

OUTLETS

The Unstoppable Rise Of The Outlet Mall

California's Outlets at Tejon offers a glimpse of outlet shopping for the future.

Holly Clinard

For decades, outlet malls have been a popular destination for shoppers of all ages. From the first multi-store outlet center that Vanity Fair opened in 1974, in Reading, Pennsylvania, and throughout the 1980s and 1990s, outlet malls grew rapidly. Outlet malls offer a wide variety of name-brand merchandise at discounted prices, and as a result, they are a great way to save money on popular brands of clothes, shoes, and accessories.

Although outlet malls have been around for decades, the pandemic was a major hit to the retail landscape. Prior to 2020, outlet malls were seeing a surge in popularity, as consumers became more price-conscious and savvy on how to save money on their favorite brands. In June 2022, visits to outlet malls in the U.S. were down 6.7 percent from 2021 and down 14.3 percent from 2019, according to Placer.ai. This had outlet mall developers scrambling for a strategy and a path forward.

GROWTH IN CALIFORNIA

One of the most thriving outlet malls in the country is the Outlets at Tejon in Tejon Ranch, California, strategically located on Interstate 5 between Los Angeles and Bakersfield, just south of the Highway 99 interchange. This mall is home to over 50 stores, including Banana Republic Factory Store, Rack Room Shoes, Nike Factory Store and Calvin Klein. There are also a variety of restaurants and entertainment options surrounding the Outlets at Tejon, making it a great place to spend a day shopping and exploring.



The Outlets at Tejon is located along Interstate 5 between Los Angeles and Bakersfield, California.

In 2019, prior to the pandemic, the mall met its sales goals, followed by 2021 and 2022, when consumers were receiving government subsidies that changed the marketplace and its demographic. Now in 2023, in what is considered the post-pandemic era, Outlets at Tejon is building on its successful foundation. The center brought on eight new tenants in two years — two Ariat stores (Ariat and

Ariat Work), Vans Outlet, Nautica, Forever 21, Lacoste, K-Pop Star and U.S. Polo Assn. The mall also relocated Tony's Pizza — a popular dining destination — from the food court to a larger space with expanded menu offerings, including an adult beverage menu. This growth, which is above the industry standard, can be attributed to a number of factors, including the mall's convenient location for shop-

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pers traveling between Northern and Southern California, its wide variety of stores and its competitive prices.

Nestled below the rolling foothills of California's iconic I-5 and Highway 99 corridor, Outlets at Tejon is a milestone marker for shoppers, travelers, adventure seekers and energetic families. The Outlets at Tejon's premier center features 50-plus designer and brand-name stores in a tranquil open-air and family friendly environment. There are stores to suit every taste and budget, from high-end brands like Coach and Kate Spade to more affordable options like H&M and Forever 21. The center is also home to a variety of specialty stores, such as Carter's and Bird Dog Arts.

The Outlets at Tejon has a reputation of seamlessly fusing convenience with a welcoming sense of community. It's a place where people spend time relaxing between road trip stints, charging up at the Tesla charging station with additional charging stations



Convenience is an amenity many outlet centers have begun to promote. The Outlets at Tejon offers Tesla charging stations among other amenities.

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added this past year, shopping for the latest finds at name-brand and factory shops, and soaking up the calm yet energizing open-air and family friendly environment.

The competitive prices at Outlets at Tejon are another factor that has contributed to its popularity. The mall offers discounts of up to 70 percent on merchandise, making it a great place to find a bargain. You can also find coupons and promo codes online, which can save consumers even more money.

In addition to its store variety and affordable prices, Outlets at Tejon also offers a variety of entertainment options. The California weather lends itself to the mall's annual Classic Car Show, Trick or Treating event for families, a Snow Bash with Santa in December, and a 12 Days of Christ-



The average outlet shopper saves 20 percent by purchasing goods at an outlet mall.



Retailers at The Outlets at Tejon offer discounts up to 70 percent of regular prices.

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mas giveaway that continually has consumers flocking for prizes. There are good restaurant options on site, so visitors can grab a bite to eat before or after shopping.

DESPITE THE PANDEMIC SLUMP, OUTLET MALLS OFFER PERKS

While data suggests shoppers are not interested in spending their hard-earned dollars — or gas money — on shopping at outlets, this isn't scaring away retailers from expanding their outlet presence and betting on deals that outlet malls can provide. Like most retail properties, outlet centers experienced a decline in sales and occupancy growth during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, because of their outdoor shopping environment, outlet malls were among the first to welcome back shoppers who were leery of visiting enclosed, indoor malls.

Additionally, the economy is still struggling, and consumers are continually looking for ways to save money. The average shopper saved 20 percent on their purchases at an outlet mall, according to a study from the International Council of Shopping Centers. Plus, outlet malls, like the Outlets at Tejon for example, can't help but be convenient, with many located near major highways and cities.

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“As retail properties recover from COVID challenges, economically speaking, outlets are performing really well,” says Becca Bland, director of marketing for Tejon Ranch. “We know there are a lot of store closings and even retail bankruptcies throughout the country, but despite that, our recovery has been strong and trending in an upward direction when it comes to leasing and tenant demands.



Becca Bland,
Tejon Ranch

As we move forward, outlet centers will continue to diversify their tenants, focusing more on experiential dining and retail, which gives us that added foot traffic.”

Overall, in the face of the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the world — and to the retail world in particular — outlet malls continue to be a desirable destination to save

money on name-brand merchandise. When mall developers prioritize convenience, affordability, store variety

and a well-rounded entertainment experience for the whole family, an outlet mall will thrive. **SCB**



The Outlets at Tejon is thriving post-COVID by offering affordability, variety and convenience to shoppers.

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