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Taunton

A Shoppers Guide to Taunton 2011

www.tauntontowncentre.co.uk

Taunton - Love every minute



Vale of Taunton Farmers' Market

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Number Seventeen on Fore Street

Serious about Shopping

Taunton, Somerset offers an eclectic mix of national brands and quality independents in the safe setting of a vibrant county town. Visit for a day to appreciate the relaxed pace that shoppers crave. Return again and grow to love the quirky nature of our specialist shopping areas, excellent customer service and the sheer accessibility of the town.

Taunton offers serious shoppers a real alternative to bland and branded city malls. Immerse yourself in the town's historic and cultural offer. Explore further and uncover the artists, boutiques and specialist stores that make a shopping trip to Taunton a truly memorable occasion.

Whether you are a visitor here for the first time or a regular shopper to the county town, the pages of this guide will inspire you to look beyond the obvious.

Enjoy using this guide and experience the very best that Taunton has to offer.

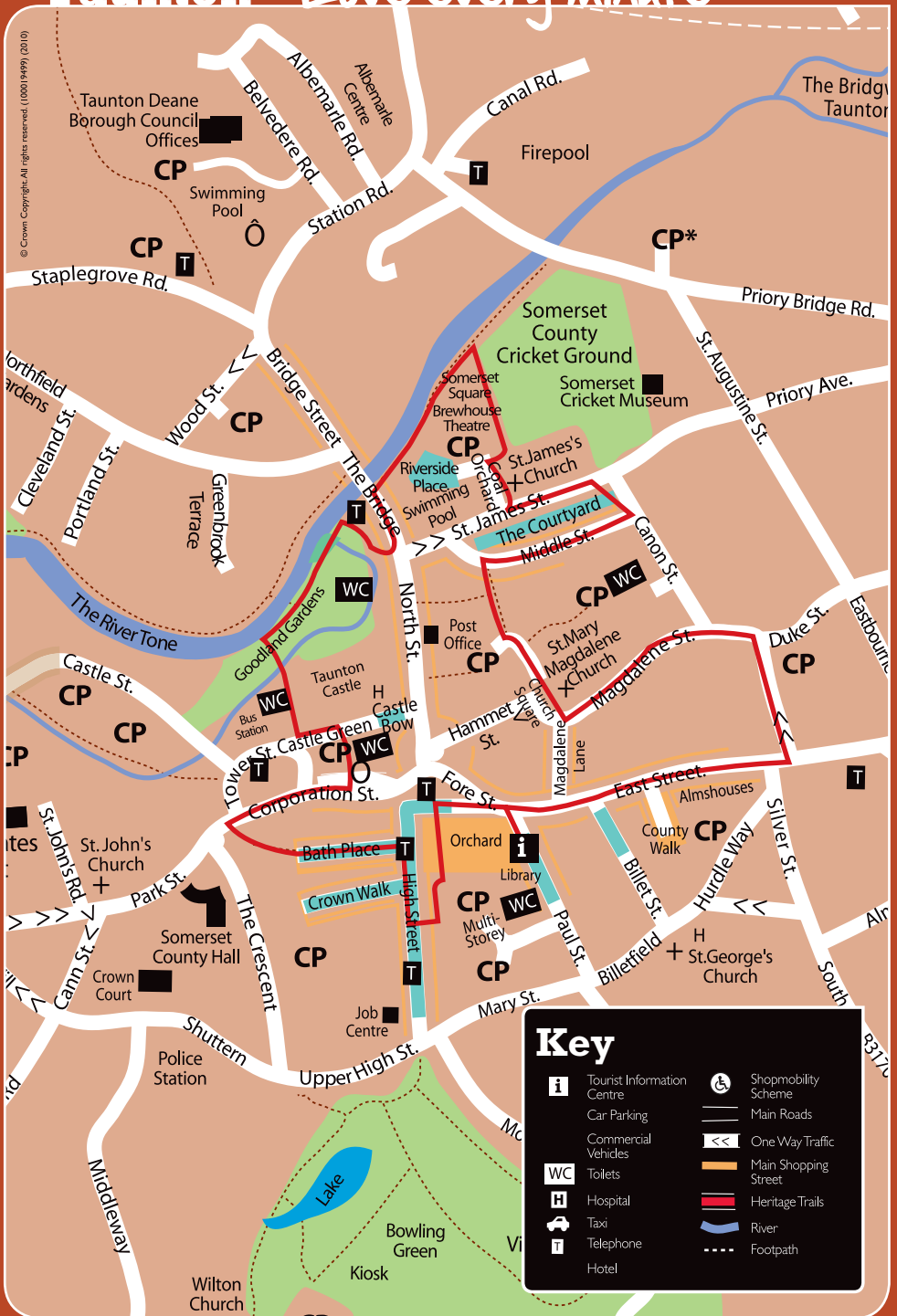
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Retail Therapy,
St James Street

