Little-Known Markets That Could Make You Rich: Secrets of the Silk Road Trader



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An International Living report

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Introduction

Global trade has been described as the hot new enterprise of the 21st century. In reality, it's not a new industry at all. Not when you think about the ancient caravans of the desert and camels bearing cargoes of salt, silk, and exotic spices. Or the Phoenicians, who exported their precious purple dye all across the Roman Empire. Or Captain Bligh and his South Seas breadfruits...Sir Walter Raleigh and tobacco. When it comes to trade, the world actually went global a long, long time ago.

The most famous example of global trading started over 2,000 years ago. It spanned continents, introduced the East to the West and allowed a whole new way of life which had a major impact on our world today. It was, of course, the Silk Road.

The Silk Road is an extensive interconnected network of trade routes across the Asian continent connecting East, South, and Western Asia with the Mediterranean world, including North Africa and Europe.

It originated in the second century BC as a defense mechanism by China's Han Dynasty. They extended their military defenses further into Central Asia from 135 to 90 BC in order to protect trade caravans which were attacked by Central Asian tribes. Chan Ch'ien, the first known Chinese traveler to make contact with the Central Asian tribes, later came up with the idea to expand the silk trade to include these lesser tribes and therefore forge alliances with these Central Asian nomads. Because of this idea, the Silk Road was born.

Extending over 5,000 miles the Silk Routes (commonly known as the "Silk Road") were not only conduits for silk, but also for many other products, especially luxuries such as silk, satins, and other fine fabrics, musk and other perfumes, spices, medicines, jewels, glassware and even rhubarb. The route spanned China, Central Asia, Northern India, and the Parthian and Roman Empires and included the modern-day countries of Turkey, Russia, Iraq, Iran, Japan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Greece, and Italy. The Chinese would trade their silk with the Indians for precious stones and metals such as jade, gold, and silver, and the Indians would trade the silk with the Roman Empire.

Although the term "the Silk Road" implies a continuous journey, very few who traveled the route traversed it from end to end. No single route was taken; crossing Central Asia several different branches developed, passing through different oasis settlements. The Silk Road branched off into two routes, the northern route and the southern route and later some sea routes were added (although they are not "officially" part of the Silk Road).

As well as being an important trade route, the Silk Road was a very important path for the exchange of cultural and technological ideas by linking traders, merchants, pilgrims, missionaries, soldiers, nomads, and urban dwellers between China, India, Persia, Egypt, and Mediterranean countries for over 2,000 years. They brought with them new products, technologies, knowledge, cultures, and aesthetic principles, and ideas...Buddhism traveled from India to China by the Silk Road.

Marco Polo was probably the most famous Westerner to travel the Silk Road routes. He spent 24 years traveling the routes of this famous road in the late 1200s, and said this upon his return to Europe:

"I believe it was God's will that we should come back, so that men might know the things that are in the world, since,...no other man, Christian or Saracen, Mongol or pagan, has explored so much of the world as Messer Marco, son of Messer Niccolo Polo, great and noble citizen of the city of Venice."

The decline of this famous trade route came about with the discovery of a sea route from Europe to Asia in the late 15th century around South Africa's Cape of Good Hope. It dealt a damaging blow to the Silk Road trade. Ocean-going vessels could convey the bulkier essential goods and raw materials that caravans on the Silk Road could not. Sea trade also entailed less cost and experienced less harassment and plunder than land-based trade.

But for over 7,000 miles and for hundreds of years the world's main commercial artery provided a link between some of the greatest civilizations the world has ever seen—the Chinese, Mongolian, Indian, Persian, Roman, Greek, Byzantine, Mesopotamian and Egyptian.

Nowadays, global trade is a little easier than it was back in Marco's day. In fact, it couldn't be easier. Online auction houses like eBay mean we can buy and sell goods anywhere in the world with a few taps of a keyboard. If you've ever fancied yourself as a modern-day Silk Road trader, then we're here to tell you it is entirely possible...and easy!

