
IWC PORTUGIESER: A LEGEND AMONG ICONS

1939: REFERENCE 325

In the mid-1930s, IWC Schaffhausen received an unusual request. At a time when petite, Art Deco-style wristwatches were in vogue, two Portuguese dealers ordered a large wristwatch with the precision of a pocket watch. It was no coincidence that they chose to approach IWC. After F.A. Jones founded the International Watch Company in 1868, it soon established a worldwide reputation for precision pocket watches. Back in 1939, its master watchmakers swiftly came up with a solution: they housed a hunter pocket watch 74 calibre in a 41.5-millimetre case. Inspiration for the dial came from the deck watches that IWC produced for the British Royal Navy at that time. These pocket watch-sized nautical instruments were, among other things, navigation instruments and consequently needed to be very easy to read. With the small seconds hand at 6 o'clock, a simple chapter ring, Arabic numerals and slim feuille hands, Reference 325 established a timelessly modern design language that would run like a thread through the history of the Portugieser family. However, the elegant wristwatch in pocket watch format was decades ahead of its time: by the late 1970s, IWC's ledgers contained details of only around 690 sales.

1993: PORTUGIESER ANNIVERSARY EDITION

The man responsible for rescuing the Reference 325 from oblivion and turning it into what is probably IWC's best-known icon was the then Marketing and Sales Director, Hannes Pantli. In 1993, the company celebrated its 125th anniversary with the Il Destriero Scafusia (Ref. 1868), at the time advertised as the most complicated wristwatch in the world. However, to mark the occasion, Pantli wanted to launch a timepiece that would represent IWC's horological legacy and be accessible to a larger number of watch lovers. This prompted the idea of reissuing Reference 325 in a limited small series. The new name, the "Portugieser", not only recalled the origins of the Reference 325 but also created a connection with topics such as navigation, precision and reliability. Production of the Portugieser Anniversary Edition (Ref. 5441) was limited to 1000 watches in stainless steel; 500 in 5N gold and 250 in platinum. Measuring 42.5 millimetres in diameter, the watches took their power from the 9828 calibre, which was based on the 98 pocket watch calibre. The Portugieser Anniversary Edition quickly sold out and established a global trend towards larger-format wristwatches.

2003:

PORTUGIESE PERPETUAL CALENDAR

In 2003, the first-time integration of the perpetual calendar in a Portugieser was a milestone in the history of this watch family. Developed in the 1980s by Kurt Klaus, the sophisticated mechanical programme automatically recognizes the different lengths of the months and leap years. All the displays are perfectly synchronized with each other and, if the watch has been out of use for some time, can be easily reset using only the crown. Kurt Klaus used the development of the oversize 5000 calibre as an opportunity to rework his calendar module from the ground up and adapt it to the more generous space available in the new movement. The fact that larger cogs were now involved led to an even more precise reduction in the moon phase display. In the Portugieser Perpetual Calendar (Ref. 5021), this is so accurate that it requires correction by just one day after 577.5 years. The Portugieser Perpetual Calendar Double Moon (Ref. 50611) is the first model from IWC to feature a double moon phase display. This unusual feature shows the moon as it appears to observers in both the northern and southern hemispheres.

2010:

PORTUGIESE YACHT CLUB CHRONOGRAPH

Design a rugged, weatherproof watch that cuts a fine figure on any occasion: that was the brief for the Yacht Club (Ref. 811A/D), which IWC launched in 1967. The driving force for this elegant, sporty automatic with its stainless steel bracelet was Albert Pellaton's high-precision 8541B calibre. In the years that followed, it established itself as one of IWC's most successful models. In 2010, the company decided to revive the legendary name and integrated the Yacht Club into the Portugieser family. In the Portugieser Yacht Club Chronograph (Ref. 3902), IWC chief designer Christian Knoop created a nautical sports watch that met the highest expectations. The 45-millimetre case is ruggedly built and water-resistant to 6 bar. But thanks to the iconic Portugieser design, the watch also cuts a fine figure on dry land. The watch is powered by the IWC-manufactured 89360 calibre, which combines stopped hours and minutes and displays them in a simple-to-read totalizer at 12 o'clock. The flange, which features a quarter-second scale, not only enables precise reading of stop times. It also lends the Portugieser Yacht Club Chronograph the character of a nautical instrument and its understated sporty style.

IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN

In 1868, the American watchmaker and entrepreneur Florentine Ariosto Jones travelled from Boston to Switzerland and founded the 'International Watch Company' in Schaffhausen. His visionary dream was to combine advanced American manufacturing methods with the craftsmanship of Swiss watchmakers to make the best pocket watches of his time. In doing so, he not only laid the foundation for IWC's unique engineering approach but also established the centralised production of mechanical watches in Switzerland.

Over its 150 year history, IWC Schaffhausen has developed a reputation for creating functional complications, especially chronographs and calendars, which are ingenious, robust, and easy for customers to use. A pioneer in the use of titanium and ceramics, IWC today specialises in highly engineered technical watch cases manufactured from advanced materials, such as titanium-aluminide and Ceratanium®. Preferring the principle of "form follows function" over decoration, the Swiss watch manufacturer's timeless creations embody their owners' dreams and ambitions as they journey through life.

IWC sources materials responsibly and takes action to minimise its impact on the environment, creating intrinsically sustainable timepieces that are built to last for generations. The company prides itself in training its own future watchmakers and engineers, as well as offering an excellent working environment for all employees. IWC also partners with organisations that work globally to support children and young people.

DOWNLOADS

Photos of Portugieser models are available at press.iwc.com

FURTHER INFORMATION

IWC Schaffhausen
Public Relations department
Email press-iwc@iwc.com
Website press.iwc.com

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Website iwc.com
Facebook facebook.com/IWCWatches
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