Taunton - Love every minute

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Key

i Tourist Information Centre	Shopmobility Scheme
Car Parking	Main Roads
Commercial Vehicles	One Way Traffic
WC Toilets	Main Shopping Street
H Hospital	Heritage Trails
Taxi	River
T Telephone	Footpath
Hotel	

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Municipal Buildings, Corporation Street

Conservation Area

Taunton has a dramatic past dating back to Saxon times, more than 1100 years. Originally called Tone Tun, the Saxon word Tun meaning Farm or Estate. Today Taunton is a thriving county town with a population exceeding 60,000.

Characterised by its soaring towers and spires, the magnificent St Mary Magdelene Church boasts the tallest tower in Somerset at 163 feet. Taunton has an interesting conservation area marked out as a heritage trail (see map). Very much a living town, businesses thrive in the heritage quarter too. Hunts Court, designed by Samson and Cottam around 1905 is an imposing building of neo-classical style with frontage to Corporation Street, now home to **The Cosy Club** offering casual dining & drinking experience with a distinguished twist.

Next door, The Old Library building designed by architect, Alexander Little and part funded by the Carnegie Foundation raised a few eyebrows when converted to licensed premises in 1996. A covenant applied by the Carnegie Foundation stated that 'alcohol must not be consumed on the premises'. Today you can enjoy your favourite tipples in contemporary style at the **Pitcher & Piano**.

Located opposite the Pitcher & Piano is the Old Municipal Buildings built in 1522 to house the town's Grammar School. Known today as the **Municipal Buildings**, the site is now the town's registry office (pictured) and an impressive location for couples looking to 'tie the knot'. To the rear of this building lies Castle Green, the site of **Taunton Castle**, the **Castle Hotel** and **Somerset County Museum**. Following closure in 2008 for extensive refurbishment Taunton Castle will reopen as the **Museum of Somerset** in 2011.

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Café Lisa on Paul Street

...Conservation Area

From Castle Bow, cross North Street to Hammet Street. This impressive Georgian street was named after Sir Benjamin Hammet, a former Taunton MP and prime mover in the creation of the road in 1788.

Apart from a few alterations Hammet Street and Church Square remain unspoiled. The original Georgian Houses can still be seen and are now home to many of the towns commercial and residential property agents like **Greenslade Taylor Hunt**. With over 150 years' experience, the firm is still independently owned to this day. Magdalene Lane leads from Church Square to East Street and hosts a hard-to-find cluster of independent businesses collectively known as **Wyvern Shopping Centre**. Stores include **Fine Fabrics**, **Wyvern Blinds** and traditional Barber's Shop, **Robert Mann**. Collectively the businesses in Magdalene Lane have built up a loyal local following and visitors to the town are assured of a warm welcome at the shops and eateries to be found in this lane.

Emerge from Magdalene Lane and cross East Street into Paul Street, home of the **Tourist Information Centre (TIC)**. Located within the **Library**, the TIC is well worth a visit especially if you want to find out more about Taunton's turbulent past and interesting heritage sites. Opposite the library, **Café Lisa** on Paul Street is a wonderful find for top quality fresh sandwiches, panini and sweet treats.

