

MORE THAN A Shopping Mall

Explore the best there is to offer at exciting mall attractions

BY JENNIFER VISHNEVSKY



ong gone are the days of visiting a shopping mall for a quick purchase, or finding that some items are impossible to locate. Today, malls are constantly expanding to be a true travel destination. Malls have grown over time to accommodate the consumer by featuring fine cuisine and plenty of anchor stores. To expand beyond a shopping mecca, malls have grown outside of the traditional. Now, shopping destinations incorporate activities like ice skating rinks and amusement parks to improve the experience. In addition, visitors can turn shopping into a long trip by staying at a hotel that is part of the shopping complex, like at the West Edmonton Mall in Edmonton, Alberta.

Mall attractions have been on the rise—Mall of America (MOA) became a leader in combining entertainment with retail. Other complexes have followed in its footsteps, incorporating unique activities for guests. By attracting millions of visitors to hundreds of stores, North America has captured some of the best in malls. Every guest is provided with a unique shopping and entertainment experience, sparking a tourism industry in some smaller cities. The group tour industry has thrived on mall destinations with various tour options. “The most popular group activity is a meet-and-greet service,” says Doug Killian, director of tourism for Mall of America. “Group activity is a big, important part of our marketing effort. Most groups generally want to do an activity, but they want plenty of time to shop and go on the rides.”

The U.S. and Canada have numerous malls that focus on providing the best shopping experience for their guests. And while every city claims its mall is the best, there are stand-outs in North America that go above and beyond the traditional shopping experience. These mall attractions provide a look at the new world of shopping, an adventure that has something for guests of all ages.



Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., is the United States' largest retail and entertainment complex.

A City Within a City

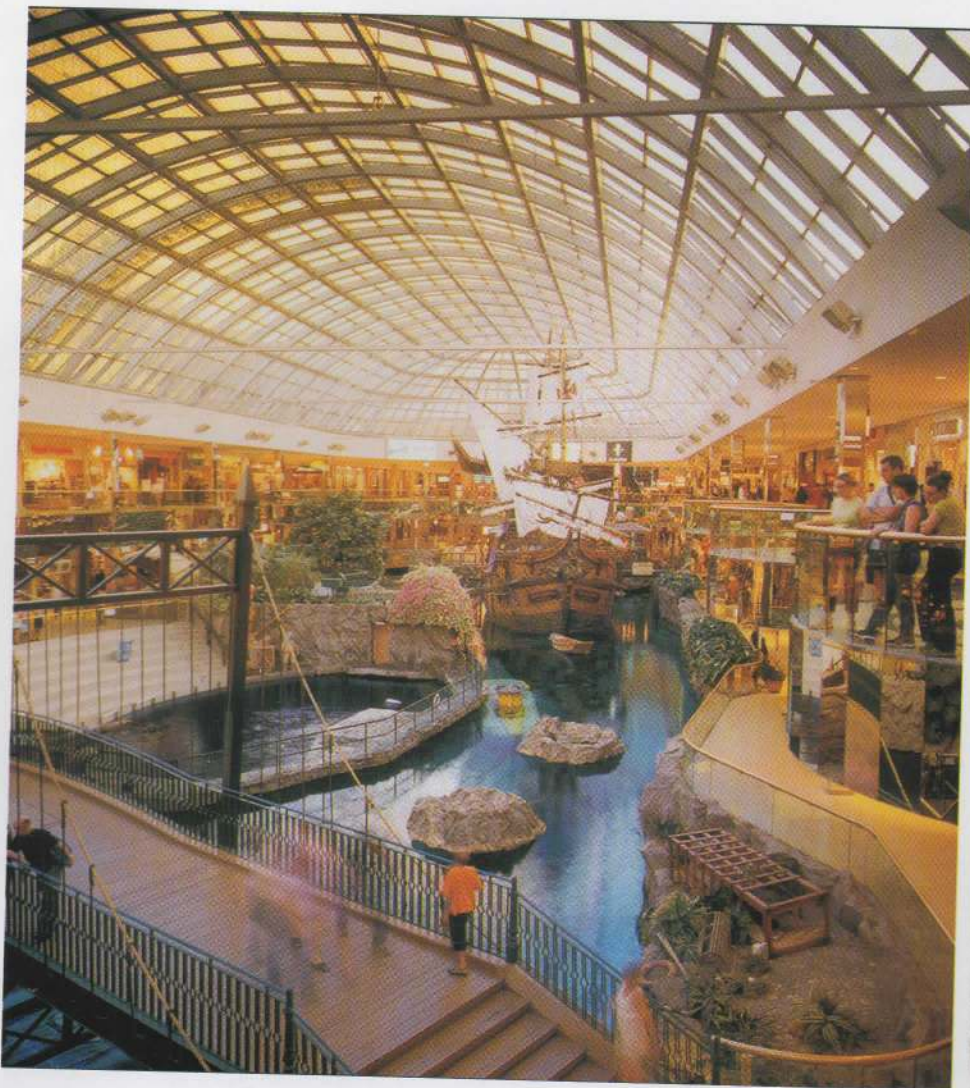
As the nation's largest retail and entertainment complex, Mall of America (MOA) lives up to its name. The 4.2-million-square-foot center is home to 520 world-class shops. Located in Bloomington, Minn., the mall has revolutionized the shopping experience in the 15 years since it opened. By becoming a leader in retail and entertainment, it has become a top tourist destination in the U.S. “The success is more than just a mall, we are a destination. We have that built in draw,” says Anna Lewicki Long, spokesperson for MOA.

