



Birkenstock sandals

A brief history

Nowadays Birkenstock® is a brand which everyone knows, famous for the comfort of its footwear. Its story began in 1774, when Johann Adam Birkenstock first registered as a shoemaker in the small German village of Langenberg. Birkenstock® has been a family owned business since then, and all Birkenstock footwear is still made in Germany. Birkenstock family started to produce contoured insoles at the end of the 19th century, and in 1902 they developed the first flexible arch support to be used in factory made shoes. Birkenstock arch supports were soon exported all over Europe. In the 1930s, experts of the company started to hold seminars in many European countries, leading medical specialists to support the Birkenstock system. The book *Birkenstock's Podiatry* was published in 1947, becoming the most influential book on foot health of its time. In the 1960s the first sandals marked Birkenstock were created and in 1973 the Arizona, Birkenstock's classic two-strap sandal, was introduced. From that time up to today several new lines have been launched, spreading Birkenstock's popularity all over the world. In the 2000s the brand was awarded in more than one occasion. A very important prize was the Draper's Award as 'Footwear of the Year' in 2004, in acknowledgement of the timeless design of its products, making them the right footwear for every age, any occasion and all types of people.

Birkenstock footwear: main features

Birkenstock footwear is based on the principles of health and wellness, quality workmanship and materials, and respect for the environment. The footbed is made of 100% natural and renewable cork. You may call it 'sustainable comfort': you support your feet and the environment at the same time.

Birkenstock developed its footwear starting from the idea that no other part of the body is subject to as much stress and strain as the foot. Therefore Birkenstock footwear is designed to provide a perfect balance of firm support and shock resistance, allowing foot and body to be naturally sustained. With features like a contoured cork footbed, a deep heel cup and a roomy toe box, Birkenstock clogs and sandals allow freedom of movement and all-round support. What's more, most Birkenstock styles come in two widths: narrow and regular. And, with new lines introduced almost every season, Birkenstock footwear shows that comfort can go hand in hand with elegance and style.

(Adapted from www.6pm.com/birkenstock and www.birkenstock.co.uk)

ACTIVITIES

- 1 Say whether the following statements are true or false, then correct the false ones.
 - 1 Birkenstock has been operating for more than 200 years. (T) (F)
 - 2 The company has its head office in the USA. (T) (F)
 - 3 The company published a book in the 1940s. (T) (F)
 - 4 The first sandals came out in 1973. (T) (F)
 - 5 The Birkenstock company received the Draper's Award as 'Footwear of the Year' in 2000. (T) (F)
 - 6 One of the principles of the company is respect for the environment. (T) (F)
 - 7 Cork is the material used for the footbed. (T) (F)
 - 8 A customer can choose among three different widths. (T) (F)
- 2 Answer the following questions.
 - 1 What is the name of the founder of the Birkenstock company?
 - 2 Name the first two innovations introduced by the company.
 - 3 How did medical specialists start to support the Birkenstock system?
 - 4 What is the name of the classic Birkenstock two-strap sandals?
 - 5 Why does Birkenstock footwear provide 'sustainable comfort'?
 - 6 What features of Birkenstock footwear allow freedom of movement and all-round support?