



**NYC Gems by City Tech Students**

# My Home Away from Home

My favorite place to visit in NYC is one of my best friend's house. Ever since the 1st grade I've had the same two best friends, named Stefon and Elijah, who've lived in the same neighborhood as me. All three of us went to the same elementary and middle school from 1st to 8th grade and the place we chilled out the most was Stefon's house.

We went to Stefon's house the most for multiple reasons; Stefon's house was two blocks away from my house and two blocks away from Elijah's house. Also, Stefon's mom was way more willing to let me and Elijah stop by after school. As the years went on Stefon's house was just the go-to place whenever we want to hang out. There have been many times were we all chilled at my house or Elijah's house but we definitely go to Stefon's house 90% of the time.

What makes Stefon's house feel like a second home is the amount of freedom and how relaxed I feel over there. Stefon lives in an apartment complex and his mom and brother have their own rooms, so we always chilled in the living room. Whenever we hang out we play games, order pizza, and just relax. Me and Elijah are allowed to stay as long as we want so it never feels like we have to watch the clock or leave at a certain time. I also feel like Stefon's house is what kept all of us as friends for so long. Neither me, Stefon or Elijah went to the same high school or college but having a place where we could come back to and relax is very comforting. Even now Elijah is dorming upstate but every couple month he visits and we just go back to Stefon's house like nothing changed.

# Tea and Friendship

Cream Coffee and Tea Shop has been my go-to spot to relax and draw since they opened next to my high school sophomore year. It's a cozy little shop in the Bay Ridge area about a mile away from my house. The walls are covered in amazing art from artists and children from the local public school. The selection of drinks go from regular coffees that everyone can enjoy, to amazing hot or iced teas, to Taiwanese-style bubble teas that are to die for. I myself usually get an iced or hot chai latte (depending on the weather), or their original milk bubble tea when it's in stock (they run out of the tapioca because everyone loves bubble tea). They have a selection of pastries and snacks that are always fresh and if you go at the end of the day, instead of throwing out the food, they will give it away to whoever is in the shop at that time.

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Even though I love Cream's snacks and drinks, its not the only reason why I keep on coming back. Since I've been going there, the staff at Cream have the best customer service I've ever seen in a coffee or tea shop. They are always have a nice conversation with you and make you feel more than just a customer. Because I've been a regular for about 6 years, they know my orders by heart and when I've made art using their cups, they've displayed them and have not moved them since I gave them to the owner.

# The Spot In NYC

I've lived in New York my entire life and the moment I found out about this spot and visited it for the first time I made it a mission to at least go there once a month. No, it isn't my bed, and no it isn't a café. The spot is Brooklyn Bridge in downtown Brooklyn, and it's a gorgeous sight to see. I recommend everyone to go visit. Sadly, the first time I went to this spot was for a college class field trip; I went last semester with my photography class. I'm a photographer and I always like exploring and looking for new spots around New York. So when we actually got onto the bridge I literally just froze because of how gorgeous the bridge was. It was something that was just so stunning to me. Although it was tedious with all the people there because it is a tourist sight, it was still great. You're literally walking from downtown Brooklyn into Manhattan without driving. Looking at all the water, the buildings, and just the boroughs while crossing them is sight. But if you see it at night, boy it's a whole different bridge.

The lights come on and it's like you're walking through a forest of Christmas lights that are white. I recently went there late at night with my best friend when my parents were out and I don't regret it. The bridge is our spot now where to go to talk about our problems, rant and let everything out. I try to go there as much as possible to think, to relax and to even chill. Also if you like long walks with scenery, this is the spot and the place to be. If you want to see a beautiful sunset and the city lights at night, Brooklyn Bridge is where it's at. This is my spot: Brooklyn Bridge. I recommended everyone go there at least once in your lifetime, for a sight and experience you'll never forget.

# St. Marks

St. Marks is an area close to NoHo in Lower Manhattan. It is one of my favorite places because I feel like St. Marks fits all the things I like to do in one area. I was first introduced to St. Marks when I was about fifteen or sixteen years old. One of the first stores I went into when I was there for the first time was Trash and Vaudeville. Trash and Vaudeville is a specific store that sells high end punk rock clothes and fashion of rock and roll culture. Going

inside of the store and looking around at all the extravagant clothing was one of my favorite things to do.

