

# Beauty Incognito: Spring Scents

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Metropolitan Cosmetics in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Photo By: Courtesy Photo

## Johannesburg, South Africa

Not too long ago, fragrance shopping in Johannesburg meant a limited choice in generic department stores and nondescript pharmacies. Today, with malls and shopping centers dotting every neighborhood, the array of choices is impressive. Finding a fragrance from the latest Chanel sensation to that elusive limited edition blink-and-its-gone cult Robert Piguet scents is no longer such an impossible feat. What I was hoping to discover on this shopping mission was a fragrance that was fresh and feminine, perhaps with a hint of green or citrus notes. But I didn't want to smell like everyone else in Johannesburg; here, they are obsessed with having the latest from the best-known brands. I wanted something not so easily identifiable but definitely memorable.

### Metropolitan Cosmetics Hyde Park Shopping Centre

Stepping into Metropolitan is like entering a private club open only to those in the know. The brands available are not your everyday department store names; they conjure exotic locales, velvet-drenched boudoirs and amorous adventures.

Inside, the store is a cross between Space NK and a chic Parisian pharmacy—clean and well ordered, with the products displayed with sophisticated symmetry. On the day I visited, the sales staff was poised and immaculately groomed, and incredibly knowledgeable about the products. They greeted me with warm smiles as I entered, and within seconds, one was at my side, smoothly asking if I was looking for anything in particular.

She introduced me to the Serge Lutens brand, explaining that Lutens is an acclaimed French perfumer who lives in Morocco and who created the groundbreaking *Fleur de Peche* for Shiseido. She spritzed a few scents onto paper strips. She didn't push me to buy anything, but clearly delighted in telling me the stories behind each, such as *Eau Suave* from *Parfum d'Empire*, which, she said, was inspired by the Empress Josephine, Napoleon Bonaparte's one true love. She pointed out the rose notes (the Empress favorite), as well as the hints of spice.

I loved that she didn't focus on the newest or most hyped fragrance. Rather, she emphasized the emotional and sensory connection of each. Her manner was enthusiastic yet subtle. Without any attempt at a hard sell, she managed to give a sense of ceremony and meaning to what has become in other stores a pedestrian experience. And she seemed to read me right the very first scent she suggested, *Fleurs d'Oranger* by Lutens, embodied the

balance of femininity and freshness I was looking for. I felt I could spend hours here without feeling pressured to buy anything until I was absolutely sure it was me.