



Q&A with **Stephanie Carter**, President of Wallaroo Hat Company

Tell us the history of your company.

Wallaroo Hat Company was founded by Stephanie Carter and Lenya Shore in April 1999 after they discovered the Aussie secret to sun protection with style: colorful UPF 50+ crushable fabric hats. They began wearing them around Boulder, a city known for its outdoor lifestyle and more than 300 sunny days each year. It wasn't long before friends and family wanted to know where they got their colorful sun-protection. The team discovered that nothing was available in the U.S. that compared to these UPF-rated fashion "finds" from Australia. Carter and Shore began importing small quantities, quickly realized their potential and launched Wallaroo Hat Company. Wallaroo Hat Company has continued to expand its selection by bringing back favorites and designing new styles and collections each year. With more than ten years under their belt, Shore and Carter now sell their hats to many resorts, boutiques, outdoor retailers, gardening stores, and catalogers.

Stephanie Carter (L) and Lenya Shore (R)

What type of customer buys your hats?

Wallaroo caters to a wide variety of customers including women, men and children. Our collection was started with the idea of providing colorful, attractive, crushable UPF rated hats that would be sun protective. There is a real need for attractive sun hats to help protect people from the sun's harmful rays. The majority of the Wallaroo collection has a UPF 50+ rating which means that the hats protect against 98% of the sun's harmful UV rays. We sell our hats in various markets including the outdoor market, gardening, sports shops, resort, boutique and fishing. We have a loyal brand following due our many colors and styles and the wash and wear aspect of most of our hats.

What makes your company unique?

What makes Wallaroo unique is having ultraviolet rated hats that are attractive and fun to wear. We were one of the pioneers in the ultraviolet hat category and we have continued to come up with new and different styles every year that cater to the fashion conscious sun protective customer. Our company is also 100% women owned and operated. Our great customer service also helps to set us apart from our competition. We are always interested in the story behind our customer's experiences and we often post our customers photos and emails on our website. We believe that there is a great story behind every hat purchase and that is what makes this business so much fun.

What's your favorite hat?

My favorite hat in the Wallaroo winter collection is the Bella which is a great angora cap and my favorite style in the summer hats is the Casual Traveler. The Casual Traveler has been one of our best selling hats for the last 6 years and continues to do well due to the fact that it is light weight, packable, washable and provides great sun protection.

What are some hat trends coming in 2010?

Wide brimmed hats seem to be continuing their strong sales trends along with fedoras. They have both been very popular in the last year and continue to dominate the hat market.