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Neighbourhood

# BROOKLYN

**The borough that birthed the global hipster phenomenon is as cool as ever — now its lesser-known neighbourhoods are shaking off their reputations and reinventing themselves as the new Brooklyn. Words: David Farley**



It's hard to imagine now, but there was a time when Brooklyn was a common punchline for New Yorkers. It was the butt of jokes in Woody Allen films and in the '90s sitcom *Seinfeld*, considered uncouth vis-à-vis Manhattan's cosmopolitan cool. But all that's changed. Artists began flocking across the East River 25 years ago, seeking cheaper rents — and hip restaurants, bars, cafes, and art galleries followed. Today it's the global epitome of cool, and 'Brooklyn' is slapped across artisanal food and drink labels. Neighbourhoods like Williamsburg, Bushwick and Park Slope have long been on in-the-know visitors' radars, now Brooklyn's DIY aesthetic is spreading across the borough into other districts.

IMAGE: GETTY





## Greenpoint

Wedge between the borough of Queens and its too-hip-for-its-own-good neighbour, Williamsburg, is the incredible Brooklyn neighbourhood you've probably never heard of: Greenpoint. For those in the know, Greenpoint is where it's at. The subway here is on the dreaded G line — the only one in New York that doesn't go to Manhattan, which partly explains why the area has long been off many people's radars. A Polish enclave since the 1880s, the neighbourhood is still sprinkled with old Poles and signs in Polish. But now those storefronts rub shoulders with a host of exciting new restaurants, bars and coffee spots.

Case in point: at The Springs, a Southern California-inspired spot with a mid-century modern vibe, thirtysomethings lounge in the spacious back garden sipping Aperol spritz slushies. It's here I meet co-owner Irene Reyes, who's lived in Greenpoint for three years. "I've always wanted to open up a place here," she tells me. "Sure, Greenpoint has been slowly changing, but I think for the better."

It's true: there are several excellent restaurants here, including Vietnamese place Di An Di, natural wine-loaded Achilles Heel, Michelin-starred Mexican spot Oxomoco and French-Canadian restaurant Chez Ma Tante.

For Sol Kjek, a Norwegian-born painter, Greenpoint has been home since 1998. She was part of the first wave of artists who made the jump over the East River from Manhattan seeking affordable studios and living quarters. Today, Sol is the head of two performance spaces — her studio, Last Frontier NYC, and her home, Mothership NYC, a 10-minute walk away. The latter also hosts a rota of visiting artists from around the world who perform their works at monthly salons.

"It's a way for local and international artists to meet and talk about art," Sol says as we chat at her studio. She's organised a performance: aerialist Erica Mancini dangles from ropes elegantly shifting above us as a band plays avant-garde music. "My studio is called The Last Frontier because, well, it's geographically on the border of Brooklyn and Queens but also it's really the last frontier for artists in Greenpoint," says Sol. "Rents are going up and it's not as affordable for us anymore, so my purpose for these performances is to keep alive the artistic spirit of the neighbourhood that's existed for the last couple of decades. But that said, the longer I've lived here, the more and more I love Greenpoint." □

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FROM LEFT: Live music at Last Frontier NYC

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 Di An Di. [diandi.nyc](http://diandi.nyc)  
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