

## The guide London shopping

# Beyond the looking glass

Window shopping is fine but these stores are made for serious splurging, writes **Rachael Oakes-Ash**.

Shopping and travel go hand in hand. There's something about foreign currency – it doesn't look like yours, so spend it like it is somebody else's. If you're a true shopaholic, you'll trawl the boutiques of New York's Soho, Paris's Marais and Hong Kong's Wan Chai in search of a bargain but when time is tight and you're itching for retail therapy, one-stop department-store shopping satiates a thirst.

London is the home of department-store shopping, where the dedicated can find truly inspiring pieces you won't see anyone else wearing, sporting or using back home.

### Selfridges

**Best for** A one-stop fashion and lifestyle shop for wannabe celebrities.

Selfridges has given itself a makeover and climbed the department store ladder, knocking Harvey Nichols from its fashionable perch. Mayfair madams, city chicks, day-trippers and the fashion mag set swear by this glamazon, five-storey store at the Bond Street end of Oxford Street.

The good folk at Selfridges understand women's needs, with an entire section dedicated to jeans – from hip-huggers to high-waisters, stove pipe, flares, vintage and indigo.

It doesn't stop with denim, either. A Moët champagne bar provides mid-shopping bubbles and a mozzarella-inspired restaurant sits in the middle of the women's super-brands

section so you can spy on your favourite Stella McCartney frock while dining.

Chloe, Vivienne Westwood, Nudie, La Perla and their friends live on the second floor. Then think high-street fashion aplenty with a Topshop store on the ground floor.

Sore arms? Selfridges will arrange free delivery of your purchases to your hotel. The store's gift gurus can give advice on what to buy those you're looking to impress, psychic sisters offer "readings" for your future and personal shoppers bring your fashion choices to you in a VIP room, so you can point and choose and your entourage can pay the tab.

Selfridges celebrates its centenary this year, so expect even bigger window displays and some seriously good discount sales.

**Top tip** City gals love Groom's signature hour treatments. Two therapists rub, tug, pummel and pamper you with a "weekly groom hour" facial, manicure, pedicure and brow tidy for £105 (\$231).

**400 Oxford Street, Marylebone. See [selfridges.com](http://selfridges.com).**

### Harvey Nichols

**Best for** The cashed-up with a penchant for the finer things in life. And ladies who lunch.

Harvey Nichols has three floors of women's fashion, from L.A.M.B to Louboutin. The men have two floors of fashion and both genders can enjoy the famous Harvey Nichols Fifth Floor, a food market and fine-dining space with a bar.



The store lacks the size of Selfridges or Harrods but the intimacy gives a more boutique vibe.

There's no need for a frown when choosing between your Prada and your Pucci – a quick trip to Beyond Medispa on the fourth floor for a Botox jab or two will swiftly take care of those fine lines. Sip bubbles at the champagne nail bar or pop into Daniel Hersheson's salon for a "do" in a private cubicle.

Each one has a personal television screen. Then go down to the ground floor and grab some Oliver Peoples sunnies to keep the paparazzi at bay.

**Top tip** Book ahead online on the HN website for a table at the sleek Fifth Floor restaurant. **Corner of Knightsbridge and Sloane Street. See [harveynichols.com](http://harveynichols.com).**

### Harrods

**Best for** Everything. There's nothing you can't get here.

The hallowed halls of Harrods have been open for more than 155 years. This creme de la creme of department-store shopping is big – it covers 1.8 hectares. At Harrods, you may rub





shoulders with Victoria Beckham or mingle in the toy kingdom with Jemima Khan. You'll find a million-pound set of diamond-encrusted shoes for sale, so it's not surprising the store also has a private bank, its own property estates for sale and an aviation service for private flying and helicopter transfers. Not to mention 22 dining outlets including a pub, a sushi bar, Laduree tea room and famous champagne and oyster bar.

