



LOWER EAST SIDE



Gentrification has replaced immigration as the demographic shifter some say is homogenizing the area's raw rich multi-culti creative vibe into a dull yuppie pastel.

For generations, the tired and poor have been rudely huddled and massed into the tattered tenements of the Lower East Side. These days, though, gentrification has replaced immigration as the demographic shifter some say is homogenizing the area's raw rich multi-culti creative vibe into a dull yuppie pastel.

Dubbed the LES by locals, LoIsaida by Latino residents, and re-branded LoHo by realtors, the Lower East Side is bounded by Forsythe and Pitt streets, running south from East Houston to Canal.

Each year, the LES shopping district draws more and more traffic, touting a wide range of quality merchandise at prices you'd never see uptown.

While many complain the cultural integrity of the area is in jeopardy, numerous performance spaces still thrive here. And, like the East Village, live music drives the scene in the LES. Great live venues like Arlene Grocery and Mercury Lounge offer a steady stream of talented performers nightly. Meanwhile, bustling bars draw heavy traffic wedged side-by-side along Orchard, Rivington, Stanton and Ludlow.

Live the shabby chic LES lifestyle up close, if only for an evening. The sights, the sounds (well, maybe not the smells)...the experience is something you really can only capture firsthand. Don't wait too long. It may soon be swept away.



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Type of
Establishment
Bar/Live Music

Hours
Daily 6pm-4am
Drink Prices
Inexpensive

Food
N/A

Nearest
Subway
F to 2nd
Avenue

Credit Cards
Cash Only

Type of
Establishment
Bar/Restaurant

Hours
Su-Th 11am-2am F-Sa
11am-4am

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
Southern

Nearest
Subway
F to 2nd
Avenue

Credit Cards
V, MC,
Discover
\$3-\$5 Cover

Type of
Establishment
Bar

Hours
Daily 5pm-4am

Drink Prices
Moderate

Arlene Grocery

95 Stanton Street Btwn. Orchard & Ludlow
212.358.1633

With its garage style and in-your-face
ambiance, Arlene Grocery's diminutive size
actually adds to its charm, while embellish-
ing the acoustics. The dark atmosphere
gives way to a multi-jellied collage illumi-
nating the band. With a nightly line-up of
up to five acts, this one room club is a
good spot to gauge the current under-



ground scene. The crowd is mixed, with
many LES local musi-
cians and artists in
attendance. Events
like punk rock
Karaoke are also
worth checking out.

Baby Jupiter

170 Orchard Street @ Stanton
212.982.2229

The pale pastel art deco decor could have
been hi-jacked right out of South Beach, but
the entertainment is pure NYC downtown
eclectic. From jazz to hip hop, comedy to
vaudeville, Baby Jupiter offers probably the
widest variety of live entertainment down-
town. Did we mention the great acoustics?
The front room is designed diner-style with a
lava lamp or two thrown in and features a full
menu. Pass through to the main room and
enjoy anything from Monday's Improv Com-
edy to Wednesday's Electro-Fetus party or
Mad Groove Saturdays. Locals endearingly
call it Baby Stupider, but you're the only one
who'll look foolish should you forget I.D.

Barramundi

147 Ludlow Street
Between Rivington & Stanton
212.529.6900

Entering this trendy locale, candles and deep
red lighting immediately soothe senses shat-
tered by everyday LES life. In the creative
hands of the owners, hollow dress forms
become lamps, mirrors framed in colon-
nades reflect off each other into infinity and
red light bathes the front room in relaxed,
warm tones. Weather permitting, the real
party is out back in the spacious garden. A
definite downtown vibe here is heightened by
the conversation of local musicians and
artists mingling amongst the mixed crowd.

bOb

235 Eldridge Street
Between Stanton & East Houston
212.473.5816

Size isn't always everything. No...really.
Making the most with its pint-sized space,
bOb is so small, yet so lovely. Just ask the
attractive multi-culti crowd that flocks here
to work it out over a DJ spun mix of hip-
hop, Latin, industrial and whatever else is
flowing over the LES these days. The
comfortable antique decor, washed in red
lamps softened by candlelight, gives this
spot livingroom/studio/crashpad appeal
that fits well with its gritty surrounds. Slide
into one of the cozy leopard skin or blue
velvet couches and do a Mr. Rogers, as in
get to know your neighbor.

