

Chapter One

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THE BEST OF LONDON AT A GLANCE

BULLETINS FROM BRITAIN

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I may just as well have called this “Bullets from Britain”: When you see the prices in the United Kingdom, you may feel like someone shot you . . . not in the heart, but in the pocketbook!

Prices are downright obscene. But wait: There are some buys and even some bargains, and there *is* value for money—things that are pricey but worth it, or expensive but still lower priced in the United Kingdom than in the United States. If you are in a hurry, or can only afford to be in London for 24 hours (I feel your pain), this quickie chapter is meant to give you an overview of the best buys.

I hope that even those on a mad tear will find a moment to read the rest of the book, however, because it lists many more stores, as well as tips for finding good values, other shopping strategies, and some day trips to villages that specialize in antiques, which happen to be among the best buys.

Remember, bargains in Britain are often hidden, and those on a flash dash don't always get the best buy. If finding the bargains doesn't matter, then London has fabulous airport shopping—you never have to go home empty-handed.

Okay, 'nuff said. Let's go shopping, mates!

You Have Only 1 Hour to Shop

Obviously, what to do depends on where you are. If I have a heavy day ahead of me, I try to get people to come to my hotel or to keep my meetings in the Mayfair area, so that I can at least get some fresh air—even though a walk along Regent Street or Oxford Street gives me more than a breath of fresh air . . . it gives me credit card debt!

If you find yourself in Mayfair with an hour to shop, and you want to go into just one place, your best bet is Liberty of London, if only to look around. But once you're here, you'll want to shop till you drop, too.

What I generally do with my hour (and what I suggest for any die-hard shopper) is the following, and this of course assumes that I can easily get to the corner of Regent Street and Oxford Street:

- Head for **Topshop**—and be sure to go downstairs to find more women's things and browse the cheap copies of hot fashions.
- Dash into **Superdrug** (across the street from Topshop, on Oxford toward Tottenham Court Rd.) for everything you need and don't need, and for loading up on stuff from Original Source, maker of my favorite bath products.
- Saunter along Regent Street, smelling the air and taking it all in; pop into **Liberty of London**; then turn left at the sign for Carnaby Street. Race for the **Lush** shop (no. 40) and buy all the gifts you've ever wanted or needed—and a few goodies for yourself, too.

You Have Only 1 Hour to Shop in Knightsbridge

If you're in Knightsbridge and want to spend your hour here, I suggest a trip to **Harvey Nicks** and then a quick whiz through the food halls at **Harrods** for souvenirs and a Stilton to go. Or just exit Harvey Nicks—if you can drag yourself away from one of the best department stores in London—by way of Sloane Street. Be dazzled at **Shanghai Tang**, where clothes and gifts and

fabrics from China offer a dizzying array of colors and energy. Then make your way toward Sloane Square, popping into **Jo Malone** (no. 150) for scents and bath or beauty treatments that cost half their U.S. prices. When you get to the department store Peter Jones, turn right and head into the newish **General Trading Company**, a small department store of high style and gift items for the home, with a Zen/colonial-Indian flavor.

You Have No Real Shopping Goals but Want a Quick Spree That's Very London

- Head for **Covent Garden**. (Yes, there are branches of **Lush** here.)
- Explore Covent Garden's entire marketplace, but don't forget that if you need a few gifts, there's a tiny branch of **Hamleys** (great gifts for kids) and a **Culpeper the Herbalist** (wonderful bed and bath products, including aromatherapy) here as well.
- Walk away from Covent Garden out the front end and go to **Neal Street** for an eyeful of cutting-edge British street fashion and shoes you just can't believe, as well as branches of stores such as **Mango**, a Spanish chain that makes inexpensive copies of the latest fashions.
- Check out the minimall **Thomas Neal's** by popping into tenant **Space.NK**, a beauty store specializing in cult brands of makeup. (Don't buy the American brands, as they are very expensive.) If you enjoy vintage clothes, there's a small shop in the mall that has some nice things.
- At the end of Neal, turn left and segue onto **Monmouth Street** for vintage and fun finds.

BEST OF LONDON

Best New Neighborhood

Seven Dials is easy to get to (use the Covent Garden Tube), it's where you want to be for shopping adventures, and it's an

up-and-coming, newly hot area known mostly for its old-fashioned cutie-pie. Vintage clothing stores are moving in, there's a well-known little French bistro here, and the various little shops seem to be at least 100 years old.

