

i love shopping CT



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what's inside

Lulu's Feature Shopping Town in CT
Lulu's Favorite Kind of Shopping this Month!
Fun Stuff!

what's online

Lulu's Shopping Day Event Info!
CT Shopaholics Club
A Gift Certificate Store
with Special Savings!

93 Lulu's CT
Shopoholics Event

94 Letter from Lulu
Karen P. Rankowitz

96 Lulu's Latest
Artwork
Karen P. Rankowitz

100 Towne Treasures
Guilford, CT
Karen P. Rankowitz

104 Hot Spotz for
Shopperz
Guilford's
Participating
Stores

108 Tips That
Make Cents
Karen P. Rankowitz





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SHOPPING




Shopping has taken me on a fantastic voyage over my 40-something years, from the big chain stores to the small hometown Mom & Pop shops. One question has always left me baffled, how do the little guys ride out the explosive storm of big guy businesses gusting into town leaving Wal-Mart and Home Depot in their wake? While these establishments are the mainstays of malls and centers everywhere, Excursionz Magazine has pulled up anchor and set sail for the little known, but big to be explored shopping territories.

We will let you in on secrets to Connecticut's hidden treasures in each edition of the Shopping section. We get to the heart of Connecticut shopping that reveals the riches that keep the pulse of our towns pumping. These shops have ridden the wave of commercialism and continue to weather the storm.

The quiet seaside town of Guilford was my first stop to shop for Excursionz' debut. I dropped anchor by the beautiful Green on historic Whitfield Street. Many of the colonial style houses from the 17th century are still located near The Green today. The Reverend Henry Whitfield settled this community during the summer of 1639, and not much has changed over the centuries. Granite blocks used for the base of the Statue of Liberty came from local quarries. Guilford's Fritz-Greene Halleck, was acknowledged as America's first poet. A statue in Central Park, New York honors his achievement.

For me, the spirit of history is reflected in the shops that line Whitfield Street and the neighboring Water Street. Though a dollar won't get you as far as it would have in the 17th century, I found the prices well within range for the quality of the merchandise in these little treasure troves by the sea.



The displays of the sale items were where the deals were found. I believe in never paying full price for any product and where time allows, I wait for changes. What changes? I'm glad you asked. Store owners are always in flux with the seasons. Therefore, to make room for the next season's merchandise, the current season's are put on sale.

A big boost for the little guy was the quality of service from the employees. My experience in Guilford was fantastic. I was greeted with a smile and younger people who put forth an effort of appreciation. My questions were answered with no eye rolling or shrugging of shoulders. They seemed happy in their jobs and if you are one who likes being treated with respect, as I do, then these workers win hands down over the big guy establishments.

Highlighted in this issue is where I went and what I found on The Green in Guilford. Also, take a look at the information on Lulu's Shopping Day Event, which we expect to be entertaining and full of surprises. Join me next time as I head for Colchester to see what gems lie inland.

Karen P. Rankowitz



To exist is to change,
to change is to mature,
to mature is to go
on creating oneself
endlessly.

- Henri Bergson

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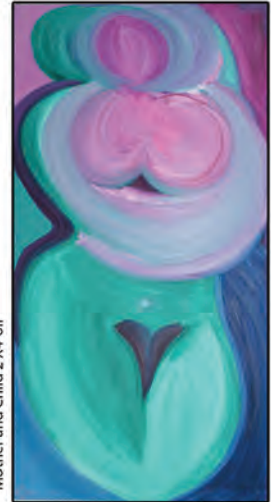
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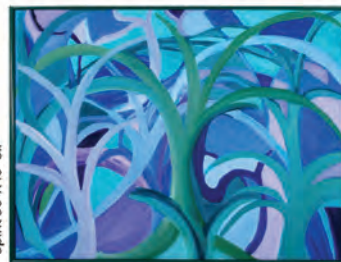


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Art!

My shopping mission this month was art-work. While I found several hot art spots when I was shopping in Guilford, I also shopped online at quite a few sites that offered a wide variety of works. Get to the heart of the art world, whether you are looking to buy or just browse the collections.