Consider for a moment. What kind of things do you buy when you travel? (And we all buy something!) Looking around our own homes, we can see we're doing a great job at helping out global trade already. Chunky silver jewelry, a display case of semi-precious stones, and a wrought-ironwork

sun from Mexico...a black leather jacket and a witch puppet with flashing eyes and a horrible cackle from Poland...lavender soap and a replica gargoyle from France...Bohemian crystal goblets and a crystal globe from the Czech Republic...a voodoo doll from New Orleans...amber beads from Latvia...cushions from Belgium...a stone Sheila Na Gig figurine from Northern Ireland...a wooden bottle-stopper with a dangly green frog from Italy...brightly colored table mats from Martinique in the Caribbean.

Now think about the stores back home that you've seen stocked with unusual merchandise from around the world. Pottery from Nicaragua...marquetry chess sets, soft kid-leather handbags, and carved cedar-wood screens from Morocco... Panamanian hammocks...curious Indian god statues with eight arms and elephants' heads.

All these unique goods come from somewhere overseas—and someone is supplying them.

Why shouldn't that someone be you?

Eye-catching things and curiosities will always sell. However, not everybody has the time or the money to travel to far-flung corners of the world and shop for treasures. If something appeals to you, chances are that it will also appeal to many shoppers back home.

If you've ever brought back souvenirs from a trip...gone in search of a memento that's not a kitschy tourist trinket...then you've got the instinct—and the first key—you need to create your very own Silk Road, one that can lead to amazing profits.

Come on the shopping adventure of a lifetime

The first, and most important, thing you need to do if you are to become a "Silk Road trader" is to source your products. These are the backbone of your operation...the more exotic, unusual, and quirky...the better. And where better to find these things than in a flea market.

Albert LaFarge's article "What Is A Flea Market?" asserts that the term is "a literal translation of the French marche aux puces, an outdoor bazaar in Paris, France, named after those pesky little parasites...that infested the upholstery of old furniture brought out for sale."

Perhaps that is the case at some markets (probably best to avoid those ones), but did you know that flea markets can also be a goldmine? All around the world there are flea markets that have the potential to help you become filthy rich. We've all rummaged through flea market stalls, mostly you probably just found some other person's junk, but if you know the right flea markets to rummage through, then you could be on your way to amazing profits.

Think of it as modern-day treasure hunting.

We have compiled a list of the world's best flea markets...places where everything is so cheap, you'll feel like you are stealing from the market traders. These are free-wheeling, rogue-trading markets from all around the world. For example, "the only stall in London licensed by Scotland Yard to sell stolen goods"...a 300-year old "thieves market" that sells everything from gold to rare books and computers...and the best place on earth to pick up antique beads made in Venice, Bohemia, and Germany.

Read on and find out where in the world you can find these amazing treasure troves of trinkets, collectibles, exotic antiques and all kinds of bric-a-brac.

The Silk Road Markets

China

The best place to get pearl earrings for less than \$2

Hongqiao Flea Market, (the northern gate of the Temple of Heaven, Chongwen district, Beijing), is a multi-story market full of noisy vendors and often fanatical customers. Restaurateurs can buy live crab from vendors on the basement floor; the ground floor caters to electronics buyers; purses are well-represented on the second floor; and the third floor deals in everything—shoes, jewelry, jade, teapots, as well as a rather remarkable pearl market.

But Hongqiao is best known for its pearls...giving it the nickname The Pearl Market. With three stories of pearls you can find freshwater, seawater, black, pink, and white pearls for a variety of quality and price. You can get a pair of pearl earrings here for as little as 15 yuan (that's about \$2). Fanghua Pearls (No. 4318), on the fourth floor, displays quality necklaces and earrings, with photos of Barbara Bush and Margaret Thatcher shopping there to prove it. Fanghua has a second store devoted to fine jade and precious stones.

