



BACKGROUNDER 2025

PERPETUAL PLANET INITIATIVE

Rolex celebrates human achievement, recognizing journeys marked by milestones and emotions that culminate in defining moments. Achievement is a path followed towards excellence.

For nearly a century, Rolex has supported pioneering explorers pushing the boundaries of human endeavour to help them achieve countless historic feats. Over time, the company has moved from championing exploration for the sake of discovery to protecting the planet. Through the Perpetual Planet Initiative, Rolex stands alongside explorers, scientists, and entrepreneurs, supporting their work to build a better future for all life on earth. By supporting those who take action and find solutions to today's environmental challenges, Rolex hopes to inspire future generations to strive for a perpetual planet.

The crowning achievement of any individual or organisation supported by the Perpetual Planet Initiative is to leave the planet a better place.

FROM DISCOVERY TO PROTECTION

For the founder of Rolex, Hans Wilsdorf, the world was like a living laboratory. From the 1930s, he began to use it as a testing ground for his watches, sending them to the planet's most extreme locations, supporting explorers who ventured into the unknown.

Since then, Rolex has seen countless historic achievements from individuals who strove to shed light on the natural world, and the company is linked to some of the greatest feats of exploration and discovery of the past century. Rolex equipped several expeditions including the 1933 British Everest Expedition and the Sir John Hunt's historic 1953 expedition, when Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay became the first people to reach the summit of Mount Everest. In honour of this global achievement, Rolex launched the Explorer watch in 1953.

By 1960, Rolex's involvement with exploration took a new turn – down to the Mariana Trench in the western Pacific, the deepest point in the oceans, the equivalent of the height of Mount Everest plus some 2,000 metres. The bathyscaphe *Trieste*, piloted by Jacques Piccard and Don Walsh, carried an experimental Rolex Oyster watch, the Deepsea Special, fixed to its exterior as it descended to a record depth of 10,916 metres. The watch was working perfectly when the vessel resurfaced, despite the immense pressure, and Piccard and Walsh remained the only people to reach the bottom of the trench for the next half century.



More than five decades later, filmmaker and Rolex Testimonee James Cameron completed his solo dive in 2012 aboard the *DEEPSEA CHALLENGER*, which carried an experimental diver's watch, the Rolex Deepsea Challenge, on its robotic manipulator arm. The watch resisted more than 12 tonnes of pressure, kept perfect time and emerged from the water unscathed.

As the 21st century unfolds, the company has moved from championing exploration for the sake of discovery to protecting the planet, and reinforced its commitment by launching the Perpetual Planet Initiative in 2019. Supporting a diverse range of projects, the Initiative is rapidly expanding and now has a portfolio of more than 30 partners. It also includes the revamped Rolex Awards programme, which has supported exceptional individuals spearheading innovative projects for nearly 50 years.

Today, Rolex continues to encourage those boldly delving into the unknown for the sake of the planet's future. The Rolex Perpetual Planet Initiative supports and highlights the partners, Testimonees, and Rolex Awards Laureates working in the fields of Ocean and Landscape conservation, as well as Science, Health, and Technology. Rolex is committed to supporting those who work tirelessly to understand the world's environmental challenges and help preserve the planet for generations to come in particular in crucial, high-biodiversity marine and terrestrial areas. Despite the difficulties faced and sacrifices made, these trailblazers are reaching new heights and achieving groundbreaking work that is changing the world as we know it.

ROLEX AND THE OCEAN

The ocean represents almost three quarters of the earth's surface and accounts for a large proportion of its biodiversity. Rolex's support of those working to explore and preserve the Earth's blue heart dates back 70 years.

One of the Perpetual Planet Initiative's central pillars is Mission Blue. Founded in 2009 by oceanographer Sylvia Earle (a Rolex Testimonee since 1982), Mission Blue highlights the importance of protecting significant marine ecosystems around the world called Hope Spots: ecologically important areas of the oceans considered vital to the preservation of species, or places where communities rely on a healthy marine environment to survive.

With support from Rolex since 2014, the number of Hope Spots has increased from 50 to more than 160, and includes rich, biodiverse regions such as the Azores Archipelago and the Galapagos Islands. Rolex also supports Mission Blue's Champions: individuals and organisations who lead local preservation efforts in their respective Hope Spots.

Earle has been a pioneer of ocean exploration for more than half a century. A committed advocate of the oceans, she is driven to inspire others to see their beauty and vulnerability for themselves.





The Rolex Perpetual Planet Initiative supports many pioneers like Sylvia Earle, who dedicate their lives to protecting the vast and critical marine world.

