

WORLD FOOTWEAR



Xsensible

Natural themes at GDS

Fashion, wearability and commerciality were the overriding concepts at GDS. This well organised fair offers all these ideas for buyers from around the world in a sound buying environment. The Italian fairs are attended by visitors looking for the latest fashion trends, whereas the German fair is a good one for placing orders. It is also a good environment to compare offers from other countries such as the Far East, Middle East and previous Eastern Bloc countries, many of which have found it

very hard to get admitted to show at the more protectionist Italian fairs.

Comfort

Comfort and Wellness were very important, with several German brands specialising in the category. Comfort today covers all sorts of shoes from anti-fashion natureform sandals from Birkenstock, to quirky natural vegetable tanned soft shoes from Loints and Think.

Negative heels and unusual sole pitches are becoming mainstream. MBT is named after Masai Barefoot Technology and has a thick soft sole with a negative

cut away heel. The sandals are very popular amongst nurses, dental assistants and any health workers on their feet for a long time.

Chung Shi's shoes have sole and heel angled at 20% which helps a natural walking gait and at the same time shifts the body's balance from heel to toe. An ergonomically shaped stainless steel plate stabilises and activates the forward motion of walking and running, and there is a constant level of cushioning in the heel. Originally just aerobic walking shoes, the line now includes Nordic walking poles, trekking shoes and sports watches. The outdoor range of high and low cut suede and textile hikers uses a Sympatex membrane and Vibram soles.

Different types of leather can provide more comfort too. Elk leather has a very spongy feel, so Highlander has



Mexx



Highlander



Mexx

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Vagabond

made a full range of comfort shoes made with elk leather from Sweden. The natural feel of the leather has been accentuated, with raw edges and no linings. Lointo also uses unlined leather with young trendy natural toe shapes, unusual toplines and natural rubber soles.

Xsensible is a stretchable shoe, where the leather is genuinely 100% stretchable. The backer has a two-way stretch, allowing the shoes to stretch up to 70% in width and 30% in length but, using the most important ability of elastic, it returns to its original shape so that the material adapts to every shape of foot without losing its own shape. TNO tests confirm that it returns to the original shape even after 50,000 stretches. No sweaty feet either, as the stretch leather is still breathable.

Work also fits into the wellness category. Clogs were originally working men's wear, particularly in the North of England, Holland and Scandinavia. Many people still wear wooden soled clogs all day in Denmark and Sweden outdoors and indoors and in winter and summer. Modern versions often have lighter soles and interesting upper variations. Sanita's unit soled 'Wave' clogs for women have lots of features, the most important being light weight and feminine lasts. Comfort is provided by a dual density non slip sole, anti-bacterial LiquiCell sock inside, ergonomic footbed, rounded edges and flexibility—not always normal in a clog type product. Sanita's clogs started several years ago with a natural wooden base and an EVA insert at the flex point. These became very popular with workers in Scandinavia, and then in America too. Wave clogs are the latest development.

Wooden soled clog-

inspired styles are again trendy. Sanita's fashion clogs for summer had high heels and crack printed leather uppers decorated with flowers. Maritime versions have red or navy strips on white with covered buckles. Pretty girls' versions were in metallic with pearlised flowers, with sandal versions having a functional buckle back strap to keep them on the feet. For dressy wear, very high heeled versions from Diba had gold metallic strappy sandal uppers.

Fashion shoes

While there has been much talk about rounded toes overtaking points, there are still lots of extended points around, maybe for a little bit more conservative customers. Comma's shoes had long pointed toes with the end cut off and a curvy mid heel. They are designed to be smart and stylish for working women, but not to attract too much attention.

Newer pumps are a bit more rounded and lasts are shorter toed 1980s style, as at Vagabond where they come in shiny red patent, silver, striped cotton, all with printed contrast linings. Ballroom dancing TV programmes and movies such as Dirty Dancing are having a strong influence on fashion. Dressy sandal heels are still high but now a bit wider and more wearable. Unit soles, solid platforms and wooden soled higher heeled styles

are summer trends that have now become mainstream.