Bowery Ballroom

6 Delancey Street @ Bowery
212.533.2111

To give you an idea of its popularity, this the-
atrical, yet casual ballroom with stained glass
and velvet curtain decor even packs them in
on Monday nights. Unpretentious downtown-
ers are crushed back-to-back downstairs, on
the balcony and the stairways. Purple lights
flood the bouncy, beer-drinking, jeans-and-T-
shirt clad, I-love-you schreeching crowd
pressed against the cast iron balcony banis-
ter or the edge of the elevated stage. Heavy-
musclcd bouncers packed in black leather
jackets keep an eye on this unfeigned, emo-
tional and enthusiastic audience enjoying 90s
rock, techno and groove.



Fun

130 Madison Street
212.964.0303

Fun? We could think of a few other one-word
monikers for this spot tucked away under the
Manhattan Bridge. BURNED, as in velvet
rope friction. SWEATY or CROWDED would
also work better. But, while it's not always
Fun, this spot is not without AtNight appeal.
The scene is downtown hipster meet the
Street, and we really like the arcade-esque
touches like the hydraulic lifted waitresses
and ceiling-to-floor MTVs (Playstation gaming
on Tuesdays). Doused in deep red lighting, a
VIP lounge overlooks the action. And, heads
up for the bathroom-cams guys and gals.

Type of
Establishment
Lounge

Hours
Daily 7pm-4am
Drink Prices
Inexpensive

Food
N/A

Nearest
Subway
F to 2nd
Avenue

Credit Cards
AmEx, MC, V

Type of
Establishment
Bar/Live Music

Hours
Daily 7pm-2am
Drink Prices
Inexpensive

Food
N/A

Nearest
Subway
F to 2nd
Avenue

Credit Cards
MC, V

Type of
Establishment
Club

Hours
Daily 8pm-4am

Drink Prices
Expensive

Type of Establishment
Bar/Lounge

Hours
T-Th 8pm-2am F-Su 8pm-4am
Closed
Monday

Drink Prices
Expensive

Food
N/A

Nearest Subway
F to 2nd Avenue

Credit Cards
AmEx, MC, V

Idlewild
145 East Houston Street
212.477.5005

Girly flight attendants serve drinks to retro-clad club kids trying their hardest to act cool in this cushioned aircraft-inspired club. Trust fund-types in pricey designer dresses flirt to funk spun strong and smooth by DJs. Other revelers chat it up in airplane seats at the chrome bar, in front of the aircraft's many bathroom doors, or in the tail section, where it can get very smoky. Done up in icy blue, a cylindrical aquarium makes the whole place look even cooler. Disclaimer: Couples getting freaky at Idlewild Do Not qualify for the Mile High Club?

Kush
183 Orchard Street
212.677.7328

Step off Orchard Street into the romantic Middle Eastern world that is Kush - where old world music dances with delicate candlelight. The stucco architecture and ornate artwork are complemented by an authentic menu of Middle Eastern delicacies and spir-its with a strong Moroccan influence. It's a mixed downtown crowd with a large number of European patrons. Tuesday's Middle Eastern night features a belly dancer, tarot readings, henna painting and a live gypsy band. Did we mention BELLY DANCER? Tuesday through Saturday Kush also offers a DJ, with DJ Sasha spinning global fusion Wednesdays.

Lansky Lounge
104 Norfolk Street
Between Delancey & Rivington
212.677.9489

This retro speakeasy recalls a time when gangsters like Meyer Lansky were loved and feared, guys were guys and girls were dolls. After stuffing yourself on the kosher menu including potato latkes, head to the back room and swing the night away. This 20s-style, gangster-themed lounge with its tin ceilings and Zoot-suited doorman ushering patrons down a set of steps through a dingy corridor and into the bar, creates the feel of a prohibition-era underground joint. Though the crowd doesn't dress the part as much as they did when the club opened, there's still a heavy time warp factor.



Type of Establishment
Bar/Lounge

Hours
M-Sa 6pm-4am Su 7pm-2am

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
Middle Eastern

Nearest Subway
F to 2nd Avenue

Credit Cards
MC, V

Type of Establishment
Restaurant/Lounge

Hours
Sa-Th 8pm-4am
Closed
Friday

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
Kosher

Nearest

Max Fish
178 Ludlow Street
Between Stanton & East Houston
212.529.3959

It's difficult to specifically describe the decor here, as Max Fish invites local artists to redecorate the entire bar each and every month. The artists vary, except for two special shows each year that are neighborhood favorites - a cartoon show and a show displaying the artwork of mental patients. To attempt to describe the ever-changing decor is unfair, except to say the range is somewhere between contemporary realism and psychedelic carnival. Live music is offered the first Sunday of every month.

