

# CORAM JAMES

ART & ANTIQUE VALUERS

## The Rolex Top 10

No other timepiece manufacturer has quite the same global recognition as Rolex. In fact, ask anyone to name the first brand that springs to mind when you say the words 'luxury watch' and it is a rare occurrence to hear anything else.

Of course, the other word most closely associated with Rolex is 'expensive'. That reputation is something the company has cultivated themselves over the years, to a large degree. Although they set out in 1905 making simple, stylish and hardworking wristwatches, these days they have become the ultimate status symbol and mark of exclusivity. Coupled with that is a price tag that can seem daunting.

However, there is a definite case for suggesting Rolex watches are not actually expensive at all in real terms. As well as the designs being aesthetically timeless, the engineering inside them is unsurpassed and, looked after properly, each will last practically forever.

Better yet, in the luxury goods industry, nothing retains its value quite like a Rolex. You could buy one of the more popular models today, wear it for 10-years and sell it on for pretty much what you paid for it—meaning you have worn one of the most desirable watches in the world for free for a decade.

Choose wisely, and several pieces in the catalogue will likely accrue in value. If you are in the market for a new Rolex watch, now is the perfect time to buy. The COVID-19 outbreak has brought production to a halt right across Switzerland, and all the brand's retail outlets have been closed as well. It is thought a price increase will be on the cards when everything starts up again to help recoup some of the losses the global pandemic has caused. But which one? As a starting point, we have put together a list of Rolex's 10 bestselling models, and given you the current value of each. Many Authorized Dealers (ADs) are taking orders online or over the phone although, unfortunately, the massive popularity of the watchmaker means there is likely to be a waiting list in place for many of them.

### The Rolex Submariner

£6,300 (no steel no-date) £7,150 (steel date)

Simply put, the Rolex Submariner is the most famous dive watch ever made. It might also be the most famous watch of any type.



Created in 1953, the current example still has the same basic looks as the originator, something common to most Rolex watches.

The range split in 1967 into two types; a date and no-date version.

Since then, it is the one with the day of the month displayed in its window at the three o'clock, along with the Cyclops magnifying lens over the top, which has been given the far greater options list. Today, it can be had in all yellow gold, all white gold or a blend of gold and steel, known as Rolesor, along with a variety of different colour bezels and dials.

But it is the all-stainless steel models (the only metal available for the no-date watch) which consistently tops the sales charts at Rolex.

Both are incredibly admired, with enough versatility to be worn with everything from a t-shirt and jeans right through to a dinner suit (just ask 007).

The traditional black dial and bezel combination wins out in the popularity stakes overall, closely followed by the green ref. 116610LV—known as The Hulk

### The Rolex Daytona

£10,500 (steel)

For the last 20-years, Rolex's only chronograph, the Daytona, has been the Submariner's closest rival.



Demand has been extraordinary, with waiting lists stretching on endlessly and examples on the preowned market selling for at least twice the official retail price.

Again, it is the stainless steel models everyone wants, and it is not hard to see why. Issued with either a black or white dial, it is a supremely handsome mechanical stopwatch, with the trademark trio of sub dials measuring the elapsed minutes and hours, and the central hand accurate down to 1/8th second.

The starts and stops are operated by the two pushers flanking either side of the winding crown, and all three of the buttons screw tightly down into the case to ensure the watch stays waterproof to 100m.

Also available in each of Rolex's flavours of gold (yellow, white and red—known as Everose) it can even be had in the ultimate luxury of platinum with an ice blue dial, for around £60,000.

## The Rolex GMT - Master II

£7,750 (steel)

The perfect travel companion, the Rolex GMT-Master II is capable of displaying three time zones, thanks to its turnable bezel and additional hour hand.

Another icon in the brand's line-up, the GMT dates all the way back to the 1950s and was developed in conjunction with Pan-Am Airways in an effort to help their pilots fend off jetlag.



These days, the watch is best known for the series of distinctive two-tone colour schemes applied to the rotating surround, each of which is furnished with an affectionate nickname by Rolex fans. It is almost impossible to say which is the most sought-after at the moment, but it will come down to either the red and blue piece (known as the Pepsi, for obvious reasons) or the blue and black (called the Batman).

Both are, again, cast in stainless steel (you'll be starting to see the pattern here!) and, like the Daytona, will require some patience if you want to get to the top of the list at your local retailer.

