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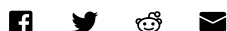
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King Kong Returns To The Empire State Building Inside New Immersive Museum

BY [BEN YAKAS](#) [\[/STAFF/BEN-YAKAS\]](#)

JULY 30, 2019 1:23 P.M. • [22 COMMENTS](#) •

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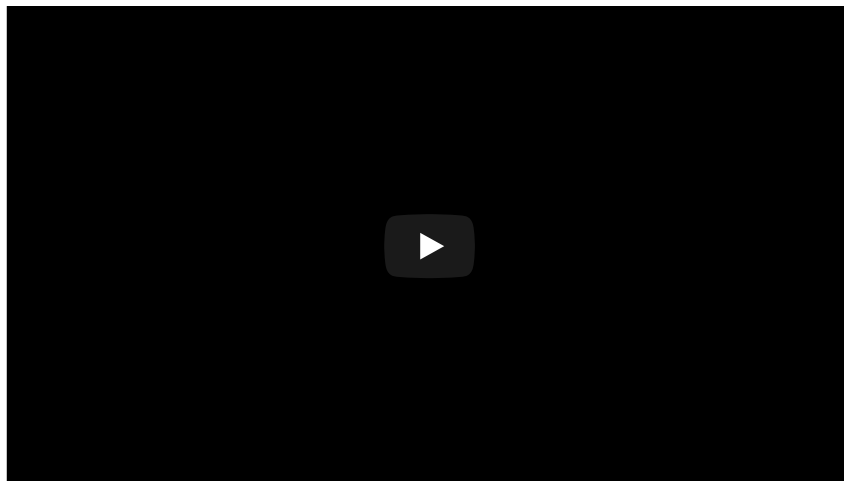
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20

It's been over 85 years since King Kong first scaled the Empire State Building in his iconic cinematic debut, and over 35 years since the ESB commemorated that moment by placing an inflatable ape on the side of the building. After several years with no ape sightings whatsoever(<https://gothamist.com/2013/04/10/king-kong-has-no-plans-on-returning.php>), The Eighth Wonder Of The World has finally made his way back to New York City, where he is one of the centerpieces of a new ESB museum commemorating the history of the building.

Last August, ESB unveiled a brand-new observatory entrance at 20 West 34th Street, and the museum that opened this week (accessed through that entrance) is part of phase two of the building's \$165 million renovations. Located on the second floor, the 10,000-square-foot gallery features immersive and interactive exhibits that encompass everything from the building's initial construction to its emergence as a pop culture landmark.



Here are the nine galleries you'll find inside the museum, with descriptions via ESB:

The Site in the 1920s: A black-and-white panoramic image depicts the site of the original Waldorf-Astoria Hotel as construction of the Empire State Building begins. Through building surveys, guests can look in and see the New York City streets of the late 1920s come to life in full color.

Construction: Inspired by the photography of Lewis Hine, visitors will be transported back in time as hot rivets, and steel beams fly overhead, and the sounds of New York City come alive in surround sound. Visitors can also interact with specially commissioned cast sculptures of construction workers as they work and take their lunch break.

Opening Day: The excitement of opening day is palpable with a newsboy announcing the opening of the Empire State Building as he sells his papers on the streets of 1930s New York City

Modern Marvel: The Modern Marvel exhibit outlines the specific measures taken to make the Empire State Building a world leader in sustainability and a leading example in energy efficiency.

Otis Elevators: Otis delivered the groundbreaking technology that made the towering height of ESB possible. In a dedicated exhibit, Otis showcases not only how the original elevators operated, but teaches visitors about the latest technology installed in the newest elevators, which transport more than 10 million tenants and Observatory guests each year. Visitors will also walk through a simulation of an actual elevator shaft and feel the energy created by the movement of the cars up close.

Urban Campus: Very few visitors to the Empire State Building are aware of what goes on in the nearly 100 floors they don't see. Urban Campus offers a glimpse into some of the major tenant spaces, amenities, and hidden views of the building as experienced by those who work there. The exhibit highlights some of these contemporary internet-age businesses, visible through peepholes that give guests an insider's view of what these high-tech offices are like.

World's Most Famous Building: Set to an original score commissioned for this exhibit, more than seventy screens display highlights of ESB's starring role in pop culture from every decade since the 1930s. Visitors from around the world will recognize the hundreds of movies, TV shows, commercials, cartoons, comic books, and video games that feature the world's most famous building.

King Kong: Visitors walk into an office from the 1930s where the famous, giant ape's fingers pierce the walls as he dangles from the building and dodges vintage fighter planes. Those brave enough can even step into Kong's hands - but beware, you might feel the power of this fearsome ape firsthand!

Celebrity: The Empire State building is a popular destination for A-list celebrities and worldwide talent with many famous faces from around the globe visiting its world-famous 86th Floor Observatory. This exhibit highlights some of the most-famous visitors (athletes, musicians, actors) with their images and signed memorabilia adorning the walls for guests to admire as they head to the elevators that will take them to their next stop: NYC: Above & Beyond on the 80th Floor.

