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I'M loving the fact that as I have this column, family and friends are basically compelled to take day trips out with me, whether they like it or not.

Mum and I watch *Antiques Roadshow* and *Bargain Hunters* in our own homes, at the opposite ends of the country, then discuss on the phone. So last week, when my parents were staying with us, there was much excitement as we planned a trip to Sunbury Antiques Market at Kempton Park. I'm not sure how this place has escaped my notice as Husband and I like to think of ourselves as the sort of couple who 'do a bit of knowledgeable antiquing' and we spend a fair amount of time mooching around brocantes in France.

Well, hold the horses. Sunbury Antiques Market leaves those brocantes standing (note racecourse pun, couldn't resist). Anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Planning the trip was fraught. "They start trading at 6.30am," I optimistically mentioned to Husband. "No way," he said firmly. 'We'll rock up at about 10am, after the traffic has died down.'

What? It's not like attending a party. You're not supposed to be fashionably late! I was deeply infuriated because I knew all the best things would be snatched up at about 6.35am. I'm extremely competitive and intrinsically believe that if a thing is worth doing, it's worth doing well; that means getting up when it's still dark to visit an antique fair. My pleas, "We have to take this seriously. It's work," fell on deaf ears. "No, it's



Adele's haul from the market

Bargain hunting

As she continues her ventures out and about in Surrey, this month, bestselling author Adele Parks drags her husband to one of Europe's best antiques markets

shopping," he replied, stonily.

Throughout the entire journey there, I perched forward in my seat and, in an satirical reversal of roles, repeatedly asked Husband, "Are we nearly there yet?"

On arrival, dad was pleased because the market offered one of his favourite things of all time, free parking and free admission. Mum was equally delighted because she got to say (no less than 22 times), "I had one of those, the exact one! If I'd hung onto it, we'd be rich." Unlikely, because the things she pointed to averaged out £6 a piece, but it was good sport.

The large, twice-monthly market is recognised as one of Europe's premier antiques markets and with good reason. There are well over 700 stalls

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offering a vast range of goods; anything from furniture, gold and silverware to vintage beer mats (I bought a bundle, for a little art project). The sun was shining and it felt very continental; I heard stall holders speaking French, Italian and Dutch – cross-channel runs being worth their while. I was giddy with excitement when I spotted one French stall holder wearing a beret. At least, I think he was French, I hope so because I love a man who plays to the crowd.

Speaking of which, Husband indulged me. He encouraged me to buy various random and bizarre pieces, including a 1920s Snakes and Ladders game and a couple of vases shaped as tattooed feet. He sure knows how to keep his woman happy! ♦



Some of the goodies up for grabs