



Raines Law Room

At this New York lounge, your throwback cocktail is made with top-shelf booze and a deft shake.

Special Section

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The 10 Best Drinking Cities in America

In certain towns, drinking isn't just some postwork activity—it's a pursuit of otherworldly libations, a quest for the perfect craft beer, a way to experience a city's history through its taverns and dive bars. It's places like these you travel to to soak up America's greatest pastime

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Drinking Cities



Death & Co

It might look intimidating from the outside, but on the inside, the drinks go down easy.



isn't because I'm bingeing; it's because they taste good. Simple as that.

Mayahuel, tucked away in a row of Indian restaurants in the East Village, serves some other drinks I can't resist: the Watermelon Sugar (fresh watermelon, white tequila, young mescal) and the El Jimador's Shifty (pineapple-infused mescal, lime, Negra Modelo)—both revelations concocted by Philip Ward, the force formerly behind the bar at nearby **Death & Co** and a man who could mix a good drink out of moonshine and compost runoff. A few blocks away at Jim Meehan's **PDT** (entered through a phone booth in the hot-dog joint Crif Dogs), so many of the cocktails on the menu stand out that I recommend making an early reservation and sticking around all night. Try the rum-

based Paddington, both for its amusing use of marmalade and its crisp Lillet finish, and the *shiso* malt sour, made with twelve-year-old Japanese whiskey, frothy egg white, and a whole *shiso* leaf (mint's exotic-tasting cousin). A little farther uptown, in the Flatiron District, there's **Raines Law Room**, so named for a nineteenth-century New York State edict that was supposed to curb boozing. Here, specialties like the tart blackberry-tinged Rumble and five different takes on the Pimm's Cup aren't even made at the bar—they're crafted in a kitchen trimmed with marble and stocked with crystal. Finally, if I'm looking for a cocktail on the Lower East Side, especially anytime after midnight, I head to **White Star**. Late one recent evening, I stopped by and literally asked the bartender for a nightcap. He glanced at his well-worn playbook, did some pouring and shaking, and presented me with something called an Atholl Brose: scotch, honey, a thickened layer of cream floating on top. The drink dates from fifteenth-century Scotland, and it hit just the right warm, sweet, calming note you want to end an evening on. Which is another thing I like about drinking in New York: The great bartenders have developed a kind of sixth sense. You give them even the vaguest instructions and they give you exactly what you need.—HOWIE KAHN



New York City

Speakeasy Central

→ New York makes me want to drink. Not beer. Not wine. Not rum and Cokes. Here, especially lately, heading out to a bar is about drinking what I wouldn't—if I were drinking at home. That means classic cocktails: those seamless blends that are best left to the pros. (Mess around with *Bénédictine* and bitters in your own kitchen and you'll see what I mean.) At Audrey Saunders's **Pegu Club** in SoHo, for instance, I have the effervescent Gin Gin Mule (gin, mint, lime, ginger beer), or a Jamaican Firefly (dark rum, more ginger beer), or maybe even a scotch-based Sleeping Monk. Okay, sometimes I have all three. This



PDT

Deep-fried dogs and superb cocktails are the specialties at Jim Meehan's East Village hideaway.

Raines Law Room

Sleepy? Order an old-school pick-me-up like the Corpse Reviver at this Prohibition-inspired lounge.



Pegu Club
77 W. Houston St.
212-473-7348

Mayahuel
304 E. 6th St.
212-253-5888

Death & Co
433 E. 6th St.
212-388-0882

PDT
113 St. Marks Pl.
212-614-0386

Raines Law Room
48 W. 17th St.
No Phone

White Star
21 Essex St.
212-995-5464

Williamsburg

New York's Best Drinking Day Trip



When I need a break from drinking—in Manhattan, I mean—I go to Williamsburg. A short L-train ride to Brooklyn and I'm in the heart of what might be the best drinking neighborhood in America. Its wide, built-for-industry streets and warehouses have been repurposed for aimless Saturday afternoons spent bouncing from one lively yet somehow uncrowded bar to the next. There's **The Levee** (a hipster dive where there are free cheese puffs and Twizzlers), **The Gutter** (a hipster bowling alley), **Barcade** (a hipster gaming parlor), and **Radegast** (a traditional beer hall that, because it's across the street from the Levee, is hipster). But really, any place you wander into—whether it's serving Bud Light in thirty-two-ounce Styrofoam cups (**Rosemary's**) or shaking fancy green Chartreuse cocktails (**Hotel Delmano**)—is liable to become your favorite. I've been coming here for years, yet all these bars leave me feeling like I've made a discovery. And sometimes that's all a jaded drinker needs to keep drinking some more.—K.S.

The Levee
212 Berry St.
718-218-8787

The Gutter
200 North 14th St.
718-387-3585

Barcade
388 Union Ave.
718-302-6464

Radegast
113 N. 3rd St.
718-963-3973

Rosemary's
188 Bedford Ave.
718-384-9539

Hotel Delmano
82 Berry St.
718-387-1945