Sadly, there is no special commemoration of [Eminem's instantly iconic ESB performance of "Venom,"](https://gothamist.com/2018/10/16/jimmy_kimmel_eminem_esb_lightshow_venom_video.php) (https://gothamist.com/2018/10/16/jimmy_kimmel_eminem_esb_lightshow_venom_video.php) the theme song from the movie *Venom*, despite the fact that it is the greatest thing that has ever occurred in NYC. They have until 2068 to correct this oversight in time for the 50th anniversary of the performance.

The museum will be open seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. [Get more info here\(https://www.esbnyc.com/\).](https://www.esbnyc.com/)

#EMPIRE STATE BUILDING (/TAGS/EMPIRE-STATE-BUILDING). #ESB (/TAGS/ESB).

#KING KONG (/TAGS/KING-KONG). #MUSEUM (/TAGS/MUSEUM).

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Julia Bulia • 9 months ago

Pretty neat exhibits. Not sure anything could entice me to stand in the ESB line again (did it once, only once, and even with an express ticket it took FOREVER) to check this out, but looks pretty great from here.

The ESB is just too damn pretty. Love that flooring

13 Share



Daysie Julia Bulia • 9 months ago

Jinx! My exact take on it.

3 Share



Snarfyguy Julia Bulia • 9 months ago

Same.

But yeah, the line...

3 Share



Ryan Julia Bulia • 9 months ago

Curious how long it took with the express ticket. I want to take my daughter but wont if the waiting will suck all the fun out of it.

1 Share



Julia Bulia Ryan • 9 months ago

I went....I wanna say, five years ago? we had an express ticket but still had to stand there for 90 minutes, it let us cut past a good chunk of line but then more security stuff, waiting on elevators, waiting on people to come down, it was a long time. Fantastic building, totally worth doing at least once, just try to avoid the summer tourist crush. Although, it's the ESB. not sure it has a down time.

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Anthony Malkin Julia Bulia • 9 months ago

line is totally different now with new entrance, faster and state-of-the-art security screening, tickets from kiosks (in 9 languages) instead of ticket booths.

the visitors to the new galleries now come for the exhibits as well as the view...

2 Share



Daysie • 9 months ago

Neat.

Not enough to entice me to join the hordes of tourists in line but neat.

5 Share



The_Lisa • 9 months ago

New entrance on 34th? Does this mean the 5th Avenue side is now less crowded? I avoid that block like the plague.

1 Share



WashieWash → The_Lisa • 9 months ago

I wonder if it's still filled with the ticket sellers blocking pedestrian traffic. I haven't been on that block in several years.

2 ^ | ▾ • Share >



rabidk → WashieWash • 9 months ago

Yes, yes it is. Now they congregate at the corner of 5av/34th blocking sidewalk traffic from both directions.

1 ^ | ▾ • Share >



Anthony Malkin → The_Lisa • 9 months ago

fifth avenue entrance is now much less crowded, along with police enforcement of new city council legislation the ticket vendors no longer obstruct and are far fewer.

1 ^ | ▾ • Share >



NanGoldinShowers • 9 months ago

a personal favorite are the stained glass 7 Wonders of the Ancient World in the lobby by Rene Nemerov (Diane Arbus sister)

<https://culturenow.org/entr...>

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Altered Beast ✓ verified • 9 months ago • edited

no funny business, strictly on the level

^ | ▾ • Share >



Not Dead Yet Don Corleone • 9 months ago

My relatives built the ESB, literally, and I am so proud of them. Real hard work went into the ESB, and the quality and attention to detail shows. Great article, Gothamist, a real class act.

7 ^ | ▾ • Share >



SpideySense → Not Dead Yet Don Corleone • 9 months ago

When people say they don't make buildings like that anymore, it's the truth.

4 ^ | ▾ • Share >



SpideySense • 9 months ago • edited

This is an exhibit I may just go to see. Even King Kong's big hands coming through the windows is cool.

^ | ▾ • Share >



ducky_1374 • 9 months ago

I once temped in the ESB and am still kicking myself for not having taken advantage of being able to bring guests up to the Observation Deck for free.

^ | ▾ • Share >



SpideySense → ducky_1374 • 9 months ago • edited

It's been done before, and not all guests go willingly.

King Kong Film GIF by hoppip - Find & Share on GIPHY — disq.us

^ | ▾ • Share >



bluecanary1 → ducky_1374 • 9 months ago

I'm outraged on your friends' behalf.

^ | ▾ 1 • Share >



Bleecker • 9 months ago

Set designers must love this new lucrative avenue for their profession: creating "immersive experiences" (aka selfie opportunities) for the thirsty masses who love waiting on line and paying for the privilege.

2 ^ | ▾ • Share >



Anthony Malkin • 9 months ago

eminem is absolutely in the media gallery!

^ | ▾ • Share >



Gary French • 9 months ago

There's another immersive exhibit of "Sleeping Homeless People in Subway Cars". If you get there around 3am there's is positively no line to view it.

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This week, we have a bunch of new and returning series to recommend, as well as a cult classic British sitcom that laid the foundation for several prominent careers.

BEN YAKAS

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