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6 exclusively New York shopping experiences

Anyone can drop plastic in a department store. With these NYC shopping secrets, you'll find deals and fashion that few know about

By Savita Iyer-Ahrestani, for CNN 28 February, 2013

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In the endless consumer mecca that is New York, it's ludicrous to shop at ho-hum department stores that sell the same clothes you can find anywhere else.

While the city's biggest fashion party -- Fashion's Night Out (FNO) -- was [canceled this year](http://www.wwd.com/retail-news/retail-features/fashions-night-out-on-hiatus-in-us-6804443) (<http://www.wwd.com/retail-news/retail-features/fashions-night-out-on-hiatus-in-us-6804443>), the shopping has never been better, especially now that stores can stop worrying about celebrities showing up and can get busy showcasing their latest pieces.

Want the inside word on shopping the city's trendiest neighborhoods and boutiques, and on getting first dibs on the latest designer pieces straight from the showrooms? Charge ahead.

Personal stylists



COURTESY CHIC INSPIRATION

Pay to learn how to really dress yourself.

Founder of personal shopping company Chic Inspiration Ella Goldin is known for helping people create fabulous looks.

She and her team of stylists and personal shoppers specialize in taking small groups to shop in the trendy New York neighborhoods of Nolita, SoHo and the East Village.

“We cater to people based on the part of New York they want to shop in or around specific items they want to buy,” says Goldin. “We also want to give clients a feel of a particular neighborhood.”

Chic Inspiration’s most popular offering is its Day of Style program. This personalized shopping date is the ultimate fashion and shopping experience for putting together an exclusive look.

US\$1,700 for a full Day of Style, including a personal consultation on colors and styles, how they work with skin tone, eyes and body type, a styling session in an exclusive boutique and lunch.

US\$850 for a half-day tour sans lunch; www.chicinspiration.com (<http://www.chicinspiration.com>).

Book personal shopping tours (US\$500 for three hours) on www.chicshoppingtoursny.com (<http://www.chicshoppingtoursny.com>).

Discounts at designer showrooms



Straight from the showroom to your shopping bag.

Fancy an exclusive look at a designer showroom and a chance to buy the latest fashions right off the racks at hugely discounted prices?

Karen Parker O’Brien, president of Style Room, is the person to see.

A fashion industry veteran with 20 years experience, she has connections to many of the “high-beta designers featured in all the top fashion magazines,” connections that afford her clients a 50 to 80 percent discount on retail prices at many designer showrooms across New York.

“I like the shopping experience to be part educational, part party,” says O’Brien.

That means a limo, some champagne, exclusive fashion industry insights and a personal one-on-one meeting with the designers themselves.

“People are all the more appreciative of what they buy because they’re in the place where the designer works and where magazine editors come,” O’Brien says, “so it’s more than just shopping.”

+1 646 245 5316; e-mail Karen@styleroom.com (<mailto:Karen@styleroom.com>) to set up your tour; www.styleroom.com (<http://www.styleroom.com>)

Group tours available. Price on demand. Tip: dress smart -- no sneakers allowed.

More on CNN: [Hong Kong’s best shopping](http://travel.cnn.com/hong-kongs-best-shopping-304796) (<http://travel.cnn.com/hong-kongs-best-shopping-304796>)

Curated vintage shopping



Not just any vintage shopping. Curated vintage shopping.

Natalie Joos is a fashion consultant and casting agent who's fast gaining a reputation as New York's Vintage Queen -- that's all she wears -- through her vintage-focused blog, [www.talesofendearment.com](http://talesofendearment.com) (<http://talesofendearment.com/>).

According to Joos, New York City abounds with all manner of curated vintage stores where one can buy anything from 1980s T-shirts to 1920s Chanel skirts, with a whole lot of bags, boots, scarves and jewelry to mix and match and whip up a one-of-a-kind look.

Joos's top picks include Artists & Fleas in the trendy neighborhood of Williamsburg, Brooklyn, an indoor market that houses a community of vintage sellers.

"It's full of all kinds of stalls and nicely curated, and it's where I find my coolest pieces," she says.