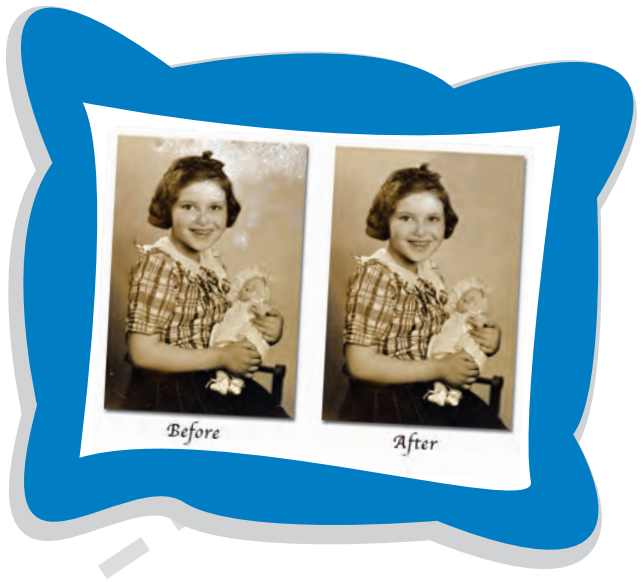


Let's begin on The Green where Brendan Loughlin's **Whitfield Street Gallery** showcases brilliant canvases depicting nature's splendor. In fact, you can enjoy some of his paintings in the walkway leading to his gallery. His works have been inspired by some of the greats, like Van Gogh, Matisse, Hopper and Pollock. Catch a glimpse of his gallery online at www.whitfieldstreetgallery.com

The Chroma Gallery, located in a modernized Quonset hut at 20 Church Street, contains work by several artists. BSK Design's Barbara Shulman-Kirwin, a glass fusion artist, creates jewelry, plates, platters, and bowls in which individually crafted pieces of brilliantly colored glass are attached or fused together into unique artistic objects. Woodworker James Wurzbach's hollow turned vessels express a simplicity that is both classic and contemporary. Photographer Marc Bono's expressive wedding shots capture the essence of every bridal moment while pushing the boundaries of his medium. Learn more about him online at www.chromagallery.org



Excursionz Magazine's own Larry Kalbfeld is owner of **Photos in a Flash**, on Boston Post Road. Specializing in photo restoration, quality photo reproductions and "affordable custom photographic solutions." Visit him online at www.iloveshoppingct.com/businesses/-photosinaflash.php to get the true picture of what he has to offer.



Mary Lou Fischer Gallery on Boston Street has abundance of artful offerings. Jewelry, custom designed furniture, fabulous fine art, and an assortment of gifts. They also offer one-of-a-kind original paintings, framing, and if you were in need of a touch up on an oil painting or a frame, they'd be happy to do the restoration. Learn more online at www.maryloufischer.com

Bill Dougal another of Excursionz' artists, is a cartoonist and caricature creator, among many things. He also provides custom illustration, graphic design and works wonders with watercolors. www.dougalart.com is where to go to see **Bill and Dori Dougal's** work.





Most important to **Jeanmarie Conlon**, self-taught local artist, is her “own vision” when bringing to life her art of sculpting and abstract painting with oils and watercolors. Since childhood, having spent much of her time with nature, she has been creating through art's “visual language” an expression of “what makes us who we are.” Find her online at www.athomeownersguide.com/businesses/jeanmarieconlon.php

Anyone interested in seeing history captured in photos, can visit www.historicaircraftphotos.com where Army Air Force Aircraft photos have been frozen in time on a variety of surfaces, and in varying sizes.



These are some of the locations to get you started on the path to finding fine art and artisans, many of them by the seashore. Enjoy, as you peruse through or make those special purchases, in support of local talent.

Karen P Pankowitz aka “Lulu”

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Guilford's Guide to Shopping

Hi, Lulu here, Excursionz Magazine's smart and savvy shopper. I have been bursting with excitement to give you the scoop on "where to shop" in Connecticut. Come along with me as I point out the stylish trends of what is hot and what is not – off the beaten path and on the straight and narrow.

While The Green in Guilford offers quiet and solitude, the quaint strip of Whitfield Street lured me in with inviting aromas of coffee, chocolate and perfumed pampering products that drifted from the small boutiques and confections shops.

