

CENTRAL AND WEST HARLEM, MANHATTAN

HARLEM: MOUNT MORRIS TO STRIVERS' ROW

A MUSEENYC WALKING TOUR · FREE, AND NOT SPONSORED BY ANYONE

DISTANCE 2.9 miles	TIME 3 hours
STOPS 13, 7 private (sidewalk only)	START 125th Street and Frederick Douglass Blvd (A/B/C/D to 125 St)
END Hamilton Grange, St. Nicholas Park	MAP museenyc.com/tours/04-harlem/map

Harlem was built speculatively as an upper-middle-class white suburb in the 1880s, overbuilt, and then opened to Black tenants when it could not be filled. The result is some of the finest row-house architecture in the city, and the center of Black American cultural life. Sunday morning is the best time, but be respectful around churches.

ROUTE CARD

Screenshot or tear off this page. Full detail for each stop follows.

1 Apollo Theater PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY	8 Abyssinian Baptist Church PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY
2 Studio Museum in Harlem	9 Strivers' Row (St. Nicholas Historic District) PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY
3 Marcus Garvey Park	10 Harlem YMCA, 135th Street PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY
4 Harlem Fire Watchtower	11 Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
5 Mount Morris Park Historic District, Lenox Avenue PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY	12 St. Nicholas Park
6 Mount Olivet Baptist Church PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY	13 Hamilton Grange National Memorial
7 Astor Row PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY	

Private stops include people's homes: no gates, no doorways, no photographing into windows.

GETTING THERE AND BACK

START	A/B/C/D to 125 St, right at the Apollo. Or 2/3 to 125 St for the Lenox Ave end.
FINISH	A/B/C/D at 145 St, or 1 at 137 St-City College, both about 8 minutes from Hamilton Grange.
ALONG THE ROUTE	Lenox Ave: M102. Adam Clayton Powell Blvd: M7, M102. Frederick Douglass Blvd: M10. Crosstown on 125th: M60 SBS, M100, Bx15. Amsterdam and Broadway: M100, M101, M104.

Cutting it short

Every walk here has exits. Good ones on this route:

- After stop 4 (Watchtower): 2/3 at 125 St-Lenox Ave, three blocks south.
- After stop 7 (Astor Row): 2/3 at 125 St, or M102 down Lenox.
- After stop 9 (Strivers' Row): B/C at 135 St, or 1 at 137 St.
- After stop 11 (Schomburg): 2/3 at 135 St-Lenox Ave, right there.

THE WALK

1 APOLLO THEATER

PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY

Built in 1914 as a whites-only burlesque house, reopened in 1934 as the Apollo with an integrated policy. A teenage Ella Fitzgerald won Amateur Night in its first year, and Jimi Hendrix won it too. Lauryn Hill was booed as a young performer and came back a star. The marquee is the neighborhood's most recognizable object. Amateur Night still runs on Wednesdays.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.81000, -73.95002

2 STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Walk: East on W 125th St three blocks to Lenox Ave.

Or ride: M60 SBS, M100 or Bx15 run crosstown on 125th St.

Heads up: Open Wednesday to Sunday. Free on Sundays.

Started in a loft in 1968 as a museum and a residency for Black artists, and the residency alumni list is basically a syllabus of contemporary American art. Its new seven-story building on 125th Street, designed by Adjaye Associates, opened in November 2025. Admission is free on Sundays.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.80840, -73.94760

3 MARCUS GARVEY PARK

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Walk: South on Lenox Ave five blocks to W 124th. The park entrance is on your left.

Or ride: M102 south on Lenox Ave.

Originally Mount Morris Park. The Manhattan grid plan hit a schist outcrop here too steep to cut through, so the city made it a park instead. Climb it. The drummers' circle on summer Saturdays has been running for decades.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.80470, -73.94400

4 HARLEM FIRE WATCHTOWER

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Walk: Climb the stone steps inside the park to the summit. Steep, about 5 minutes.

Heads up: Worth it. Skip if stairs are a problem and circle the base instead.

The only survivor of a network of cast-iron towers that watched for fires before telegraph alarms. Built 1856, dismantled for restoration in 2015, reinstalled on the summit in 2019 with its 10,000-pound bell. The tower itself is fenced, and Urban Park Rangers open it for occasional climbs, but the summit around it is open and the view is enormous for the effort.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.80435, -73.94360

5 MOUNT MORRIS PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT, LENOX AVENUE

PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY

Walk: Back down the west side to Mount Morris Park West, then walk W 120th through W 123rd between the park and Lenox Ave.

Heads up: All private houses. Look at the stoops, bays and cornices from the sidewalk.

Walk West 120th to 124th between Mount Morris Park West and Lenox. These blocks were built for wealthy German-Jewish families in the 1880s, then became the heart of Black Harlem after 1904. Bay windows, brownstone, terra cotta, no two blocks alike. The best-preserved residential architecture in Harlem.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.80600, -73.94620

6 MOUNT OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH

PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY

Walk: Lenox Ave at W 120th St, on the corner.