Beijing's best place for everything...including the kitchen sink!

Affectionately referred to as the "dirt market", the Panjiayuan Flea Market, Third Ring Road, Chaoyang District was so called because in the beginning peasants would cart in objects they supposedly unearthed themselves, squat in the market's open field and hawk their wares—no licenses, no stalls, no facilities (some say it was the place where wealthy families who had fallen upon hard times came under the cover of darkness in order to exchange their belongings for a few yuan).

The peasants are gone now, and the market grounds are no longer just an open field, in fact it got a makeover recently, but there are still plenty of merchants selling everything from antiques to paintings and a great deal of the boisterous atmosphere remains. With over 3,000 stalls the market is

divided into four zones: handicrafts; ancient and old furniture; ancient and old calligraphic works, paintings, books and periodicals; and ancient architectures.

Anything you could ever want from China, you'll find here. Life-size terracotta warriors, Buddhist statues, old opium pipes, posters, postcards, second-hand instruments, old Peking Opera costumes...and one vendor specializes in old, grimy sinks. This is the place to buy any Chairman Mao memorabilia you could ever want, and also clay teapots in the shape of boats houses, Buddha, and all the animals of the Chinese zodiac. The prices are still rock bottom and the vibe is pure, dirty fun. Hilary Clinton even shopped here once!

Russia

Moscow's matryoshka dolls and more

The Izmailovsky Souvenir Market, is a full day out and a must-see for all visitors or treasure hunters. Whether you buy or not, you're sure to have a stimulating experience. The enormous market is just a few minutes walk from the Partisanskaya Metro stop and is surrounded by a mock wooden fortress.

Street performers abound, as do interesting vendors and customers—it's all part of the show. Choose from costume jewelry, Cold War chess sets, Soviet memorabilia, original art, and, of course, hand painted *matryoshka* dolls. By all means, get into the act and do a bit of haggling yourself! This market is massive, but you're in luck: the area boasts loads of relaxing cafés (try freshly barbequed Georgian *shashliki* (kebabs) or warm up with a glass of Russian cognac) at which to set your packages down and take a breather. Only open at weekends.

Armenia

The place to pick up an Armenian masterpiece

With everything from surgical instruments to drill bits, remote controls to rugs, the Vernissage market in the Armenian capital of Yerevan literally has it all. This year-round, weekend market was originally started by Armenian artists in the 1980s to showcase their work. It has now grown into a market that not only sells art but a whole host of other treasures. The artists are still a major part of this market. You can talk with them about their work, buy a painting and commission one to be painted for you.

If you are on the hunt for some true Armenian merchandise, it's best to skip past the hardware section of the market (beaters for electric mixers, nuts and bolts, medical instruments!) and head for the crafts section. This is THE place in Yerevan to purchase souvenirs. Pick up a Nuri Nuri doll, a rag doll that when hung in a home will bring good luck, or an Armenian Duduk or Dhol, two traditional instruments that are played at every Armenian wedding and celebration.

Many of these tradespeople started selling at the market as a means of survival after the collapse of the Soviet Union and their country's subsequent independence.

The market is actually divided into two parts; the artists can be found in a square near the Opera House and the rest of the market is to be found near Republic Square. It is open Saturday and Sunday starting at 10 a.m.

Israel

Tel Aviv's most jaw-dropping deals

In this world, there are deals...and then there are steals. If you're on a haggling roll at the Jaffa Flea Market (Shuk Ha Pishpishim), Yefet and Aleystion Streets, Old Jaffa, you may get merchandise for one third of the (already low) asking price. This market sells almost everything.

Merchandise does vary, but copper, brass, old Persian tiles, and jewelry are always to be found, as well as old family photo albums, obsolete Palestinian passports, used jeans and clothing from India. Items such as handmade scarves in every hue, pillow covers, bright tunics and ponchos, as well as jewelry made from silver, wood and plastic all have excellent eBay trading potential.

