

## Ria Shopping: Olhão new shopping center

The new Olhão shopping centre, will have three cinemas. They will be occupying the space that was planned to be used as a gymnasium. Ria Shopping will have three cinemas, one of which will be 3D (the first of its kind in the Algarve), each with about 100 seats, and which will open for business at the end of June.

This aspect of the shopping centre was not planned in the initial project and for this reason the promoters had to adapt the space. The challenge came from Alarcine, a company that manages some of the cinemas in the Algarve. Patrícia Múrias, director of Ria Shopping said that they had done a technical evaluation about whether it would be possible or not and in the area where they had planned to have a gymnasium they decided to go ahead because it was the biggest area they had where it would be possible to create the cinemas.

Winter a challenge for the bold design?

Ria Shopping is divided into six floors, three underground with parking for 1100 cars, and three floors above ground: the first with a supermarket and services, the second with clothes and other shops, and the third with restaurants and cinemas.

The structure that covers the shopping centre is a tensioned canvas, similar to a gigantic sheet. The centre includes open balconies with a view over the city which will oblige the administrators to find solutions for windy and rainy days.

Patrícia Múrias said they had already thought that the wind could cause some discomfort but at present there was no reason to do anything because they hadn't tried it out yet. The summer was just beginning and the problem would not arise, and so it was the ideal time to try it out and see exactly from where the prevailing winds came and how it felt inside the shopping centre so that they could then implement the most appropriate solutions.

A different range in a space conceived for the city

Ria Shopping consists of 80 shops, half of which are occupied by regional businesses.

Despite the fact that the centre is opening to the public today with just 50% of the shops and 75% of the larger premises occupied, Roger Shiltz, CEO of the company Sans Frontières, the promoters of the shopping centre, predicts that the centre will be running at 90 – 95% capacity at the end of June, with the opening of the cinemas and the restaurants.

Another of the characteristic aspects of the shopping centre is that there are not many shops that are recognised nationally, something that is justified by Patrícia Múrias who said that they did not want to have "more of the same" and they opted to invest in a different concept with regional businesses and shops that were just starting to expand nationally.

As regards the competition, with Fórum Algarve in Faro and Gran Plaza soon to open in Tavira, Patrícia Múrias said she thought that there were cities where just the city had more than this (three shopping centres close to each other) and they all got on fine. She said it was healthy for competition and it did not worry them.

Compensation still being studied

An investment worth 30 million euros transformed the old Estádio Padinha, belonging to Sporting Clube Olhanense, into a shopping centre. In order to set up such a structure inside the city, compensation was agreed with the local authority and with local shopkeepers, which is still being evaluated.

The possibilities for compensation so far proposed are the roofing of the shopping street in the city centre, the installation of advertising billboards on the way in the city and advantages for the shopkeepers who wanted to set up a shop in the shopping centre.

Francisco Leal, president of Olhão municipality, said that the promise had been made in their presence, with the shopkeepers, and they had been monitoring it, but these matters were always dealt with and in the final analysis the shopkeepers would say what they really wanted and what they were prepared to accept.

Ria Shopping was opened yesterday in the presence of official bodies and it opens to the public today. It includes the

shops Pão de Açúcar, Box, Sportzone, Book it, Zippy, Worten Mobile, Sapataria Loop, Page One, Lanidor Loft, Multiópticas, Vodafone, TMN, and Burger Ranch , as well as leisure areas, restaurants and services.

It is predicted that 700 direct and 1200 indirect jobs will be created.

The premises will have entertainment on the top floor, with dancing and music; Roger Shiltz explained that it was a shopping centre full of diversion, closely in touch with the city's agenda, and they always wanted there to be free entertainment on offer so that people could have a good time without having to spend more money.

He concluded by saying that what they wanted to have there was a centre that was integrated into the city, on a very human scale, with plenty of space for people to feel at ease, with a wide range of restaurants and services.

source: [algarveobserver.com](http://algarveobserver.com)