Built as Temple Israel by Arnold Brunner in a Roman classical style, sold to a Baptist congregation in 1925 when the German-Jewish population left. One building that holds the whole demographic story of the neighborhood in a single transaction.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.80640, -73.94750

7 ASTOR ROW

PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY

Walk: North on Lenox Ave to W 130th St, then east half a block. About 10 minutes.

Or ride: M102 north on Lenox Ave.

West 130th between Fifth and Lenox. Built 1880-83 on land owned by the Astor family, in semi-detached pairs set back from the street with wooden porches and front yards. Nothing else in Manhattan looks like this. The porches were restored in the 1990s after decades of decay.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.81120, -73.94180

8 ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH

PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY

Walk: West on W 130th to Adam Clayton Powell Blvd, then north to W 138th St. About 12 minutes.

Or ride: M7 or M102 north on ACP Blvd; or 2/3 train from 125 St to 135 St.

Heads up: Active congregation. Sunday services welcome visitors but there are rules and a line. Read them first, and no photography inside.

The oldest Black Baptist congregation in New York State, founded in 1808 by members who refused segregated seating downtown. Adam Clayton Powell Jr. preached here and went from this pulpit to Congress. The Gothic and Tudor building dates to 1923. Services welcome visitors but there are rules and a line; read them first.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.81630, -73.94180

9 STRIVERS' ROW (ST. NICHOLAS HISTORIC DISTRICT)

PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY

Walk: West on W 138th half a block past ACP Blvd. Walk 138th, then loop back east on 139th.

Heads up: Look for the surviving alley gates reading Walk Your Horses.

West 138th and 139th between Adam Clayton Powell and Frederick Douglass. David King commissioned three firms at once: McKim Mead and White did the north side of 139th in Renaissance-inspired brick, Bruce Price and Clarence Luce the south, James Brown Lord the 138th Street row. Look for the rear service alleys with the surviving signs reading Walk Your Horses. W.C. Handy and Eubie Blake lived here.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.82010, -73.94400

10 HARLEM YMCA, 135TH STREET

PRIVATE — VIEW FROM THE SIDEWALK ONLY

Walk: South on Frederick Douglass Blvd, then east on W 135th St to No. 180, between Lenox and ACP. About 6 minutes.

The 135th Street Y was the first stop for Black men arriving in Harlem, and its rooms and gym were an informal hub of the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes lived here when he arrived in 1921. Ellison and Baldwin both passed through.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.81430, -73.94090

11 SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Walk: Half a block east on W 135th to Lenox Ave.

Heads up: Lobby and exhibition galleries are free. Check the day's hours.

Built on the collection of Arturo Schomburg, a Puerto Rican scholar who was told as a child that Black people had no history and spent his life proving otherwise. Now a research division of the New York Public Library. The lobby and exhibition galleries are free and open.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.81470, -73.94060

12 ST. NICHOLAS PARK

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Walk: West on W 135th St about 8 blocks to St Nicholas Ave. Uphill the whole way.

Or ride: M10 bus, or B/C train 135 St to 145 St.

A steep, wooded strip along the schist ridge. Revolutionary War fortifications sat on this high ground during the Battle of Harlem Heights. Take the stairs up the west side toward City College.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.81800, -73.94800

13 HAMILTON GRANGE NATIONAL MEMORIAL

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Walk: Up through the park stairs to W 141st St and Convent Ave. The house sits on the terrace.

Heads up: Free, Park Service run, and closed some weekdays. Check before you go.

Hamilton built it in 1802 as a country retreat nine miles from the city and lived in it for two years before Burr shot him. The house has been physically moved twice, most recently in 2008, lifted over a church and set down in St. Nicholas Park. Free, run by the Park Service, and the restored interior is worth the time.

[Open in maps](#) · 40.82000, -73.94900

COMBINING THIS WITH OTHER TOURS

- [Tour 5 \(Upper West Side\)](#) ends at the Cathedral of St John the Divine on 112th St. From there it is 13 blocks or one stop on the B/C to the start of this tour. The two chain into a long, excellent uptown day.

WALKING NAVIGATION LINKS

Google caps a directions link at ten points, so the route is split. Open a segment on your phone and it starts walking navigation.

- [Stops 1–10](#)
- [Stops 10–13](#)

THE MAP

Open the MUSEENYC map for this walk at museenyc.com/tours/04-harlem/map. Every pin carries its own walking directions, transit alternative and notes.

- **Green pin** = open to the public.
- **Orange pin** = private, look from the sidewalk. Several are people's homes: no gates, no doorways, no photographing into windows.

The orange line is a straight-line guide between stops, not the walking route. Use the navigation links for turn-by-turn.

MUSEENYC

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Questions about a stop, a closure, or anything else on this walk? Reach MUSEENYC at museenyc.tours@gmail.com or [@museenyc](https://www.instagram.com/museenyc) on Instagram. More walks at museenyc.com/tours.