

Omega Constellation de Luxe Models

De Luxe is a word that crops up regularly in vintage Omega watch nomenclature. Not to be confused with "Deluxe Finish", which pertained mainly to the cosmetic appearance of earlier movements, Omega Constellation de Luxe watches were a cut above the ordinary models but ranked lower than the exquisite Constellation Grand Luxe.

The standard for an Omega Constellation de Luxe up until the introduction of the Gerard Genta designed C-Shape is a case made from precious metal, either 18 karat gold or platinum. While all gold dials are not de Luxe models, all de Luxe models have gold dials and they're usually finished in a similar fashion.

First Generation

The first de Luxe dial Constellation pair was the screw-in case back 2699 Pie Pan and its sister press-in case back model 2700. Strangely, even though the Omega Vintage Database lists model 2700, it does not list case 2699.

Introduced in late 1952, de Luxe versions of case 2699 and 2700 featured both the famous Cloisonné Observatory dial and the arrowhead marker solid gold Pie Pan dial. Shown opposite are two examples that appeared in the screw-in case back model 2699. Both of these versions were powered by calibre 354 movements and there are confirmed instances of the 2700 featuring calibre 352 RG movements.

The first solid gold non-cloisonné case 2699 dial established a standard of dial design and finish that lasted for over fifteen years. The flat plane of the solid gold dial was lightly 'brush finished', over which the upper case printing and Constellation lettering was embossed. 'Swiss' and 'Made' appeared between the six 'o clock marker. The pie pan facets were highly polished and when combined with the solid gold faceted markers offered a gleaming contrast to the brushed dial plane. Finally, a coating of lacquer was applied over the dial before the solid gold markers were hand riveted.

The gold dauphine minute hand marginally overreached the inner perimeters of the chapter ring, as did the centre second sweep.





To men who want the
finest watch
that man
can make...

You've dreamed of owning the watch
that crowns your own success ... the

Constellation de Luxe

You'll thrill to all its famous features: self winding, shock protected, anti-magnetic -- strap it on and forget it!... Officially certified as a chronometer that has passed exhaustive government precision tests "with especially good results" ...

Plus -- its extra heavy 18 K solid gold case, solid gold dial, hands and figures -- delivered in an exquisite presentation box of sterling silver. The supreme mark of recognition for outstanding services -- an outstanding timepiece -- the finest watch that man can make.



Engraved on the back of your Constellation's case is the symbol of Omega's famous records for precision... the most coveted- international observatory awards. Since 1943 the world's leading watches have competed in Geneva Observatory's annual contest for wrist watch accuracy. Out of eight consecutive contests, six have been won by Omega... Your guarantee of consistent perfection

Optionally Available in waterproof case

OMEGA

Constellation de Luxe



THE WORLD HAS LEARNED TO TRUST OMEGA * Some day you'll own one

Omega Advertisement from 1953: Case 2699, powered by calibre 354 accessorised by a solid gold Milanese bracelet and silver Jezler box.



Model 2799 with Milanese bracelet and accompanying Jezler Silver box. The first Deluxe to feature the "O-Ring" gasket.
Photograph courtesy of Omega Museum

The case on the earlier models included lyre-shaped lugs, the outer curve of which was slightly more in alignment with the case at the case join. The case middle plumped out from the double bevelled bezel. The case back was highlighted by a hand engraved and hand finished Geneva Observatory emblem with a delicately cross-hatched night sky. Hand-finishing of this meticulousness and quality was the hallmark of all gold Omega cases. Conversely, a cast gold medallion seated into the case back was used with the normal range of steel or gold-capped models.

O-Ring Update

De Luxe models 2699 and 2700 were replaced in 1954 by press-in case 2799, the first 'waterproof' and fully dust-proof de Luxe model. This case, again with double bevelled bezel, had more protruding lyre-shaped lugs but was almost identical to the earlier de Luxe models. The main exception was that the 2799 had the honour of being the first de Luxe model to feature the O-Ring rubber based gasket between the press-in case back and case.

Again, this model offered as an option both the silver presentation box and Milanese bracelet. Model 2799 continued to be promoted internationally as the Constellation de Luxe until late in 1956.



Model 2782

It should be noted that case 2782 (seen opposite with an 18K pie pan dial) is not designated as a de Luxe model in the Omega Vintage Database. As far as I can establish, it was not promoted through advertising as part of the Constellation de Luxe collection either. However, I have confirmed that some models did indeed have "de Luxe" solid gold dial in the 18k gold case version. This screw-in case back model with O-Ring may well have been promoted at the retail end as the screw-in version of the 2799 model.

Not all 18k case 2782 models sported a solid gold dial and usually had either an ivory pie pan dial or a domed two tone dial. A range of dial types were available for the 18k, 14k and stainless steel versions.

So, essentially, the 2782 is not a de Luxe model. If, for example, a fastidious collector decided to collect all Omega de Luxe models, it would be debatable whether s/he would choose to include the 2782, because it was a multi-purpose model and not strictly part of the de Luxe family.

Second Generation

Superseding the 2799, the first of the new calibre 501 de Luxe models reached the market in early 1957 carrying the case number 2853. Most features of the earlier models were duplicated in this press-in case back model.

Seen opposite in an US advertisement from 1957 is the 2853 with a solid gold semi-extending bracelet with flat links, a spectacularly modern bracelet that was copied for Seamaster and other solid gold creations in the later 1960s. As with earlier 'O-Ring' cases, the outer case back featured the word "Constellation" engraved above the observatory roof on the rim of the case back the word "Waterproof" engraved on the rim near six o'clock.

