

Back in 2003, when Harvey Nichols opened its store in Manchester, a buzz of excitement arose at the very prospect of having even more designer gear on every Mancunian's doorstep. Nowadays, the locals tend to take it all in their stride with a whole range of upmarket stores and trendy boutiques joining forces to make Manchester the greatest shopping experience in the North of England.

Exchange Square and New Cathedral Street now house some of the most desirable brands known to mankind. If designer labels make you go weak at the knees, department stores like Selfridges and the luxurious Triangle Shopping Centre offer an upmarket haven. Also in the surrounding area there are top labels such as Vanessa Bruno, Hobbs, Zara, Louis Vuitton, Massimo Dutti and Ted Baker, so be prepared, your credit card could take quite a thrashing.

Over the last decade, top end high street stores have flocked to fill King Street's attractive boutiques. A well balanced mixture of haute couture and street fashion have developed into an increasing number of exclusive outlets for emptying your pockets in. Armani, DKNY, Joseph and Vivienne Westwood are among the many prestigious stores located here. As favourites among the local 'WAGS', you may find yourself rubbing shoulders with some famous faces on your way to the changing room.

A short stroll away along Deansgate shoppers will find old school glamour Kendals department store (currently known as House of Fraser). With its own variety of designer labels in stock, this store most definitely makes an impact. So much so, that it's not uncommon to hear stories of major celebrities like Justin Timberlake visiting for an evening of personal shopping.

The recent facelift of the Manchester Arndale on Market Street has made it one of the busiest shopping streets in the country. Amongst a huge selection of exciting shops and leading high street names from Apple to WH Smith, shoppers will also appreciate the delightful Arndale Markets, offering fresh local produce and specialist goods from a range of stylish stalls.

## Northern Quarter

For a more charismatic and bohemian shopping experience, Manchester's Northern Quarter boasts a range of hotly tipped independent retailers, enjoyed by the casual visitor as much by the local creative types. The Northern Quarter is a cool and colourful hive of hip activity, providing the alternative shopping space. With a long history in the rag trade, this is definitely the place to go if you're looking for something different. Now home to the renowned Affleck's with its multitude of little boutiques featuring local designers, vintage clothing stalls, piercing studios, tarot readers, cool clothing designers, music makers, and craft design centres. Within easy reach of Affleck's, the vibrant and vintage clothing in Rags to Bitches and Pop Boutique are two further examples of the great independent offerings dotted around this area. The Northern Quarter is also a music lover's paradise, with a range of excellent record stores sitting literally side by side. Established businesses such as Piccadilly records, Vinyl Exchange and Fat City Records attract local DJs and bands alike, for their offering of select new cuts and obscure rarities.

Also watch this space for 'The Avenue' in Spinningfields. The new premier shopping destination, soon to come your way, will form the concentrated cluster of international designer fashions and accessories complemented by national and international restaurants. With the flagship Armani store and many more to look forward to, shoppers will most definitely flock to this new part of town.

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