Bargaining is the order of the day; feel free to indulge in lengthy haggling. This place is a hive of activity from Sunday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is said that you'll get the best bargains if you are the first customer on the first day of the week (Sunday) as the seller hopes a quick sale will bring him luck for the remainder of the week.

Forbidden markets off the Silk Road

England

Petticoat Lane-Noisy, vibrant, and lots of fun

A particular vendor at the Petticoat Lane Flea Market, (Aldgate or Aldgate East tube, Middlesex Street, London; Sundays only), has been known to display a sign advertising his business as "the only stall in London licensed by Scotland Yard to sell stolen goods." Whether this is a dose of cockney humor or not, it sets the tone for this jovial place, as much street fair as flea market.

The market is named after the petticoats and lace once sold there by the Huguenots who came to London from France. The street was renamed Middlesex Street in 1830 by the Victorians who wanted to avoid references to women's underwear, but the original name had stuck. The market was always unpopular with the London authorities, being largely unregulated and in some senses, illegal. As recently as the 1930s, police cars and fire engines were driven down The Lane, with alarm bells ringing, to disrupt the market. The rights of the market were only finally protected by Act of Parliament in 1936.

"The Lane" was always renowned for the "patter" and showmanship of the market traders. Some, selling crockery, would pile an entire setting onto a large plate, and then send the lot, high into the air, catching the construction on its way down. This was to demonstrate the skill of the vendor, and the robustness of the porcelain.

This place is noisy, vibrant, and a good deal of fun. Prepare for a good-natured haggle as you eye antiques, jewelry, factory seconds, bric-a-brac, and the like. Petticoat Lane specializes in cheap clothes, shoes, and leather jackets. Even if you come home empty-handed, you'll have had a great day out. Open Sundays, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

New Caledonian Market

Started in 1855, the New Caledonian Market (also known as Bermondsey Square Antiques Market) Bermondsey Square, Southwark, London, SE1 4QB; nearest Underground station is London Bridge, is now a busy weekly market where you can find much loved secondhand and historic objects.

Stalls start to line the square—formerly the site of Bermondsey Abbey—from 4 a.m. and trading starts at 5 a.m.; arrive early to get the best of the pickings. The opening hours of the Bermondsey Market from 6 a.m. until noon (some sources say 4 a.m. until 2 p.m.) reflect the ancient law of *market ouvert*, which was abolished in 1995. Under this law, in a number of designated markets, including Bermondsey Market, if an item was sold between sunrise and sunset then it could not have its history of ownership questioned, so stolen goods could be traded and good title would pass to the purchaser. Some observers suggest that New Caledonian Market's decline in trade over later years coincided with the abolition of this law.

Treasures can be found hidden among the bric-a-brac and dusty old items so you never know what you might find. Among the furniture, silver, jewelry, china and glass from Georgian, Victorian, and Edwardian times are photo albums full of postcards, paintings and walking sticks with their silver handles well worn by years of service. But the prize for most unusual find here has to go to a two million year old fossilized turtle shell.

France

Paris' dizzying best

You may not find the deals you once would at Le Marché aux Puces St- Ouen, Métro: Porte de Clignancourt; open Saturday through Monday; *website: www.parispuces.com*, but this renowned flea market still offers some amazing finds. For more than 100 years, this square-mile maze of alleyways has housed a wide variety of vendors, from antiques and second-hand clothing dealers to junky household appliances and bric-a-brac hawkers.

What you find to be a bargain is largely to do with personal taste as well as endurance: there is a lot of stuff to pick through and, as the saying goes, "one man's junk..."