Other Ocean partners and Rolex Awards Laureates supported include:

- **Cristina Mittermeier:** world-renowned conservation photographer Cristina Mittermeier is inspiring positive action on a global scale. By aiming her lens at urgent changes that are needed to preserve the oceans, the marine biologist is sparking conversation about ocean conservation. With the support of the Rolex Perpetual Planet Initiative, she is documenting the many untold wonders of the oceans, highlighting the action we must take to protect our waters.
- **Coral Gardeners:** this group of young people in French Polynesia are restoring corals reefs and globally raising awareness about their importance. Led by local ocean advocate Titouan Bernicot, the organisation is rapidly expanding to protect coral ecosystems around the world.
- **Under the Pole:** the team of expert divers use cutting-edge rebreather technology to dive deeper and for longer than was previously thought possible. By collaborating with researchers around the world, Under the Pole are helping to uncover the mysteries of the ocean's little-studied "twilight zone" and advocate to better protect it.
- **Luiz Rocha:** the Rolex Awards Laureate is a leader in his field, having spent more than 6,000 hours underwater on more than 70 scientific expeditions worldwide, half of which he has led. He recently collaborated with Under the Pole to conduct a first-of-its kind exploration of the deep-sea animal forests of Guadeloupe.
- **Emma Camp:** the marine biologist is finding ways to restore and improve resilience of coral reefs by studying the behaviour and genetics of "ultra-tough coral survivors" she has discovered growing in conditions previously thought to be deadly to them. Her work may hold the key to repopulating reefs ravaged by a warming climate, acidifying water and other human-inflicted damage.
- **Paul Nicklen:** an acclaimed wildlife photographer, author, and filmmaker, Nicklen has spent his career documenting the breath-taking beauty of some of the Earth's most extreme environments. His work is celebrated for raising awareness of the threats posed by biodiversity loss.
- **David Doubilet:** the pioneering underwater photographer has been creating iconic images of the underwater world for decades. His first photograph was published in National Geographic in 1972, and he has been a Rolex Testimonee since 1994.



- **Prince Albert II Foundation and Oceanographic Institute:** Under the leadership of HSH Prince Albert II, the Principality of Monaco has been strongly committed to the study and protection of the oceans. The Rolex Perpetual Planet Initiative supports the Monaco Ocean Week, which includes the Monaco Blue Initiative, an annual forum where scientists, entrepreneurs, and political and economic decision makers meet, to advance marine conservation.
- **One Ocean Foundation:** the Foundation surveys whales and other large marine mammals that thrive in the Caprera Canyon, an oasis of marine biodiversity between Sardinia and the Italian mainland. They are providing scientific evidence to get Caprera Canyon recognised as an Important Marine Mammal Area and to increase its protection.
- **OceanX:** the organisation unites cutting-edge science and technology with world-class storytelling to bring the mysteries of the ocean to life for a global audience. Equipped with 4 deep-sea vehicles, wet and dry labs, and Hollywood-level production capabilities, their state-of-the art ship, the OceanXplorer is the most advanced exploration, research and media vessel ever built.

ROLEX AND LANDSCAPES

From enabling vital discoveries in the Amazon rainforest to equipping the first adventurers to reach the summit of Mount Everest, Rolex has supported the world's trailblazing explorers for almost a century.

► National Geographic Society

The long-standing partnership with the National Geographic Society, began in 1954 when the magazine wrote an article on Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay's history-making ascent of Mount Everest, which Rolex had supplied with watches. Since then, the partnership has enabled world-renowned scientific expertise and cutting-edge technology to be harnessed, illuminating new insights about the impacts of climate change on the systems that are vital to life on Earth: mountains as the world's water towers, rainforests as the planet's lungs, and oceans as its cooling system.

The first expedition supported by this partnership was to Mount Everest in 2019. The expedition team was set out to improve understanding of the effects of climate change on the glaciers of the Hindu Kush-Himalaya that provide critical water resources to 1 billion people downstream. The team installed a network of five weather stations, including the world's highest, just short of the summit of Everest. The climate, geological and biological data gathered during the expedition have resulted in the publication of 30 scientific papers and helped better understand the impact of global warming on high-altitude environments.





The partnership between Rolex and National Geographic also enabled expeditions to Mount Tupungato in Argentina and Mount Logan in Canada, where more crucial climate change information was gathered.

In April 2022, Rolex and National Geographic launched a series of seven scientific research studies spanning the entire Amazon River Basin, from the Andes to the Atlantic. Increased deforestation, poaching, and commercial agriculture, as well as climate change, decrease the Amazon's ability to adequately provide critical ecosystem services for the planet. Supported and often led by local community members, seven teams of National Geographic Explorers investigated the basin, successfully showcasing its intricate connectivity and the critical role seasonal flooding has on the survival of communities and wildlife.

