

RETAIL

South Coast Plaza expands retail footprint with new luxury additions, redesigned boutiques

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The West Coast's largest shopping center generates over \$1.8 billion annually. Image courtesy of South Coast Plaza

By AMIRAH KEATON

U.S. shopping center South Coast Plaza is revealing a strong roster of new partners.

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The leading luxury retail destination has announced a number of high-end names will hit its glossy floors in short order. South Coast Plaza's most recent debut adds 25 new brands and redesigned boutiques to an existing assortment of 250 stores.

"Our ownership has enduring personal and professional relationships with the leadership of luxury groups and individual brands," said Debra Gunn Downing, executive director of marketing at **South Coast Plaza**, Costa Mesa.

"This inspires trust, collaboration and creativity," Ms. Downing said. "It is telling that both Gucci and Louis Vuitton have opened second boutiques in new locations at South Coast Plaza.

"We are the first and only center in the U.S. to have second boutiques from those brands."

Refreshing retail

Nearing end-of-year, a number of new and redesigned luxury, contemporary and watch boutiques are landing at the West Coast's largest shopping center, with fresh arrivals in tow just in time for the holiday season.

South Coast Plaza enjoys an annual footprint of 22 million annual shoppers, 6 percent of which reside internationally. All shopping center visitors one-third of whom, including 13 percent of shoppers who travel in from Los Angeles, reside outside of the Orange County bounds in which South Coast Plaza is located will soon be able to browse a sizable selection of revamped choices.

"South Coast Plaza is privately owned by the same family that founded it 55 years ago," South Coast Plaza's Ms. Downing said.

"The family has farmed the land for a century," she said. "So, we have the freedom and flexibility to make decisions

based on quality, and long-term growth.

"That appeals to our global partners."

Among luxury updates, the addition of a second Louis Vuitton boutique seeks to enhance travel, watch and men's apparel options.

Meanwhile, French fashion house Dior and Italian fashion house Fendi are among a series of standing partners that will see their stores refreshed.

Swiss watchmaker Breitling is also slated to see a renovated space, newly located within the pavilion. French footwear and accessories label Christian Louboutin will reach the center's grounds shortly.

"For boutiques and brands already at South Coast Plaza, refreshing a design or moving to a new location in the shopping center may be a strategic decision based on the brand's interests, and South Coast Plaza's," Ms. Downing said.

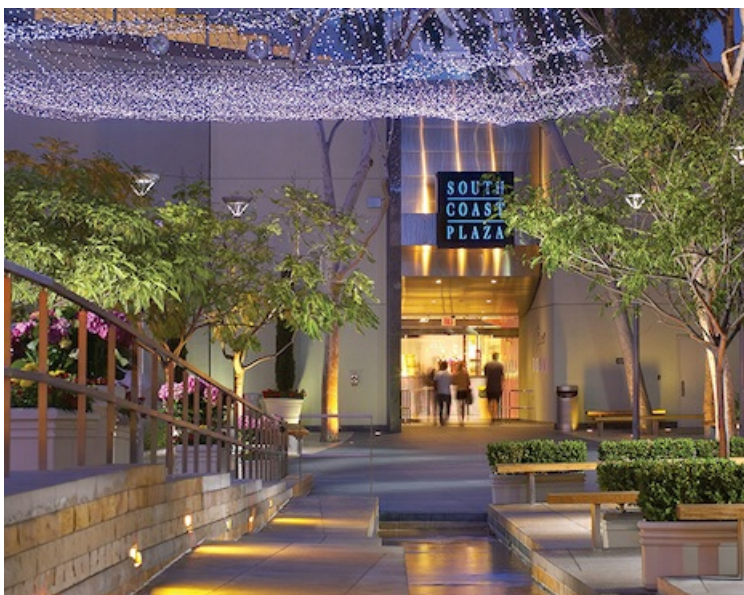


The 4,500-square-foot space, open Nov. 1 through spring 2023, stocks a range of luggage, carry-ons, travel bags, and other accessories from the Gucci Savoy collection. Image courtesy of South Coast Plaza

Among unique features, the sole Gucci Valigeria Ephemeral store in the U.S. is located amid the Costa Mesa locality. The Plaza's expansion also brings Southern California's first and only Missoni boutique.

"South Coast Plaza has long been a global destination, drawing travelers from Asia, Europe, Mexico, the Middle East, and across the U.S.," Ms. Downing said.

"Post COVID-19 lockdowns, the desire to travel, shop, and enjoy luxury experiences has driven demand at South Coast Plaza," she said. "The new Gucci Ephemeral store is popular, and we understand the space is part of the brand's plans moving forward."



The international destination is home to a number of luxury brands. Image courtesy of South Coast Plaza

Notably, South Coast Plaza's portfolio touts the largest collection of luxury timepieces and jewelry boutiques under one roof in North America.

It now adds luxury timepiece brands Tudor, IWC Schaffhausen, Roger Dubuis and Hublot to the list.

Experiential era

The sixth largest in America, Orange County enjoys a thriving population of approximately 3.2 million people who tout an average household income of \$133,431, in addition to an economy that generates more than \$223 billion per year, ranking 50th among the world's most prosperous economies.

These customers create the perfect opportunity for South Coast Plaza to capitalize on the plethora of global luxury brands eager to connect with this caliber of clientele. Additionally, an array of cultural offerings make clear that commerce is not the only bottom line for South Coast Plaza's strategy.

With its unique commerce and culture blend, the luxury entity's retail updates and experiential installs offer shoppers many of the exact in-demand elements set to drive the industry forward in the next decade, named as part of a recent report from Bain & Company ([see story](#)).

"Gens Y and Z are key consumers of luxury goods, and they crave authenticity and experiences," Ms. Downing said.

Alongside apparel and accessory announcements, South Coast Plaza shared that Cal Kitchen + Tequila, Ramen Nagi and Teatro Angelina are to come in 2023. Meanwhile, MIN Gourmet Sichuan Noodle is listed as just one immediately-available dining option comprising the center's 30 restaurants.

Additionally, 780,000 people experience South Coast Plaza's influential and beloved performing arts venues each year. South Coast Plaza anticipates visitorship driven by artistic programming will continue to climb, considering a principal October opening.

"South Coast Plaza has a unique connection to art and culture in the community," Ms. Downing said.

"We donated the land for and are supporters of Segerstrom Center for the Arts, the new Orange County Museum of Art, and South Coast Repertory Theater, all independent arts organizations [are] located on the arts campus adjacent to the shopping center," she said. "This unique relationship addresses the desire for authentic experiences we see in our visitors and shoppers.

"These are just a few of the hundreds of events, activations, and installations held at South Coast Plaza each year we also host creative exhibitions and installations, from our brands and community nonprofits."

South Coast Plaza's current calendar proves no different.

"Our Jewel Court has been the site of recent exhibitions by City of Hope, the innovative medical center, and Louis Vuitton's Tambour Twenty exhibition celebrating the Tambour watch," Ms. Downing said.

"In coming weeks, Jewel Court will feature an exclusive Louis Vuitton Holiday tree, and we will host the opening night cast party for American Ballet Theatre's 'The Nutcracker.'"

The retailer's lineup leans heavily into heritage brands, while experiential elements provide another layer of luxury to guests.

"South Coast Plaza is always evolving,"

"While this year has been especially successful, we do debut 20 or more new stores annually," Ms. Downing said. "It's how we keep the center fresh and relevant."