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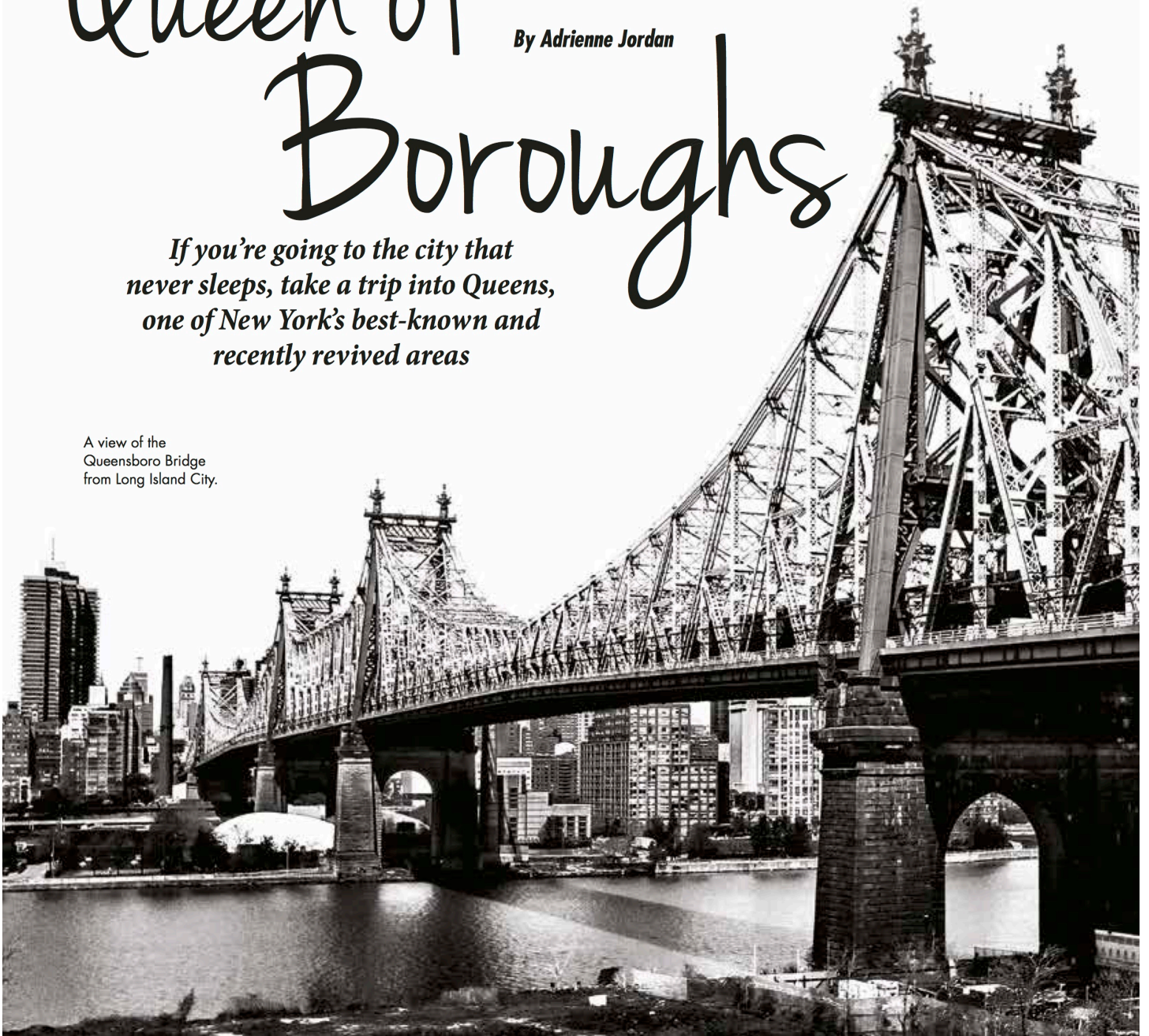
QUEENS, NEW YORK • ITALY • SPA • RWANDA • MAHIKENG • GALLERY

Queen of Boroughs

By Adrienne Jordan

If you're going to the city that never sleeps, take a trip into Queens, one of New York's best-known and recently revived areas

A view of the Queensboro Bridge from Long Island City.



LONG ISLAND CITY

Once a prime manufacturing hub, Long Island City (LIC) is now home to one of NYC's most exciting art scenes. The neighbourhood's turn-of-the-century industrial buildings are adorned with graffiti designs and many have been transformed into galleries, museums and studios. What's more, it's easy to get there. A journey from midtown Manhattan to LIC is surprisingly fast, involving only one stop from Grand Central Terminal on the No 7 train. For a more scenic commute, you can also travel by water: the East River Ferry regularly operates straight from FDR Drive and East 34th St.

