

Stitching it all together: Joella Hill

A young woman from Terang, Victoria, is making her mark in the world of travel accessories with her one-off, funky designs that are sure to turn heads in the departure lounge.



Joella Hill, from Terang, specialises in making hand-crafted travel goods from vintage and imported fabrics.

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[/dropcap]ROWING UP IN a family of women who liked to sew, it was almost certain that **Joella Hill** would eventually discover her own crafty streak.

"My Mum made all of my clothes and my grandmother was a sewer as well, so I guess you could say I come from a strong craft background," Joella, from Terang, says.

Joella, 30, has spent the past decade finding her niche as a creator of unique travel accessories after completing a studio

textile and design course at TAFE and discovering that sewing, more than screen-printing, was really her thing.

“I started by making things from other people’s patterns, but then I thought, hey, I can design my own patterns and create my own pieces,” she says.

By 2007, Joella was making the first of what have become her signature tote bags in vibrant fabrics that she sources from the United States and locally.

“I really like bright, funky colours and I find that the US has the best selection. It also means that once a fabric is gone, it is gone, so there are only a limited number of items that can be made and I think that adds to their appeal,” she says.



Eye-catching fabrics are a signature of Joella’s work.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]A[/dropcap] small business scheme in 2010 helped Joella to firm up her ideas and realise that her range of functional travel products could find a wider market.

Soon after, she set up an online store and, from a spare room in her parent's house at Terang, works with two sewing machines to create a range that includes travel wallets, eye-masks, pocket books, pencil cases and, of course, her multi-purpose tote bags.

The personal technology boom has also seen Joella creating pieces for items that were unheard of when she first began, such as covers for ipads, tablets and smartphones.

"The other day I had a lady who wanted a cover for (an older version) of a Samsung Galaxy phone, so I had to hunt down a template," she says.



Family travel wallet and matching eye mask – forget the airline issue mask!

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O[/dropcap]ne of Joella's most popular items is the family travel wallet, which holds up to four passports and "can be found at the bottom of your bag", while the eye-masks are almost destined to become a must-have item for long-haul travel because they look so much better than those issued by airlines.

An important part of the process for Joella is to keep experimenting with new ideas and fabrics, such as recycling old denim jeans. (A pair of her old jeans feature in the babushka doll travel bag series.)

And while she now works as a supermarket night filler twice a week, she hopes to build the *Joella Hill* label into a full-time job.

“I still live at home. I want to travel. So, you know, it’s hard, but I am hoping this will be how I eventually make a living.”

You can contact Joella Hill at studio@joellahill.com.au or visit www.joellahill.com.au.

[box type="bio"] **Joella Hill has a regular stall at the Terang Market, All Saints Church, which is held on the first Saturday of the month from 9am-1pm.** [/box]



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