

Shopping with an African edge

Text Roxzanne van Eyk

For a genuine African gift, there is obviously no better place to shop than in Africa, but when it comes to finding distinctive, premier quality items, Sandton City in Johannesburg's upmarket northern suburbs rates highly. The prestigious shopping mall of Sandton City offers many shops with curio items, African-influenced art and wares for the home, as well as traditional gifts with an African edge such as genuine animal skin handbags, metal and beaded jewellery and traditional African garments.

African Origins is not a typical curio shop but rather geared towards offering gifts such as T-shirts, handbags and jewellery with a difference. Among some of the unique items are stainless steel beaded cutlery and colourful ceramics from Limpopo. Here bowls and cups are offered in a variety of hues with lime green, red and white among the colour variations. There are also embroidered placemats and cushions designed by African embroidery artists Maria, Thandi and Meacy. Jewellery in the store comes complete with semi-precious stones or beads. The beaded jewellery is sourced from KwaZulu-Natal, while the metal, beaded and jewellery with semi-precious stones is sourced from Cape Town. The store also offers carvings of colonial figures from Congo and ethnic Ndebele dolls from

Mpumalanga, which are wrapped in beaded blankets with rings around their necks and legs.

As its name suggests, Indaba Lifestyle offers wares for the home, including linen, tableware, cutlery, crockery, fabrics and pictures. Also on display are silver plates with beadwork as well as cutlery in materials including brass and copper. There is an especially funky range of crockery designed by Hennie Meyer of Cape Town, which includes purely decorative teapots and coffeepots. For attractive trimmings there is a range of plates, pictures frames and bracelets

with Ostrich egg shell inlay, as well as hand embroidered cushion covers and wall hangings.

For clothing with an African edge, Out of Africa – Oasis is a specialised clothing store with popular and unique African garments. The store offers the famous "Mandela shirts" with the signature mandarin collar and a range of dresses including traditional kaftans. There is also a variety of T-shirt designs, including the Big Five, African Queen, African Goddess and routes in South Africa. For the ladies there are a range of handbags made of genuine zebra or springbok animal skin, as well as sandals for the South African terrain including springbok leather sandals.

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