

‘Ultra-rare’ pair of Apple trainers on sale for \$50,000

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Author: Sammy Gecsoyler

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One lucky shopper with US men's 10.5-size feet and \$50,000 (£38,969) to spare will be able to buy one of Apple's earliest and most obscure products – trainers. The auction house Sotheby's is selling the "ultra-rare" Apple-branded trainers, which are believed to have been custom-made for employees in the late 80s or early 90s, on its website. The men's trainers, size 9.5 in the UK, have an air-cushioned heel. Despite being in "new" condition they are "consistent with age", with the item description noting yellowing around the midsoles and glue, and light marks on the toe boxes. The auction house claims they were a one-time giveaway at a national sales conference in the mid-1990s but the full history is unclear. In 2016, a pair were found at a garage sale in Palo Alto, California. The shoes were brought to Heritage Auction, which listed them at a starting bid of \$30,000. Leon Benrimon, Heritage Auction's director of modern and contemporary art, told Esquire in 2018: "We believe they were a pair of prototype sneakers made for Apple in the late 1980s or early 1990s. "We believe there were only two pairs made, and the other pair was from the Apple archives. The pair we have are what we believe is the only known private pair." In 1986, Apple started a short-lived clothing and accessories range called the Apple Collection. A magazine released at the time shows an eclectic range of company-branded products for sale, including jumpers, sunglasses, a toy truck and even a windsurfer all plastered with the multicoloured Apple logo. The trainers do not appear in the magazine. A year before the clothing brand was launched, 22,000 Apple-branded shirts were sold. Sotheby's notes that Apple would not manufacture products outside its "zone of expertise" itself, instead partnering with brands such as Lamy, Honda and Braun that would apply their branding to various white label products. The shoes are almost all-white, apart from the retro multicoloured Apple logo, but a pair of red laces will be included in the box. Earlier this month, an unopened, first edition 4GB iPhone was sold at auction for \$190,372.80.