Meow Mix
269 East Houston
Between Avenue A & Avenue B
212.254.0688

Meow Mix is the purr-fect (sorry, we just couldn't resist the urge to pun) alternative downtown dive featuring live music all week long. The crowd is mostly lesbian, but Meow Mix also taps into the mixed LES scene on weekends. Pussycat cartoon drawings, leopard skin chairs and numerous other feline-inspired features are of interest, but peripheral. The main focus here is on the music and the conversation. They aren't posh by any means, yet the bar's charm lies more with the playful attitude of its staff and regular customers than with any aesthetic. Try one of the special cocktails including the Flaming Ho-Moe, Real Love or Troye on the Beach.

Mercury Lounge
217 East Houston
212.260.4700

From LES local vocals to the occasional A-list crooner, Mercury hosts a broad array of artists and styles. It's not exactly a hard rock spot, nor is it strictly an easy listening venue. There is, though, a strong accentuation on local talent, always sounding better than when you saw them elsewhere thanks to an exceptional sound system. There's no cover charge to drink at the front bar with the mostly LES crowd where you just might overhear locals reminiscing about neighborhood history. If you came to hear the bands, though, there is a cover to pass through the thick velvet curtains. Relax, it's a small price to pay to experience one of NYC's best sounding rooms.

Type of Establishment
Bar

Hours
Daily 5:30pm-4am

Drink Prices
Inexpensive

Food
N/A

Nearest Subway
F to 2nd Avenue

Credit Cards
Cash Only

Type of Establishment
Bar

Hours
Sa-Su 3pm-4am
M-F 5pm-4am

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
N/A

Nearest Subway
F to 2nd Avenue

Credit Cards
Cash Only

Type of Establishment
Bar/Live Music

Hours
Daily 6pm-4am

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
N/A

Nearest Subway
F to 2nd Avenue

Type of
Establishment
Private Bar

Hours
M-Sa 9pm-
4am

Drink Prices
Expensive

Food
N/A

Nearest
Subway
F to
Delancey
Street J,M,Z to
Essex Street

Credit Cards
Cash Only

Milk & Honey

134 Eldridge Street
Between Broome & Delancey Streets
Number Changes Weekly

This is where nobody knows your name, and they never look glad you came. That is, unless you're part of the clique. We'd post the address, but, actually it doesn't have one (psst, off Delancey, around the block from Lansky's, but you never heard it from us). You can spend hours combing the area, but it's a game LES locals play pointing you in the wrong direction. Styled as a sort of speakeasy, you'll only get in if you're down with someone who's down with the owner. If you're not, don't even bother. Once inside, gents should resist the urge to approach young ladies. It's just one of the unusual house rules that will get you bounced.

Orchard Bar

200 Orchard Street
212.673.5350

With a floor that's reminiscent of rugged terrain, granite banquettes, and National Geographic-esque animal flicks playing on a central screen, we weren't sure whether we were supposed to grab a drink or pitch a tent. Despite the unnaturally natural look of the place, the staff is congenial and the DJs put on a great show, especially on Mondays. Thankfully, the natives, who range from neighborhood friendly unwinding after work to trendy club-goers weekends, are far from restless. DJs spin a nightly mix of house, hip-hop and, appropriately, jungle.

The Saint

105 Stanton Street
Between Ludlow & Essex
646.654.1293

Will the LES ever meet a theme it won't like? There's the Moroccan-inspired Kush, Welcome to the Johnsons' take on 1970s suburban hell, and Idlewild with its 747 appeal. Add to that list The Saint, modeled after a Middle Ages pub. But unlike most theme bars, the decor here doesn't overpower the relaxed vibe. With over 85 different bottled brews from around the world, this is a great spot to catch up with friends. Try not to chuckle at the poor rendering of a panel from the Sistine Chapel when you walk in. Head for the music lounge downstairs featuring an intriguing mix of jazz and Caribbean.

Type of
Establishment
Bar

Hours
M-Sa 3pm-
4am Su 7pm-
4am

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
N/A

Nearest
Subway
F to 2nd
Avenue

Credit Cards
AmEx, MC, V

Type of
Establishment
Bar

Hours
Daily 4pm-
4am

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
N/A

Nearest

Sapphire

249 Eldridge Street
212.777.5153

Fuse the phat elements of a full-scale nightclub together and cram them all into a small LES commercial space and you can almost picture this long-running downtown spot. Holding one of the few cabaret licenses in the nabe, flashing strobes and fluorescent bulbs illuminate the crowd kicking it to the breaka-breaka dawn as the renowned roster of DJs work it out with hip-hop, house and R&B. The crowd is mostly downtown local, but this spot also has a mixed out-of-town flavor.

