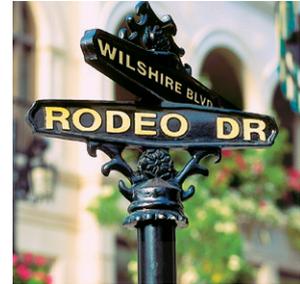


Streets of gold

Why settle for a run-of-the-mill mall when you can visit some of the world's most exclusive shopping streets? Offering history, glamour and opulent wares, **Georgina Lavers** provides a guide to some of the best



'Beverly Hills' perfume that featured 70 pounds of caviar.

Nowadays, as well as scores of curious tourists, the area offers the discerning shopper a more curated retail experience. Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Dior and Yves Saint Laurent all have dressing rooms that seek to recreate the French salon of times past. The dressing rooms are apartments that sit above the store's boutique, which require an exclusive invitation to visit.

On the street, luxury still abounds. The House Of Bijan, otherwise known as 'The Most Expensive Store In The World', has a US\$12m storefront and a strict appointment policy. Well-known clients of the store can have their names engraved on the front window, but the true attraction for customers and tourists alike is the custom Bijan Bugatti Veyron, often seen parked out front.

AVENUE MONTAIGNE, PARIS

Once home to the androgynous femme fatale Marlene Dietrich, and named after the Renaissance author Michel de Montaigne, the very pavestones of Avenue Montaigne are steeped in history.

Located at the 8th arrondissement in Paris, the street is home to classic names in high fashion such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Prada, Fendi, Valentino and Ralph Lauren, who have their ready-to-wear stores on the small street. Or, for those who prefer to have a one-of-a-kind piece, brands such as Dior, Scherrer or Ungaro have upstairs salons, closed to the public, where seamstresses can work for months on the

Above and below: Rodeo Drive is home to several luxury fashion labels **Left:** Head to Avenue Montaigne for chic retail therapy

RODEO DRIVE, BEVERLY HILLS

The year was 1906, when Burton Green and a group of investors bought a piece of land on a ranch, turning it into a quiet suburban street with hardware stores, beauty salons, and a gas station or two.

Fast-forward over a century and the land is now known as Beverly Hills. Its quiet street has become Rodeo Drive – the iconic boulevard made famous by *Pretty Woman* and universally recognized as home to all of the heavy hitters in luxury fashion. Armani was one of the first arrivals, capturing the eighties consumerist zeitgeist with a launch party for a



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creation of just one haute couture piece. As well as the internationally known names, the avenue houses smaller, more exclusive stores. Head to S.T. Dupont for its Chinese lacquer lighters and pens, Harel for handmade shoes, and Caron for a bottle of Tabac Blond – first produced in 1919.

There is more than just shopping – the Hôtel Plaza Athénée Paris offers luxurious living in the heart of Avenue Montaigne, while L’Avenue, offers patio dining with a clientele that includes Kanye West and Lionel Ritchie.

CANTON ROAD, KOWLOON

Canton Road is not for the faint of heart. Lying just west of Hong Kong’s Nathan Road, the major thoroughfare is a cacophony of noise from cars and pedestrians from noon to night. To escape the din, head indoors to one of the many malls on the street.

Harbour City on the southern Kowloon peninsula – is Hong Kong’s largest, with a floor space of over two million square feet. As well as women’s fashion (Aquascutum, Bauhaus, Chanel, Gucci, etc), the mall also contains the biggest ‘Toys R Us’ in the city.

The road also has the distinction of being home to Hong Kong’s only in-town outlet mall. Hong Kong China City has around 20 outlet stores. I.T outlet is one of the best; shoppers can find items from Alexander McQueen, See by Chloe, Maison Martin Margiela, Acne and Isabel Marant for around 70 per cent off the original price.

COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE

Existing for 170 years, Collins Street in Melbourne boasts both impressive Victorian architecture and a good selection of establishments that include finance, high-end fashion and several theatres.



Left and below: Brave the bustling streets on Hong Kong’s Canton Road
Bottom and below left: Melbourne’s Collins Street is famed for its Victorian architecture and high-end fashion stores



Accessible by tram, the street is home to the shopping centres Collins Place, Block Arcade, Georges on Collins, Collins 234, and Centreway. Most brands’ flagship stores are located there, including Prada, Montblanc, Tiffany, Dior, Gucci, Cartier and many more, and the weary shopper also has the option of checking out a production at the Athenaeum or Regent theatres afterwards.

Additionally, the street contains some more specialist boutiques, including The Chocolate Box, which began in 1958, and The Hour Glass, which has emerged as Asia’s leading specialist luxury watch retailer. ■

