

Gucci Handbags: From the Moon Side to the Bamboo 1947

By Lilah Ramzi for VOGUE September 11, 2024



Photo: Getty Images

A History of the Best Gucci Handbags

In 1897, a man named Guccio Gucci left his native Florence for London, where he worked at the tony Savoy Hotel as a bellhop. Handling the luggage of the ritzy clientele there gave him the education he needed to return to Italy and produce his very own line of travel-centric leather goods. The year was 1921 when Guccio finally opened the doors to his boutique on Florence's Via della Vigna Nuova, selling imported suitcases in addition to goods handcrafted by local artisans. It didn't take long for customers to latch onto Guccio's wares, and soon after that, Gucci became an outright sensation.

A trade embargo placed on Italy during Mussolini's rule meant that materials—leather in particular—were scarce. So, Guccio and his sons Aldo, Vasco, and Rodolfo (all now part of the family business) had to get creative, making wicker, raffia, and wood Gucci signatures in addition to *cuoio grasso*, an incredibly smooth veal calf leather. (Nearby, the Florentine Salvatore Ferragamo was also making do with what was available with his cork-heel creations.) At around the same time, Gucci also developed a woven hemp textile with a diamond pattern, a precursor to the current double-G monogram.

Around 1947, Gucci made fashion history with its bamboo-handled bag, a structured little purse adorned with a bamboo handle bent by the heat of a flame. By 1953, Ingrid Bergman was carrying a variation in the film *Viaggio in Italia*, setting off Hollywood's love affair with Gucci. Reported visitors to Gucci's Florence shop included then-Princess Elizabeth (before her ascent to the British throne), Eleanor Roosevelt, and Elizabeth Taylor. A stint as an actor meant that

Rodolfo would also bring in his own picture-making friends like Bette Davis, Katharine Hepburn, and Sophia Loren.

By the 1950s, when *la dolce vita* was in full swing in Rome, and Manhattan was a playground for monied movers and shakers, Gucci was outfitting and accessorizing it all. Over the next two decades, Gucci opened up shops just about everywhere worth being seen. One day, at the Milan outpost, Grace Kelly walked in and got a silk scarf decorated with a feminine floral pattern (dubbed the Flora, which remains a house code to this day); on another, Jackie Kennedy Onassis picked out a hobo bag. The latter was recently reissued by Alessandro Michele, as were the bamboo-handled Diana bag and the Gucci Attache bag. Michele was also responsible for the Dionysus and the Marmont—two bags that have maintained their It bag status years after their debuts. Time will tell what bags (new and old!) will rise to the top-coveted spot once as creative director Sabato De Sarno helms the Gucci ship a new seasons in. In the meantime, the stories behind all the best Gucci handbags to shop right now, below.



Roberto Gucci in 1984.