She also loves Stella Dallas in Greenwich Village, where dedicated Japanese vintage experts cull varsity jackets, old Levi's and "tons of cool

dresses from every decade," and Amarcord Vintage, for "fun pieces" by European designers from the 1940s through the 1980s.

Artists & Fleas, 70 N. 7th St., New York; +1 917 301 5765; open weekends 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

Stella Dallas, 218 Thompson St., New York; +1 212 674 0447; open Monday-Sunday 12:30-7:30 pm.

Amarcord Vintage, 252 Lafayette St., New York; +1 212 431 4161; open Monday-Sunday noon-7 p.m.

Self-guided shopping tours

She prides herself on her ability to guide New York shoppers to the city's unique boutiques, but Natasha Malinsky, founder of Shop NYC Tours, also knows that some shoppers would prefer not to have her around.

That's why she came up with the idea of the self-guided shopping tour, an e-mailed itinerary complete with map and directions, for those who want the insider take on New York shopping but would rather do the act solo.

"Many people want to take their own time shopping and don't want to be stuck to a guided tour

schedule," Malinsky says.

Her self-guided shopping tours are either thematic (specialties include a Fashionista Fave tour, Unique Gifts tour and a Recessionista tour), or can be customized depending on what people want to buy. (Yes, she can get as narrow as just scarves.)

Purchase pre-designed tours online for US\$14.95 and receive a pdf itinerary. Or, e-mail for a customized tour, which costs approximately US\$99-US\$199, depending on needs. An iPhone app is forthcoming.

www.shop-nyctours.com (<http://www.shop-nyctours.com>)

Fashion history tours and sample sales



Stand with the greats on New York's Fashion Walk of Fame.

Founder of Seek New York Tours, Rebecca Frey has worked as a costume designer and stylist for TV shows, plays and fashion magazines, and specializes in "bringing a little bit of history" to her New York garment district shopping tours.

You can hear the stories behind New York's most famous department stores, or meander through the innards of New York's fashion district and comb through the wares at fabric and button wholesalers, snagging deals along the way.

Then, stand on plaques commemorating such greats as Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren on the Fashion Walk of Fame -- "A place that even longtime residents of New York may never even have noticed," Frey says -- while learning about the machinations of the fashion industry and how designer creations actually come together.

For those who may not be into the technical side of fashion, Frey is hooked into the legendary New York sample sale scene, and has dibs on exclusive sales that not many know about.

+1 888 274 8580; e-mail info@seeknewyorkllc.com to set up a tour or book online through the website. Prices on demand depending on group size; www.seeknewyorktours.com (<http://www.seeknewyorktours.com>)

Discount department store



Be good to yourself and don't go to Century 21 on Black Friday. Or anywhere in New York for that matter.

Discount mega-department store Century 21 is often touted as New York's best kept shopping secret.

Except it's not much of a secret, judging from the hordes of shoppers with suitcases (bought on site in the luggage department) crammed with designer handbags, shoes, watches and sunglasses.

"One time, my best friend found a suede Derek Lam dress there for \$60," says popular New York fashion blogger Leandra Medine, aka [The Man Repeller](http://www.themanrepeller.com) (<http://www.themanrepeller.com>).

"She was my hero until I found a white tweed Oscar de la Renta blazer for \$57.99."

There's no need for a guide at Century 21. But as you dig through the jumbled racks of shirts and jackets, and turn boxes inside out looking for your shoe size, brace yourself for either the great disappointment of finding nothing, or for the jubilation of scoring a Gucci skirt for under 50 bucks.

It's usually one of either extreme.

Century 21, 22 Cortlandt St. (between Church Street and Broadway), New York; open Monday-Wednesday 7:45 a.m.-9 pm; Thursday-Friday 7:45 a.m.-9:30 p.m.; Saturday 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; Sunday 11 a.m.-8 p.m.

More on CNN: [Best of Paris shopping: The street market guide](http://travel.cnn.com/paris-shopping-guide-061506) (<http://travel.cnn.com/paris-shopping-guide-061506>)

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