## The Rolex Datejust

£5,650 - £11,650

One of the longest continually produced ranges in Rolex's history, the Datejust emerged in 1945 to celebrate the brand's 40th year in operation.

The first automatically winding, waterproof wristwatch in history to have a date function, it was a revelation on its release.

Nowadays it is something of the elder statesman in the portfolio, but offered in such a bewildering array of different metal, dial, bezel and bracelet combinations that it can match literally any taste. The all-time classic look remains the Rolesor edition, with a case made of stainless steel and a bezel and winding crown in yellow gold. The bracelet, too, is made up of both, with the precious metal forming the centre links. For many people, it is the archetypal Rolex visual.

As well as the various materials, the Datejust also comes in a choice of sizes, from the 28mm Lady-Datejust, with a 31mm, a 34mm, a 36mm and the recently introduced 41mm completing the collection.

In terms of both elegant style and breadth of selection, there is nothing to beat it.



## The Rolex Air-King

£5,150

Another name which has been in use for generations, the Air-King emerged at the end of the Second World War. It was initially created to commemorate the heroics of the RAF during the Battle of Britain, and these days makes an attractive alternative to the Oyster Perpetual—with all the quality you expect for a relatively small outlay.



The latest version takes plenty of styling cues from the 1940s original, with its retro-inspired logo, and the period-correct, prominent hour markers mean the dial is just about the most legible of any in the collection—essential in a pilot's watch.

