

SHOPPING

top picks

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SHOPPING

New Yorkers live in a city of temptation. Candy-colored fashion boutiques, cutting-edge music shops, atmospheric antique stores, tea parlors – no matter what your weakness, you'll come face to face with all the objects your heart desires and plenty of curiosities you never knew existed. If you lack self-control, stick to Central Park, one of the few places where you can safely battle the spending demons (although carriage rides, balloon animals and ice cream may entice). Otherwise, delve into the city. Its wide avenues and tree-lined side streets hide many surprises for the intrepid, card-wielding explorer.

Shopping here isn't just about collecting pretty, fanciful things. It's also about experiencing the city in all its variety and connecting to New York's many subcultures. Where else aside from Forbidden Planet (p236) can *manga*-lovers find each other so easily on a rainy afternoon? Vinyl heads bond over the seemingly endless bins of jazz and soul albums at Academy Records (p234), one of many LP shops in the East Village. Old-school hip-hop fans flock to well-hidden stores in the Lower East Side, while fashion insiders elbow joust over rare denim at lesser-known SoHo boutiques. There are shops for lovers of chess (with pick-up games for browsers), street art (the tagger might be working the cash register), cuddly robots, artist monographs, Danish things, handmade jewelry, Ukrainian handicrafts, old-fashioned toys, vintage boots, New York State wine (it's good!) and mosaics made by you. This is just the beginning and there really is no end.

Shopping can also give you a taste of local history, whether you're stopping by the mom-and-pop shops still left in the Lower East Side, exploring the storefronts in Harlem or browsing the rare titles of a longtime antiquarian bookseller like Argosy (p244). There are also the many antique sellers and several excellent flea markets where you can put your hands on those little fragments from New York's past.

While New York can seem like pure quicklime to the budget, insiders know where to find the deals. In addition to great thrift shops like Housing Works (p240), there are many discount stores (see the Top Picks, p226) that sell top fashion labels at excellent prices – though you'll have to dig. There are also superb sample sales (see the boxed text, *opposite*), where you can walk away looking like a million bucks without having to spend it.

SHOPPING AREAS

To the question 'Where do I shop?', NYC answers 'How much you got?' Well-funded shoppers head to Midtown's Fifth Ave and the Upper East Side's Madison Ave, where high-end fashion is served in the glittering front windows of Bergdorf-style department stores and famous shops like Cartier. Downtown neighborhoods are the stomping grounds of fashion-forward folk. SoHo has high-end boutiques stocking the wares of international and famous local designers, while Nolita has smaller boutiques of expensive, up-and-coming stylists. The Lower East Side and the East Village are traditional enclaves of vintage and indie fashion, with a mix of both pricey and budget-friendly shops. The West Village has tiny, well-known boutiques, while the Meatpacking District is home to designer havens like Jeffrey and Stella McCartney. Midtown is the place for big-box retailers like Macy's, multistoried H&M and other chain stores along with overflowing tourist shops

selling tacky but essential souvenirs like Big Apple snow globes.

For more tips on where to shop, see the boxed text, p238.

OPENING HOURS

With the exception of Lower Manhattan and shops run by Orthodox Jews (who close their doors on Saturdays), nearly all stores, boutiques and megastores are open daily. Few stores open before 10am, though many stay open until 7pm or 8pm. Things open a little later (at 11am or noon) in more residential pockets (such as the East Village, Lower East Side and Brooklyn).

CONSUMER TAXES

There is currently no sales tax on the purchase of clothing or footwear items costing less than \$110. For all other items – and for clothing or footwear items over \$110 – total sales tax is 8.875%.