The latest Rolex and National Geographic Expedition is the Ocean Expedition. From seashore to seafloor and pole to pole, the project covers all five oceans on the planet and involves teams of National Geographic Explorers, scientists, storytellers and local community members diving beneath the surface to showcase how critical the ocean is to life on Earth. Spanning two years, the trailblazing project combines academic science, traditional knowledge, and community engagement to reveal the diversity and connectivity of our planet's seas.

Rolex also supports the annual National Geographic Explorers Festival, which provides an opportunity for adventurers to present their discoveries and solutions for creating a healthier planet. The Rolex National Geographic Explorer of the Year is also celebrated at the festival, an award for leaders in exploration which has been running since 2012.

Through the Rolex Perpetual Planet Initiative, explorers, scientists, and conservationists are reaching new heights in achieving advanced discoveries.

Other Landscapes partners and Rolex Awards Laureates supported include:

- **Steve Boyes:** Renowned South African conservationist who is documenting Africa's waterways along the "Great Spine of Africa." This includes the Angolan highlands, where he discovered a massive water tower: an elevated area of forest and peatlands with high rainfall that feeds local rivers, including the fourth-longest river in Africa, the Zambezi, even during drier periods. With over 20 million people and countless species of plants and animals in southern Africa relying on the rushing waters of the Zambezi River, this achievement is crucial, as it could help scientists and local communities to protect the river and build resilience against climate change.
- **Rewilding Argentina and Rewilding Chile:** more than three decades ago, Kristine and Doug Tompkins purchased vast tracts of land in Chile and Argentina for the purpose of rewilding them with key local species, setting up a process of sustainable management now led by these two offspring organizations with the



support of local communities in the process. They then donated the land back to the two governments for the creation of national parks, inspiring the protection of 5.6 million hectares of wild landscapes.

- **The Orange River-Karoo Conservation Area (ORKCA):** the Namibian non-profit is acquiring farmland and partnering with local landowners to form a large, continuous conservation area. ORKCA have secured 16,700 hectares of land for conservation, restoration, rewilding and socio-economic development since the project began.
- **Constantino Aucca Chutas:** the indigenous Peruvian biologist is scaling up his community-centred forest ecosystem restoration and protection programme in the high Andes. His conservation groups have already planted nearly 12 million native trees and established partnerships with 15 organisations across the six countries where it operates.
- **Inza Kone:** the Ivorian conservationist is protecting a richly biodiverse forest in Côte d'Ivoire, while safeguarding its endangered fauna and reducing poverty in the area. He has established a conservation programme with 11 communities living in the Tanoé-Ehy forest, leading to its official designation as a community-managed nature reserve.
- **Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim:** the climate change and indigenous rights advocate uses indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge to map natural resources and prevent climate conflicts in the Sahel. She brought together 556 indigenous communities' leaders around Lake Chad to map their region's resources, and their advice was adopted by national authorities.
- **The Royal Geographical Society (RGS):** Rolex has a long-established association with the body, dating back to the 1930s, when it began equipping Himalayan expeditions. Today, Rolex continues to support the Society's archives, events and exhibitions and the conservation of its extensive photographic collections.
- **The Explorers Club:** Since its inception in 1904, the Club has brought together an international community of explorers and has been supporting scientific expeditions across the world. Through their annual events, such as the World Ocean Week and the Global Exploration Summit, the Explorers Club continues to lead the conversation on exploration for the benefit of our planet.

Rolex also supports a number of mountaineers, including **Ed Viesturs, Alain Hubert, Jean Troillet, and Dawa Yangzum Sherpa.**



Ed Viesturs is a legend in the world of high-altitude mountaineering. Known for his meticulous approach and unwavering determination, has summited all 14 of the world's 8,000 metre (26,250 feet) peaks without supplemental oxygen. In 2002, Belgian polar explorer **Alain Hubert** created the International Polar Foundation (IPF) to support polar science as a key to understanding climate change. Mountaineer **Jean Troillet** climbed Everest in 1986, and in 1997 became the first man to descend the North Face on a snowboard. The Swiss-Canadian holds the record for the fastest ascent of Everest's North Face. **Dawa Yangzum Sherpa** is the first woman in Nepal to gain certification from the elite International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations. In 2024, she became the first Nepali woman to successfully climb all 14 peaks above 8,000m. She is determined to not be the only one and is committed to seeing more women embrace climbing.