The halls are mammoth and themed, from the jewellery and luxury watch room to the perfumery. But it's the food halls that are known around the world for their cheeses, fresh seafood, charcuterie of exotic delicacies and tea. Lots and lots of tea.

**Top tip** Be prepared for crowds, especially on the ground floor, and the usual street-hawking gypsies at the entrance who will try to part with your money. Hold it tight, you'll need it inside. **Brompton Road, Knightsbridge. See harrods.com.**

## Liberty of London

**Best for** Design, design, design. Whether make-up, artwork, fashion or jewellery, you'll find names here first.

Liberty's founder, Arthur Liberty, spearheaded the London design scene in the late 1800s, importing exotic ceramics, fabrics, metal work and design from the Middle East and the Orient, creating a vibrant artistic flair within his store that still exists today.

The store is set in an iconic Tudor revival building built from the timber of two ships, the HMS Impregnable and the HMS Hindustan, and is instantly recognisable.

Originally known for designer dress and furnishing fabrics, Liberty still stocks both but the store has diversified into an eclectic enclave of fashion, beauty, perfumes, accessories, jewellery, stationery and more. Shoppers can take advantage of valet parking and an in-store concierge, while fancy-pants London males flock to the Murdock Barber for a Dr Harris wet shave or the full Murdock service of shampoo, haircut, wet shave and shoe shine.

Expect cutting-edge designers such as Alexander McQueen, Helmut Lang and Eley Kishimoto in the fashion department and Malle's Editions de Parfums in the beauty boutique. Liberty of London on Sloane Street is the store's new boutique wing.

**Top tip** Can't get to London? Liberty has their online store, so they can come to you.

**Corner of Great Marlborough and Regent streets, London. See liberty.co.uk.**

## TRIP NOTES

■ **Getting there** Emirates Airline flies direct to London from Sydney via Dubai. Phone 1300 303 777, see [emirates.com](http://emirates.com).

■ **Staying there** The Dorchester is London's celebrity-filled Park Lane address. A superior double room starts from £235 (\$515) a night. Phone +44 20 7629 8888, see [thedorchester.co.uk](http://thedorchester.co.uk). The Mandarin Oriental Hyde Park is within skipping distance of Harvey Nichols and Harrods. Rooms start from £235. Phone 1800 123 693, see [mandarinoriental.com](http://mandarinoriental.com). Browns Hotel, Albemarle Street, Mayfair, is within walking distance of Selfridges and Fortnum & Mason. Rooms start from £199 for a double. Phone +44 20 7493 6020, see [lhw.com](http://lhw.com).

## Fortnum & Mason

**Best for** Food, glorious food. In the elegant streets of St James, Fortnum & Mason is synonymous with tea and trimmings in England.

The impressive food hall has been serving up game in aspic jelly, preserves and condiments, loose-leaf teas, foie gras, hams, champagne and other posh nosh to the royal family and the upper classes since the store opened hundreds of years ago.

F & M lays claim to creating the Scotch egg and being the first to sell Heinz baked beans; it has had numerous royal warrants and was chosen by mountaineer George Mallory to provide tucker for his Everest ascent. It's genteel, discreet and terribly British, though the recent multimillion-pound refurbishment has seen some of the grand tradition replaced with modern interiors and a four-storey atrium.

Today, customers can branch out from the food hall for fashion, beauty and accessories. However, the real reason you come to Fortnum & Mason is for high tea at the St James restaurant. This is tea the way it should be served, in bone china with lashings of sweet things on a plate.

**Top tip** Cashed-up customers have their food hampers delivered by horse and carriage with coachmen in full livery—for £1000.

**181 Piccadilly. See [fortnumandmason.com](http://fortnumandmason.com).**



What recession? ... (clockwise from top left) a Selfridges window display; Harrods, the creme de la creme; a Liberty of London festive window space; grand entrance at Fortnum & Mason. Photos: Getty Images; britainonview.com