

[illegible]

the [♥]comfort of things

SOUVENIRS

There are certain things in the home that are like old friends: they always cheer you up. This month, we feel the love for things found on holiday

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

The best souvenirs are the ones that mean nothing to other people. No one else knows that the lump of black stone gathering dust on a shelf in the kitchen is actually a piece of volcanic rock picked up in Iceland on a romantic weekend break. Or that you found that unremarkable little basket, now filled with cotton wool balls, on gap-year travels to Malaysia and carried it home in your rucksack.

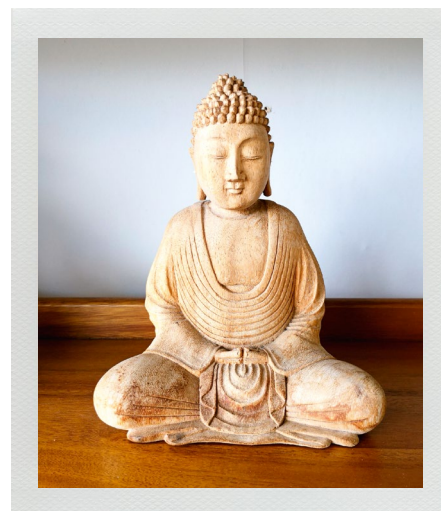
These are the mementoes that sing to you and to you alone. They trigger the memory, taking you back to happy times. Unlike a digital image, they can be held in the hand and treasured. They are a conduit across time and continents, connecting you to that moment.

"It's like extending the holiday, by taking a piece of it home"

Travel and holidays are markers in our lives: memorable weeks that stand proud above the flat routine of the every day. The impulse to bring something back that reminds us of these precious times is hard to resist. It's feels like extending the holiday by taking a piece of it home. The internet age means that most things are available to everyone all the time, but it's still possible to find something unique. Buying traditional crafts, even if they are made for tourists, is like adopting a piece of the country's culture. For the unabashed, it also, provides bragging rights: "Oh, that figure of Ganesh? I picked it up in Bali."

Some souvenirs, however, are not tasteful at all. We are talking here of the mass-produced tat that fills gift shops and airports and which are often purchased as presents, wanted or otherwise. Whereas they may have kitsch or ironic charm, no one really wants a reminder of someone else's holiday, and you will soon tire of them. Best to steer clear of anything that declares itself a souvenir, and stick to things that have some sort of personal meaning.

** But don't be tempted by that colourful bottle of liqueur enjoyed last night at dinner. It will never be drunk when you get it back home.*



BRING IT BACK

Where to find the best souvenirs

In the wild

Sometimes the most meaningful mementoes are the simplest. An interesting piece of bark or a pressed flower are potential memory-joggers. A pebble or shell found on the beach is redolent of holidays but remember that pebble removal is illegal on many beaches.

Craft shops

A search for traditional craftspeople can result in finding a one-off piece that you wouldn't be able to buy at home. Hand-thrown bowls are a good bet as they're easy to pack and will remind you of happy times as you eat your granola.

Supermarkets

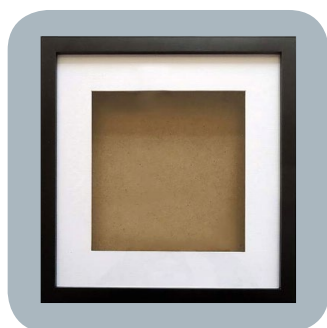
When abroad, look beyond the food aisles (although they may offer all manner of tasty, local delights*) and wander towards the homeware shelves, for gadgets, ceramics and glassware not available back home.

Museum and gallery shops

Even if you don't fancy the exhibition, a shop attached to an art gallery or museum offers rich pickings for souvenirs. Museums specialising in design are generally the best and sell arty objects you won't see elsewhere. »

THREE WAYS TO DISPLAY SOUVENIRS

Don't hide your mementoes, show them off instead to remind you of a favourite holiday



1 Make a memory box

Chances are that you've come home with a bag or two of ephemera – tickets, receipts, maps, postcards, interesting food packaging etc. Instead of throwing them away or burying them in a cupboard, display them in a memory box. Cover the inside base of the box with a thick piece of paper (scrapbook paper is good), arrange your mementoes artfully, pin or glue in place, then hang on the wall. A memory-box frame like this wooden one (£12, dunelm.com) is a good ready-to-fill alternative.



2 Stitch a tea towel cushion

Take a souvenir tea towel and trim it into a square slightly larger than a cushion pad, selecting the best part of the design. Cut two pieces of backing material, each two-thirds the length of the tea towel square. Double turn each piece at one end and stitch in place. Fold one edge over enough to tuck under (like a pillowcase). Place both pieces on top of the tea towel square so that they overlap, and pin right sides together. Stitch all the way round. Turn inside out and it's done. For more ideas, seasidesisters.co.uk.



3 Turn postcards into art

When buying postcards, don't forget yourself! Gather a few you've brought home from different destinations, and then display them. A simple montage makes a colourful reminder but you can also buy multi-aperture photo frames, into which postcards can be inserted. Alternatively pin them to a length of florist wire (Oasis Silver Metallic Wire, £5 for 45m, hobbycraft.co.uk) with clips (rose gold binder clips, £2.50 for 24, paperchase.com) or mini pegs (£20 for 50, also Hobbycraft).

Unwanted souvenirs
clogging up storage
space? We can help



HOME QUANDARIES

My elderly aunt is a great adventurer and is always travelling the globe. Although I very much admire her spirit, she always brings me back the tackiest souvenirs – none with any aesthetic merit. How do I stop her buying me any more without hurting her feelings?

Answer in brief: request specific comestibles, then eat gratefully.

The urge to bring something back for those left at home is a kindly and generous one. It involves some thought and an outlay of cash, plus the selected gift takes up valuable suitcase space. So it's not to be disparaged or dismissed lightly. Cluttering your home with unwanted and unattractive things, however, is not good for your spirit and should be avoided at all cost. The next time your aunt sets off on her travels, do a bit of research and find some food stuff – preferably small items – particular to her destination, then politely request it. On her return, you can gobble it up thankfully. No more ornaments cluttering up drawer space. **S**