Lulu's lingerie and bath boutique is a one stop, fun girl store. Though the name is in no way affiliated with Excursionz, I felt it had to be a first stop for me. I was first impressed by the combination of the subtle fragrances the bath products offered in a tempting "try me" approach and then by the "softness" of the store merchandise. Everything called to me, "touch me, rest your weary head Lulu, you are in dire need of indulgence." How they knew that, I don't know, but it worked. Pajamas, loungewear, robes, and any pampering product you can wear, bathe in, or cuddle up with was simply beautiful. A big seller is the robe made by Barefoot Dreams. Anyone familiar with Oprah's Favorites knows these robes are on the list, as well as Oprah's favorite bra made by Le Mystère can be purchased here. All I needed now is a little of Oprah's "goods" to fill out the bra and, voila – Le Mystère, pas plus. The homemade greeting cards, seaside crafts, jewelry, and the small details that adorn the merchandise denote the care that goes into providing the ideal birthday, Mother's Day, or holiday present. This is a great shop for men to purchase the perfect gift for the special woman in their life. For any man without a "someone special," I have left my wish list with Lisa who works Sundays. She can direct you to the pretty pastel pinks that happen to be my favorite color, but really, I'm not fussy.





Asiye's Boutique has some of the most exquisite formal wear a girl could want. Whether for a wedding, a prom, or any special occasion, this boutique can dress you from head to toe and caters to all ages. Asiye Kay established this boutique, as well as others in Clinton and Madison, in 2003, and has been dressing clientele in the most glamorous fashions since. More than one dozen exclusive brands include Alfred Angelo, Mon Cheri, Betsey Johnson, ABS, and Asiye's own line. Where there is an occasion and the ordinary just will not do, here you will find the fashions and accessories that will set you apart from the rest. Glamorous, extraordinary and one of a kind from Europe and New York are the way to go in style. The boutique is proud to say, "The only common thing among our products is their uniqueness," and what woman would not be proud to stand out in the crowd wearing nothing but the finest. Log on to www.asiyesboutique.com for information on the latest clothing, extras, fashion shows and the Ladies of the Shoreline Club that cater to the busy lives of women keeping up with today's demands.



Cilantro Specialty Foods and Coffee Roasters offers 34 flavors of coffee. Being a lover of coffee, I figured I could have a flavor an hour and still have some for another day – Oh, there just aren't enough hours in the day. Brewed daily are five of these fabulous flavors or you can choose one of the 12 varieties of loose-leaf teas. Specialty foods include sandwiches, salads, wraps, desserts and more, if you are in need of a nibble to complement your coffee. Besides coffee and delectable desserts, several displays showcase kitchen gadgets, spreads, relishes, linen sprays, lotions, and candles. The store, established in 1990, houses an old-fashioned coffee grinder, which completes the quaintness of this little gathering place. At the breakfast counter or seated at the various tables, patrons can enjoy a fresh cup of coffee and read the morning paper. Cilantro's stays open late for those who gather on The Green for summertime events. We all love a bargain, so be sure to check out the sale rack for discounted specials.



Not wanting to make a spectacle of myself, I decided it would be best not to dive head first, with mouth gaping, into the goodies at **The Village Chocolatier**. Instead, I settled for a sampling of the specialty chocolates sold by the pound. Hey, I can afford a few pounds – I'll just shop for new clothes too. It was difficult to make a decision where homemade fudge, chocolate covered nuts, chocolate cherries, and New England Saltwater Taffy beckoned my name. The scrumptious sweets come locally from all over New England. Custom made baskets keep the store busy during the holidays. So if you have a chocolate lover on your holiday list, this is a wonderful way to sweeten up even the most finicky family member. They even have a selection of sugar free items to choose from, which, having brought my diabetic mother along for the shopping trip, gave her a little taste as well.



One store bridged the generation gap for shoppers. **Flutterby's** appeal to all ages was revealed in the variety of clothing, furniture, indulgent body and bath goods, pottery, and so much more. A large amount of the clothing is from New York and there is always something on sale. Another plus to shopping here for clothes; alterations are done on site. Fine details on the hand painted switch plates, drawer pulls, and cabinet knobs puts hardware in a completely new class of accessorizing. European influence is apparent in the stylish furniture, yet it suggests a "put your feet up" comfortable air. From bags to belts, shoes to smokeless candles, this store has my vote for the store most adored. Browse their website, www.flutterby-ct.com, to get a true sense of the offerings; it is astounding.