My second favorite place to go to around St. Marks is Kung Fu Tea. I love to drink tea, especially bubble tea, and Kung Fu Tea near St. Marks has about the best-tasting bubble tea in New York City. This was the first time I have had Taro Milk Tea, which is one of my favorite milk teas. An-

other thing I love about Kung Fu Tea is the atmosphere. The cashiers greet you and make sure you are welcomed in. Soothing music greets you as you step inside and you can sit on the red lounge couch with friends and take a stop to have a cold drink while people watching outside the window at the commotion going on outside of St. Marks.

# Next Level

Gaming in my high school's lunch room didn't necessarily attract the biggest crowd. Though eventually, I did manage to gather a handful of friends who share the same interests as I do, and Next Level Arcade is where that magic happened. Next Level is a modern arcade where our community gathers to enjoy a plethora of fighting games. Fighting games are something I hold close to my heart, as I've played them for hours on hours since I was just 5 years old.

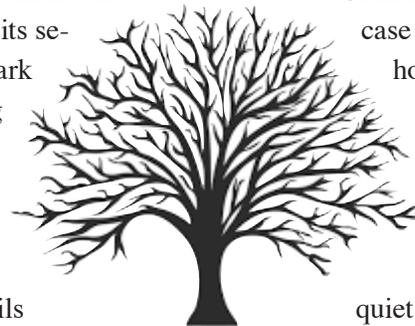
To this day I still go to Next Level quite often, whether it be to cast spells in 'Magic: The Gathering' or compete in nerve-wrecking fighting game tournaments. I've grown close to the community at Next Level, from the staff, to old faces, to newcomers, all of whom are just like me. Gathering together at Next Level allows us to pursue our passions. Being enclosed in the small, yet vibrant store seamlessly drifts me into my comfort zone. All my problems vanish, and my only focus is excitement, fun, and enjoying what I do most. Home is supposed to be a place where you can be yourself and you're accepted for it. I feel like Next Level is my second home.

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# My Park

When it comes to visiting my favorite place in NYC, I always find myself travelling to Canarsie Park. I can think of a bajillion reasons why it's my favorite place to hang out, but all of them can be divided into two categories: its diversity and its serenity. One of the main reasons I come to the park is to explore its wide variety of options. Growing up, I used to head to the playground with my family, as we would either go on the swings, run around the jungle gym, or play soccer in the lush, green fields. Nowadays however I explore more options, such as taking a hike in trails I wasn't allowed to stray on by myself, watching and participating in basketball games, and even discovering places like a track & field area as well as a skate park. Despite its not being as big as other NYC parks, it holds a special place in my heart as one of the most memorable from childhood.

Another reason why it's my favorite place in NYC is due to its convenience. Being born and raised in Canarsie, my neighborhood consists of nothing but big shops, food joints, an occasional corner store, and an even more occasional housing projects. You might find a playground connected to the neighborhood elementary school, but that's about it. As for me, I happen to reside close to the park, so I have a place to go to whenever I am tired of staying in my house.



I have options of grabbing a bite to eat, swinging by a store for a last-minute purchase, or catching up with a friend, and that's all BEFORE heading out to relax at the park. Everything is close in case I need to stock up for a big day. And whether I spend ten hours there or a measly ten minutes, Canarsie Park is more than just having options on the inside.

Another reason it's my favorite place is because of its serenity. The park is a place I go to whenever I want to walk around and just take in its lush, green fields. Out of all the things available in my area, nothing is as quiet or as vast as Canarsie Park. You cannot find relaxation at a store or a food joint, nor can you find relief inside a school or within the walls of your home. If I ever want to escape the bind of stress, the park is the first place my mind will stray towards. I often come to the park in hopes of finding something new, or seeing someone I would never expect to find. Although it may not be an option for some, and perhaps it's not an ideal way of relief for others, I see the park as an opportunity to get away from all things clogging my mind, and simply let nature run its course. Canarsie Park, to me, is more than just a variety of options; it is the path I take in order to find the answer I'm looking for, making it stand out as one of my favorite places in NYC.

