

THE CULT SHOP

# boudoir 36

Rare scents and opulent decor create an Aladdin's cave of fragrance in Sicily

Spend a day in Catania, a baroque jewel on the east coast of Sicily, and you will understand why Boudoir 36, an artisanal perfumery, is such a great fit for this exuberant city – a place where every scent, taste and colour seems more intense, from the jasmine draping the buildings and the oranges piled into ziggurats on the pavements to the blue of the sky framing Mount Etna. The perfume selection at Boudoir 36 rivals the finest boutiques in Paris and London, but the shop's flamboyance and opulence are uniquely Sicilian.

The entrance is framed by a sumptuous red-velvet curtain, and as you pass through, you leave the bustle of historical Via Santa Filomena and discover an

Aladdin's cave of fragrance. "Boudoir" is an appropriate name – the space is small, only 22sq m, and it has the intimate ambience of a private salon. There is shelf upon shelf of bottles, porcelain jars, gilded candles and soaps wrapped in colourful paper. Flowers in extravagant arrangements spill out of vases, and crystal chandeliers cast a soft glow over the antique furniture. "I want to offer an experience that involves all the senses," says Antonio Alessandria, the visionary behind the store. And the reason he succeeds is because of his contagious passion – obsession even – for scent.

At the end of his working day as an electronics engineer, Alessandria repairs to the boutique until late at night and spends his free time studying fragrance. His knowledge is encyclopedic and he will share it generously. More than selling you a pretty bottle, he wants you to be seduced by perfume.

Alessandria approaches his collection as if he were a museum curator – with exacting attention to detail and thorough research. He stocks Boudoir 36 with the very best of fragrances from luxury houses such as Jean Patou, and niche producers of the likes of Tauer. It is one of the few places in the world where you can sample such rare scents as "1270" (€115 for 100ml) by P Frapin & Co, the makers of prized Pierre Frapin cognac, or Tauleto Wine Fragrance (€80 for 100ml) by Umberto Cesari, which is redolent of



Sangiovese grapes. There are also home-  
aroma and bodycare products that are  
equally outstanding. Devotees seek out  
Cire Trudon's Trianon candle (€68 for  
270g), which radiates a scent inspired by  
Marie-Antoinette's garden at Versailles, as  
well as Les Sens de Marrakech Black  
Olive soap with eucalyptus (€28,  
pictured left), which pays homage to  
Moroccan hammam rituals.

Alessandria's loyal clientele ranges  
from celebrities and connoisseurs to  
local residents, and he shows the same  
devotion to helping Italian actress Isa

Danieli choose her ideal cologne as he  
does to any other visitor. When one of  
his neighbours returns to purchase  
Frédéric Malle's Carnal Flower (€160 for  
50ml), a lush tuberose she discovered  
thanks to Alessandria's gentle guidance,  
he beams. "My customers are above all  
people who wear perfume as a way to  
express their moods and personalities,"  
he says. Part of his magic is finding the  
perfect match. **VICTORIA FROLOVA**  
Boudoir 36, Via Santa Filomena 36, 95129  
Catania, Sicily (+3909-5715 9662; [www.boudoir36.it](http://www.boudoir36.it)).



FOR GOODNESS' SAKE

## Small steps

Luxury travel company Artisans of Leisure has offered philanthropic activities as part of its tours since 2003, from working at a women's centre in Tanzania, to visiting a landmine clearance operation in Cambodia and donating to the Halo Trust to support its de-mining work.

Now it has launched a new initiative called Kids Helping Kids. "Many clients were travelling with children and asking us to incorporate activities for them into the trip," says Artisans of Leisure founder Ashley Isaacs Ganz.

New activities for 2014 include visiting a school for disadvantaged children in Cambodia to learn about the classes it provides, perhaps sponsoring the education of one of its pupils, or spending a day at a village in Sri Lanka to see how the people live. "It's a fantastic way for kids to have meaningful experiences while they are travelling, which can often lead to them to having a greater understanding of the world," says Isaacs Ganz. +1212-243 3239; [www.artisansofleisure.com](http://www.artisansofleisure.com).

## All going swimmingly

“As many of our products are intended to be worn in the sea, we want to do our bit to preserve it for the next generation. So we incorporated imagery given to us by Blue Marine Foundation co-founder George Duffield into the design of our classic Bulldog swimming trunks. They are part of a special Blue capsule collection we've created for the foundation, which works to protect the world's oceans and waterways – from the Pacific to the Mediterranean.”

Adam Brown, founder of Orlebar Brown

**Orlebar Brown Bulldog swim shorts, £225 ([www.orlebarbrown.co.uk](http://www.orlebarbrown.co.uk)). Twenty-five per cent of sales from the Blue collection will go to the Blue Marine Foundation ([www.bluemarinefoundation.com](http://www.bluemarinefoundation.com))**



## Coast with the most

To help the work of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, photographer and RNLI crew member Nigel Millard is staging an exhibition of pictures he's taken of the organisation's work around the British coast over the past decade. They are from his new book, *The Lifeboat: Courage on our Coasts*, a limited edition (£250) of which, with a casing made from recycled RNLI lifejackets, will be out by Christmas. Currently in Manchester, the event will then head off to Dublin, Cardiff and Edinburgh, before making a final stop in London.

In addition, budding photographers are invited to enter their own pictures of the British coast in a competition, for the chance of winning, among other things, one of Millard's signed prints.

*The Lifeboat: Courage on our Coasts* runs until February 22. The book, £25, is available from [www.rnli.org.uk](http://www.rnli.org.uk); profits go to the RNLI. The My Coast photography competition closes on March 31 2014; see [www.rnli.org](http://www.rnli.org) for details. **SIBÉAL POUNDER**