

New York

Forget the January sales. Book a flight to New York and take advantage of some incredible bargains. With the pound still looking strong against the dollar, you'll be flying to retail heaven. Words and pictures, Jo Cooke



At 1:2, it's odds on favourite

New York and shopping have become synonymous. Brits in their droves make the short hop across the pond to overdose on retail therapy in ever-growing numbers. The sparkling window displays of Macy's, Bloomingdales, Saks Fifth Avenue and Lord & Taylor are as alluring as the Chrysler Building and the Empire State when they're illuminated at dusk. But, before you spend all your shopping time on the frenetic streets of Manhattan, let me tell you about a wonderful temple of consumerism called Woodbury Common Premium Outlets in Central Valley. It's just over an hour from the city centre by dedicated bus from Port Authority Station and every brand and designer label doing business there has to offer their goods at between 25 and 65 per cent less than the price you'd pay on the New York City high street.

Woodbury resembles a pleasant, New England-style village. Within its boundaries you'll find 220 outlet stores; that makes it the largest designer outlet complex in the world.

Shoe-aholics and those who love to don designer labels will feel like kids in sweet shops. Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel, Gucci, Jimmy Choo, Armani, Space, Diane von Furstenberg, Salvatore Ferragamo, Fendi, Nine West... all have stores here. But why would such top names sell their pieces at discount prices?

'Even the top fashion houses have excess inventory,' explains Jean Guinip, senior director of marketing, 'and they want to control how and where it's sold.'

There is no scrabbling around in bargain buckets or searching for your size on overloaded clothes rails here. Each shop is fitted out just as it would be if it were in the swishest high street and

selling items at full price. And with the exchange rate hovering at around two dollars to the pound, everything seems to be less than half the price you'd pay back in the United Kingdom.

Away on a girly weekend to New York City with my sister, we had planned to make Woodbury a half-day excursion. We got the first bus out of Port Authority at 7.15am and thought we'd get back to Manhattan by early afternoon, in time to get to MoMA (the Museum of Modern Art). Instead, we just about made the last bus back at 9.25pm!

And still we could have shopped some more. I should add at this point that I am not a keen shopper. I'd rather sight-see any day of the week, but for my sister, retail therapy is an essential part of any holiday. And, on this occasion, I had to agree with her. The more you scour the stores at Woodbury the more addictive the shopping experience becomes.

If we'd been representing our country, we'd have done England proud. The bargains we bagged were quite simply incredible. You can pick up Chanel black patent-leather stilettos for just £120, a DVF dress for just £85, a pair of Levi 501s for £11, Calvin Klein boxer shorts for £8, L'Occitane vanilla bath and shower gel for just £5, and a Samsonite suitcase for £65.

Now, I'm usually the grounded one, trying to dissuade my sister from melting her credit card on shopping outings. But, as the day stretched delightfully on in a shopaholic haze, I found myself uttering phrases like: 'The more we spend the more we save,' and 'Good. It's over \$50. That means I get \$5 off!'

I reassured myself I wasn't being illogical. After all, the likes of Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston, Steffi Graf, Pamela Anderson, Donna Summer and Harry Connick Jr have all been spotted in Woodbury... so we were in good company.

All good things do come to an end, however, and as we struggled, fully laden, to the bus we were wondering how much we might have to tip the driver to get our two new suitcases stuffed full

of purchases on board. 'Just put 'em underneath,' he said opening a swing door beside the front wheel. There, inside, were at least a dozen other suitcases, most of them brand new. 'Yep, the bus is full of Brits,' he said, not even cracking a grin.

It seems we may not be the first to discover Woodbury and we will certainly not be the last. We can't wait to go back, but not too soon or our other halves might be on to us.

Back home we both managed to stash our new clothes away undetected among the older items in our drawers and wardrobes.

So far, we haven't been rumbled. Whenever asked if something is new, we've passed our Woodbury finds off with a casual 'Oh, this old thing? I've had it ages.'