# The Ride of My Life

Circus games, food stands, and sandy beaches are the first things one will notice about Coney Island. The atmosphere is rich with laughter as people find entertainment at every turn. Rides range from a haunted house fueled by nightmares to the adrenaline-pumping roller coaster that will have you screaming. However, not everybody is interested in such extreme activities so there are other games to test their mind, endurance and strength. Shooting a target is a skill that requires not only focus but also the ability to calculate the trajectory. If the person fails to maintain a win in these games, they should move from brains to brawns for a better chance at a prize. Scattered around the theme park are machines that display the info behind the power of a person's punches. This is perfect for those who need an ego boost and an opportunity to gloat in front of friends and family. After a long day of fun activities, we'll get hungry sooner or later so why not visit one of the vendors there.

Thanks to New York being a melting pot of ethnicity, you can expect an assortment of food that fulfills all sorts of taste buds. Most would turn to the good old fashioned American hotdog or hamburger. However, others, like myself, prefer to dine on exotic food that comes from around the globe. The enriching seasoned flavors of the Caribbean can provide an explosive taste for newcomers. Furthermore, there is umami soaked fresh food from the seas of Asia. The list goes on with rare deserts not typically found in public spaces. One

can say that the theme parks are a haven for people with a sweet tooth. They'll provide cotton candy which is as soft as clouds. For those looking for a healthier option, I would choose a candied apple instead. On the outside, it resembles honey with nuts covering the skin. Upon taking a bite, the person's mouth will feel crunchiness as it fills with natural juices. Once someone finishes experiencing the palate of Coney Island, they should seek a place to rest their full stomachs. The beach is convenient for relaxation on the sand or waters with amazing scenery.

It is known that their beaches are one of the top locations to travel in New York. It's best seen from across the sea as the sun sets. The sky turns rose while the clouds blacken. The view itself can be breathtaking as your surroundings grow in beauty. The sands at your feet will begin to flicker like crystals and the ocean reflects a colorful spectrum of light. The beauty extends pass the shores and into the water where secrets are waiting to be uncovered. Most commonly found are shells, great to keep as a collection, and a small colony

of fishes. During the summer, the waters become populated by people looking for ways to blow off steam. A favorite pastime is swimming under the heat or playing games like volleyball and Marco Polo. Others go jogging or tanning in an attempt to better themselves. In the end, we all get together to entertain each other and foster a bond that can last a lifetime because Coney Island is the place to provide this experience.



Image Source: Wikipedia



# Brooklyn Botanic Garden

**My** FAVORITE PLACE IS THE BROOKLYN BOTANIC GARDEN. THIS is a beautiful and large garden located at Washington Ave in Brooklyn. I love plants, and I love Brooklyn Botanic Garden since the first time I went there. There are many kinds of trees and flowers in the garden. This garden is famous for Japanese cherry trees. Inside the garden, there is a place that has two lines of cherry trees. Every year in April, cherry trees bloom pink petals, and part of the garden becomes a pink magic world. When I stand under a cherry tree, I fall into the pink magic world and fantasize I am in Japan. I enjoy watching the scene of cherry blossoms.

In the garden, there are a lot of plants that I have never known before. It opens my eyes and I learn many things during my visit. There are also many familiar plants we can see around us. Every plant has life and fills me with hope. They are growing, struggling, and never giving up. They are trying their best to greet the sun, wind, and rain. Every time I go to the garden and see the plants, I feel the world full of hope and life full of positive energy.

# Seafood Boil

**THE** *place I really enjoy visiting in NYC is Sammy's Shrimp Box.* It's a seafood restaurant located in the Bronx. The restaurant also has different branches of seafood restaurants. It's really family friendly and is affordable, not to mention that it's a world-famous seafood restaurant with signature dishes and cocktails.

Sammy's Shrimp Box is the best seafood restaurant I know of, which is why it's my favorite. It's set up and designed like a sailboat, or the way a fisherman's boat would be. My family and I usually go on special occasions, and every visit is a great experience. The atmosphere and customer service in the restaurant is great and there are hardly ever any complaints. They serve various kinds of shrimp, lobsters, crabs, steak, ribs, etc. This restaurant by far is my favorite place to be when I am hungry for seafood.

# HEAVENLY GYM

**So everyone says they want a smoking body, but what do they actually do about it? Let's think about it really quickly; you know how many potential soulmates you could attract from getting your body right?**

That leads me to talk about where my favorite place in New York is. Everyone in New York is striving to get that money right but sometimes we overlook the gym in the name of being busy. That's why the gym is my favorite place to be in New York. To be more specific I enjoy going to Blink Fitness gym.