Made up of 15 different markets, this is the largest flea market in Europe. For example the Paul Bert Market has almost 220 stands, stretched out over seven aisles. Goods here are sold "as it comes" and it is a favorite with famous decorators who rummage through the eclectic mix of wares on offer. According to the website, "Do not be surprised to find yourself tagging along behind the luscious,

sculptural figure of Sharon Stone, out for a day on the town with her Yankee friends, or other stars looking for inspiration to decorate their home in California or their loft in New York."

If collections of saucy corsets and underwear is more your thing, then don't miss the Dauphine Market. Its 6,000 square meters of floor space holds around 180 antiques and bric-a-brac merchants. Here you can also find a Renaissance period dresser, rare texts from the Torah, not to mention thousands of rare books, 18th century gilt wood pieces or inspired decorative pieces from the 1930s and 1940s, and vintage or industrial art.

Covering 7 hectares, this is the largest antiques flea market in the world. Between 120,000 and 150,000 visitors from the world over come here every weekend. It's best to pace yourself here—take frequent breaks at the numerous hole-in-the-wall cafés in the area.

Also part of the Paris Saint-Ouen Flea Market and perhaps the most authentic of Paris' flea markets, Le Jules Vallès, 7 rue Jules Vallès, has the feel of a grandma's attic. A somewhat haphazard array of dusty collectibles fills these two covered aisles: military uniforms, antique weapons, posters, books, bronze statues, china dolls, as well as fascinating memorabilia. The market contains 120 stands and is open very early on Thursday and Friday mornings, but is for trade professionals. The general public can come along though and watch the dealers in action.

Jules Vallès has retained a traditional spirit. The market, with its no-frills stands, is entirely without pretension, looking more like attic space than anything else. Recently, the market got a lick of paint but the style has remained unaffected.

Portugal

Lisbon's best place to steal from thieves

The Feira da Ladra, Campo de Santa Clara, Alfama, translates as Market of Female Thieves. Some 300 years ago, female thieves known as *sovaqueiras*, concealed illegal goods and sold them at a market in Lisbon's Rossio Square. While the present day market is on the up-and-up, you can still find a real steal here, particularly when it comes to bronze, copper, and gold items. This market is jam-packed with antiques, rugs, new and used clothes, vintage tiles (these are great), riding spurs, pottery, as well as a lot of rather useless junk. It's also a great place to pick up hand-crocheted doilies, embroidered napkins, even large tablecloths.

This open-air street market is a great place to experience the hustle, bustle and haggling of the day's trading. It is often said that to get the best bargains you need to get there early, but many people simply go down to browse through the bric-a-brac on show at many of the stalls. Check out

Alberto Gourgel and his "vintage" suitcases decorated with images from original Portuguese fashion magazines. Opening hours are Tuesday and Saturday from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Ghana

A bead-lover's paradise

Russian Blues and Pink Pineapples. Bohemian Kakambas and Venetian Ghosts. Bumblebees... Baby Seafoam Vaselines...Whiteheart Turquoise Blues...Ethiopian Redeye Skunks. Dutch Watermelon Chevrons and Venetian Rosettas...

Just the names might make you want to hunt them down. Beads sourced from Ghana aren't only beloved by jewelry designers and beadwork artists. Go searching on Google and you'll undoubtedly be amazed by the number of enthusiasts and collectors that are out there. Ghanaian beads actually come from all over the world. Antique beads made in Venice, Bohemia, Germany, and Holland were used by Europeans to trade for slaves, gold, and spices.

Arab traders used Indian, Islamic, Egyptian, and Roman beads. Traders from other African countries such as Mali, Mauritania, and Nigeria used beads made of agate, carnelian, gold, Kiffa powder glass, and even granite.

The biggest bead market in the whole of Africa is held on Thursdays in the Ghanaian town of Koforidua. New beads, antique beads, glass beads, plastic beads. Experts say traders inflate their prices by at least 50% for foreigners, so haggling is vital—and you get a better deal by paying in dollars.