While those in the know dine at **Miriam**, an award winning tandoori restaurant boasting a five star hygiene inspection rating and voted 'The best Indian restaurant in Taunton' by **Somerset County Gazette** for the past seven consecutive years.

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Brazz on Castle Bow

North/East Spine

Taunton's main artery for shoppers extends from Station Road in the north crossing The Bridge into North Street and Fore Street then heading eastward to East Street and East Reach. North Street and East Street boast the national brands you might expect from Somerset's county town together with some rather special independents you won't find anywhere else.

County Stores on North Street is a family business trading in Taunton since 1836. With an accent on excellent food and wines the store is famed for its range of exceptional chateau bottled Claret. Foodies on-the-go will love **Proper Cornish**; the West Country food producer chose Taunton for its first venture into retail and **Brazz** (pictured), the trend-setting brasserie on Castle Bow offers contemporary dining in an historic setting.

Fore Street is located directly behind The Market House, originally constructed in 1772 this imposing red brick building was once the town's main market. Today Fore Street is the site of the monthly **Blackdown Hills Market**. The visiting market hosts some of the very best craft producers from the Blackdown Hills on the Somerset/Devon border.

Mr. Miles Tea Room and Coffee House is another first for Taunton. Fine tea and coffee merchant, DJ Miles established over three generations has returned elegance and style to the High Street offering traditional English Tea Rooms and retail sales of their well renowned West Country brand. Recent addition to the High Street, **Craftsmic**, offers craft supplies with a high degree of personal service to its customers. Why not visit the High Street on a Thursday when the **Vale of Taunton Farmers' Market** regularly attends with local fresh produce in abundance. The market is visited on occasion by Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall of River Cottage fame.

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Mr. Miles Tearooms on the High Street

...North/East Spine

Orchard is Taunton's premier indoor shopping destination with the perfect combination of high street brands and quality independents. **Wave Games** is the place for water-sports and leisurewear. Stacked to the rafters with brands like Globe, Quicksilver, Rip Curl, Reef and Zinka the store is a must for surfers and outdoor enthusiasts.

Master Butchers, **Gerald David and Family** can be found in 'The Old Pig Market'. The award-winning butcher established in 1969 supplies fresh meat & poultry sourced from its own 'Freedom Foods Approved' west country abattoir.

New addition **Much2nice** offers delectable handbags and accessories from funky, bo ho-chic to contemporary style.

Orchard

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Ralph Colman, Station Road

North Town

The North of town is characterised by independent retail businesses, many are long standing like **Calverts Furniture** est. 1944. The expanding business has retained a strong affinity with families across the south west for generations. Naturally, product knowledge is matched by quality brands including ercol and Ekornes Stressless.

At 70 Station Road, **Gurds** menswear has been providing sartorial style since 1924. This fantastic institution caters for the discerning gent like no other. Pick up a genuine Panama made in England by Olney, country and casual wear or try on one of the 2500 pairs of trousers held in stock. North of town is the place for hobbies and sports. A walk across Tone Bridge rewards shoppers with an eclectic mix of hard-to-find specialists bursting to share their passion.

Martian Records is one of two independent music stores in town, and dancers of all ages share their obsession at **Wow Dancer** on Bridge Street. Among England's largest stockists of ukulele instruments, **Westside Music Centre** has been providing sensational service for decades.

Taunton boasts six cycling specialists; **Ralph Colman**, 79 Station Road offers lifetime servicing on all bikes sold over £200. Located on Somerset Square, newcomer **Six Cycles** boasts a try-before-you-buy scheme with a permanent selection of demo bikes available.

You can view the full listing of cycle shops online at: www.tauntontowncentre.co.uk

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Mikron Model Railways, Station Road

...North Town

Escape the stresses of modern living at **Buff Urban Day Spa**. Voted Day Spa of the Year 2009 in the 'British Beauty and Spa Awards' Buff offers an oasis of lavish urban chic to be found at 22-24 Station Road.

Fuel your passion at **Mikron Model Railways**. The enthusiasts store boasts a clutch of model railway brands including Brio wooden railways, through Thomas the Tank Engine all the way up to the latest DCC Sound fitted locomotives.

