



“ Being able to think clearly at 3am is a mark of a true leader ” Ariel Leve

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From Times Online

March 6, 2008

Hip Hop New York

Step beyond tourist Manhattan and take a rapping tour of hip hop in Harlem says Michael Moran

Michael Moran

The New York most tourists see is confined to a narrow rectangle of Manhattan centred on Times Square and Central Park.

Beyond the Sex and the City world of Manhattan matrons shopping for shoes and Brits stocking up on iPods there are innumerable other pleasures waiting to be discovered uptown, if only you can find a suitable guide.

From the moment you step on the chartered Harlem Hip Hop Tours bus, which has been equipped with a DJ mixing station and a rump-shakingly loud sound system, you know that you're in for a memorable experience.

Charismatic and personable tour guide MC PJ works hard to strip self-conscious tourists of their inhibitions and promote a party mood. It doesn't take long before the cynical Britons onboard are sporting impossibly loud baseball caps and rapping along to even louder music.



Ready to scratch at the Hip Hop Culture Centre in Harlem

There's also a more conventional rolling talk about the history and culture New York's most colourful district.

With a focus on the early pioneering days of Hip Hop music it's slanted to please those 40-year old b-boys with substantial disposable income rather than devotees of more threatening contemporary rap styles.

There are digressions too into Hip Hop's jazz and soul antecedents with brief stops at The Cotton Club and the Harlem Apollo, both of which are far smaller and more modest than their international reputations might suggest.

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Steve Keenan, Online Travel Editor

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desire.

Hip Hop tours offer a mix-and-match selection of authentic Harlem experiences, including club nights, Hip Hop dance lessons and even a recording studio visit. For those of us that grew up listening to the fat beats from across the Atlantic one of their tours really is an essential part of any New York visit.

Harlem Hip Tours can be contacted via www.harlemhiphoptours.com

Definitely highlight of the tour was a visit to Harlem's Hip Hop Culture Centre. It would be inaccurate to suggest that the DJing skills workshop resulted in anything but a raucous cacophony of inexpert scratching, but most participants were having too much fun dreaming up fanciful DJ stage names for themselves to notice.

Elder statesman (and arguably originator) of Hip Hop Kool Herc was on hand at the centre to say a few words and good naturedly pose for photographs with starstruck ageing Home Counties b-boys. Other rap luminaries are promised for future tours.

The tour ended with a lunch at Sylvia's soul food restaurant. Few could finish the vast plates of delicious cornbread, fried chicken and ribs but it wasn't for lack of



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