Inside though, it is state-of-the-art. The Air-King actually has two cases, a 40mm steel outer case and a second internal one made from soft iron to shield the calibre from magnetic forces, one of the biggest dangers to a mechanical movement.

Only one variant is available, with a high contrast black dial and white markers, but livened up with a green seconds hand and Rolex signature, topped with a yellow coronet emblem. An underappreciated, and undervalued, watch, the Air-King makes a great choice.

## The Rolex Milgauss

£6,650

The Milgauss is something of a cult favourite amongst Rolex fans. It was designed to be used by the world's scientists and technicians, and possesses formidable antimagnetic abilities. It takes its name from the French for 1,000 (*mille*) and gauss, the unit of magnetic flux density, designating just how strong a force it can withstand.



The latest model was released in 2007, following a 20-year hiatus, to coincide with the opening of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN.

Sharing the same double case as the Air-King, the Milgauss is an exclusively steel, 40mm watch, but with two colour schemes.

You can choose either a black dial or what is called the Z-Blue, featuring an electric blue face. Both are covered with a green tinted sapphire crystal, the only one made by any watchmaker.

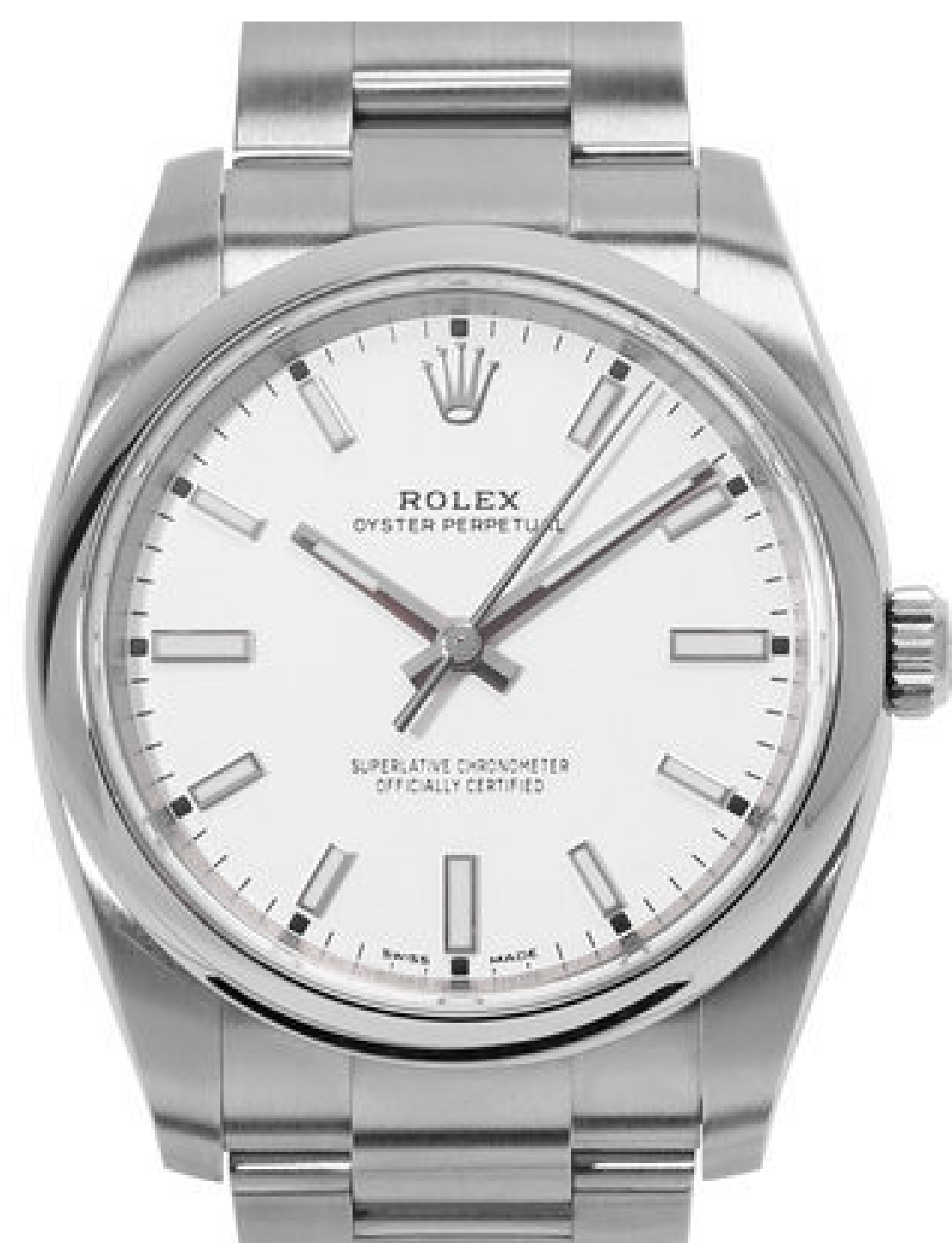
Another detail you will notice is the seconds hand. Shaped like a bright orange lightning bolt, it is a little nod towards its lab-coated target audience.