I'm not to sound like a commercial or anything, but Blink Gym is aweAsome. Before I started going to the gym I had my doubts about whether or not people would be judging me there at the gym. I think gym anxiousness is pretty common. What helped me was their accepting environment.

My favorite place in New York City would be Pier 40. It is by the Hudson River and has a big field on the ground floor, and there is a second floor with a mini field. The second field is great if you want to have a good view of the river and the Freedom Tower. I don't go there a lot nowadays but I use to go a lot in high school. I went like 3 times a

# PIER 40

week after spring. I used to play soccer a lot and hang out with friends there. Even if you don't play soccer, Pier 40 is next to the river so you can sit and just relax while looking at the view. When the weather is nice, if you're there when it's cold you'll freeze to death.

Other than Pier 40 being a great place to chill or play soccer, I went a lot because of my friends. We just went

to have a good time and didn't have any worries while we were there. Just play soccer and then eat after. In addition, you meet new people and that means making new friends; everyone there is having a good time. Even though I don't go anymore, I still have the memories I made there. Whenever I think about this place it makes me feel happy and nostalgic.

Three years ago, my two best buddies and I came up with a plan to visit a small place in Brooklyn known as The Milk and Cream Cereal Bar. It has become a tradition in our friendship to visit this place yearly and enjoy the pleasant experience of having ice cream and cereal in the same package. An experience that can only be described as breathtaking, which is why we go back annually.

Milk and Cream may not have many selections of icecream, but what it lacks in ice cold dairy, it makes up for in plenty of delicious cereal choices. Whenever we visit, I find it hard to decide on which flavor I should get because there's so many combinations to try and so little time to decide. As the store is not known to many people and the service is some of the best I've ever seen, the line tends to move fast enough for you to just get down what type of flavor you're aiming for, be it fruity, creamy, or chocolatey.

It's my favorite place because whenever me and my friends go there, we always walk away with a delicious and pleasant memory to carry with us, reminding us to come back next year and the year after. I highly doubt I'd let either of my best buddies forget about it because I refuse to let the delicacy of Milk and Cream to fade from my mind. Not only that, but we always go in the summertime, and ice cream is always a great way to combat the blazing heat of summer in the city. Truly a win/win situation if you ask me.

# The Ice Cream Haven

# Wonderland

**Author:** Rosa Cortes Aguilar

**Exercise:** Indented Text, Space Above & Below

Central Park is one of the largest parks in New York, having various parts, statues and ponds within it. My favorite place however is the area where the Alice in Wonderland bronze statue is. This place is special to me for a few reasons. I had found out about the place in a family trip around the park when I was younger, having fun with my little sister and cousins around the area and exploring the park. We did stay a while relaxing near the Alice in Wonderland statue. The statue itself is interactive, to get on the mushrooms or sit next to Alice for a picture or two. I recall taking different poses and acting out interactions with the characters with my cousins, able to get a good laugh and relax before walking around again. I now visit the park a few times during the summer, enjoying the scenery, because like the rest of the park it's surrounded by trees and people walking around.

*Aside from the statue there is a nearby lake, adding more to a beautiful scenery. I started going here again for inspiration to draw, or to practice drawing people interacting with each other. It's always enjoyable to see kids run around, as they are carefree and come up with the most enjoyable of scenes with their family, or even with pets. Personally I enjoy Alice in Wonderland itself, the reason being it's the idea of a Land of Wonder. In a world where everything follows certain rules and laws of nature, in wonderland it doesn't really follow that idea, which is why I enjoy being near the statue. Something normal would be happening, and with a glance of the statue, an idea of wonder begins to form as to what else could happen or could have happened, letting go of the restrictions of the real world.*

Over all it's one of my favorite parts of Central Park. It is a place where I feel free like in any other park, but it allows me to take my mind off things and wander about, and at times it reminds me that all places have their own wonder for each and every individual.

