



Date: August 2007
To: Utterly Sophisticated Travelers
From: Teresa Beall Expeditions
Re: This little piggy went to Market...

We may not **all** be born to shop, but you haven't truly visited a country until you have seen its markets. You know, picking through designer duds in Cambodia, salivating over stinky cheeses in France or getting lost in the muddy paths of a market in Ghana. Only then will you discover that shopping is a great way to soak in the local culture. It can also be a surprisingly cheap way to get a true sense of a country's character. After all, you don't actually need to buy anything to stroll through a market. One thing is for sure, visiting one is a sure-fire way to interact with the locals. Who knows? You might just score a good deal at the same time. The following is a list of our favorite markets – places where you too can stroll as well as shop until you drop:

Adelaide, Australia – Of course there are the fine art museums, the crumbling historic sites and the holy churches, but I'd like to think that a destination reveals itself through humbler means, like food, and I know my friend, Deb Barshafsky (www.bitegeist.com) would agree. Let us both loose in a new city and eventually we'll each make it to a grocery store, patrolling the aisles for insights into daily life. This Australian city is home to the largest fresh food market in the southern hemisphere. The **Adelaide Central Market** offers up stall after stall of fresh, grainy breads; pungent cheeses; blood red sausages; piles of jewel-toned fruits; and buckets of salty brined olives – the perfect place to do weekly shopping or simply gather up the fixings for the best picnic in that half of the world.

Chichicastenango, Guatemala – This highland city is almost 90 miles from the hub of Guatemala City, but it boasts the country's largest and most popular open-air market. The **Chichicastenango Market** is held every Thursday and Sunday from morning to dusk and brings together craftspeople from the countryside who sell everything from wood boxes, textiles, masks carved from vegetables and medicinal herbs and fruits. Vendors begin setting up shop the evening before. Mornings usually open with the sights and sounds of firecrackers and rockets. The best time to visit is either early morning or late afternoon to avoid large tourists groups. No matter what time of day you'll be greeted by an array of sounds, bright colors and the smell of incense wafting from Santo Tomás. Much like the Marrakech souks, the market is organized by wares and products sold in specific areas. The central part of the market houses eateries (AKA comedores) and the butchers can be found on the outskirts. Prices are not marked, so you'll need to fine tune your bargaining skills. While you probably could get better deals elsewhere (and many of the items here are mass-produced with tourists in mind), a market visit is a great way to immerse yourself in a local tradition.

London, England – It is impossible to name just one favorite city's markets, so we have narrowed it down to two. For unique and trendy clothing, look no further than the indoor **Old Spitalfields Market** in Shoreditch. They sell a wide array of hip clothes by young designers as well as stand-alone art galleries and organic food stalls. The market is open weekends from 10 to 4, but the best time to visit is Sunday mornings when all the stalls are staffed. For great antique finds, head to **Portobello Road Market** in Notting Hill (remember the movie? same neighborhood). A whopping 2,000 antique dealers fight for space and cram onto Portobello Road with fruit and veggie stalls and various clothing and jewelry traders. This place is crowded with tourists, for sure, but if you brace yourself and come with an open mind, you just might come away with an amazing find.



New York City, New York, USA – Young designers who aren't lucky enough to make it onto Bravo's hit TV show Project Runway (both mine and my sister's favorite Bravo reality TV show) sell their wares, hoping to get discovered at the **The Market NYC**. Every Saturday and Sunday from mid morning to just after dinner, aspiring designers gather inside the gym of Saint Patrick's Church on Mulberry Street with racks of clothes, bags, shoes, jewelry and other designer miscellany. Unlike the stacks of mass-produced goods carried at stores like Gap and Banana Republic, everything here is one-of-a-kind. In fact, these designers pay for the privilege of showcasing their work to the public and they can get ousted from the market for selling any mass-produced items. You might find ornate trinkets tightly wrapped with gold wire, or funky hand-painted bracelets made from reshaped vinyl records. Racks of graphic T-shirts, flowing tunics, and space-age style boots line the walls, while loud music is pumped through the gym. Although the products are not exactly dirt cheap (prices range from \$10 to upwards of \$300) the merchandise is definitely more affordable than what you might find in the nearby stores. And, if you buy products here, you never have to worry about seeing another person on the street wearing the same thing.

Buenos Aires, Argentina – Everything old is new again and nowhere is this more apparent than in Buenos Aires' **San Telmo District**. One of Buenos Aires' oldest neighborhoods, San Telmo is evolving into an upmarket destination where crumbling buildings now house trendy boutiques and bars, but antiques still rule the area. There are thriving antique shops and the neighborhood's pride, the vibrant San Telmo Antiques Market. The fair is held in San Dorrego Square every Sunday from 10 to 5 and it has become so popular that vendors now overflow onto the side streets. It is best to arrive early before the crowds. Nearly 300 booths sell antiques and distinctive wares – everything from matchboxes and broaches for a few dollars each to elaborate display of glassware, beautifully stacked in every color. You'll find a treasure-trove of leather, silver, handicrafts and ceramics. It also happens to be the perfect place to buy unique souvenirs (or the usual ubiquitous gourds for drinking mate). Haggling over merchandise is encouraged and a big part of the fun. Of course, this being Buenos Aires, tango factors in as well and adds a special flavor to the scene. Impromptu dance performances are held in open squares with crowds always forming around to cheer couples on, as singers weave through the booths. Performances last well into the night, even after the vendors close up shop. San Telmo is a must-see on any trip to Buenos Aires, but come on Sunday and you'll see this once-sleepy neighborhood at its most exuberant.

