

# TUDOR'S NAVAL HERITAGE

**The TUDOR collection has a selection of models that celebrate the brand's memorable heritage as a supplier of divers' watches to some of the largest navies in the world over the past six decades.**



**TUDOR**



This story dates back to the mid-1950s: 1954, to be precise. That was the year that TUDOR presented its first divers' watch, reference 7922, one of the first professional instruments aimed specifically at this emerging discipline. TUDOR's typical combination of a robust, technical product, positioned at an accessible price, made this divers' watch the ideal option for any organisation carrying out large-scale underwater activities. The French navy was one of them. Building on the recent innovations of a small group of officers with a passion for underwater exploration, it had the benefit of a unique expertise concentrated at the GERS (Groupement d'Étude et de Recherche Sous-marine – Underwater Study and Research Group). It was this organisation that contacted TUDOR in 1956 to evaluate the suitability of the brand's models for equipping the French navy's combat swimmers. What followed was over half a century of TUDOR watches on the wrists of divers from the largest navies in the world.

Today, the TUDOR collection comprises a number of references whose aesthetics allude to this heritage, with models either directly inspired by divers' watches famously used by military divers, or presenting an allegory of life at sea.

# BLACK BAY FIFTY-EIGHT “NAVY BLUE”, THE “FRENCH NAVY” BLUE

For vintage watch enthusiasts, blue TUDOR divers' watches are inextricably linked to the French navy. In the mid-1970s, this institution, which had trusted TUDOR to deliver robust, technical watches for nearly 20 years, opted for blue. For several years, the brand had offered a blue alternative to the classic black dial typical of the divers' watches of the time. This feature, coupled with the specific inscriptions engraved on the back (M.N. together with the last two digits of the year of issue), which evoked a life of aquatic adventure, made these watches, dubbed “TUDOR MN”, extremely popular among collectors.

It is to these models, and this period, that Black Bay Fifty-Eight “Navy Blue” alludes. In addition to the matt navy blue colour of its dial and bezel, this model also adopts the proportions of this generation of watches. With its 39-millimetre diameter, it is ideal for narrow wrists, for those who prefer a smaller watch and, of course, for vintage enthusiasts.

Its configuration on a fabric strap, also in navy blue and woven in France using traditional techniques, is the strongest visual evocation of the famous “TUDOR MN”s. These watches were in fact delivered to the French navy without TUDOR bracelets and were then fitted with various types of fabric straps, particularly woven ones.



# BLACK BAY P01

## THE PROTOTYPE SPIRIT

The 1960s will go down in history as a period of heightened innovation, culminating in the conquest of the moon. At that time, watchmaking generally and TUDOR in particular were experiencing the same creative impetus, of which the “Commando project” is the greatest example. In 1967 the brand, which had been supplying the American navy with divers’ watches since the second half of the 1950s, began developing a technical model to replace the Oyster Prince Submariner 7928 reference supplied at that time. This new watch needed to meet a set of specifications laid down by the American government and incorporated the results of the latest research into functionality and ergonomics carried out by the brand’s engineers. A development phase was launched, resulting in the production of prototypes, as well as a patent for a hitherto unseen function. “Commando” was the code name of this ambitious project that was perfectly in tune with the zeitgeist.

The Black Bay P01 model – meaning Prototype 1 – is directly inspired by a prototype developed as part of this study and preserved within the TUDOR archives. Half a century later, this series brings to life its unique functional appearance, where function and innovation took priority over any consideration of the watchmaking aesthetics in fashion at that time. Produced in a contemporary spirit, while at the same time retaining the principle of the winding crown at 4 o’clock, as well as the prominent lug covers of the 1960s model, the Black Bay P01 tells a story that was hitherto little known in TUDOR’s naval history. In the end, the US Navy chose to equip its divers with a simpler TUDOR model, the Oyster Prince Submariner 7016, and the “Commando” project was halted at the prototype stage.



A person is shown from the waist up, sitting in a forest. They are wearing a dark, heavy jacket with a large pocket and a watch on their left wrist. The watch has a dark dial with gold accents and a rotating bezel with a red triangle. The person is holding a dark fabric bag or piece of equipment. The background is a dense forest with trees and foliage.

## BLACK BAY FIFTY-EIGHT, DIVING INTO THE 1950S

With its proportions, overall shape, gold accents on the dial, and red triangle on the rotating bezel, the Black Bay Fifty-Eight is probably the TUDOR model closest, in terms of aesthetics, to the brand's first divers' watches and the first models adopted by the French and US Navies in the second half of the 1950s. At the time, one particular reference had been chosen by the two organisations, the famous 7924, now known among collectors as the "Big Crown" due to its prominent winding crown, a strengthened version of TUDOR's regular winding crown to be able to offer water-resistance to 200 metres for the first time.

Without being a faithful reproduction of this reference, the Black Bay Fifty-Eight model interprets its spirit, evoking the aesthetics of the pioneering years of autonomous diving. In its configuration with a fabric strap, it recalls the military divers' custom of wearing their watches on different types of straps or belts, sometimes taken from other field equipment (see Black Bay Bronze).



## BLACK BAY BRONZE, **AN ALLEGORY OF LIFE AT SEA**

The Black Bay Bronze model does not allude to any particular watch in TUDOR's naval history. Rather, it presents a number of aesthetic nods to the rustic nature of life at sea and makes reference to anecdotes about the way generations of sailors have used TUDOR watches. Starting with its fabric strap: following a parachuting incident during which a member of the French navy's diver-paratrooper unit was momentarily left dangling from the plane door by his fabric watch strap, the group decided to produce their own, more supple bracelets using elastic straps recycled from the emergency opening system of the rescue parachutes they used at that time. This strap presented a central yellow stripe, which is now found on the fabric strap of the Black Bay Bronze model.

In the same spirit, the bronze used for the model's case, a high-performance cupro-aluminium alloy widely used in naval engineering for submerged parts and required to demonstrate a high level of resistance to corrosion, further evokes naval activity. The nature of this metal guarantees the development of a subtle and unique patina to match its user's habits. The overall visual effect is of a rich, patinated object that might have battled the waves of the seven seas for years on a sailor's wrist, and which is "made" for him and his lifestyle.