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Timeless Fashion Luxuries You'll Love Forever

Louis Vuitton luggage has always been the last word in luxury, and now the brand's vintage treasures are proving hot property among A-list collectors

Words by Lottie Johansson



MOST WANTED

Vintage Vuitton

What do Ralph Lauren, Sean 'P Diddy' Combs, Madonna, Tommy Hilfiger and Kanye West have in common? They are all collectors of vintage Louis Vuitton luggage, including the distinctive LV steamer trunks that are so in vogue with interior designers.

In an era where luxury products have become less elite, discerning customers are now investing in exclusive vintage pieces that focus on craftsmanship and unique provenance. And if you too fancy buying vintage Vuitton, your quest will now be a lot easier.

Max Bernardini, owner of the Bernardini Luxury Vintage store in Milan, a goldmine of bespoke luggage, timepieces and accessories, has launched luxuryvintage.net, offering a huge array of vintage designs. The site boasts pieces by Louis Vuitton, Goyard, Gucci, Cartier and many other prestigious brands from the 1880s to the 1970s.

Bernardini says there is a special atmosphere surrounding these

designs. "They were originally created for a clientele that didn't need to work to maintain their wealth and had the time to dedicate to the research of excellence," he explains. "Luxury from the past is therefore extreme luxury. The eastern nobles before the Russian revolution had Louis Vuitton provide them with trunks and cases in a beautiful signature yellow colour. Items owned by characters such as these have a very active collectors' market."



Case History

■ Next time you find yourself in Belgium, check out the Pand Hotel in Bruges (pandhotel.com). The owners have lovingly decorated the interior with their collection of vintage Louis Vuitton trunks and cases.

■ For a modern edge, take a look at designer Aaron R Thomas's acrylic covers that he designed to encase vintage Vuitton luggage "safely" at this year's Louis Vuitton's pre-Golden Globes party (aaronrthomas.com). Ideal for displaying vintage trunks.



LV trunks make great display pieces

With an impressive line-up of signature pieces that Bernardini has amassed over the years, the website is an extension of the store at bernadinimilano.com, which has been a magnet for serious collectors for more than two decades. The site also offers customisation using skilled craftsmen. "The most incredible piece we've customised was a 1960s Vuitton trunk in which we placed a complete sun care facility, with trays for towels and sun creams," says Bernardini. "It was a fantastic top yacht gadget."

While Bernardini doesn't recommend travelling with vintage Louis Vuitton luggage on commercial flights, he believes that the original steamer trunks – first designed for the golden age of travel in the late 1800s – are ideal for today's luxe cruises.

However, the most popular use for these signature vintage pieces is for interior design. Celebs Christina Aguilera and Eva Longoria are both fascinated with Louis Vuitton's 150-year heritage, and both display covetable pieces from the luxury brand's luggage range in their homes.

"Vintage Vuitton pieces work with every kind of interior style," concludes Bernardini. "But they look especially outstanding in a contemporary setting." ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: EYEDA; SION TOUNIG/SYOMA-CORBIS; FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY IMAGES; DARIA KUSHNER/PANOS