



VIA Outlets reopens entire 11-centre portfolio after Covid-19 closures

Encouraging results after reopening, with new hybrid services introduced and a host of new brands joining the portfolio

14 May, 2021 – VIA Outlets – Europe's fastest growing owner-operator of premium fashion outlet destinations – has moved quickly to reopen all centres in its 11-strong portfolio, with Zweibrücken Fashion Outlet in Germany the final centre reopening its doors today. With the exception of Hede Fashion Outlet in Gothenburg, all of VIA Outlets' centres have been partially or completely closed for the majority of the period December to May due to in-country government-imposed Covid-19 restrictions.

Otto Ambagtsheer, Chief Executive Officer, commented: "The business has worked tirelessly to ensure an efficient return to normal trading right across our European portfolio – and we're delighted we have all our eleven centres open again after months of closure. We are already seeing spend per visitor outperform 2019 numbers in all centres, all double digit growth, some by as much as 40 per cent – a true testament of so-called 'revenge shopping'."

Hybrid services

During the closed periods, VIA Outlets worked hard to continue offering guest and brand partner services, for example by supporting virtual shopping – assisting brands to continue trading to the greatest extent possible. This allowed guests to shop from the comfort of their homes by setting up private shopping appointments via WhatsApp, Skype or Teams, speaking directly with a sales assistant to see products in store or via a Digital Catalogue, with purchases either available to be picked up in store or delivered directly to the customer's front door. The service was deemed a great success and highly appreciated by both guests and brand partners. As a result, going forward it will remain a permanent service offered by many brand partners in the VIA Outlets portfolio.

VIA Outlets also trialled and successfully launched a dedicated "Plan and Shop" platform in its Batavia Stad Fashion Outlet in Amsterdam, which allowed guests to plan their visits in advance. This was in response to the Dutch authorities requiring customers to book visits a minimum of four hours in advance and the platform allowed guests to access a unified booking system for all brands in the centre, letting them book several appointments with one



click. The system attracted a high number of customers with over 250,000 reservations in less than two months – allowing the centre to reach 25 per cent of normal turnover even during these extraordinary circumstances.

In addition to these centre-level initiatives, VIA Outlets has continued implementing its 3 R's strategy (remodelling, remerchandising and remarketing), with particularly high activity on the remerchandising side. Throughout the pandemic, VIA Outlets saw an increase in demand from existing as well as prospective brand partners looking for new channels to sell surplus stock after periods of lockdown, and it has met this demand by offering new locations as well as additional space in the form of pop-up stores.

New Brands

As a result, a host of new brands have joined the portfolio, including premium ski brand Toni Sailer and German icon Windsor opening new stores in Landquart Fashion Outlet in Switzerland, Lyle & Scott opening their first European outlet store in Batavia Stad Fashion Outlet, Karl Lagerfeld opening in Mallorca Fashion Outlet, Hugo Boss opening in Zweibrücken Fashion Outlet and Cavalli Class opening two stores in Batavia Stad and Zweibrücken respectively. Another new brand to join the portfolio is Fila, which chose Freeport Lisboa Fashion Outlet for its first mono-brand outlet in Europe, whilst Vans opened its largest outlet store in Iberia (412 sq. m.) in the same centre.

Otto Ambagtsheer, Chief Executive Officer, added: “With the health and wellbeing of our guests, staff and brand partners remaining one of our highest priorities, in July last year we partnered with leading testing and certification expert Bureau Veritas to create a ‘Safer Shopping’ certificate in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, which was subsequently awarded to all centres in the portfolio. In Q1 of 2021, Bureau Veritas re-audited all centres, resulting in a full certification for the second year in a row. This certification will further reinforce the message to our guests that we have taken every step to ensure the safest possible shopping experience.”

Ends
