

Carnival Cruise Line opens expansive retail environment

By **Hibah Noor** on April, 24 2018 | Retailers



Ribbon-cutting ceremony kicks off the opening of retail space in Carnival Horizon

Carnival Horizon is a brand new ship boasting the biggest shopping space in Carnival Cruise Line's fleet.

The line has dramatically expanded its retail offerings, showcasing top brands like LeVian, Victoria's Secret and, for the first time, Michael Kors, Kate Spade, Breitling and Hublot.

Designed to take Carnival's retail offerings to the next level, Carnival Horizon is distinguished by its modern two-level, mall-style shops located along the ship's atrium on decks 4 and 5 with branded outlets providing guests with a fun and engaging shopping experience, the company said.

"We've significantly upgraded our retail choices and spaces in recent years and with Carnival Horizon

we're raising the bar with our biggest and best shopping experience yet," said William Butler, Vice President of Retail Services at Carnival Cruise Line.



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In addition to offering the largest and most varied offerings in the fleet, Carnival Horizon's retail space is unique in that it is divided into areas dedicated to a particular shopping experience, each designed around guests' interaction with the various interests.



Carnival Horizon offers a host of brand new duty free stores



These areas include: Hip Fish: fashion jewelry, accessories, beauty and fragrances; Cherry on Top: the “sweetest spot onboard” with an assortment of candies, novelty items and fanciful gifts; Carnival Store: the latest logo items and Carnival Horizon inaugural season memorabilia, as well as Carnival Adventures merchandise, such as sunscreen and apparel; and Portside Liquor & Tobacco: popular

duty free items, including the most extensive spirits display at sea.

Makeovers before a night out onboard

Carnival Horizon brings these areas to life by offering an immersive shopping experience, including a Beauty and Fragrance Bar that allows guests to try out cosmetics, skincare and fragrances and even enjoy a makeover before a night out onboard. Port Side Liquor & Tobacco features a Spirits Tasting Bar where guests can sample and purchase some of the world's finest liquors, including coveted Hennessy White Cognac, currently not available outside of travel retail.

Guests can also take home their own personal keepsake at the "create-your-own" jewelry experience in the Hip Fish outlet, where they can custom-design jewelry made of Swarovski crystals. The Wearable Tech outlet features the latest wearable technology with onboard experts on hand to match guests' style with a variety of watch brands tied to fitness tracking.

Shopping aboard Carnival Horizon is a true "retail-tainment" experience, Butler said, including special events and engaging spaces with staff providing giveaways, in-store parties and entertainment. Promotions change daily with flexible pop-up spaces that showcase new fashion and jewelry trends, making Carnival Horizon unlike any other shopping experience on land or sea.





“Our guests are all about participatory fun, and Carnival Horizon certainly takes that philosophy to the next level, offering not only opportunities to sample the finest products but also keep up with fashion and beauty trends with interactive outlets staffed by experts to help them make the choice that’s right for them. There’s nothing else like it,” he enthused.

Extensive passenger research

Carnival Horizon’s expanded retail offerings are part of the line’s continued emphasis on enhancing guests’ overall shopping experience. Over the past year, Carnival Cruise Line has completely revamped the shopping outlets on nearly half of its fleet with additional ships set for makeovers during upcoming refurbishments.

Carnival Horizon’s inaugural voyage departed April 2 from Barcelona. The ship repositions to New York in May to launch a summer schedule of four-day Bermuda and eight-day Caribbean departures, then shifts to Miami for year-round six- and eight-day Caribbean cruises beginning in September.

In an exclusive interview with *Americas Duty Free*, Butler spoke about the new ship’s retail revamp. “Carnival Horizon is our latest and greatest vessel. We took our formula from Carnival Vista and reimagined it for Carnival Horizon from a retail perspective. Even though the amount of space is about the same, the layout and brands are very different.”

Before adding new brands, the operator undertook extensive research, including conducting past guest surveys to better understand why guests choose to shop or not to shop onboard.

It also conducted focus groups, to speak first-hand with guests to understand what they loved about their shopping experience. “It’s important to connect with guests while onboard so we can understand what they liked and didn’t like about the experience.”

Carnival Horizon’s assortment is a lot broader when it comes to fashion and costume jewelry and fine

jewelry, he continued. “We evolve merchandise on a monthly basis so there is always newness coming on board. In the last few years we’ve created stronger brand environments with partners such as Pandora. The ‘shop in shops’ feature a wide array of merchandise that allow our guests to become immersed in the brand.

“At the same time we have worked with our onboard retail team to evolve their level of expertise. For example, our Fine Jewelry specialists understand the story behind the pieces, the memory/keepsake component and the thought process that guests go through when purchasing jewelry on vacation.”

Double-digit sales increases

The grand opening for the retail environment took place on Carnival Horizon’s maiden voyage from Barcelona in April. “We’ve experienced strong sales increases year-over-year with our refreshed assortments and environments. A lot of that is due to the fact that we’ve been able to truly focus on brands and how the guest is interacting with our team members on board. At the same time, we’ve kept historically strong brands within the overall assortment.”

The stores are located in the central atrium, the main promenade on the ship, so the shops are a part of the overall experience. “We have created dedicated retail zones so the flow makes sense.

“Our tax and duty free retail offer allows us to have some of the best pricing in retail. This also includes our price match guarantee.

We want to make sure that the guest feels that they’re getting the best deal.”

Because guests are on board for multiple days (the average cruise length is five days), we offer promotions each day. Exciting retail events tied to Entertainment is a big piece of what makes shopping onboard so exciting.

The retail area onboard newer ships have grown 20-30%. “At Carnival, we have focused in on what the guest is looking for during a vacation experience. We’ve featured retail on board our ships for over 25 years and now we’re creating that are more meaningful. We’re really proud of that. Sales continue to grow. It’s growing because we’re offering on-trend merchandise our guests expect from Carnival, and we’re also staying true the brands that have always been strong for us,” he concludes.