

Christmas shopping: Video UK - transcript

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Christmas shopping in London. There's nowhere like it in the world. When the West End Christmas lights go on and the big shops reveal their special Christmas window displays, it's time for the festivities to begin.

Fortnum & Mason, here in Piccadilly, has been selling the finer things in life around the world for over three hundred years.

From chocolates to china, luxury goods are what Fortnum & Mason specialise in. And Christmas is their busiest time of the year.

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Today's an important day. Parts of the Christmas window display have just arrived. Everything needs to be put in place. It's a difficult job getting all of the items into the windows.

Paul Symes is the head of visual presentation and the creative force behind the Fortnum & Mason Christmas window display.

Amandeep: This is so exciting, Paul. You've allowed us behind the scenes in your Christmas shop window. Now tell me about your design this year.

Paul: It's all about dancing, burlesque, theatre, shows and glamour and style.

Amandeep: And what are the challenges involved in designing something to this scale?

Paul: One of the challenges is trying to get it all to fit. There's so much that you want to say and it's trying to get it small enough to fit into just seven windows.

Amandeep: So Paul, you're about to reveal your Christmas shop window. How nervous are you?

Paul: Very, very. I start getting nervous about a week before. A lot of effort goes into making sure that when we finally pull the curtains up, everyone's happy.

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The Christmas story dates back two thousand years, but the way it's celebrated has changed a lot over time. Many Christmas traditions are actually quite recent. Fortnum & Mason have seen Christmas fashions change over the centuries. Archivist Dr Andrea Tanner is interested in the history of the store.

Amandeep: Andrea, when did Christmas shopping become such an important tradition?

Andrea: Well, in Britain, it really came with the Victorian era. It was when Queen Victoria married her German prince, Prince Albert, and he brought lots of Christmas traditions to Britain.

Amandeep: What's your biggest-selling Christmas item?

Andrea: It's a hamper. A hamper is a basket in which you find wonderful Christmas foods and drinks and we expect to sell around seven and a half thousand of those.

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It's almost time for the big moment. The windows are finally going to be revealed.

Man 1: It's going to make people stop and stare.

Woman 1: I think they're fabulous, but they always are.

Woman 2: It's absolutely beautiful. It's beautiful.

Amandeep: It's a huge success and I'm starting to feel festive. Now, where's my Christmas list? Better start some shopping.