Best Department Store

SELFRIDGES

400 Oxford St., W1 (Tube: Bond St.).

If you remember a dowdy old British department store targeted to little old ladies, think again: Selfridges has totally re-created itself. This department store is now the talk of the town for all the young and hip designers' clothes, the grocery store, the designer boutiques, the clothes made especially for the store, and the largest makeup and beauty department in Europe. © 0870/837-7377. www.selfridges.com.

Best Specialty Store

HARVEY NICHOLS

109–125 Knightsbridge (at Sloane St.), SW1 (Tube: Knightsbridge).

Harvey Nicks sells style by the yard and is the specialty store of choice for Sloane Rangers—it was the favorite department store of Diana, Princess of Wales. It's known for its blend of designers, home style, gourmet market, and good eats. Note that there is a branch of Wagamama, the noodle shop, in the basement. © 207/235-5000. www.harveynichols.com.

Best Chemist (Drugstore)

Eeeek, I'm having a tough moment here and must declare a tie, as I am now torn between my teenybopper heart and my conservative traditionalist heart.

Traditional choice: **Boots** (multiple branches).

Teenybopper choice: **Superdrug** (multiple branches).

Open-late-and-on-Sunday choice: **Bliss Chemist**, 5–6 Marble Arch, W1 (Tube: Marble Arch).

Best British Multiple (Chain)

LUSH

123 King's Rd., SW3 (Tube: Sloane Sq.); 11 The Piazza, Covent Garden, WC2 (Tube: Covent Garden); 40 Carnaby St., W1 (Tube: Oxford Circus); 80–82 Regent St. (Tube: Piccadilly Circus); 96 Kensington High St., W8 (Tube: High St. Kensington).

Now that Lush has stores dotted around the U.S. as well as a strong international presence, it might not offer the novelty you seek. And, heaven knows, the prices are frightening. But if you don't know the gimmick, it's still worth delighting in. Each store is set up like a deli, with beauty treatments in tubs and soaps in giant cheese-like wheels. The bath bomb is the biggest draw, but there are also products with silly names, a newsletter that clues you in on the latest, and enough razzle-dazzle to make you forget that you would never, in your right mind, let a five-dollar bill float down the bathtub drain if you weren't on holiday. www.lush.com.

Best Multiple You May Not Know

MUJI

41 Carnaby St., W1 (Tube: Oxford Circus); 157 Kensington High St., N8 (Tube: South Kensington); 118 King's Rd., SW3 (Tube: Sloane Square); 187 Oxford St., W1 (Tube: Oxford Circus).

The Japanese-minimalist multiple named Muji has stores all over the world, with many, many locations in London. Muji specializes in clean lines, great nonbranded merchandise, and fair prices. Some stores are larger than others; there are also Muji stores or boutiques within most London department stores and malls. www.muji.co.uk.

Best Places for Dishes

- Affordable: **Harrods**, 87–135 Brompton Rd., SW1 (Tube: Knightsbridge; ☎ 207/730-1234; www.harrods.com).
- Dream on: **Thomas Goode**, 19 S. Audley St., W1 (Tube: Green Park or Hyde Park Corner, but really, no one takes the Tube to a store such as this; ☎ 207/499-2823; www.thomasgoode.co.uk).
- Discount, but with a limited selection: **Portobello China & Woollens**, 89 Portobello Rd., W11 (Tube: Notting Hill Gate; ☎ 207/727-3857; www.portobello-ltd.com).

Best Mad Hatter

PHILIP TREACY

69 Elizabeth St., SW1 (Tube: Sloane Sq.).

Ascot, anyone? A wedding, perhaps? The king of British topers has some sublime pieces and many that are wild, wacky, wonderful, and way out there. Be prepared to pay—and have photographers standing by. ☎ 207/824-8787. www.philip-treacy.co.uk.

Best Designer Resale Shop

PANDORA

16–22 Cheval Place, SW7 (Tube: Knightsbridge).

How can you beat £35 (\$65) for a YSL blouse? Enough said. ☎ 207/589-5289.

Best Flea Markets

- Wednesday: **Camden Passage** (Tube: Angel).
- Friday: **Bermondsey** (Tube: London Bridge or Bermondsey). **Note:** Bermondsey Market will be closing to become a residential tower—watch this space and check with your hotel concierge.
- Saturday: **Portobello Road** (Tube: Notting Hill Gate).
- Sunday: **Camden Lock** (Tube: Camden Town).

