

60.

Cruise your way around Manhattan and You'll come to understand that New York is a city afloat. Just don't tell anybody who lives there.

TEXT *by* PORTER FOX
PHOTOGRAPHY *by* BLAINE DAVIS

WATER WORLD

THE TOWERS RISE UP AND THE WATER SINKS DOWN. The tide is ebbing. Golden light reflects off the island city. A few clouds drift overhead. It's 3 p.m. on a Saturday. The workers have gone home and the streets are left to the wanderers. The blue overhead is blinding. It's December so the air and water are cold. The river is brown and velvety. Tiny ripples angle away from old pilings. At the turn of the last century you could walk across the Hudson River on brigs, barks, steamers and canal barges loaded with cargo. Now there's just water taxis and a single trawler—plumbing the murky depths of America's most infamous shoreline.

Manhattan's waterfront is a place of no places. It's the watery perimeter that city-goers hit, turn tail and then dive back into the grind of the metropolis. Its significance hasn't so much been forgotten over the years as it has been eclipsed by bigger, more stunning events. Here, the Carpathian landed with 700 Titanic survivors. There, two jetliners slammed into the World Trade Center's Twin Towers. Here P.T. Barnum crossed the Brooklyn Bridge with 21 elephants. There, the 1,000-story fantasyland of Donald Trump's mind's eye edges the river.

People have tried to wrangle "the island of hills," as the Manhattan tribe called it, since the Old World met the New. Dutchman Peter Minuit bought the island in 1626 for \$1,000 in trinkets. When the British overran the Dutch, they renamed it New York after the future King James II. When the Americans prevailed, after being chased across the island a dozen times, the genesis of modern New York began.

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Joining a bunch of performance artists travelling down the Hudson River on a home made raft/installation piece is one way of seeing the Manhattan waterfront. — See pg. 75



The dream day in Alex Noren's life doesn't come cheap: Starting with a round of golf at the Sunningdale Old, north of London, arriving in a Lamborghini, preferably black (we recommend the limited edition 2009 Reventón with 650 bhp, Alex) and then some jet skiing (on a color matched 2009 Yamaha FX High Output, bien sur) in the Stockholm archipelago. No mention of how he would travel from England to Sweden but we're guessing a ferry trip is out of the question.

In fact, this apparent picture of human perfection does have some all-too-human failings. He is, for instance, notoriously hard on caddies:

— I just think that people should work hard and try hard in everything they do, so if the caddy works hard I will like him and if he doesn't, I try to find one who does.

Having burned through four of them in two years on tour, he indeed must be tough on them.

— I have always been very impatient but now I'm starting to learn more patience on the golf course. I love being out there so I should try and enjoy it as much as possible. And I really want to win and you're not going to do that by hitting the ball in a hurry.

Does this mean that off the course he can be a bit hot-headed?

— It's more a case of having a purpose; if I'm not doing something constructive, that's when I can get impatient.

He clearly doesn't suffer well those who give up too easily, and it's this behaviour observed in other players or caddies that he finds most annoying.

— I hate it when people quit playing out on the golf course. Okay, if you're having a lousy day and nothing's going right and you want to quit, then walk off. But if you give up and aren't even trying then stay out there anyway, it can have a really bad effect on the people you're playing with.

Impatience, however, has not caused him to lose sight of the importance of a career plan, and he seems to be doing an admirable job of controlling any impulsiveness that might hinder his ambition. For example, he decided early on that one of the quickest routes to success was via the American college system, and he knew that Oklahoma State University had an excellent reputation, but a fearsome coach called Mike Holder.

— I had heard a lot of stories about how tough the coach was and I was already pretty nervous out on the course and didn't think too much of my game, Alex explains.

— But I saw the place and the amazing facilities and decided to go. The coach was every bit as tough as I had heard but he knew a lot about golf and players and he knew exactly what we needed to do and he helped me more than anyone else.

From there Alex proceeded to the Challenge Tour before graduating to the Big Time—the full European Tour—at the end of 2006. In his first season he finished a very respectable 63rd, to easily secure his tour card for last year, when he ended up 31st.

— My driving is the thing that has most improved, says Alex.

— On half the courses we play it's really tough to find the fairways and then hit the greens in regulation. So I would say that driving is the best part of my game and putting is the thing I work on the most. I'm not exceptionally good or exceptionally bad at anything but reasonably good at everything.

