

Totes AMAZE

From the *supersized* to the *sleek* and *slouchy*, this is the season of the *investment tote*

Words **GRACE CAIN**

It's been more than 40 years - as legend has it - since Hermès' then-executive chairman Jean-Louis Dumas sat on a plane next to Jane Birkin and accepted the French actress and singer's challenge to make a bag that was as practical as it was stylish. He named the bag after Birkin and since then it has become the fashion lover's holy grail, the ultimate emblem of taste and exclusivity. But therein lies the dilemma - not everyone can gain access to their own Birkin. Instead, sartorialists are embarking on the quest to find a contemporary alternative, finding it in The Row's Margaux tote bag.

Since its launch in 2018, this unbranded design has quietly garnered a cult following with its minimalist iykyk appeal. Then, towards the end of last year, it exploded. Industry barometer the Lyst Index reported a 93 per cent increase in demand for The Row and named the Margaux as the hottest product of Q4 2023. Insiders are lauding it as (whisper it) 'The New Birkin' and it's currently as difficult to acquire, with styles selling out almost as soon as they come back into stock. Waiting lists have been implemented, and pieces are already popping up on resale sites at almost double the original price.

It wasn't so long ago that diminutive bags were considered a mark of wealth and prestige - either you didn't need to carry stuff, or you had people to do it for you. Now, just like the Birkin, the scarcity of the Margaux has elevated the capacious bag's status. After all, in the age of hot-desking and spontaneous weekend trips, size matters. With their minimal shapes and neutral colours, here's our edit of the new-season tote bags to invest in, all of them future classics that will forever stand the test of time.

GIVENCHY VOYOU CHAIN

If you liked the generous proportions and slouchy cool-girl nonchalance of the original Givenchy Voyou which landed last year, get ready to love its new, edgier younger sister. Available in a variety of finishes (think tumbled calfskin leather and washed denim - perfect for all you cowboycore acolytes), the freshly added gradient-effect metal chain can either be slung over your shoulder or worn across the body.

From £2,150, [givenchy.com](https://www.givenchy.com)



BOTTEGA VENETA ANDIAMO

With a name that means 'let's go' in Italian, Matthieu Blazy's intrecciato leather Andiamo is quite literally destined to be on the move; just look at the roster of jet-setting celebrities who have made it their bag of choice for errand runs and airport appearances. Go for the large, slouchy size, like this version in canvas and leather, for a modern, classic accessory that will keep up with even the busiest lifestyle.

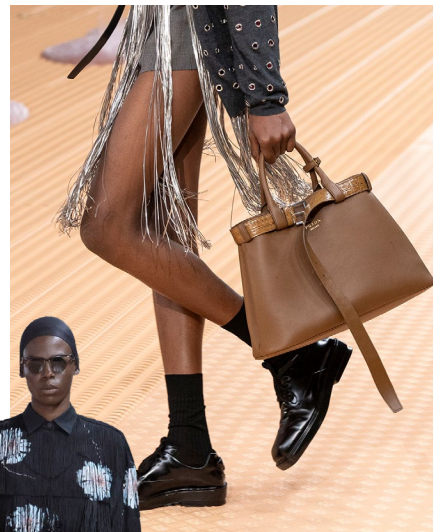
£5,640, [bottegaveneta.com](https://www.bottegaveneta.com)



PRADA BUCKLE

As far as investments go, Prada is always a good idea. The Buckle has been topping fashion-savvy wish lists since it first appeared on the SS24 runway, balancing between form and function in the way that only this Milanese powerhouse can do. What really distinguishes this particular design, however, is the belt that can be switched out and updated whenever you choose. Cinch it tight or leave it unbuckled for a more casual look.

£4,400, [prada.com](https://www.prada.com)



BALENCIAGA RODEO

Named after Los Angeles' best-known designer shopping street, Balenciaga's Rodeo bag is easily recognised thanks to a tilted silhouette and intentionally open front compartment that practically screams I don't care. If you prefer your leather goods to remain on the quieter side, you can opt for the version without the trinkets. However, if a certain Y2K insouciance is more your style, you'll love the addition of a worn effect and playfully chaotic charms.

£8,500, [balenciaga.com](https://www.balenciaga.com)



PHOEBE PHILO XL CABAS

Philophiles, assemble. One of the highlights of Phoebe Philo's hugely anticipated debut collection, the XL Cabas gives Mary Poppins a run for her money. Boasting a length of 57.5cm and a height of 41cm, this semi-structured tote has ample space for laptops, gym clothes and even the bulkiest of makeup kits. But don't worry about having to root around for your AirPods: six internal pockets (two with zips) help keep things organised.

From £5,200, [phoebephilo.com](https://www.phoebephilo.com)



MIU MIU AVENTURE

Anyone who identifies with the 'Frazzled English Woman' aesthetic would surely have found comfort in the overstuffed bags carried by Miu Miu's models for the SS24 show. Based on a style taken from the brand's archives and updated with a lighter structure that makes it ideal for casually tucking under your arm, the top-handled Adventure has already proven its credentials as a classic.

£2,650, [miumiu.com](https://www.miumiu.com)