Best New Market Experience

COLUMBIA ROAD FLOWER MARKET

Columbia Rd., E2 (Nearest Tube: Old St.; or bus no. 26, 48 or 55).

Don't fret, it's not just flowers. Although the streets are filled with cut flowers, plants, herbs in pots, and small trees, there are also shops selling antiques and fun home furnishings, tiny outdoor markets with heaps of olives, and so on. Several shops and bistros sell coffee, bagels, and other goodies. It's crowded by 8:30am; most of the stores open at 9am. They're open only on Sundays, so don't think you can come back during the week for a less crowded stroll. www.columbia-flower-market.freewebspace.com.

Best Addition to Regent Street

APPLE STORE

235 Regent St., W1 (Tube: Piccadilly).

Surely you are no stranger to Apple's retail business, but this large branch store has brought some really nice energy to a street that was drowning in the boredom of one multiple after the next. You can play with Apple toys and even check your e-mail for free here. It's open 7/7. **Note:** If you're visiting in the summer and traveling with kids, there are free workshops and even a summer camp program held at the store. © 207/153-9000. www.apple.com.

Best Shopper's Lunch

CADOGAN HOTEL

75 Sloane St., SW1 (Tube: Knightsbridge).

Nestled right into the shopping district, the Cadogan (say KUH-duh-gun) was once owned by Lillie Langtry and was home to Oscar Wilde. Now it's a member of Leading Small Hotels of the World and a swank place to stay. The insider's tip? There's

a three-course gourmet lunch for £18 (\$33). © 207/235-7141.
www.lhw.com/cadoganuk.

Best Shopper's Quickie Lunch

EAT

319 Regent St., W1 (Tube: Oxford Circus).

I discovered EAT because it's across the street from the Langham Hotel and a block from the crossroads of Regent Street and Oxford Street, putting it smack in the middle of the shopper's world. This is a fresh sandwich, soup, and salad bar, part of a chain, but with really high-quality tastes. I would kill for the shrimp and langoustine salad with red Thai dressing. You can also stop in just to refuel with a drink—anything from an espresso macchiato to a chai latte made with soy milk. © 207/636-8309. www.eatcafe.com.

Best Vintage Clothing

STEINBERG & TOLKIEN

193 King's Rd., SW3 (Tube: Sloane Sq.).

An Ali Baba cave of vintage, much of it designer caliber and very expensive. Don't miss a trip downstairs. The specialties are from the '30s and the '60s. © 207/376-3660.

Best Outlets

BICESTER VILLAGE

50 Pringle Dr., Bicester, Oxfordshire.

Created along the same lines as an American outlet village, complete with pedestrian-only main street and cutie-pie storefronts, this place is about a 70-minute drive from London. You can get here by train or tour bus; see p. 276 for details.

The mix is all very upscale, with mostly international brands and some British lines, so you should know your labels. For British specialty brands, check out **Molton Brown**, **The White Company**, and **Ken Turner**, among others. Okay, okay, there's

also **Ozward Boateng**, a Savile Row bespoke tailor who makes rock-'n'-roll clothes for guys. © 1869/323-200. www.bicester-village.com.

Best Source for Postcards

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

Cromwell Rd., SW7 (Tube: South Kensington).

This is the best museum store in London and one of the best in the world. The shop is located right inside the front door of the museum, so you don't have to see the art if you don't want to. © 207/942-2000. www.vam.ac.uk.

Best Place for Royal Souvenirs

BUCKINGHAM PALACE GIFT SHOP

Sorry, open only Aug–Sept. At the end of the Mall (on the road running from Trafalgar Sq.). (Tube: St. James's).

HISTORIC ROYAL PALACES (INCLUDES TOWER OF LONDON)

Palaces have banded together to form a marketing confederation (how American!) and have redone their gift shops, offering replicas of the crown jewels at the Tower of London gift shop.

Best Museum Store

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

Cromwell Rd., SW7 (Tube: South Kensington).

One-stop shopping for everything from postcards and posters to crafts (Crafts Council booths are in the rear) to repro items and fun decorative touches including jewelry, tin dinner plates, Spode coffee cups, and so on. You may enter the store without paying the museum admission; just ask at the front desk. A specialty gift shop is usually set up to serve particular exhibits; this shop will be adjacent to the exhibit itself and sells merchandise that is not seen in the main gift shop. © 207/942-2000. www.vam.ac.uk.

Best Bookstore

HATCHARDS

Piccadilly, W1 (Tube: Piccadilly Circus).