Another antique bead hunting ground is the daily Kejetia Market in the town of Kumasi. Factories make modern bauxite and powder glass beads and there seems to be an export market for these, too. According to Ghana's National Commission on Culture "foreign bead dilettantes" also visit factory sites to make bulk purchases. For more details, visit *www.ghanaculture.gov.gh*.

Singapore

Every shopper's paradise

Singapore is world-famous for its excellent shopping...and its flea markets and fairs are no exception. As you would expect in a city known for its discipline and cleanliness, many of Singapore's markets are regulated and superbly organized.

One of the city's best known fairs is The Shophouse Fair, 22 Lock Rd, Gillman Village (off Depot Rd, 6pm-midnight). Held on the last Thursday of every month, it features up to 60 vendors selling a wide variety of goods, from women's fashion to children's toys, to fine art and quality wines. Held in an old converted army barracks, the Shophouse has valet parking and vendors will even accept credit cards.

Another of Singapore's most celebrated fairs is the Mille Fleur Bazaar, Central Square at Clarke Quay. If you like your flea markets with a touch of glamour and you like the idea of shopping in the dark, then this is the fair for you. The Mille Fleur is a night market held for two nights every month. Vendors are carefully selected and sell jewelry, cosmetics, bags, shoes, holistic products and much more. If all the scouring through stalls has taken it out of you, you can stop for a manicure, some nail art or even a henna tattoo.

For a list of other Singapore markets, see www.Singaporefairs.com.

If you prefer your markets more "down and dirty" then try the Sungei Road "Thieves Market", so called because of the dubious means by which the vendors came into possession of their goods! Many Singaporeans will tell you that if you had goods stolen from your house, you could go down to the Sungei Road and buy them back. Nowadays, the authorities have stepped in though, and all vendors must declare that they are not selling stolen merchandise. This market, started in the 1930s, is not an organized market. No license is required and goods are often laid out on a mat on the ground. Over 400 vendors here sell everything from vinyl records, old electrical goods, and old record players to battered woks, photos, and clothing. It may all seem like junk, but look carefully and you may just come across a piece of treasure.

The Sungei Road market is open daily from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The best time to go is weekend afternoons.

How to Get Rich as a Silk Trader

We here at *International Living* have our very own Silk Road trader. Her name is Steenie Harvey. She recently went to Anatolia in Asian Turkey to explore some trading routes of her own.

She found everything for sale in its bazaars—from hand-knotted rugs and regional kilims to mother-of-pearl tables and mirrors, traditional copperware, ceramics, and spices. It's a shoppers paradise...and best of all, you can make money by selling the items you buy here back home.

Made in Turkey—Import-export opportunities that can triple your money back home

"The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold...his cohorts gleaming in purple and gold."

No sheen of spears, thankfully. However, this baggy-trousered trader has gold teeth and wears a lavender headscarf the size of a tablecloth. Is he descended from Assyrians?

I'm wearing a lavender tablecloth, too. Embroidered with silver threadwork and sequins, mine cost \$4. Maybe locals buy cheaper, but the haggling did start at \$6.40. These cotton scarves are trademark headgear for Sanliurfa's men and women. The reputed birthplace of biblical Abraham, Sanliurfa lies in Turkey's southeast, in what was once upper Mesopotamia.

I'd donned the scarf/shawl to investigate Balikli Gol, Sanliurfa's mosque-dotted lakeside gardens. In Islamic belief, Assyria's King Nemrut threw Abraham into a fire here. Through divine intervention, the fire turned into water, the firewood into fish. The lake waters are thick with carp, fattened by pilgrims. Look, but don't touch. Apparently fish molestation results in blindness.

I exchange a *merhaba*—hello—with the trader. He offers a sample of his wares: a hand-rolled cigarette from a sack of tobacco. At \$18.60 for three kilos (just over 6 pounds) it's tempting, but importing tobacco is illegal...

