



ROLEX AND EXPLORATION - THE PERPETUAL PLANET INITIATIVE

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 most extreme locations, supporting explorers who ventured into the unknown. But the world has changed.

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. It supports individuals and organizations using science to understand the world's environmental challenges and devise solutions that will restore balance to our ecosystems.

The Perpetual Planet Initiative is rapidly expanding and now has a portfolio of more than 20 partners including Sylvia Earle's Mission Blue – which Rolex has partnered since 2014 – to preserve the oceans through a network of marine-protected 'Hope Spots'; an enhanced partnership with the National Geographic Society to study the impacts of climate change; and the Rolex Awards for Enterprise, which for more than 45 years have been supporting exceptional individuals with innovative projects benefiting our world.

LONG HISTORY OF SUPPORT FOR EXPLORATION

For nearly a century, Rolex has been an active supporter of pioneering explorers, individuals who have pushed back the boundaries of human endeavour by venturing to the most extreme places on Earth to shed light on the natural world. Rolex watches have accompanied these explorers to the highest mountains and to the ocean depths, serving as precise, reliable tools. In turn, these groundbreaking expeditions have proved to be the perfect living laboratory for the brand to test and develop its timepieces.

EXPLORING THE EXTREMES

Rolex is linked to some of the greatest feats of exploration of the past century. In **1933**, the brand first equipped the British Everest Expedition and again in **1953** on Sir John Hunt's historic expedition, when Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay became the first men to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

In honour of this milestone, Rolex launched the Explorer watch in **1953**. The Explorer model was eventually improved with a reinforced case and a more legible dial for extreme conditions. Since that time, the Explorer has benefited from every technical advance to Rolex watches, though its appearance remains the same.



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In keeping with this support of exploration, in **1954** Rolex formed one of the brand's most enduring partnerships – an alliance with the National Geographic Society.

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 Deep Sea Special, fixed to its exterior as it descended to a record depth of 10,916 metres (35,800 feet). The watch was working perfectly when the vessel resurfaced despite the immense pressure it had been subjected to. Piccard and Walsh remained the only people to reach the bottom of the ocean for the next half century.

In light of its increased involvement with exploration, in **1971**, Rolex launched the Explorer II, featuring a date display, an additional 24-hour hand and a fixed bezel with a 24-hour graduation, enabling the wearer to distinguish hours of the day from those of the night. This was essential for exploration in dark environments – caves, for example – or polar regions that experience six months each of daylight and darkness.

Echoing the first manned descent to the Mariana Trench in 1960, filmmaker and Rolex Testimonee James Cameron completed his solo dive in **2012** aboard the *DEEPSEA CHALLENGER*, which carried an experimental divers' watch, the Rolex Deepsea Challenge, on its robotic manipulator arm. The watch, waterproof to 12,000 metres (39,370 feet), resisted more than 12 tonnes of pressure on its crystal, kept perfect time and emerged from the water unscathed.

EXPLORERS LINKED TO ROLEX

From the early 1980s, many explorers, including mountaineers, divers and scientists, became associated with Rolex or became brand Testimonees, breaking records and testing their abilities and endurance while equipped with Oyster Perpetual watches. Rolex timepieces have been constant companions and key tools in their work. This group includes:

- German-born American conservationist **George Schaller**, who has been instrumental in preventing the destruction of environments; he has helped establish more than 20 wildlife reserves around the world and protect some of the most endangered animals, including mountain gorillas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and snow leopards in Mongolia.
- The late palaeoanthropologist and conservationist **Richard Leakey**, renowned for his fossil finds related to human evolution and his campaigning for responsible environmental management in East Africa.