Photo: Getty Images

The Best Gucci Handbags

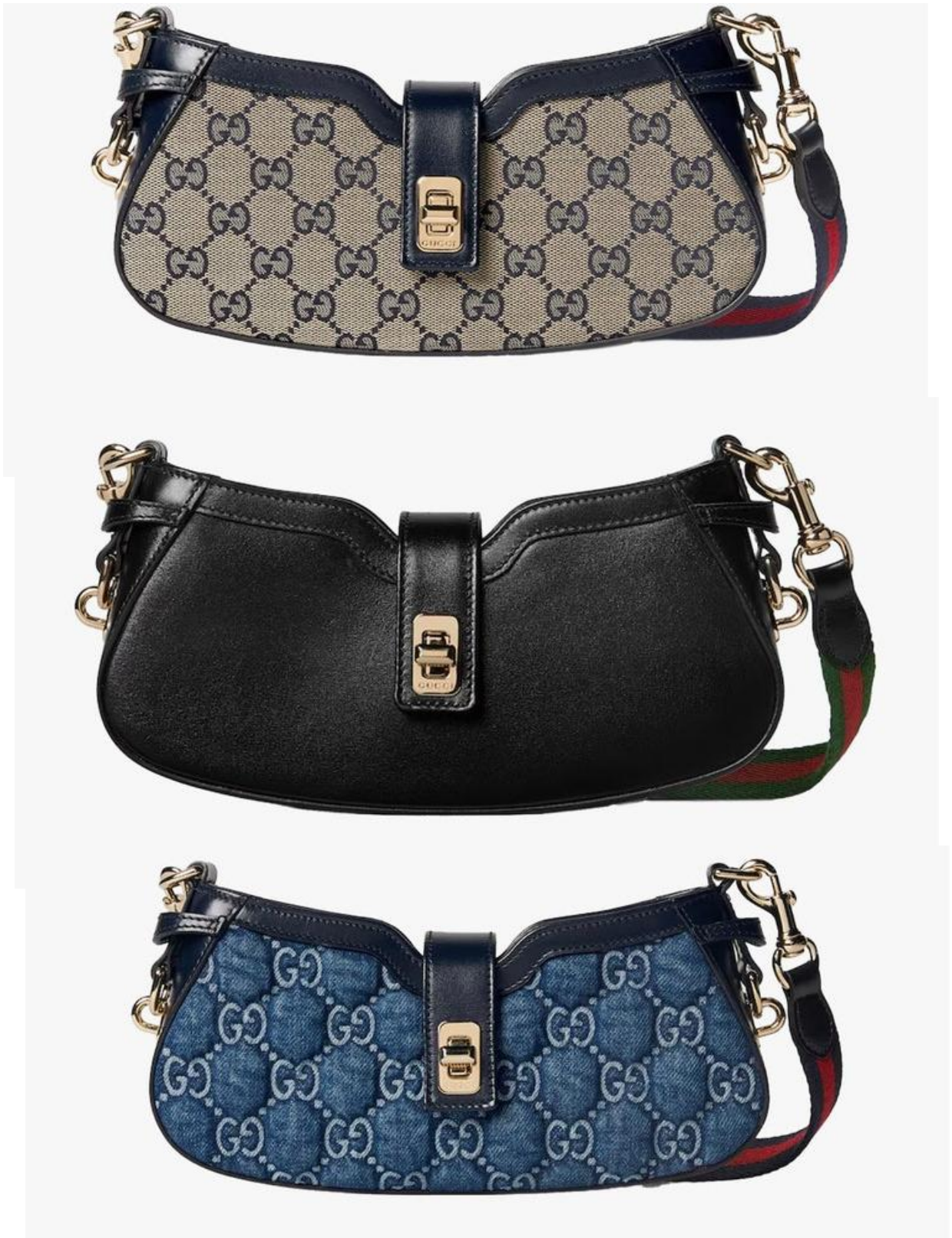
- Moon Side - *debuted in 2024*
- The Milano - *debuted in 2024*
- The Tote Bag - *debuted in 2024*
- The Ophidia - *debuted in 2024, a reimagining of a style from 2018*
- The Chain Horsebit - *debuted in 2003*
- The Blondie - *debuted in 2022*
- The Gucci Horsebit 1955 - *debuted in the late 1950s*
- The Jackie 1961 - *debuted in 2021, a reimagining of a style from 1961*
- The Diana - *debuted in 2022, a reimagining of a style from the 1980s*
- The Marmont - *debuted in 2016*
- The Dionysus - *debuted in 2015*
- The Gucci Bamboo 1947 - *debuted in the late 1940s*

The Moon Side



The Gucci Moon Side bag in oxblood for Fall 2024.

This was no summer fling. Introduced in the summer of 2024 as part of Gucci's Lido collection, The Moon Side bag harnesses the lunar powers of several other moon-shaped renditions of Gucci classics. Consider this a moon-first bag that is as slender as a waning crescent. The bag was first shown in jaunty colours like bright pink, but for fall (the Maison has recoloured this for the season), there are canvas monogrammed and all-leather iterations in hues like chalk-white and inky black. No matter your colour choice, it'll come with a strap festooned with Gucci's signature web twill in red and green.



Gucci Moon Side shoulder bags

The Milano



The Gucci Milano bag in oxblood for Fall 2024.

Photo: Gucci

Is this De Sarno's first Gucci It Bag? It very well could be! As one of the creative director's first fresh bag silhouettes (he's masterminded a couple of archival reprises), the GG Milano bag debuted at the Milan fashion show for Gucci's Fall/Winter 2024 collection. With three finishes (a smooth glossy leather for the minimalist, an embossed Gucci monogram for the maximalist, and a striped version for the in-betweens), the bag's defining feature is its subtly puffed fabrication. Plus, a detachable chain strap on the top-handle bag gives you the option to go hands-free as a crossbody.



