

INTERNET

## Barneys removes ecommerce barrier with free return policy

March 25, 2014



By SARAH JONES

Retailer Barneys New York is introducing free returns to its ecommerce services to make online shopping less stressful for its consumers.

[Sign up now](#)

**Luxury Daily**

Prior to this the retailer had free standard shipping but charged an \$8 shipping fee for online returns sent through the mail. Taking away this possible fee will allow consumers to shop more freely online, knowing that they can easily return anything they are not satisfied with.

“At Barneys we strive for the highest level of customer service in-store and online. A completely complimentary and seamless shipping and returns process gives our customer even more confidence to explore, experiment and buy,” said Matthew Woolsey, senior vice president of digital at [Barneys New York](#), New York.

Free for all

This new announcement from Barneys removes what might have been a competitive disadvantage, since most of the other luxury retailers in the United States offer free returns. This is similar to Saks Fifth Avenue’s decision to offer free standard shipping for all online purchases.



### *Barneys Jay Z collection*

Saks has announced that all orders placed online will now be eligible for free shipping, regardless of the purchase total.

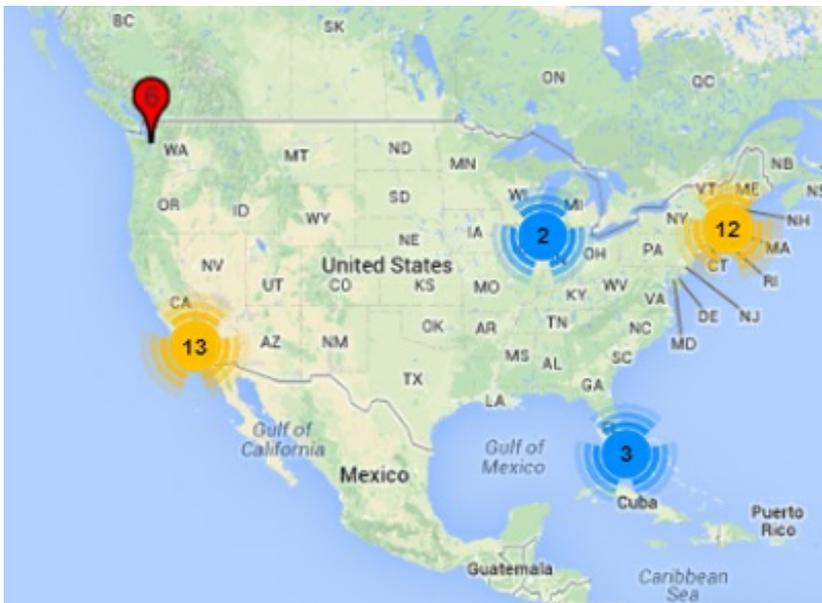
Previously, Saks offered free standard shipping to its store credit cardholders when they made a purchase using the card. This extension of the offer to all consumers makes Saks more competitive among luxury retailers based in the U.S., since most already offer a similar shipping option ([see story](#)).

Previously, Barneys would give consumers a prepaid label for them to ship their order back. The \$8 fee would be deducted from the return amount.

Online returns were also accepted to Barneys store locations, excluding outlets, at no charge.

Now with no fees to ship or return, Barneys has eased the online shopping process for consumers. This is especially important for those consumers whose only interactions with the retailer are through its ecommerce site, since it provides a customer service to them.

Barneys operates approximately 30 stores in the U.S., concentrated mostly around New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Florida. Realistically a lot of consumers who shop with Barneys online wouldn't be able to travel to a store to return an item.



*Map of Barneys stores*

Currently the retailer ships to 89 countries. This new offer is more of an incentive for consumers outside of the U.S. to shop with Barneys, since they are not penalized for returns.

Ecommerce continues to represent more of a luxury retailer's business. Ecommerce for luxury retailers continues to grow by 25 percent each year, according to a [report](#) by Bain.

#### Ecommerce convenience

Neiman Marcus Group looked to revitalize its ecommerce before the holiday season's fervor began by offering permanent free shipping and returns year-round for all domestic purchases made through [neimanmarcus.com](#) and [bergdorfgoodman.com](#) as well as at retail locations.

By removing some of the burdens that deter consumers from shopping online, Neiman Marcus may have seen a surge in ecommerce.

Additionally, Neiman Marcus Group's move demonstrated that retailers are still adjusting to the digital sphere and determining the right balance between in-store and online ([see story](#)).

Bricks-and-mortar retailers have to compete with online retailers such as Amazon for the holiday shopping season, and they are finding new ways to get consumers to shop with them.

A number of department stores offer click-and-collect services where consumers can order items online and pick them up in-person in-store and, in most cases, with no delivery fee. By doing this, stores are able to merge the ease of online shopping with speedier return, getting consumers to visit their stores in-person for convenience ([see story](#)).

This offer of free returns rounds out Barneys' ecommerce service.

“Complimentary shipping is something we’ve done for years and has been very well received,” Mr. Woolsey said. “We expect our customer to have a similarly positive response to free returns.”

Final Take

*Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

---

© Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your **feedback** is welcome.