

CHECKOUT



A BUYER'S MARKET

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Atlas fudged: This early 17th-century rendition of America (about \$6,000) is available at Argosy, a midtown book and map emporium.

You are here

Any number of New Yorkers will tell you where to go, but to really arrive at your destination, you need a good map **By Rob Cummings** Photographed by **Amy Freeth**

Well-conceived maps not only depict the relationship between *here* and *there*, but also sort and assemble our conceptions of reality. Emotionally speaking, maps can be a container for memories, or a screen on which to project fantasies. But most importantly, accurate maps give you a sense of where you are, conveying an extraordinary amount of information in a compact form.

When Henry Hudson sailed 150 miles north from the mouth of the river that now bears his name, looking for the Northwest Passage, he was guided by incomplete charts and hearsay. All he found was a place that would one day be

called Albany. The following year, Hudson returned in the *Discovery* to sail northwest along the Labrador coast and then south into an enormous bay. Hudson was still looking for the elusive passage on the southern shores of the bay when winter closed in. The *Discovery* survived the winter locked in the ice, but the crew mutinied on the return voyage, setting Hudson and eight other men adrift in a small boat. They were never seen again.

Fortunately for the modern-day disoriented, Manhattan is now well surveyed and stocked with maps of the entire earth. Whether you're planning a trek across the Hindu Kush or a pas-

sage to New Jersey, you can find a map to show you the way—if you know where to look.

STORES

Argosy Book Store Inc.

116 E 59th St between Park and Lexington Aves (753-4455). Subway: N, R, 4, 5, 6 to 59th St. Mon–Fri 9am–6pm.

Many cartophiles are not interested in travel, but collect maps for what they reveal about an area's stages of development and the limits of the mapmaker's knowledge. At Argosy Book Store, collectors can lose entire days browsing through the giant folders of the map col-

lection on the second floor. The folders are identified by region—there are seven folders devoted to New York state alone—and also contain antiquarian maps (those made before 1900). You might find a small map of the Yucatan, printed in 1640 (\$250), or a poster-size reproduction of a 1766 survey of the British colony of New York (\$200). At the time that survey was made, the city extended only as far north as Grand Street, and the East Village was still a swamp. Argosy has also developed a minor trade in errata. Ever popular are the 16th-century charts that depict California as an island. "That kind of idiosyncratic geography applies for every country," notes Adina Cohen, a partner at Argosy. "Some people just like them because they're decorative."

The Civilized Traveller

2003 Broadway at 68th St (875-0306). Subway: 1, 9, 2, 3 to 72nd St. Mon–Sat 10am–9pm, Sun noon–7pm. A combination luggage store, bookstore and travel agency, the Civilized Traveller has packaged the travel experience into a retail hybrid of information and gear. A decent selection of guidebooks shares space with backpacks, duffel bags, grips, globes, hats, picnic hampers, tip tables and the in-store travel agency. Just don't expect to find many maps here.

The Complete Traveller

199 Madison Ave at 35th St (685-9007). Subway: 6 to 33rd St. Mon–Fri 9am–7pm; Sat 10am–6pm; Sun 11am–5pm.

"We get all kinds of strange requests," says Harriet Greenberg, who owns the Complete Traveller along with her husband, Arnold. "We've been having this big rush on Ireland now, for some reason. People want to go back to Ireland and find the towns their grandparents came from." For locating tiny towns in the British Isles, the Ordnance Survey maps are best, Greenberg adds. The Complete Traveller is a comfortable maporium, where it's not unusual to find customers sprawled on the floor, studying roadmaps of the American Southwest, or diagrams of English bicycle routes. The store also carries an extensive collection of atlases, 19th-century travel literature, city maps, antiquarian maps and international cookbooks. But not every visitor is planning a major expedition. "We actually have some people come in and buy the guidebooks who are quite happy not to go anywhere," Greenberg notes.

Hagstrom Map & Travel Center

57 W 43rd St at Sixth Ave (398-1222). Subway: B, D, F, Q to 42nd St–Times Sq. Mon–Fri 8:30am–5:45pm.

A sunny space replete with atlases, wall maps, globes and pilot books, Hagstrom is probably best known for its thorough series of roadmaps (\$2.50–\$3.95) charting the most minute byways of the tristate area. Hagstrom also has

A la carte

The folks at the New York Public Library have 405,000 maps—which you can use for free

On the evening of December 21, 1988, Alice Hudson, chief of the Map Division at the New York Public Library, was talking with her colleagues after the library's holiday party when she received an unusual request. "The phone rings," Hudson recalls, "and someone wants to know where Lockerbie, Scotland, is. It's a reporter. I ask him why and he says, 'We think a plane just went down near there.'" Hudson and her staff located the site of the Pan Am air crash before the rest of the world had even heard the name Lockerbie.