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- American mountaineer **Ed Viesturs**, who scaled all 14 of the world's 8,000-metre peaks without supplemental oxygen during his Endeavor 8000 project, which he completed in 2005.
- Belgian polar explorer and mountaineer **Alain Hubert**, who in 2002 created the International Polar Foundation (IPF) to support polar science as a key to understanding climate change. The IPF raised funds to build an international research station in Antarctica, designed to operate on renewable energies.
- Swiss-Canadian mountaineer **Jean Troillet**, who climbed Everest in 1986, and in 1997 became the first man to descend the North Face on a snowboard. Troillet holds the record for the fastest ascent of Everest's North Face and has climbed 10 of the 8,000-metre peaks, all without supplemental oxygen.
- Norwegian **Rune Gjeldnes**, who in 2006 became the only person to cross the three big ice sheets – Greenland, the Arctic Ocean and Antarctica – on skis, unaided.
- **Steve Boyes**, Rolex National Geographic Explorer of the Year 2019, along with a team of scientists who explored the Okavango Delta, is following Africa's principal rivers to improve understanding and protection of their biodiversity with the Great Spine of Africa series of expeditions.
- German cave diver **Robbie Schmittner** and his Xunaan-Ha Expedition explored cave systems and found sources of contaminated water in Yucatán's giant aquifer.
- **Dawa Yangzum Sherpa** is the first woman in Nepal to gain certification from the elite International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations. She is determined to not be the only one, aspiring to see more women embrace climbing.
- Citizen scientists **Sunniva Sorby** and **Hilde Fåln Strøm**, who created Hearts in the Ice, are the first women to have spent the winter in total autonomy in the Arctic. By taking samples and observing the variations in the environment day after day, they collected crucial data on global warming, which they share with international researchers.
- Canadian **Paul Nicklen** and his partner Mexico-born marine biologist **Cristina Mittermeier** are two of the world's most influential conservation photographers. They created the storytelling platform SeaLegacy in 2014 to spark conversation and action about climate change and ocean conservation.



COMMITMENT TO A PERPETUAL PLANET

Today's explorers are increasingly concerned about the balance of the Earth's ecosystems. Accordingly, the purpose of their expeditions and projects has transitioned from discovery to drawing attention to the planet's fragility, as well as catalysing and designing solutions to environmental challenges. Through its partnerships, relationships and programmes, Rolex is championing these explorers as part of its commitment to a Perpetual Planet.

ROLEX AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE

The Rolex Awards were set up in **1976** to mark the 50th anniversary of the world's first waterproof wristwatch, the Oyster. Through the programme, the company supports exceptional individuals with innovative projects that improve our knowledge of the world, protect the environment – helping to preserve habitats and species – and improve human well-being. The 160 women and men selected as Laureates since the programme was launched have had an extraordinary impact. An estimated 17 million people, in all corners of the globe, have benefited: around 28 million trees have been planted; 52 endangered species and 32 major ecosystems protected, including 57,600 km² of Amazon rainforest; hundreds of new species have been discovered; 53 challenging expeditions have been completed; and 49 innovative technologies have been developed and applied for a range of applications.

Among explorers who have benefited from the Awards are: Francesco Sauro, who is leading scientific expeditions deep into the caves of South America's remote table-top mountains; Cristian Donoso, who kayaked along the coast of Western Patagonia, documenting this dramatic region to throw a spotlight on its value; Gina Moseley, who is exploring the planet's northernmost caves to improve our knowledge of climate change in the Arctic; Luiz Rocha who is studying deep-sea corals to advance the case for their protection.

New tracking technologies developed by Rolex Laureates provide electronic eyes in the wild and are proving a powerful weapon in the race to save endangered species. For example, English zoologist Rory Wilson created the Daily Diary, a lightweight electronic logger that provides valuable data on the behaviour of animals such as penguins and leopards. South African scientist Louis Liebenberg designed the CyberTracker to enable Kalahari Bushmen to record their observations of animals, but the technology has proved a highly versatile scientific tool.

SYLVIA EARLE'S MISSION BLUE

Sylvia Earle, a Rolex Testimonee since **1982**, has been a pioneer of ocean exploration for more than a half-century. In 1970, she participated in one of the most ambitious underwater habitat programmes. As part of the US government research project Tektite II, she led an all-female mission, living and working alongside other scientists



in a pair of metal silos anchored on the seabed in the US Virgin Islands, where they carried out research and a variety of tasks. A committed advocate of the oceans, she is driven to inspire others to see for themselves their beauty and vulnerability.

