

Save on fall attire with hot summer sales today

READY-TO-WEAR



KAREN DASKAS

While summer may be in full swing, it's time to start thinking fall fashion. What better way to get ready for the new season by taking advantage of the great summer sales going on now at your local retailers? With the fluctuating economy at the start of the year causing a rocky road for retailers, spring and summer were less than stellar selling seasons. Deliveries from designers were late across the board, and as a result, the stores are packed with fresh merchandise that is less than three months old. This translates to big deals for attentive shoppers, who can save nearly half off on great in-season styles that can carry into early fall.

The bargain trap

While many savvy shoppers may be tempted to hit the outlet malls to save big dollars, be wary: the majority of the merchandise there is seasons old. What consumers don't know is most often, the merchandise is made specifically by the designer for that outlet store. This summer's hot sales at local retailers provide an unprecedented opportunity to top designer fashions at unbeatable prices.

Transitional wear

With wallet in hand, you're ready to hit the town shopping for those great summer bargains. Select items that are heavier-looking (meaning no linen or sheers) yet are lightweight enough to wear for early fall. As a smart shopper, you can buy your fall wardrobe now and save it until September. Key hues are khaki, onyx, gunmetal gray, rich brown and gem tones of ruby, emerald and sapphire. Finding the right fabrics can keep you dressing smart for all seasons.

Leather and cashmere

The once winter fabrics of leather and cashmere have become a hot year-round staple. As such, you can purchase beautiful lightweight cashmere sweaters and leather ensembles at a great price. But hurry, these two goodies have dramatically increased in production costs. Cashmere has increased twice in price since last year, due to high demand and a price hike in the industry. So now is the perfect time to invest in lightweight cashmere for day to evening looks.

This season offers great cashmere cardigans, sweaters and three-quarter length sleeve tops that are perfect for fall in great colors like camel, chocolate, ocean blue, onyx and deep pink. Pair it with a pair of leather pants, and you're ready for the new season.

Leather has become a four-season fashion staple, from leather tops to jackets and soft leather trousers. You can't go wrong with a great fitted black leather shirt or chocolate brown leather pants, and the summer sales offer the perfect way to stock up on this must-have item. There are new, ultra-thin leathers with stitched detailing, studs, embroidery and braided accents. Leather handbags also can be a new fall staple in rich colors of onyx, British tan and ruby red.

The new wool

Heavy wools are a fabric of the past. New tropical weight wools are virtually weightless and keep their shape, unlike heavy winter wools. Whether you're looking for a new suit or planning a great getaway, summer sales present a great opportunity to build your fall ensemble. Even wool shirts in tropical weights allow the skin to breathe while looking fashion forward with stitched detailing and figure-flattering gathers.

The denim rage

This isn't your teenybopper's denim anymore. The classic fabric gets a boost with chic denim skirts, pants, jacket and suits. The new style is 'fashion denim,' with gathers and pleats, studs and stitched detailing. Faded, dip-dyed, 'dirtied'



STAFF PHOTOS BY MELANIE MAXWELL

Great deals: Troy resident Denise Marks browses through the sale table at Anthropologie in downtown Birmingham.

Like it or not

Shopping is a large part of daily living

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
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You might view shopping as a trivial, if not minor, part of your life.

But the fact remains everybody shops.

If you want something, you have to shop for it.

And you probably spend more time participating in the activity than you think, whether you're a shopping addict who jumps into action at the sight of a mall or dislike it to the point of avoidance.

Today's market place provides numerous ways for consumers to shop, from inside the intimate quarters of a neighborhood boutique to the seemingly endless clicks and links on the Internet. However, activities in shopping malls are a good barometer of overall patterns.

Nationally, 197 million adults visited shopping centers each month in 2000 (up from 190 million per month in 1999). The result in 2000 was \$1.14 trillion in retail sales, accounting for 51 percent of non-automotive retail sales, according to the International Council of Shopping Centers.

One only need consider the size of the retail industry to understand how significant the act of shopping is in everyday life, says Larry Meyer, Michigan Retailers Association chief executive officer and former director of the Michigan Department of Commerce.

"One in five people in the economy work in retail," says Meyer. "It is a very very large employment base."

More observable than the retail industry's size is its social impact, its tendency to weave itself into people's day-to-day existence.

A cup of morning java at the coffee house, photos of the kids with the Easter Bunny, Friday night movies and dinner at the mall and a summer concert series in the downtown park are social activities that revolve around the retail industry.

"Besides supplying people with things that they need and desire, retailers are providing people with activities that are recreational and social," says Meyer. "And I think our downtowns still represent our sense of community."



Right fit: Bloomfield Hills resident Maria Marian makes her final purchases at Anthropologie.



In style: Nichole Race of Bloomfield Hills tries to find a good buy.

THE Observer & Eccentric NEWSPAPERS Best! of Malls and Mainstreets Where is your favorite shopping area?

Take a moment to vote for your favorite retailers, downtown shopping districts and malls. By participating in the Observer & Eccentric's "Best of Malls & Mainstreets" reader survey, you'll automatically be entered into a drawing for a \$100 mall gift certificate.

THE CATEGORIES

	Oakland County	Wayne County
Best mall		
Best downtown		
Best independent retailer		
Best department store		
Best women's clothing store		
Best men's clothing store		
Best shoe store		
Best jewelry store		
Best store for bath and beauty		
Best flower shop		
Best gift store		
Best store for greeting cards		
Best toy store		
Best store for high tech		
Best book store		
Best resale store		
Best sporting goods store		
Best store for the kitchen		
Best store for bargains		
Store with best customer service		
Store with best events/community services		
Store with best selection		
Best store decor		
Best store exterior/signs		
Best store displays		
	Malls	Mainstreets
Best people watching		
Best window shopping		
Best for dragging along husband/boyfriend		
Best for meeting people		
Best for teens		
Best for kids/family		
Best for speedy shopping		
Best bargain shopping		
Best eats		
Best shopping		

The following name and address blank must be filled out.

Your Name _____
Street _____
City _____
Phone _____

Be sure to legibly write in your vote after each category. Your name, address and telephone number must be included in the bottom box to be eligible for the drawing. Forms must be received by 5 p.m. Friday, August 3. Survey results and winners will be announced by September. If you live in Oakland County, you may win a \$100 gift certificate from the Somerset Collection in Troy. If you're one of our Wayne County readers, you're eligible to win a \$100 gift certificate from Laurel Park Place in Livonia. Send to: Malls and Mainstreets • 805 E. Maple • Birmingham, MI 48009

SOMERSET
COLLECTION

Laurel Park Place

See SALES, NEXT PAGE