

The Rambler

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Edition I

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Preparing to leave on holiday used to mean composing detailed lists outlining the clothes I should pack, snacks to smuggle in my carry-on, travel-size toiletries I should purchase, and where to buy one new piece of clothing (a personal tradition). These lists led me all over the city, running me through the wringer of traffic on congested streets of Los Angeles, and trying any remaining modicum of my patience. With a trip slated to Texas recently to call on family, rather than create a pre-voyage list that would add needless miles to my odometer, I set the automatic pilot to 225 26th Street where I knew I could find it all: The Brentwood Country Mart.

With two darling nieces awaiting my arrival in Dallas, a little spoiling was in order. Logically, my first stop was Toy Crazy for an adorable turquoise Ugly Doll for the younger. Then it was off to Poppy Store a few steps across the way for one of the ever classic *This Is* ---- books by Miroslav Sasek for the elder. Trying to decide between *This Is Texas* and *This Is Paris*, a pair of Vilebrequin swim trunks caught my eye. That's right - trunks. For an adult. Poppy Store primarily provides fashions and fashionable accessories for children and infants, but there are also select

items for the big kids who are doing the shopping. However, I knew I needed to stick to my mission so I turned a blind eye to the swimsuit and grabbed a copy of *This Is Texas*.

Next, knowing the availability of airline cuisine is unpredictable at best (and my sweet tooth is more than predictable), I headed to reliably delightful Edelweiss Chocolates. Ogling the decadence of the surrounding confections, I settled on a bag of chocolate covered espresso beans for the mid flight hunger pang that always surfaces over Arizona.

With my checklist rapidly disappearing, I walked to Apartment Number 9 for a new piece to add to the wardrobe. The fuss-free stylish shop is the sort of boutique whose wares could turn a ragamuffin into a gentleman, and could turn a gentleman into an even more refined version of himself - all while cleverly avoiding pretension. Bowties, argyle, and the most exquisite collection of men's socks I've seen in a long time were a breath of fashionable fresh air as was the amiable service. Perusing the racks, I eventually settled on an immaculately tailored slate grey jacket that at once said "I'm calm, classic and collected" and "I'm a jet setting maharajah of mode." The Vilebrequin was soon forgotten (for the moment, anyway).

Exquisite Turpan was my last stop. Turpan is a place of practical luxury with everything from to-die-for plush organic bath towels to a fetching array of coffee table books; but it wasn't literature or linens in which I was interested. With looming lengthy flights and the lack of sleep I'd likely soon experience visiting with my siblings I knew I should nip bags-under-eyes syndrome in the bud, so I snagged some Ole Henriksen eye gel - a wonder-working gem in the realm of health and beauty.

With the final purchase made and thus my list completed, I took a seat by the courtyard's fire pit, splurging calorically on a decadent chocolate cookie from City Bakery. I knew I was headed to my hometown in a matter of hours, but there is a feeling at the Brentwood Country Mart that's also inexplicably homey - especially in easily isolating Los Angeles. Perhaps it's the convenience of everything from luxury to logic in a bevy of cleverly united vendors. Perhaps it's the peaceful setting and well kempt grounds. But I like to think it's because everyone, whether they realize it or not, is aware of what a haven of timelessly, elegant Americana the Country Mart is in a city bent on forgetting the past.