

LATITUDE

A GUIDE TO LUXURY WATCHES



WHAT MAKES CELEBRITIES TICK? | LADIES' LINES | WATCHES & WHEELS

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Buying Power

Know how and where to find the right timepiece

Buying a watch has never been more convenient. From online retailers to traditional brick-and-mortar outlets, there are more places to buy a watch than ever before. The downside is that all these choices can be a little overwhelming — and some of them pose special risks, too. Quality and authenticity can vary widely in today's marketplace. You don't necessarily want to buy from the person or business that offers the lowest prices.

That's where your friendly authorized retailer comes in.

"When you are buying something expensive, you want to make sure the retailer has a direct relationship with the manufacturer," said Greg Simonian, president of Westtime, an authorized retailer with boutiques at the Westside Pavilion and in Beverly Hills. "If the seller is not an authorized retailer, you could unknowingly be buying a used watch [on which] the warranty has already started or has expired. A watch that seems new could be six years old, and it could include watch parts that aren't even made by the manufacturer. Sometimes the seller doesn't even know it is a used watch."

There's even the danger of unknowingly buying counterfeit or stolen watches. Luckily, that just cannot happen when you work with an authorized retailer.

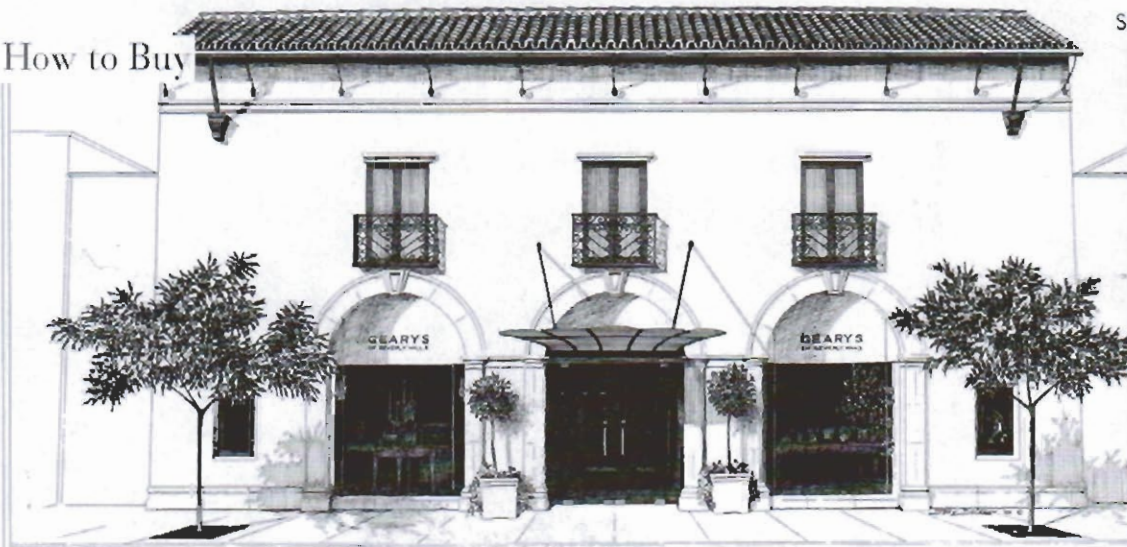
"The reasons for buying from an authorized dealer include the international warranty and fantastic customer service," said Korosh Soltani, owner and managing director at David Orgell Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. "Buying from an authorized



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Hublot by Westtime

How to Buy



Gearys of Beverly Hills storefront

dealer, the customer has the confidence that the watches have not been tampered with or manipulated. We are not here to sell a watch and forget about them. We engage with our clients continually after the sale. We alert them to new product information, special events, and we even communicate on Facebook and Twitter."

Authorized retailers are experts in the brands they sell. They can help a buyer find the perfect watch for his or her taste and budget. And when they do, the customer isn't the only one who finds the experience highly rewarding.

"It is our job to steer the customer in the right direction and educate them on the differences between each piece, helping them make a sound decision," said Thomas J. Blumenthal, president and CEO, Gearys of Beverly Hills. "I enjoy helping customers celebrate this special moment. I have had a true

passion for watches since a very young age. A watch can be a very personal purchase and it gives me great pleasure to know I was a part of a very special occasion."

A lot of buyers like to research watches before they buy. There is a lot of information out there. A knowledgeable authorized retailer can put all that information into perspective. Stores sometimes hold

invitation-only events showcasing rare pieces and offering a chance for customers and the sales team to meet watchmakers and be among the first to see new watch designs. All that adds up to a level of expertise you're not likely to find at a department store jewelry counter.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Before you shop, think about what sort of watch you want, how you want to use it, where you want to wear it, and how much you want to spend. A good salesperson can do a lot with that basic information. But some dig much deeper.

"The most important information for me to learn is what the customer appreciates in life, and then we can direct them to the right watch," Simonian said. "For example, if they are a traveler, maybe a GMT watch is important. If they are

running around all day or involved in sports, maybe a chronograph is the best choice."

Soltani starts by asking questions to get to the heart of what a customer wants. "What is the style they are looking for, for example dressy or sporty? Is it their first watch, or is it adding to a collection of a handful or a collection of 20?"

The diligence pays off. For a retailer who goes the extra mile to understand a customer's wants and needs, a sale is more than a transaction. It's an accomplishment.

"I totally enjoy the process of finding the one watch that is perfect," Soltani said. "knowing that wherever in the world the client is, and whatever they are doing with the watch, that I am actually a part of them because I helped them with the purchase."

HAVE FUN

Browsing and learning about exquisite timepieces, experts say, should be enjoyable. Exploring the world of watches means delving into a historic craft while at the same time learning about exciting innovations and technologies.

"I love everything about watches," Blumenthal said. "From the inner working of an automatic movement or a classic manual wind-up to the exterior and the finishing, a quality watch will be treasured and appreciated by its wearer and passed down through generations."

That's why the people who sell watches really love watches, and that shines through when you walk through the door. With that kind of passion and expertise waiting to serve you at an authorized retailer, it doesn't make sense to go anywhere else.

"A watch represents a big decision in someone's life," Simonian said. "After all, a watch is the only item — unlike clothes or accessories — that is socially unacceptable to wear day after day, for many years." ■

Some top watch retailers in the Los Angeles area:

CARTIER BOUTIQUE.....310.275.0903
370 N. Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills

CHONG HING JEWELERS.....213.680.4799
956 N. Hill St., Los Angeles

DAVID ORGELL.....310.273.6660
262 N. Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills

FELDMAR.....310.274.8016
9000 W. Pico Blvd., Beverly Hills

GEARYS.....310.273.4741
365 N. Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills

HARRY WINSTON BOUTIQUE.....310.271.8554
371 N. Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills

PANERAI.....310.228.1515
9490A Brighton Way
Beverly Hills

MONTBLANC.....310-854-0049
Beverly Center
8500 Beverly Blvd., Suite 605
Los Angeles

TIFFANY & CO......310.273.8880
210 N. Rodeo Drive, Beverly Hills

TOURNEAU.....310.553.8463
Westfield ShoppingTown Century City
10250 Santa Monica Blvd., Space 103,
Century City

TRADITIONAL JEWELERS.....949.721.9010
Fashion Island
203 Newport Center Drive
Newport Beach

WESTIME.....310.470.1388
10800 W. Pico Blvd., Suite 197
Los Angeles (also Beverly Hills)



David Orgell interior, Beverly Hills