The picture is one of steady, sustained progress and the nearest comparison is to someone like Padraig Harrington who, in his earlier years on the tour did few things exceptionally well but nothing badly.

— I'm a lot more steady this year, I don't miss too many cuts. I've had a lot of top-10 and top-15 finishes and all the stats are improving, none of them getting worse. Still, I need to be up there more often than I have been. My coach Pete Cowen used to say that if you get within three strokes on the back nine of the last day then you have a chance to win.

Like most athletes, however, you have to knock on the door a few times before it opens. Noren's loudest knock came in 2006 when he led the Esoril Open de Portugal after three rounds but then blew up to a 76 on the last day to eventually finish in a tie for 11th.

— I can't stay awake at night and tend to fall asleep wherever I go. The only time I can remember staying awake was when I was the overnight leader at Oitavos in Portugal. I'd won on the Challenge Tour but the European Tour was so much bigger and more important and I wanted to win so much that I just couldn't sleep.

Clearly it cost him. But as if heeding the Friedrich Nietzsche axiom that whatever does not kill us makes us stronger, Noren responded to the setback and he has been able to turn what could have been a devastating blow to his self-esteem into the catalyst for even greater effort. It suggests an inner mental toughness that belies the surface charm and courtesy.

As a young man, Alex looked up to a varied crop of players including Nick Faldo, Fred Couples, Seve Ballesteros and Jose Maria Olazabal. This might seem strange given that Faldo and Couples are so very different from each other.

— You've got to remember that we didn't know too much; we just saw them on TV and knew that they were champions. It was the same with Greg Norman, who has a similar sort of attitude to Fred Couples. Then Tiger Woods came along when I was about 14 or so and I really liked and admired him for a long time; in fact, I still do; I watched him in 2000 in Dubai for the first time and I thought he was amazing.

Alex Noren still has some way to go to scale even the foothills of success that Tiger has achieved but all the indicators suggest he is past base camp and climbing steadily. And though it may pain many to say it, he's also a pretty likeable guy.

ALEX NOREN ON...

... *the best part of a touring pro's life.*

— Playing really good tournaments and courses every week against the best players in the world.

... *the worst part of a touring pro's life.*

— Travel around Europe isn't too bad but long haul travel is just something that has to be endured.

... *his biggest extravagance.*

— I love cars and everything about them. In fact, I'm a fan of any machine that goes fast—powerboats, jet skis, whatever. To me they're sym-

bols of freedom. My dream car would be a black Lamborghini.

... *the biggest mistake amateurs make.*

— Not knowing their own strengths and limitations and taking on the near impossible shot that has a 1-in-50 chance of success. If they played more strategically they would score a lot better.

... *fans.*

— I get a lot of fans from my home club [Haninge GK], and they are very supportive; the really good thing about them is that they don't try and talk to me about golf all the time.

... *his perfect day.*

— I would drive my Lamborghini to Sunningdale Old and play a round with friends and then we'd jet ski around the islands outside Stockholm. I just love Sunningdale, it's one of the oldest and prettiest courses in the world.

... *what he talks about with his caddy when they're walking down the fairway.*

— Everything. Courses we've played or will play, friends, girlfriends, cars. There's a lot of random talk and all of it is deliberate—you're over the ball you focus on what you're about to do but the rest of the time it's important to think about other things.

... *the last person or thing he swore at.*

— I swore today when it took too long at the airport.

... *whether he would like himself.*

— Yes. I like people and I'm pretty energetic, so maybe that rubs off on people. I just see the good stuff in people. Possibly that makes me a little too trusting but I like to think people are good unless they show you something to the contrary.

... *one shot he'd like to play again.*

— The tee shot on the first hole at Birkdale that I hit in the final round of The Open. I was in the third-to-last group in my first major and I wasn't too nervous and I just loved being in that position.

60. Water World

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From inside America's largest city, the water comes in flashes of blue and brown: images of a freighter's superstructure passing by, a bridge's suspension cables swooping through the skyline. It's at that moment you wonder where, exactly, you are. This is the city of Sinatra, DiMaggio, Rockefeller, Streisand, The Ramones and P. Diddy. This is The Big Apple; The City That Never Sleeps; Gotham; Empire City. The conflation of civilization, industry, economy and the arts is like nothing ever seen before—but has also built a physical and psychological wall between Manhattanites and the water that braces them. Tell a New Yorker they live on an island and they'll scoff and walk on. Tell them Brooklyn occupies the western tip of Long Island and they'll laugh.

