

Horologists have a relationship with the sea that goes right back to the 18th century, when John Harrison famously created his original marine chronometer. Numerous luxury brands now embrace this maritime heritage with a vast array of models that are specifically designed to survive the rigours of the sea. Here, Simon de Burton selects five very different examples.

Ocean going



Panerai Luminor Submersible 1950

Few dial names have attracted the cult following enjoyed by Panerai since it was revived 17 years ago by the Vendome Group (now Richemont). Originally founded in 1860 as a maker of nautical instruments for the Italian navy, Officine Panerai didn't get into the watch game until 1936 when it was commissioned to make a small number of waterproof timepieces for use by the crack commandos of the Italian Navy's submariners.

The brand set out to reinforce its maritime links in 2004 by founding the Panerai Classic Yachts Challenge, an international regatta series for vintage boats - which is now the largest of its type



in the world. To mark the 10th anniversary Panerai has produced a limited-edition version of its Luminor Submersible 1950 model, which features an automatic movement with three day power reserve and a 47mm case made from brushed titanium. The back is engraved with the legend '10 Years of Passion' and the watch is supplied with two Panerai straps and a tool with which to change them. Just 50 examples will be available. www.panerai.com

Audemars Piguet Royal Oak Offshore Chronograph Tourbillon

Audemars Piguet's distinctive, octagonal-cased Royal Oak - designed by the late Gerald Genta in a single, overnight sketching session in 1972 - is regarded as one of the great classics of modern watchmaking. The original, 39-mm, three-handed version has been re-interpreted in dozens of different models over the decades and was joined in 1993 by the extra large Offshore model that first found fame on the wrist of Arnold Schwarzenegger in the

film *End of Days*.

More than 150 variants of the 'ROO' have since been created in a vast range of colours, dial designs and complications. Among the most impressive is the Chronograph Tourbillon, which features an open-worked dial, white gold hands and Audemars Piguet's lavishly hand decorated, 328-part column wheel movement. The 950 platinum case measures 44mm in diameter and is complemented by a black ceramic bezel and dark blue rubber strap. www.audemarspiguet.com





Rolex Yacht-Master II

— Although the Yacht-Master II has been around since 2007, it remains unique in being the only watch on the market with a programmable countdown feature and a mechanical ‘memory’ which allows it to be synchronised exactly with a regatta pre-start period. The system works through an interaction between the case, the movement and the bezel and has been specifically designed so that the functions can be operated using only one hand.

A single pusher at the two o’clock position starts and stops the countdown,

while the pusher at four o’clock has three functions - programming, synchronising and resetting the countdown. The ‘ring command’ rotating bezel, meanwhile, is used for programming the duration of the countdown, which can be maintained at the same setting between regattas or adjusted to suit specific events. The countdown is read off the highly legible timing arc, which extends between the eight o’clock and four o’clock positions on the dial. Last year, the watch became available for the first time in stainless steel (as opposed to precious metal). www.rolex.com

Ulysse Nardin Marine Diver

— Not for nothing is the central feature of the Ulysse Nardin logo a ship’s anchor. Founded in 1846, it quickly became renowned for making super-accurate marine chronometers which, at one stage, it was supplying to 50 of the world’s navies. The firm eventually racked up more than 4,000 prizes for the accuracy of its products, along with 18 gold medals for timekeeping.



Nowadays, Ulysse Nardin concentrates on producing high-end wrist watches incorporating the latest horological technology, such as low friction, lubricant-free silicone for key components such as escape wheels.

One of the cornerstones of its range has long been the Marine Diver model, a beautifully finished sports watch with a ‘wave pattern’ dial, a moulded, uni-directional rubber bezel and a solid case back engraved with the image of a boat and the words ‘Conquer the Ocean’. A screw-lock crown ensures water-resistance down to 300 metres. www.ulyssse-nardin.com

IWC Aquatimer ‘50 years science for Galapagos’

— IWC’s big news at this year’s Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie in Geneva was the launch of a completely re-vamped Aquatimer dive watch range - and the pledge of long-term financial support for the Galapagos Islands through its backing of the Charles Darwin Foundation, which helps to maintain the area’s unique, decidedly fragile, ecosystem

A whole family of new Aquatimers was unveiled, ranging from a basic, three-

hand automatic to a complex, perpetual calendar model and a ‘Deep Three’ version with a built-in depth gauge. There are also two special editions chronographs, one called the ‘Expedition Charles Darwin’, which has a bronze case, and the Chronograph Edition ‘50 Years Science for Galapagos’ which features the same mechanism in a rubber-coated steel case with a black rubber strap. The watch honours this year’s half-century anniversary of the archipelago’s Charles Darwin Research Station and is limited to 500 examples world wide. www.iwc.com

