

In New York, any day can be Mother's day

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Mom and daughter excursion comes years later than planned, but maturity has rewards

NEW YORK—The proposition comes almost as soon as we arrive at the corner of Canal St. and Lafayette.

“Gucci? Prada? Chanel? You want purse? Come, come,” offered the woman on the corner, her eyes darting left and right.

Before we can even talk about it, we both shake our heads “no.”

It wasn't so much that we were above making the purchase, just that caught off-guard we realized we were both too chicken to delve into the purse-buying underground. The inevitable backroom visit and negotiations for what would probably be knock-off products would've had me nervous on any occasion, but with my mother at my side? Just couldn't do it.

And this was a problem since buying a purse was one of the things on the list.

My mother and I were here in New York City to rectify what seemed in our minds to be the equivalent of a teenage pimple on prom night. Despite being on the planet for a combined 100 years and despite having travelled to far-flung places around the globe, neither of us had ever truly visited New York City.

We'd “passed through it” for conferences, family visits, airport transfers, but the key must-see rites of passage had never been attempted.

To add insult to injury, the Carlton Hotel in Manhattan recently published a list of “13 things to do in New York City before turning 13” and neither of us had done any. We were in New York now to rectify the situation, make up for lost time and restore our travel dignity over a weekend.

I mean, surely, if 12-year-olds could conquer New York, we could. Right?

In many ways the list put my mother and me back into a pattern familiar to moms of teenage girls. Here we were, more than 20 years later, having the same conversations we'd had when I was a teen without the accompanying dependency on mom to pay for things or chastisements about my clothing choices.

Instead we both could relax allowing our time together to reveal how much we are alike: the mutual hesitancy on Canal St., worry about when the amount of ice cream we were eating would arrive on our hips and joint pain brought on by walking 30 blocks on a whim.

There were other benefits to exploring New York with mom while being . . . um . . . slightly older.

We understood the deep historical undertones of [FELA!](#) (the Broadway play about the torture and perseverance of Nigerian singer and activist [Fela Kuti](#)) and could enjoy the scantily clad dancers and rump-shaking rhythms without worry about corrupting teen values or what the other might think. We could have a glass of pink Moët and Chandon champagne alongside our High Tea at the [Russian Tea Room](#) and order the complimentary white wine on our Porter Airlines flight without hesitation.

Age also made us more confident: skipping the Bloomingdale beauty tricks to choose our own lipstick instead, spending money on 500 thread-count sheets instead of the latest trendy fashions and opting out of the bicycle ride in Central Park for a walk down Fifth Ave.

We added in a few other things, too — a trip to 30 Rock for me, a glimpse of the [Rockefeller Plaza](#) ice rink for her and a trip up to the [Top of the Rock](#) for us both to take in the view.

Later, as we sat at a table in [Dylan's Candy Bar](#) sharing a Demolition Cookie Derby Sundae (No. 2) and reviewed our original list, we agreed that we were too old for some things (no interest in the Gossip Girl Tour, No. 8) and weren't keen on doing others. In my opinion shopping for lingerie (No. 4) with my mom shouldn't be done after a certain age. Instead we opted to extend our time at the Spa at the Peninsula and pay our respects at the [World Trade Center Tribute site](#) and had no regrets about either choice.

By Sunday we had only made it through about half of the original list. We weren't going home with the trendy purses and makeovers we had originally envisioned but we left feeling victorious and confident that 13 or not, NYC still had plenty to offer for a mom and daughter only slightly past their prime.

Heather Greenwood Davis is a Toronto-based freelance writer. Her visit to New York was subsidized by Porter Airlines, the Carlton Hotel and the New York City Tourism department (www.ncygo.com).

Just the facts

[The Carlton Hotel](#) is on Madison Ave. at 28th St. in Manhattan. The “13 things to do in New York City before turning 13” package offers moms and their tween daughters a copy of the book that inspired the idea, a flip book with details on the 13 things and accommodations starting at \$369 U.S. per night.

[Porter Airlines](#) offers nine daily non-stop flights to Newark International Airport from Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport.

City pass: [The New York CityPass](#) offers an almost 50 per cent discount on entrance fees to six of New York’s most celebrated sites including the Museum of Modern Art and the Empire State Building Observatory.