## The Rolex Oyster Perpetual

£3,900 - £4,500

Restrained and perfectly proportioned, the Rolex Oyster Perpetual is as minimalist as a watch can get.

Often seen as the brand's entry level choice, it has been in production even longer than the Datejust, and these days comes in a total of five sizes.



You can take your pick from a ladies 26mm (the smallest Rolex currently makes), a 31mm, 34mm, 36mm and 39mm. Each is cast only in stainless steel; basic and simple time-only models, with not even a date function to muddy up the symmetry of the dial.

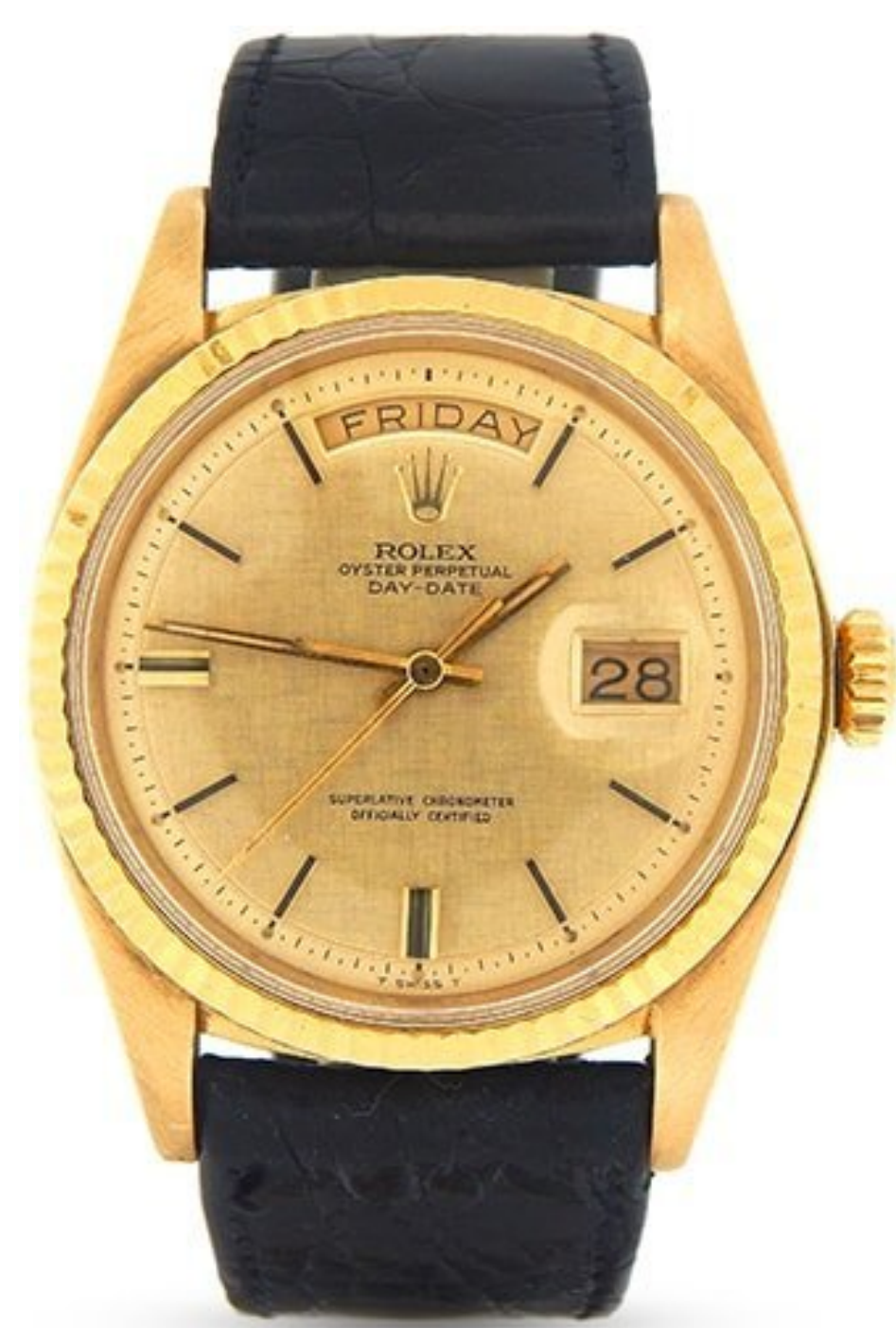
The least expensive of any Rolex, the Oyster Perpetual is also available in a number of different colours and makes either the ideal first purchase in a burgeoning collection, or else is that 'one good watch' to cover all situations.

## The Rolex Day-Date

£26,650 - £115,000

The flagship offering from the most successful watchmakers on the planet, the Rolex Day-Date is something special, and has the price list to prove it.

Sometimes better known as the President, it got its nickname from its association with the most powerful figures of the 20th century, including a number of world leaders.



Unashamedly superior, it has only ever been made from either solid gold or shimmering platinum, and sits most often on a supple three-link bracelet created especially for it, officially called (confusingly) the President.

Like the Datejust, it has an extensive number of possible configurations and, similarly, can be subtly understated or a flamboyant grandstander. Diamonds and other gemstones play a more prominent role in the Day-Date's options, but it is only made in two sizes; 36mm and a newer 40mm.