Some bookstores are larger, but none are more fun. There are floors and floors of books here, plus a staff that knows and reads everything. © 207/439-9921. www.hatchards.co.uk.

Best Toy Store

HAMLEYS

188 Regent St., W1 (Tube: Oxford Circus).

A veritable theater of retail, worth a visit even if you don't have kids. © 0870/333-2455. www.hamleys.com.

Best Teenage Hangout

TOPSHOP

214 Oxford St., W1 (Tube: Oxford Circus).

The flagship Topshop is mecca for boys and girls. Now there's even a branch of Miss Selfridge inside the Oxford Circus store. © 207/636-7700. www.topshop.co.uk.

Best New-to-the-Scene Teen Source

NEW LOOK

500–502 Oxford St., W1 (Tube: Marble Arch).

The bad news: This store isn't nearly as good as Topshop. The good news? It's less expensive. There are two huge locations on Oxford Street, convenient for all shoppers. The Marble Arch store is the flagship. There's another branch at 175 Oxford St. (Tube: Oxford Circus). Merchandise tends to be crammed in, and display and finesse are minimal. However, the looks are here and the prices are low. © 207/290-7860. www.newlook.co.uk.

Great Gifts for Not Many £

- **Anything from Lush**—one of my faves is the Ballistic Barrel (three bath bombs in a container). I just bought some baby bath bombs in pale blue for a novelty baby gift. Not every product is brilliant, so you'll need to experiment; the good ones are so good that you'll go back to buy more the next day—and rue the day you didn't bring home more.
- **Cashmere liquid washing soap from N.Peal.** Okay, so this is a novelty gift, but it goes a long way for the person who has everything.
- **Duchy Originals**, organic biscuits (cookies) from Prince Charles, available at all fancy food shops and food halls in department stores. *Note:* These have almost no sodium, making them a great gift for anyone on a salt-free diet.
- **Tea, coffee, or cookies from Fortnum & Mason**, the famed purveyor of gourmet foods. The teas and coffees have such fabulous packaging that they make exciting gifts based on their looks alone.
- **Aromatherapy fan from Culpeper the Herbalist**, £15 (\$28); with the scent of your choice, an additional £3 to £5 (\$6–\$9).
- **Silk-knot cuff links from Thomas Pink**, £5 (\$9).
- **Filofax planners and inserts.** Prices vary, but you'll pay basically half the U.S. retail cost.
- **Bottle of whiskey.**

Best Gifts Under £5

- **Crisps**, available at any supermarket or cafeteria, about £1 (\$1.85) per small package. I buy the oddball flavors of potato chips and hand them out as gifts. Some of the flavors are so bizarre (steak and kidney pie?) that you can only laugh.
- **Bath bomb (£3/\$6) or Red Rooster soap** (prices depend on size, but £3/\$6 will usually do it) from Lush.
- A **tabloid newspaper**, with at least one tacky headline and news of yet another royal scandal, 20p (37¢).
- **Original Source** shower gel, shaving cream, or moisture mousse. I'm nuts for Orange & Grapefruit as well as Tea

Tree & Mint, which I use for shaving my legs because it smells great and leaves a tingle afterward. The mousse is a lightweight foam that serves as a body oil post-shower. Available at all drugstores, for under £3 (\$6) per product.

Unusual Gifts for the Person Who Has Everything

- **Desk accessories from Smythson of Bond Street.** There are all sorts of doodads and gadgets here. I buy the tiny magnifying glass as a 50th-birthday gift for loved ones, £25 (\$46); with an engraved case, £35 (\$65).
- **Asprey's unique silk scarf belt with leather buckle.** You buy the scarf and the leather buckle separately, which means you can buy the buckle and attach it to your own scarf collection. The buckle costs about £50 (\$93).
- **Columbia Road Flower Market original gray plastic tote,** available only at the Columbia Road Flower Market, £3 (\$6).
- **Gift certificates for afternoon tea at the Dorchester Hotel.** These come wrapped in an elegant box that is perfect for presentation. Full tea costs about £20 (\$37). If you would like the vouchers sent to you or directly to your gift recipient, call ☎ 207/629-8888 and ask for the Promenade. Credit card orders can be taken over the phone; however, there is an additional charge for international mail.
- **A dog portrait by Stephanie Poppen,** on Walton Street.
- **Aroma Cushion,** available at many department stores (I found mine at Fenwick on Bond Street). These small pillows come with a variety of treatments—there's everything from Deep Sleep to Animal Spirit. Oh yes, don't forget Monthly Moon. Prices range from £15 to £20 (\$28–\$37).
- **Anything from Basia Zarzycka,** 52 Sloane Sq., SW1 (Tube: Sloane Sq.), where whimsy floats in the air and gift items range from decorated lampshades to fashion accessories. Prices soar on the wings of doves.

