



NUVO

Going with Ghurka The loyalty of leather.

Marley Hodgson, founder of Ghurka, had always aspired to graffify the “quiet confidence and adventurous spirit” of his clients. The name is derived from the Gurkha, the soldiers of the Himalayas. Known for their bravery, loyalty, and indifference to all difficulty, Gurkha soldiers are reputed for a fearless military prowess. Hodgson’s Ghurka story began in an early-1970s London auction, when a set of leather antiquities came up on the roster: a series of campaign gear made for Gurkha regimental officers stationed in India during the early 1900s. Inspired by the rugged elegance of the leather, Hodgson returned to the United States with a piqued interest in the leather craft and created the first Ghurka bag, a knapsack for his son.

Ghurka was officially founded in Connecticut in 1975, and Hodgson has since parted ways with the company. Today, Ghurka headquarters are stationed in New York, and the company continues in the spirit of making the finest goods by hand, as was the way that Gurkha regimental gear in the 19th and 20th centuries was constructed. “Ghurka bags are built for purpose. They are designed to be put through their paces. Our collectors tend to prize our bags the older they get. The more they look like they have travelled around the world 10 times, the more value they assume,” says Pam Brisow, executive vice-president of marketing and brand strategy.

Brisow tells of a package she received last year from a client who had bought a Ghurka wallet 35 years ago: “He had received it as a gift from his wife when they were married. Over the course of his life he had dropped it into the ocean—and retrieved it. Left it on planes—and it had been returned to him. He had raised a family and put children through college with the credit cards it held. Now, with the wallet threadbare and indelibly imprinted with the markings from those cards, his wife insisted on buying him a new Ghurka wallet. When he received it, he did not have the heart to throw his old one away. So he sent it back home—to us—to keep as a reminder of what our products come to mean to our collectors.”

With a women’s collection, a furniture range, two New York boutiques, a buzzing San Francisco outpost, and an international expansion, the next year looks fruitful in the Ghurka realms. In celebration of the brand’s 40th anniversary this year, a capsule collection has been created in collaboration with the Gurkha Welfare Trust, and a Ghurka shop has opened at landmark retailer Fortnum & Mason in London. Ghurka has set its sights on expanding on a global market, with Japan already a stronghold.

“As the world moves away from overt status symbols and a culture of conspicuous consumption, Ghurka takes you right back to the classic era of luxury,” says Brisow. **Daniel Scheffler**

Photos: Ghurka’s Express No. 2 weekend bag in khaki twill (top); the Rover No. 66 handbag in black leather (bottom).

