

New look and retail experience at V&A Waterfront's revamped Alfred Mall

Just in time for the festive season, the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town has reopened the newly-refurbished Alfred Mall, which adjoins the Victoria & Alfred Hotel in the Quays District.



Source: Supplied

The revamped Alfred Mall, anchored by the Aafricaa store along with five other tenants, is designed to fill the transition between offerings at Watershed and the Victoria Wharf Shopping Centre, presenting a boutique offering of design, art and craft.

Aafricaa's flagship design emporium is a 450m lifestyle destination for locals and travellers and is a unique new concept store for curated contemporary African design, offering a dynamic retail platform for the continent's leading contemporary brands and designers. With an emphasis on crafted and artisanal luxury, Aafricaa is a place where great in-house collections, ever-evolving exhibitions, and new collaborations will continually be explored in celebration of the creative energy of the continent.

The boutique mall also has food and beverage offering on the quayside with a new external concession area looking out over the water to the city and Table Mountain. With the opening up of the building's arches and raising the pedestrian canopies, visitors are presented glimpses from pedestrian level through the building to the water's edge on the quayside.

The mall is energised on the Alfred Square side with the reinvention of the external area, previously a carpark, into a new public square with greenery and a water feature while the Victoria Alfred Hotel now dons a new and independent entrance off the upgraded arrivals plaza.

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History of the site

Built in 1904 as the North Quay Warehouse, the Alfred Mall building is nearly 120 years old. Throughout its lifespan, the building has functioned as a coal shed, the old port rope store, an overflow warehouse for the Union Castle Shipping Company Building (UCB), a customs baggage store – and the original mall in the neighbourhood, before the Victoria Wharf Shopping Centre was built.

In 1990, the building's storied past gave birth to a new, exclusive speciality mall as well as the precinct's first hotel – the Victoria and Alfred Hotel – a development that established the neighbourhood as a top tourist attraction. Now, the space is rebirthed as a destination for the contemporary African aesthetic - one that marries heritage with imagination to inspire a new generation of visitors with the stories of a modern and vibrant continent.

V&A Waterfront chief executive officer, David Green said the time is now right to unveil the renovated Alfred Mall following the influx of tourists choosing to holiday in Cape Town over the national holidays and school holidays closures.

“The V&A welcomed just over 20 million visitors in the last 12 months which highlights the steady recovery that is being

experienced across the country. This is up 36.1% on 2021, but down 23.8% pre-Covid-19 in 2019 over the same period,” said Green.



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Reimagining retail

In addition to Aafricaa, new tenants at Alfred Mall include luxury café Coco Safar; South African fashion retailer Mungo & Jemima; women's apparel brand Hannah Lavery; clothing, jewellery, and homeware label Jane Valken and precious gems retailer Treasures of Africa, which also offers a concierge for information on African travel experiences.

Instead of traditional brick-and-mortar retail design, the V&A said it's reimagining retail as a space that invites shoppers on a journey of delight and discovery. Here, the V&A aims to create immersive, shareable experiences that visitors can show their friends and families to showcase the best that Africa has to offer.

Laurence Brick, co-founder of the Aafricaa Store, comments: “Aafricaa is a development from our ongoing partnership with the V&A Waterfront and our work on projects such as the award-winning Joy From Africa to the World and the Zeitz Mocaa shop.

“In our collaborations together we have discovered we have a shared passion for the creative community of this continent and a commitment to projecting the work of artisans and designers to the world. Aafricaa gives us the perfect opportunity to let this work shine in a beautiful environment where visitors can meander at their leisure and be inspired by the designs firsthand.”

According to Green, the concept behind the renovation was to redefine the future of retail and the customer experience, to explore how other countries are innovating retail spaces and to add an African flair that captivates a new generation. “Our neighbourhood is vibrant with an undeniable electrifying spirit. It's a source of endless potential alongside our retailers and community.”

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