



MARKING A MILESTONE

SOUTH COAST PLAZA CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR, LOOKING BACK ON FIVE DECADES OF RICH HISTORY AND AN IMPRESSIVE COLLECTION OF HIGH-END STORES.

BY ASHLEY RYAN

A year before the San Diego freeway reached Costa Mesa, on the site of a former lima bean farm, South Coast Plaza opened in March 1967 with May Co. and Sears as its major department stores. Over time, SCP has grown into a luxury shopping center with designer boutiques like Gucci and Louis Vuitton welcoming visitors from across the region and around the world. The mall is one of the largest on the West Coast with more than 250 stores and restaurants on 128 acres. And, with sales approaching \$2 billion per year, it's touted as "the most successful planned retail destination in North America." Aside from boosting the economy, the center has also developed philanthropic partnerships and played a major role in elevating the region's fashion scene.



Clockwise from top left: An aerial shot of South Coast Plaza during its early days; the mall's carousel; the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the mall; Henry Segerstrom in front of his family's former farmland

"It's the pinnacle of luxury shopping," says local stylist Leslie Christen. "We can really thank South Coast Plaza for helping Orange County grow into a very stylish location."

Now celebrating its 50th anniversary, SCP plans a lineup of special events and exclusive products: Runway fashion shows will spotlight the latest looks by top designers this fall and the center is collaborating with high-end brands including Gucci, Marni, Brunello Cucinelli and Tod's to produce limited-edition items.

Meanwhile, luxury book publisher Assouline will present an anniversary release focused on South Coast Plaza's heritage, illustrating the center's development with never-before-seen photographs. And, a commemorative exhibit will highlight the center's history.

"After 50 years of innovation, South Coast Plaza has become a heritage brand," says SCP partner Anton Segerstrom, son of founder

Henry Segerstrom. "This is the time for our family to pause and envision the future. With all the challenges in retail today, we will stay true to our tradition of curating a unique collection of international fashion and luxury boutiques, focusing on customer service, and creating destination appeal. We will continue to evolve and remain relevant in this rapidly changing world."

CULTIVATING A LEGACY

South Coast Plaza stands on property that was part of the substantial agricultural complex owned by the Segerstrom family in the early to mid-20th century. Henry, who would go on to provide the land for the Segerstrom Center for the Arts across the street from the mall, was a key player in the transition from cultivating beans to enhancing culture in Orange County.

Henry has an impressive backstory, enlisting in the military following the attack on Pearl Harbor only to be injured and awarded the Purple Heart for his service in the Battle of the Bulge. Upon returning to California, Henry earned

both bachelor's and master's degrees from prestigious Stanford University before taking his family's company, C.J. Segerstrom & Sons, in a new direction: commercial real estate.

Although South Coast Plaza wasn't the firm's first project, it was the one that propelled the company to success. Planning began in 1962, around the same time that the San Diego freeway was being designed. Because the area was largely agricultural, Henry knew it was important to build near a direct route that would allow shoppers to reach the proposed mall—and the 405 freeway would ensure just that.

SCP officially opened with 70 shops, but its continued success lies in the luxury boutiques that Henry incorporated through the years. He began reaching out to upscale designers in other countries, an unprecedented move at the time. A decade after the mall opened, Henry invested in Yves Saint Laurent, Halston and André Courrèges in order to bring them to South Coast Plaza. They were the mall's first high-end boutiques,

but, shortly after, designers like Dior, Gucci, Hermès and Louis Vuitton followed suit.

As additions continued, with entrances on various sides, multiple parking structures and interior roads connecting parking lots, the development of South Coast Plaza was among the first of its kind, creating a unique type of mall-centric downtown environment, according to Hess.

"South Coast Plaza and Fashion Island are both examples of how OC pioneered these types of suburban cities," architectural historian Alan Hess says. Although Henry, a longtime resident of Newport Beach, died in 2015, SCP is part of his lasting legacy.

PRESENT-DAY LUXURY

South Coast Plaza has undergone many evolutions through the years and Sears is the only original anchor store that remains: Macy's, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bloomingdale's and Nordstrom (the first one to open outside of the Pacific Northwest) now accompany the classic department store in addition to smaller shops. Notably, there are few places in the world where shoppers can stroll past a

Giorgio Armani boutique and a Bath & Body Works shop in the same complex, but that's part of what makes South Coast Plaza unique. The mall expertly blends high-end designer stores with more casual retail spots to create a one-of-a-kind experience.

items carried in these upscale shops aren't found in many other places in Southern California.

