

Downtown worth rediscovering

Visitors to Ground Zero can see some of city's most historic sites

By LAN N. NGUYEN
DAILY NEWS FEATURE WRITER

At 10:30 a.m. on the first day of her first-ever trip to Manhattan, Neva Hascall and two friends stand in the line at South Street Seaport's Pier 16, waiting for tickets to the Ground Zero viewing platform.

"I just wanted to make sense of the tragedy," says the retired hospital administrator from New Mexico. "I feel I am visiting a cemetery, to honor the people who died."

New Yorkers wait in line, too. "I need to see something to get closure for it," says Peggy Geoghan, a 38-year-old security worker from Levittown. "My girlfriend's brother was killed."

Tickets give visitors a 30-minute window on the platform at Broadway and Fulton St. They are distributed daily on a first-come basis from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. or until the day's supply runs out. (Call 212-732-7678 for more information.)

The walk from the Seaport ticket office to Ground Zero is no more than 15 minutes, leaving many visitors with time to spend downtown. Here are some suggestions for what to see and where to eat before or after your visit:

■ South Street Seaport.

Walk the cobbled streets and pop into quaint brick buildings featuring such mainstream retailers as Coach, Abercrombie & Fitch and Gap. Stroll the boardwalk and get a wonderful view of the East River and the Brooklyn Bridge. Be sure to check out Mariposa, the butterfly gallery.

■ **The South Street Seaport Museum** (212-748-8600). A \$5 ticket will give you access to three galleries and a 19th-century printing shop. At Pier 16, climb onto the Ambrose, a 1908 lightship, and the Peking, a 1911 bark, and learn how sailors live. The museum has a free afternoon tour designed to help put the awful events of Sept. 11 into historical perspective.

■ **The New York Stock Exchange** is a few blocks southeast on Wall St. The visitors' gallery has been closed since Sept. 11, but the columns — lit to resemble an American flag — are worth seeing.

Across the street is Federal Hall, the former U.S. Custom House and a beautiful example of Greek Revival architecture. George Washington's statue stands in front, a memorial to the day he took the oath of office as the nation's first President. The Downtown Alliance (212-606-4060) offers a free, 90-minute Wall Street Walking Tour every Thursday and Saturday at noon.

■ **Trinity Church**, on Broadway between Wall and Pine Sts., escaped the events of Sept. 11 intact. The Neo-Gothic structure with its artful spire has been providing solace since 1846. (A Trinity Church in some form has stood here since 1697.)

■ **Downtown museums.** The Museum of American Financial History (212-908-4110, \$2 admission) is 15 minutes south of Ground Zero at 28 Broadway. It features an exhibition of piggy banks. A little farther down the hill, at 1 Bowling Green, is the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (212-514-3888, free admission).

■ **Fraunces Tavern.** The newly renovated Fraunces Tavern restaurant at 54 Pearl St. (212-968-1776) combines classic American food and a building dating to the American Revolution. Admission to the upstairs museum, where Washington delivered his farewell address, is \$2 for children and seniors; \$3 for adults.

■ **Dining choices.** For a hearty bistro lunch, there's Les Halles Downtown (15 John St., 212-679-4111). Mangia (40 Wall St., 212-425-4040) has salads, soups and sandwiches and a spacious eating area.

Two choices from Pier 17 at the South Street Seaport: Cubano Nuevo Latino and Sago Tea Cafe. Vine on Broad Street (212-344-VINE) serves New American fare, and Ruben's Empanadas at 64 Fulton St. (212-962-5330) serves delicious empanadas filled with everything from tofu to Argentine sausage for under \$4.

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