The Map Division staff, housed in Room 117 of the main branch, also fields less catastrophic geographic queries. "We get crazy questions like 'I need a map of the center of the earth,'" Hudson says.

The planet's core is not well charted, but the Map Division is still the best bet for getting a quick fix of your position on the surface of the earth. The New York Public Library has 405,000 maps and 18,000 books and atlases covering the entire globe from the 16th century to the present. The collection focuses on cities, but it also contains USGS topographical

maps and a growing set of computer mapping programs, including DeLorme's excellent Map'n'Go, which, given a starting point and an end point, can plot detailed driving routes between towns and cities in the United States.

The difference between a good map and a bad map is in the details. "You can test [a map] by looking at what you know," Hudson explains. When evaluating a new atlas, for example, the chief of the Map Division will look for her hometown in Tennessee. If the mapmaker accurately rendered the topography of that small town, Hudson says, they probably got the other details right as well.

At the end of the 20th century, it would seem that most terra is already cognita. But, says Hudson, it's not a dead science yet. "There are parts of the world that are not really mapped. For instance, parts of the Amazon. A place isn't mapped unless you can get back to it."—RC

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave at 42nd St (930-0587). Subway: N, R, 1, 2, 3, 9, 7, S to 42nd St-Times Sq. Tue 11am-7:30pm, Wed 11am-6pm, Thu-Sat 10am-6pm (for map division only).

Mon-Sat 10am-10pm, Sun 11am-9pm.

● 743 Broadway between 7th and 8th Sts (228-7770). Subway: N, R to 8th St-NYU. Mon-Sat 10am-10pm, Sun 11am-9pm.

Star Magic has less earthly concerns: Among other things, it specializes in celestial charts. If you can overlook the crystals, insidious New Age music and cloying incense, you'll find a set of three Repogle Globes—Earth, Moon and Mars (\$40). Stargazers will appreciate the Miller Planisphere (\$8), a cleverly rotating chart of the heavens above 40 degrees north latitude, New York's approximate position, adjustable for season and time. Best accessory for megalomaniacs: soft, Nerf-like globes that you can crush in your hand. It's a squishy world after all.

Traveller's Bookstore

22 W 52nd St between Fifth and Sixth Aves (664-0995). Subway: E, F to 53rd St. Mon-Fri 9am-6pm, Sat 11am-5pm.

The Traveller's Bookstore stocks 10,000 titles, 2,000 of which are maps, in a space no bigger than your average studio apartment. But when owner Diana Wells bought the place four years ago, it was smaller. "I doubled the size," she says, "believe it or not." Wells recently bought her wholesaler's entire stock of updated Uzbekistan, a total of three maps brought back by a missionary to the Central Asian republic. She's already sold one of them. "We sort of specialize in off-the-beaten-path," she says.

AUCTIONS

Richard B. Arkway Inc.

59 E 54th St between Park and Madison Aves, suite 62 (751-8135). Subway: E, F to 53rd St. By appointment only.

"A very large part of what we do is maps," says Paul Cohen, a dealer in antique maps at Arkway. "Most of the people who buy them are private collectors." Like other galleries and auction houses, Arkway deals exclusively in antiquarian maps and globes. The gallery recently sold a 15th-century map of the world for an undisclosed sum. It was among the oldest maps Arkway has sold. "Printing started in 1455 or '6," says Cohen. "Before that you're talking about manuscripts."

Christie's

● 502 Park Ave at 59th St (546-1000). Subway: N, R, 4, 5, 6 to 59th St.

Christie's East

● 219 E 67th St between Second and Third Aves (606-0400). Subway: 6 to 69th St.

Call for auction and viewing info.

"Maps are a very hot market," explains Nina Musinsky, assistant vice president of books and manuscripts at Christie's. "People are collecting maps because they're decorative. It is an area where prices have gone up drastically in the last 15 or 20 years, and it's a strong area of the [book] market." The average price for a 17th-century map could start at \$200 and go up to \$5,000, according to Musinsky, although there are always exceptions. Christie's recently held an auction where half of a rare 1616 Dutch map of the world sold for \$26,000.

