



Guest Editor Marie P., Phila PA: Whether at holiday season or any other time of year, England's capital is a great city for shopping. Here are my five favorite retailers, all within central London:

Harrods (87-135 Brompton Road, Knightsbridge), represents what a department store should be. Even as the world changes outside, the inside of Harrods remains a London institution. Added to the best shopping in the world, more than 30 cafés and restaurants welcome Harrods visitors. The Harrods experience is a worldwide brand, and the store is filled with tourists from around the globe. The London flagship store should be visited at least once on any London shopping excursion. Insider tip: Harrods offers high-end day tours of London in a classic open-top bus. The four-hour tour costs about \$60.

Selfridges (400 Oxford St., Oxford Circus) has always been my favorite London department store. It has the full range of products, from clothing to housewares, along with an incredible food court and market area. Selfridges always feels more customer-oriented than the other department stores. Selfridges is open Monday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., and from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays.

Harvey Nichols (109-125 Knightsbridge, Knightsbridge) is also a collection of the world's top

designers and manufacturers. For high fashion and related shopping, I think this is the best place, with a more stylish attitude than Harrods or Selfridges. It's the best place to buy gifts, with a good selection of unique luxury items only available there.

The Foodmarket and London Wine Shop are also well stocked with unique (and sometimes pricey) vintages and selections. The store is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and from 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sundays.

Marks and Spencer (458 Oxford St., Marble Arch) is the most accessible (both price-wise and attitude-wise) of the giant London department stores, including a food hall and other amenities. The chain started in the northern England city of Leeds and has always catered to regular folks.

It provides a more accurate glimpse into the lifestyles of ordinary Brits. The main London store is open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and from noon to 6 p.m. on Sunday.

John Lewis (300 Oxford St., Oxford Circus) is a classic London store with a good range of products, from clothing to housewares. It also has an excellent food hall with a wonderful range of British products. A John Lewis visit will also be refreshingly tourist-free, as this store caters to upscale Brits. The store is open Monday through Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., and from noon to 6 p.m. on Sundays.