LIC's the place for both professional and amateur photographers, who can capture the high-rises across the Hudson River. Start by having brunch at the Ravel Hotel's rooftop restaurant, Penthouse 808 (8-08 Queens Plaza South), which offers sweeping views of the Queensboro Bridge and the Manhattan skyline. While taking in the expanse, guests can enjoy the new brunch programme that features live jazz and a diverse menu offering items like breakfast pizza with eggs, cheese and bacon, Belgian-style banana waffles and juicy lobster Benedict on English muffins. The establishment's signature cocktail, Pacific sangria made with Japanese coconut sake, will put you in

a good mood. "Watching an industrial area grow into a tourism hotspot over the past five years is what keeps me here," says Benny Ramos, Penthouse 808's Food & Beverage Manager.

Alternatively, visit Mundo (37-06 36th St), located inside the eclectically designed Paper Factory Hotel (painted fire hydrants, books forming walls and a British telephone booth are among its attractions). The restaurant is health-orientated and inspired by Argentinian, Turkish and other global cuisines (hence its name). "We serve alkaline water created using a medical device and raise the pH level just a little," says co-owner Guillermo Lucerofabbi. Try delicious appetisers like the short rib sliders, falafel medley and chorizo à la planca.

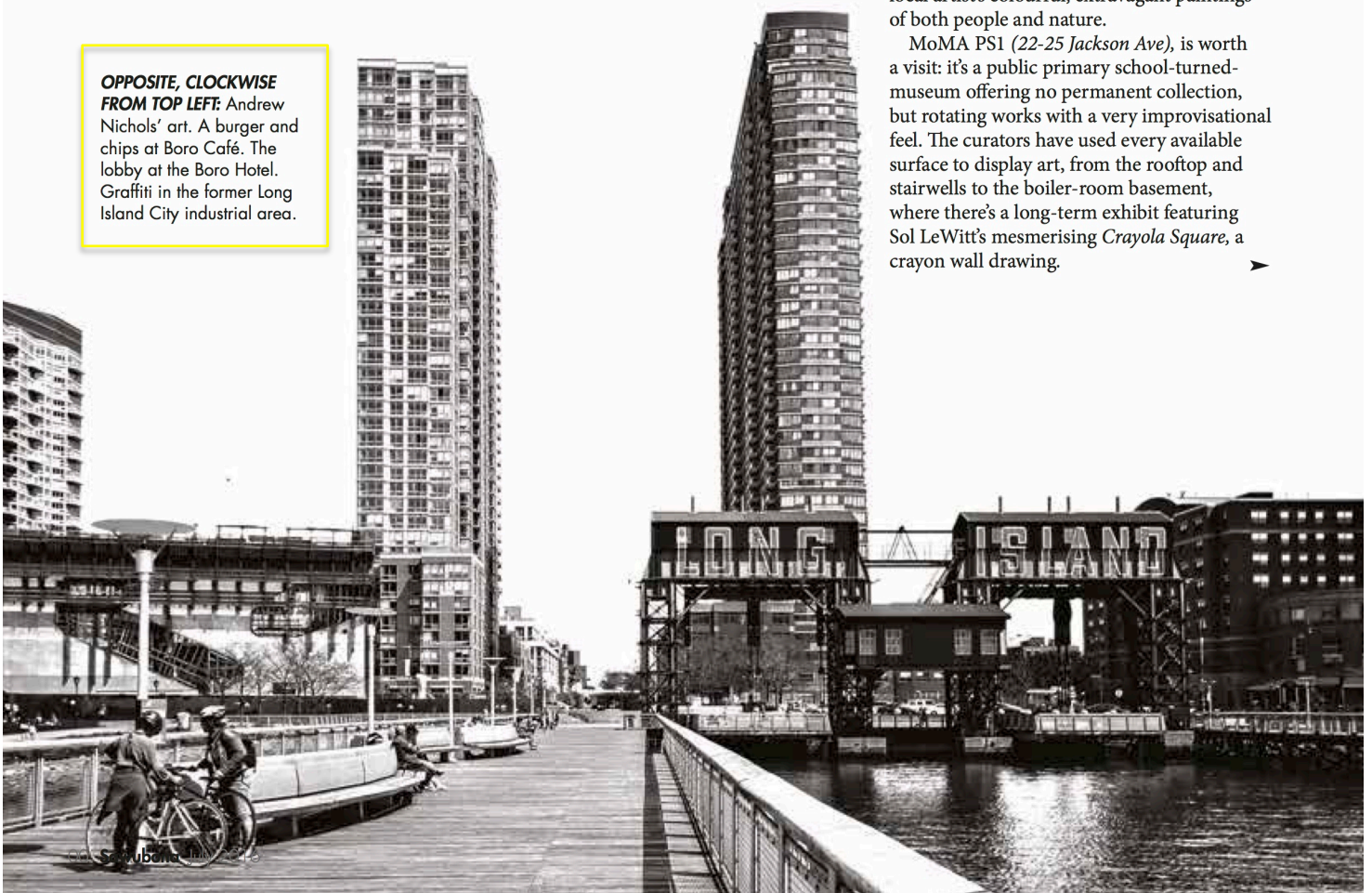
To walk off a hefty midday meal, take a stroll around Gantry Plaza, a 5ha state park located on the river. The pier features dual striking, massive signs reading "Long Island" and there's plenty of green space, punctuated by weeping willows and ideal places for a quiet moment or a picnic with a significant other.

