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CLARION REVIEW ★★★★☆ TRAVEL

Harlem Travel Guide

Carolyn D. Johnson
Valerie Jo Bradley
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"Nieuw Haarlem" was taken from the American Indians by the Dutch in 1658, who, in turn, lost it to the British in 1664. Being more parsimonious in their use of vowels, the British renamed the place "Harlem," and it has been so ever since. In 1873, Harlem was annexed to New York City as the City's first suburb.

Sugar Ray Robinson owned a bar in Harlem, and the boxer Jack Johnson also owned a club there that ultimately became the Cotton Club. The site of Columbia University, located in West Harlem, was once the site of the Bloomingdale Asylum. Comedian George Carlin grew up in Morningside Heights and Thomas Merton converted to Catholicism at Corpus Christi Catholic Church on 121st Street near Columbia University.

These are but a sample of the rich and varied history that is woven into the backdrop of *Harlem Travel Guide* by Carolyn D. Johnson and Valerie Jo Bradley. The authors have penned a remarkably useful and informative guide to this culturally rich and important neighborhood.

The guide begins with a section entitled "Useful Information," and it should not be overlooked by the reader. These pages contain essential information for both the new visitor to New York City and the occasional traveler to that huge metropolis. Johnson and Bradley provide such basic information as the names, addresses, and contact numbers for visitor centers throughout the city, guides on tipping doormen, porters, and taxi drivers, and vital information on fares and use of the New York transit system.

The remainder of the book is divided into chapters covering each of the identifiable parts of Harlem: Central Harlem, the famed neighborhood of the "Harlem Renaissance" and the political center of Harlem; West Harlem, home to colleges including Barnard and Columbia University; Grant's Tomb and the area known in the 1920s as "Sugar Hill"; and East Harlem, containing Spanish Harlem, an old Italian neighborhood, and the Langston Hughes house.

Johnson and Bradley have also filled their guide book with the basic data any traveler would look for in such a book: lists and descriptions of accommodations, restaurants, museums, and more. There are several full-page, detailed maps of sections of Harlem that are easy to read and follow. They have included a large quantity of smaller full-color pictures of important sites, such as historically and culturally significant houses and buildings.

Harlem Travel Guide should be in the backpack of every visitor to the neighborhood and therefore makes terrific reading for the armchair traveler.

JOHN MICHAEL SENGER (February 17, 2011)

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