Paws By The Green is a trendy little boutique for cats, dogs, and the companions of our furry friends. Here pets are welcome when accompanied by their owners to visit and browse the all-natural and holistic foods and treats. What pet wouldn't love an opportunity like that? They specialize in rugged wear for dogs for all kinds of activities, like camping and hiking, dog life vests for boating and a vast and interesting array of pet beds. What owners want to pamper their pet and all that makes them healthy, exceptional, and loved can be found here, on Water Street. Another specialty is pet portraits. Visit their website at www.pawsbythegreen.com.



No shopping trip is complete without a visit to a bookstore.

Breakwater Books, though a small shop, has floor to ceiling books nestled in dozens of bookcases. For 35 years, they have been providing readers with non-fiction, reference, and children's books. Anything a large scaled bookstore offers, Breakwater has also, as they are well stocked, but can fill orders in a few days if needed. One difference I noticed immediately, in comparison to the larger bookstore chains, was the charming cozy atmosphere. I felt like I was stepping into a private library, where the world of fiction or poetry could wrap their stories gently around me.



There were several shops where window browsing got the better of me. I know how difficult it can be to shop with my children under foot, but on The Guilford Green, it is not a problem. **Lasses and Lads Playspace** has an offer you may want to take advantage of, "Drop & Shop." With prior arrangements, you can drop your children off in the care of their professionals and go shopping. Visit their website, www.lassesandlads.com for specific details. It's a fun time for them and a productive one for you.

My experience shopping in Guilford was fantastic. I took notice of the friendly help from the sales people, this impressed me. Perhaps it is the fresh sea air and quietness of the town that influences these young kids to have good manners and respectful attitudes. Now that warms a shopper's heart.

Don't forget there are many shopping spots along Route 1 (Boston Post Road). Guilford Tile where they boast "Let our showroom...show you!" Exclusively Children, has clothing, accessories and footwear for your special little ones. Guilford Sporting Goods is the local store to find what you need for anything that has to do with sports. One place that is a must see is Gozzi Turkey Farms; you will be amazed at the pastel-colored turkeys that roam the farm. I did find the colors made the turkeys more attractive, which left me curious; do you think they found each other more attractive too?

On Route 77, Dudley Farm, which has been in the same family for 350 years, is being preserved to exemplify the family history. They also run a Farmers Market on Saturdays from July through October. Another fantastic stop along Route 1 is Bishop's Orchard. Since 1872 the Bishop family has been growing and selling native fruits and vegetables. However, this farm offers so much more. Yearly "Pick Your Own" begins in July and runs through October. Visit the website at www.bishopsorchard.com for a complete schedule of what is in season for the pickin'. A market and bakery is open all year where you can buy the crops grown right there on the farm or pick up their homemade cider. Gift Giving Opportunity sums this orchard up nicely, with fruit baskets or custom-made veggie, cheese, and cookie platters. Visit the Bakery for the homemade muffins, breads, pies, cookies and more that are always "fresh from the oven." In the mood to add some spirits to the spirit of giving? Then the winery is the place to select from an assortment of flavors picked and processed right from their own orchards. A bottle of wine and a basket full of goodies fresh from the farm, what could be more charming?

I left Guilford, well caffeinated, and ready to soak in a hot tub with soothing bath oils, light a scented candle, pop chocolate covered cashews into my mouth and read the latest romance novel. What more could a woman want? Perhaps Oprah's favorite robe to snuggle up in and a calming cup of tea would be the final touches on a successful shopping spree.

Join me next time as I shop Colchester. I'm sure there will be treasures galore and a whole lot more. I would love to come and visit your establishment personally, just let me know ahead of time if I am scheduled in your area. Contact me at lulu@iloveshoppingct.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Also, be sure to read about Lulu's Shopping Day Event in this section. I hope to see you there.



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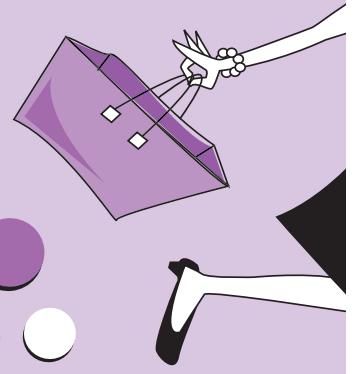
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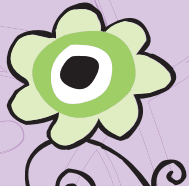
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Who doesn't love a bargain? Or, buying that sweater or swimsuit for less? Do you need to redecorate the bath and know of just the right item? You are ready to shop, but how do you know you're getting the best bang for your buck? Well, I have gathered some tips that can help you save time and money.