For outdoor shopping, visit LIC Flea & Food (5-25 46th Ave), a weekend market open from 11am-6pm. Fetching vendors line the enclosed area, including Artisanal Twinkies, which sells gourmet treats and Andrew Nichols Art, where you can buy the eponymous local artist's colourful, extravagant paintings of both people and nature.

MoMA PS1 (22-25 Jackson Ave), is worth a visit: it's a public primary school-turned-museum offering no permanent collection, but rotating works with a very improvisational feel. The curators have used every available surface to display art, from the rooftop and stairwells to the boiler-room basement, where there's a long-term exhibit featuring Sol LeWitt's mesmerising *Crayola Square*, a crayon wall drawing. ➤

"Watching an industrial area grow into a tourism hotspot over the past five years is what keeps me here."

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Andrew Nichols' art. A burger and chips at Boro Café. The lobby at the Boro Hotel. Graffiti in the former Long Island City industrial area.





queens

At the East River's Socrates Sculpture Park, there's also an ever-changing assortment of sculpture and art installations, mostly by emerging artists.

One small section of LIC, Dutch Kills, has emerged as a new hotspot. Located just north of Queensboro Plaza, it reveals an industrial hamlet-turned-happening micro-hood. For visitors to this residential area lined with stately single-family homes, an unlikely establishment stands right in its centre. The Boro Hotel (38-28 27th St) is decked in minimalist design and has a rooftop offering views of the Manhattan skyline from Harlem to One World Trade. The Boro Café recently launched an all-day menu crafted by Chef George Mandakas and offering simple, healthy ingredients with unique preparations and presentations. The burger is a standout item, made in-house with chips – and don't leave without trying the signature cocktail, made with spiced rum, orange, cranberry and Prosecco.

ASTORIA

A trip to NYC's adjacent area of Astoria is always a joy. The destination's also about 15 minutes' commute from midtown Manhattan: the Northern and Western subway lines run through the heart of the neighbourhood, above 31st St. If you ask any long-standing residents about Astoria's history, they'll refer to it as a traditionally Greek area. There are at least half a dozen Greek restaurants and bakeries sprinkled along the intertwining blocks and most visitors come here for the food. One popular option is Psari Seafood & Restaurant (3210 36th Ave), which serves specialities like *saganaki* (lightly fried *kefalograviera* cheese) and *moussaka* (baked eggplant and potatoes with meat sauce). And there's the Omonia pastry shop (32-20 Broadway), opened by John Arvanitis in 1977

when he was a newly-arrived, 19-year-old immigrant from Greece. The historic shop serves pastries and cocktails, and even the cake in the movie *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* was commissioned to Omonia.

However, there are also many other ethnic cuisines in Astoria. At Leo's Pizza, a nondescript corner establishment, people can pop in for beautifully arranged slices with fresh ingredients like eggplant and spinach. Get a taste for Japanese sake during the free tasting at Astoria Wine & Spirits and enjoy delicious Czech fare at old-school beer garden Bohemian Hall. With its shady trees, picnic tables, pitchers of icy beer and hearty meals, it's a summertime must. If you visit at the right time, there may even be live folk music in the afternoons.

Before leaving Astoria, visit the innovative American Museum of the Moving Image (+1 718 777 6888, 36-01 35th Ave), which explores all facets of TV and film production, from their origins to the cutting-edge techniques used today. The attractions inside the museum include Thomas Edison's kinoscope (the precursor to the movie projector), classic *Star Wars* action figures and a small arcade where you can play vintage games like Donkey Kong and Asteroids in all their retro glory. The museum also screens hundreds of films a year which aren't shown at mainstream theatres, including silent movies (often with live music), animated shorts, rock documentaries and international flicks. 🌈

A view of the Manhattan skyline and elevated subway during sunset.

