

The stores' in-house private shoppers or VIP associates offer such assistance, and they also can provide services that extend beyond the sales floor. "A lot of my time is spent going through my database of clients and keeping up on what they've purchased in previous years, what they still need, how much weight they've lost or gained, if they spend half their time on water or in the air, and what hobbies or interests they have," says Paul Stuart's De Lisi, who photographs and codes each client's purchases and enters them into a book or database, a copy of which she gives to the client. "That way, when their wardrobes need a boost, I have all the information to help them."

Being familiar with the client's preferences and lifestyle is essential to building his wardrobe, says David Watson, the manager of Saks' Manhattan men's club. "During the initial appointment, we get to know who the customer is, what they do for a living, and what occasions they need clothing for," he explains. "We get to know if they are more conservative or avant-garde, what colors they like to wear, and which designers or manufacturers fit them best." The staff also maintains a record of occasions for which gifts may need to be purchased, such as birthdays and anniversaries, and they can have merchandise brought to your home or office, where you can decide whether you want to purchase it. Above all, says Watson, the club is designed to provide a secluded place for working one-on-one with a fashion professional with no time limits, spending pressures, or hourly service charges. "What happens in here stays in here," he adds, noting that privacy and discretion are among the club's most alluring features. "Our customers don't want anyone to know what they are buying or how much they spent."

The Saks club also offers opportunities to acquire exclusive items from lesser-known luxury brands, such as Loro Piana, that are not offered in the store's everyday merchandise mix. "We may not make the commitment to buy a collection for the chain, but we'll bring a designer in for a couple of trunk shows to see how our clients respond," explains Profis. "It's a great opportunity for our club customers, because they get to see something new rather than the same Dolce & Gabbana and Prada they see everywhere."

Gaining access to difficult-to-obtain pieces and collections and anticipating a client's needs as well as his wants are hallmarks of a skilled personal shopper. Because she is also a buyer, says Stanley Korshak's Warner, she frequently shops the European designer collections with particular customers in mind. "We just added Valentino for fall, and there was an incredible jacket that I knew would be perfect for one of my clients," she explains. "I called him when it came in, and he showed up in his town car with his children and nanny and bought the coat as well as a bunch of other Valentino pieces." Except for the occasional frill, such as a pair of rhinoceros-skin cowboy boots, says Warner, "Most men don't know what they really need in their wardrobes until someone like me shows it to them." ■

ITINERANT SPENDING HABITS

EVEN THOSE WHO DO NOT USE personal shoppers at home can find their services invaluable abroad. They can introduce the hidden gems of a foreign city: new fashion boutiques, interior design houses, antiques shops, and art galleries. Many of these personal shoppers also serve as concierges who can assist with tasks that range from planning shopping itineraries and arranging after-hours visits to luxury boutiques to making restaurant recommendations and reservations. The following personal shoppers are among the best in their respective countries. —W.K.

ENGLAND

Camilla Yonge, Yshop

THROUGH HER ARRANGEMENTS with London's top hotels, Camilla Yonge offers their guests assistance with shopping in and around the city. "Most out-of-town visitors head straight for Harrods," says Yonge, a former advertising executive with London Fashion Week, the semiannual runway event where designers premiere their new collections. "I try to direct them to more adventurous parts of the city, such as Savile Row, Notting Hill, Brompton Cross, and New and Old Bond Streets." Yonge, who is developing a travel guide with Blake's hotel designer Anouska Hempel, charges an hourly rate of \$125 per person and \$700 (not including meals and transportation) for an eight-hour day.

Yshop, +44.7711.277.969, www.y-shop.co.uk

FRANCE

Susan Tabak, Paris Personal Shopper

SUSAN TABAK IS A SELF-DESCRIBED Francophile with a love of fashion and travel. For a daily rate of \$1,500 per person including lunch (group rates are also available), Tabak escorts visitors on the ultimate insider's tour of Paris: from the designer shops on the Avenue Montaigne and the Rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré to the eclectic boutiques of the Marais and Latin Quarter.

Paris Personal Shopper, 212.404.8398, www.parispersonalshopper.com

ITALY

Sophia Batson, Ottima Moda

AS A CONCIERGE FOR American Express Platinum Card members, Sophia Batson gained an encyclopedic knowledge of the finest hotels, restaurants, clubs, and shops in Milan and other popular Italian destinations. Batson's shopping services, with fees starting at \$500 per day for two people, can include sightseeing tours. She is expanding her services to Barcelona, London, Paris, and New York.

Ottima Moda, 917.669.8722