



Globe Spotters

From the country rounds of rural Alabama, to the bustle of the city streets of Turin, Nicholas Martin reveals seven brocantes every collector should visit this summer

centre open to visitors, who rush as quickly as possible to the trucks in search of rare and unusual objects. This really is the must of the fair!

It is recommended to show up on the first day of the fair as, by the end of the day, most of the best merchandise will be gone. On Saturday and Sunday visitors usually mostly find “leftovers” such as bulky or expensive items that didn’t find any takers or objects in bad condition.



Below Ciney hosts the largest flea market and antique fair in Belgium

BELGIUM

CINEY EXPO FLEA MARKET AND ANTIQUE FAIR

WHERE: Ciney
FREQUENCY: Twice a year
DATE: July 21- 23

When it comes to massive flea markets, the town of Ciney in the Province of Namur, is a must. Ciney hosts one of the largest flea market and antique fairs in Belgium, with more than 700 exhibitors from Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and even Italy, and more than 15,000 visitors. The fair takes place twice a year over three days, between March and October.

What has made the *Ciney Puces et Salon des Antiquaires* famous, is its unique concept of “unpacking at the back of the truck” (the “déballage au cul du camion” in French) when more than 500 trucks gather on the car park of Ciney Expo on the first day of the fair (Friday). Vendors initially leave their trucks closed, and at 2pm sharp, the gates of the exposition



FRANCE

INTERNATIONAL FAIR FOR ART AND ANTIQUES OF ISLE-SUR-LA-SORGUE

WHERE: Isle-sur-la-Sorgue
FREQUENCY: Twice a year
DATE: August 11-14

Located 12 miles east of Avignon, between Carpentras and Cavaillon, Isle-sur-la-Sorgue is one of those typical places in Provence that one has to see: a square surrounded by cafés and shops that radiate mouth-watering smells and window displays; little bridges to cross, narrow ancient streets where plane trees and green foliage abound, and several large, lovely waterwheels. However, what makes Isle-sur-la-Sorgue so special from a flea market standpoint, is its antiques fair.

Twice a year, in spring and in summer, 450 exhibitors (in addition to the 300 permanent antique dealers and second hand shops) flock to Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, making this event one of the biggest antiques and secondhand fairs in Europe – some even say that Isle-sur-la-Sorgue forms today, with London and Paris, one of the cardinal points of the antiques “golden triangle” in western Europe.

Travellers and flea market enthusiasts who manage to fight their way through the 120,000 visitors who attend the fair twice a year, will be rewarded by finding pretty Provençal boutis, beautiful ceramics with patina, antique furniture, old crockery, rare finds, and other collectables and memorabilia from the South of France.

‘Some even say that Isle-sur-la-Sorgue forms, with London and Paris, one of the cardinal points of the antiques “golden triangle” in western Europe’

IN THE KNOW

DÉBALLAGE MARCHAND D’AVIGNON

FREQUENCY: Four times a year
DATE: June 19, September 18

The Déballages Marchand d’Avignon (Antique Trade Markets of Avignon), also known as *Journées Professionnelles Internationales de l’Antiquité et de la Brocante*, is a trade event exclusively reserved to professional antique dealers and flea market merchants from all over the world. One of its trademarks is its equal opportunity policy – no one can open a truck before the start of the fair. It means all buyers have the same opportunity to



find exceptional things. The market allows professional antique dealers the chance to find treasures that would otherwise take weeks to source around Europe.

It is no wonder why thousands of buyers from more than 50 countries around the world regularly flock to Avignon in order to refill their stocks with a full range of antiques and decorative art produced over the last centuries, from the four corners of the continent.



Must visit!

GRANDE BRADERIE DE LILLE

WHERE: Lille
FREQUENCY: Once a year
DATE: September 2-3

Just an hour outside of Paris by TGV, the town of Lille is home to one of the most anticipated events in France: the annual two-day *Grande Braderie de Lille*. Every first weekend in September, Lille (in northern France) becomes the worldwide capital of flea markets and bargain-hunting, while offering the unique opportunity for visitors to discover the colourful French city, with its exuberant architecture, and witness of the rich commercial past of Lille.

As the largest flea market in all of Europe, this vibrant event, which dates back to medieval times, attracts almost 2m visitors every first weekend in September. The “Braderie” (French for “sell off”) hosts around 10,000 professional and private exhibitors hawking their wares over 62 miles of streets, with everything from knick-knacks to antique treasures.

The *Grande Braderie de Lille* is the place to find that hidden gem (the “perle rare” as the French say), discover vintage and retro items as well as beautiful antiques, and immerse oneself in an atmosphere that reflects the city itself: warm, friendly and festive, especially when sampling its traditional “moules frites” (mussels with french fries).





Each edition of the Fiera Antiquaria di Arezzo is visited by an average of 20,000 people

GRAN BALON FLEA MARKET

WHERE: Turin
FREQUENCY: Every month
DATE: June 11, July 9, August 13

Once a week in the city of Turin, 100,000 visitors descend on *Porta Palazzo*, Europe's largest open-air market. For more than 150 years, the sprawling market has offered a cornucopia of items from Italy and beyond. With 1,000 merchants and 700 street vendors, the weekly market of everyday objects has welcomed a colourful mix of registered, formal and informal vendors (since 1935 migrants have had the right to exchange goods on the market by a special city statute). But for collectors it is the monthly *Gran Balon Flea Market* that is the prize. This is the time that the market and surrounding streets are packed with antique dealers' shops offering the most amazing pieces.