As mentioned above, case 2853 was powered in the earlier versions by the calibre 501. In later models the 24 jewel Calibre 505 supplied the power.

In collecting the early 500 series of calibres in this case number, an astute collector would in the first instance choose to acquire both calibre 501 and 505 versions of the deluxe dial. Calibre 501 models are quite uncommon because of the progression from 19 jewelled 501 to the 24 jewelled 505 occurring over an eighteen month period.

One of the most uncommon, bordering on rare, variations of the 2853 was the 18k stepped pie pan dial, a dial most often seen in the Constellation Grand Luxe collection. At this time Omega appeared to be a little more generous with this dial style and it can also be seen on the very rare Seamaster calibre 503 model 2849.



Constellation
de Luxe

The supreme mark of recognition for outstanding performance or accomplishments in commercial or professional fields.

All the technical perfection of the Constellation . . . plus a specially modeled case of extra heavy 18 K. solid gold with solid gold dial, hands and figures. The de luxe model is delivered in an exquisite presentation box of sterling silver.



Calibre 505 case 2853 with stepped solid gold Pie Pan dial

The first calendar model in the Constellation range, the calibre 504, was also given the de Luxe treatment in model 2954 (seen opposite - courtesy Omega Museum). This is not to be confused with the solid gold case 2943 that featured a solid gold dial with gold index markers and onyx inserts. While such dials may be described as de Luxe, the 2943 is not a bona fide member of the Constellation de Luxe family

The Mid-500 Series



The calibre 551 edition of the de Luxe series came in case 14382, seen opposite in rose gold.

The case backs on these models were often styled 14381 82, thus allowing better inventory control by sharing a case back between the non-deluxe 14381 and the de Luxe version 14382.

The Omega Vintage Database does not have a listing for model 14382, but this is simply an illustration of the incompleteness of the database.

The calibre 551 de Luxe came in both 18 karat pink and 18 karat gold. The more common dial was the polished faceted pie pan model shown opposite. In life, the contrast between the polished facets and the grained dial centre create an impressive effect. This is especially so in the rose gold versions.



This model also signalled one of the last appearances of the magnificent stepped pie pan dial as shown opposite. Often seen in Grand Luxe models, the stepped pie pan allowed for incredible plays of light on the dial and exuded conspicuous opulence. The stepped pie pan version of the 14382 is rarely seen and can be considered uncommon.

As with other earlier mid-500 series models, the upper case "officially Certified" script is not present, the reasons for this being lost in time.

Three models powered by calibre 561, were promoted by Omega as de Luxe models.

The first of the calibre 561 de Luxe editions was model 14394, shown opposite, courtesy John Goldberger. Sharing strikingly similar dial livery to the earlier calibre 504 gold dial models, this model is, in my opinion, one of the more aggressive de Luxe models. The heart of this design is the deeply chamfered bezel and strong protruding lyre-shaped lugs framing a relatively uncomplicated dome-shaped dial with the chapter ring at the extremities of the dial.

The model opposite is relatively uncommon as it was basically a calibre 561 version of the earlier Constellation design phase. Part of the Constellation collection for less than 12 months, it was replaced by more contemporary designs, including the famous dog-leg lugged models designed by Gerard Genta.

Model 168.006 was the first of the third design phase de Luxe models. The tradition of finishing solid gold de Luxe dials was continued in this new case style. Featuring the classic pie pan dial with refined index markers and complimented with onyx inlays, the pie pan facets were grain finished in contrast with the highly polished facets of earlier models.

This is a stunning model on the wrist, and while a similar size (34.5mm) as the earlier de Luxe models, it appears deceptively larger, possibly because of the flat bezel with a slight bevel on the rim and, of course, the lug shape. This model will have stamped on the inner case back 168.005/6, it sharing a case back with other non-de Luxe versions of this famous case style.





Shown above is model 168.014, the semi hidden crown de Luxe edition of the case 168.004. This model continued the design slate of the 168.006 with the brush finished inner dial, chapter ring touching the pie pan facets, with the outer dial, being of a grained or matt finish and hosting solid gold index markers with onyx inserts.

The 168.014 was, essentially, the last of the Constellation de Luxe models, however the monocoque case 168.025 in 18k did house a de Luxe dialled version in the 18k collection.

Shown opposite is the movement removed from the case with an updated finish on the dial, more deeply machined to reflect contemporary tastes. This is also the

first piepan dial to feature OM (denoting O'r Massif) at six o'clock advertising the precious metal content of the dial.

De Luxe No More

At the onset of the third design phase in the Omega Constellation the de Luxe concept had clearly had its day. The nearest any C-Shape came to be invited into the de Luxe family was the solid C-Shape with the 18k silky guilloché dial accessorised by a machined Milanese bracelet and advertised in the U.S. for a time as the Omega Constellation "Ultima".

Seen opposite (courtesy Omega Museum) these models also continued the practice of identifying the 18k dial metal content with the embossing of OM on either side of Swiss Made at 6 o'clock.

Summary

From the inception of the Constellation range, Omega established a three tier system of luxury and finish. Sitting at the head of the Constellation family was the ultimate in indulgence, the Grand Luxe. The de Luxe sat between the more accessible range of gold, gold-capped and stainless steel Constellations, a very expensive timepiece never-the-less in its day.