We know the island from the inside: 21 kilometres long and 3.2 kilometres at its widest. We've read about its 1.5 million souls through the eyes of Kerouac, Ginsberg, Whitman and Ellison. But what about the outside? What about the water? What does it look like from out there? What if you approached the island following Henry Hudson's route? Or from the East River? New York Harbor or Newtown Creek? Climb over the seawall; cross the riverside parks; scamper over the highways and into the streets. What is that light you see between the buildings? That sound?

There's no starting point on a circle so we start in the north at the spitting devil. It's fitting. This is how things are done in Manhattan. Action first, thought later. So we put our feet to the fire and enter at Spuyten Duyvil.

The oaks grow tall and full in the north. The Dutch named the area for a trumpeter who drowned here trying to warn of a British attack. Now a railroad swing bridge

marks Manhattan's northern border. Half a dozen times a day a whistle blasts and the gleaming Metro North speeds by. Commuters and tourists fill the trains. Wide-eyed and slack-mouthed, they look lazily at the mass of metal and asphalt just now coming into view. They boarded in Albany, Troy, Beacon and Poughkeepsie. They've come to work, meet a friend, visit their family or just walk the streets. They've barreled south for an hour or more, the sluggish Hudson rushing past their windows.

We don't follow them over the bridge. We're on a different tack. We sweep west and south, down the gut of the Hudson. The waters surrounding Manhattan are tidal estuaries—they ebb and flood twice a day. Onshore, the red oaks and tulip trees of Inwood Hill Park are stark and leafless. Few come here. With more than 100 neighborhoods in the city, New Yorkers don't stray far from home. Few visit the nation's only medieval art collection just south of the park, either. The Cloisters look like a castle from the water. The museum's broad browning lawns sweep downward. A family lays out a picnic on the pathway edging the river. The scene could be a hillside in France or a suburb, except for the jagged skyline behind the trees, raking the blue.

There are 21 bridges leading onto Manhattan, but none as grand as the George Washington. The metallic, cross-braced towers rise 200 metres over our heads as we pass under. Next to one of the footings is a little red lighthouse. It was to be torn down until Hildegard Hoyt Swift wrote *The Little Red Lighthouse and the Gray Bridge*. After that, the city deemed it a landmark.

The water swirls as we emerge from the bridge's half-mile shadow. Thousands of ships once passed Washington Heights on their way to the Eerie Canal and the farms and factories of the western United States. When the canal closed and shipping moved to New Jersey, the boats disappeared as well. A few anchored barges are all that's left of New York's legacy as the world's



According to author Porter Fox: "Last summer's raft trip was a project by the internationally acclaimed female street artist, 'Swoon.' For six months Swoon and her crew collected discarded building material and constructed three rafts to her specifications, while a crew in San Francisco built and re-built three car motors with Thai-style, long-shaft propellers to drive them..."



“...Then 60 artists and friends drove the rafts 250 kilometres from Troy, New York to Deitch Studios in Queens, NYC, where they docked as part of an installation that Swoon had created there. Along the way, the crew performed a theatre piece written by playwright Lisa D’Amour and the band Dark, Dark, Dark at most of the towns they stopped in—including several performances at the 79th Street Pier and Deitch Studios. Previous to this, Swoon and friends had floated 1280 kilometres down the Mississippi River in a similar project.”

busiest port. And the rotting pilings of the old piers.

The ebb tide sweeps us south and we watch Manhattan slide by. South of the bridge, New York begins with the wide boulevards and slender row houses of Harlem. Hundreds of thousands of African Americans landed between 159th and 110th Streets following the Great Migration from the south. For the next 80 years, writers, musicians, artists and civic leaders like Langston Hughes, Romare Bearden, Duke Ellington and Malcolm X forged a new African American identity and culture that still stands today.

