

## FOOTWEAR TECHNOLOGY: ISPO 2017

The once-a-year ISPO winter sports fair was buzzing, as usual. **Penny Leese** reports from Munich.

# Footwear at ISPO 2017

ISPO is still a major destination for sports retailers of all sizes from all the German speaking countries and further afield. While ISPO used to concentrate on snow sports like skiing and snowboarding, the scope has recently gone broader; this year there were even yoga displays on paddle surf boards, and self-rolling yoga mats from the US. There were also many more urban products. It's said that the polluted inner city can be harder on equipment than clean powder snow.

### Outdoor sports

Outdoor sports is clearly the biggest category at ISPO, filling most halls. Outdoor sports shoes cover everything from trail-running to hiking. The technical versions are usually high-tech and in brightly coloured combinations. Although not so much is said about barefoot technology any more, the soles tend to be slim and low line, but do include cushioning. Of course, the Vibram Five Fingers is now considered a classic iconic

product. Similar ideas, with fewer separate toes, were shown by Body Glove, the water sports brand. At the same time, classic and retro boots are gaining ground, in black and brown leather for example, from heritage companies such as Meindl, HanWag and Dolomite. There are specialist ski and mountaineering boots, as well as approach footwear too.

### Anti-slip on ice

For winter footwear, non-slip on ice, especially for runners, has been an increasing requirement. Vibram has been very active in promoting its outsole technology on wet ice, for winter 2016-17 which the company launched with a limited number of partners, such as Merrell. Now the non-slip technology is available widely for winter 2017-18, and blocks of melting ice on several booths at the fair meant that buyers could test the product, one foot in a Vibram-soled shoe, one foot in the user's regular footwear, so that they could really feel the difference.

*Hanwag Anvik GTX boot with Michelin V-Rough sole for winter traction and adherence.*

 Hanwag



*Salming Trail5 - winner of the gold outdoor award.*

 Salming Sports AB

Salming Trail5 won the ISPO gold outdoor award for its colourful outdoor shoes on Vibram's MegaGrip soles. Vibram MegaGrip is a sticky and very long wearing compound that provides excellent grip on wet, muddy, slippery surfaces as well as on dry rocky surfaces. The Salming Trail5 is for extremely technical trail-running. It is a lightweight trail shoe made for any kind of weather conditions and any kind of surface: wet, dry, slippery, soft, muddy or rocky. The design incorporates proprietary running support system and cushioning properties. The wrap-around design consists of an exoskeleton, a gusset tongue design and a three-layer upper sandwich construction that is sealed off with a protective thin net mesh.

There are other ways of avoiding slipping on wet ice. TrekSta from Korea has steel studs that can be extended out of the sole with the turn of a wheel (a wheel similar to the Boa Technology wheel that the brand is renowned for). Another turn of the wheel at the heel and the spikes are retracted back into the sole.

David Ekelund, CEO of IceBug, who has been making BugGrip running shoes and boots for ice with retractable spikes for several years, has now issued a challenge to other brands claiming to provide the best anti-slip technology for ice. He feels that the IceBug technology is tried and tested for over 15 years and is the best on the market for function. His opinion is that a highly promoted wet ice sole technology that doesn't really deliver safety and confidence will keep runners and

walkers indoors. IceBug had expanded its technology with the BugWeb last season, a soft rubber web with spikes that fits with the pattern of the sole, but can be removable.

For the new season the company has collaborated with Michelin tyres from France with extra sticky rubber soling, based on winter tyre technology from Michelin. Additionally the soles are non-marking so can be worn outdoors and indoors.

IceBug isn't the only company to collaborate with Michelin: there have been a number of varied partners, from HanWag on hiking shoes to ski boots by Nordica. Nordica has taken technology from Michelin Latitude X-Ice North car winter tyres and used it on Gripwalk soles on its Striderider ski boots. The interlocking design increases adherence, the chamfers reduce structural wear and the deep grooves evacuate water. The high edges promote better adherence, too, while the multi-faceted lugs help with braking.



*Trek Spike by TrekSta feature a sole with retractable ice studs.*

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## Ski and mountaineers

ISPO is still the destination to see ski boot trends. Arc'teryx is always at the forefront with technically innovative designs for clothing and footwear. Its Procline ski boot combines alpinism with alpine climbing boots. Normally in winter a skier will have to use a mountaineering boot for approach and have the ski boots in a backpack. The company has innovatively combined the two technologies to make a single boot. The outsole bottom on the ski boot is the same as the mountain climbing boot. There is rubber toe protection, unusual on a ski boot. All the sides of the boot are totally clean so as not to get snagged on rocks or obstructions. Even the vamp adjustment clip with its tightening cable is going "the wrong way" so it only covers the instep and won't get snagged. The boot can be adjusted for climbing on skis with a non-slip skin attached to the skis, where there is a profile that means the skier can only go forward and not slip backwards. The bindings on these boots are classic touring bindings, called tech bindings. That means that the skier is not attached to the skis at the heel, or can adjust the heel binding for support on a steep slope. The cuff is split in half at the back so that there can be sideways movement, unusual in a rigid ski boot. There is 12% medial movement and 26% lateral movement. Forwards and backwards the boots can tilt about 70 degrees, which means that the user has the same sort of movement as in a hiking boot. Once the climber has got to the top, and wants to ski down, the boot can be converted from alpinist to ski touring in a few seconds in a simple movement with two buckle straps and a power strap. In addition to not having to carry an extra pair of boots in the backpack, this boot only weighs 1.2 kilos, a considerable weight saving.

