

how to bag a turkish carpet

Chris Delisio's buyer's guide to the ultimate Turkish souvenir

The Blue Mosque, Turkey



To find a rug with real authenticity, value and beauty, it's wise to keep in mind a few words of wisdom from local experts with long experience in the carpet trade.

Do Look for established stores; these are both very knowledgeable about their carpets and keen on preserving their good reputation.

Insist on Turkish products only; unscrupulous dealers sometimes try to pass off cheap, mass-produced carpets from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Compare carpets in different shops before you buy. And remember, a rug might be beautiful, but if it doesn't match your room décor it's not the right one.

Don't Go to carpet 'factory tours' or stores that stress their 'discounted' rates; these are usually gimmicky and offer substandard products.

Don't get drawn in by the touts that solicit you outside the main historical attractions.

Don't be afraid to bargain! This time-honored practice is great fun and, provided it's done with moderation, tact and cleverness, helps one get the best value for money.

Takkeciler Sokak No 58-60) and the adjacent Ethnicon. Prices are determined per square meter; be prepared to pay around £120/m² for new concept patchworks, and £80/m² for woven kilims.

world. They come from the town of Hereke, near Istanbul, which has a 115-year tradition. Set up originally to satisfy the aesthetic desires of Ottoman sultans and visiting heads of state, the Hereke carpet works are still producing exquisite silk-on-silk carpets which feature an astounding number of knots per square meter and utilize traditional ornate floral designs set in elegant deep blues, creams, crimsons and yellows.

When you think of an Oriental rug, you're probably thinking of a pile carpet rather than a flat-woven kilim. Although they have a more rustic, durable feel, kilims too have become collector's items in recent years. They often feature vibrant and geometrical tribal designs; the motifs originated in the deepest symbolic myths of ancient Anatolian culture. For example, the colourful strands of fabric hanging from some kilims represent the secret desires of a now unknown soul: in the traditions of rural Turkey, from where the fabrics originally came, teenage girls would fasten these strands onto trees and then silently make their deepest wish.

The Grand Bazaar hosts several superior carpet dealers. Two places that stand out are Meha (Kapalicarsi

Historic, bustling Istanbul is a wonderland for shopping, with an ambience to match. The Grand Bazaar is the focal point of most tourists' shopping experience; with over 4,000 shops, and a mind-boggling range of goods, it more than lives up to its name. For many visitors, acquiring the fabled Turkish carpet is a high point of the trip.

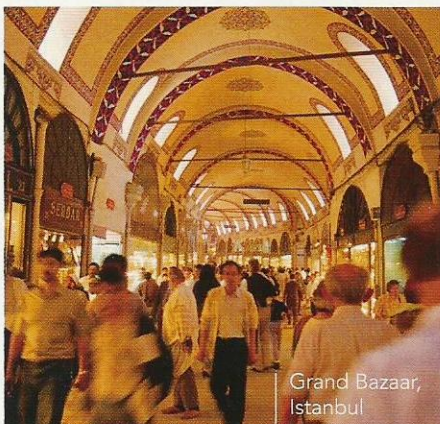
A particularly famous kind of Turkish carpet is named after the city of Usak, which from the 16th century became the centre of rug-making in Turkey, producing lavish carpets for mosques and palaces. Turkey also boasts the finest hand-woven silk carpets in the



Usak carpet



Silk Hereke carpet



Grand Bazaar, Istanbul