And then it’s gone. The river carries us south to another place between places: Morningside Heights, Bloomingdale and Columbia University. General Grant’s Tomb and the gothic Riverside Church mark the northern edge of the stretch. Silver lampposts line the Riverside Park walkway where marathon runners and road bikers train. Stands of elm cover the steep hillside leading from the park to Broadway and 122nd Street.

We enter the Upper West Side. The buildings are tall now, Cyprus water tanks top every structure over six stories to help extinguish fires. This is the beginning of the big squeeze, with 26,000 people per square mile. You can sleep a metre away from someone for 20 years in a Manhattan apartment and never meet them. Upper West Side streets and cafes once filled with blue collar workers, writers and artists, but the neighborhood’s been gentrified like everywhere else. Europeans in fur coats circle Central Park. Yoko Ono and Lauren Bacall relax in their Dakota penthouses above the sidewalk where John Lennon was shot. Just down the street on Broadway at W. 112th: Tom’s Restaurant from the *Seinfeld* set.

Back on the water the shoreline is abandoned. Then we see something. A speck against the shore just south of the Soldiers and Sailors monument: a boathouse with finger docks and old yachts rocking in our wake. The 79th Street Boat Basin is the

only marina on Manhattan and the last place for a city boater to live the boating life. Basin residents live year-round on 1970s Chris-Craft’s that have been remodeled into watery townhouses, houseboats built up three stories with gardens on the balconies and flat-screen TVs in the galley. People make their own space in Manhattan and with average rent at \$2,500/month and the average selling price of an apartment at \$1.1 million, you may as well have a nice view.

We float past the cream-colored Normandy apartment building with its art-deco corner suites and enclosed water tanks. Behind it are the mirrored Time Warner towers on Columbus Circle: two knife blades, edges turned in. New York’s jazz legacy lives on on the fifth floor of the Time Warner Center where Wynnton Marsalis gigs with greats like Wycliffe Gordon, Cyrus Chestnut and Roy Hargrove. At Dizzy’s Club Coca Cola, the next generation of jazz lions take the stage in midnight jam sessions.

People stream out of the buildings now. We’re in midtown, at the start of Trump’s Monopoly board that runs down the West Side. He’ll make it all the way to 59th Street before he stops, they say. People have come from everywhere to live in his buildings. They sell out before they’re even finished. Half the people living in New York moved here from away.

The shoreline is a two-way street and you need to see the water from both sides to understand Manhattan’s place in it. So we land at Pier 83 and continue on foot. The green roof of the Chinese consulate waves and dips, then falls in a wall of glass to the sidewalk. Up 45th Street is Public School #51, Metropolitan Hardware and Lumber, The First and Only Union Affiliated Certified Woman Owned Licensed Plumbing Contractor in New York, United City Dry Ice and Cubes and a little man in sunglasses with a leggy blond on his arm. To the north is the *Intrepid*—survivor of five simultaneous kamikaze attacks and rescuer of *Apollo* astronauts.

On the afternoon of January 16, 2009, this is the sidewalk where you could have watched US Airways Flight 1549 float down over the George Washington Bridge and splash into the Hudson, nose slightly up, flaps extended, as pilot Chesley B. Sullenberger III executed the first successful water landing in history. There were 155 people onboard and both engines were snuffed out by a flight of Canada geese. Thought one: *We still live in a natural world.* Two: *How about Sullenberger teaching the rest of the pilots how to land in the water?*

Walking south through Riverside Park we see fragments of old wharves sagging under a layer of ice and snow. Single tracks jut from the white here and there. Inland, sediment and seed in the defunct High Line elevated train track have given way to a small forest. The train used to connect West Side warehouses but is now being transformed into a park. Renovation has swept through the old industrial heart of America. Sprawling warehouses are now modish apartment buildings. Piers now house art installations and kayaking centers. The island is constantly changing. Sometimes moving forward, sometimes not. But the change you can count on.

The winter sun hangs low over the riverbank. People on the pathway are transformed into black silhouettes. The sound of the city builds. Horns, engines, sirens and people. Imagine the hum of a million conversations at once. There’s glass everywhere on the inside. It reflects blue light onto the streets and back at the river. In 1916 the New York City passed America’s first zoning law, requiring skyscrapers to set back their upper structures to allow light and air into the streets. It worked, kind of. But there will always be concrete to your left, right and underfoot.

