



WORLD MARKETS

Want a city break that's *really* rewarding? Invest in a trip to one of these markets; rich pickings are guaranteed, says **Laura Goodman**

1 For designer handbags **Marché aux Puces de St-Ouen, Paris**

Lazy shoppers need not apply. In this huge market on the northern fringes of Paris, the vintage Louboutin shoes and quilted Chanel bags are present and correct, but they're hidden beneath stacks of tatty comics, dirty boots and old toys.

Undeterred? From central Paris, hop on the Metro to Porte de Clignancourt where a sprawling complex of 16 markets promises the kind of joyous shopping none of Paris's inner arrondissements can touch.

The original market, Vernaison, kicked things off in 1920, as a row of wobbly wooden shacks; it's still going strong, and because its merchants pay less rent than in other parts of the market, it retains low prices and a wonderfully

jumbled ethos. If you have a map, navigate your way to No. 114 for beautiful watches, and to No. 141 for luggage – if not, just rummage at will. Another section, the Jules, is stuffed with handbags, shabby chandeliers and jewels, in the true spirit of the flea market. And house-proud shoppers can find bistro-style furniture at Paul Bert or satiate all their gilt desires at high-end Biron. Before you head back to the hotel to review your swag, reward your heroic shopping efforts with cheese plates and coffee at Le Picolo Café, or gypsy jazz at La Chope des Puces.

● Eurostar (08432 186186, www.eurostar.com) has Paris returns from £69. Hotel Amour (00 33 1 48 783180, www.hotelamourparis.fr) has doubles from £121, room only.





2 For glittering lampshades Grand Bazaar, Istanbul

Aside from a crash course in haggling, you'll need unflinching resolve to handle this giant grid of temptation. Because when you're pondering yet another rug stall, and its owner offers you a cup of tea, it's easy to forget all previous rugs, even if they were prettier.

Comprising 64 streets, 3,600 shops, a mosque, a bank and a post office, the Grand Bazaar should feature at least twice in any Istanbul itinerary – you need one visit to decide what you want, and another to buy (and perhaps one more 'make-sure' trip in between).

Part of the pleasure is getting utterly lost: plunge deep for gold cuffs, sequined belly-dancing outfits, handbags, pashminas, lamps, and ravishing rugs and throws. The further inside you get,

the more likely it is you'll spot the rug to end all rugs; it'll become clear who to buy from when you see the locals bargaining expertly.

If you need refreshment and can't wait for the honeyed pastry and nutty sweets at the nearby Spice Bazaar, stop for Turkish coffee and baklava at Café Bedestan in the Grand Bazaar. And when you're finally nearing bankruptcy, ask a trader to guide you toward the nearest exit; if you try to specify which one, you'll never find it – there are 22.

● *Pegasus (0845 084 8980, www.flypgs.com) flies to Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen from Stansted from £90 return. Book a 'Wonderful Room' or a 'Wow Suite' at the W (00 90 212 381 2121, www.wistanbul.com.tr; doubles from £131, room only).*

3 For magnificent munchies Queen Victoria Market, Melbourne

In a city that loves to lie low, the Queen Victoria Market is a flamboyant display of the great and the goodies that southeast Australia yields. On arrival, eyes pop at gloopy dips and stacked cheeses, before straying to land on giant wine barrels. If you find the overwhelming abundance hard to digest, consider taking the Foodies Dream Tour (00 61 3 9320 5822, www.qvm.com.au; £20pp), which includes coffee and shopping bag, and weaves the bulging precincts with know-how.

Trading begins at 6am, when thoughts of breakfast (or jet lag) will wrench you out of bed. There's mushroom and spinach frittata from Ripe; nutty Castagnaccio cake from Coffea; steaming Malaysian *laksa* (noodle soup) from

Canton Fast Food – whatever does the trick. Later, pick up premium Pinot Noir at ReWine and cheese-and-cherry strudel at the QVM Cake Shop. If your eyes miss the retro Spanish doughnut van, your nostrils will alert you to the thick chocolate dipping sauce within.

And if you only eat one thing, follow the traders' lead to a legendary spot known as 'The Borek Stall'. Its real name is Mezze Table, and its Turkish-style spinach and cheese pastries are flaky and oozy in all the right places.

