

# CHACOS vs.



BY NINA ELKADI

**H**onest to god, I can't even believe this is a debate. How can you compare two sandals, one of which falls apart from a little puddle, and the other that can keep you from falling down the spillway?

Chacos are the most versatile shoes on the market. Not only can you hike, bike and do every water sport imaginable with them, you can also buy them in boot form and have the most comfortable foot sensation of your life all year-round. Every strap can be adjusted to perfectly fit *your* foot, because everyone's foot is different, right? Birkenstocks cannot be perfect for everyone because they cannot adjust to each individual foot. Chacos can.

I walked around Europe for two weeks in my first pair of Chacos, and spent the subsequent five summers hiking and paddling lakes and rivers in them. They lasted six years. This includes the winter that I would wear them with socks.

Now on my sixth pair of Chacos, I can proudly say I haven't worn any other brand of shoe for over a year. I have a pair of fancy chacos for fancy events, my regular chacos for school, my dirty chacos for hiking and paddling, and my boots for the winter months. There is absolutely no debate that Chacos aren't only superior to Birkenstocks, but also to every other shoe on the market.

They were established in 1989 in Paonia, Colorado and are now manufactured in Rockford, MI.

 WHERE ARE THEY FROM?

\$55.99-\$110.00

 PRICE RANGE

Oh yes! You can wear Chacos while you're doing anything. Nina wears hers to work at Terry Trueblood where she wrangles boats, and Camp Wildlife where she plays in the spillway. Chacos were created by a raft guide and are specifically built for having traction in moving water.

 WATER RESISTANT?

Yes. You can also create your own pair on the Chacos website and customize every detail of your sandal.

 CUSTOMIZABLE?

So simple. You can throw your Chacos in the washing machine or hose them off whenever. You can "floss" the straps using fabric softener.

 MAINTENANCE REQUIRED

Because they're made with polyurethane, the material can be recycled. Their ecotread style is made of a 25 percent recycled rubber outsole.

 RENEWABLE MATERIALS

Straps can be individually adjusted to best fit your feet.

 SIZING

Unlimited combinations for both men and women.

 NUMBER OF SANDAL STYLES

All Chaco styles are certified by podiatrists as being supportive and comfortable for all-day wear. Their LUVSEAT™ footbed is found in every pair of Chacos. It has a contoured design that naturally cradles the foot for healthy alignment and a more efficient stride.

 COMFORTABLE

Each component of Chacos can be re-chacoed online individually. Nina had a pair for six years, and just retired them the other week because the sole is too worn down. This is after miles trekking around Europe, miles hiking around Lake Macbride and miles walking up and down the hill at Terry Trueblood. They are made out of polyurethane, which doesn't break down or compress with wear.

 LONGEVITY

**WOMEN:** Boots (7 styles), shoes (14 styles),  
**MEN:** Boots (6 styles), shoes (9 styles)

**OTHER STYLES**  
(BOOTS, CLOGS, SHOES)

# BIRKS

Nina Elkadi and Leah Dusterhoft have been best friends since junior high, but one thing has always separated them: the fight between Chacos and Birkenstocks.

Birkenstocks operated out of Neustadt, Germany since 1774 and have been in the United States since 1966.

\$29.95-\$145.00

Sadly no. The majority of the materials used in Birks are not water resistant, but some are (their EVA collection is). There are products you can get to make them water resistant, but they do not always offer full coverage.

No

The cork in the sole of Birks must be resealed every 3-4 months. This keeps the cork from crumbling and extends the lifetime of the sandals.

In 1988, Birkenstocks started using environmentally safe adhesives in the shoes and in 1990 the company reduced their energy consumption by 90 percent.

Sizes are based on the European model. (For instance, a US women's 10 would be a European 40.) They also come in regular and narrow widths.

13 women's, 2 men's

The Birkenstock footbeds are made to mold to each individual foot and are designed with anatomically shaped insoles for increased comfort. There are two choices for footbeds: the harder, original footbed and the soft footbed to give you the comfort you want.

Birkenstocks can be resoled and straps can be replaced at local Birk certified repairers for a reasonable fee. By repairing your Birks instead of buying a new pair you can keep the footbed that has already molded to your foot. Leah has had one pair for three years and had to retire them this past summer due to the toe strap coming loose after having them repaired once already.

**WOMEN:** Clogs (9 styles), shoes (4 styles), boots (6 styles)  
**MENS:** Clogs (6 styles), shoes (4 styles), boots (1 style)



BY LEAH DUSTERHOFT

I own at least one pair of *both* Chacos and Birkenstocks. But my loyalty stays with my Birks.

Yes, Birks aren't waterproof, but there are many products to increase their water resistancy. Yes, they take maintenance but it's very low cost and maintenance depends on how often they are worn. Any repair shop working on Birks must be certified by Birkenstock, so you know that when your shoes are in need of repair, they will be repaired right. There are local repair shops in Iowa City for low prices.

My Chacos have caused me physical pain when I wear them for long amounts of time. I was in Germany for two weeks over the summer and left with eight huge blisters on my feet. But Birkenstocks, on the other hand, are not restrictive to the feet so there is no constant rubbing on any one point on the foot that results in a blister.

Also, the process of adjusting Chaco straps is very confusing and I still haven't gotten mine to fit quite right. After my Chacos have been worn in dirt, the straps are even harder to adjust, while Birkenstocks have easily adjustable buckles and moldable footbeds to best suit your foot.

There's a definite reason why Birkenstocks have come back in style since their popularity in the 70's: they are stylish with no sacrifice for comfort.

## TWITTER TALK

*West Side Story* conducted a Twitter poll asking what sandals WSS followers preferred.

16%  
voted for  
Chacos

59%  
voted for  
Birkenstocks

25%  
voted for  
neither

119 @WSSPAPER  
TWITTER FOLLOWERS  
PARTICIPATED IN THE  
POLL