Ten Best Shops in London

As I keep saying, I hate lists like this because they don't really evaluate a store; they take into account the entire city and its retail scenario and are balanced to make a whole. On the whole, I like this whole, which includes shops that happen to be close together so you can walk from one to the next; with the exception of two of the stores on this list, they are all on either King's Road (or nearby Sloane Sq.) or in Mayfair.

Note that I have left out shopping experiences, alternative retail, and entire events, such as Covent Garden, Greenwich on a Sunday, walking from Ledbury Street to Portobello Road along Westbourne Grove, and so on. My choices are based on thrills or chills.

BASIA ZARZYCKA

52 Sloane Sq., SW1 (Tube: Sloane Sq.).

This store is not for everyone, and it is unlikely that you will actually buy anything here unless you cashed out your tech stocks before the crash. But, but, but you must come here to simply gawk at the creativity, energy, high style, and whimsy in picture frames, accessories for fashion and home, lampshades, shawls, handbags, and so on. The prices are very, very high; the attitude is equally elevated—but it's still one of the best stores in London. © 207/730-1660. www.basia-zarzycka.co.uk.

BOOTS WELL-BEING CENTRE

127 Kensington High St., W8 (Tube: Kensington High St.).

I never met a Boots I didn't like, although I do like the super-stores better than the average ones because they have even more selection. The Well-Being Centre is nothing short of astonishing—perhaps the most exciting new store in London. It looks so average from the front that you will wonder if I am daft, so give me a break here. The space is very deep, gets wider in the rear, and has an upstairs with spa, herbal meds, and more. Many brands of makeup, health, beauty, bath, hair, and sun products are sold on the ground floor. You can call ahead

(☎ 0845/121-9001) to book spa appointments, which is a good idea since they do book up. Spa hours are Monday through Saturday from 9am to 7pm, Sunday from 11am to 5pm. www.boots.com.

GENERAL TRADING COMPANY

2–4 *Symons St., Sloane Sq., SW3 (Tube: Sloane Sq.)*.

This is a totally new cup of tea for those of you who haven't stumbled onto the changeover on your own—the General Trading Company as Princess Di knew it ain't no more. That building is being converted into a housing block, so the icon store moved around the corner and fancies itself as GTC with a modern logo and a cool, Calvin Klein kind of environment. This mini-department store has a lot of good gift and novelty items, but the new version reminds me of Gump's in San Francisco . . . very spare and minimalist, although it still displays heaps of merchandise. ☎ 207/730-0411. www.general-trading.co.uk.

GEORGINA VON ETZDORF

4 *Ellis St., SW1 (Tube: Sloane Sq.)*.

Etzdorf is a painter who scribbles and scrawls on fabric, then makes up accessories in her eccentric and delicious prints. Scarves are the number-one item, but the new handbags of painted canvas and linen are sensational. There are other goodies as well; I bought a pair of gloves for £50 (\$93) that are pieces of art. Very original and special. Not for the preppy set; a true British eccentric. If you're a regular client, note that this is a totally new shop in a new location. ☎ 207/259-9715. www.gve.co.uk.

LIBERTY

210–220 *Regent St., W1 (Tube: Oxford Circus)*.

Give me Liberty or give me death. This fabulous department store has great architecture on the outside and the inside, lots of charm, good clothing, good William Morris prints, good

needlework department, good everything. © 207/734-1234.
www.liberty.co.uk.

LUSH

123 King's Rd., SW3 (Tube: Sloane Sq.); additional locations around town.

Lush is set up like a deli, with bath and skin-care items sold by the chunk or in a salad container. It's home of the bath bomb, Red Rooster soap, and many yummy and silly gift items for everyone you know. Original, creative, and exactly what you travel the world to find. © 207/376-8348. www.lush.com.

PICKETT

*32–33 Burlington Arcade, W1 (Tube: Piccadilly Circus);
149 Sloane St., SW1 (Tube: Sloane Sq.); 6 Royal Exchange,
EC3 (Tube: Liverpool St.).*

One of the reasons I think Trevor Pickett is so clever is that these stores have been able to reinvent themselves each year, pivoting from purveyor of pashmina (so *last year*) to ethnic jewelry and a look that is sublime and special. There are a handful of shops all over town. www.pickett.co.uk.