Recently I left Europe behind and headed into Anatolia: Asian Turkey. Before me lay the Silk Road...the sun-baked lands of Allah...the forgotten kingdoms of the Hittites and Assyrians. Few import-export trails are more rewarding. Or exotically unpredictable. Anatolia's southeastern borderlands snuggle up against Syria, Iraq, and Iran. No mass tourism here, that's for sure.

Well before Marco Polo's journeys, caravans of precious goods traveled the Silk Road. Linking China to Europe, this wasn't a single road, but a network of routes. Most passed through Asia Minor and what is present-day Turkey.

During Ottoman Empire rule, *caravanserais* were built. These secure trading courtyards had stabling for camels and mules and accommodation for merchants. There was generally a mosque, a *hamam* (Turkish bath), and a *bedestan* (covered hall), where goods were securely stored.

Old *caravanserais* often became a town's Kapali Carsi, a Grand Bazaar-style market. Down narrow passages, men pound copper cauldrons; animal hides await skinning; artisans inlay wood with mother of pearl. Everywhere smells of spices and sizzling kebabs. Booths yield saddles and saddle blankets...gleaming copperware...blocks of dusky green olive oil soap...air-dried beef sausages... cheap shoes and clothing...waterfalls of sequined and embroidered fabrics.

Similar wares are grouped together. Knives here, carpets there, textiles and leather farther on. You come across calligraphers adorning marbled paper. Script work can be artistically decorated with a perfect pink tulip; sometimes an arabesque of Arabic gets hidden inside the stylized shape of a bird.

Scepters and fur-trimmed capes? Some vendors have what appear to be sultan costumes for boys. But they're not—they're circumcision ceremony outfits. It's usually done between the ages of 6 and 10, depending when families can afford the expense. I got some odd looks when asking, but the cheapest quote for the full regalia was \$120.

Guidebook advice to "never start talking prices unless you intend to buy" is nonsense. How else can you make comparisons?

The carpet town of Kayseri

Anatolia's crown jewels are hand-knotted rugs and regional kilims—flatweave wool-on-wool or wool-on-cotton rugs. Motifs are symbolic. A ram's horn, for example, denotes fertility, heroism, and power.

So I flew from Istanbul to Kayseri, a carpet production center. On a Silk Road junction, the city connected central Anatolia to Iran and Turkmenistan. Known in Roman times as Caesarea, it's within day-trip distance of Cappadocia's fairy chimneys and early Christian underground cities.

Beside a dark fortress, Kayseri's bazaar leads into 16th-century Vezir Hani *caravanserai*. Above its central courtyard are workshops for carpet restoration and tailoring. Mustafa Fizilman makes caps—baseball, baker's boy, and old-fashioned flat caps. He sells them for an equivalent 80 cents apiece to Cappadocia souvenir shops—who charge at least \$2.50. Those crafted from woven kilim rugs could be fashion items...

Kayseri's Vezir Hani is still a wool-trading center. Some weavers buy yarn here and then sell their carpets at auction. Annoyingly, the Sunday auctions are closed to outsiders. In other cases, rug merchants (who then buy the finished carpets) act as wool suppliers.

Lighter than rugs, kilims fold easily—but nowadays few are made by nomads as dowry items. The same goes for kilim cushions and saddlebags. "Handmade" can be a misleading term. Rugs and kilims are mostly produced in workshop conditions for foreign markets.

Kayseri has industrial-scale carpet enterprises, too. Factory-made from a kind of jacquard for material, you'll see prayer mats for as little as \$9.

Through Internet research, I came across Chinese factories flogging \$14 to \$18 "antique kilims" by the container-load. Be careful when buying. Would you know the difference between Chinese- and Turkish-made kilims? Or recognize vegetable dyes from synthetic dyes?

With bold geometric patterns, Kayseri kilims feature reds, blacks, pinks, and grays. In the bazaar, I spoke to Mehmet Baspinar of Baspinar Carpeting. He says the cheapest regional flat-weave kilims cost him \$38. Size is around 2'4 by 4'6 feet. He sells them for \$52—more if possible.