The only thing that might give our marathon shopping spree away is that we've both stopped using the classic line: 'I haven't got a thing to wear.'

OUR BEST BUYS*

- Liz Claiborne handbag, **£10**
- OshKosh B'Gosh kid's 4-in-1 puffer jacket, **£28**
- Disney store Winnie the Pooh character babygrow, **£5.50**
- Addidas trainers, **£32**
- Gap hoodie, **£7.50**
- Roxy crop tops, **£5**
- Nine West kitten heels, **£23**
- Paul Frank pjs, **£27**
- French Connection combats, **£22**
- DKNY jeans, **£27**
- Diesel trainers, **£38**
- Ralph Lauren



- merino wool jumper dress, **£46**
- Michael Kors tweed dress, **£55**
- 7 For All Mankind jeans, **£55**
- Burberry handbag, **£270**
- Armani mules, **£70**
- Banana Republic classic white shirt, **£28**

*NB: PRICES, DISCOUNTS AND SPECIAL OFFERS CHANGE DAILY

INSIDER TIPS FOR AVID SHOPPERS

- Show your return bus ticket at the visitors' centre when you arrive and you'll receive a coupon booklet filled with further discount offers for nearly every store.
- The clothes and accessories on sale here are end-of-line and excess stock. Most goods are the current season's except for the top-end designers which tend to be the previous season's.

New York

► Log onto www.premiumoutlets.com before your visit and join the VIP Shopper Club for free. This entitles you to print off special discount coupons from select stores so you can save even more.

■ Take a suitcase on wheels with you just in case you can't stop spending.

NEW YORK TOP 3

■ In the morning

Pick up a City Pass. It costs \$53 and gets you into five of the big attractions: the Guggenheim, MoMA, Circle Line Sightseeing Cruise along the Hudson and The Empire State Building Observatory and The American Museum of Natural History, in double-quick time. It's great to be able to queue-jump; the lines to buy individual tickets for these attractions can be seriously long. The pass also saves you money. www.citypass.com

■ For lunch

At MoMA (11 West 53rd Street, between Fifth and Sixth avenues) After feeding your soul with Monet, Magritte, van Gogh, Cezanne, Dali, Matisse, Picasso, Mondrian and Warhol, head to the Terrace 5 Café. It serves delicious lobster or salmon salad, syrup-thick hot chocolate and a wonderful artisan cheese board.

■ For dinner

Dine with the in-crowd at one of Soho's most acclaimed restaurants, Kittichai, 60 Thompson Street, NY 10012. The Thai food served here is quite simply sensational. Try the \$65 tasting menu which includes chocolate baby back ribs, banana blossom and artichoke salad and coconut and organic chicken relish with jasmine rice cakes. Their lychee margaritas are not to be missed. Call 00 1 212 219 2000 or visit www.kittichairestaurant.com

NEED TO KNOW

■ The tour operator

Virgin Holidays offer three nights at the smart and perfectly located Westin New York Times Square from £608 per adult. In the heart of Times



Square, the hotel is connected to a 200,000sq ft shopping and entertainment complex. This price includes return flights with Virgin Atlantic from Heathrow to New York JFK. The price also includes a day's shopping excursion to Woodbury Common Premium Outlets with return bus transfers from Port Authority and a VIP Coupon Book worth hundreds of dollars in additional savings. Prices are based on two adults sharing. Visit www.virginholidays.co.uk or call 0871 222 0306

■ The shopping centre

Woodbury Common Premium Outlets is the flagship centre of leading US luxury outlet group Chelsea Premium Outlets. It offers a wide selection of discounted fashion and homewares including Crate and Barrel and Frette.

For more information visit www.premiumoutlets.com/woodburycommon

■ Getting to Woodbury

A day excursion from Manhattan with Short Line buses to Woodbury Common costs \$39 return per adult. Buses leave Port Authority Bus Terminal, 8th Avenue & 42nd Street.

