

# Put your **best foot** forward



Step into these hot trends in spring and summer footwear

by amanda dolter • photos by nicki kohl

**I**t's time to free your feet from winter's thick wool socks and heavy winter boots.

Warm weather is here again, and so is shoe shopping season.

Shoe trends this spring and summer offer an array of styles suitable for everyday wear, as well as high-fashion, statement-makers.

Simply Elegant Boutique, in Galena, Ill., boasts a variety of shoe selections that are right on trend.

"The styles you'll be seeing are not only fun and innovative, but also very comfortable," said owner Robin Vaughn.

Simply Elegant Boutique's shoe collection includes leather styles with platform heels, woven and gladiator-influenced shoes by Bed Stu, embellished flats from designer Yosi Samr and glamorous slip-on sandals with pops of color, sequin details and elaborate beading, by Naughty Monkey.

"Think eye candy for the feet," Vaughn said.

According to Vaughn, the more popular shoe trends for spring and summer are flats, wedges and mules, gladiator sandals, platform heels, ankle boots, sneakers and platform shoes.

"We are loving the wedge and

platform trend," Vaughn said. "And, we found some comfortable, affordable selections of platforms and flatforms with super comfy elastic-band tops and color block designs."

Not to be confused with the platform, the flatform is a style reminiscent of the 1990s (think Spice Girls). Essentially, it's an elevated sandal with a flat, rigid base that can make getting around a bit tricky depending upon the height of the shoe.

Maurices, in Platteville, Wis., carries the ever-popular gladiator sandals, as well as lots of sporty, canvas flats evocative of Converse sneakers and



**Slip-on sandals from PJ Chapin's Shoe Boutique**



**Peep-toe booties from PJ Chapin's Shoe Boutique**



**Sling-back wedges PJ Chapin's Shoe Boutique**

sandals with shimmery detail.

“Oh my gosh, we have so many shoes that I can’t even find places to put them,” said Maurices store manager Chelsie Walter, “Most popular right now would be the wedges, they’re going over extremely well, and I think that closer to summer our sandals will be flying out of here.”

Maurices’ selection of canvas shoes and sling-back wedges are available in an array of colors including neutral shades of black, natural and navy blue, as well as brighter hues of coral, sea green and turquoise.

Neutral shoes are a staple for warm-weather footwear, as they offer greater flexibility to wear with a variety of outfits; plus, natural toned shoes help elongate the leg when worn with shorts or cute summer skirts and dresses. And shoes with a splash of color are a great way to personalize your style and bring an outfit to life.

But as Paula Chapin — owner of PJ Chapin’s Shoe Boutique, located



**Strappy high-heeled platforms from PJ Chapin’s Shoe Boutique**

inside the Hotel Julien Dubuque on Main Street — said, “In shoes, almost anything goes anymore.”

Animal print is always big and wedge platforms are as popular as ever.

Chapin is especially excited about the newer wedge styles at her boutique, which feature a unique snakeskin pattern with a cork platform, hardware-accented ankle strap and back zipper closure. Available with both high and low wedge heels, these stylish shoes will complement almost any outfit for an effortlessly chic look.

“The peep-toe bootie is going to be huge for spring,” Chapin said. “It’s usually something people would consider more fall-oriented, but it’s actually a very cute spring shoe design.”

Peep-toe booties for spring also feature a slightly chunkier heel, which make them more stable and conducive for a sunny afternoon stroll.

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**Heels with fringe from PJ Chapin’s Shoe Boutique**

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According to Chapin, another popular trend is the Birkenstock-inspired flat sandal. The Shoe Boutique carries a cute selection of this style from the Nicole shoe brand, which provides the comfort of a classic slip-on sandal with a modern twist and more design details.

Not one for flats, Janelle Lynch, of Dubuque, is known for her affinity of footwear.

“I have a two-bedroom house, and the second bedroom is pretty much a shoe room,” Lynch admitted, sheepishly, “I have a wardrobe in there, but it’s mostly shoes, and everybody jokes about it because it’s pretty full.”

In fact, Lynch’s love of shoes helped form her friendship with Chapin about two years ago.

“Janelle is my shoe girl,” Chapin said. “She even comes and helps me out at the store when I need it. It’s like a hobby for her; though, it’s not like work.”

It only made sense for Lynch to help out at PJ Chapin’s Shoe Boutique every now and then; she was already there on a regular basis to shop and would help other customers because she owned many of the shoes and could answer all their questions.

“It’s a blast for me; it’s like playing,” Lynch said. “I love talking with people and meeting folks, and when they find the right shoe, it just makes you happy.”

Lynch has always had a passion for shoes and likes how the right pair can take any outfit to the next level.

“Even if you have something simple on like leggings and a fitted T-shirt or sweater, when you put on the right pair of boots, it just sings,” Lynch said.

*Amanda Dolter is a freelance writer from Dubuque.*

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Gladiator sandals from PJ Chapin's Shoe Boutique



Photos contributed

Reptile-print wedges from PJ Chapin's Shoe Boutique