Wedge heels are comfortable—especially on higher heels—and espadrille types have been such good sellers the past two summers that there are several variations around. Espadrille looks come in wide band strappy sandals with thick basket weave soles or simple d'Orsay pumps, slim, low line and feminine. Soft side gore espadrilles from Gant looked bright and fresh in white natural unlined leather with bright contrast sole stitching and matching Hawaiian cotton print socks.

Metallics are either all over soft wrinkled or cracked leather in bronze, faded gold and silver, or just used for details. Driving shoes from Hogn have become more than just comfort items when made in soft leather with all over shiny silver riveting. There was also plenty of bling on the Marc Ecko white leather lace to toe cupsole tennis shoes—diamantés with gold surround and



Comma

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Gant



Timberland

gold ► detailing. Rivets too on basket boots by Replay which have outline tropical flower embroidery first and logo rivets afterwards. Canvas sneakers were not just decorated with embroidery and rivets, but are often pre-dirtied too.

Unstructured turn shoes have appeared, looking rather like slippers but based on jazz dancing shoes and are again a popular trend, with 1980s styles revived by Swedish fashion company

Vagabond for both men and women.

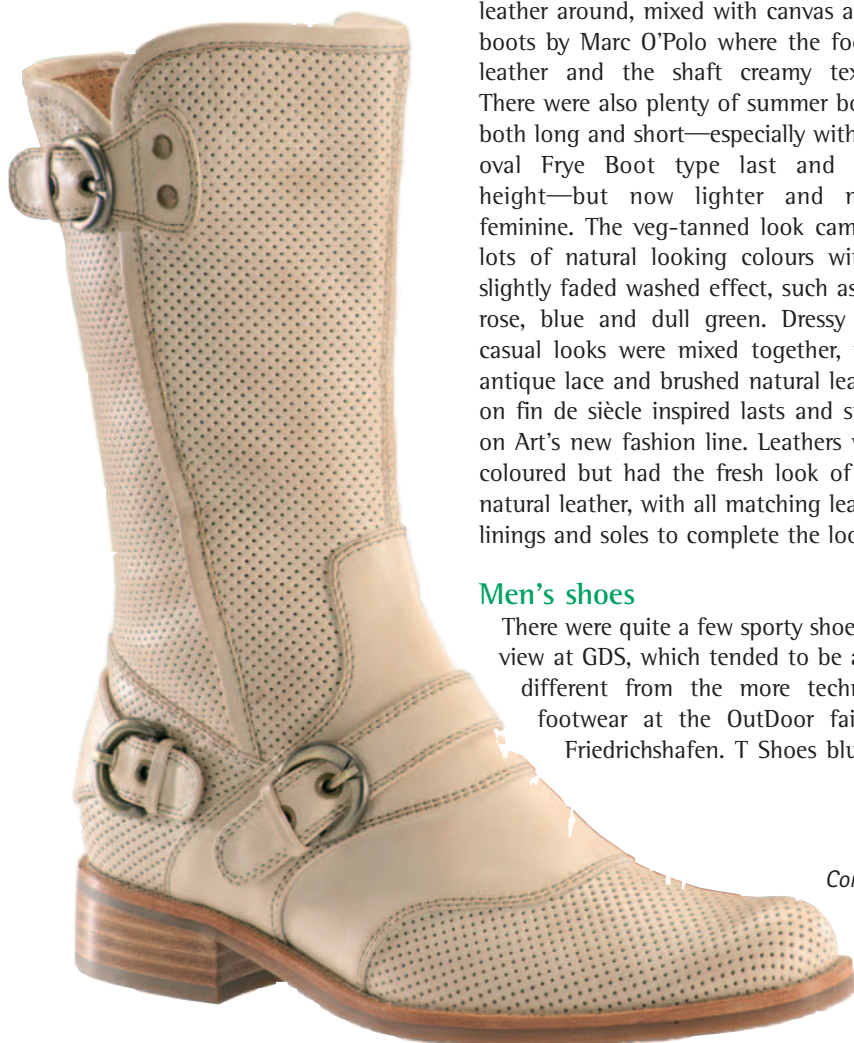
There was a great deal of cream and natural pale and tan veg-tanned look leather around, mixed with canvas as on boots by Marc O'Polo where the foot is leather and the shaft creamy textile. There were also plenty of summer boots, both long and short—especially with the oval Frye Boot type last and heel height—but now lighter and more feminine. The veg-tanned look came in lots of natural looking colours with a slightly faded washed effect, such as old rose, blue and dull green. Dressy and casual looks were mixed together, with antique lace and brushed natural leather on fin de siècle inspired lasts and styles on Art's new fashion line. Leathers were coloured but had the fresh look of real natural leather, with all matching leather linings and soles to complete the look.

