

Luxury Channel Check Posh on parade at Bicester Village



Bicester Village: facts and figures

Opening: 1995

GLA: 236,800 sf

Sales: Total sales in 2012 rose 17 percent from 2011, well above Great Britain's 2 percent increase for non-food sales in 2012; Value Retail's nine-center portfolio has delivered double-digit sales growth every year, with comp-store sales rising 13 percent in 2012.

Sales psf at Bicester Village exceeded €2,200 (the portfolio posts average sales psf of €1,200).

Tourism:

5.8 million visitors in 2012, a 5.5 percent increase over 2011.

China, the Middle East and Southeast Asia are the top-contributing nationalities at Bicester Village, with UK tourists generating approximately 10 percent of the center's total sales. Non-EU tourists represent about 66 percent of the international tourists and generate a third of total sales.

IOJ's luxury analyst pays a visit to Value Retail's top-producing outlet village.

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MY MECCA IS 130 luxury shops in a rural setting less than an hour from London by train. Today the town of Bicester, England, is as much known for Value Retail's designer outlet village there as it is for its 1,000 years of Saxon history and its proximity to Bleinheim Palace (Winston Churchill's ancestral home) and Waddesdon Manor with its world-renowned collection of 18th century French decorative arts.

In sum, a visit to Bicester Village is an imperative for shoppers, historians and connoisseurs alike.

I took the 42-minute train ride from London Marylebone with Tamara Benjamin, who heads up corporate communications at Bicester Village. She told me that the outlet center is one of Value Retail's nine Chic Outlet Shopping

Villages, all located near Europe's most stylish capital cities and all filled with fashion's most sought-after labels.

Those coveted brands at Bicester Village include Céline, Dior, Gucci, Loro Piana, Marni, MaxMara, Missoni, Moncler, Mulberry, Prada, Roberto Cavalli, Smythson, Tumi and Valentino.

Pop-up boutiques are a regular feature of the Villages, offering brands the opportunity to test new markets. In 2012 90 new and innovative pop-up boutiques and temporary stores opened in Value Retail's centers. In fact, I shopped British designer Lulu Guinness' pop-up shop with its whimsical accessories when I visited Bicester Village.

We took a short bus trip from the train to the center and entered to a familiar sight, a Ralph Lauren shop with prime real estate. The beautiful store is a two-story anchor with a sprinkling of Purple Label and Collection, along with Lauren and Polo staples. As much as I love Lauren and the attentive sales help eager to assist and find my size, I wanted to shop the local brands, so I headed to Burberry, where the shop was almost as gorgeous as the flagship on Regent Street. I was duly impressed.

Some less-well-known British brands



enticed me and at Temperley's I found a wonderful silk blouse (pink flowers, black background, very English) that I can wear with the assurance that I won't see myself coming and going in New York City.

I can't afford the Jimmy Choo's even in his homeland, even at Bicester Village (oh, they're there!), but boy, did I find the most gorgeous pair of Rupert Sandersons at a third of their retail price. Metallic animal print slingbacks with a 2-1/2 inch heel, practical and fabulous, truly! They had my name all over them, and again, not a brand I see in the U.S., thus a special shopping experience, really a delight.

I'm overwhelmed with the level of service in the boutiques and amenities such as babysitting, valet parking, handsfree shopping, VIP rooms and multi-faith prayer areas throughout the village. I took advantage of the hands-free shopping, allowing me to roam the village and leave the staff to wrap up the goods and bring them to the welcome center where I picked them up before leaving. What a nice way to shop!

Obviously, Value Retail's secret sauce for success is brands and service and more service. The developer has teams at each center to assist tenants and provide expertise and support for brand promotions, in-store presentations and window displays. It works!

Other amenities were just as nice, with numerous cafes and sandwich shops and ice-cream vendors as well as very clean WCs. I visited the VIP lounge which was a pleasant, second-level complex (away from the madding crowd) where clients can rest, leave their bags, meet with personal shoppers, and enjoy a beverage or light snack. So very civilized. Currently, Bicester Village and La Vallée Village near Paris have VIP lounges, offering bespoke hospitality service. All VR villages will have VIP lounges and VIP program managers by the end of 2013. Guests who have used the Bicester Village VIP lounge include visiting dignitaries from embassies in London and uppercrust socialites from everywhere.

Tamara Benjamin told me that the international shopper spends significantly more than the domestic shopper and the average length of stay is four hours. I stayed for five hours and didn't visit every store, but got to some twice!

By the way, I never made it to Waddesdon Manor; maybe next time. ☺



BICESTER VILLAGE TENANTS

7 For All Mankind	Fat Face	North Face
Agent Provocateur	Fendi	Orla Kiely
Alexander McQueen	Folli Follie	Orlebar Brown
All Saints	Fratelli Rossetti	Pal Zileri
Amanda Wakeley	Fred Perry	Pandora
Amorino	French Connection	Paul Smith
Anne Fontaine	Furla	Pavilion by Searcys
Annoushka	Gerard Darel	Penhaligon's
Anya Hindmarch	Gieves & Hawkes	Polo Ralph Lauren
Aquascutum	G-Star Raw	Prada
Armani	Gucci	Pret A Manger
Aubin & Wills	Guess	Radley
Bally	Hackett	Reiss
Basler	Hearts on Fire	Roberto Cavalli
Belstaff	Hobbs	Rupert Sanderson
Bodum	Jack Wills	Salvatore Ferragamo
Bonpoint	Jaeger	Samsonite
Bose	Jigsaw	Savoy Tailors Guild
Boss Sportswear/Tailoring	Jimmy Choo	Sergio Rossi
Brooks Brothers	Juicy Couture	Smythson
Burberry	Karen Millen	Superdry
Busaba Eathai	Kids	TAG Heuer
Calvin Klein/Underwear	Kipling	Ted Baker
Cath Kidston	L.K. Bennett	Temperley London
Celine	La Perla	Thomas Pink
Cerruti 1881 Homme	Lacoste	Timberland
Charles Tyrwhitt	Lalique	Tod's
Church's	Le Creuset	Tommy Hilfiger
Clarks	Levi's	Tory Burch
Coach	Links of London	True Religion
Coast	L'Occitane	Tumi
Coccinelle	Loro Piana	Ugg Australia
Cosmetics Co.	Marni	Valentino
David Clulow	Matthew Williamson	Versace
Diane von Furstenberg	MaxMara	Vilebequin
Diesel	Michael Kors	Villeroy & Boch
Dior, Dior Homme	Missoni	Vivienne Westwood
DKNY	Molton Brown	Waterford Wedgwood
Dolce & Gabbana	Moncler	White Company
Dunhill	Mulberry	Wolford
Emma Bridgewater	Musto	Yves Saint Laurent
Ermenegildo Zegna	N. Peal	