More remnants of the old: the United States Lines at Pier 76 is a car impound lot. (New York City makes more money from parking tickets than taxes.) On the east side of the street is the terminus of the Long Island Railroad: a mass of train cars

and engines stacked on the tracks. There are strange goings on in all parts of the city at all times. In the wall here, a hole drilled with the words “core sample” painted above it. Since the 9/11, people look up when they hear a bang. They flinch when a crane drops something on the sidewalk. For three years the smell of maple syrup has sporadically swept across the island. The Environmental Protection Agency can’t find where it’s coming from. No one knows what it is. Well, someone does. And that’s what worries people.

A dark green Jaguar stops to let us pass. This is the New York I know. The city of have’s and have-not’s living side-by-side. An older man behind the wheel waves me across. He has two gold rings on his fingers. I nod and cross and he merges onto the West Side Highway. On the left is a field of bright yellow moving trucks. On the right, eight helicopters and 10 Lincoln Town Cars at the West Side Heliport, waiting to receive the city’s nobility. A family steps out of a Bell 430. They look normal. There are six of them. The father emerges and shakes the pilot’s hand, then follows his youngest to a waiting car.

The sun is running at an angle through the slats in the park benches now. West 28th Street, 27th, 26th. The water smell—diesel, tar and wood—is strong. The old, blue B&O pier used to stand here. Cary Grant and Deborah Kerr watched it pass by in *An Affair To Remember*. The brick and glass Starrett-Lehigh Building has been remodeled into posh studios and million-dollar penthouses. It appears that one floor is filled entirely with mannequins. Real estate is the new industry on the riverbank. But even that will change.

The water to the south is blocked by the 30,000 square-foot Chelsea Piers athletic complex. We’ll avoid the joggers, skaters and golfers and turn inland. The city sound is getting loud. Shafts of light slice between the skyscrapers. The motion on the street is overwhelming: blinking neon signs, steaming halal kiosks, famous faces peering down from billboards. Thought one: *People*

move here for the opportunity. Two: *Opportunity is wanting what you don’t have.*

It’s late afternoon and Chelsea’s galleries are open to the public. Each opening is marketed as transformative, like nothing that has come before. Enter the “gallery system”—the micro-economy that collectors herald and artists mourn. It is an exclusive, political, arbitrary game. By any account it has killed new and inventive art in New York.

There are, of course, exceptions. Through two glass doors we enter the Richard Avedon show. Photographs of New York greats stare down from the wall: Killer Joe Piro, dance teacher, 1962; Truman Capote, writer, 1955; Paul Simon and Art Garfunkle, musicians, 1969; and of course Bob Dylan, in Riverside Park, 1965. These are the minds who came to the city to live outside of their life, the romantics who lived half in a dream, half in reality.

The artists wake early and walk late. Remember the painters, Klein and de Kooning, who chose their West Side apartments by how the light shone in; the poets, Creeley, Ginsberg, Thomas and O’Hara, who conversed and recited in dimly lit apartments until the sun came up; Pollack who ripped the door off the Cedar Bar bathroom in a fit of excitement. All of them—Baryshnikov, Stravinsky, Jones, James—lived here at some point. When you walk the streets downtown, the anxious energy of the city’s prodigies buzzes in the concrete, it bares our inner desire to be famous—or to simply turn away from our lives and do something extraordinary.

The sun drops beneath the horizon and, indiscernibly, light now comes from the city. Balenciaga is wall-to-wall with \$1,000 handbags and jackets spread out over a cement floor. 192 Books is closed for the night. In front of the Gansevoort Hotel, a girl screams for her friend. She’s wearing a black cocktail dress and has the face of Jeanne Moreau. There is no one else on the street. The intersection of 9th Avenue and 12th Street used to house the city’s meat

processing plants. Now it’s the playground of the rich.

Enter their flagship watering hole, Pastis, Keith McNally’s recreation of a 1930s Parisian brasserie. It’s warm and wet inside. There’s glass everywhere, brass railings, a wooden newspaper rack by the door—all testament to America’s deep desire to appear civilized. A table of artists bickers about who is going to pay; a cluster of Jersey girls fix their hair and wonder if they are in the right place at the right time; two spinsters at the bar with thin arms and hopeful eyes look around for love, or more likely, money; a young boy falls asleep as his parents discuss real estate; all while a stream of patrons decked in black silk and wool stream through the doorway, pause, then parade forward to find their place among the throng.