They're handmade, but Mehmet admits the dyes are synthetic and the wool machine-spun. He might drop to \$45 apiece for bulk buyers. For better-quality kilims, hand-spun wool (standard size is 5 feet 10 inches by 3 feet 10 inches), the picture gets more muddled. Mehmet says these cost him \$182 to \$202. They sell for a minimum \$243.

However, on *www.alibaba.com*, there's a Kayseri company called Leaf Carpets. It has handmade pure wool kilims at this size for "85." Whether that's dollars, euros, or Turkish lira, I don't know—no one ever got back to me.

Copper, pearl, and leather in Gaziantep

Many Turks still call Gaziantep by its old name, Antep. The largest city in southeast Anatolia, the "Gazi" part, meaning heroic, was added after World War I.

Pans, samovars, cauldron-sized pots. Handmade copper work has been sold in its bazaar for centuries. You'll see both traditional copperware and copper plated with tin or nickel silver. Most items used for edibles are tinned inside. Copper by itself is poisonous.

Here are some prices: Hand-engraved sugar bowls: \$8. (Buy-it-now eBay (www.ebay.com) price is \$24.99.) Cezves—Turkish coffee pots plated with tin on the inside—cost from \$4.50 to \$7, depending on size. You'll buy these in the States for \$22 for the smallest size.

Coffee sets comprising six copper cups with ceramic inserts, sugar bowl, and tray cost from \$40 to \$63. The more expensive are hand-engraved with motifs, not stamped. The price on www.turkishcoffeeworld.com is \$235. Tinned copper trays engraved with symbols such as fish and pomegranates cost from \$8 to \$16. That's without any serious bargaining.

Another eye-catcher is sedef, mother-of-pearl inlay. It's used to decorate items such as mirrors, letter racks, cigarette cases, walking sticks, and boxes. Haggle and you'll get small walnut-wood jewelry boxes for \$8. I've seen these on only one U.S. website—for \$69.99. You can buy pearly coffee tables, too. In an Istanbul fixed-price handicraft store, a 2-foot by 18-foot inlaid table was \$838. Similar Gaziantep tables are \$228; ones with fewer inlays are \$186. Initial prices for miniature tables (12 feet by 18 feet) are \$84 to \$127.

Sanliurfa's sumak hunt

Reverberating with ethereal calls to prayer, the City of Prophets isn't only associated with Abraham. Job (Eyup to Muslims) also reputedly suffered his torments in sweltering Sanliurfa. By sweltering, I mean 118° F in high summer.

But forget the heat. The best-priced kilims and sumaks (Persian-style embroidered kilims) I found anywhere were in its bazaar. An ancient *caravanserai*, it was built during Suleiman the Magnificent's reign. Often made by Iranian refugees, most Turkish sumaks are from the Lake Van and Mount Ararat localities, where believers think Noah's Ark landed. Defying Islamic tradition, some depict stylized animals and birds.

With Abdullah Fidan of Yore Kilm, I bargained down a Noah's Ark-themed silk-and- wool sumak to \$160. Starting negotiations were \$200. I passed it up, expecting to do better farther east. I didn't.

A few booths away, more haggling with Sarac Ticaret of El Isi Hali. I wore him down to \$73 for a 4-foot-2-inch by 2-foot-5-inch Persian wool sumak. It had started at \$121. I bought that one, but I'm still smarting over not snapping up three wool kilims from Adiyaman and Lake Van. They were only \$28.50 apiece.

Carpet traders congregate near Gumruk Hani, the *caravanserai's* former customs depot courtyard. Go into the courtyard, have some tea, and drink in the atmosphere. Boys carry trays of sesame seed simit rolls on their heads... men in those signature lilac scarves squander away the day playing cards and backgammon. Women? Forget it. I was the only one there.