

A sanctuary for skin and senses: Aesop opens in Hainan with China Duty Free Group



The new Aesop store in Hainan is hailed as a sanctuary for skin and senses

L'Oréal Travel Retail has partnered with China Duty Free Group to open an Aesop store within the cdf Sanya International Duty Free Shopping Complex in Hainan. The store was inaugurated December 23, 2024.

Following L'Oréal Travel Retail's vision to continually reinvent the traveller experience via engaging experiences and Aesop's unique approach to store design, which sees the brand respond to the essence of each locale, this store is said to offer "a distinctly sensorial experience that nurtures a deep connection with the brand".

Inspired by the surrounds of Hainan, the space is influenced by memories of sunlight refracting through water while swimming, which is translated into the store's own architecture. A key aspect of the design is the use of algae as an architectural material, which is featured on light fixtures that in turn cast dappled waves of light across the space.



Aēsop claims a bold presence in the cdf Sanya International Duty Free Shopping Complex

Warm hospitality, bespoke consultations, and a sensory exploration of formulations await visitors. Signature touches of the brand are all preserved, from a welcoming cup of tea along with oshibori, to the discovery of fragrance through a specially designed space dedicated to Aēsop's unconventional Eaux de Parfum.

For a limited period from January 18, to celebrate the opening of the store, customers have been able to discover local Hainan tea flavors whilst they explore the space, and leave with a printed neighborhood guide which offers a curated sensory exploration of local sights.

Jesus Abia, Managing Director of L'Oréal Travel Retail Asia Pacific, said, "A momentous occasion unfolds with the arrival of Aēsop's first travel retail destination in Hainan. The interplay between Aēsop and its environment is a defining characteristic of the brand.

"Here in Hainan, the store's inherent connection to nature and considered design elevates the journey, enriching skin, senses, self, and surrounds. We look forward to unparalleled immersive retail experiences for our travelers."



Store visitors are treated to Aesop's unparalleled products and service

Dorothy Liu, Vice President / Deputy General Manager, Product Merchant Department of China Duty Free Group, commented, "We are pleased to welcome Aesop, a brand of distinct creativity and inspiration, to our flagship travel retail destination in Hainan.

"Challenging convention and cultivating novel experiences for our discerning clientele remains a central pursuit. We celebrate Aesop's successful opening and anticipate further collaborations in the years to come."

Aesop Hainan store design elements

According to L'Oréal Travel Retail, a distinct childhood memory of seeing sunlight refracted through water while swimming, shimmering patterns dancing on the ocean floor, is translated into architecture within Aesop's inaugural Hainan store.

Conceived by the brand's in-house designers, the space is articulated by the compression and expansion of massive proportions and a strong datum to give the feeling of being immersed in a deep ocean cave, looking up at the wavering light. To recreate this sensation, a living substance with an otherworldly quality - algae - was chosen as an architectural material despite the seriously humid environment. The challenge was to coat 2,000 aluminum pieces, destined to be suspended from the oculi, and the four-meter entrance column in the stuff. The problem was hydrophilia: algae will absorb moisture from its surroundings, becoming tacky and possibly moldy.

In collaboration with Jessie French, an experimental artist and designer developing algae-based bioplastics, an innovative method of preserving the organic matter while maintaining its biodegradability was realized. Overcoming such technical obstacles was all in service of framing an

intimate atmosphere around the store's central basins, where flowing water and Aesop's formulations for the skin, hair and body combine to create iridescent bubbles.