You can’t see the water from here, but it’s not forgotten. From the top of the Gansevoort Hotel the twinkling lights of Hoboken and the Erie Lockawana train depot reflect off the Hudson. The tiny silhouette of a Circle Line ferry fights the ebb tide. A few blocks away, the days of swashbuckling sailors terrorizing the city on shore leave live on at The Rusty Knot. The bar is decorated with model ships and portraits of famous steamers. The menu is straight from 1945: \$.99 demi-beers, \$1 pickled eggs, \$4 meat pies.

Water used to run *into* the city as well. We follow an old streambed, now Spring Street, to the Ear Inn—once the home of George Washington’s most trusted aide. (James Brown was black, even though Emanuel Leutze painted him white in his depiction of Washington crossing the Delaware.) After Brown passed—and through Prohibition—the inn became The Green Door, one of the most legendary sailor bars in the world.

To get back to the water we follow the old waterway buried beneath Canal Street. The road is now the crossroads marking the start of the financial district to the south, the heart of Chinatown to the east and Tribeca in the west. The original canal was edged by trees, tenements



“There now is your insular city of Manhattos, belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs—commerce surrounds it with her surf. Right and left, the streets take you waterward. It’s extreme downtown is the Battery, where that noble mole is washed by waves, and cooled by breezes, which a few hours previous were out of sight of land. Look at the crowds of water-gazers there. Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, by Whitehall, northward. What do you see? Posted like silent sentinels around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Some leaning against the spiles, some seated upon the pier-heads; some looking over the bulwarks of ships from China; some high aloft in the rigging, as if striving to get a still better seaward peep. But these are all landsmen; of weekdays pent up in lath and plaster—tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks. How then is this? Are the green fields gone? What do they here?”

— Herman Melville, 1850, *Manhattan*



C stands for Columbia University. A huge painting on the rocky cliff along the far bank of Harlem River.

and businesses until it was filled in and turned into a sewer. We follow it west, past the entrance to the Holland Tunnel and the West Side Highway, back to the platinum water in between tides.

The buildings around Wall Street are dark except for a few lights. A sliver of moon emerges from behind a cloud. Ahead, is the great sweep, the southern tip of the island. The land of milk and honey is crisscrossed with the names of American financiers: Beekman, Broome, Thomas and Worth Streets. The patina on the gothic roof of the Woolworth building glows green. The opening in the sky where the Twin Towers stood is a physical and psychological vacuum. The tragedy in numbers: 2,823 killed; 1,300 orphans created; 19,500 body parts collected; 69 days to put out the underground fires; 43 minutes for George W. Bush to react; 422,000 New Yorkers diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder; 20-percent increase in church participation and new births nine months later; 13.5 million square feet of office space lost; 100,000 jobs in lower Manhattan lost; 22,000 bombs dropped on Afghanistan within six months; 98,000 civilian deaths in the ensuing Iraq War. Yes, 9/11 changed Manhattan. But the island has been changing from the beginning.

We can see into the heart of the world's financial centre every other block. Trinity Church where George Washington prayed after he was sworn in; City Hall where President Abraham Lincoln lay after his assassination; the Federal Reserve Bank of New York; the New York Stock Exchange. The first storefronts of the Astor and Tiffany families book-end the historic site of P.T. Barnum's American Museum—where the entertainer put mermaids, “freaks” and whales on display. At the intersection of Broadway and Pearl is the city's first tony neighborhood, home of the Van Cortlands and Delanceys.

We round the horn and drift back in time. There is the site of Johannes Beekman's wharf, the first in New York; there, Collect Pond and the old Tombs Prison; over here, the rowdy

Five Points neighborhood. The city's industrial roots took the shape of pilings driven into the river bottom around Pearl and Broad Streets. Sloops, ketches and square-rigged brigs anchored in the harbor and transported their goods to the piers to be sold. More were built. More ships came. Waterfront lots were sold on the condition they build a wharf and a street to access it.

