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Courtney Barton

Occupation: Founder of Mela & Roam, an online bazaar for traditional handmade Indian textiles.

Current Location: Houston, Texas

What inspired Mela & Roam. My husband's job moved us to Malaysia and I accompanied him on trips throughout Southeast Asia. I had a mission to visit as many local bazaars as possible, and kept meticulous notes on artists and collectives making things I'd never seen. After we returned to in Texas, I rented a booth at a weekend market and imported my finds. After leaving empty-handed and having sales continue after the show, it became clear I'd haphazardly created a business.

What are your favorite places to shop abroad: Yogyakarta, Indonesia, for antique batik sarongs; Columbo, Sri Lanka, for the most precious silver coffee spoons; Jaipur, India, for jewelry that transforms you into an exotic princess; and Bangkok, Thailand, for everything but the kitchen sink.

Any tips on shopping abroad? Buy what you love and you will never regret it. I've carted handwoven dhurries and teak statues back from travels, and though clearing customs took an especially long time, I never minded the hassle. I will have these pieces forever. Dealing with overstuffed carry-ons is fleeting.

Any upcoming collaborations you'd like to share with us? I recently joined forces with Cheryl Schulke of Stash to make one-of-a-kind weekenders, totes, and small-essential bags constructed from my textiles and their leather. I was in India with one of the pieces, and I was accosted in two airports by several women clamoring for my bag!

Tell us about your favorite shopping destination. Nothing beats a trip to Round Top, Texas. It's rare that I miss a chance to sip iced tea and shop for antiques, junk, and curiosities in the middle of cow pastures.