Beyond shopping, the mall offers visitors the chance to shop, see a movie, ride a roller coaster or build a LEGO castle. Mall of America is home to Park at MOA, the nation's largest indoor family amusement park. The attractions get bigger with the Underwater Adventures Aquarium, the world's largest underground aquarium. With more than 4,500 sea creatures and a virtual submarine tour, visitors can view sharks and more from a 300-foot glass underground tunnel.

First in the industry to mix retail and entertainment, Mall of America has become the model for combining signature attractions with retail to create an outstanding entertainment venue and is now one of the most visited destinations in the United States.

The mall has become a treasure for the entire state of Minnesota. MOA has become a destination for tourists, generating more than \$1.8 billion each year. Tourists from Canada, England, Sweden, Ireland and Japan come to Mall of America to take in the sights and capitalize on the absent sales tax on clothing. Once known mainly as a vacation destination for outdoor activities, tourists now flock to the state for shopping. In fact, tourism accounts for four out of every 10 visits to the mall. “We have a lot of tourists, more than 40 million per year. More than 40 percent of traffic is out-of-state tourists,” adds Lewicki Long.

The most notable attraction is the Park at MOA, home to 7 acres of fun and more than 30 rides and attractions. At LEGO Universe, four stories of fun await guests to



play, see and buy. Guests see more than 90 full-size LEGO models and the world's largest animated and interactive LEGO clock tower.

For some adventure, visitors can step into the world of a fighter pilot at A.C.E.S. Flight Simulation. Guests can fly in flight simulators that replicate piloting the actual aircraft. Visitors get a chance to experience the intensity of aerial combat and see what it's like to land aboard an aircraft carrier.

Back by popular demand is Moose Mountain Adventure Golf, an 18-hole miniature golf course certain to provide a fun adventure for all. The course features an old-time north woods feel, complete with life-size moose. "We had a golf course when we opened. We tried a few new things in that space, but people always asked about it," says Lewicki Long.

Visitors can satisfy a need for speed at the NASCAR Silicon Motor Speedway. The roar of 700 horsepower engines and 195 mile-per-hour speeds are all part of this

Deep Sea Adventure lake at West Edmonton Mall has an exact replica of Christopher Columbus' ship.

electrifying, high-tech indoor stock car racing competition. "It feels like you're really in NASCAR. This is a very popular and realistic ride," says Lewicki Long.

Visitors should remember to take their time—if a shopper spent 10 minutes browsing at every store, it would take more than 86 hours to complete the visit to Mall of America.

The Greatest Indoor Show on Earth

With more than 800 stores, nine major attractions, two hotels and more than 100 dining establishments, the **West Edmonton Mall (WEM)** is truly a world-class destination. More than 28.2 million visitors each year make WEM Alberta, Canada's No. 1 tourist attraction. "Our size and scope definitely set us apart," says Kimberly Evans,

Shop Till You Drop

ARIZONA

Arizona Mills

Tempe
(480) 491-7300
www.arizonamills.com

Calling the desert home, Arizona Mills features the best names in retail outlets. The indoor mall includes OFF 5th Saks Fifth Avenue Outlet, Last Call from Neiman Marcus, Kenneth Cole New York and Nine West Outlet. For the moviegoer, visitors can choose between the latest movies on 24 screens at Harkins Luxury 24 Cinemas. For a powerful movie experience, guests can treat their senses to the IMAX Theatre, located in the mall. Visitors can also grab a bite at the Rainforest Café, a tropical-themed restaurant.

