



Showtime

Bond Street, Fifth Avenue, Place Vendôme or Ginza might seem like the natural choice when shopping for jewels. Yet some of the best deals are to be found at the world's jewellery exhibitions, which are now opening up to VIP clientele. **Rachael Taylor** reports

The idea of a drafty exhibition centre may not appeal, but these spaces are routinely transformed into luxurious hubs when jewellers like Van Cleef & Arpels or Chopard roll in, so there's no need to fear. Plus, a champagne bar is never more than a few steps away.

It is at shows like Baselworld and the Hong Kong International Jewellery Show that many new jewellery collections are first

launched. And in the spirit of showmanship, exhibiting ateliers will often offer exclusive prices or host lavish customer events for those in the know.

BASELWORLD

BaselWorld has long been considered the king of watch and jewellery shows. Founded in the charming Swiss town of Basel, an hour's drive from Zurich, this mecca of jewels and timepieces

can trace its history back to 1917, and each year it welcomes tens of thousands of professional buyers and private clients.

Regular visitors to the show, which will run from March 21st to 26th in 2019, will notice that this year's edition of the exhibition is somewhat smaller than in previous years. This is due to much of the watch contingent (including Swatch Group and its 18 brands) jumping ship for more intimate exhibitions, but this is good news for the feet – and the jewels.

Jewellery brands that were previously a substantial walk away will now be brought into an area within the main hall dubbed Show Plaza. Here, there will be

Above: The most prestigious watch and jewellery brands present their latest innovations and creations at Baselworld

three catwalk shows a day, with models dripping in diamonds, and enormous screens showing off close-up views of the jewels on offer. New additions to this year's Baselworld also include a selection of restaurants open to the public, so you don't need to get an invitation from a brand to one of the private restaurants hidden within multi-story stands to experience in-show fine dining. Although one should always try to time an appointment with lunch – Italian jeweller Marco Bicego's stand is famed for its bountiful selection of antipasti and fine wine.

Though the full line up is yet to be announced, highlights from the 2019 Baselworld jewellery halls include the return of German jewellery brands Gellner and Jörg Heinz, which specialise in pearls and handmade fine jewels. IsabelleFa will also make

a return to the show for the first time in three years, with its fashionable, chain-inspired neckpieces and bangles.

"Baselworld remains one of the most important networking opportunities for our group," says Karl-Friedrich Scheufele, Chopard co-president.

"It represents a unique window to meet our international business and media partners in a very condensed time frame."

And for true jewellery enthusiasts, a trip to the Baselworld loose gem hall is not to be missed. Here, you will find fist-sized coloured gemstones, exquisite rarities, diamonds of every creed, and endless strings of pearls. It's a gem hunter's paradise.

"The show has established itself over the years as an important meeting place for the international jewellery scene and it has successfully positioned itself in the luxury brands segment, says Constantin Wild, an independent gem dealer.

baselworld.com



Far right: Yoko London pearl necklace Right: Bulgari at Baselworld Below: Sarah Zhuang Trio Butterfly Earrings Bottom Left: xxx xxxx exhibited at the Hong Kong show

HONG KONG

One of the most colossal jewellery shows on the global calendar can be found in Hong Kong during February. With more than 4,500 exhibitors offering everything from loose gems to luxury jewels, it is a rich – and seemingly boundless – maze of sparkling rooms.

This behemoth is in fact two shows rolled into one – the Hong Kong International Jewellery Show and the Hong Kong International Diamond, Gem & Pearl Show, which this year run from February 28th to March 4th (the gem show closes two days earlier on March 2nd). One ticket will grant you access to both shows, and as well as browsing, buying is encouraged.

The majority of jewellers who show here are not big-name brands,



but they do carry serious jewels and will offer special prices at the shows. A healthy representation of Asian manufacturers also means that should you require a bespoke piece of jewellery made, this is a great place to find the right atelier for the job. This can be particularly handy should you find a gemstone that you simply can't live without within the gem show next door.

Designers to see at the Hong Kong show include Yoko London, a British pearl brand that specialises in rare pearls and will launch a collection of jewels that mix



baguette-cut diamonds with South Sea and Akoya pearls. "The Hong Kong show brings the Eastern and Western jewellery trade together," says Michael Hakimian, CEO Yoko London.

"It is an important event for us, as we buy a large quantity of raw materials there, and we meet with many Asian clients to present our newest Yoko London pieces."

While Sarah Zhuang, a local jewellery brand with global ambitions, will unveil its latest collection, Fantasy Garden, at the show. This new line is inspired by women who are resilient, adaptable and strong, and features the must-have jewel motif of the moment – bugs. If you've bought a piece of Sarah Zhuang jewellery in the past or buy two pieces or more at the show, you will qualify for a VIP discount of 15% - just one of the many bargains to be sought out within Hong Kong's jewel metropolis.

"The show creates quite a buzz and is a good mixture of practical and aspirational," says Claudia Bradby, founder and designer, Claudia Bradby.

You can wander the fine jewellery halls and see breathtaking design, and then roll up your sleeves to select just the right pearl, sometimes rummaging through mountains of product to find just the right piece. And it's always good to be in Hong Kong - very much a 'can do' city for me."

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