

AFRICA IN YOUR HOME

Infuse some African character into your home — whether you buy while you're there or order online, you'll be spoilt for choice with the wealth of Africa's creative talent and its flourishing art and craft scene. Here we offer some tips and a few suggestions to help you fill your home with the energy of Africa, with the added feelgood factor of helping projects that focus on Fairtrade principles, including women's empowerment, fair employment, community upliftment and conservation. In most African countries you'll find a wealth of opportunities to buy something special for your home, so keep your eyes at the ready!

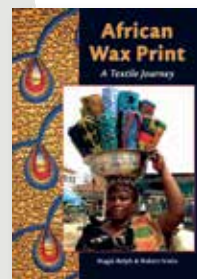


GREEN SAFARI

Katunda: A craftswoman working on a tumbled glass hanging ornament at their Malawi workshop

INTERIOR DÉCOR

Many shops offer a range of African homeware, from soft furnishings to furniture. Training local women to be artisans, **Katundu** (katundu.com), on Likoma Island in Lake Malawi, sells beautiful lighting and wall decor, textiles and tables all made with recycled materials from tumbled glass to old bicycles and boat wood. **Lalibella** (lalibella.co.uk) supports educational projects in Ethiopia through its online store, working with designers and artisans from across Africa. And **Etikora** (etikora.com) sells goods from the Kingdom of Eswatini and Kenya, all sustainably sourced and made with local materials.



Colour me African. Wax print can be used in many ways to brighten the home, such as batiks, bedspreads, lampshades, cushion covers, table runners or wall hangings

A splash of colour

Seeking a quintessential African look? Try wax print, suggests Robert Irwin

African wax print fabric is a defining metaphor of African design, fashion and expression: its bold designs and colours just say "Africa".

But is wax print truly African? Africa is rich in textile traditions: think Kente, mud cloth and indigo. But wax print actually originated in 19th century Europe. The Dutch colonised Java, home of batik. Chasing bigger profits, they industrialised batik production in Holland and sold the fabric in West Africa. Entrepreneurs in the world's "cotton capital", Manchester, copied them. Africans loved the fabric and a lucrative new trade was born.

The numbers were

huge. In 1960 one English company alone shipped 14,000 miles of wax print, most of it to savvy women market traders called 'Nana Benz' after their car of choice.

Enter the dragon. Today 90 per cent of printed fabric in Africa comes from China. It's not genuine wax, it's a lower quality facsimile, often smuggled tax free across borders. That keeps it cheap, undercutting genuine, quality producers left like ATL and GTP in Ghana and Vlisco in Holland.

Wax print is worn by women, men and children of every social standing, from humble farmers to elite politicians. It's tailored into elaborate dresses and suits, and also worn as a

simple wrapper or pagne.

Designs range from traditional African motifs to wacky object-based prints such as shoes, fans, bicycles — almost anything, including politicians.

Genuine wax print is very robust and stands up to years of washing. It's great for colourful and distinctive clothing. Many innovative textile artists use it in their quilts and wall hangings. In the home, it's perfect for curtains, cushions, lampshades, tablecloths and, if you're bold enough, even upholstery.

Last words. If the fabric is cheap, it's probably Chinese. Buying it pushes African producers closer to the brink.

READ MORE: AFRICAN WAX PRINT: A TEXTILE JOURNEY, BY MAGIE RELPH AND ROBERT IRWIN. FOR OVER 35 YEARS, THE AUTHORS TRAVELLED THE BACKROADS OF AFRICA RESEARCHING AND BUYING TEXTILES FOR THEIR FAIR TRADE BUSINESS, THE AFRICAN FABRIC SHOP (WWW.AFRICANFABRIC.CO.UK)



ROBERT IRWIN (2)



A touch of glass. At Anselm Kitemela Hot Glass in Nairobi, products range from everyday glassware to elaborate sculptures and chandeliers

ANSELM KITEMELA HOT GLASS (2)

Glassware

When scrap glass meets creativity and innovative design, the results can be spectacular. Many glass-blowing studios offer tours for visitors, along with shops selling everything from beads, glasses and animal figurines to huge chandeliers and furniture. Visit **Anselm Kitemela Hot Glass** (kitemela.com) an hour's drive from Nairobi or **Ngwenya Glass** (ngwenyaglass.co.sz) in Eswatini, both supporting local artisans and communities, for distinctive gifts for your friends or your home.



