



Tiger of Sweden

Hazel Davis goes for a spin round Leeds' stores with a personal shopper, and picks up some valuable style tips in the process



High heels & lowdown



Gulping and sucking in my stomach, I attempt to stride confidently over to the well-dressed girl waiting to meet me. She stands up, all trim and stylish, and I immediately feel like a five-foot frump. To her credit she doesn't look me up and down and tut like the Trinny-Susannah monster, but I'm still terrified and I begin to gabble like a lunatic as soon as we start chatting.

After 10 minutes, however, I realise that this trendy chick is the same height as me and a whole dress size larger. Her secret? She knows how to dress. Before we've even begun she explains that my beloved brown leather boots are shortening my legs and my glorious paisley dress does nothing for my figure. You might think it's rudeness, but Judy Berger of Style Advocates is paid to do

this every day. It's her job to tell people when they look rubbish and to do something about it. Judy has been charged with the task of revolutionising my wardrobe and showing me where and how to shop.

Leeds is a good place to start, having been voted the UK's most female-friendly city by trendspotters The Future Laboratory. In the all-round shopping stakes, this city couldn't be better. Harvey Nichols (www.harveynichols.com) and the Corn Xchange (www.cornx.net) coexist in harmony, providing something for hip and hippy chicks alike. The city's quadrant layout means that shops are easily accessible, and the proliferation of cafés means it's easy to stop and refuel. Best of all, the report says that Leeds has more specialist clothing shops than any other town, which serves our purposes well. ▶



Main picture: Praying for a fashion miracle in All Saints
Below: Judy of Style Advocates

My upbringing has instilled in me that personal shoppers and their ilk are a waste of time. And that some people will be taken in by anything



Com Xchange

Where to refuel

Harvey Nichols Café in the Victoria Quarter is plush and elegant – the perfect end to a hard day's high-end shopping.
 +44 (0)113 204 8888,
www.harveynichols.com

Refresh yourself mid-shop and indulge in a pampering session at **Headlines**, Esporta's in-house beauty studio in The Light. Choose from a host of relaxing

and holistic beauty treatments, from aromatherapy massage to spray tanning.
 +44 (0)113 246 9111,
www.headlinesuk.co.uk

Waterfall Spa in the Brewery Wharf is a ladies' boutique day spa. It's open seven days a week and offers facials and body treatments as well as special pregnancy treatments.
 +44 (0)800 731 1995,
www.waterfallspa.co.uk



Harvey Nichols Café

Judy and I have a promising start in the Briggate's Topshop (www.topshop.co.uk), a store which stands for everything I want in my style: hipness, youth and individuality. Judy whizzes round the shop, snatching outfits off pegs and mentally dressing me in them. We're here for five minutes before she forces me into tight black leggings and a shiny, blue and white blouse, neither of which I would be seen dead in. Due to issues of height and bottom, I have avoided leggings like the plague, but with Judy's guidance I consider changing my mind. My usual shopping technique is to grab something, try it on with what I'm wearing, see that it doesn't fit and put it back in a sulk. Judy, like a terrier, goes and gets several sizes, teams them with belts, shoes and hats, and forces me to think outside my comfort zone.

In between squeezing me in and out of outfits I would be too scared to even look at, Judy explains that shopping well isn't the same as shopping often. It's about accessories, versatility and long-term planning. Judy's enthusiasm and vigour are infectious and the shopping experience swiftly turns from agony to ecstasy.

I'm having such a good time that I soon start to trust her and when she lures me into All Saints (www.allsaints.co.uk) in the Victoria Quarter (www.vqleeds.com), a shop I would usually avoid at all costs. I follow her to the fitting rooms like a lamb. Presenting me with a series of misshapen and puffball dresses, Judy ignores my cries and waits for me to check myself out in the mirror.

My upbringing has instilled in me the idea that personal shoppers, beauticians, nail technicians and their ilk are a waste of time and that some people will be taken in by anything. But when I emerge from the dressing room my preconceptions about my companion's profession have vanished. I practically look like Kate Moss in a trendy grey wrapover dress with patent grey heels.

Over a much needed coffee at the Harvey Nichols Café, Judy talks me through some of the styles we have earmarked as 'me' and

'not me', and dispels some of the myths about short people wearing smock dresses. The Victoria Quarter is one of Leeds' shiniest shopping jewels. It's ornate, dressy and full of gorgeous shops. Harvey Nichols, to me, is a terrifying place, but in Judy's capable hands it turns into a navigable sea of set pieces and timeless one-offs to team with cheaper, changeable items.

Heads held high, fighting the hairdo-destroying January winds, we head to Tiger of Sweden (www.tigerofsweden.com) in Leeds' glass fashion hub, The Light (www.thelightleeds.co.uk). This beautiful but scary seeming shop doesn't fill me with confidence, but Judy nudges me into the dressing room with a red tulip skirt and black-and-white polka-dot blouse. Despite my initial protests, I have to admit that I look pretty good.

By the time we get to the Corn Xchange in New Briggate, I'm a little tired of trying on clothes and my interest starts to pall. But Judy peps me up with a visit to vintage shop Fabric Junkie on the top floor. The Corn Xchange, a grade-one listed building, boasts more than 60 independent clothes shops and a host of funky jewellery stalls and artistic outlets.

Vintage shops are the places I usually gravitate towards, only to find that nothing fits me. Judy walks me round the rails of retro clothes slowly, rejecting garments with a glance and muttering things like, "You're not a student anymore."

We settle on a pale turquoise nylon old-lady dress, the sort of thing Sienna Miller wears and looks chic in, and the sort of thing I wear and look like Ugly Betty. But

I come away with the knowledge that the earthy cloth dresses I wear actually make me look like a fat, turn-of-the-century Dutch peasant

Judy points out how flattering the length is to my legs, and while I bravely choose my own pair of gold-heeled shoes she wraps a brightly coloured asymmetrical belt around me. Voilà! Sienna has a new rival. Judy explains that vintage shops like this are a great place to zing up new outfits with carefully chosen second-hand belts, scarves or shoes.

Back in The Light, we try out funky clothes and accessories shop Joy, which turns out to be my spiritual home. I come away refreshed in the knowledge that yes, I can wear a mini-pinafore dress, but those earthy cloth dresses I favour actually make me look like a fat, turn-of-the-century Dutch peasant.

Despite my ego having taken a bit of a battering and some of my beloved clothes having been fatally dissed, I come away from the personal shopping experience with a better knowledge of one of the UK's most vital shopping centres, and an idea of exactly what and what not to wear. Now I just need to figure out how to make Judy my new best friend. ■



Above and right: Finding a spiritual home in Joy

Below: Shopping's a cinch at the Corn Xchange



FOLLOW OUR LEEDS

To book your own personal shopping day, contact **Style Advocates**. Prices start from £140 for a style consultation and £60 per hour for a shopping trip. +44 (0)7984 422 374, www.styleadvocates.co.uk

Offer for *JetAway* readers!

All readers receive a 20% discount from **Style Advocates**. Just mention the magazine when you book.

Leeds Shopping Week, with plenty of events and discounts, takes place from 24 May to 2 June.

www.leedsshoppingweek.co.uk