Gucci GG Milano top handle bag

The Tote Bag

What has a hook-style closure (à la the Jackie) but the angles of the Diana? Meet The Tote bag, which was first introduced in Gucci's Spring/Summer 2024 collection. It's a seriously-chic bag that's meant to be taken seriously—she gives the airs of a C-suite executive. You won't find a logo on this style, just a natural leather grain in solid hues. Coming in small, medium, and an oblong-shape, The Tote bag works as hard as you do with a removable shoulder strap for added functionality.





Gucci Small tote bag with hook closure

The Ophidia



The Gucci Ophidia bag in a mint green for Spring 2024.

Photo: Gucci

If you love the unmissable GG print or the green and red web print, those signature motifs are celebrated throughout The Ophidia collection. The best part about this line is its continued growth year after year since it was introduced during the Cruise 2018 season under Alessandro Michele's leadership. Find the hallmark touches on boxy totes, mini shoulder bags, and so much more. For spring 2024, the Gucci brand introduces a durable denim fabric that comes into two pastel shades; a peachy beige and a minty green.



Gucci Ophidia mini bag

Gucci Ophidia GG mini top handle bag



Gucci Ophidia medium tote bag

The Chain Horsebit



Dua Lipa holding a silver Gucci Chain Horsebit bag during a night out.

Photo: Getty Images/MEGA

Tom Ford infused new life into the brand's iconic horsebit motif by elongating the equestrian hardware and anchoring it on the flap of a clutch handbag, in 2003. Twenty years later, the fashion house revived the early-aughts bag with a quilted silhouette and playful colourways that instantly grabbed the attention of style stars like Dua Lipa, Kendall Jenner, and Dakota Johnson.



Gucci Horsebit-embellished shoulder bag

The Blondie



The medium Blondie in black.

In addition to lots of L.O.V.E, Gucci's Love Parade runway show was filled with accessory goodies. There's the aforementioned Attache bag but also the Blondie—an understated leather flap bag with a removable strap (there's a glinty gold chain, a strip web trim, or a strapless option). There's little embellishment or bedazzlement save for an eye-catching Gucci logo that dates back to a logo filed in a patent by Gucci in 1971—the interlocking G-motif featured a pair of the letters with one inverted and flipped on its head. The Blondie represented yet another cleverly modern homage payment by Gucci's then-creative director Alessandro Michele to the historic house. The bag is proof that Blondies do indeed have more fun.

Gucci Blondie
small shoulder
bag



Gucci Blondie
shoulder bag





Gucci Blondie medium top handle bag



Gucci Blondie small shoulder bag

Gucci Horsebit 1955



A small horsebit shoulder bag with web shoulder strap.

As the legend goes, glinty horsebit hardware entered Gucci's fashionable *oeuvre* in 1953. It was Aldo Gucci—recognizing that shoppers liked a side of history with their handbags—who perpetuated the myth that the Gucci family had once been saddle-makers to nobility. Aldo leaned into the equine concept, and under his direction, top-stitching reminiscent of that on saddles adorned handbags; and green and red stripes seen on girth straps became a signature Gucci element, as did the Gucci horsebit. Aldo even went so far as to replace the bellhop—a nod to Guccio's early job—in the Gucci crest with a knight in armor. Since the horsebit appeared on a handbag in 1955, that elegant hardware has become as recognizable as Chanel's double Cs. Tom Ford, Alessandra Facchinetti, and Frida Giannini all incorporated the horsebit into their designs, and current Gucci creative director Alessandro Michele has given us the latest iteration. Presented at the house's cruise 2020 collection, the reprised Gucci Horsebit 1955 bag comes in various shapes (tote, satchel, shoulder bag), all unified by the instantly identifiable double-D rings. After all, there's no need for a Gucci logo when its signature hardware is present.



Gucci Horsebit 1955 shoulder bag

Gucci

Horsebit 1955 mini top handle bag



Gucci

Horsebit 1955
mini bag

The Jackie, 1961



Jackie Kennedy in 1971; Dakota Johnson in 2023

Like the enduring allure of the woman it's named after, The Jackie is a bag that will never go out of style. In 1961, Gucci introduced a hobo-style bag that caught the eye of Jackie Kennedy, whose husband so famously loved Gucci's loafer moccasins. It's said that upon seeing a paparazzi image of Jackie Kennedy with the bag (then called the Fifties Constance), the Gucci family swiftly christened it The Jackie. The classic hobo-shape saw many iterations under Tom Ford and Frida Giannini, but its latest incarnation comes by way of Michele, who in 2021 gave us a spin on The Jackie with a bit more structure, an adjustable strap, and a piston closure. Back in 2014, Giannini made Kate Moss the star of The Jackie Bag campaign; now, Harry Styles is ushering in the bag's new era.