Stoneware and metalware

Indoor and outdoor sculptures add an African aura to any home. **AMS** (africanmastersofstone.co.uk) specialise in hand-carved statues, from small gifts to large statement pieces, created by **Shona stone sculpturers** from Zimbabwe. Also supporting Zimbabwean craftsmen, **Chi-Africa** (chi-africa.com) focuses on garden décor with birds, beasts and flowers made from recycled or reclaimed metal.



AFRICAN MASTERS OF STONE

Basketware

Whether bright and bold or in muted shades, basket designs exude African tradition and symbolism. Check out the colourful top-quality Bolga baskets from **Baba Tree Basket Company** (babatree.com/africanfabric.co.uk) in Ghana that supports over 250 weavers. **Gone Rural** (www.gonerural.co.uk) sells beautiful baskets, tableware, wall hangings and lamp shades made from local grass, supporting nearly 800 women and their families in Eswatini



One of 250 artisans at the Baba Tree Basket Company in Ghana

BABA TREE BASKET COMPANY



Africa at home

TRIBAL TEXTILES



Scraping the starch. Tribal Textiles is a must-visit enterprise for all visitors to South Luangwa NP in Zambia

Textiles

Fabrics evoke the spirit of Africa in the hues of nature inspired by the bush and beach, or in the vibrant colours of women's dresses and wrap-around *kangas*. In Uganda, **Ride 4 A Woman** (ride4awoman.org) is a grassroots project beside Bwindi National Park that sells high quality clothes, tableware, cushion covers, handbags, purses and even iPad cases, benefiting local women through employment, microfinance, and refuge from domestic violence. And the fabulous **Tribal Textiles** (tribaltextiles.co.zm), just outside South Luangwa National Park in Zambia, offers hand-painted bed linen, wall hangings and tableware in contemporary and traditional styles, helping to fund community and conservation initiatives.

Art

Bring Africa's people, wildlife and wild places into your home in beautiful paintings in classic or contemporary style. Check out the distinctive Tingatinga Art (tingatingaart.com) for vibrant, sometimes cartoon-like Tingatinga style artworks by specialist Tanzanian artists. For wildlife art that supports conservation, try the David Shephard Wildlife Foundation's Wildlife Art Ambassadors (davidshepherd.org) for exquisite collectable pieces.



TINGATINGA AFRICAN ART

Flavours of Africa

Wake up to the smell of the award-winning arabica coffee from **Gorilla Conservation Coffee** (ctph.org/coffee-safari), grown on the borders of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Uganda. Or try **Gorongosa Coffee** (ourgorongosa.com) from the slopes of Mount Gorongosa, Mozambique, where 850 local farmers cultivate shade-grown coffee. Both support conservation and community projects. Over dinner, enjoy **Painted Wolf Wines** (paintedwolfwines.com) from South Africa: every sip contributes to the conservation of African wild dogs.



Our buying advice

Plan:

Before you leave for Africa, make a note of what you might want or need, so you can keep an eye out for it on your travels. This will help you to shop with a conscience as well as with a purpose.

Act:

On safari, when you see something you like, buy it — you may not come across it again, as products vary between lodge, market and location.

Markets:

Ask to be taken to local markets, which often offer a treasure trove of products. Be prepared to spend hours there!

Roadside stalls:

Stop on the side of the road to browse small stall holders — you might find something surprising there.

Store shipping:

Ask the store or gallery if they can ship your purchase home for you if there is no space in your bag. Not all do as there is a minefield of things to think about, but it is worth asking, especially if it is bulky or heavy.

General shipping:

There are usually several forms that need to be filled out along with commodity codes and descriptions for overseas shipping.

Weight and size:

Think about luggage allowance — if you are bringing it back in person, you may need to make a plan here.

Dimensions:

Check dimensions and colours if you're buying online — you don't want to be disappointed or mildly surprised when you receive your piece of Africa!

Packaging:

Double-check how your goods will be wrapped and transported. Even if they are in your own bag, they will need to be protected in transit.

Delivery times:

Do check the schedule — shipping from Africa can take anything from ten days to six weeks, depending on the item and where it comes from.

Supporting Africa:

Please do check that you are buying through ethical individuals and companies; check out websites and do some due diligence.