Kumasi, Ghana – The Kejetia Market in Kumasi, Ghana is the mother of all markets. I have a pin marking the spot on my office world atlas as a future expedition. This market lies in a hollow among the hills of Kumasi in the heart of Ashanti country in West Africa and sprawls for 10 hectares. It consists of rusting railroad tracks, thousands of tin, clay and wooden stalls, and a few colonial buildings. This is not a market for browsing or even strolling. It is cramped, filthy dusty, crowded and loud. The muddy walkways function as the market's drainage and sewage system and are only occasionally paved. Once you get down inside it is nearly impossible to see the surrounding hills. Forget your bearings. The best way to see the market is to step right in and let the twists and turns of the paths take you where they will. Every step puts you at a cross roads. Count yourself lucky if you make it to the other side and even luckier if you come back out where you started. Aside from typical market fare like fruits and vegetables, anything one could ever need can be found here or custom made – clothes, furniture, electronics and caskets. An army of skilled craftspeople cram into the tiny stalls making anything out of what seems like nothing. You might wind up on a loop through the auto-body section where workers build buses out of scrap... or perhaps you'll find the seamstresses at work on antique sewing machines... then again you might find yourself amidst the cobblers and the smell of molten rubber and plastic... or you might get stuck in the never-ending stretch of butchers' stalls. And that is only skimming the surface. We don't recommend having anything made here if you're on a tight travel schedule because – what are the chances that you would find the stall again?



Otavallo, Ecuador – Bargain-hunters love Ecuador's **Otavallo Market** about 60 miles north of Quito, but then again even non-shoppers enjoy the scene in this small Andean town nestled near the Cotacachi and Imbabura volcanoes. Official market day is Saturday, when Ecuadorians and foreigners descend on the city. To avoid the crowds, visit on an off-day – the Plaza de Ponchos has an artisans' market throughout the week. You will hear Otavaleños speaking in their native Quichua and the languid sounds of Andean pipe music with hawkers offering herbal remedies and stalls selling cuy (guinea pig) an Ecuadorian delicacy. There are Alpaca sweaters and hand-woven blouses for sale as well as colorful straw bags, ceramics, carved figurines, multihued textiles, mittens, carpets and ponchos dyed with agave juice. You'll find more here than you can possibly fit in your luggage. The Otavaleños are not only master craftspeople, they also know a thing or two about business. They bargain, but they won't drastically lower their already-reasonable prices. You might save some if you are fluent in Spanish or if you are accompanied by an Ecuadorian who can do the haggling on your behalf. You can take the bus from Quito's Terminal Terrestre every 20 minutes or hire a taxi for under \$50. If you're planning to attend the Saturday market, consider going to Otavallo the night before so you can rise early (that means at 5 in the morning) and beat the crowds.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia – Even if you have shopped the shaded Moroccan souks or Chinese night markets, **Phnom Penh's Russian Market** stands in a class of its own. Partly due to Cambodia's general lawlessness and poor economy, you can find nearly anything in the Russian Market – from exquisitely carved jade figures to military contraband and all manner of pirated goods – all it at unbelievably low prices. Bring \$50 and you can probably finish your Christmas shopping early. Everything is for sale from bronze Buddhas to brand-name clothes and everything in between. Weaving your way deep into the dim labyrinth, you'll see vulgar tourist knickknacks, tasteful souvenirs, religious carvings, strange-looking fruit and vegetables, un-refrigerated meats (and the associated fragrant that comes with), and other edible goodies, which in Cambodia constitutes just about anything. If you're brave, sit down in any of the food stalls and order up something that looks appetizing. Whether you choose deep-fried morning glories or a variation of the national dish, amok (fish cooked with Cambodian curry and coconut milk), you probably won't go wrong, just make sure you have a large dose of Cipro in your cosmetic bag.

Budapest, Hungary – **The Central Market Hall** was built by Gustave Eiffel in 1897, so it feels a bit Parisian. You can purchase everything from handmade scarves to fresh cow stomachs. On the ground floor, locals shop for produce and tourists hunt for bargains on souvenir delicacies such as paprika (\$1 a tin), saffron (0.35 oz for about \$3), dried mushrooms (including truffles), caviar and foie gras (starting at about \$35 for a half pound). The basement has some prepared foods, pickles, fishmongers and an Asian specialty food shop. The upper level has a few cafes tucked amongst booths of folk art, tablecloths and porcelain.

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Best, Teresa

"Travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living." – Miriam Beard