At first, the city built out more than it did up. Cartmen were charged five cents a load to dump refuse and fill into the East and Hudson Rivers. The Donegan Charter added more than 300 acres to the island. The Montgomerie Charter added 210. By the mid-1800s—south of City Hall—the island had grown by 33 percent. English, Irish and French immigrants swelled the population in the 1830s from 4,000 to 32,000. That number doubled over the next decade. Washington Market was established on fill between two slips on Washington and Fulton streets to feed all the newcomers. Sewers were dug and the matrix that is now Manhattan was laid.

Ellis, Staten and Governor's Islands are dark lumps to the south. For the 16 million immigrants processed at Ellis, the islands were the first sight of American civilization. Behind Ellis is the Statue of Liberty, the Declaration of Independence clutched in her right hand. We won't take the tourist cruise around her. We're headed north up the East River. The tide is flooding now. We've hit it just right. If you time this trip perfectly, you can ride a current all the way around the island.

North of the Vietnam Veteran's Plaza, FDR Drive launches cars, trucks and vans north. The South Street Seaport at Pier 17 is dimly lit—the four-mast Peking clipper ship a shadowy reminder of the days when more than 10,000 commercial ships were registered to New Yorkers. Overhead the Brooklyn Bridge materializes. It was the longest suspension bridge in the world when it was completed in 1883. Now swarms of visitors walk the kilometre-plus from Brooklyn Heights to Wall

Street. The city passes quickly north of the bridge as the flood gathers speed. Just a few hundred feet later we pass under the blue, steel Manhattan Bridge, backed by the Confucius Plaza apartment in downtown Chinatown.

We saw this part of the city from the other side, so now we look east to the New Bohemia. Once the home of farmers and commuters, Brooklyn is the latest promised land for artists, writers and anyone looking to break the mold. Lofts and studios in Red Hook, Williamsburg and Greenpoint hold America's greatest young talent. Forget nightclubs with \$30 cover charges and \$13 drinks. Brooklynites dine in converted garages and party until dawn in empty warehouses.

Between the bridges, the transformed storehouses of D.U.M.B.O. (Down Under the Brooklyn Bridge Overpass) edge the river. North is the rambling Brooklyn Navy Yard where *Saturday Night Live* builds its sets and, before that, the Navy assembled ships for 200 years. The Williamsburg Bridge looms next, reaching between Delancey Street in Manhattan and South 5th in Brooklyn. There are a few people on the waterfront now, hipster guys in tight, black jeans and girls wearing thick, black eyeliner and vintage evening wear. Beyond that is the 1882 Domino Sugar plant then Newtown Creek, the contaminated border between Brooklyn and Queens.

Back on the Manhattan shore, the FDR cuts most of the Lower East Side and its old tenements off from the river. Until East River Park begins. There, a group of soccer players race up a playing field under blazing lights while half a dozen others throw Frisbees at each other and jog in circles. City people need to see grass and trees to remember that the world is not made of mortar and glass—even in the middle of the night. At 14th Street, the hospitals and power plants begin: NYU, Cornell-Weill, New York Presbyterian. In the distance the peaked roof of the Chrysler building soars above midtown, hood ornaments and hubcaps adorning its deco setbacks. We

can see all the way across the island, past Times Square, on 45th Street. At 46th Street a helicopter zips past the United Nations complex, over the dome the General Assembly meets under.

Just ahead is Roosevelt Island. Ten thousand people live on the skinny stretch of land lodged like a splinter in the middle of the East River. Many ride a cable into the city and back every day. A castle-like mental hospital occupies the southern tip of the island, then there's rickety Queensborough Bridge that splits the strip half.

Back on Manhattan is Sutton Place—the richest neighborhood in the country. Just north of that, the home of Bernard Madoff, the greatest white shoe criminal in history. The East River appears slow and smooth here, but the waters ahead are deadly. Just past the German neighborhoods of the east 80s we come to Hell Gate, a treacherous tidal straight whose rocks took more than 200 ships before the Army Corps of Engineers blasted them in 1876. (At the time the largest manmade explosion in history.) On the eastern shore we see the old mayor's house, Gracie Mansion, and angle into the Harlem River. Behind us, the East River meanders north, past LaGuardia airport on to Riker's Island and Long Island Sound.