Men's shoes

There were quite a few sporty shoes on view at GDS, which tended to be a bit different from the more technical footwear at the OutDoor fair in Friedrichshafen. T Shoes blurred

the line between travel shoes and sport, with sporty constructions but super soft uppers and clean simple styling on slim soles. They came in a wide range of unisex colours from lilac to faded orange and pale mint, with faded grey rubber mouldings on toes and counters. Soles were typically Italian off-white or grey, very much differentiating them from classic sports shoes with normally black soles.

Dirty, brushed, used and second hand leather and mixed materials are still mainstream for men, with cream and off-white the main summer colours.



Comma



T Shoes



Timberland

Vulcanised canvas sneakers come with dirty brown streaks on the white foxing and toe bumpers. Woven tweed type summery textiles looking like men's suitings or shirt materials were used for lightweight imitation vulcanised shoes where the foxings and toecaps were in suede or leather and the sole in EVA. The edges of the textiles are left open and raw. Graffiti type overprinting has motifs such as skull and crossbones. Even smarter shoes mixed old and new, where small bands of raw edge linen peeped out from underneath the seams on dressy leather shoes from Gant and Mexx.

The fashion trend this summer for sailing and yachting influences has filtered down into footwear. The new boat shoes come in soft white or navy leather, and have Lycra panels for softness and stretch, and often have touch and close straps instead of laces as shown by Gant and Timberland. These stretch panels have the advantage that the shoes stay on the feet even in rough weather

and with lots of activity and movement.

Men's sandals are more than just trekking styles and there are now semi-covered shoe-sandals in soft nubuck for city wear. Sandals sold extremely well in Europe this year, due to the hottest weather for years. For summer and fashion, there are updates on the flip flop look, now with printed and embossed wide toed footbeds with plenty of toe spring. Uppers mix rough leather, hemp or jute and have heavy stitching and riveted decoration.

Ethical, organic and natural

Jute, canvas and hemp will be popular next summer. For women they can be jazzed up with metallics, studs and beads. Timberland combined hemp in the outsole of its Pike Place line of soft leather shoes and sandals with open edges and an ethnic raw look. As well as

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using natural materials, the company works hard to maintain correct ethical standards and its code of conduct is stricter than the accepted standards for the international sporting goods industry. The factory name appears on every box as well as the country of origin. Keen has even gone so far as to make the boxes for its sandals from biodegradable vegetable fibre.

Tatami has linked up with People Tree to sell Fair Trade products, where the workers receive fair pay for fair work. Women's groups of war widows in Pakistan hand weave cotton which is then made into sandal uppers on Birkenstock type leather covered cork wedges. Native tribeswomen in Laos make hand embroidered cotton uppers, with their own ethnic designs for these sandals too. A fixed amount goes to the women's groups and they receive more than subsistence wages, so that they can save and re-invest for the future. 



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