ITALY

FIERA ANTIQUARIA DI AREZZO

WHERE: Florence
FREQUENCY: Once a month
DATE: July 1-2, August 5-6

Any collector planning a trip to Florence this summer is advised to make the *Fiera Antiquaria di Arezzo* an essential port of call. With 500 exhibitors, the fair has for the last 40 years been the monthly meeting place for flea market enthusiasts throughout Italy and beyond.

In fact, it has been estimated that each meeting of the *Fiera Antiquaria di Arezzo* is visited by an average of 20,000 people, including many tourists.

Exhibitors come from all over the country attend the fair, offering a wide range of pieces reflecting the region's cultural traditions and costumes. Besides the outdoor stalls there are more than 100 antique shops open all year round, reflecting the town's ancient heritage.

The diversity of the range on offer is equal to the most demanding collectors and art lovers. It includes antique furniture and paintings as well as quirkier pieces for the discerning collector. Alongside the eclectic, specialised collectors of antique books, scientific instruments, old bottles and antiquity are all rewarded after a day's search. *Fiera Antiquaria di Arezzo* is the choice destination for both connoisseurs and bargain hunters.

UK

ARDINGLY INTERNATIONAL ANTIQUES AND COLLECTORS FAIR

WHERE: Ardingly, Haywards Heath, West Sussex
FREQUENCY: Seven times a year
DATE: June 20-21, July 18-19

With its convenient links to the capital, Ardingly International Antiques and Collectors Fair is a truly cosmopolitan antique event and a hot spot for local and national dealers and buyers. Its proximity to Gatwick (12 miles away) and from Dover (1 hour 30 minutes), means vendors come from Europe and further afield to sell here, with some buyers even coming from Asia and North America.

Up to 1,700 stalls, housing thousands of goods – from fine antique furniture to delicate ceramics – can be seen at the fair. In fact, it has the reputation as one of the UK

antique fairs where quality European decorative items can be found. Its great appeal is that you can find just about anything. The fair embraces the traditional antique trade, with hobby collectors and the fast-growing vintage crowd, as well as fans of rustic, primitive and everyday objects. It is also a magnet for interior designers looking for a quirky, one-off accent pieces. With a combination of inside and outdoor stands, this mid-week fair is the perfect opportunity to indulge in a spot of off-piste collecting.

Its proximity to Gatwick and Dover, means vendors come from all over Europe and further afield to sell



USA

127 CORRIDOR SALE

WHERE: Addison, Michigan to Gadsden, Alabama (690 miles)
FREQUENCY: Once a year
DATE: August 3-6

Every year, thousands of individuals clean out their closets and stake out their front yards along the Highway 127 corridor, stretching over 690 miles of scenic rural highway from Addison, Michigan to Gadsden, Alabama. They band together as communities, in groups or as individuals and over a four-day weekend they welcome the onslaught of visitors from the north, south east and west of the country. 127 Corridor Sale is a mutual exchange of cultures with a common goal: to look, buy and sell. For sheer variety, nothing tops the World's Longest Yard Sale. Seasoned dealers in formal tents, as well as locals unloading the contents of their attics set up shop roadside, hawking everything from boxes of fishing lures to crocheted table linens, along with iron bed frames, and garden statuary. As you drive the country roads, you will hear a collection of dialects, be privy to incredible stories related to the individuals and the items they sell and see a plethora of items that only your grandmother could love. Most importantly, many visitors come to see the unusual and socialise. 127 Corridor Sale is America at its best, especially for the savvy collector and garage sales enthusiast.

Did you know?

The 127 Corridor Sale began in 1987 when Mike Walker initiated an event to encourage travellers to bypass interstate highways such as I-40 and I-75 in favour of scenic routes that would take them through rural communities and allow them to experience what the small towns and cities had to offer.

Top right Twice a year over a three-week period, more than 100,000 people flock to rural Texas

Below The Highway 127 Corridor stretches over 690 miles from Addison, Michigan to Gadsden, Alabama



TEXAS ANTIQUE WEEKEND

WHERE: Locations around Texas
FREQUENCY: Twice a year
DATE: September 21 to October 8

As the saying goes, "everything is bigger in Texas". And its premier flea market is no exception. Twice a year over a three-week period, more than 100,000 people flock to rural Texas, to shop at more than 60 antique, collector, decor and fashion shows in barns, halls, under tents and in fields that span over 30 acres along Highway 237, at a midpoint between Houston and Austin.

In fact, Texas Antique Weekend is not your regular flea market: this epic event regroups dozens and dozens of show sites in and around the communities of Round Top and Warrenton, in Fayette County, Texas. Antique Weekend Shows are scattered in Carmine, Burton, Oldenburg, Shelby, Fayetteville and points in between.

Thousands of vendors from all over the country regularly attend the weekend, to showcase items from Majolica to mid-century holiday decorations and vintage chairs.

Nicolas Martin is the founder of www.fleamarketinsiders.com, an interactive website which lists all of the world's largest (and smallest) flea markets fairs.

