

RETAIL

## Harrods turfs off-season inventory to new outlet store

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*Harrods, with its colorful window display, joined a worldwide movement uplifting local communities with rainbows of hope. Image credit: Harrods*

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

U.K. department store Harrods has found a way to offload its off-season and unsold inventory that piled up over the COVID-19 lockdown period: open an outlet store in a separate location to handle the crowds.

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The Harrods Outlet, as the pop-up store in Westfield London in Shepherd's Bush is called, is better suited to handling foot traffic in an era of social distancing. While the main Harrods store in Knightsbridge reopens June 15, Harrods Outlet will accept shoppers in July.

"Our focus has been on getting our Knightsbridge store back to what it does best: serving our customers, supporting our brand partners and bringing new and exciting experiences to those who pass through our doors," said Michael Ward, managing director of Harrods, in a statement.

"Harrods Outlet allows us to enable better social distancing across a larger footprint, move towards the new season decisively and confidently, and retail in a responsible way," he said.

### Flooring it

The Harrods Outlet in West London will include fashion, beauty and accessories stock left over from the current season and host the Harrods Sale, complementing online efforts at Harrods.com. The store will be spread out over two floors.

Unveiling the outlet store will allow **Harrods** to reopen its Knightsbridge store with strong social distance measures in place, with selected seasonal discounts and a focus on new, in-season and exclusive collections.

"In the new world in which we find ourselves, the economy needs businesses willing to look at its business model and current operations and think differently to enable growth, while protecting its customers and employees," Mr. Ward said.

Harrods and its competitors closed their bricks-and-mortar doors in March, complying with the U.K. government lockdown mandate to protect against the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak.

Starting mid-June, the store will resume operations, but keep its restaurants, beauty salons and wellness clinic closed until the government deems it safe to reopen those establishments across the United Kingdom.

#### Eyes on the prize

Harrods will deploy footfall-monitoring technology to limit capacity and maintain social distancing in its Knightsbridge store. There will be clear signage to direct shoppers and employees, and specific doors for entry and exit to the landmark Grade II building.

The retailer has also debuted an improved cleaning program that includes hand sanitizer stations throughout the store and at entry and exit points.

Aside from the COVID-19 disruption, Harrods has had a busy few months.

The retailer took its H Beauty concept from its Knightsbridge store to Lakeside, welcomed Tiffany & Co.'s Blue Box Caf restaurant concept, opened a new art gallery and plans to extend its personal shopping experience in Shanghai at "The Residence."

While ecommerce operations are up and running during the lockdown, Harrods last week introduced a new personal shopper program that enables affluent consumers to call up personal shoppers in stores and place orders directly.

STILL, REOPENING THE Knightsbridge store in a responsible manner is key to Harrods' financial wellbeing.

"Closing our store was a heart-breaking decision for everyone at Harrods, and we instinctively began to look ahead to re-opening, poised and ready to welcome customers back as soon as we feasibly could," Mr. Ward said. "We are delighted to re-open our iconic store on June 15.

"While we will undoubtedly be operating in a hugely changed environment, we are optimistic about the future," he said.

"The opening of Harrods a building that has stood in central London for over 170 years is important for our long-term stability as a business, but also an optimistic step in the wider re-opening of London.

"We are excited to welcome back our customers and colleagues, as well as support the local London and British economy get back on its feet."

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A post shared by Harrods (@harrods) on May 22, 2020 at 9:09am PDT

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