

"I thought it was overrated even as a kid," said Christine Lancet, a 26-year-old park ranger on Liberty Island and a native New Yorker. "Personally, I'm not a big fan of a spiral staircase. It's very tight, it's very narrow, it's dark, you're not paying attention to what's going on around you because your concern is, 'Oh, my god, let me up to the crown, please!'"

But some said the challenge would be hard to ignore.

Carla Vergara, a 32-year-old from Buenos Aires, Argentina, was sitting on the green lawn beneath Lady Liberty with her husband, Damian, and their 8-month-old son, Manuel. The family was visiting New York for the first time when they learned they were a week too early for the chance to climb to the crown.

"We've been in the Eiffel Tower, we've been in the Pisa tower, we've been in the Vatican at the top," she said. "We are a little bit disappointed that we couldn't be in here, too," Vergara said.

Even Victor Smith's 63-year-old wife, Betty, yearned for a chance to climb and conquer.

"That's just like people going to the top of Mount Everest. You stand at the bottom and you can look up and think, 'Why would any fool want to go up to the top of Mount Everest?' But it's up there and people want to experience that, and so they risk their lives to do it. That's what life is all about, our experiences along the way."

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