CALIFORNIA

Del Amo Fashion Center

Torrance
(310) 542-8525
www.delamofashioncenter.com

Straddling several blocks in the city of Torrance, Del Amo Fashion Center features hundreds of the best names in retail. With more than 300 stores under one roof, visitors can shop at Macy's, Sears, Marshall's, TJ Maxx, Barnes & Noble and The Gap. Millions of shoppers visit the fashion center each year to seek the latest fashion trends and unique gifts. The new outdoor promenade at the fashion center brought South Bay residents and visitors many long-awaited retail, dining and entertainment destinations. Guests can take a break from shopping at Lucky Strike Lanes. For a change from the food court, visitors can grab a bite at the Melt Gelato and Crepe Cape, or enjoy some Japanese food at RA Sushi Bar restaurant.

South Coast Plaza

Costa Mesa
(800) 782-8888
www.southcoastplaza.com

South Coast Plaza, Southern California and Orange County's premiere shopping destination, celebrates 40 years of quality. With plenty of new stores opening every season, the plaza provides a fresh shopping experience. The shopping center provides major retail chains such as Bloomingdales, Saks

Fifth Avenue and Nordstrom. But perhaps the most enticing aspect of the South Coast Plaza is the fine cuisine. Antonello Ristorante is host to rustic Italian dishes, prepared with a contemporary touch. With its palazzo-like seating, the award-winning restaurant is a favorite in Orange County. For something unique, visitors can try Darya Fine Persian Cuisine, where guests sample rice dishes and savory shish kebab at the exotic restaurant.

FLORIDA

Sawgrass Mills

Sunrise
(954) 846-2300
www.sawgrassmillsmall.com

Sawgrass Mills, Florida's largest retail and entertainment center, features more than 350 name-brand stores and outlets such as Nordstrom Rack, The Gap Outlet and OFF 5th Saks Fifth Avenue Outlet. It would be nearly impossible to avoid the great rates at the outlet stores. Visitors can also enjoy full-service restaurants like Cheesecake Factory. To do a little shopping while enjoying a tan, visit the nearby Colonnade Outlets.