Taunton Stamp Shop has had an international clientele since before the advent of the internet and **Taunton Angling Centre** offers a showroom on two floors to tempt the novice and expert alike.

Madisons Beads on Bridge Street offer everything for the craft jeweller. The family-run business, named after daughter, Madie hosts weekly Beading Workshops for beginners and more experienced craft workers.

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The Bridge

Riverside

The Riverside shopping area including The Bridge, Riverside Place, St James Street and Lower Middle Street offers laid-back browsing in convivial surroundings. Take time out at the **Flying Aubergine**, the Mediterranean-style rendezvous with alfresco dining; great for people-watching on sunny days. Or seek out **The Olive Tree** (The Bridge). The specialist dell offers premium cheeses, olives and local honey. The gift hamper service is excellent, as is the first floor coffee shop.

Just off The Bridge, regional fair trade fashion house, **Chandni Chowk** specialises in textiles, hand made in India and Bangladesh to a very high quality. **Sassi Holford** (Bridge Street) is a highly respected clothes designer with outlets in both London and Taunton. Her wedding dresses are among the best known in the UK. Bridal couture is a passion for Sassi who has been trading in Taunton for more than 20 years.

St James Street, adjoining Riverside Place, is characterised by its level footway where shoppers share space with one-way traffic heading for Coal Orchard, **The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre** and **Somerset County Cricket Ground** beyond. Crammed with specialist independents this narrow street can be easily missed by those with only a passing interest in the town.

Children and adults love **Tick Tock Toys**, tipped for wooden toys and traditional favourites. **RJ Phillips** (watchmakers) do exactly what is says on the sign – if you have a watch or clock in need of repair you can be sure that the master watchmaker has the capability to make the repair on the premises. One of a kind, **The Tobacconist** on St James Street offers a bewildering choice of smokers' requisites and a fine range of traditional boiled sweets too.

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Will Shakspeare, Shakspeare Glass

...Riverside

Fashionable St James Street provides hard to find specialist brands and designer labels. Regional independent **Maze Clothing** brings together a mix of labels, expertly merging high end fashion with luxurious basics.

Retail Therapy of The Courtyard, St James Street is a must for label-conscious bargain hunters; the store specialises in designer labels; clever buying ensures customers achieve a true designer wardrobe at a fraction of the cost. Gentlemen are well served at **Astaires** (The Courtyard). Just like the store's famous namesake, customers note Astaires for keen dress sense and an eye for quality men's tailoring.

Boutique 28 stocks exclusive labels and brings new designers' collections, giving individuality to customers. A mix of cosmopolitan, timeless chic pieces and contemporary current trends, Boutique 28 offers individual clothing for every woman.

Taunton has the ability to surprise and delight those dedicated to exploring beyond the obvious. **Shakspeare Glass** (pictured) has a retail showroom and studio combined. Proprietor, Will Shakspeare can be seen practicing his art daily and produces beautiful, functional and decorative pieces in glass. You can even sign up for an evening workshop – be warned it's easy to get hooked and with Will's expert guidance you can achieve some surprising results.

World of Bears, 20 Lower Middle Street, is crammed full with over 4,500 different products from nostalgic classics to collectables like Steiff and Hermann Original. The themed Boyds Attic is a delight and provides what must be the biggest independents choice of stuffed toys in the UK.

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Olio & Farina, Somerset Square

Coal Orchard

Follow the river eastward from The Bridge and Riverside Place to emerge at Coal Orchard, home of **The Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre**. The regional arts centre for Somerset attracts an impressive line-up of nationally and internationally renowned events. Beyond The Brewhouse lies **Somerset Square**; a modern piazza fronting the river Tone.

Enjoy the taste and culture of Italy at **Olio & Farina** - an exciting new Italian deli and café offering artisan produce on the premises and for consumption at home. The home of County Cricket, **Somerset County Cricket Club** offers the opportunity to view some world class sporting action with regular matches throughout the season.

Somerset County Cricket Museum, located in the historic Priory Barn is open Tuesday to Friday throughout the summer. Thought to be part of the medieval Augustinian Priory, the museum and Barn are well worth a look.

