



Christmas magic: The busy shopping season is upon us!

November 19, 2007 - Shopping Centers

The city takes on a magical aura during the holiday season-perhaps it's the colorful lights lining the streets or the festive ice skaters in the shadow of Rockefeller Center's towering evergreen. I maintain that it is the bustle of tourists and Manhattanites exploring the shopping scene, granting retailers' wishes.

The National Retail Federation (NRF) found that 40% of consumers plan to start holiday shopping well before the traditional kick-off, Black Friday. To further entice shoppers, stores are donning holiday decorations especially early. In addition to festive décor, retailers are unveiling promotions and discounts to celebrate the early entry of the season.

Continuing the trend of last year, online shopping will continue to gain popularity. Consumers plan to accomplish more than 30% of their shopping online. Popular gifts will include books and video games, electronics, jewelry, home décor, and, of course, apparel.

Soho will be a particularly attractive destination during the next few months, as gifts of trendy apparel continue to be in high demand. Topshop will debut at 478 Broadway, just below Broome St. The U.K.-based brand is expected to occupy more than one level, housing its famed Kate Moss collection, along with special lines by designers Zandra Rhodes, Celia Birtell and Sophia Kokosalaki.

These styles, as well as its popular Top Man collection, have been on display at Opening Ceremony, 35 Howard St., for several seasons. The Swedish apparel store boasts a mini-Topshop boutique on its rear mezzanine.

Though French Connection at 435 West Broadway was devastated by an electrical fire less than a year ago, the flagship has emerged with a new design. To the excitement of many shoppers, the haute label's renovated locale is the first of many new openings. Optimistic executives predict up to twenty-five new stores will open nationwide over the next two years.

If you wish to give a useful gift advancing a "green" agenda, visit Greek beauty label Korres at 100 Wooster St., between Spring and Prince. The environmentally friendly products at this store are sure to appeal to a growing demographic of eco-conscious shoppers. The brand's first U.S. store is outfitted with gold foil wall coverings, inspired by Greek honey tins. Korres is reportedly eyeing space on Montague St. in Brooklyn for its second location.

Of course, holiday shoppers will relish in our fine department stores-all inimitable shopping meccas. Bergdorf's, Barney's, Bloomie's, Bendel's, Saks, Lord & Taylor, and Macy's, all offer one-stop shopping for the latest in jewelry, accessories, footwear and apparel.

BCBG's remarkable new flagship at the corner of Fifth Ave. and 40th St. is an expansive three levels. The new location showcases the full range of the brands, from the more expensive "Runway" label to shoes and accessories. Nearby retailers include Lacoste, currently undergoing an expansion, United Colors of Benetton, a grandiose Sephora, and Aldo. Ann Taylor and Esprit will be joining the lineup soon.

Newly emerging as a source for the holidays is Park Ave., a unique retail landscape with an exclusive roster of stores. After being a Madison Ave. staple for 72 years, wine and spirits purveyor Sherry Lehmann has relocated to 505 Park Ave., making use of the expanded three-level space with a wine tasting section. Hailing from Paris, Dorothy Porthault fine linens fits perfectly at Park Ave. and 58th St., replacing Rene Mancini. Atelier Aimee opened at 475 Park Ave. with bridal fashions from Milan, and Jay Kos menswear is located in the same building. Manfredi timepieces and exquisite jewelry is at 470 Park Ave. Stefano Ricci, Italian designer of luxury men's fashion, is nestled between two high-rises in a two-story 100 year old building at 407 Park Ave. At number 417 is Walter Steiger, another European fashion designer, while stationery boutique Papyrus has moved into 400 Park Ave.

Happy holidays and happy shopping!

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