

spree Haizhu Square, Guangzhou

Guangzhou celebrates the 2,220th anniversary of the founding of the city this year and the 100th session of the Canton Trade Fair took place here last month. Last year, the biannual fair attracted 177,000 buyers from 210 countries. These people descend on the city to stock up on the products later seen in shops and marked "Made in China" – though unless you plan to order hundreds or thousands of an item, forget the fair.

As with all things in China there is a more affordable alternative. In recent years, Haizhu Square, in the centre of Guangzhou, near the Pearl River (close to the Guangzhou Hotel, where the first fair was held in 1957), has become a hot spot for shoppers. Although intended mainly for small-store owners, here everyone can buy. Head to 39 Jiefang Nanlu (South Road), at the junction of Jiefang and Yide roads, by taxi or Metro (Haizhu Plaza station). The six floors of **Onelink International Toys and Gifts Wholesale Market** (below and right; www.onelinkplaza.com) are overflowing with something for everyone.

Grab a shopping guide at the information counter at the entrance. Although mostly in Chinese, the pictures give an idea of what's on offer even if you can't read it. Household items, clocks, arts and crafts, furniture, ceramics, bags ... the list goes on. On the ground floor, you'll find wrapping paper, toys, gifts, artificial flowers and **Kai Lai Bei Ye** (shop 1B009; tel: 86 20 6110 2190), which sells, along with a range of insulated mugs and flasks, the latest models of digital-display bathroom scales in glass and chrome for a mere 150 yuan.

But for the best take on what's on offer, ride the escalators in the centre of the building to the top floor.



If you are a golfer, look for **Guangzhou Mezuno Golf Exquisite Articles** (6/F, shop 6A051; tel: 86 20 8328 0486) for a selection of branded golf clubs, bags and other accessories, such as gloves (18 yuan to 35 yuan). Nearby is a shop selling the kind of leather-covered accessories for the home office found in all smart department stores in the west. Check out the diaries (20 yuan), waste-paper bins (45 yuan), file folders and notebooks (from 15 yuan).

Also on the sixth floor is **Leou** (shop 6A023; tel 86 20 8323 0652; www.centurybegin.com), which carries a range of camping equipment and barbecue accessories, canvas chairs, bags and travel gear. You can't beat a folding camping table for 22 yuan. If this puts you in the mood for more outdoor activities, stroll the same floor to shops selling all manner of hiking equipment. If you hanker after a new handbag (from 100 yuan), **Zi Cai Exquisite Article Line** on the fifth floor (shop 5A025; tel: 86 20 3377 0112) is the place.

Work your way back down, calling in on the third floor at **Da Yu's Crafts** (shop 3A028; tel: 86 20 6110 2289) for colourful toys and gifts, and do not forget to explore the basement, gathering more goodies at silly prices as you go.

If you still haven't shopped 'til you've dropped, there's more. Opposite the plaza is a big covered market selling the household items found in all Chinese cities, but it's fun to explore nevertheless. And don't miss the row of shops on the opposite side of Jiefang Nanlu for Christmas decorations, novelties, wrapping paper, toys and much more.

Valery Garrett



Pictures: Valery Garrett