

Ocean Culture Sandboards

Ocean Culture began in Hatherleigh, South Australia, as a small alternative clothing label back in 1992 and moved into the growing sport of sandboarding in 1994. Joanne, now 28 years old, discovered this alternative boarding lifestyle as an enthusiastic surfer who looked for ways to make use of the local sand dunes on days when the surf was flat. She found that the crossover was natural and easy.

At school Joanne enjoyed art, woodwork and physical education and now applies all of these interests to designing, making and using her sandboards. She has experimented with designs to make boards with great manoeuvrability and more effective bindings. Joanne's sandboard and accessories business grew from making boards for friends, both locally and in the city, then later for the wider boarding community throughout Australia and those who read about her on the Internet.

Joanne moved cautiously into exporting. Two companies list her products on their web sites, take orders for her boards and accept credit card payments. This market entry strategy allowed Joanne to keep her initial costs down, but she is now having her own site developed. By the end of 2001 Joanne expects that 20–25 per cent of her income will come from exports. She is aware of possible threats to this expansion with higher freight costs to various countries, fluctuating exchange rates and the extra cost for insurance to cover lost or damaged boards. However there are opportunities to travel overseas, gain company exposure and increase product turnover.

Sandboarding is growing as a sport for teens and young adults, particularly in the USA, so Joanne can see her export business expanding. She has not faced any trade barriers besides having to translate the language on some orders and, as an innovative designer, has not had to alter her product to suit particular market preferences. In the future Joanne would consider selling through stores overseas because they serve as advertising outlets and this introduces the 'off the street' shopper to alternative sports like sandboarding.

If you have not tried sandboarding yet, you're missing out! Check out Ocean Culture sandboards at www.oceanculture.com and www.geocities.com/oceancultureboards .