The Slipper Room

167 Orchard Street @ Stanton
212.253.7426

Is your fantasy to lounge in the "*I Dream of Jeannie*" bottle while sucking down a martini or two? Well then, we suggest you seek some serious professional attention. If you're so far gone that therapy is not an option, then by all means head on over to the Slipper Room and have a seat. The service at this latest theme bar to splash down in the LES leaves a little to be desired. So, blink all you want, you still might wait for 10 minutes or so without being approached. Once the drinks finally arrive, you realize that your magic carpet ride needs a lift. Have another drink, and tell your date you want to be MASTER. Some great DJs, drag-king shows and occasional live performances make up the slack.

Swim

146 Orchard Street
212.673.0799

Nestled amongst the countless wholesale clothing outlets you'll find this comfortable lounge reflecting the evolving Orchard Street scene. The atmosphere at Swim is definitely conducive to soaking up the acoustic sounds of singer/songwriters, as well as local DJs that perform here. The minimalist decor - warm lighting, bare walls, wood floors - has a classic feel. Sorry folks, they've since scaled back and squished the fish, as in shuttering the late night sushi joint upstairs. So, while you'll have to seek elsewhere for your late night raw finger snacks, the DJ driven music scene here is still alive and kicking weekends.

Type of
Establishment
Lounge

Hours
Daily 7pm-
4am

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
N/A

Nearest
Subway
F to 2nd
Avenue

Credit Cards
Cash Only

Type of
Establishment
Bar/restaurant

Hours

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
American/
International

Nearest
Subway
F to 2nd
Avenue

Credit Cards
AmEx, Disc,
MC, V

Type of
Establishment
Bar

Hours
Daily 6pm-
4am

Drink Prices
Moderate

Food
Sushi

Nearest
Subway
F to 2nd
Avenue

Type of
Establishment
Bar/Restaurant
Hours
Th-Sa 11am-
3am Su-W
11am-1am
Drink Prices
Moderate
Food
N/A
Nearest
Subway
F to Delancey
Street
Credit Cards
Cash Only

Tonic

107 Norfolk Street
Between Delancey & Rivington
212.358.7501

This live music venue curated by composer John Zorn is rapidly becoming a stronghold for the downtown avant-garde scene. Avocado walls and exposed wooden rafters foster an island escape vibe, but setting definitely plays second fiddle to scene here. By offering more than just live music, including a Monday night film series, informational workshops with musicians and organized events by guest curators, Tonic has crafted a haven for musicians wanting to stretch the boundaries of expression.

Type of
Establishment
Supper Club
Hours
F-Sa 6pm-4am
Su-Th 6pm-
2am
Drink Prices
Expensive
Food
French/South
American
Nearest
Subway
F to 2nd
Avenue
Credit Cards
AmEx, MC, V

Torch

137 Ludlow Street
Between Rivington & Stanton
212.228.5151

This swanky downtown supper club parachutes some much needed uptown ambiance onto the LES scene. Ornate glowing orange/red wooden fixtures match the larger wall sculpture behind the bar as you walk in. The deep sultry sounds of live musicians are evenly carried throughout the club, providing the perfect appetizer for a menu of French specialties with a South American infusion. Suede-soft walls gently lit by delicate golden globes and candlelight makes this an ideal place for an intimate dinner or warm group cuddle.

Type of
Establishment
Bar
Hours
M-F 3pm-4am
Sa-Su 12pm-
4am
Drink Prices
Inexpensive
Food
Pizza
Nearest
Subway F to
Delancey
Street

Welcome to the Johnsons'

123 Rivington Street
Between Essex & Norfolk
212.420.9911

Equal parts kitschy tribute and sardonic critique, this spot could pass for the rumpus room of a middle-American family, circa 1975. From the tacky furniture and Sears family photos on the wall, to the stocked medicine cabinet in the bathroom and Ms. Pac-Man machine, no detail has been spared. The result is a suburbia garage sale heaven from our youth (Well, not exactly 'our' youth, but we're pretty sure this is how those other Herbs used to live). Depending on where you're from, the bar either strikes a nostalgic note or comes off as a bizarre museum. Either way, the crowd is as funky and freaky as the surroundings.