# Luxury watchmakers embrace sustainability to protect the planet



In recent years, sustainability has risen as a prominent concern within the luxury watchmaking industry. Traditionally focused on endurance and meticulous craftsmanship, watch brands have often overlooked environmental impact in their production and operations. However, rising consumer demand for responsible practices has spurred several pioneering firms to integrate eco-conscious measures deeply into their business models. These companies are redefining luxury watchmaking by proving that it can coexist with authentic environmental stewardship.

One such leader is Swiss watchmaker Oris, which has committed itself to ocean conservation through its purpose-driven watch collections. The Oris Ocean Trilogy series supports marine protection organisations including Pacific Garbage Screening and Whale and Dolphin Conservation. Its latest Clean Ocean Limited Edition features a caseback medallion made from recycled PET plastic and ships in packaging derived from algae and recycled plastics. Rolf Studer, Oris's Joint Chief Executive, describes this model as “a symbol of our commitment to ridding the world’s oceans of plastic.” Oris goes beyond product-focused initiatives by backing coral restoration projects on Australia’s Great Barrier Reef and linking customer purchases directly to tangible environmental outcomes.

Italian brand Panerai has developed what it describes as possibly the most sustainable watch ever created, the Submersible eLAB-ID. Crafted from 98.6% recycled materials, including recycled EcoTitanium for the case and movement components, and fully recycled Super-LumiNova on hands and indices, it represents a novel approach to luxury watchmaking based on reuse. Panerai CEO Jean-Marc Pontroué remarked, “What is the point of creating the most beautiful timepiece imaginable if we know this will have a negative impact on the planet?” The company has pursued an open-source philosophy, inviting other watchmakers to collaborate with shared suppliers for recycled materials. “Acting alone won’t save the world,” Pontroué said.

IWC Schaffhausen has taken a comprehensive approach to sustainability by integrating environmental responsibility into all facets of its operations. The brand’s manufacturing facility operates entirely on energy from renewable sources such as solar panels, leading to a significant reduction in its ecological footprint. IWC transparently publishes detailed sustainability reports highlighting its ongoing progress and goals. A company statement summarises this commitment as “a journey [that] signifies our forward-thinking and long-term vision – thinking beyond our time.” This holistic methodology encompasses not just product materials but all stages of manufacturing and lifecycle impact.

Breitling has innovated particularly in reducing the environmental impact of watch packaging. Traditional watch boxes, often large and made from wood, contribute notably to carbon emissions. Under CEO Georges Kern’s leadership, Breitling developed a flat-pack packaging solution constructed entirely from recycled plastic bottles. This redesign has slashed shipping weight and volume by over 60%, substantially lowering transportation emissions. Kern explained, “We started working on a sustainable packaging concept with the goal of optimizing the impact on the environment, and the result has exceeded our ambitions.” The company also offers the option to choose conventional boxes if desired, linked to a donation supporting global urban forest initiatives.

A different model of sustainability integration comes from French microbrand Awake, founded in 2018 by Lilian Thibault with a vision rooted in legacy and future generations. Thibault explains, “As my kids are growing older, I’ve started to think more and more about the legacy that will be left behind for them.” Awake’s initial collection, Origins, incorporated recycled stainless steel cases and straps made from plastic waste. Its innovative use of recycled aerospace-grade titanium earned recognition at the 2021 NASA Mission to Earth project. Additionally, Awake produced bespoke timepieces featuring ancient Vietnamese Son Mai lacquer techniques for 100 global leaders at the G7 Summit addressing climate change, an initiative that caught the attention of French President Emmanuel Macron. Positioned as a brand with sustainability embedded from inception, Awake shows how environmental responsibility can be core to design and ethos, rather than retrofitted.

As sustainability claims have become more prevalent across the watch industry, evaluating their authenticity has gained importance. The Manual highlights several criteria for assessing the credibility of ecological commitments, including transparency about material composition, verifiable certifications from independent bodies like the Responsible Jewellery Council, company-wide sustainability strategies beyond individual products, measurable environmental targets, and candid communication of challenges faced.

In summary, the forward-thinking practices of brands like Oris, Panerai, IWC Schaffhausen, Breitling, and Awake showcase how luxury watchmaking is evolving to meet environmental imperatives. By embedding sustainability into materials, manufacturing, packaging, and corporate philosophy, these companies demonstrate that exquisite craftsmanship and ecological responsibility can advance together. Considering the watch industry’s long-term historical perspective, integrating environmental impact awareness aligns both with business prudence and the legacy these timepieces represent.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://time.com/6265889/luxury-watches-sustainability/> - Supports the claim about Oris's commitment to ocean conservation, its climate neutrality since 2021, collaborations with marine protection organizations, and use of recycled materials in collections like the Clean Ocean Limited Edition.
* <https://www.watchtime.com/featured/how-green-is-my-watch-how-watch-brands-are-embracing-sustainability/> - Confirms IWC Schaffhausen's use of 100% renewable energy at its manufacturing center and transparent sustainability reporting, reflecting its holistic integration of environmental responsibility.
* <https://www.bobswatches.com/luxury-watches/best-eco-friendly-watches> - Demonstrates the trend of sustainable luxury watchmaking by highlighting eco-conscious manufacturing methods and materials, aligning with the article’s coverage of brands innovating in sustainable production.
* <https://zeitwatches.com/blogs/news/sustainable-luxury-watches-how-rolex-richard-mille-patek-philippe-audemars-piguet-and-cartier-are-leading-in-eco-friendly-practices> - Supports the importance of sustainability in the luxury watch industry and exemplifies broader brand commitments to eco-friendly practices, supporting the article's context about industry-wide sustainability movement.
* <https://triwa.com/blogs/triwa-blog/the-ultimate-guide-to-sustainable-watch-brands-timeless-style-without-compromise> - Provides additional context on microbrands and emerging companies like Awake that focus on sustainability from inception, including use of recycled metals and eco-conscious design, consistent with the article's claims.