1-Timing Can be Key

Many stores have clearance items marked down at the end of a current season in order to make room for new seasonal inventory. Often beginning in August, summer merchandise has to be cleared out for the fall fashions coming in - this means savings!

2- Check the Store Policies

Sometimes unwritten policies allow patrons to receive sale prices the day before or on the day after a sale begins and ends. Ask, and you may be extended this courtesy.

3- Dented and Scratched Displays

Quite often huge savings can be had if you consider purchasing the floor displays, like kitchen appliances, rather than new merchandise. Many of these products have only minor scratches or "blemishes," but can offer considerable cash savings.

4- Everything is Negotiable

Why pay full price for big purchases, like furniture? Find a sales person who works on commission and negotiate- you may be able to strike a discount of 10% or more. Those who work on salary aren't going to be as motivated as the commissioned sales person to "make that sale."

5- Sign up for Mailing Lists

Stay in touch with your favorite stores. You will receive mailings that will let you know what is going on sale and when. You'll also get coupons and even "sneak previews" of what's to come.

6- Before Making that Purchase

Many stores will tell you, but sometimes you have to ask, if the item will be going on sale soon. It could be worth the wait.

7- Ask for Reimbursement During Sales

You bought a pair of jeans at full price last week, now they are on sale this week. Not a problem if you ask for the difference in prices. Many stores will do this provided it is within a certain period and you have the receipt.

8- Weekend Sales

Many large retailers begin setting up for the sale on Thursdays. To avoid the crowds, shop then. Let the store know that you wish to take advantage of the sale price now, instead of coming back over the weekend.

9- Make a List

If you are on a budget, making a list and sticking to it will save you plenty.
***Avoid impulse buying!

10- Do I Really Need This?

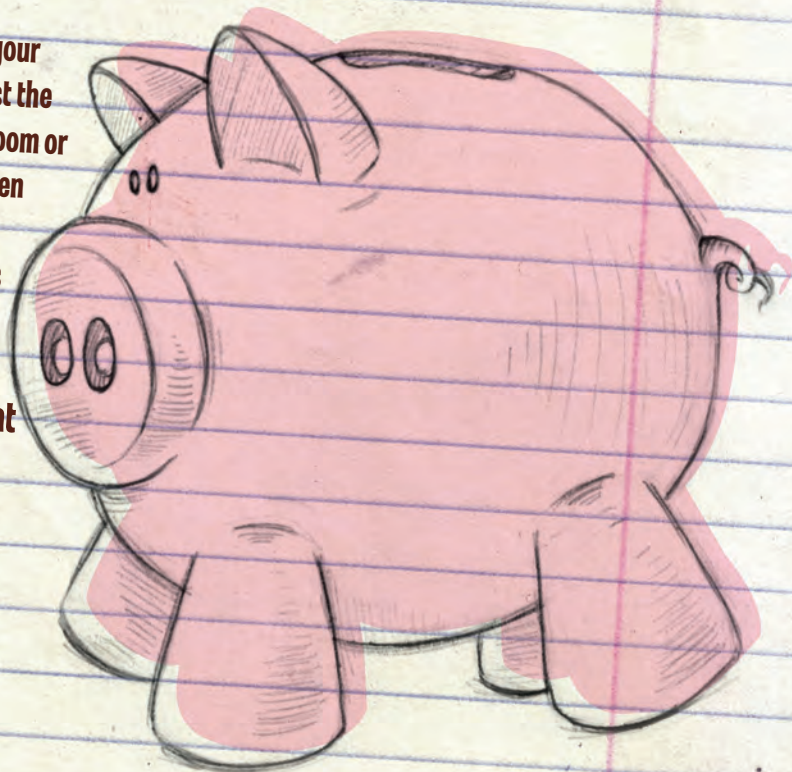
A great question to ask yourself before checking out. If you don't need it or really don't want it, don't buy it.

Don't just dole out the cash, do your research first. While finding just the right item to decorate your bedroom or the perfect fit of jeans tempts even the thriftiest shopper, take your time and you will find the savings is well worth the wait.

If you have shopping tips that can save money or time, we would love to hear from you.

Contact me at
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