If you are travelling by car, the centre is located one hour north of New York City, Exit 16 (Harriman) off the New York Thruway (87).

■ Local Accommodation

If you get so carried away you miss the last bus home, or would like to stay longer in Central Valley, check out historic The Thayer Hotel at West Point. Visit www.thethayerhotel.com or call 001 800 247 5047.

TRAVEL ADD ON: NEW YORK

Tour Sex and the City Hotspots

Follow in the fancy footsteps of Carrie & Co. as they conquer New York City! Drink where they drink, shop where they shop and gossip where they gossip. The tour takes you to over 35 locations including:

- The opportunity to sit on Carrie's apartment stoop,
 - Shop at The Pleasure Chest where Charlotte bought her rabbit
 - Have a cupcake at the bakery where Miranda stuffed cupcakes in her mouth
 - Stop at a bar used on Sex and the City
 - Visit the church where Samantha meets 'The Friar'
 - Go on location to the gallery in SoHo where Charlotte worked
 - See the furniture store where Aidan designs his tables and chairs
- ... and who know you may even see the filming of the Sex and the City movie!

This is a 3 hour tour and tickets cost £19 pp

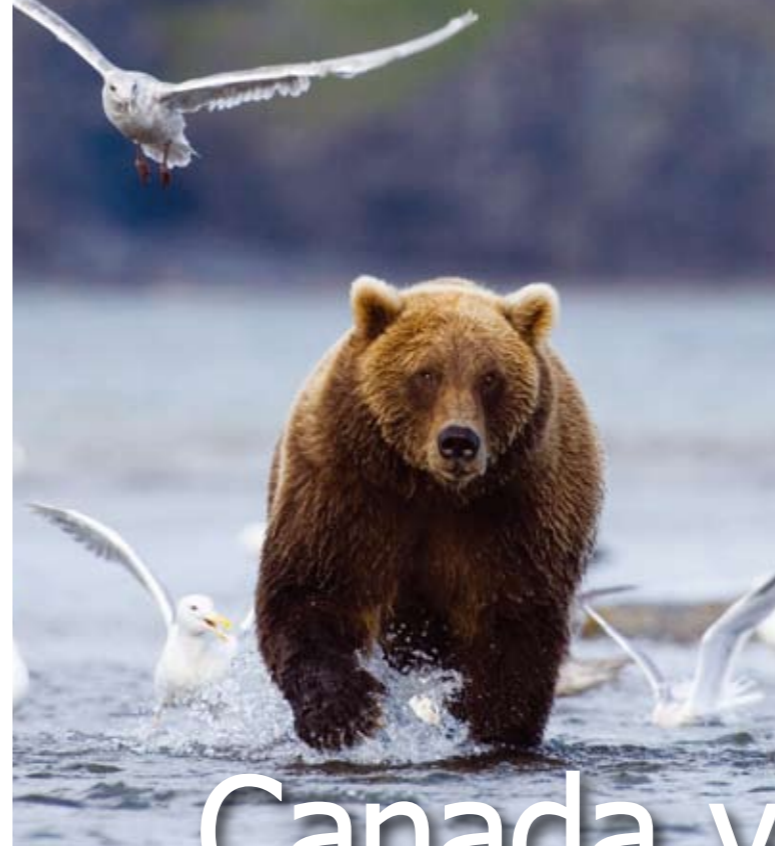
Full Island Cruise

The cruise that shows you the very best of Manhattan - the only cruise to circumnavigate the Island! You'll see it all - 3 rivers, 7 major bridges, 5 boroughs, and over 25 famous landmarks. Your experienced guide will be sure to keep you entertained on this superb 3 hour experience.

And you will be even lucky to get a close up view of the Statue of Liberty! Beverages, wine, beer, cocktails and food are available on board.

■ This tour lasts 3 hours and cost £14 pp

To find out more about these and other tours visit www.attractionworld.com/travelmag



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Price includes flights, airport taxes, excursions, car hire and hotel accommodation room only basis. Travel May 08

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