However, it doesn't end with clothing. The massive shopping complex is also home to upscale stores such as L'Occitane and Assouline, and a variety of high-

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Of course, it's the boutiques of top fashion houses like Versace, Balenciaga, Chanel, Burberry, Michael Kors, Valentino, Dolce & Gabbana and Oscar de la Renta that get the most attention. SCP is known for securing the first U.S. locations and flagships for many brands. In recent months, the center landed the only Weekend Max Mara store in North America, as well as The Webster's first West Coast boutique and Les Parfums Louis Vuitton's only U.S. site. Coups like these help set SCP apart from the traditional mall setting;

end accessory boutiques, including famed watchmakers IWC Schaffhausen, A. Lange & Söhne and Jaeger-LeCoultre, as well as luxury jewelers such as Cartier, Harry Winston, Tiffany & Co. and Bulgari.

While strolling through halls filled with so many retail stores is every shopper's dream, foodies have a home at the mall, too. SCP has become a hot spot for innovative and critically acclaimed restaurants: From sweet shops like Godiva and Sugarfina to the Asian fusion establishment AnQi, there is something for every palate.

TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: COURTESY OF ORANGE COUNTY ARCHIVES BOTTOM LEFT AND RIGHT: COURTESY OF SOUTH COAST PLAZA

COURTESY OF SOUTH COAST PLAZA



"AS WE SET OUR SIGHTS ON THE FUTURE, WE ARE DELIGHTED TO CELEBRATE THIS IMPORTANT ANNIVERSARY WITH OUR RETAILERS, RESTAURANTS, COMMUNITY, PHILANTHROPIC AND ARTS PARTNERS, EMPLOYEES AND MILLIONS OF VISITORS WHO HAVE COME THROUGH OUR DOORS,"

— DEBRA GUNN DOWNING

With so much to offer shoppers, South Coast Plaza has become a shopping destination in and of itself, drawing visitors from around the world. Travelers from Canada, Mexico, Japan, China and the Middle East all flock to Costa Mesa to shop at this luxury retail mecca.

FORGING THE WAY

Much like the past, the future of

South Coast Plaza lies in its high-end boutiques. But aside from shopping, the center is also home to a variety of events each year, including runway shows, special sales and philanthropic gatherings.

SCP has been a longtime supporter of the arts, donating land and hosting fundraisers for South Coast Repertory, Segerstrom Center for the Arts and the Orange

County Museum of Art. The shopping destination also supports organizations and nonprofits like Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County, while many of the mall's boutiques partner with nonprofits for cocktail parties and in-store specials that benefit various philanthropic causes.

One annual event, the Harvesters Fashion Show and Luncheon, helps support the Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County. "Their dedication to helping Second Harvest in its mission to end hunger, along with their support of many other local charities, has made Orange County a better place for all who live here," says Second Harvest CEO Nicole Suydam.

As SCP celebrates five decades of community involvement, as well as shopping and dining excellence, it's clear this opulent center will continue to shine in the sartorial world and far beyond.

"For 50 years, South Coast Plaza has taken charge of its evolution, from the curation of luxury brands and [a] unique mix of stores to the extraordinary services, experiences and special events that draw a global following," Debra Gunn Downing, South Coast Plaza's executive director of marketing for more than 15 years, says in a news release about the mall's milestone celebration and anniversary.

"As we set our sights on the future," she continues, "we are delighted to celebrate this important anniversary with our retailers, restaurants, community, philanthropic and arts partners, employees and millions of visitors who have come through our doors. They have played a role in helping the center achieve international stature and success."

BESPOKE BENEFITS



SHOPPING AT SOUTH COAST PLAZA IS TRULY A ONE-OF-A-KIND EXPERIENCE. ALONG WITH TOP DESIGNER BOUTIQUES, COMPLIMENTARY WI-FI AND EVEN AN INVITATION-ONLY VIP LOUNGE, THE CENTER OFFERS A VARIETY OF SPECIAL SERVICES.

Personal Shoppers

Those interested in a curated experience at South Coast Plaza can make an appointment with a personal shopper. Employed by the center, these stylists are experts in all things fashion. With 24-hour advance notice, they will help shoppers look their best, helping them assemble a whole new wardrobe or navigate the season's hottest trends.

Concierge Services

While most malls have an information counter, few have the bespoke services offered at SCP's concierge desks. These concierges do perform standard tasks like providing strollers and wheelchairs (a deposit is required), handling gift certificate sales and making restaurant reservations, but they also go above and beyond. If your bags become too much to handle,

there is a complimentary package check at each of the four concierge locations throughout the mall. Guests can also visit the concierge desk for translation assistance, with bilingual representatives fluent in more than 40 languages.