Filming in New York City
Location scouts reveal their favorite spots for shooting movies and TV shows. By Annemarie Dooling

Boardwalk Empire
**FILMED IN:** Cortlandt Alley
The production team for HBO’s Prohibition-era drama recreated the Atlantic City boardwalk in a vacant lot on Greenpoint’s Commercial Street, but scenes from the show are also filmed outdoors in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Cortlandt Alley—a small enclave just off Canal Street—is a popular locale because of its grizzly ambiance. “We had to find a street that looked like the Lower East Side,” says Amanda Foley, a location manager for the show. “[And] the building owners were so open to us being there.”

Subway secrets
See a defunct station
The old City Hall stop in lower Manhattan was envisioned as the MTA’s most majestic station when it was completed in 1904. It eventually closed because longer chains of subway cars couldn’t fit onto its looping track. The New York Transit Museum offers tours to its members, although it’s possible to get a gratis peek at the beautiful platform. Simply stay on a downtown 6 train as it makes the loop around Brooklyn Bridge–City Hall to the uptown track, and keep an eye out for the bygone station’s vaulted ceilings and Art Nouveau skylights.

Peep underground art
Thanks to the MTA’s Arts for Transit program, the subway system is filled with colorful installations intended to beautify the often dreary stations. Though acclaimed artists like Roy Lichtenstein and Sol LeWitt have contributed to the program, some of its best curios were created by less well-known artists. For example, in the New York Plaza station on the Q line, gaze up to spot David Wilson’s blue-and-red patterned Transit Skylight installed in the ceiling. Or check out our favorite piece, Bill Brand’s Mass Transit Tapestry, a zoetrope created from 226 hand-painted panels. Take a ride on a Manhattan-bound B or Q train from Dekalb Avenue to view the kinetic mural between that station and the Manhattan Bridge. (Be sure to look to the right.)

Look for abandoned tracks
A quiet stretch of Joralemon Street in Brooklyn Heights conceals one of the transit system’s hidden gems: A brownstone on the block (near Willow Place) is actually a facade housing an entrance to the defunct Atlantic Avenue Tunnel, the city’s oldest railroad passageway. (The DOT discontinued tours of the space in 2010.) Farther east, there are four disused tracks and two unfinished platforms hidden in the Utica Avenue station in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The depot was part of a planned expansion of the IND subway line, but the MTA abandoned the project because of a lack of funds. You can still see the station shell by standing on the existing platforms and looking up—you’ll be able to spot the underside of the tracks.

Enchanted
**FILMED IN:** Times Square
Scenes for the 2007 fairy tale were shot in the busy hub. According to co-location manager Jason Farrar, to work in Times Square, film crews must get special allowance to turn the area into a set in the wee hours. “At 2 or 3 in the morning when it’s quiet and there aren’t that many people around, it’s a very different place,” Farrar explains.

The Smurfs
**FILMED IN:** Rockefeller Center
For the 2011 adaptation of the cartoon series, location scout Nick Carr—who also runs the blog Scouting NY (scoutingny.com)—occasionally had to improvise. He and his team transformed a vacant Rockefeller Center storefront into a makeup shop so convincingly that passersby actually tried to enter it.