HAWAII

Ala Moana Center

Honolulu
(808) 955-9517
www.alamoanacenter.com

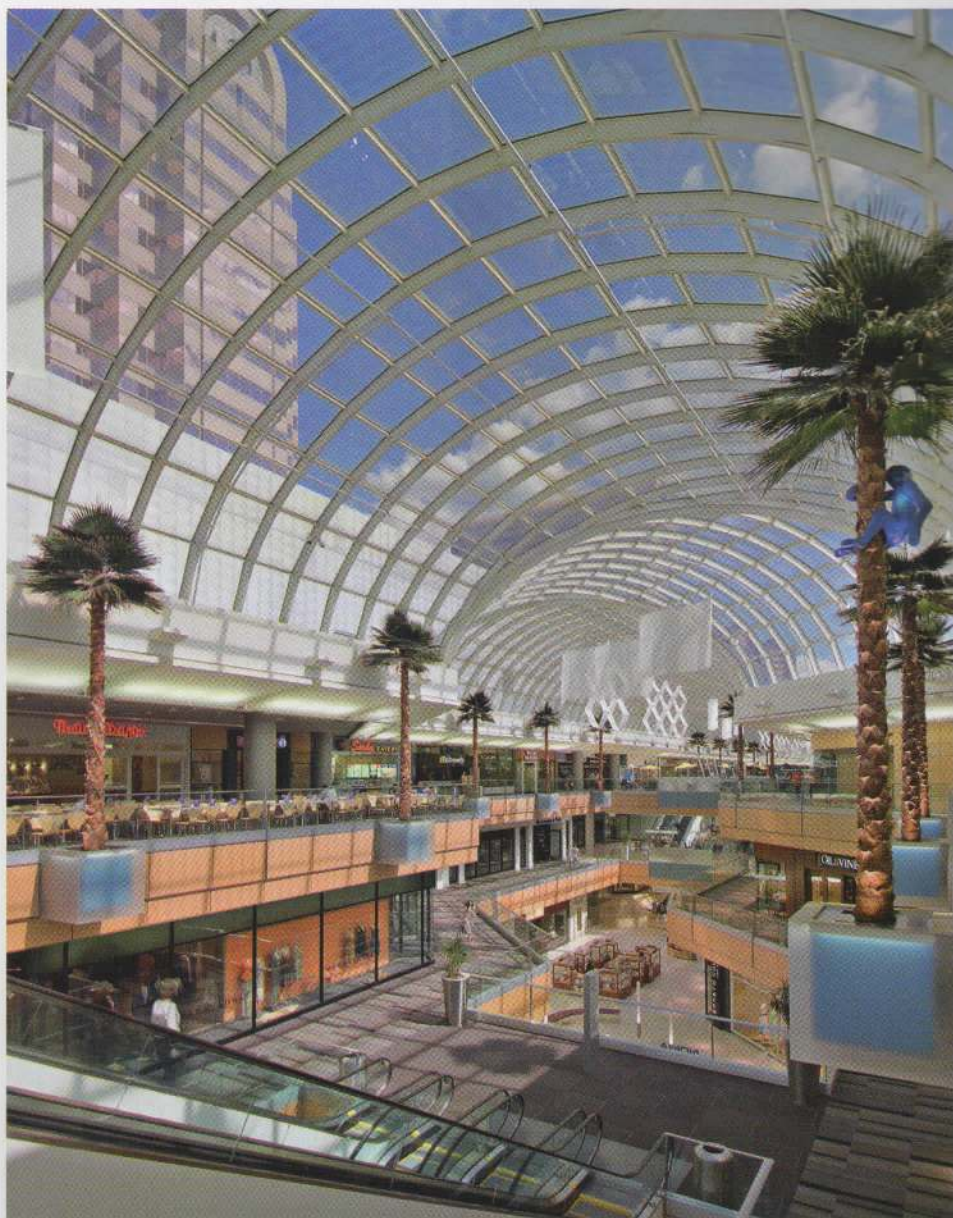
More than 50 million visitors walk through the aisles of the world's largest open-air shopping center. No matter what time of year, there's always a fantastic performance at Centerstage. Centerstage has more than 500 performances a year, including the weekly Keiki Hula Show on Sunday morning. Enjoy free entertainment by local groups as well as visiting national and international entertainers. For a special meal, check out the Ho'okipa Terrace, which houses 10 incredible restaurants, from Bubba Gump Shrimp Co. to Mai Tai Bar. In addition, Ala Moana Center boasts holiday celebrations, sidewalk sales, fashion shows and an exciting range of special entertainment events.

IOWA

Coral Ridge Mall

Coralville
(319) 625-5500
www.coralridgemall.com

While Coral Ridge Mall may not compare to some of the big-city shopping competition, this regional mall draws visitors from



media and public relations coordinator at West Edmonton Mall. As North America's largest enclosed shopping center, "there is no other mall like us in North America," says Evans.

The mall features nine amazing attractions and a host of other entertainment options. "There is definitely always a wow factor for those who see these features for the first time," says Evans. "The unique mix [which includes] exclusive and one-of-a-kind retailers, the nine major permanent attractions, the other entertainment options we have, and all of the other special entertainment and activities that come on a daily basis, really set WEM apart. We

The Galleria Dallas is home to 200 world-class retailers.

have something new and different every time a guest visits."

The Galaxyland Amusement Park is the world's largest indoor amusement park, home to Mindbender, a triple loop roller-coaster. Also featured is the Galaxy Orbiter, an amazing spinning coaster. No matter what the season, the temperature is always right for the World Waterpark. The wave pool is always warm, perfect for visitors of all ages to ride the slides or bungee jump at the 5-acre waterpark. The warm weather may seem like a shock outside the walls,

since Canada is often cold and snowy. "That is part of what makes WEM a success—having everything under one roof," adds Evans.

West Edmonton Mall has taken mini-golf to a new level at *Putt 'n' Glow*, featuring neon lighting in the glow-in-the-dark entertainment experience. Also, the sensational NHL-sized Ice Palace provides fun on the rink, under a giant glass dome. Ed's Rec Room is home to plenty of fun, featuring 10-pin bowling, billiards and arcade games.

Another must-see is *Sea Life Caverns*, the underwater home to approximately 200 species of colorful fish, sharks, sting rays, reptiles and penguins. For the sea lion fans, *Sea Lions' Rock* is the home of the three talented and crowd-loving creatures. Guests are also encouraged to stop at the world's largest indoor lake, *Deep Sea Adventure*, and see an exact replica of Christopher Columbus' ship, the *Santa Maria*. Also, *Deep Sea Derby* allows guests to board their own bumper boat to splash their way to fun.

