

Cork: Did You Know?

Talk to someone about cork in the Mediterranean and you are likely going to hear about a unique product with a multitude of uses. Portugal, the largest producer and exporter of cork in Europe, supplies the world with a wide range of cork products including flooring and wall coverings, paving, decorative house wares, art and design materials, shoe soles and fashion footwear as well as innovative applications for pharmaceuticals and the auto, military and aerospace industries. Cork has turned up in the most unlikely of places, making it an amazing natural resource to be admired, appreciated and praised for its many uses.

Did you know that the floor of the US Library of Congress is laid with real cork?

- Built in the 19th century, the Library of Congress' cork floor has stood the test of time and still endures years later, even with the weight of the great books and great minds that continue to put pressure on it. Acting as a natural sound absorber and able to withstand daily wear, cork flooring remains the perfect choice for the largest library in the world

Did you know that cork flooring has long been a darling of the architectural world?

- In addition to the Library of Congress, cork flooring has been used by architects and designers the world over and was a favourite of one of the 20th century's most famous architects – Frank Lloyd Wright. Organic architecture, the term Wright used to describe his approach to architectural design, promotes harmony between people and nature through design. Cork flooring, as a natural, eco-friendly material, was a favourite of Wright's and he used it in many of his most famous designs, including *Fallingwater* in Pennsylvania

Did you know that cork is not just for this world?

- Because of its thermal properties, slow burn rate and shock absorption capacity, shredded cork is currently being used in the thermal protection coating on the Space Shuttle's external fuel tank.

Did you know that cork is becoming a material of choice in the fashion world?

- Cork's presence in fashion has been intensifying over the past few years with luxury designers using it more and more in their collections. The material is showing up on umbrellas, flip-flops, jackets and evening gowns. Designers such as Michael Kors and Christian Louboutin use it in their famous, high-end ladies platform sandals and pumps. In his Spring 2010 collection, the famed Manolo Blahnik debuted a cork ballerina flat