



Why this 1980s Porsche Design watch might just be a sleeper classic

The Ocean 2000, made in collaboration with IWC, is an undervalued timepiece that looks ultra modern on the wrist...

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Sapphire, ceramic, forged carbon, boron carbide... the list of new materials for watch case construction seems never ending. But it was only back in the 1980s that titanium, now a common case choice, was seen as innovative. The first titanium case was produced by Citizen in 1970, but it was another ten years until a bracelet and a full model range adopted it. For that, we have to thank a name more associated with motoring than watchmaking: Porsche.

Ferdinand Alexander Porsche, son of the company's founder, was the designer behind the 911, launched in 1963. Nine years later, he broke with the family car business and set up [Porsche Design](#) to bring his Bauhaus-inspired aesthetic to products from sunglasses and pens to clothing and, of course, watches. Not being watchmakers themselves, they partnered with Orfina, [IWC](#) and then Eterna. It was in the IWC years that titanium became part of the design language.



An IWC x Porsche Design Ocean 2000 sold for £5,500 by the Watches Of Knightsbridge auction house in 2019 Watches of Knightsbridge

“Titanium. An exotic metal. Twice as difficult to craft as stainless steel. Eight times more expensive. But half the weight. Absolutely non-corrosive. Non-magnetic. Incredibly durable. Thus, obviously superior. One of many design decisions typical of the world’s first

titanium chronograph,” said Porsche Designs in the ad for its first creation, the Titan ref 3700. So innovative was it, that IWC had to invest in new machining processes to create the case and links in this ultra-hard material. The sleek lines of the Titan were later refined with the design of possibly the most iconic IWC-Porsche Design collaboration, the Ocean 2000.

In 1981, Rolex’s Sea Dweller offered 610-metre water resistance. The Ocean 2000's 2000-metre rating, brushed titanium and sinuous case and bracelet lines must have seemed like alien technology. Even the bezel lock was innovative, with a push-in-to-turn mechanism. Remarkably, this stylish [dive watch](#) was initially offered to the German navy, supplied on a nylon strap rather than titanium bracelet. These “Bund”-engraved watches are highly prized in the military watch collecting community, especially the “mine-clearance” model, which had its automatic movement modified to make it 100 per cent anti-magnetic by replacing all the steel components. For two years, these watches just had Porsche Design on the dial and were retailed through the company’s own shops. But in 1983 they appeared at the Basel Watch Fair with the more commonly seen co-branded dial. At 42mm, these pieces must have made quite the statement in the early 1980s, but fit the norms of contemporary wristwear proportions perfectly.

For a watch that still looks ultra-modern even after 40 years, the IWC Porsche Design is an excellent choice. The cutting-edge production issues make early bracelets fragile and prone to collapse, but subsequent refinements by IWC mean replacements are possible. Although rarely found at auction, they can easily be unearthed in the dealer market for around £5,000. The military issue pieces command a substantial premium, selling for around twice this. Happy hunting.

[porsche-design.com](https://www.porsche-design.com)