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Sex on a Sunday Morning

City tour follows the footsteps of hit TV show | **BY KELLY E. CARTER**

There's nothing like sex on a Sunday morning to arouse a crowd of women. In this case, my group was a busload of "Sex and the City" fanatics eager to trace the Manolo Blahnik-clad footsteps of Carrie Bradshaw and her crew.

"I'm going to be your sex guide," Lisa, our perky leader, shouted into the microphone after the 50 or so excited women and three apathetic men settled into our seats. "We're not an X-rated tour, but we're not a G-rated tour either. Put your cell phones on vibrate, which is more fun."

For the next three-and-a-half hours, we meandered through the streets of Manhattan, checked out more than 40 locations where scenes for the hit HBO series were filmed, listened to Lisa dispense tidbits about the show's main characters (as well as the actors who portrayed them), watched clips on the overhead television monitors and did our best to step into the Jimmy Choos of the four women who made it chic to talk about sex at restaurants.

Inhibitions were shed when we sauntered into The Pleasure Chest, the sex-toy boutique where Charlotte bought her "Rabbit," and we received a 15 percent discount on merchandise. One lady let out a squeal when Lisa informed us we were going to visit the stoop in front of what is supposed to be Carrie's brownstone, the highlight for most sightseers. (Here's some inside information: The brownstone is in the West Village although Carrie lived at 245 East 73rd Street, on the Upper East Side. In truth, Sarah Jessica Parker lives close to her fictional apartment.) We were allowed to pose for solo photographs or with our friends on the stoop. I'll always treasure the photo I took with my girlfriends, Stacie and Maureen. Afterward, we strolled up the street to purchase sweets at Magnolia Bakery, where Miranda stuffed cupcakes into her mouth on the show. Later we took a cocktail break in Little Italy to sip \$8 cosmopolitans (a bargain in New York City and a special price for our group) at Onieal's, which substituted as the watering hole owned by Steve and Aidan on the show.



From left: Kelly E. Carter, Maureen Jenkins and Stacie Henderson; above: the stoop in front of Carrie's TV brownstone.



New York at night

We sailed by Takashimaya, the upscale Fifth Avenue fragrance store where Carrie announced to her female cohorts, "Ladies, I'm taking a luv-ah." Saw the church where Samantha met "The Friar." Viewed the alley where Carrie was mugged and stripped of her Manolos. And so much more.

As we snaked through Manhattan's avenues, Lisa tested our "Sex" knowledge. "Why did Samantha dump the very rich but very old man she met in the presence of Donald Trump?"

"Because of his saggy butt," one woman blurted out before I could open my mouth.

For a "Sex and the City"-holic like me, the jaunt was sheer pleasure. Even with the cutting-edge show (which aired from 1998 to 2004), now in reruns, the excursions are more popular than ever. Since its inception in October 2001, the tour has grown from one on Saturdays to running 363 days a year, shutting down only for Christmas and the Gay Pride Parade because of traffic snarls. There are at least two tours a day and as many as five on Saturdays, including one in German, as organizer On Location Tours tries to accommodate the oodles



of fans like myself going through withdrawal. The company even offers bachelorette packages and special girlfriend getaways.

More than 75,000 people from 40 countries have experienced the outing. My bus included women from Chicago, Boston, Houston and Washington, D.C., as well as Canada, Germany, Israel, Japan, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Australia and France. A truly multinational group bonded by Carrie, Charlotte, Miranda and Samantha. (see left)

A feeling of melancholy fell over me as we made our way back to our starting point, on Fifth Avenue between 58th and 59th streets (near Central Park). It was like watching the final episode when I unwillingly accepted that the show, or in this case the tour, was over.

For more information, visit www.screenstours.com. Tickets (\$36) available through Zerve at (212) 209-3370. Advance reservations required.

Kelly E. Carter is a New York-based freelance writer.