

# Shopping In L.A.

Whether you're looking for bling in Beverly Hills or bargains in the downtown Fashion District, Los Angeles is rolling out the red carpet for shoppers this spring. Mindful of the downturn in the economy, hotels are cutting as

get the third night for free. Book into the Montage Beverly Hills, and receive 20 percent off all your purchases in a single day at Saks Fifth Avenue. Or pamper yourself with the Recession Relief Package at the Beverly Wilshire Four Seasons with \$500 worth

clients have included stars like Scarlett Johansson. Scott leads guided tours of "hidden gems," the undiscovered boutiques where you'll find "unique pieces that no one back home will have." The excursions, including transportation from limos to SUVs, don't come cheap — but Scott says she can save clients a bundle by avoiding costly wardrobe mistakes, and providing perks from designer discounts to appetizers and Champagne.

Melrose Place has become home to high-end fashion with boutiques like Caroline Herrera New York and Monique Lhuillier, the bridal and eveningwear designer with an A-list clientele. The area has also made its Marc — as in Marc Jacobs, the Marc Jacob's men's store, and Marc by Marc Jacobs. Veteran boutiques like Fred Segal and Maxfield have been joined on Melrose Avenue by Paul Smith and impossible-to-miss Alexander McQueen (just look for the nine-foot anatomically correct angel). The area has great cafes and restaurants including Comme Ca, a classic French bistro for good wine, pomme fritte, and mussels mouliniere.

At Sunset Plaza you'll find D&G, Catherine Malandrino, Nicole Miller, Calypso, Tracey Ross, and H. Lorenzo. Lunch al fresco at the many sidewalk cafes or at Ketchup overlooking the Sunset Strip. Here you can sample mini Kobe beef hot dogs and fries with five types of ketchup including mango and maple. For dinner on the strip, there's XIV, Michael Mina's latest restaurant where artful small

much as \$100 off their rack rates and offering all kinds of incentives. The Breakfast in Beverly Hills campaign, from April 1 through August 31, may include additional nights, retail offers, and, of course, breakfast for two.

For example, stay two nights at the Peninsula Beverly Hills and

of spa treatments for \$200. (Check out details at [www.breakfastinbh.com](http://www.breakfastinbh.com).)

You can't get much closer to shopping than at the Luxe, a chic little boutique hotel on Rodeo Drive. Here you can book a "shopping experience" with celebrity stylist Aly Scott ([www.stylechicla.com](http://www.stylechicla.com)), whose



Montage Beverly Hills

plates make a memorable meal in a Philippe Starck-designed space that has the look of an elegant living room. Luau is fun. But the biggest buzz goes to The Bazaar at the hip SLS Hotel where Spanish chef Jose Andres turns out tapas that earned a rare four-star review from *The Los Angeles Times*. And for a bit of old Hollywood, sip a "speakeasy cocktail" in Bar Nineteen 12, a sophisticated retro lounge at the Beverly Hills Hotel, where you can see dazzling sunsets from the adjoining terrace.

Trendy Robertson Boulevard boasts Lisa Kline, Tory Burch, Kitson, Agnes B., Ralph Lauren, and Les Habitues for gorgeous eveningwear. La Cienega, known for the ginormous Beverly Center, now has edgy boutiques like Opening Ceremony. Silverlake near Griffith Observatory is worth exploring (try Café Stella for the best bistro fare). And check out boho-chic fashion on Venice's very hip Abbot Kinney Boulevard including Madley and Shareen Vintage, along with hot bars and restaurants.

For great bargains, head to the Fashion District in downtown L.A. This 90-block wholesale hub includes the California Market Center, The New Mart, Cooper Design Space, and Gerry Building. This is where buyers for major stores and boutiques order merchandise for the coming seasons. But on the last Friday of every month, showrooms open their doors to the public if they have samples for sale. Smart shoppers arrive early, wheeling roller bags because the deals can

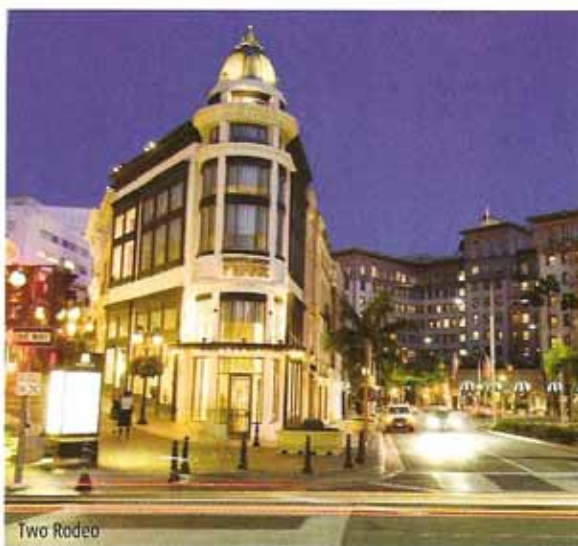
be considerable. "You can save as much as 50 to 70 percent off retail," says Jan Mesloh, a Vail, Colorado buyer in town on vacation. She had just scored a \$200 crocheted scarf for \$20 while friend Yvette Lilly bought a cashmere hoodie for the same price. At another boutique, a visitor longingly cradled a Francesca Biasia handbag tagged at hundreds off retail. A black-and-white Alberto Makali silk cocktail dress, seen last spring at Neiman Marcus for \$500, could be had for less than \$100.

Fun to browse is the perhaps taboo Santee Alley, a bewildering three-block bazaar from Olympic south to Pico, known for knock-off fashions and said to be the country's biggest market for fake goods (despite frequent raids by the LAPD). The San Pedro Mart, at 12th and San Pedro, is home to hundreds of Korean-owned garment businesses, and is open to the public, as are many wholesalers, on Saturdays.

Before you shop, check out [www.fashion.district.org](http://www.fashion.district.org), where you can download a free map or a podcast shopping tour to your iPod or MP3 player. Shopping blogs such as Racked.com and Dailycandy.com are other great sources, along with the Sunday "Image" section of the *Los Angeles Times* where Max Padilla spotlights sample sales and the latest deals at salons and spas. Bring cash. And wear a tank top and tights to make trying on samples easier. Want a great deal? Then forget about a fitting room.

ANDREA NAVERSEN

Palm tree-lined streets of Beverly Hills



Two Rodeo



Downtown Fashion District