

RETAIL

History brought to life at Harrods for 175th anniversary

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Harrods is bringing its heritage to life, ringing in nearly two centuries of business via product drops and in-store activations. Image credit: Harrods

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

British department store Harrods is ringing in a major anniversary.

In celebration of serving customers for 175 years, a series of activations are rolling out across the retailer's physical and digital footprint. From beauty and fashion exclusives to Champagne toasts and branded lounges, Harrods is participating in three trends that have officially captivated the hearts of luxury consumers: experiential shopping moments, sensorial marketing and heritage-infused touchpoints.

"What makes Harrods stand out is its ability to blend heritage with innovation," said Thomas Wieringa, cofounder and managing partner of [Quintessential Luxury Branding Boutique](#), Amstelveen, Netherlands.

"Celebrating 175 years is a testament to the brand's enduring appeal and its successful adaption to changing consumer preferences," Mr. Wieringa said. "The focus on exclusivity and personalization, through a wide variety of initiatives caters to the modern luxury consumer's desire for unique, bespoke products.

"I believe 2024 is going to be the year in which Harrods sets itself apart again by far."

Mr. Wieringa is not affiliated with Harrods, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

A history lesson

Harrods first opened its doors in London in 1849.

Since then, it has established itself as a home of luxury and gourmet goods. With branding based around both high-end experiences and the classic practicality of department store culture, the business's versatility has long held the attention of a diverse customer base.



The state of Harrods through the past many decades is delved into on its website, complete with historic photographs. Image credit: Harrods

This history is outlined on a dedicated landing page for Harrods’s 175-year observance.

Similar to fellow British department store Fortnum & Mason ([see story](#)), the retailer began as a general store and tea purveyor. Founded by Charles Henry Harrod, the location quickly became known for its top-quality service and produce.

In the early 1900s, the shop started carrying the latest styles, introducing its Knightsbridge clientele to fashion collections from around the world.

A few years later, in 1909, Harrods entered the fine-dining scene with the opening of The Grand Restaurant. To this day, a number of eateries provide those in-store with crafted bites and beverages at the Food Hall and throughout the store ([see story](#)).



The Champagne bar offers a seafood-centric menu and pastry lineup. Image credit: Harrods

The [Moët & Chandon Champagne Bar](#), the maison’s largest stand-alone bar in Europe, pours the full range of cuves. Delicacies are carefully paired with them, such as Carlingford Irish oysters with dashi dressing and pomegranate seeds, and lobster bathed in miso-and-yuzu sauce with a smoked paprika cracker.

From the 1920s through ‘50s, Harrods continued to incorporate the newest trends of the day into store operations. For example, in the ‘30s, electric vans were introduced to handle deliveries across the country.

During the next 40 years, fashion and cosmetics became a bigger point of emphasis.

By the 1990s, the Way In boutique was set up on the fourth floor, providing apparel for those wanting to purchase the most modern looks. At this point, the Ground Floor Banking Hall also became home to the Beauty Halls.

Through the 2010s, luxury was at the core of Harrods's strategies. The company worked to distinguish every floor and department with prestige-focused identities and brand selections.



In honor of its history of connecting London shoppers with global styles, Harrods is collaborating with luxury fashion brands for anniversary-edition releases. Image credit: Harrods

At this point, the department store is nurturing its reputation for innovation, experiential retail and collaboration. With 175 years under its belt, the business is among the oldest in the sector, granting it an ear with the growing segment of consumers that are showing a preference for heritage names and brands from those with deep roots ([see story](#)).

Beauty, bears and more

This history underlines the anniversary celebrations at Harrods.

In an update of what was first installed in 1959, new LED lights have been revealed on the exterior of the shop. The shimmering display comes to life every night at 8 p.m.

Inside, a concierge space guides clients through what else is going on for the occasion. Here, guests can grab event tickets and find information about anniversary drops.



A Burberry basket revealed for the anniversary houses English eats, such as jams. Image credit: Harrods

A collection of exclusive products is on offer, including items from departments that sit at the heart of the business, such as fine

tea. Jewelry, treats, homeware and toys are also among the lineup.

British fashion label Burberry, which helped to kick off the festivities ([see story](#)), has crafted a goodies-filled basket.

