

Buying gifts for birthdays, Christmas and anniversaries is hard enough but there is nothing like Valentine's Day for placing minifields in the way of unsuspecting shoppers.

It also has a way of creeping up on you without you noticing, resulting in a last-minute dash to the shops to pick up any old tat, or a mangy bunch of flowers from a garage forscout.

Brummell has decided to come to your rescue, done the necessary legwork, and provided a guide to some of the best gifts around, with an emphasis on helping you find beautiful things very easily.



For her...

Red is obviously the colour for valentines but if you want to make a contrarian purchase how about the dazzling new collection from Mikimoto called Blue Rhythm? The blend of Akoya, White South Sea or Black South Sea cultured pearls, diamonds and sapphires results in a sparkling collection. Prices start from £670 up to £5,450. All purchases of more than £100 from the Mikimoto online store leading up to Valentine's Day receive a complimentary bottle of Mikimoto pink champagne.

www.mikimoto-store.co.uk
Asprey has produced a colourful range in time for valentines. The chaos bracelet, earrings and ring (above) cost £5,750, £2,900 and £2,700 respectively.
020 7493 6767;
www.asprey.com

For some silver screen glamour, how about a La Doña watch from jeweller Cartier, made of pink gold? The watch is available in two sizes, £8,300 for the smaller and £11,950 for the larger, and is named after the legendary Latina actress Maria Felix, whose nickname was La Doña. She was a top Cartier customer in the 1950s and 1960s.
020 8080 0330; or
www.cartier.com

If you are prepared to chance your arm with clothing then this floral print brocade coat (far left) with crystal embellishment from Aquascutum is perfect for valentines and a key look from the Spring Summer collection. The coat retails at £1,800.
www.aquascutum.co.uk

If you are thinking of buying lingerie, a visit to London's newest lingerie boutique, Essenziale, in Grafton Street, could be well worthwhile. It stocks a range of the finest European brands hand-selected by lingerie expert Lina Barbara, with



staff available to offer advice.

Offering some insight for the daunted, Barbara said: "French brand Eree has a huge cult following due to its reputation for producing classic styles, which are cut with precision to flatter different body shapes."

"Beautifully crafted Italian label Gula La Bruna, with feminine bouidori designs, features stunning vintage inspired chemises, structured bras and flirtatious suspender belts, as well as indulgent loungewear pieces such as cami tops and French briefs."

"For something slightly more overtly sexy and flamboyant, Essenziale's La Perla Label features seductive details such as ostrich leathers – perfect for special occasions."

If the thought of lingerie shopping remains overwhelming, Essenziale has a private consultation service. Simply book an appointment for your partner to visit the store where the personal shopping suite will be reserved complete with champagne and refreshments. You can even shop online.

www.essenziale.uk.com

For him...



When it comes to men's watches, Brummell likes to err on the side of simplicity. This watch from Chopard provides understatement in spades. The ultra-thin case houses a self-winding movement equipped with two barrels and an almost 70-hour power reserve. From £4,700.
020 7436 3304; www.chopard.com

Those in need of inspiration could do worse than head to Dunhill's new store on Sloane Street, which provides a one-stop shop of menswear, leather and accessory collections. Brummell particularly likes these porcine cufflinks, a double-edged gift for a man with a sense of humour. For £185.
08454 580 779; or www.dunhill.com



For either...

If you don't have to be in the office in time for the markets to open, why don't you treat your loved one to breakfast in bed – all the more impressive if presented with a red rose and served on this cafeteria set from Linley (milk jug, sugar bowl, cafeteria and rosewood tray - £995)
020 7730 7300; or visit
www.davidlinley.com

Want to go out for supper but not be crammed into a restaurant with dozens of others eating a deus? Why not book the Loggia room at the Mandarin Oriental, Hyde Park, which is, for one night only, being transformed into a romantic private dining room for two.

You will be collected in a chauffeur-driven Mercedes and enter the Loggia through the Royal Entrance from Hyde Park, a privilege usually reserved for the royal family.

You and your loved one can enjoy vintage champagne and feast from an aphrodisiac menu especially for the occasion by award-winning chef David Nicholls. A private uniformed butler will serve with inimitable discretion.

The Loggia costs £3,190 for the night of February 14 this year only.

For reservations, call 020 7201 3772, or visit

www.mandarinoriental.com/London.

For those looking to travel a little further afield, but to do so with a little effort as possible, Avulus – a fully-integrated luxury transport company, which provides a door-to-door service – has put together a spectacular package for a romantic weekend in Monte Carlo.

A chauffeur-driven Mercedes takes you to Farnborough airport, Hampshire, where you climb on to your awaiting jet equipped with your favourite champagne. At Nice a helicopter will whisk you to Monte Carlo Harbour and on board a Sunseeker for supper. The yacht would then be yours for the rest of the week. The approximate cost of this package would be £33,680.
0845 450 1504; or visit
www.avulus.com

Where could be more appropriate to celebrate Valentine's Day than at the birthplace of the Greek goddess of love?

The Anassa hotel is set in some of the most pristine Mediterranean countryside, in a location overlooking one of the finest

beaches in Cyprus and beyond to the Akamas peninsula and the famous Baths of Aphrodite.

Guests staying Valentine's Day receive a complimentary candlelit dinner for two in the Amphora Restaurant and a bouquet of flowers in the room. Stay seven nights in a garden suite and pay for five: £954 per person including flights, transfers and breakfasts.

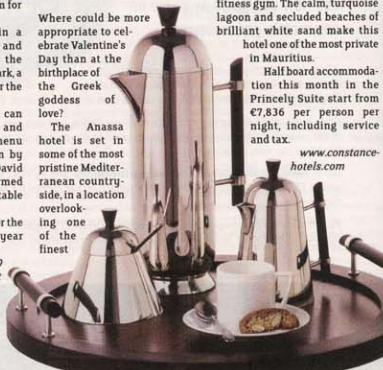
Reservations through Abercrombie & Kent on 0845 0700 612; www.abercrombiekent.co.uk

Or, if you really want to splash out, you could head off to the Constance Le Prince Maurice hotel in Mauritius.

Set in 60 acres of tropical gardens with a natural fish reserve, the hotel is made of wood, stone and thatch. The Guerlain spa offers guests a wide selection of treatments and the Bodydoctor fitness gym. The calm, turquoise lagoon and secluded beaches of brilliant white sand make this hotel one of the most private in Mauritius.

Half board accommodation this month in the Princely Suite start from £7,836 per person per night, including service and tax.

www.constance-hotels.com



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