

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Coco goes West in latest installment of Inside Chanel

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Coco Chanel first came to Hollywood in 1931. Image credit: Chanel

By SARAH RAMIREZ

French fashion house Chanel is emphasizing the longtime link between two different cultures with the latest installment of its heritage film series Inside Chanel, which follows the house founder's arrival in the United States.

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“Chapter 25, Gabrielle Chanel Goes West” explores how the French label found success stateside. House founder Gabrielle “Coco” Chanel first came to America in the 1930s, and her career there spanned decades.

### American dream

Ms. Chanel grew up idolizing the myth of America, but the designer did not visit the country until 1931. Chanel’s designs and iconic perfume, N°5, had already been making headlines in the U.S. since the mid-1920s.

Like countless others before her, Ms. Chanel arrived to the U.S. through Ellis Island before making her way to Hollywood and the West Coast. She was accompanied by a small team, including her close friend, Misia Sert.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/nHgSCKLPir0>

*Inside Chanel details Ms. Chanel’s career in the U.S.*

Although Ms. Chanel’s meetings with Hollywood executives and starlets drew attention from the press, her philosophy of balancing luxury with simplicity was eventually rejected by the film industry. However, the American audience continued to love her designs.

During her post-war comeback to fashion, Americans lavished praise on her collections while the Parisian press criticized her clothes.

“Admiration, popularity and support for her would never waver,” the film’s narrator explains. “The United States had nothing but praise for Chanel.”

In 1957, department store chain Neiman Marcus named Ms. Chanel the most influential designer of the 20th century. In New York, the Museum of Modern Art hosted an exhibition featuring the packaging of N°5, and actress Katherine Hepburn portrayed the designer in a Broadway show, titled “Coco.”



*Archival footage of Coco Chanel. Image credit: Chanel*

The American icons who dressed in Chanel's designs included Elizabeth Taylor, Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe, who famously said she only wore N°5 to bed.

"Gabrielle, who as a child saw America as a legend, became herself a legend to America," the film concludes.

#### Coco abroad

Chanel has previously explored its close ties to the U.S.

In 2013 and 2014, Chanel traveled the globe with its "Paris-Dallas" Métiers d'art collection's fashion show. The original launch of the line was in Dallas, TX, in December 2013, and the same collection was exhibited again in June 2014 in Tokyo, Japan.

Chanel's show combined Texan-American and Parisian stereotypes into a cowboy and Native American meets high-fashion blend. The Métiers d'art collection was created to honor and celebrate the brand's affiliation with the United States ([see story](#)).

The late Karl Lagerfeld, then the house's creative director, also directed a 30-minute film focusing on the brand's history following World War II, when its founder returned to fashion after a hiatus. "The Return" deals heavily with the brand's relationship with department store Neiman Marcus, which helped to solidify the designer's status in the U.S. ([see story](#))

Other episodes of Inside Chanel have looked at how other locations have influenced Chanel.

"Chapter 24, Venice" examined Ms. Chanel's time in the Italian city. Cited as the greatest source of her inspiration, her time in Venice is documented as the designer fled to the country after losing the love of her life ([see story](#)).