## Skate and Street

The skate and street area at ISPO is much smaller than before - and this makes sense as this category has got so much stronger in the city and successful street and skateboarding fairs SEEK and Bright were held in Berlin a couple of weeks previously. At ISPO you can see snowboarding boots, bindings and also some street art, but nowhere near as much street wear as a few years ago.

## Apps

Today there are apps for everything, even to find your way round the ISPO fair. The company IOFIT won an award for hardware and devices. This is a smart golf shoe with sensors in the soles to track and analyse all movement and technique. This information can be downloaded and analysed later.

## Natural materials

Every year at ISPO, more companies appear to be embracing the environment, from using natural materials to more environmentally conscious sourcing and so on. For example, HanWag's double-welt stitched hiking boots in natural leather can be sent back to the factory for resoling at any time.

Birkenstock, famed for its cork footbed natureform sandals launched a whole new line at ISPO, with a locker-room inspiration. The company has taken its classic footbed construction on natureform lasts, and recreated a high-level retro inspired leather sneaker collection, mostly in black and white full grain leather. The stand's backdrop was a retro gym from about 50 years ago, with leather horses and bucks, with metal lockers in the locker rooms. These high-level sneaker-inspired shoes may not see so many actual locker-room interiors, but they are good wear all year round.

There has been a revival in interest in natural materials for winter – as can be seen by the Scandinavian knitting firms with merino wool soft shells, and layering garments. Dachstein's boots in natural wool felt, especially in classic grey, combined with leather in traditional welted style boots, look both retro and fresh at the same time. Wool felt is not just natural, it is cozy too and appears on all types of footwear from winter boots to home slippers. New from Austrian wool slipper maker Giesswein were pure wool joggers,



*Arc'teryx Procline ski boot is the only hybrid ski boot of its kind, combining features of a climbing boot with those of a lightweight ski mountaineering boot.*

 Arc'teryx



*Birkenstock introduced a new locker-room themed sneaker range.*

 WTP

with soft unstructured uppers – even the eyelets are embroidered rather than being metal inserts. These clean simple jogger-inspired shoes come on a simple moulded EVA sole, a little Nike Free-inspired – clean, classic and neutral, and available in a range of colours in natural dyed wool.

BERG Outdoor won a gold award for footwear lifestyle. Made in Portugal with a mix of wool felt and real Portuguese cork textile, the simple style on a sneaker sole mixes environmental demands with the right trends. The sneaker is recyclable, as well as being warm and water-resistant.

Vaude's Kiruna boots are made of insulating felt materials, premium TerraCare leather from tanner Heinen and thermal PrimaLoft linings. They come in versions for men, women and kids. Terracare leather is tanned in Germany in accordance with the highest environmental standards. The integrated felt made with recycled materials insulates in icy temperatures. The integrated Cplex Green membrane keeps feet dry and ensures good breathability. An EVA midsole adds cushioning. Inside shoe comfort is very important, so the Ortholite soles are removable and are made of recycled polyester and 25% bio-based castor oil (Eco Plush PU foam).

Comfort in footwear is increasingly important, as one can see from the increased use of memory foam insoles and the enormous success of Skechers in this field.

Personalisation and individuality are lifestyle trends. At ISPO personalised insoles for all sports are available, from foot scanning, gait and pressure analysis, to heated and moulded inserts. Many of these are services that can be offered to retailers. Currex offers a two-minute analysis from the user walking back and forth along a short carpet; the sensor in the middle checks each foot individually as well as finding out weight, pressure and so on. It makes a coloured scan showing how much each pressure area of the foot is in contact with the ground; flat arches

for, example, can be clearly seen.

Kavat from Sweden is not considered a sporty brand but has done very well. The company was founded over 100 years ago as a children's brand and is now the official after-ski boot supplier for several Scandinavian athletic teams competing internationally. The company's proud aim is to reduce the ecological footprint to make sustainable shoes, using the EU EcoLabel. All the adult shoes and boots are resolvable. Most of the shoes are made from leather, and even the moulded waterproof boots are made from sustainable SEBS rubber.

Function and fit are vital in children's shoes for winter sports, and winter urban use as well. Finnish brands like Reima understand this well, as does Viking of Norway. They both make lasts with roomy toe boxes, but have updated them with a trendy sneaker look on the soles and more wintry technical lugs. 



*Kiruna, Vaude's new winter footwear series, with TerraCare eco-leather and thermal PrimaLoft linings.*

 Vaude