



ON THE MOVE

SWITCHBACK IN THE BIG EASY

For the second edition of the Switchback Spring standalone show, the outdoor-focused trade event is headed to New Orleans after debuting last year in Nashville, Tenn.

Christina Henderson, vice president of the Endurance Portfolio at Switchback's parent company, Diversified USA, said there are many benefits to moving to the Big Easy.

"In addition to all the perks of a city known for its celebratory spirit, we're also going to enjoy the move into a true convention center, as it gives us much more flexibility with the exhibit hall, networking space and many other event elements," she said.

Switchback originated as a segment of The Running Event and was spun off into a standalone show, held in Nashville last June. During year one, Henderson said her team's biggest takeaway was the need for in-person educational and networking opportunities in the outdoor industry.

"The more we all rely on a digital world, the more value there is to gathering in-person," she said. "Trade events are the foundations of healthy business communities, which in turn deliver a long list of benefits, including resiliency, growth, innovation, talent development, advocacy and more."

She encouraged show attendees to make the most of the show on June 16-18 by engaging in its networking events and activations.

One such new feature will be the "Pathfinders" section, created in partnership with Founded Outdoors and Garage Grown Gear. It will feature a curated collection of retail-ready young brands, meaning "brands that have been in business for less than 10 years and who meet certain revenue qualifications."

In total, more than 190 brands are expected to exhibit at Switchback Spring, including Altra, Asics, Chaco, Merrell, The North Face, Teva, Salewa, Scarpa and more. — Jennie Bell

↑ Switchback Spring's first event was held in Nashville, Tenn.

↓ The show aims to fill a need in the outdoor industry for in-person gatherings.



STRAIGHT TALK

SANDI MINES

The vice president of corporate engagement at FDRA on the power of in-person experiences.

Amid increased economic pressures, retailers are weighing the costs of attending trade shows. Why are they still vital?

"Trade shows remain one of the most efficient ways for retailers to see a wide range of product in a short period of time and make confident buying decisions. As the market continues to change, in-person conversations are more important than ever—allowing buyers and brands to align on pricing, delivery, inventory, and consumer demand in real time."

What is FFANY's unique value proposition?

"[Its] value proposition is rooted in its New York City location, a global, fashion-focused hub where many brands already maintain permanent showrooms and where retailers have stores, offices and headquarters. This makes FFANY an efficient, natural meeting point for the industry. FFANY is also scheduled earlier than many other trade shows, giving buyers an important advantage as they plan and refine their assortments. [The next show takes place Feb. 2-6.]"

Where do you see the most opportunity in terms of product categories?

"We're seeing continued momentum in comfort-driven fashion, versatile lifestyle footwear, and elevated casual styles. Categories blending function and style — such as updated flats, refined sneakers and wearable heels — are resonating strongly. There's also growing interest in quality materials, craftsmanship and products that offer long-term value."

What is overall mood in the footwear market for 2026?

"The mood is positive and pragmatic. While retailers remain mindful of inventory and margins, there's a renewed focus on smart buying, proven categories and products that truly resonate with consumers. The market is leaning into intentional growth, adaptability and collaboration — making in-person events like FFANY especially relevant." — J.B.