

36 HOURS

# Lower Manhattan



Photograph by John Marshall Maser for The New York Times

**W**ELCOME to Lower Manhattan, you're already behind schedule. Was it really just a few years ago that people wondered if the area would ever recover? Since 9/11 the pace of development has only intensified (everywhere but ground zero, where the pace of stagnation has intensified). Thirty-six hours seems far too little time to cover it all. But it's a great start. **ARIEL KAMINER**

chocolate facials of uptown spas. Settle into a cracked old wing chair while a Chinese masseur leans down on the tip of your fourth toe, or the area right inside your heel, tiny spots said to correspond to precise parts of the body. Check the laminated chart and note that he's put his hands on not only your "liver" and "spleen" but also places — hello! — not fit to name in a family newspaper. What's the standard tip for that?

**Friday**

**3:30 p.m.**

**1 Hang Out**

On a tiny platform 23 feet off the ground, every natural impulse tells you to stay away from the edge. But Jonah, a rather dreamy trapeze instructor, tells you to lean over 3— way over it— and so you lean. Then he tells you to bend your knees and jump off. And so,

**8 p.m.**

**2 Bridge to the 19th Century**

Depending on whom you believe, the Bridge Café (279 Water Street, 212-227-3344) may be the city's oldest drinking establishment, tracing its ancestry to 1794. It wears its history lightly, with a low-key New American menu and friendly setting (seared diver scallops, \$28; lobster pot pie, \$26). After dinner you can wander the almost ridiculously picturesque streets just south of the Brooklyn Bridge (but north of the dreaded South Street Seaport mall), cobblestone alleys



Map by Barbara Berman for The New York Times

doing it. Every morning in Chinatown's Columbus Park, old men, young students and graceful women of a certain age gather in their own little square to perform tai chi

Chinese art. With a new \$27 million federal grant for cultural programs in the area, more art — and more condo sales offices —

flight up. Upstairs a West Broadway, 212-4 features some of the a tiny and happily cro trees top out in the lo burger is just \$12). It cepted, and the line e you're waiting you c the open kitchen, and literally look down on times as much for the

**Midnight**

**3 Sofia on the E**

If you can choose only bar this weekend, Mo go. This freakish little way and Canal (418 St 212-625-0881), but at it ferent country, or plar of cute college girls, r Eastern Europeans — dervish thrown in for D.J. spins somethr drinks and dances, i night slides over the weird terrain. Food i way advisable.

**Sunday**

**11 a.m.**

**4 Why Is It So I**

There's something al with a band of cranes that changes a person how long, it's best no plan: brunch at Sm Street, a pretty cobbl nancial district (33 r 3500). Bring a stack r not read them. Instea ster eggs Benedict ( quant doses of coffee i in your head. It will i

has to.

**THE BASICS**

## An Urban Crawl On the Island's Tip

One of Lower Manhattan's newest hotels may also be its fanciest: the Ritz-Carlton New York, Battery Park (2 West Street, 212-344-0800; www.ritzcarlton.com) opened in 2002 at the southern tip of the island. Expensive, but who can put a price on Staten Island views? Weekend accommodations start at \$295 a night.

On the other end of the spectrum, but not far away, is the Cosmopolitan Hotel (95 West Broadway, 212-568-1900; www.cosmohotel.com). The hotel offers budget accommodations, which for New York means it's not as mealy as you'd expect, and it's not as cheap as you'd like. Perfectly decent if unglamorous rooms start at \$129.

Just a few blocks north of Canal Street, the Blue Moon Hotel (100 Orchard Street, 212-533-9080; www.blue-moon-nyc.com) is a strong reminder of the Lower East Side's immigrant past. This converted tenement has been updated — somewhat — so that each of the 22 rooms looks like an apartment a stylish young slacker inherited from his Great-Aunt Sadie. Though if she knew that rooms there start at \$330 on weekends, she'd plotz.