

On location at Marseille Provence Airport: a striking new commercial zone comes to life – 07/02/08

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By Dermot Davitt in Marseille

FRANCE. Marseille Provence Airport and its key commercial partners Aelia, Relay and Autogrill celebrated the inauguration of a striking new retail and food & beverage zone with a special ceremony on Tuesday evening. The centrepiece of the zone is a 700sq m multi-category store operated by France's leading travel retailer Aelia.

In his welcome address, Marseille Airport CEO Pierre Regis thanked the three commercial partners for raising the standard of commercial activities at Marseille Provence and in particular hailed the "exceptional quality" of the Aelia outlet, which is currently the largest travel retail store in France.

Speaking later to The Moodie Report Regis said: "The role of non-aeronautical revenues is becoming more and more important to us, which is why this project was so critical. The outcome is fabulous and the quality of the retail here has fulfilled our expectations. Non-aeronautical revenues rose by +18.2% in 2007 and we are looking at double-digit growth again in 2008. We have a strong contribution also from Aelia's new-look shop in the Schengen area, which has seen turnover rise by +20% since work was finished.

"Now we need to capture more passengers to ensure our growth is maintained. There are still certain gaps in the mix. We want to open a watch shop and we need a good sportswear offer, so there is room to grow in new categories too."

Clarity in the offer

As the anchor commercial tenant, Aelia's investment in Marseille encompasses the main travel retail store – which opened in September - plus additional stores in the Schengen area and at the airport's low-cost terminal. The 700sq m outlet in Hall 1 has an easily accessible, open frontage and excellent visibility across the store. Inside, each category has its own look and feel, and there's real clarity in the offer.

There's a strong Sense of Place too: the centre of the store is built around a fountain feature and dedicated to products from the region of Provence, including brands such as L'Occitane. And aside from the the main duty free categories, there are areas dedicated to Bijoux Ternier, the cigar concept La Cave à Cigares, plus fashion and accessories areas by Longchamp and Lacoste.

Aelia Chief Executive Jean-Baptiste Morin said: "This project completes a series of major openings and renovations here at Marseille and underlines the remarkable relationships we have with the airport, a relationship that is going to last for many years. The remarkable numbers that the business has achieved since we completed the work serve to amplify the importance of that relationship.

"Marseille is a fast-growing airport," added Morin, "with strong international traffic, in particular from North Africans who are a high spending group, and an important one for us.

"The offer in the store is a coherent one tailored to the passenger profile. We have a very nice cigar area, a strong food and wine offer – a sector that is growing strongly for us – and then a very large perfumes & cosmetics area. We incorporated some of the high-end luxury elements that work so well in Paris, but the mix is tailored very much to the passenger at Marseille."

The critical role of beauty

Beauty plays a critical role in the new-look offer. Aelia Category Manager Perfumes and Cosmetics Béatrice Delorme told The Moodie Report: "Although we focus on the major French brands such as Chanel, Dior, YSL and Guerlain, just as we do in Paris, this store is quite different. We feature perfumes, cosmetics and skincare all together. Next to those major brands are Clinique, Lancôme and Clarins, and on the far side we have the back walls dedicated to perfume brands Kenzo, Armani, Calvin Klein and Hugo Boss. We worked hard on the walk-through aspect of the store, with a pebble effect on the floor offering a reminder of Provence.

"There is plenty of activity in the store too. We have areas dedicated to promotions and exclusives will continue to be a major point of difference for us. Just two weeks ago we launched our own latest exclusive fragrance, in collaboration with Azzaro: Cockpit.

"And we are doing some other things we don't do so much in Paris for instance. There is a far stronger market here for celebrity fragrances so we have an area for those."

"Compared to the previous store, we are doing +30% more sales turnover now," said Delorme. "There is a strong mix of passengers, from British visitors to North Africans. And although they are seeking premium brands, they also want brands such as L'Oréal Paris, which does very well."

Delorme paid tribute to the support of the brands. "I am telling brand owners that all of our stores now need to hit the same high standards. We need to get our passengers to dream and to do that you need to present them with a luxurious environment. And the brands are buying into that."

Paris and Warsaw next

For Aelia, the Marseille project is just one of a number of major openings planned in the coming months. Jean-Baptiste Morin said: "We will be reopening T2E, which has now been closed for four years (after the roof collapsed-Ed) and that will be exciting. We have some major openings at Paris Orly, with a strong new perfumes & cosmetics offer on the one hand and a liquor, tobacco and food outlet on the other.

"And then there is Warsaw, which is a very important project. We will have 1,200sq m of space there, so the store will really be a masterpiece. We are hopeful it can open by the end of March." To hear Jean-Baptiste Morin discuss these developments, and the Marseille project, click on the Podcast icon on this page.

Alongside Aelia, Marseille Airport's other commercial tenants – Aelia sister brand Relay and food & beverage specialist Autogrill - also celebrated the inauguration at Hall 1.

Former Aelia Chief Executive Michel Pérol, who was influential in kickstarting the project, returned as CEO of Relais H SNC, Lagardère Services French travel retail division. He celebrated the opening of the Relay store, and said: "Marseille Airport has shown a very ambitious strategy to develop, and has proved a very good partner for our group. And with the remarkable performance of the business here, we are very happy to continue that good relationship."