

Grab the go-to ice cream of TV mafia while marvelling at a city that's embracing the future while remaining steeped in a fascinating history

NEIL MURRAY

# Get a taste for Newark

**With a list that runs to more than 50 flavours, Nasto's Ice Cream Company don't make it easy to pick just one.**

But as Tony Soprano's father opted for cherry vanilla on a visit to the family-owned business in TV series *The Sopranos*, I reckoned if it was good enough for the mafia, it was good enough for me. Very tasty it was too.

I'd stopped off with Emily Manz on a *Have You Met Newark* walking tour of the Ironbound district of the New Jersey city. The neighbourhood – so-called as it is bounded on two sides by railroad tracks – is a hive of activity, from classy jewellery stores and bustling bakeries to second-hand clothes shops and electronics outlets.

On one corner, Portuguese pottery was on offer, on another, Brazilian bikinis, while two steps away everything you ever wanted made of cork was for sale. But for visitors, the area's main draw is its vast array of eating places, bars and cafés.

Originally a German enclave, it is now home to a huge range of Central and South American, Portuguese and Spanish restaurants. Later visits to the likes of Allegro Seafood Grill (mouth-watering food in a Portuguese courtyard setting) and Krug's Tavern (winner of the Best Burger in the State award) proved how good they are.

In Ferry Street, Emily pointed out St Stephen's Church, which film fans might recognise – it was blown up in

Steven Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* – and then invited me to taste Pastel de Natas, a Portuguese "custard cup", in Pao da Terra, and traditional Brazilian chocolate in Gio Docinhos.

Amid the lavish interior of St Casimir's Polish RC Church, I was taken aback to see a mural showing a Nazi soldier beside a group of nuns about to be shot and pushed into the open grave in front of them.

On the other side of the city – and almost austere by comparison, with its only colour coming from stained-glass windows and wall mosaics – the imposing Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart is a top attraction.

The fifth-largest cathedral in the US, it took 55 years to complete, being finished in 1954. This is also another link to *The Sopranos* as the building featured in its opening credits.

But it's the future that Newark is looking to now. Only 15 minutes by train from New York's Madison Square Garden, the city is in the process of renewal, with a flood of new office buildings and accommodation, five new hotels in the pipeline, and the Grammy Museum Experience due to open in October inside the Prudential Centre, home of the New Jersey Devils ice hockey team.

The centre's Daniel Cherry said the new museum (the fourth in the US) will have touring exhibits featuring Bruce Springsteen, Prince and the Beatles, interactive areas to learn drumming and rap music, an "And the Grammy Goes To..." exhibit.

Visiting the Red Bull Arena – home of the New York Red Bull "soccer" team – I marvelled at a modern, 25,000-seater stadium that puts many UK grounds to shame. I also heard how the solitary red seat (no11, row 20) in a sea of blue marks the time (11 mins) of the first goal in 2010 at the stadium, scored by Joel Lindpere (squad no20).

In downtown Newark, the Hahne & Co building was an early-20th-century department store that closed in the 1980s and reopened in January, after an extensive \$175million renovation.

It now includes the Express Newark collaborative arts centre, which has an Institute of Jazz exhibition with "the world's largest collection of jazz memorabilia".

At the GlassRoots Studio, if I'd had more time, I would've done some glass blowing, made a mosaic, or turned glass beads into fancy jewellery.

My last stop was at the impressive Newark Museum where, as well as the Drewfuss Planetarium and the Tibetan Buddhist Altar (consecrated by the Dalai Lama), the magnificent, Victorian Ballantine House is a big draw for visitors... and no wonder.

The home of Jeannette and John Holme Ballantine – whose father, Peter, came from Dundee and started brewing beer in the mid-1800s – it highlights how the family lived in an "ideal home" of the late 19th century.

By the way, Ballantine beer still produce an India Pale Ale, a Burton Ale and a Brewers Gold Ale. Cheers.

Travel info

■ **United Airlines** ([www.united.com](http://www.united.com), 0845 607 6760) fly from Glasgow and Edinburgh to Newark Liberty International Airport with prices from £584.29pp (Glasgow) and £609.94pp (Edinburgh) in October, including taxes.  
 ■ **Three nights' B&B at the Robert Treat Hotel** ([www.rthotel.com](http://www.rthotel.com), 001 (973) 622 1000) costs from £230.  
 ■ **For details:** [www.newarkhappening.com](http://www.newarkhappening.com); [www.haveyoumetnewark.com](http://www.haveyoumetnewark.com); [www.VisitTheUSA.co.uk](http://www.VisitTheUSA.co.uk)



**NEW JERSEY BOYS** Bruce Springsteen and Keith Richards performing in the city



**VICTORIAN VALUES** Ballantine House



**COOL CUSTOMER** Neil samples cherry vanilla ice-cream at Nasto's in Newark



Win four-day break to Newark for two. See Sunday Mail page 34