



Port Adelaide: collectables markets and colonial heritage

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For lovers of collectables, paraphernalia and trinkets which tempt and tantalise the collector, Port Adelaide just has to be on the national 'sniffing out of curios' trail. Sitting astride the banks of the dolphin-jumping Port River, replete with historic ketches and various sailing ships, the Fisherman's Wharf Markets are literally bursting out of the big old warehouse.

I need no encouragement for a sojourn at the Port. Meandering around this historic precinct, I hear the echoes of my ancestor Joseph Coleman's footsteps. I wander past the pub he owned opposite the market. In the Maritime Museum, I see relics of ships he salvaged,

repaired and sailed up the gulf for the prosperous grain trade, until he met his untimely death falling from a ship's mast in 1880. This, and a myriad of other tales are part of the folklore of Black Diamond Square opposite Port Dock Markets.

This, surely, is the Fremantle, the Salamanca Place, the Rocks of Adelaide with its historic Customs House, old lighthouse, former sail-makers' workshops and warehouses converted to artists' lofts, cafes and fascinating alleyways. The scene is set for a day of fossicking in one of Adelaide's longest operating collectors' markets.

It is not simply a collectors' market, but a treasure trove of every conceivable type of commodity. Duong, a Vietnamese wood-carver

taps away, while others tout their wares: tinkers parade their goods alongside model ship displays and jewellery vendors, garden statuary and mountains of pre-loved books. Handscrub demos with gritty aromatic oils made from Aussie bush components by Denise add to the melange of goods on offer.

It's a kaleidoscope of miscellany, drawing bowerbirds, the anti-minimalist brigade, the lovers of charm and clutter. Take a walk through all the tarot card readers and pedlars of whatever and a liberal sprinkling of antiques and collectables abounds, both upstairs and downstairs.

For an array of collectable badges, postcards, signage and packaging, along with a fabulous selection of estate jewellery, Codger's Antiques, run by the colourful Chris and Carollette is an Aladdin's cave. The nearby lanes are chock-a-block with old world goods: militaria at Don's, exquisite jewellery, costume and items of great beauty at Jan and Juanita's, Malcolm corralled with an abundance of surprises in his central aisle stall.

Down memory lane a little further is Celia, a character from the Old East End Markets (now re-invented in



Above left > Replica of the 400-year-old Dutch ship *Duyfken* berthed near the markets

Above centre > The original Port Lighthouse, with the market in the background

Above right > Historic figureheads at the SA Maritime Museum. The foremost adorned Joseph Coleman's Exchange Hotel in the 19th century

Left > Fort Glanville Troopers with possible 'new recruits'



Adelaide's funky Rundle St East every Saturday), purveyor of lace, linen and costume. And speaking of funky, if it's retro you're after, there are little 'rooms' of zany 50s to 70s 'kool kitsch' as well.

Ascend the escalator to *The Gods* above and make further forays into rescuing little must-have items to adorn your fantasy pad back home. Paddy, yet another market character, has amassed an amazing collection of fine china, glassware and *objets d'art*. His daughter Tabatha is the market's 'Faerie Queene' of vintage clothing. Whether you want it for dress-ups or serious style, the apparel is lovingly presented, calling out to adorn the chic and adventurous yet again.

Promenade further along the upper deck and cabinets of gorgeous citrine, Murano and carnival glass, china and ephemera of the Victorian, Art Nouveau and Deco styles will further enchant you, not to forget the coins, magazines and comics. Adding diversity, Huy Nguyen, a former Saigon antiques dealer, along with other stallholders spice up the market with treasures from Vietnam and other parts of the Orient.

As Carolette, a long-standing and convivial collectables vendor says, 'It's really like an emporium. You can buy anything here that takes your fancy.' Yes, it almost has that kind of

'Grace Brothers' feel, where you are actually *served*, and people actually engage with you in your quest for the Holy Grail at this bustling flea market.

Adelaide is often referred to as one of the country's best-kept secrets. But it is no secret with a large number of interstate dealers that antiques and vintage items are remarkably cheap in Adelaide. Check out the Port, the Brickworks and a sprinkling of other kindred markets through the verdant Adelaide Hills, many operating from former mills, warehouses and places of historic charm.

'The Port' is an ideal venue for a day's outing with a \$2 – yes, *two dollar* – dolphin-spotting cruise, perhaps a climb to the top of the nearby lighthouse, a visit to the fascinating Maritime Museum, the National Railway Museum and other attractions.

Enjoy a delicious 'Ginja' (you can really taste the ginger) or 'Black Diamond Bitters', brewed on the premises by Damien Trance at the Port Dock Hotel. Failing all that, simply ramble around the historic precinct, preferably *before* you have burdened yourself with bags of trawled-for treasures at the market.



Top left > Historic commercial buildings now adapted to new uses

Top centre > The Workers Memorial, Customs House and historic civic buildings

Top right > Maritime Museum opposite the Lipson Street Cafe

Above centre > Damien Trance at work at Port Dock Hotel Boutique Brewery

Above > Carolette of Codger's Antiques

Dennis Coleman is an Adelaide TAFE lecturer who juggles this with freelance writing about antiques, theatre and travel. He has operated antiques stalls in markets and fairs, travelled overseas extensively and worked in Saigon. He is a self confessed addict who rescues beautiful and bizarre items for his eclectic collection