

The OutDoor fair in Friedrichshafen is Europe's major sports trade fair of the summer. Situated on the shore of Germany's beautiful Lake Constance, bordering Austria and the mountains, it is the perfect venue for showcasing outdoor sports goods. Each year you can see everything for the summer outdoors enthusiast, from tents to shoes. This year the fair was bigger, with not only hardcore products but with leisure shoes too.

Outdoor shoes shout colour for summer 2009

by Penny Leese

Right colours and trail running shoes are making inroads into the relatively traditional outdoor market in Europe. Beige, sand and brown nubuck have always been best sellers for lightweight hikers in Germany and Austria. But now, despite the current 'eco wave', more colourful and lighter weight footwear is available, strongly influenced by American-style jogging shoes. For those that are not so brave, there are sandals and shoes in grey or beige, brightened up with contrast stitching and details in faded or bright yellow, lime, magenta or red.

Eco Wave

Eco no longer just means broad-footed 'earth' sandals and shoes in basic beige; many of the newer lines are slimmer in the last and more colourful. The look is more mainstream; just because shoes are environmental, they don't need to scream it to all and sundry.

Haku Honu's colourful clothes and shoes are made from Peruvian organic cotton, dyed using only traditional vegetable dyes made from natural plants and bark. The soles of the hand-crocheted shoes are made from lambskin, with the wool side on the inside. The belts featuring a bag for a mobile phone are made from salmon skin.

ACG's 'Considered' shoes are thoughtfully produced. They are hybrid-styled this year, with a basketball Air Jordan inspired upper for young people who want to look more city cool than eco outdoorsy. Styling may be inner city basketball, but the sole is technical enough, with extra cushioning and a 0.44 sticky rubber bottom sole –also featuring Gore-Tex for waterproofness. All the ACG Considered line, including boots and apparel, are made using as much recycled matter as possible (polyethylene (PE) laces for example) and pattern parts are shaped to keep waste to an absolute minimum.



Haku Honu, real lambskin inside these hand crocheted shoes made by natives in Chile.

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Patagonia's shoes, like its clothing, are environmentally conscious too. And some of the technology from its technical hiking line is now filtering down into the leisure line. The new 'Travel' line features a triple density footbed and Vibram EcoStep sole, which is 30% recycled, sharing the same technical specifications as the hiking shoes. Source, the sandal company, supports community projects by giving 1% of its turnover to projects.

Every little bit helps the environment. YKK recognises this and now produces zips made from Natulon, a chemically recycled polyester.

High technical specs on this travel shoe by Patagonia.



Dolomite shoes feature the DAS system where the insole and last are curved like the shape of the foot.



Trezeta's own wheel lacing system can be tightened and loosened as well as quick release.

Teva sandal soft shell inspired shoe with semi-transparent moulding.





Retro or sporty

Retro styling doesn't just mean old shoes in new colours. Company anniversaries are a good excuse to launch new products inspired by the original styling, or even just using original logos, often with a vintage faded and wrinkled finish. Dolomite, an old Italian hiking shoe brand, established in 1897, now has a line of retro apparel (second season) and shoes. Badges and logos on the footwear and apparel are originals from the 1970s and 1980s. There is both a technical line and a retro line, but the colours and badges are designed so that the ranges can be mixed and matched. Next year will be ACG's 20th birthday, so old styles have been revived in new fashionable bright colours. Hiking and climbing boot maker Scarpa also has an anniversary next summer, its 70th, and has cleverly restyled the classic rock climbing shoe in a range of bright shades (including turquoise, fuchsia and yellow), but on a Vibram sole.

Sports sponsorship

Shoe companies don't just sponsor athletic events; there are lots of outdoor sponsorships too. The North Face sponsors performance trail running and endurance on the Ultra Trail of Mont Blanc. This has led to the development of a neutral stability thrust chassis, with an ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) that recovers quickly even after long distances, while remaining very lightweight. Sports are getting 'faster' and fast hiking is now part of the line. The shoes look like multisport shoes but they have Gore-Tex and a shake plate in the forefoot which is designed to be worn on uneven, hardened, uncomfortable surfaces like stones, without hindering forefoot flexibility. Dolomite sponsors mountain climbers, while even more down to earth is New Balance's sponsorship of the Nijmegen four-day march in Holland. Every day during the event, participants walk 50, 40 or 30 kilometres. These shoes are even lighter than usual.

Technical innovations

Waterproofness is a benefit for outdoor shoes. Gore-Tex and Sympatex are both popular in Europe, but now there are several other new water-resistant technologies as well. Hi-Tec shoes are hydrophobically treated, so that they stay clean longer and are lighter in weight than traditional membranes, where the water can soak through the upper and is kept out by the membrane between the upper and lining. Comfort is vital when you are walking or hiking long distances either with or without a heavy backpack. Dolomite has DAS (the Dolomite Anatomic System), where the last and footbed are curved to follow the shape of the foot rather than the traditional flat-bottomed last, creating a super-wrap around the foot. This technology was originally developed for technical hiking boots but is now filtering down into scrambling and trail running shoes. Tecnica has a BioMove system where the upper is



wrapped around and incorporated with the sole to create a foot-hugging wrap system. The suede is PU coated in the toe area on Patagonia's 'Scramble' approach shoe as this is the part of the shoe that is most liable to get damaged, while the outsole is made from climbing-specification sticky rubber. Lasts, as at Merrell, are male and female specific.

The Boa lacing system is used to tighten shoes all round the collar and laces by turning a wheel. The North Face is now also using the patented system for backpack hydrating systems; it stops the water sloshing about inside, helping to make the bag more stable. Another innovation involving the company's hydrating backpack is the cross-shaped closing at the centre of the front, making the bag much more comfortable than more traditional alternatives with a bar across the upper chest, which can be closed with a quick lock. Trezeta also uses its own wheel system for lacing, with the additional advantage

that it can be turned both ways, so that the shoes can be loosened as well as tightened without needing to pull or push the release button.

Seamless technology, where the shoes are inspired by Paclite jackets, are comfortable and lightweight, often featuring moulded parts for the eyestay and toecap instead of stitched pieces, thus reducing the number of seams to a bare minimum. These lightweight shoes are made by Lowa, Viking and Salomon among others.

Rubber boots and draining sandals

Summer weather can be so wet that rubber boots are necessary—Kamik's are fresh and new in bright printed rubber with a soft neoprene shaft, in both long and shorter galosh-inspired versions. For hotter summer days sandals are most comfortable. Crocs have been incredibly successful and there are now many other lightweight moulded sandals and clogs with drain holes.

Those from Lizard the Italian sandal expert are innovative and wearable. They are slim line and technical in appearance with a Velcro wrap-around strap for a comfortable and close fit. They are also dual density, with non-slip outsoles and anatomically inserted footbeds.

Patagonia's sport sandals are for heavy use with enclosed reinforced toecap to protect the toes from rocks and stones, particularly suitable for crossing streams during a summer hike. They have heavy lugs for all-purpose wear, but can also be worn on boat decks as they are siped (cut with tiny waves) to grip very strongly on wet wood or fibreglass.

Kids shoe

Kids are active when outdoors and need the same level of product as their parents. This has inspired several technical shoe brands to launch children's shoe ranges, such as Italian climbing and hiking brand Dolomite. 