● *Qantas (08457 747767, www.qantas.com) flies from Heathrow from £683 return. The brand-new Olsen (00 61 3 9040 1222, www.artserieshotels.com.au) has a glass-bottomed pool over Chapel Street and doubles from £160, B&B. >*



4 For vintage dresses **Hell's Kitchen Flea Market, New York**

Never ones to sit tight and let everybody else look fabulous, New Yorkers flood to the weekend market they lovingly call HKFM – on *Vogue's* say-so. There are Tibetan scarves, art works, Indian textiles, maps, antiques and cameras – but the Carrie Bradshaw wannabes devote their time to the stalls lined with vintage clothing (and occasionally Lali Antiques' crystal mirrors).

For a cracking introduction, head directly for Toaster Central, which also sells waffle irons – later you can pick up a polka-dot vintage apron to complete the kitchen

makeover. But for what HKFM does best, locals love Karen Trivelli, whose racks of sunglasses include Oscar de la Renta, Pucci and Christian Dior, with original tags dangling. City Chic Vintage sells designer silk scarves, pocket books, Burberry coats and shoes. And to complete the knock-'em-dead ensemble, stop at Wildpalm, where costume jewellery pieces come courtesy of designers such as Weiss, Trifair and Eisenberg.

The biggest treat of all is The Store With No Walls, which owners Janet and Anthony fill with gorgeous items from

their vintage clothing collection. Seek out their big red banner before you exit on 9th Avenue.

For afters, indulge at nearby Little Pie Company. There's key lime, pumpkin, cherry, Mississippi Mud and the best-selling Sour Cream Apple Walnut – but best hold back if you've just stocked up on skintight dresses.

● *Virgin Atlantic* (0844 209 7777, www.virgin-atlantic.com) flies from Heathrow to JFK from £298 return. The newly opened *Trump Soho* (00 1 212 965 0008, www.trumpsoho.com) has doubles from £249, room only. >





5 For dangling hams Mercat de la Boqueria, Barcelona

Don't wait for the clock to strike an acceptable hour before you eat inside the Boqueria – do it right away, or you'll be distracted by gleaming shellfish, spicy red chorizo and salt cod hanging from the rafters. Most importantly, remember that the 14 stools at tapas bar Pinotxo (stall No. 466) will be taken long before 11am. Here, break all known breakfast conventions with a banquet of lamb ribs, squid in cuttlefish ink and garbanzo beans, along with a glass of Cava or a coffee *cortado*. Chef Albert Asin sources everything from his favourite vendors, and the lively proprietor will direct you to whichever souvenir ingredients you seek.

Pick up hazelnuts, honey, fresh fruit juice and thin-skinned

potatoes for Catalan stew, stopping to examine head-sized hams along the way. Would-be chefs should aim for the back of the market, where La Masia de la Boqueria parcels up deli wonders such as *Nevat* (a Catalan goat's cheese), Iberian acorn-fed ham, Spanish foie gras and their own *confitura de tomate* (tomato confit). Notice fraught-looking chefs from local tapas bars cycling off with huge crates of whatever they've run out of balanced on their handlebars – peaches, pineapples, even live lobsters.

● *Bmibaby* (www.bmibaby.com) has low-cost flights to Barcelona from Birmingham and East Midlands. Destination BCN (00 34 93 514 1950, www.destinationbcn.com) has apartments from £120 for two.

6 For quality bric-a-brac Place du Jeu de Balle, Brussels

The earliest historical records indicate that a market 'for old or used things' opened in this central spot in 1640, and the Place du Jeu de Balle as we know it has been open daily since 1919. Clearly then, it's an old hand at selling old things, and seasoned bargain-hunters eschew Brussels' shiny high streets and Belgian chocolate boutiques in favour of this ancient outlet.

A quick scout around reveals glassware, pictures, furniture, coffee grinders, clothes and general junk, tipped recklessly out of crates or lying on blankets. Around 200 vendors show up daily, on a strictly casual basis, so who knows what you might find; aside from books you didn't know you wanted to read, and records

you didn't know you collected, you might leave with an antique carriage clock or a bag stuffed with Brussels' best rip-offs.

For the best buys, arrive at 7am as the dealers set up. They depart at lunchtime – your cue to head for nearby Rue Haute, where pretty shops sell bric-a-brac in a slightly more chic setting. At No. 207, Haute Antiques has '20s speakeasy furniture and retro telephones at reasonable prices. Spend all your spare pennies at No. 75 on perfect truffles and pralines from Leonidas. ● *Eurostar* (08432 186186, www.eurostar.com) has Brussels returns from £69. Stay at *Hotel Café Pacific* (00 32 2 213 0080, www.hotelcafe-pacific.be; doubles from £129, B&B) in the hip Dansaert district. ■

PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY, ALAMY, AXIOM, PHOTOSHOT