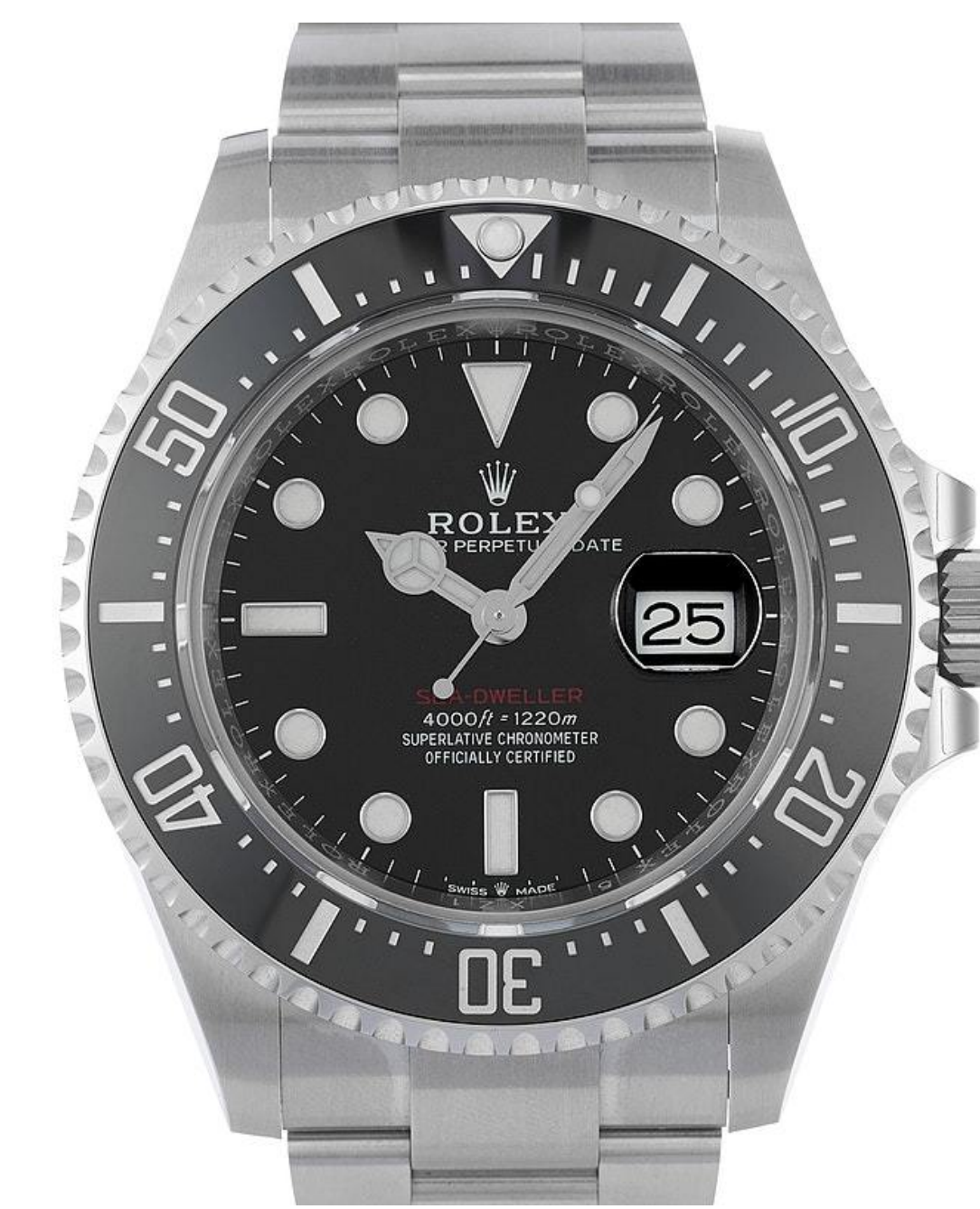
The best from the best, the most basic model will still set you back more than £26,000, while the diamond-encrusted, platinum-cased top-of-the-line piece is comfortably into six figures.

## The Rolex Sea-Dweller

£9,300 (steel)- £13,300 (Rolesor)

The big brother to the Submariner, and middle child of Rolex's diver trio, the Sea-Dweller is a massively capable watch.

Developed originally in 1967, it was made for the world of professional saturation divers, and the current model is waterproof to an incredible 4,000ft.



Between that performance and its robust good looks, it could well be the best blend of style and substance the brand offers.

It is the largest of all the pieces on this list at 43mm, and now comes in two variants. The all-stainless steel watch is the archetypal Sea-Dweller, complete with the line of red text on the black dial that harks back to classic versions from the past. But last year a Rolesor alternative was released, with yellow gold accents on the bezel, crown and bracelet that gave a real touch of extravagance to the once toughest of tool watches. As one of the greatest all-rounders, the Sea-Dweller is hard to beat.

## The Rolex Yacht-Master

£9,000 - £37,850

Launched in 1992, the Yacht-Master is among the newer watches from Rolex. It was originally intended to replace the venerable Submariner, but was instead released as an entity in its own right. The look of the two nautically-themed models is very similar, with the Yacht-Master given slightly softer lines and a more opulent bearing.



It is another watch with plenty of variety. It can be had as a 37mm piece, a 40mm or the latest 42mm. Metals are also kept exclusive, with plenty of gold throughout the range, and even the stainless steel version is topped with a platinum bezel (a mixture Rolex dubs Rolesium).

What's more, it was the Yacht-Master chosen to debut the brand's first ever rubber strap, called the Oysterflex. Featuring a nickel/titanium core covered with a high-tech polymer, it is an especially comfortable and hardwearing addition and brings an essential sportiness to the model.

A timepiece that is becoming more and more popular every year, the Yacht-Master makes a particularly tempting target.

That is our list of the bestselling Rolex watches at the moment. As you will have seen, it is the steel sports models which are the most in demand, and they can make a great investment alternative.

But the most important advice is to buy the watch you love, one you will continue to enjoy for years and maybe hand down to future generations.



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