritime pier (next to the Staten Island Ferry dock), and from a pier on the Brooklyn side not far from the iconic Brooklyn Bridge, where the old industrial waterfront is morphing into a new park. The island is also reachable by the "Harbor Way" service provided by New York Harbor Taxi from the big pier at Fulton Street and the East River (at the South Street Seaport), on the East Side.

Space constraints in Manhattan have provided an impetus for newly developed office and apartment towers in Long Island City, Queens. Subway and car transportation have been supplemented by water taxis, linking the East Side of Manhattan with the recently constructed piers in Queens. **New York Water Taxi**, which operates the service, also runs boats from newly gentrified areas of Williamsburg and DUMBO, in Brooklyn, into the Fulton Street and World Financial Center piers. Red Hook, Brooklyn, another up and coming area (where breakbulk vessels were worked through the late 1960s), is also served by this operator.

Business hubs and residential development have also spread to the New Jersey waterfront. Two way passenger traffic has been growing steadily on the **Liberty Landing Ferry**, operating between Jersey City and the World Financial Center near West Street (across from the newly emergent construction at Ground Zero). One of the earliest operators from New Jersey, and a leading proponent of ferry transportation, has been **New York Waterway**, with a Weehawken, New Jersey hub sitting on land where truck trailers were unloaded (long before the days of containerization). New York Waterway offers service across the Hudson to terminals on the West Side of Manhattan (at 39th Street, a short walk from the Intrepid Museum), the World Financial

Center, and a dock on the East Side at Wall Street (south of The Seaport). These days, New Jersey terminals range from as far south as Sandy Hook, and north to Edgewater. The big hubs at Port Imperial and Lincoln Harbor (both in Weehawken) are tied to a light rail system. On the Manhattan side, ferry commuters are then shuttled across town by a bespoke bus network. Another operator, **SeaStreak**, operates high speed passenger catamarans between the Atlantic Highlands (below Sandy Hook) into downtown Manhattan.

Most of the operators listed offer activities targeted beyond commuters, including sunset cruises, weekend river cruises, wine tastings and other special events. The boats offer a great way to see a different part of New York, beyond the hectic business scene. The boats embody a great deal of history, evocative of New York's early days. Some of the history is relatively recent such as the evacuation of downtown after the 9-11-2001 tragedy, and the January 2009 rescue of passengers from Flight 1549, a jetliner that ditched in the Hudson River shortly after taking off from LaGuardia Airport.

MOMA: Rising Currents Exhibit
<http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/1031>

Staten Island Ferry <http://www.siferry.com/>

Statue of Liberty / Ellis Island <http://www.statuecruises.com/>

New York Harbor Way <http://nyharborway.com/>

New York Water Taxi <http://www.nywatertaxi.com/>

Liberty Landing Ferry
<http://www.libertylandingferry.com/littlelady-stops.aspx>

New York Waterway <http://www.nywaterway.com>

SeaStreak <http://www.seastreak.com>