



# FROM LE BRASSUS TO THE MIDDLE EAST: AUDEMARS PIGUET

By Cassidy Hazelbaker



Switzerland is the home country to many of the world’s most prestigious watch brands. It seems the serene lakes, flower-filled meadows and pine-covered mountains of the country are the ideal setting to develop the grand complications found in haute horlogerie. For fine watchmaker Audemars Piguet, however, its link to the country runs even deeper. Cassidy Hazelbaker examines the past and present of Audemars Piguet.

Nestled in a beautiful corner of the Joux Valley, not far from the French border, lies the small town of Le Brassus. “It feels like an enchanted, mystical valley,” says Tim Sayler, Chief Marketing Officer of Audemars Piguet. The valley’s climate and conditions were not conducive to agriculture, so early inhabitants were forced to develop a craft to earn a living given that farming was not sustainable. Inhabitants of Le Brassus began working with metal, which, over time, developed into watch making. Many local residents are master

watchmakers; the profession has been passed down from generation to generation in the town and thus the art of horlogerie has become inextricably intertwined with Le Brassus.

It is from this atmosphere that in 1875 Jules Louis Audemars and Edward Auguste Piguet established Audemars Piguet in order to further their passion for complex timepieces. The founding families still directly operate the brand, which enables the company to retain its independence and unique vision. “Audemars

Piguet’s location in Le Brassus has a huge impact on nearly everything we do. The place is a part of the company; it is part of the history, part of the value, and part of the craftsmanship. Even the corporate catalogue is a deep green, which is a reflection of the nature and the forest,” says Sayler. It is the company’s origins, heritage and inspiration that are drawn from Le Brassus’ surroundings that differentiate it from other brands. “While we have this great history and heritage, we are forward thinking, progressive and contemporary,” he adds. “Audemars Piguet is inspired by the past, but always wants to look towards the future.”

## FOR LADIES, PAST AND PRESENT

Though Audemars Piguet is often thought of as a brand for men, it has a long-standing history of women’s timepieces. Its first watch for women was created in 1883, just eight years after the launch of the brand. At the time, it was not considered socially appropriate for a woman to wear a wristwatch, thus Audemars Piguet



designed brooch and pendant timepieces. For these pieces, very small movements of less than 23 mm were developed. The traditional roles of women were challenged during the First World War as they stepped in to fill the gap in many work places while the men were away. Audemars Piguet’s first wristwatches for women were developed in 1913, and were mostly miniature unique Art Deco pieces set with gems.

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Tim Sayler

## AUDEMARS PIGUET IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In 1982, Audemars Piguet established a partnership with Ahmed Seddiqi and Sons. The brand’s presence in the Middle East has been growing ever since. There are currently seven boutiques in the region, making it the region with the strongest presence for the brand. “As a luxury brand we are driven by elegance and craftsmanship but also characterized by a strong character. Both men and women from the Middle East have a passion for this aspect of the brand and our products. Middle Eastern clients tend to go for bold, architectural pieces,” says Sayler.

When asked about the brand’s female clientele, Sayler declares, “Middle Eastern ladies love diamonds!” Audemars Piguet is one of the few watch brands who ensure that their products feature exclusively internally flawless diamonds, which reinforces their dedication to extreme quality.

## GIVING BACK

The Audemars Piguet Foundation was started in 1992. The foundation draws back to the company’s roots in

Le Brassus, where the beautiful forest is enjoyed and appreciated by the local community. “The founding family wanted to enable other people worldwide to also be so fortunate to experience and preserve nature,” explains Sayler. The foundation supports global forest conservation and sustainable development around the world. While encouraging reforestation, it also promotes an educational angle so that future generations will understand the importance of nature to our rapidly changing planet. So far, it has financed 75 projects in 34 countries in collaboration with renowned organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund. Each watch sold contributes to the foundation’s funding.

Audemars Piguet is a unique brand; each of its watches constitutes part of the larger story. “Audemars Piguet is for people who want to wear their watches, not store them in a safe,” concludes Sayler. With products which are elegant and fashionable externally, precisely engineered internally, and contribute to an environmentally responsible cause, the brand has no place but on the wrists of its loyal clients. From a small Swiss town to glamorous capital cities around the world, an Audemars Piguet timepiece is a reliable accessory in any setting. ♦

*Opposite Page: A master watchmaker examines a timepiece-in-progress.  
Above Left: An assortment of classic antique Audemars Piguet women’s timepieces.  
Above Right: Winter in Le Brassus.  
Left: Royal Oak Ladies’ Timepiece.*

All images courtesy Audemars Piguet.  
For more information visit [audemarspiguet.com](http://audemarspiguet.com)

