**OVER TO CHINA AND THE US FOR ‘EXPO RIVA SCHUH & GARDABAGS AROUND THE WORLD’**

**Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags continues its international travels, keeping abreast of latest trends in the footwear and accessories markets and nurturing closer, more effective relationships with industry stakeholders. The aim is to provide a business and relational experience at Riva del Garda focused on the industry’s real needs.
‘Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags Around the World’ is about cultivating and strengthening lasting partnerships with key players in the global footwear and bags industries.
The months of April and May were spent visiting China, a country pivotal to footwear and accessories production, which participates in Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags with a delegation of almost 300 exhibitors, and the US, a key market for footwear consumption.
In China, the numerous institutional meetings and tours underscored the nation’s advancing strides in automation, robotics and integrated software development aimed at enhancing production, distribution and the holistic structuring of the supply chain, complete with all connected and necessary services.
In the USA, our collaboration was reinforced with the local distributors’ association, now a constant presence at the Riva del Garda exhibition, and the project launched in 2023 with Soles4Souls further developed, aimed at drawing the industry's attention to corporate sustainability.**

Following our visits to Portugal last month and Brazil in November 2023, where GianPaola Pedretti, Exhibition Manager, is set to return as a speaker for one of the panels at the 26th edition of FORO LATINOAMERICANO DE CALZADO, **in May the focus shifted to China and the United States**.

“First and foremost,” stated Alessandra Albarelli, General Manager of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi, “I wish to express the solidarity of the entire Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags community towards our Brazilian colleagues from Rio Grande do Sul, who are facing an extremely difficult time following the climatic disaster that recently struck the region. This district represents 24% of Brazilian footwear production, and many of the companies we know quite well are based there. We will do everything we can to help them overcome this challenging time.”

**CHINA**

The sizeable Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags delegation, which regularly visited China until 2019 before the pandemic, returned to explore the footwear industry of the world’s largest manufacturer.

The team was very keen to observe the changes over recent years and to reconnect with numerous industry players with whom the fair has long held excellent relations.

The visits to the production districts of Shiling, Pinghu, Guangzhou, Wenzhou with Lucheng and Weling, as well as the fairs in Canton and Wenzhou, were extremely interesting.

“**We were impressed by the companies’ level of technological progress, services and production**, thanks in part to the government’s far-sighted support, particularly in the Wenzhou region and Weling district, which specialises in children's footwear,” commented Albarelli.

Similarly remarkable was the organisation of Wenzhou's **‘Shoe City’**, a location meticulously designed to promote footwear development, production and trade. It includes research and technology centres, spaces for designers to develop collections, material procurement and logistics centres, showrooms, hotels to accommodate buyers, housing for workers, a dedicated port and customs facilities, as well as a specialised trade fair. “The government has provided the Chinese footwear industry with a comprehensive supply chain complete with all the necessary links and services. **A place where ideal conditions for the shoe business have been recreated**.”

It was precisely to the **Mayor of Wenzhou** that the Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags delegation, together with General Manager Albarelli, **renewed the invitation** by the Mayor of Riva del Garda, Cristina Santi, **to return to the fair** during one of the upcoming editions.

Visits to several prominent **local shoe, bag, luggage and belt companies** highlighted a **rapidly evolving manufacturing landscape, marked by the use of increasingly automated and robotic systems**, alongside the deep integration of software across the entire production line. These systems ensure improved efficiency, in addition to better working conditions and optimised order, warehouse and logistics management.

Numerous meetings were held during the **trade fair in Canton**, an event of striking dimensions with a genuinely rich offering. Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags staff met with the organisers of the event, the CFTC - China Foreign Trade Centre, and Suilong Liu, president of the Association of Guangdong Shoes Manufacturers.

**USA**

Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags made sure it caught what has now become a regular appointment for the Riva del Garda exhibition, the **Annual Forum of the NSRA - National Shoe Retailers Association**.

GianPaola Pedretti highlighted its significance: “It is crucial for us to watch over the US market, the second-largest in terms of consumption (15.9% of international purchases in 2023). Our relationship with the NSRA, with whom we have been collaborating for some years now, and which brings a **delegation of distributors and buyers** to each edition of our fair, is vital in ensuring the level of international trade we aim to offer through our business platform.”

The trip to the US also provided an excellent opportunity to meet with Soles4Soles, a non-profit organisation that transforms unused shoes and clothing into valuable resources, preventing waste, offering assistance, creating jobs and helping to break the cycle of poverty.

Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags has partnered with Souls4Soles since 2023, working to raise awareness among exhibitors and visitors about the importance of reusing footwear in good condition and donating it to countries and communities in need. A commitment that enhances **corporate social responsibility** by encouraging companies to minimise waste and convert overproduction into a means of assisting the less fortunate.

**WHAT HAPPENS NOW**

If you thought the next appointment for Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags was at the **101st edition from 15 to 18 June**, then think again.

Expo Riva Schuh & Gardabags Around the World continues its journey, heading straight for its next stop: **Brazil**.