

# BAZAAR BEHAVIOR

THE PRICE ISN'T RIGHT—UNLESS YOU KNOW THE VITAL SKILLS, CRAFTY TRICKS, AND FINE ART OF HAGGLING BY ROBERT YOUNG PELTON



## EVERY SERIOUS TRAVELER

has at least one—a goggle-eyed tiki god, a carved skull, or an outlandishly patterned, foul-smelling carpet. My house is full of such tchotchkes: old shell casings from Chechnya, swords from Borneo, a Kenyan spear, even a turban from Pakistan emblazoned with the image of Osama bin Laden on one side and an Afghan military map on the other.

Did I pay too much for these souvenirs? Probably. There is something about being on vacation that drains travelers of financial common sense. Still, I pride myself on being fair but not foolish when it comes to parting with my trinket money. Here are some tips on how to haggle without incurring a rug merchant's wrath.

**BE PATIENT.** It's the key to getting a fair deal in larger stalls, where big-ticket items are marked up five to ten times the reasonable price. Find the most successful-looking shop and ask to see "something special." In my experience, shopkeepers can provide a pretty accurate overview of which curios are worth pursuing and which are not. Many vendors keep the highest-quality items in a separate room or at home.

**BE RESPECTFUL.** If what you're eyeing looks like a fresco pried off a temple wall with a

crowbar, it probably is. Stop and think about the difference between buying looted cultural objects and supporting local craftsmen.

**GET PERSONAL.** While you enjoy a complimentary cup of tea, find out more about the



shopkeeper's family and his business. (Even if this doesn't help you save money, the cultural experience will be worth it.) Then indicate your budget. Remind the vendor that what he sells you is a reflection of his taste and friendship and that you will be embarrassed if you discover that you paid too much.

**OFFER HALF THE ASKING PRICE**—at least in shops without walls. But don't forget: Most vendors are just consignment sellers, so don't expect to get that dung-covered fertility statue for less than cost.

**NEXT, WALK AWAY.** Visit other shops. Return the next day and ask the vendor why his wares are better than those of the competition. Identify what you'd like to buy, compliment the item, then ask if he could lower the price to match your budget.

**GIVE AN INEXPENSIVE GIFT.** I usually proffer a small Maglite. The investment has invariably been returned many times over in savings.

**STOP HAGGLING.** When you really can't budge the seller off his price, go ahead and make the deal. Getting a fair price is one thing—shaving someone's profit margin to nil is another.

**DON'T FORGET THE GIMMES.** I always ask the vendor if there is something that I could give to my wife and daughters back home. You'd be surprised at how magnanimous merchants can be—I've received rings, bracelets, decorative boxes.

**BUDGET FOR BAKSHEESH AND NON-EXISTENT EXPORT TAXES.** These issues usually come up as you're boarding your plane. If you ship goods back to the States via freight, don't be surprised if an overzealous customs inspector chainsaws your teak elephant in half looking for contraband—I've seen it happen. ▲

## » ONLY HERE

### Sway of Life



The action in Brazil's steamy coastal state of Ceará includes surfing, sea kayaking, and dune hiking, but inaction—sleep, specifically—is the region's art. The local tradition of **handcrafted hammocks** originated hundreds of years ago with the Tapeba Indians, who used fibers from the carnauba tree to weave slings. Today, most locals don't even own beds. Easy to see why: Ceará's hammocks (the one above is a typical example) are durable, bright, and ultracomfy. (\$50 to \$100; [www.hammocksinc.com](http://www.hammocksinc.com)) —Christian DeBenedetti

## » Music to Go CHOICE VOICES



MARISA MONTE, ARNALDO ANTUNES, CARLINHOS BROWN, *TRIBALISTAS* ([www.metroblue.com](http://www.metroblue.com)) Vocalist/writer/producer Monte has carved out a singular niche as

the queen of intelligent pop. Her sound bridges Brazilian traditions, Lennon-McCartney, and arty modern rock. In this acoustic departure, with gravel-voiced poet Antunes and percussionist Brown, Monte weds popular music and art as seamlessly as anyone today, in any language.

KATE RUSBY, *10* ([www.compassrecords.com](http://www.compassrecords.com)) Rusby's pure-throated Brit balladry serves as an instant detox for the strip-malled soul. The most acclaimed Celtic singer in a generation (BBC Radio 2 called her "one of the Top Ten Folk Voices of the Century"), Rusby works her magic with a languid lilt that had me in its thrall within three seconds. A chronicle of love and hard luck, *10* is an excellent compilation of her first decade of music.



—Joe Robinson