Since 2009, through her Mission Blue initiative, Earle has encouraged communities and governments to shield marine life that is at risk from human pressures through protected areas she calls Hope Spots. These are areas of the oceans designated as being vital to the preservation of species. They may be significant for their biodiversity, or home to endemic, rare or endangered species, or be places where local communities rely on a healthy marine environment for their livelihoods.

With the support of Rolex since **2014**, the number of Hope Spots has increased from 50 to more than 160. Earle is contributing to a global movement aiming to protect 30 per cent of the world's oceans by 2030. Currently, 8 per cent of the oceans are protected.

Some Hope Spots have been created in existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). Where there is no current protection, once applications for Hope Spot status are approved by the Mission Blue council – in partnership with the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) – work on a conservation plan begins with local populations, environmental organizations and governments. Rolex also supports Mission Blue's Champions: individuals and organizations who lead local preservation efforts in their respective Hope Spots.

A Champion in the Galápagos, Todd Steiner, as well as Mission Blue and other global and local organizations, successfully petitioned Costa Rica and Ecuador to create one of the first bilateral MPAs in the world – a protected swimway allowing animals to swim between two protected marine reserves in the Cocos and the Galápagos. In December 2021 Costa Rica expanded the Cocos Island National Park, which lies at the heart of the Cocos Island Hope Spot. Ecuador followed in January 2022 by expanding the Galápagos Marine Reserve.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

In **2017**, Rolex enhanced its long-standing partnership with the National Geographic Society to promote exploration and conservation. Now the two organizations have come together to carry out a series of expeditions answering critical questions about the impacts of climate change on vital environments.

The partnership enables world-renowned scientific expertise and cutting-edge technology to be harnessed, revealing 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.



MOUNT EVEREST

The first expedition supported by this partnership was to Mount Everest in **2019**. The Everest expedition team, led by National Geographic and Tribhuvan University, 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 also installed a network of five weather stations including what was then the world's highest, just short of the summit of Everest.

Studies were conducted on the region's biology, geology and glaciology, which led to the publication of a number of scientific papers. The information gained from the expedition, coupled with additional data sets on water supply and demand from mountain chains across the world, also formed the basis of a new index to track the health of the most important and vulnerable water systems and inform decisions to help protect them.

MOUNT TUPUNGATO

The next step was in early **2021** when a National Geographic team of explorers and scientists placed the highest weather station in the Southern and Western Hemispheres just below the summit of Tupungato Volcano, in the Southern Andes.

With the installation of the weather station, scientists have a window into atmospheric processes in the high Chilean Andes. One of the most vulnerable water towers in the world, these mountains provide critical freshwater to more than 6 million inhabitants in nearby Santiago.

MOUNT LOGAN

In 2021, glaciologist Alison Criscitiello climbed Canada's Mount Logan, the second-highest mountain in North America, with geologist Rebecca Haspel and installed a weather station. A year later she returned with an expedition and extracted an ice core at a record depth of 327 metres, which is estimated to contain 30,000 years of climate change information.

AMAZON RIVER BASIN

In April **2022**, Rolex and National Geographic announced a series of seven scientific research studies over the next two years spanning the entire Amazon River Basin from the Andes to the Atlantic. Increased deforestation, poaching, commercial agriculture, as well as climate change, decrease the Amazon's ability to adequately provide critical ecosystem services for the planet.

Led by National Geographic Explorers, scientists, storytellers and local community members will investigate the basin, showcasing its intricate connectivity and the critical role seasonal flooding has on the survival of communities and wildlife.



This work will build on the Tropical Forest Vulnerability Index developed by National Geographic in 2019 with the support of Rolex. The index indicates that each forest reacts differently to stressors such as heat, drought, fires and pollution, and requires a diversity of solutions.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORERS FESTIVAL

The annual National Geographic Explorers Festival is supported by Rolex. This symposium gives explorers an opportunity to present their discoveries and solutions for creating a healthier planet. At this occasion, the Rolex National Geographic Explorer of the Year is announced. The honour, which Rolex has awarded since 2012, is given to an individual who is a leader in exploration, who illuminates the planet's challenges and inspires others to create a more sustainable future.

