

ANTIQUES WEEK PRIMER

Getting the “Big Picture” can help plan a trip to Antiques Week. Generally held the first full weekend of October and April, the event runs more than a week, typically eight to twelve days. It’s not actually one antiques show, but rather hundreds of individually-owned sales venues scattered across a 20-mile radius of Round Top. Some run three or four days, some everyday during the “week.”

Sixty or so large shows (with 100 to 400 dealers each) offer fine antiques and collectibles in historic structures, circus-size tents, and large climate-controlled buildings. Dozens of smaller shows feature collectibles displayed in permanent structures or al fresco markets. Many more flea-market-style “fields” cover cow pastures with everything from antiques to handmade crafts to chic junk. Dealers typically accept credit cards, personal checks, and cash. Automated teller machines are available. Most venues have restrooms, food and beverages, and parking nearby.

“Don’t try to take in everything in one day. The event is too overwhelming, even for us locals,” notes Cathy Chaloupka of the Round Top Area Chamber of Commerce.

Moxy buyers arrive with a game plan. Reserve lodging early. Local and area motels and bed and breakfasts often book up weeks or months in advance. The Chamber website (www.roundtop.org) matches lodging requests with availabilities. The Chamber website also links to member websites helping you learn which shows and dealers offer what you want. Another way is to pick up a free *Show Daily* show guide available at the Chamber, local restaurants, and businesses, as well as by subscription (www.showdaily.us).

Arrive early on opening day. Good buys go quickly, though bargains can be had on closing day as well. Ask for the “best price” because many dealers offer discounts. Buy fearlessly. If you *must* have something, regardless of price, take it on the spot; it may not be

there when you return. Don't hesitate to ask questions. Dealers are walking encyclopedias about what they sell.

Plan on lots of walking. So wear comfy shoes and clothing, plus a hat for shade. Keep an umbrella or poncho handy in case of a sudden shower. Layered attire helps handle changeable weather and makes it easier to try on clothes at dealers' "curtain closets."

Shop like "the players." Go with co-shopping "pickers," others in your group who watch for your "buys" as well as their own. Jot down locations of dealers you like. They often reserve the same spot each show. In six months, there's another Antiques Week, and they may have just what you're looking for.

--Randy Mallory