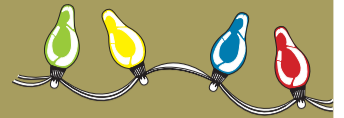


# CHRISTMAS IN REGENT STREET



Christmas is a special time of year and for taxi drivers it is usually a busy time too. As you drive along Regent Street with passengers each day, the lights this year add a new dimension as they change colour in response to the volume of shoppers on the street. Starting on Christmas Day, the lights will produce a commemorative show for each of the twelve days of Christmas. Called Unity, the lights are supplied by Regent Street and Nokia. A new flagship Nokia store opens on 14th December which will be the largest Nokia store in the world. There will be touch sensors in the store where visitors will be able to affect the lights outside.



**Regent Street Lights 07**

For many people in London and across the UK, a trip to London for Christmas shopping is a tradition they enjoy every year. On Regent Street the wide pavements and general ambience of the street make the experience really enjoyable. Behind the decorated shop fronts are some real surprises, even for some taxi drivers who have been driving through the street for many years. For example, did you know that the Habitat store used to be a cinema? When the store was being let the Crown Estate who own the properties in Regent Street wanted a tenant who would use the building as a retail outlet but still retain the cinema's features. So as you enter the Habitat store you can see the evidence of the cinema days long gone by. None of the fixtures and fittings actually attaches to the main structure but are free standing. Upstairs you can see where the circle and upper circle were originally housed, with a lovely café called Nouveaute, positioned high up in the upper circle. Even the original projector window in the plaster can be seen and down on the ground floor the Wurlitzer organ is still played on a regular basis entertaining shoppers.

For taxi drivers or passengers who have grandchildren, a visit to Mamas and Papas is sure to produce a present that will delight both the child and their parents. The store is beautifully laid out and also has a café area that is child friendly. On the day of my visit, the store was launching its new spring and summer ranges to the press, but the store was decorated for Christmas with in a traditional style, with impressive gingerbread men. Regent Street offers a very diverse mix of retail outlets but of course one of the most famous is Hamleys. This store is packed with every imaginable toy, from the well known to newer items. One of the ones I saw demonstrated was a jigsaw



which depicts London. The jigsaw is put together and then the toy vehicle of your choice goes round the jigsaw on a track. Of course this particular toy caught my eye because the vehicle going round was a London black taxi. The demonstrator told me that the jigsaw goes together in many different ways, so perhaps not a good aid for doing the KoL, but a great present all the same!

The retailers of clothing on Regent Street offer an amazing array of choice. It caters for all age groups too. Well known labels such as Tommy Hilfiger and French Connection report sales are buoyant in the lead

up to the festive season. Hobbs offers a wide selection of clothing and accessories, whilst Hawes and Curtis not only have beautifully cut men's shirts but a superb range of ladies shirts. All their shirts can be tried on in store to ensure a perfect fit. Although many would not think of buying shoes as a gift at Christmas in case, Church's have a range of gifts such as belts slippers and briefcases on offer. The Jaeger store is a popular choice and again they have a range of gift items available as well as their clothing. Stepping through the automatic doors of the Aquascutum store is stepping

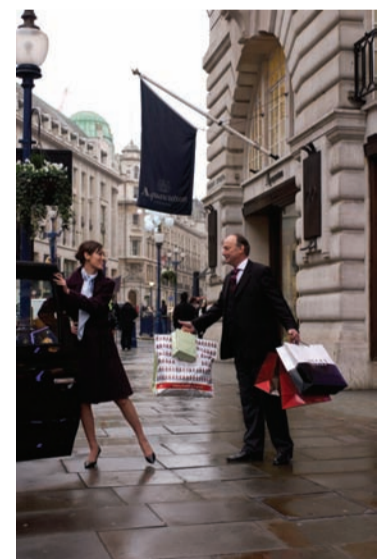
into a world of elegance.

Jewellery is also a popular choice as a Christmas gift and in Frey Wille the stunning gold and silver enamelled items are eye catching. Scarves, ties and even pens in the vibrant colours make an unusual gift to treasure. Nearby, the Apple store is bursting with technology and even has an area set aside as a lecture theatre to help you get the most from your Apple product. Once all the weariness of shopping sets in, a visit to the spa in Austin Reed is a relaxing treat and there are many treatments available for both men and women as well as products to buy.

No shopping trip is complete without an eating experience and Regent Street has some hidden away gems to enjoy. Tucked away in Heddon Street is Piccolinos, an Italian restaurant. Lunchtimes are busy here with both shoppers and office staff enjoying the Italian ambience and delicious foods. The authentic Italian pizzas are prepared and baked in an open kitchen which has a Neapolitan wood stove oven. All of the menu offers fresh seasonal ingredients and the atmosphere is relaxing and informal. The restaurant also offers private dining facilities. If you are a fish menu fan, Bentley's in Swallow Street is in a historic listed building, spread over three floors. The Oyster bar on the ground floor serves fish and seafood dishes from midday throughout the evening. The Champagne bar also on the ground floor is open from midday until late serving classic and contemporary cocktails. Upstairs, The Grill offers an extensive menu every day. If you want to try something a little different, Gaucho Piccadilly also in Swallow Street, is an Argentinean restaurant. It has a Wine Boutique selling a large collection of Argentinean wines. By night this area becomes a private dining area. There is a lovely bar in this historic building and then on the first floor and second floor are two eating areas.

The famous 'grass fed' steaks are presented to diners and explained by the waiter or waitress so that you can choose exactly the cut and weight you would like. These are then cooked to perfection in a traditional Argentinean way, flash grilled, sealing in the flavour and making the meat very tender. Throughout the building dark wood and cowhide are used alongside marble, glass and black chandeliers creating an ambience that is relaxing and fun at the same time.

The Regent Street retailers would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone involved in the London taxi trade a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and look forward to welcoming drivers and their families to their stores.



**Regent Street Butler with shopper Curanne Labercane and taxi**