Gucci

Jackie 1961
small shoulder
bag





Gucci

Jackie 1961 Anaconda mini bag



Gucci

Jackie 1961 mini bag



Gucci

Jackie 1961 large shoulder bag

The Diana



Princess Diana in London in 1997; Ella Fanning and Sienna Miller in 2021.

In the late 1990s, one often saw Princess Diana headed to-and-fro with a bamboo-handled Gucci bag. Hers was in putty-coloured suede, and even when it accessorized her biker shorts and sweatshirts on trips to the gym, she made it look divine. As mentioned above, bamboo-handled bags have been a part of the Gucci repertoire since the very beginning, and the style has never really left the house. On Thursday, July 1, 2021—what would have been Princess Diana's 60th birthday—Michele gave us The Diana Bag, a bamboo-handled tote much like the version worn by the Princess. On this bag, we get a logo of double Gs facing the same direction (Michele's remix of the Gucci monogram is one of many celebrated interventions he's made at the house). Because it wouldn't be Michele's without a madcap flourish, he added a neon-coloured elastic strap. The latter is a playful, removable touch that references the elastic bands Gucci uses to help its bamboo keep its shape.



Gucci

Diana small shoulder bag



Gucci Diana small tote bag



Gucci

Diana mini GG
crystal tote bag

The Marmont



The Marmont making its debut on the fall 2016 runway.

The Marmont is less a single bag than a family of bags with Michele as the patriarch. Not long into his tenure as Gucci's creative director, Michele gave us the Marmont bags with a chain, crossbody strap as the signature style. They debuted on the 2016 fall runways, capturing everything Michele intended to bottle up and sell in bag form: The untethered bohemian spirit of the '70s and the hush-hush glamour of the Château Marmont. On the bag, Michele introduced his flipped Gucci logo, festooning a semi-puffed, chevron-style quilted pattern of leather and velvets in gemstone hues. The Marmont collection also includes totes, backpacks, and bucket bags, and sometimes the hardware is studded with pearls. No matter which you choose, you can't go wrong.



Gucci GG Marmont medium shoulder bag



Gucci GG Marmont small shoulder bag



Gucci GG Marmont small shoulder bag



Gucci GG Marmont mini shoulder bag

The Dionysus



The Dionysus making its debut on the fall/winter 2015 runway.

No bag better encapsulates the Greek Chic aesthetic of modern-day Gucci than Michele's first bag for the brand, The Dionysus. The crossbody bag features a double flap-shape in Gucci's coated canvas textile, and it's closed with U-shaped hardware that can be traced back to Gucci's fall 2015 ready-to-wear collection. (With The Dionysus, Michele added a new signature piece to the Gucci vocabulary: Yes, we know all about the horsebit, but how about some snakes?) Dionysus is the god of agriculture, wine, and revelry, and—befitting Michele's more-is-more aesthetic code—the bag that takes his name is decorated with fantastical jungly embroideries, eclectic bolts, and patchworked with the kind of decals you might find on a Girl Scout's vest. Like a Greek deity, The Dionysus bag is widely worshipped and has maintained its *It-bag* status since its introduction.



Gucci Dionysus super mini bag



Gucci Dionysus small top handle bag



Gucci Dionysus GG mini bag



Gucci Dionysus super mini bag

The Gucci Bamboo 1947



The small Bamboo 1947 in white.

Bamboo and Gucci are as interconnected as the interlocking double Gs in the maison's monogram. Back in the late 1940s, in the aftermath of World War II, Italy experienced a shortage of leather and thus restrictions on how much could be used in the creation of handbags. And because necessity is the mother of invention, Guccio Gucci ingeniously thought to use a curved bamboo handle (applying heat to the raw material to create a curved U-shape) in a patented technology that has stood the test of time. Throughout Gucci's history, creative directors from Tom Ford to Frida Giannini to Alessandro Michele have all utilized bamboo in the design of ready-to-wear and leather goods. The current iteration of the iconic bag, now dubbed the Gucci Bamboo 1947, has changed little since its inception. Wonderfully logo-free, polished but not prissy, the bag comes in medium, small, and mini sizes in a variety of polished leather, canvas monogram, and exotic skins.

Gucci

Bamboo 1947
small top handle
bag