Few shopping malls can boast a hotel, which is a key part of WEM's appeal. The *Fantasyland Hotel*, located adjacent to *World Waterpark*, has one of the highest occupancy rates in Canada. It features 355 guestrooms including 120 theme rooms such as *Hollywood*, *Roman*, *Polynesian* and *African Safari*.

Between visiting the stores and attractions, visitors may stumble upon jugglers, musicians and artists. These entertainers may have stopped by the *NewCap Radio Stage*, which showcases big-name talent and rising stars. Another featured stop is the *Centre Fountain*, long used to showcase fashion found in the mall's stores.

Attraction aside, part of WEM's flair is in the themed streets. Visitors can stroll down *Europa Boulevard* to find fashion by some of the world's best designers in the boutiques and specialty store. For a taste of New Orleans' vibrant nightlife, guests can stop by *Bourbon Street*, where the rhythms of jazz fill the air.

Premier Shopping

For a great mixture of high-end and affordable shopping, visitors can enjoy fashion-savvy brands at **The Galleria**

Dallas. Texas' major mall is home to 200 world-class retailers, including *Saks Fifth Avenue*, *Nordstrom*, *Louis Vuitton* and *Gucci*. More than 19 million guests visit *The Galleria Dallas* each year, making it the most popular visitor attraction in the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex.

When guests get tired of shopping, they can make their way to the famed *Galleria Ice Skating Center*, which features the country's tallest indoor Christmas tree during the holiday season. Visitors can show off their moves on the ice or simply enjoy a great meal at a restaurant surrounding the rink. The iconic ice skating center regularly welcomes elite skaters from around the globe, as well as those who lace up their skates just for fun. Nestled in the collection of stores and restaurants, this attraction can't be overlooked.

Families with younger guests can stop at the *Galleria Dallas Playplace*, nestled under the domed skylight. The jungle-themed perfect "playground" welcomes younger guests who are 42 inches in height and shorter.

Guests can turn the mall into an overnight experience with a stay at the newly transformed *Westin Galleria Dallas*. Located within the shopping center, the hotel offers the best in quality for its guests. Shopping, restaurants and attractions at *The Galleria Dallas* are simply an elevator ride away, providing a convenient travel experience.

The *Galleria Dallas* also boasts its share of dining opportunities suited to every need and taste. There are more than 25 restaurants and eateries, including fabulous newcomers *SushiSamba* and *The Grill on the Alley*.

SushiSamba opened its sixth worldwide location at the mall. The restaurant blends Japan, Brazil and Peru into its cuisine, music and design.

The Grill on the Alley, which opened its first Texas location at *The Galleria Dallas*, offers straight-forward, classic American cuisine. The restaurant is known for its offering of favorite American classics, including perfectly grilled prime beef steaks, chops, fresh fish and fowl. *Grand Lux* and *Oceanaire* restaurants add additional culinary choices for those who like to mingle fine shopping and fine dining.

all over the Midwest. Anchor stores include *Target*, *Dillard's*, *Barnes & Noble*, *Sears*, *JC Penney*, and *Younkers*. The mall also boasts an NHL regulation-size ice arena. The *Coral Ridge Ice Arena* provides quality entertainment for local shoppers and visitors. The *Iowa Children's Museum* offers interactive exhibits as a family escape from shopping.

MINNESOTA

Mall of America

Bloomington
(952) 883-8800
www.mallofamerica.com

See main story.

NEVADA

Fashion Show Mall

Las Vegas
(702) 784-7000
www.thefashionshow.com

Most of Las Vegas is known for its slots and high-end hotels. What it is also getting recognized for is its array of shopping venues. The *Fashion Show Mall* is Las Vegas' premiere retail destination, spreading over 2 million square feet and offering more than 200 stores. In addition to the shops, one of the most interesting aspects is the name-sake events: visitors can watch the fashion shows to get ideas on clothing trends.

PENNSYLVANIA

King of Prussia Mall

King of Prussia
(610) 265-5727
www.kingofprussiamall.com

With more than 400 stores in its directory, visitors may need a few breathers making it across the entire mall. Billing itself as the "premiere shopping destination on the East Coast," the mall takes advantage of its location right off the *Pennsylvania Turnpike* to draw shoppers from New York, New Jersey and Maryland. The mall offers visitors an endless selection of world-class department stores, boutiques and sophisticated restaurants. Despite a lack of theme parks and other modern amenities, the retail shopping space draws tourists looking to get away.

TEXAS

The Galleria Dallas **North Dallas**

(972) 702-7100
www.galleriadallas.com

See main story.