

*To pretend you're a
local in New York you
have to shop like one.*

Rachael Oakes-Ash

is your department

store guide

united states



THERE'S a hierarchy on the streets of New York City, from Upper East to Downtown.

What brand you wear matters as much as who you know; where you live as much as where you dine; and what you vote as much as what you drive, or rather what you are driven in.

But in a city where department stores are legitimate tourist attractions it's where you shop that really gives you away. Here's what you need to know:

Barneys New York 660 Madison Avenue

IT'S all very "step out of the yellow taxi in your Jimmy Choos and shop with your nose in the air" here.

The clientele are up to the manic millisecond and terrified they'll hit the peak of a trend.

The foldout shop directory is a work of retro-illustrated art and worth putting in your rucksack, though if you have a rucksack you shouldn't be in here.

Trustafarians spend mummy and daddy's money on dinner plate-sized Oliver Peoples sunnies on level one and butt-hugging Nudie jeans on level eight before popping into Fred's on level nine for a bite to eat with celebrities who choose not to.

Keira Knightley was spotted on our sojourn, though it could have been Natalie Portman. It's so hard to

tell, dahlink.

Did we mention shoes? Sarah Jessica Parker has been known to disappear on levels four and seven.

www.barneys.com

Bergdorf Goodman 754 Fifth Ave

IF YOU have to ask the price, don't go in. Bergdorf Goodman is the home of the NYC Social X-ray. Think Trump, Onassis and Rothschild, popping in from tea next door at the Plaza to pick up a spot of fur.

Don't be put off by its clientele. The service is impeccable, understated and non-judgmental.

If you don't know Caroline Herrera, Bill Blass or Chloe, then head straight for the basement and pick up some Paul & Joe lipsticks so you, too, can swing your Bergdorf Goodman bag down the street.

www.bergdorfgoodman.com

Saks Fifth Ave 611 Fifth Ave

IF YOU want service, this is your store. It's worth moving continents for the Fifth Ave Club alone.

Imagine a personal interview in your personal shopping suite, personal refreshments and a personal stylist. Need help decorating your home in the Hamptons? Saks Fifth Ave's second-home service "makes your additional home as comfortable as your main residence".

Go crazy on the fifth floor, where

more than 10 designers specialise in only denim. The store also offers Dynamic Currency Conversion, which means you pay for purchases in your home currency to keep track of your spending. Ouch!

www.saksfifthavenue.com

Henri Bendel 712 Fifth Ave

GIRLIE heaven. Bendels is bazaar and boudoir. Intimate salons on each of its four floors sell handcrafted beads, gold, silver, bags, shoes and quirky women's fashion. It's all very retro with a flapper girl feel, from the townhouse exterior to the brown and white striped shopping bags coveted by stylemeisters worldwide.

La Lingerie has chocolate-box pink and brown decor, chaise longues, French Muzak and risqué toys hidden among the exquisite lingerie.

www.henribendel.com



mustknow

- 1.** If you are busting to buy designer but can't quite afford it, head to Century 21 at 22 Cortland St. This discount department store is a New York institution.
- 2.** Fans of streamlined fashion will love Takashimaya at 693 Fifth Ave, with its innovative florist, tearooms and

stylised Japanese designers.

Macys

151 West 34th St

THE original owners of Macys went down with the *Titanic*, but the store has only gone up and up. The world's biggest department store has its own post office and is the third most visited site in New York City.

No pretensions here, with 30,000 visitors a day it's hard to maintain airs and graces. When you get tired, and you will, visit one of the 10 food outlets.

Joan at the Visitors' Centre has worked at the store for 25 years. Her weirdest request? A New Yorker looking for a plant minder.

Macys was the first shop to install

escalators and you can still find 24 wooden originals to ride.

www.macys.com

Bloomingdales

1000 Third Ave

THE iconic brown bags — shopping bags printed with Big, Medium or Little Brown Bag — make Bloomingdales customers instantly recognisable.

Covering a city block, Bloomingdales is big, bolshie and tres New York. So is the service.

Watch out for the little dogs. They bite if stood on, which may account for why so many are carried in Hermes bags through the store.

If you don't have one, borrow one, because you'll blend in better.

And third-finger boulders are big here, too.

www.bloomingdales.com

The writer was a guest of Air Tahiti Nui and Accor Hotels



traveller's checks

Getting there: Air Tahiti Nui has low-season fares (excl Dec 10-Jan 31) from Melbourne-New York via Sydney and Tahiti from \$2198 plus tax.

www.airtahitiniui.com

Staying: Sofitel, near Fifth Ave, has the city's largest standard rooms so lots of space for shopping bags. From \$350 a night. See www.sofitel.com

Hostelling International is on the corner of Amsterdam and 103rd streets. Dorm beds about \$40.



On top of the world: Macys is the biggest department store in the world and the third most-visited New York attraction, drawing 30,000 visitors each day.



Girlie heaven: retro Henri Bendel.



Saks appeal: pay in your home currency at Saks Fifth Ave.



Bags of class: Bloomingdales covers a whole city block.