Cricket connoisseurs should seek out the pleasure of **Millichamp & Hall**, producers of the world's finest hand made cricket bats. The firm specialises in bespoke cricket bats in English Willow and hand-make every single bat on site using traditional tools and methods.



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Taunton Country Markets, Bath Place

Bath Place

The specialist shopping area of Bath Place provides an oasis of calm and a real alternative to primary shopping streets. Find Bath Place through a narrow lane off High Street or through the Cider Press Garden on Corporation Street to emerge in the midst of a near complete set of 19th Century shop fronts characterized by octagonal glazing fanlights.

The former Mechanics Institute constructed by William Beadon in 1838 is home to **Ginger Fig** offering gorgeous gifts for friends and family. The Ginger Fig Gallery located on the first floor is a tremendous find for those seeking local artists and their work. Tipped by Rick Stein as a fishmonger who knows his business, **Phil Bowditch** provides fresh-caught fish and shellfish to those in the know from his independent store. Phil buys most of his fish from day boats; this has the advantages of a more sustainable fishing method and a fresher catch.

Scrumpters Deli and Canteen is a brand new addition to Bath Place. Specialising in local produce; mustards, olive oils and vinegars are complimented by a range of fresh British and Continental cheese, quality meats and charcuterie.

For a home-grown appeal check out **Taunton Country Markets**. This cooperative with over 180 members provides an ever changing offer of fresh fruit and vegetables, delicious home-baked cakes, preserves and local crafts. Established in 1932 Country Markets is a real gem you won't find anywhere else. **Krackers Comics & Games** specialise in quality Comics, Movie, TV, Sci-Fi & Fantasy merchandise. Owner Anthony Peach has a fantastic knowledge of the ranges he stocks and only sells the products which he truly loves.

Brendon Books located within the Old Brewery Buildings is an independent bookshop with a reputation for a fast, friendly, efficient service. Maps and travel are a speciality. Regular book signing events make this independent bookseller a place to return to time and again. Bath Place is home to **Coco Blue**. Shoes, accessories and clothing are all beautifully presented in this destination store. Claimed to be 'worthy of London' by Mary 'Queen of Shops' Portas, Coco Blue is a must-visit if you are looking for something different; labels include American Vintage, Ally Capellino, Fiorentini + Baker and new additions - LNA and Wildfox.

The shoe cupboard at Omah Shoes (also in Riverside Place) stocks innovative and developing brands, like Blowfish, Naot, Wolky, Lacey's & J Shoes. Proprietor Lisa Brooking-Clark strongly endorses brands with low environmental impact such as Terra Plana and Josef Seibel.

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County Flowers of East Reach

East of Town

The east of town is characterized by busy shopping streets accommodating the national brands one might expect in a thriving county town. Explore further and you will find a myriad of independents within this quarter, which should never be overlooked.

East Street is perhaps the busiest shopping street in Taunton with some handy on-street parking if a swift visit is all you require. Fashion independent **Emzee** is located here and in County Walk, **Rolys Fudge Pantry** is an independently owned franchise hand-making delicious fudge on the premises.

Beyond East Street, East Reach has some of Taunton's longest serving specialist stores. **Bredons** is a third generation family business and mecca for sewing machinists seeking brands like Husqvarna and PFAFF as well as more familiar names like Brother and elna.

Watkins Toys is crammed floor to ceiling from the latest craze to trusted brands like Lego and Sylvania Families. Parents and grandparents will be right at home in this local business which is 'just like toy shops used to be'. Continue on East Reach to **Phil's Dolls House Shop** to find the biggest selection of Dolls Houses and accessories in the west country. Many accessories are hand-made in the store.

East Reach is renowned for service and expertise, which is in great demand. So much so that Denise Cross, proprietor of **County Flowers** spends much of her time lecturing at colleges in Somerset. **Hair Academy** is a hair and beauty salon operating from brand new premises at 122 East Reach. A busy professional salon, Hair Academy is also a local training school creating award winning professional stylists.



Hair Academy



Phil's Dolls House Shop



County Flowers