# Fresh Paper

My favorite place in New York is Kinokuniya. My best friend and my sister took me to that bookstore, and I loved the atmosphere. It has language textbooks and Japanese stationery in the basement. It is generally quiet, and all the walls are filled with shelves full of fresh notebooks. Most of the books are kept wrapped in plastic and the paper ranges from grid, lined, dotted and blank. Sometimes you could hear the staff speak Japanese, but it was never too loud. It was always nice to see people reading novels in the back. It's very easy to find where the children's books are as well, the book covers such as the planners had very detailed designs, bumpy textures and they even shine when you point them towards the light. On the other side of the basement there are pens and very soft plushies on top of the shelves. They have micro pens and many art supplies such as the mono zero eraser. But my most favorite part of the basement is right next to where the fabric hangs; there is a small bunny sculpture that decreases in size all in the same position. There are other animals as well, but I really like how they are all connected, and it looks like a family. This place is special to me because the third floor has all

Sometimes seeing that a book is shiny or has a nice cover over the net isn't the same as feeling the texture of the paper

the collectables you could dream of. The last time I went there, they had all five art books of Granblue Fantasy. I love coming here to look at the covers and noticing that I know these shows, but at the same time I just know my wallet isn't willing to fork over sixty dollars for each book. In the corner there are keychains and a shrine of some franchise that's exclusively in Japan. Even though I don't know the series I still appreciate being able to flip through the books and see all the volumes lined up. Across from the art books is a cafe that I haven't tried yet, but I want to at some point. Book and stationery have always been the things I liked to shop for, because the texture of the book covers is so unique and the colors are vibrant and vary. Sometimes seeing that a book is shiny or has a nice cover over the net isn't the same as feeling the texture of the paper and how thick it is. Also, when I'm window shopping as an aspiring illustrator, seeing all the covers and all the different art styles just feels really refreshing when I am on the third floor.

# RIIS BEACH

My most favorite spot ever in NYC is Riis Beach. Riis Beach is located in Queens in Rockaway. To get there, I can easily take the Q35 bus. The reason I love this area is because I enjoy the peace it brings. I am a night person, so I admire the peace and quiet and beauty of the nighttime. When I go to Riis sometimes it's in the nighttime. Hearing the waves crash, taking in the nice and quiet space. If the sky is clear, seeing the moon reflect against the water is the best thing to ever witness. Going during the daytime also gives that same effect; of course you get to see the birds fly, watch the ships out at sea, guessing which way they are going, and again admire the view out on the water. As a night person though, I prefer to go at night.

TAKING IN THE NICE AND QUIET SPACE

Going to this beach relaxes me and it gets me thinking. Since during the night no one is ever really there, I can think alone. It helps me reflect on myself, helps me think out problems. I even made a couple of drawings of people sitting on the beach staring at the sunset, and a person sitting watching the moonlight as well. These drawings helped me improve my shading and shadowing and the perception of light. That's how obsessed I am over the natural beauty of the beach. I barely ever go to beaches, so this year I'm discovering the beauty of it. Just being present at Riis makes me happy and this is my favorite spot in NYC.

# YaYa Tea

YaYa Tea is a bubble tea spot where I have built many memories with all my loved ones. A place where I have laughed, cried, expressed my thoughts and sipped teas with unique names.

It was never easy picking a had over 50 choices and to drink from here is I Love flavors include strawberry, with oolong tea. YaYa Tea but rice balls too, which is

This place reminds me of up until now. My friends to talk about our lives, how laugh at each other's jokes. would always order when city to end our day together. drive there late at night and with the music on loud. I enjoy my own company. company is the greatest

tea flavor because the menu toppings cost extra. My go-Yaya with mixed jelly; the mango and passionfruit not only sells bubble tea similar to sushi.

my high school years and and I would always go here our day at school went and Bubble tea was what we we were hanging out in the My boyfriend and I would sip on our teas in the car even go here by myself to YaYa Tea, rice balls, and combination for me!

In my opinion my favorite place to go would be my grandmother's house. I say that because last year, me, my mom, my grandmother and aunt all lived in that one house. Me and my mother recently moved out and found a house that is very far away from where we used to live. I go to my grandmother's from time to time, and I would hang out with my friends. All of my close friends from high school lived in that area as well; that's one major reason as to why I like going there so much. Sometimes I would spend the weekend there and make as many plans with them as possible.

When I go there on the weekends I sometimes invite my friends over to chill because during the weekend, no one else is home. We would order food and watch movies most of the time. We would also go to the mall to chill since that too is close to my grandmother's house. The mall has a gym with a pool, and I've only been there once, but it's something that we've planned on doing for a while. My friends used to work in the mall as well so they know people who work there now.

## **My Grandmother's House**

*from time to time*