

Homeland security

Amsterdam's import furnishings shops offer stylish homeware from all over the world.

Nanci Tangeman traces a shopping route that begins on the Silk Road a lá Holland



Nowadays it doesn't take a dog-eared passport to give your digs a little global glitz. Instead you can simply pump up your bike tyres or slip on your walking shoes and discover the many multicultural treasures this city has to offer.

The Silk Road à la Holland is the perfect place to begin. In the Canal District, at **Shirdak** (Prinsengracht 192/shirdak.nl), you'll find traditional textiles from China and 'the Stans', as well as new designs from Dutch artists inspired by the region. The nomadic tradition of felting is updated on colourful throw pillows (around €50), footstools (€225) and carpets (€250/square metre) from Kyrgyzstan. There are also higher-ticket items, such as Samarkand *suzani* wall hangings (from €195).

A short way down, take a quick detour to Japan. **Van Hier tot Tokio** (Prinsengracht 262/vanhiertottokio.com) specialises in high-end Japanese antiques, though lower-priced items such as lacquer and wooden tea trays

(€25) are hidden between the polished step chests (€6,200) and racks of kimonos (from €25).

Next, cruise through Mexico via **Kitsch Kitchen Supermercado** (Rozengracht 8-12/kitschkitchen.nl). Set a colourful 'tablescape' with midnight-blue and deep-red pottery pitchers (€39.50) and floral dishware (€2.10/piece), all atop a loud garden-print fabric tablecloth (€2.50/metre). Afterwards, make washing up fun with a brilliant yellow *escurridor de vajillas*, otherwise known as a dish rack (€7.50).

Cross the street and you're back on the Silk Road. **Aba-i Meubelen Woonaccessoires** is an oasis of rich natural dyes and textures (Rozengracht 229-231/aba-i.nl), with its wide range of artisanal textiles and kilim-upholstered furniture. For more riches from the east, head north to **Aarde Werelds Wonen** (West-erstraat 10/aardewereldswonen.nl). Marvel at giant carved pillars (€1,700) and small stone bowls (from €14.50) from Pakistan; sort through piles of fabric from Iran (from €100/square metre) or discover a pillow made from an Afghan donkey pannier (€75).

Spin the globe with a short trek to

De Pijp, a neighbourhood full of foreign intrigue. At **De Emaillekeizer** (Eerste Sweelinckstraat 15/emaillekeizer.nl), Mali's calabash gourd lends its shape to musical instruments, utensils and every size of bowl – keep a few handy for ritual washings, to ward off anything from financial disaster to decorating mistakes. This reggae-pulsing den also sells barber signs from Ghana (around €60), African figurines (Santas, nurses and doctors: €17.50) and loads of colourful eastern European enamelware (from €3.50).

Next, find your way out of Africa and into Amsterdam's historic centre. **Aboriginal Art & Instruments** (Paleisstraat 137/aboriginalart.nl) offers beautiful souvenirs to up your home's exotic appeal with sound. Prop a slender eucalyptus didgeridoo (from €100) in a corner opposite some earthy-patterned desert paintings (€29-€2,500), certified as being created by some of Australia's top Aboriginal artists.

Hop continents again by turning left, and bring glowing goodness into your home with meditation pillows (€6.50) or prayer flags

(€10/€20) from Tibet, sold by the volunteers at **TibetWinkel** (Spuistraat 185a/tibetwinkel.nl). However, the best buys in Buddha statues can be found nearby at **Xenos** (Kalverstraat 228/xenos.nl), but proceeds here won't help free Tibet.

If your schedule is so tight you can't manage an adventure around town – let alone the world – you'll find 30 countries represented at the **Fair Trade Shop** (Heiligeweg 45/fairtrade.nl). Dutch-designed seat cushions (€49.50) made by Nepalese women support the Womanpower programme to stamp out poverty. For style that's as fashionable as it is fair at your next dinner party, mix Vietnamese glassware and ceramics (from €4.95) with mother-of-pearl bowls (€15.95) from the Philippines.

Whether you want your home to be vagabond-chic or look like a former diplomat's mansion, why scour the **Earth?** Asia, Africa, Australia and the Americas are all reachable in a day's wanderings.

