

# WISHING YOU A VERY INDIE CHRISTMAS

Follow Petit Pixel as she wanders the streets of her hometown Bendigo, photographing and writing about the people, places and food she finds along the way. You can read more on her blog [www.petitpixeldesign.com](http://www.petitpixeldesign.com) or join in the conversation on twitter via @petitpixl

A few years ago I was determined to adopt a handmade or indie (aka independent/ not mainstream) theme for my Christmas shopping.

Giving handmade means giving a gift with someone behind it who sewed the stitches, looked through the viewfinder, and planned the design from sketch to finished product.

And the rush you feel when you find something with all of the above that matches the person you have in mind perfectly...well you just may be hooked.

So where to start? I've gathered some of my favourites for you.

Nestled within the impressive architecture of Bendigo's Hotel Shamrock you will find Bob Boutique. Stepping through the door, you almost feel as though you're taking refuge from the predictable retail fare of giant department stores, instead finding yourself in a warmly lit and inviting space that breathes creativity and quirky into the soul.

Sonia Brit's personal touches are evident everywhere you turn, from hand written product tags to her own illustrations and creations. It's the kind of place where you will need to set aside time to truly explore every nook, shelf and display.

I love the Pass the Parcels, each layer hand wrapped, the contents chosen by you or compiled by Sonia as a surprise. With a range including softies, clothing, original art and so much more, you will find something for almost everyone on your list.

Bob Boutique has gained a reputation as a place to source offbeat and whimsical gifts...although I defy you to set foot in store and not want to buy for yourself as well! Sonia puts in an incredible amount of time and effort into sourcing a particular mix of beautiful and unexpected pieces, ensuring that new finds are constantly making their way to her shelves. It is this reason, among many, that you will find yourself returning often.

Literally located in the heart of Bendigo, Jess Cola of View Point Handmade Gallery could spend her days gazing dreamily across to Alexandra Fountain, absorbing the energy of the city as it bustles past her window. Luckily for us, she prefers to spend her time in store finding new makers and artists that are excited about sharing their creations with her customers.

Putting together the store was a collaborative effort. Jess explains "it was a huge amount of fun. My Roller Derby team came along to help paint, my Aunt sewed the curtains...and a lot of our fittings are

secondhand or repurposed." Having always known she wanted to work for herself, Jess literally created a space where local makers can rent space on her shelves to display and sell their wares...like a handmade market that is open every day and constantly evolving. In terms of her product range, "it honestly feels as though we have a little something for everyone.

"We do try to curate our offerings (i.e. making sure there is a mix of product types) and we do have an emphasis on local makers." Jess is also passionate about her customers, "every day that we're open I seem to have one conversation that expands my understanding of Bendigo, art and handmade."

Some of my recent favourites are the collection of indie magazines, decorative tape and monster softies. You never know what you will find, and that is half the fun. Don't forget the view from the gallery space via the colourful stairwell!

When Jodie and Belinda were hatching the idea of a local maker's market, the town hall was the top of their location wish list. The stunning heritage building just happened to be situated in an area that used to be called market square, and thus The Square, Bendigo's boutique handmade market, was born.

They both nominate that the most enjoyable yet difficult part of organising the market is sifting through the many applications they receive from people wanting to be stall holders. They work hard at ensuring each of the four markets a year provide us with new sellers and returning favourites, in addition to keeping a high standard of handmade quality. "We take great care to curate each market so there is a fantastic blend of a variety of mediums, and you're buying from people who have actually made and/or designed the product themselves." As to what kind of things visitors will find? Everything from jewellery to toys, art to home wares, even tasty treats to boost your energy levels for more shopping.

The summer market runs over two days, and this is the first year you will see different stall holders on each day so definitely visit twice. If you're lucky enough, you may happen to be there when the afternoon sun catches the delicate gold leafing of the interior, casting a beautiful warm glow across your potential Christmas gifts.

**Bob Boutique: 17 Williamson Street Bendigo**

**View Point Handmade Gallery: 13 View Point Bendigo**

**The Square: December 8 and 9, Town Hall. ■**

