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Review: Vibram Five Fingers

Transcript 026

August 2007

Linda: Giddy, I'm Linda

Craig: And I'm Craig

Linda: And this is the Indie Travel Podcast episode 26 - a review of Vibram's Five Fingers.

Craig: First things first: what on earth are Five Fingers?

Linda: Well, they're a type of shoe, I guess. There's a sole made from hard rubber and an upper body made from a type of wetsuit material. They slip over your feet like slippers or socks - except for one very important thing: each toe has its own place, like toe socks, so you end up being able to see and wiggle all of your toes. They look freakin' weird. Anyway, they're designed for outdoorsy types: where you'd love to be able to walk barefoot, but are a bit worried about something going through your foot.

Craig: I bought a pair last month, thinking I'd use them to replace my flip flops (we call them jandals). I figured that they'd be a bit more versatile and they'd probably work as a pair of running shoes as well - one guy called Barefoot Ted runs marathons in them, I thought they might be OK for my occasional jogging.

Linda: Very occasional. First thing is the most painful - the price. We picked up ours for €80, in Italy, which seemed about average, although I did see one pair at over €100, so do shop around. They came with a cotton carry case, which makes packing easy and also allows them to be strapped onto the outside of a pack with no worries.

Craig: When I first got them, they took a lot of wearing in. I can't emphasise enough: don't buy them unless they fit perfectly. I've been using them for around two months and I still feel the right toe is a little bit too short and it makes them uncomfortable after a couple of hours. Unfortunately Vibram doesn't

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manufacture them in half sizes yet.

Linda: Sadly, cos I can't find my size.

Craig: Apart from that, walking barefoot feels really different from walking in shoes - I love that feeling. I think the ground in Europe's a bit more dirty than the ground in New Zealand, and I miss just being able to wander around. But your feet do need to get used to not having a cushioned sole. I'd suggest wearing your new Vibrams for a few hours each day, gradually increasing the amount of time you're wearing them.

Linda: Of course, this is a big negative to using them as a travelling shoe. You'd want to buy them several weeks before you leave home. Any other bad points, Craig?

Craig: Yeah - they are not the best for long days walking in the city, especially in old towns where there's cobbled streets. The amount of pressure they put on your feet are horrible - that's the cobblestones do - and the hardness of concrete and tarmac are really unpleasant. Although the rubber is hard, I also feel uncomfortable walking around broken glass, so there's heaps of that in cities. And because they aren't waterproof you'll want to avoid public toilets in some part of the world.

Linda: Definitely the public toilets in Turkey, which are squat toilets, and we're not enjoying them very much at all.

Craig: No, no.

Linda: Anyway, they do clean easily. You can just chuck them into a washing machine (not that we have a washing machine).

Craig: It's in my pack.

Linda: You've haven't shown it to me - we've been carrying around a washing machine? He never tells me anything! Anyway, you can just chuck them into a washing machine, if you have one, and pull them out when the load's done. You'll probably want to wash them separately though unless you want your clothes to

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smell like feet.

Craig: Mmm, my feet don't smell that good.

Linda: They really don't. But you've been wearing them quite a bit though - what are they good for?

Craig: I love walking with them in the forest, dirt tracks and short forays through the city - and hour or two, that's fine. I love feeling the texture of the ground under my feet. It was good walking on the beach with them when the sand was too hot, cos I find with jandals they kind of flip off and get left behind in the sand or get washed away in the surf. So these were much better. When we were walking around the forests in Sigulda in Latvia they were awesome ... until - after several hours of hiking around - we got back into town and had to walk along the footpaths. By that stage, the concrete footpaths were just way too much for my feet. We're going to do the West Highland Way, which is a walk between Glasgow and Fort William in Scotland in a few weeks, and I'm going to be bringing my walking shoes, but I'm also planning on using my Five Fingers for most of the time.

Linda: So, to round off: Vibram Five Fingers are a very expensive jandal or sandal replacement. They're not too much good for city walking, although they're great for specialist uses: Craig's used them for hiking and a very little amount of jogging, and the [company website](#) also recommends them for watersports and yoga or general fitness.

Craig: I'm considering using them for Taekwon-do training when I get back into that again. Are you going to get a set?

Linda: I will if they ever release half-sizes. The 40's too big and 39's too small, so I'm stuck in the middle at the moment. I keep trying them on every time I see them, but it's not working at the moment.

Craig: As I mentioned, we're walking the West Highland Way in a few weeks' time. If anyone out there has done it and has got the time to flick us an email with any inside advice, we'd really appreciate it. We haven't done any walking in Scotland

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so far. So, to get it touch, there's a contact form at www.indietravelpodcast.com or our address is mail@indietravelpodcast.com. Thanks again for listening -

Linda: And until next week, travel well.

<http://www.vibramfivefingers.com/>

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