Sotheby's Inc.

1334 York Ave at E 72nd St (606-

7000). Subway: 6 to 77th St. Call for auction and viewing info.

"The great thing about maps is that they can be collected at any range of value," says Selby Kiffer, a vice president in the books and manuscripts division at Sotheby's. "For the most part, the market for maps in the city is a gallery market. If you're looking for American maps, [New York] is absolutely the place to be." There is a greater concentration of vintage world maps in London, Kiffer notes, while Amsterdam is the place to track down works of the great Dutch mapmakers, like the Blaeu Brothers and Ortelius.

Swann Galleries

104 E 25th St between Park and Lexington Aves (254-4710). Subway: 6 to 23rd St. Call for auction and viewing info.

"Collectors come from all walks of life," says Gary Garland, senior cataloger and head of the map and atlas department at Swann. "It's a very international business." Many European collectors place their orders by phone. Although the prices of rare and vintage maps have been escalating in recent years, the average cost of antique charts is still accessible. "Not everybody can spend four or five thousand dollars for a map," Garland says. "Ninety-nine percent of the maps coming to market are really fairly affordable," (fetching anywhere from \$200 to \$4,000 for an antiquarian map). Which parts of the earth are in greatest demand? According to Garland: "Map collectors worldwide tend to specialize in areas close to home." ■

two essential items not found in most other travel stores: bilingual picture dictionaries—useful for having intimate conversations comprised almost entirely of nouns—and multicolored push pins. It's impossible to keep track of your far-flung empire without them.

New York Bound Bookshop

50 Rockefeller Plaza (245-8503). Subway: B, D, F, Q to 42nd St-Times Sq. Mon-Fri 10am-5pm.

For Gothamites who would never dream of venturing beyond the five boroughs, New York Bound, in the lobby of the AP Building at Rockefeller Center, carries a collection of books, maps and ephemera of an exclusively local provenance. There you can find modern isometric maps providing a pigeon's-eye view of each neighborhood in the city, like those in *Manhattan Up-Close* (\$13), and 19th-century property surveys of the Village (\$200-\$300). Nostalgia bonus: New York Bound has Official Souvenir Maps of the 1964 World's Fair (\$35).

New York Nautical

Chart Supply Inc

90 Hudson St between Worth and Leonard Sts (925-8849). Subway: 1, 9 to Franklin St. Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.

At New York Nautical Chart Supply, a small no-nonsense space on Hudson Street in Tribeca, the shelves are filled with volumes of shipping regulations, tide tables, U.S. Coastal Pilots and copies of the *American Tugboat Review*. True to its name, Nautical Chart Supply provides charts for the seven seas. A few guys may wander in during lunch hour to talk boats, but most of the business comes over the phone or from the nearby shipping agencies.

New York Nautical Instrument and Service Corp.

140 West Broadway at Thomas St (962-4522). Subway: 1, 9 to Franklin St. Mon-Fri 9am-5pm.

Around the corner from DeGennaro's chart house is New York Nautical Instrument and Service Corp. It's a bigger, cluttered room lined in dark wood paneling and glass cases containing sextants, barometers, chronometers and a handheld Global Positioning System (\$225), which uses satellite signals to fix its exact position on the face of the earth, give or take 50 feet. Latitude and longitude, however, aren't much good without charts. "We chart the entire world," says shipping manager Mike Surita, leaning against one of the cases containing some of the store's 10,000 charts. "If it's out there, we have it."

Rand McNally & Co.

150 E 52nd St between Lexington and Third Aves (758-7488). Subway: E, F to 53rd St; 6 to 51st St. Mon-Fri 9am-6pm, Sat 11am-5pm, Sun noon-5pm.

The Rand McNally & Co. travel store—one link in a 21-store chain—has everything the well-heeled corporate traveler could want. There's a good selection of guidebooks, a comprehensive collection of road maps for North America, topographic maps of the Northeast, globes and a gaggle of gadgets. Next to waterproof clock radio-flashlights and portable cutlery sets is a calculator designed solely for currency conversion—just the thing for changing dollars to drachma.

Star Magic

● 275 Amsterdam Ave at 73rd St (769-2021). Subway: 1, 9, 2, 3 to 72nd St.



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