Once covered with rolling fields and farmland, the northern reaches of Manhattan get little attention. New Yorkers didn't settle the area en masse until they ran out of room down south, and the backwater vibe persists today. Except on Pleasant Avenue, the single most famous mobster block in the country. We sneak under a pale green footbridge in the Harlem River and approach slowly. The sights are real and imagined at once. In the 1970s Fat Tony ran the Genovese crime family from this street; in 1972 Sonny Corleone beat up Carlo here in *The Godfather*. The neighborhood was the literal stomping ground of Tommy Salami and Angelo Cheesecake—where Johnny Roast Beef met Martin Scorsese and landed a role in *Goodfellas*.

Back on the river, the bridges come every 300 metres: the Triborough, Willis and Third Avenue. You notice the little things up here. The seawall is falling into the river. Canada geese nest on Ward's Island. The massive orange logo of Storage Deluxe, towers above the riverbank, a rare blank billboard glowing in the night behind it. A hawk swoops low over a slab of ice in the river. A pedestrian pushes a handcart over the bridge while seagulls walk the shoreline.

Then something we recognize: the Yankee Stadiums. One is the House that Babe Ruth built, the home of Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle and Yogi Berra. The second is the new stadium that, strangely, few in the city wanted. But the fate of Manhattan is never decided consciously. Rather, it morphs as a result of timing, money, momentum and, yes, opportunity.

On the right riverbank is the Bronx that the Bronk family settled in the 1600s. The borough is the only New York City neighborhood on the mainland and the difference between it and the island is discernable. The clapboard homes in the Bronx are intact and set among trees. The edges of the island and its ramshackle apartment buildings are crumbling. There are box stores and highways and lights on the mainland. Back in Harlem, abandoned piers support half-sunken boats.

The river is barely moving. We're nearing the end. On the Manhattan shoreline, a picnic table sits under a lone, fenced-in tree. The retaining wall is caked with yellow ice. We pass under the High Bridge that used to carry water from the Adirondacks to the city, then George Washington High School where Harry Belafonte and Henry Kissinger graduated. We drift under the Broadway Bridge and past the winding tail of Manhattan's longest street.

Finally, we see the long green arch of the Henry Hudson Bridge and the stretch of water that bears his name. The spitting devil waits, the first and last point on the circle. The railroad bridge swings open and we pass through. Water churns at the mouth

of the Harlem River. The flood tide is almost over. In an hour it will go slack again. An hour later, imperceptibly, the river will begin to ebb.

The current turns slowly at first. For two hours the water near the riverbanks flows opposite that in the middle of the channel. Eddies and whirlpools form behind bridge footings and breakwaters. By sunrise, the river is running south, full force, spilling into the Atlantic. Garbage barges and water taxis fight the ebb. Pink light filters from the east onto Wall Street, Canal, Broadway and Amsterdam. Four million cars spill over the island's bridges and people fill its sidewalks. Lights flicker on in the skyscrapers. A man in a suit pedals a bike uptown. A woman picks up the phone and stares out the window. The great hum and flow of the city has resumed.

62. Helen Alfredsson

Continued from pg 2:63

— **I guess I enjoy the attention that comes with my job.** More so when I was younger—it seemed more important then. It was cool to be on TV and in the papers because it's a measure of success. But it's not as important now and I won't miss it when it's gone. I love my life here and my husband—who was a very good hockey player—has now retired and moved on in life. Doors open a little more easily when you're in the public eye, but it's kind of sad when people become dependant on that and can't leave it behind.

— **What makes me laugh most are my friends and husband.** I love sarcastic humour that refuses to take anyone or anything too seriously.

— **I've always had a self-deprecating sense of humour.** And if you're giving people shit, you have to be able to take it in return and be pretty honest with yourself. I also think it



The Alfredsson Wire...

- Age 18 Helen runs away to Paris to become a model but gives it up after six months because she is becoming anorexic...
- She attends San Diego University on a golf scholarship and majors in business and marketing studies...
- She is the 1989 Ladies European Tour Rookie of the Year, a feat she repeats on the LPGA Tour in her debut season of 1992...
- In between she wins the 1990 Weetabix Women's Open...
- In 1993 she claims her second major title, the Nabisco Dinah Shore...
- Helen claims a total of 11 victories in Europe and wins the Order of Merit in 1998 (after having been runner-up five times) and notches five victories on the LPGA Tour...
- She appears in the Solheim Cup seven times as a player and once, in 2007, as captain of the Swedish Team.