

## **Colostomy Bags in Times Square**

Bright lights, ticker tape, pop music and a million screaming people waiting for the Waterford Crystal to drop. Times Square, New York on New Years Eve looks like a party on TV.

But it's not in real life.

It's a shouting mass of joy for five minutes at midnight. But what about the seven and a half hours of back-breaking, leg-muscle numbing torture before the fireworks explode and the New Year begins?

New York at Christmas is unbeatable. The funky Soho shopping, a crisp cold sunset at the top of the Empire State Building, a Broadway show, sparkling Rockefeller Centre Christmas trees, the haunting Ground Zero and a no-frills hotel like the Days Inn on Eighth Avenue in Midtown to see you through the chilly Manhattan nights.

All of it is magical – the hype and promise lived up to. Then comes New Years Eve; with warnings from local New Yorkers ringing in the ears.

“Don’t do it,” they said, laughing. “You’ll be crushed,” they added. “It’s a real let-down,” they declared with the weight of experience glimmering behind their eyes.

But, after flying all this way, how could you not go to Times Square for the big night?

Well, if you’re a Big Apple resident, you just don’t. They get out of town for the night. It’s the tourists who have arrived from across the globe who make up the numbers.

Get to the Square at 5pm, along with the other million people joining you for the evening, otherwise you won’t get in. Leave your bags behind. This city is understandably one of the most paranoid places in the world so prepare yourself to be strip searched by the NYPD boys in blue (something many of the girls standing in front of burly, unformed police officers don’t seem to complain about on the night).

On entering the Square you’ll be herded like the human cattle you are in to huge metal-railed pens the width of Broadway. And there you will stand, squashed, shivering, hating the group next to you that bought a heap of McDonalds’ meals before they arrived and you will freeze in the same position for seven hours desperately needing a jimmy riddle.

Once in the pen you are not allowed out. Not for any reason (and arguing with a New York police officer on New Years Eve isn't recommended). So you stare inanely forward at the hundreds of dazzling adverts, bobbing heads and, half a mile away, the pole holding a crystal ball that you're praying will drop early so you can find the nearest restroom.

When it does drop you will have completely lost interest in New Years Eve and not want to dance the Auld Lang Syne because it will shake up your full bladder.

If you go to New York on New Years Eve, listen to the locals. They usually know best. Avoid Times Square and find a good restaurant instead. But if you insist on partaking in the Square's five-minute party at midnight then stuff SAS provisions in your pockets: food, water, sweets and, if you think she won't miss it, borrow your Gran's colostomy bag too.

**Anthony Burt**