The [Harrods x Burberry Exclusive Anniversary Edition Hamper](#) retails for 750 pounds, or \$946 at current exchange. Home comforts are included, from a quilted blanket and fruit preserves to, in true British fashion, a selection of English breakfast tea.

To the delight of collectors, a series of [Anniversary Edition Harrods Bears](#) are also available. Named Henry, after the father of the store, the stuffed animal sports a tweed jacket and satin bow in signature gold and green hues.

Though the item is a nod to the past, its composition of recycled materials is a signal that the historic department store is embracing the future and can “stand the test of time,” as the bear’s product listing states.



Bears can now be found throughout the department store. Image credit: Harrods

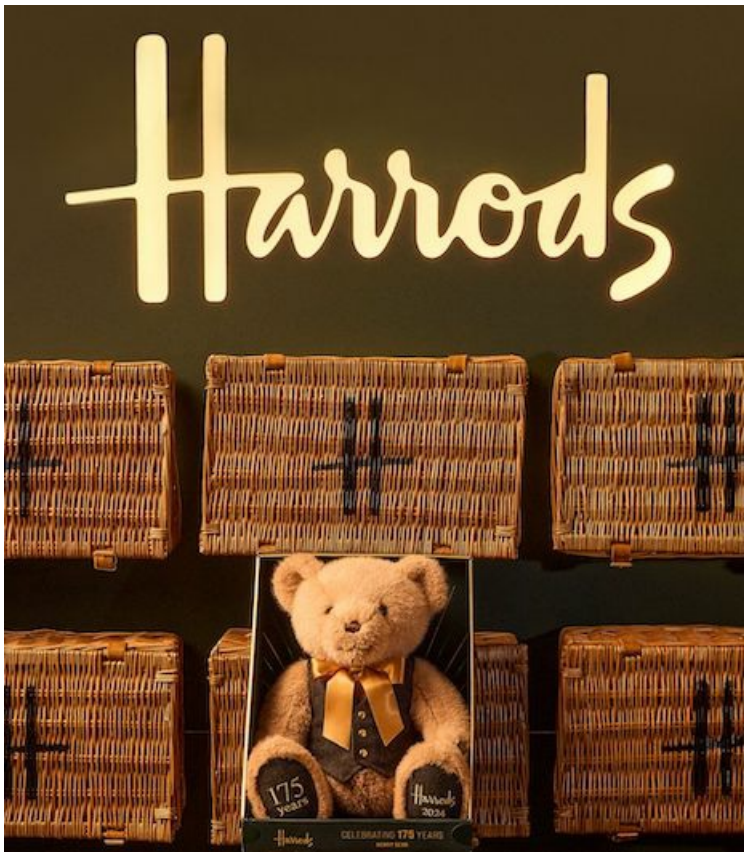
Through April 7, in-store guests can customize their own Henry in the Harrods Lounge. Picking out the clothes, colors and accessories for the furry creature, participants can even choose a new name and backstory.

A winning design will be turned into a special-edition toy in December 2024.

“With the opportunity to celebrate such a milestone Harrods is of course leveraging every opportunity to deliver on strategic growth drivers,” said Mr. Wieringa.

“The bears, displays, exterior decorations are part of their above the line’ visibility and are the main drivers of generating traffic and recruiting new customers,” he said. “The bear is playing a pivotal role throughout the year with several collaborations with fashion brands contributing to the level of exclusivity.

“In terms of loyalty, I believe Harrod’s understands the need to constantly focus on their brand equity and to stay an iconic destination for their discerning clientele today and in the future.”



The bear could reel in younger, aspirational consumers and those wanting something nostalgic. Image credit: Harrods

Until the end of the year, Harrods is also launching limited-edition beauty items. On its website, a running list of the drops will keep being updated throughout the year.

The array includes Maison Francis Kurkdjian Reflets d'ambre Eau de Parfum, 111Skin NMN Age-Defying Eye Mask, La Mer Crème de La Mer The Moisturizing Cream and Guerlain Royal Extract II Parfum.

"Let's not forget that Harrods is a luxury department store," said Mr. Wieringa.

"They are heavily relying on activating a diverse portfolio of products within a broad price range," he said. "This part of their portfolio is a recruitment tool to generate traffic in-store as well as online."

"They manage to create a great mix of recruitment products, loyalty products (the bear) and aspirational products... recruiting younger generations into the luxury funnel."