THOMAS GOODE

19 S. Audley St., W1 (Tube: Green Park or Hyde Park Corner).

The fanciest china shop in the world with room after room of dishes, and even some antiques. There are also tabletop and design items. The tearoom is very expensive, but staring is free. © 207/499-2823. www.thomasgoode.co.uk.

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

Cromwell Rd., SW7 (Tube: South Kensington).

Besides the usual cards, books, paper works, and museum souvenirs, there are wonderful reproductions from the decorative-arts collection of the museum itself. You'll see everything

Best of the London High Street

—by *Jemma Griffiths*

If you're looking for high fashion at cheap prices, nothing beats the London high street. With a huge array of exciting styles available, and new products arriving every day, never has there been a better time to hit the streets. The brands are so cutting-edge that catwalk knockoffs reach the shelves with the models' footsteps barely off the runway.

As a student at London College of Fashion, I find the high street an essential source for the latest trends. So for the style-conscious, budget-conscious female, get ready for the LCF girl's tips. Here's my insider's guide to the best buys on the high street.

Note: While the traditional English village has only one high street, London has many, so the stores listed below appear in many different areas. Ask your concierge for the nearest branch, or head to the flagship, which for the following stores are on Oxford Street. In fact, most of the stores listed below are within a 2-block stretch, clustered around Oxford Circus and Regent Street (Tube: Oxford Circus).

- **Topshop** wins the prize for one-stop fashion shop. The Oxford Circus store is surely a spectacle, with everything from sunglasses to vintage. Clothing for men is on the first floor; ladies, head to floors -1 and -2 to view the Aladdin's cave that awaits. For a more retro feel, hit floor -2 to check out "The Closet," which holds treasures such as dated '80s glitz and '70s sportswear. Topshop offers a personal style advisor service, so if you're feeling lazy, let them come to you, complete with a wide range from the latest collection. **Tip:** Clothing is continually being moved around, and the stock is updated daily—so don't count on your goods being there when you come back tomorrow.
- **Miss Selfridge** is right next door to Topshop and can be accessed through the store itself. It holds a similar array

of cheap high-fashion looks, but aims for a younger audience—young teenage girls will coo in delight over the trendy goods, while moms relax comfortably once they've surveyed the prices. It's good for novelty pieces that you fancy at the time, but might not necessarily wear next season. A recent face-lift has brought in London design duo Odie and Amanda, creating their own line for the store, as well as the Miss Vintage line, tapping into the recent obsession with all things dated.

- **Dorothy Perkins** treats its customers to contemporary styles without compromising on quality. There's something for everyone here: funky of-the-moment fare; staples such as jumpers, fitted shirts, and jackets; and a wide variety of handbags, lingerie, and shoes. Accessories are fashion-moment stuff, but the footwear is more timeless. I usually pop in to check out jewelry, as there's a large selection of current looks at very reasonable prices.
- **New Look** is the fashion student's secret weapon. In my teen days, I avoided this store like the plague. In recent years, however, it's had a serious makeover and is now doing a roaring trade. The Oxford Street flagship is brilliant fun, with wheelable shopping trolleys and funky music and lighting. The shiny entrance steps make you feel like you're walking into a runway show. New Look's "boutique" line is becoming a firm favorite, and several hot new designers have been enlisted to continue its success. Sporty babes and office girls are also catered to. The best buys are definitely the shoes, many going for as little as £20 (\$37).
- **Oasis** is higher-budget than my other recommendations, but it's a nice place to check out for something special. Designs are slightly more unique, and the handbags are worth a look. Oasis is always great if you're looking for something a bit feminine, such as interesting flowing skirts and tailored dresses. There is an Oasis branch on Regent Street, almost alongside Topshop at Oxford Circus.

from blue-and-white Spode dishes to Kaffe Fasset tin boxes and much much more. © 207/942-2000. www.vam.ac.uk.

VV ROULEAUX

6 Marylebone High St., W1 (Tube: Baker St. or Bond St.).

A few years ago, VV Rouleaux was a fancy ribbons-and-trimming store at Sloane Square. While it still has a shop there (54 Sloane Sq., at Cliveden Place), the best location to visit is the one on Marylebone High Street, where two levels of ribbons and stuff just knock you out with their colors, textures, and possibilities. Buy trims, artificial flowers, home style, and more. © 207/224-5179. www.vvrouleaux.com.