



In time

Voyage In the sea History

Having been master watchmaker to Louis XVI since 1770, Ferdinand Berthoud embarked five of his “n°7” Marine Chronographs to support one of the most audacious maritime exploration campaigns of that time. Now the brand has reinterpreted his work in the 1785 edition consisting of five unique examples of the FB 1R Chronometer.

With the contribution of ©Ferdinand Berthoud





Voyage in the sea history

Ferdinand Berthoud, originally from Val-de-Travers, harnessed his genius to create one of the finest stories in luxury watchmaking. From the accolades awarded by the Royal Academy, which saw him as a prominent star, to the indissoluble link between his chronometers and the sea that have measured the time of some of the most exciting adventures of the Real Marina dedicated to exploring new worlds.

Having been master watchmaker to Louis XVI since 1770, the King of France entrusted him with the task of using his measuring instruments to support one of the most audacious maritime exploration campaigns that France had ever undertaken during that period.

In 1785, he had the privilege of embarking five of his “n°7” Marine Chronographs to support the explorations of Jean-François de Galaup, one of the most illustrious explorers in France at the time, with the intent of scouring the Pacific with two frigates, L’Astrolabe and La Boussole. A voyage with 220 officers, scientists and sailors on board, ready to sail around the globe to complete its cartography and continue the exploration of the Pacific

Ocean in search of what was not yet known, making use of tools of the time. This included Ferdinand Berthoud’s marine chronometers and a few other instruments available, such as the sextant made by Mercier and loaned to Lapérouse by the Royal Naval Academy for scientific observations during his expedition with the La Boussole frigate.

During the voyage, which lasted two and a half years, Lapérouse and his men crossed the Atlantic from the north and the south, passing Cape Horn by plunging into the Pacific Ocean up to Alaska, touching the Hawaiian Islands. Then, crossing the largest ocean in the world, they dropped anchor in Macao and went back up the Chinese coast before descending towards the South Pacific, passing by the Tonga Islands. A few months after having stopped off in Australia, in March 1788, all traces of the vessels were lost between the Solomon Islands and the Vanuatu archipelago.

Searches and attempts to help amounted to nothing. A few survivors remained to tell the tale of the end of a great adventure cut short by a storm that shipwrecked the vessels. L’Astrolabe ran aground off Vanikoro, in the archipelago of the islands of Santa Cruz, while La Boussole sank,



marking the end of the adventurous dream of those brave explorers who made their contribution to seeing the world with different eyes.

Over the centuries, the area has attracted attention with continuous underwater explorations and with great joy, some findings came to light in 2015 in Vanikoro, including a bronze sextant, rusty but still intact after 217 years.

It is these very colours that provide the main source of technical and aesthetic inspiration for the reinterpreted work in the 1785 edition, consisting of five unique examples of the FB 1R Chronometer, as well as those five Ferdinand Berthoud n°7 marine clocks.

Numbered from FB 1R.5-1 to FB 1R.5-5, each comes in a different colour which, thanks to the special finishing of the bronze, makes each of them one-of-a-kind, testifying to the unique nature of marine instruments and the signs of time. And today, each one has been brought back to life with the same passion using a modern and safe manufacturing technique performed by careful expert hands.

One of the characteristics that makes the Ferdinand Berthoud timepiece special was his vision of changing the operating principles of longitudinal clocks by using

an unusual display. The regulators indicated hours, minutes and seconds in different positions while a large central hand with an FB-T.F.C.R-2 calibre was used on the FB dial, which makes one think of measuring instruments at sea. The marine chronometers and the sextant, in fact, were the only way available for calculating longitude and successfully completing expeditions.

This calibre is one of the rare few to feature a fusée and chain transmission, the oldest solution in order to obtain a constant force at the level of the escapement, which acts like an automatic reduction gear box. Depending on the state-of-wind, in fact, the torque delivered from the barrel varies.

The case features two bronze side shafts which give it its characteristic octagonal shape. The sides have two portholes at 2 o'clock and 11 o'clock, providing a chance to admire the fusée and chain transmission mechanism in action. These two openings are complemented by the glare-proof sapphire crystal case-back, affording a pleasing glimpse of the movement finishing. The knurled bronze crown featuring a titanium medallion ensures smooth winding after the 53-hour power reserve. Each of these pieces is engraved



with the inscription “Chronomètre Val-De-Travers Suisse”, testifying to its origins and above all, its identity.

The main components of this chronometer with tourbillon and constant force transmission correspond to a rationale of excellence in the scientific progress of measuring time at sea in line with the philosophy of Ferdinand Berthoud, whose works help to understand the forward-thinking interpretation of time and can once again be admired today.

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