ROLEX AND SCIENCE, HEALTH, AND TECHNOLOGY

Rolex also supports individuals and organisations working across the sciences, believing that no challenge is so great that human skill cannot overcome it. Among these individuals is Rolex Awards Laureate Grégoire Courtine, who is creating revolutionary medical technology. When he was a physics and neuroscience student in Switzerland, Courtine dreamed of helping people paralysed by spinal cord injuries to walk again. Having developed groundbreaking bioengineering technologies to stimulate nerves in the spine artificially and help patients regain movement, Courtine hopes to restore mobility to paralysed people around the world.

With support from the Perpetual Planet Initiative, pioneers like Courtine continue to develop technology and answer questions that are changing the world.

- **Andrew Bastawrous:** the ophthalmologist launched Peek Vision in 2012 to provide vision-testing software to local eye care partners in rural communities. Boosted by his 2016 Rolex Award, the company has recently celebrated the milestone of 10 million people screened using its tools worldwide.
- **Miranda Wang:** the Rolex Awards Laureate is revolutionising plastic recycling. Along with her partner Jeanny Yao, she has designed and constructed a first-of-its-kind plant to process discarded plastic back into high value virgin-quality polymer. The polymer is then sent from India to Wang's partner in China, where it is processed into plastic for products like electronics and shoes.
- **CERN & Society Foundation:** a long-standing partnership between CERN – the world's leading particle physics laboratory – and Rolex dates back to 1956, when CERN scientists were tasked with testing a new Rolex watch, a precision piece crafted to withstand CERN's powerful magnets. More than six decades on, the CERN and Society Foundation and their trailblazing centre for outreach is harnessing the natural curiosity of young minds through hands-on educational programming.



- **Felix Brooks-church:** through his social enterprise Sanku, the Rolex Awards Laureate aims to eradicate malnutrition across Tanzania and Ethiopia by adding micronutrients to staple foods using a simple but life-changing machine called a dosifier.
- **Mark Kendall:** the Australian biomedical engineer revolutionized vaccinations with the invention of a vaccine patch, the low-cost Nanopatch, which does not require needles or refrigeration. He has gone on to invent a series of low-cost, life-saving microwearable medical devices to combat deadly diseases and forewarn of events such as heart attacks or dehydration.
- **Piyush Tewari:** the Rolex Awards Laureate founded the SaveLIFE Foundation (SLF) to find ways of reducing the death toll from road accidents in India after his cousin was fatally injured. Tewari estimates that 1.82 million people injured in roadside accidents have been rushed to hospitals by people who have received his training from the SLF.

THE ROLEX AWARDS

As the Rolex Awards for Enterprise near their 50th anniversary, Rolex is introducing a new, revamped Awards programme with an increased focus on impact and achievement. The changes come with a new name: **The Rolex Awards**.

The new programme is an evolution of the Rolex Awards for Enterprise. Since their foundation in 1976, the Awards have embodied the company's determination to contribute to the wider world – the ethos that now inspires the Perpetual Planet Initiative.

The Rolex Awards are unique in several ways. Unlike most other awards programmes, they are not designed to recognize past achievements – they are given for new or ongoing projects with the potential to achieve enormous global impact.

The Awards are given to individuals and projects making significant contributions to one of the following key categories: the environment, in particular ocean and landscape conservation; and science, health, and technology.

The tangible benefits of the Laureates' projects are profoundly impactful. In those directly related to the environment: 37 million trees have been planted; 48 endangered species and 32 major ecosystems protected, including 57,600 square kilometres of Amazon rainforest; hundreds of new species have been discovered; 19 challenging expeditions have been completed; and 49 innovative technologies have been developed for a range of applications.



FOSTERING TOMORROW'S EXPLORERS

Rolex supports organisations and initiatives raising environmental awareness and fostering tomorrow's explorers, scientists, and conservationists through scholarships and grants.

Since 2017, the company has provided project funding each year for up to five young explorers through The Rolex Explorers Club Grants. The grants are given in partnership with The Explorers Club in New York, established in 1904 to fund and promote scientific exploration.

The long-standing partnership between CERN and Rolex continues to inspire the next generation of scientific pioneers. Rolex is the title partner of the CERN & Society Foundation, and the Perpetual Planet Initiative supports its Beamline for Schools competition – an annual programme that gives high school students from across the globe the opportunity to visit the world's largest particle physics laboratory and design and test their own experiment. The initiative also supports the CERN Science Gateway – a visitor centre offering interactive exhibitions, hands-on experiments in working labs, and a 900-person lecture hall, designed to nurture curiosity for the way the world around us works.

With support from Rolex, the groundbreaking work of today's partners across Ocean and Landscapes conservation, as well as Science, Health, and Technology, is more important than ever before. The Rolex Perpetual Planet Initiative is encouraging tomorrow's explorers to push the boundaries of human endeavour, achieve new discoveries, and reach even greater heights than the inspiring generations that came before them.

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