OTHER KEY PARTNERSHIPS

THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

Although Rolex officially became a corporate benefactor of the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in London in **2002**, the brand has a long-established association with the body dating back to the 1930s when it began equipping Himalayan expeditions. Over the years, Rolex has supported many historic expeditions, including in 1986 the investigation of the early development of the Wahiba Sands in Oman, its ecosystem and the impact of recent change in the country's deserts. The expedition documented the diversity of terrain, noting 16,000 invertebrates, 200 species of other wildlife and 150 species of native flora.

UNDER THE POLE EXPEDITIONS

Rolex supports the Under The Pole expeditions that push the boundaries of underwater exploration. The inaugural expedition in **2010**, Deepsea Under the Pole by Rolex, created a photographic and film report on the undersea world of the Arctic ice caps near the geographic North Pole. On the Under The Pole – Twilight Zone exploration programme (**2017–2021**), divers and scientists sailed from the Arctic to the Antarctic, by way of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, to explore ecosystems and complete research in marine biology, polar systems and diver physiology. In French Polynesia, they studied the local reef ecosystem, which requires deep, extremely technical diving to the mesophotic zone, a layer of water that lies roughly between 30 and 150 metres below the ocean surface. They also developed and tested a diving capsule that permitted them to stay underwater for extended periods to observe marine life. Their work provided vital information about deep corals and the health of the oceans. They also identified the deepest photosynthetic coral ever found at 172 metres.



The current exploration programme, Under The Pole – Deeplife, is expanding the research conducted in 2021 and will study deep-sea marine animal forests across the globe. The team of explorers and scientists began with two months in Norway’s Svalbard Archipelago in mid-2022, followed by the Canary Islands and the Caribbean, thereby covering Arctic, temperate and tropical oceans.

MONACO BLUE INITIATIVE

Rolex has supported the Monaco Blue Initiative, organized jointly by the Institut Océanographique de Monaco and the Fondation Prince Albert II, since its first edition in 2011. Annually, it brings together scientists, conservationists, government representatives and entrepreneurs to discuss global challenges to ocean protection and preservation. The event takes place during Monaco Ocean Week, also partnered by Rolex, in which the Principality becomes a hub of events and activities around marine conservation for international experts and the public alike.

ONE OCEAN FOUNDATION AND MENKAB

Rolex supports the two Italy-based organizations One Ocean Foundation and Menkab, which strive for the protection of cetacean populations in two important areas of the Mediterranean through acoustic monitoring, visual survey, environmental DNA analysis and education. The Menkab team works in the Ligurian Sea while the One Ocean Foundation’s activities are focused on the Caprera Canyon in Sardinia. Underwater canyons in both areas create optimal feeding grounds for fauna including rare cetacean species.

CORAL GARDENERS

Coral Gardeners was created after a group of young surfers in Mo’orea, French Polynesia, witnessed their local reef bleaching and wanted to take action. Founded in 2017, the organization grows and transplants resilient corals to restore dying reefs, while working to inspire others to act similarly to save coral reefs worldwide. Founder Titouan Bernicot has created an international collective of scientists and advocacy specialists and is scaling up its operations while exporting the organization’s conservation model to other countries.

REWILDING ARGENTINA AND REWILDING CHILE

Thirty years ago, entrepreneurs Kristine and the late Doug Tompkins purchased vast tracts of land in Chile and Argentina for the purpose of “rewilding” them with key local species and set up a process of sustainable management with the support of local communities. In the 2000s, they began to donate the land back to the two governments for the creation of national parks. Their gift inspired the protection of 5.6 million hectares (14 million acres) and 15 parks in the two countries. Today, Rewilding Argentina and Rewilding Chile implement Tompkins Conservation’s strategies as its



offspring organizations. They work with local authorities in their respective countries to protect vast landscapes, including the Iberá National Park, the largest protected natural area in Argentina, and Patagonia National Park in Chile.

FOSTERING TOMORROW'S EXPLORERS

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

In **1974** Rolex began supporting the Our World-Underwater Scholarship Society, a global community of marine professionals dedicated to the oceans. Through this relationship, the company has provided funding for scholarships to young people considering careers in the underwater world.

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.

Rolex also provides support to the Explorers Club's Global Exploration Summit (GLEX) where a wide range of world-leading explorers, from astronauts to biologists, gather annually.

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