

Moon Phase Watches

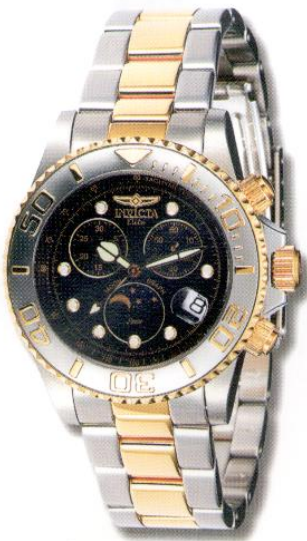
In this issue we will talk a bit about the cycle of the moon, measuring this cycle and, of course, some moon phase watches.



Pretty much since the beginning of life on earth, the moon has been the last word in measuring the natural time cycle. The tides, the flowering of plants, and more things than I care to guess at (*Werewolves? Romantic desire? Swiss watch purchases?*) are governed by the rhythms of the moon. Waaaay back in ancient Babylon, an astronomer named Kidinnu observed that the average cycle of the moon (*or lunation – I'm not kidding, look it up*) is just a bit longer than 29.5 days. With our modern scientific measuring ability, we know that the mean lunation is 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes and 2.9 seconds. Hmmmmm, I'd say that old Kidinnu was pretty close. Lots of "timekeeping" history is based on the moon, the original meaning of the word "month" was the time it took the moon to complete one orbit around the Earth. This is, of course, not strictly speaking true in our modern sense of the word. If it were, there would be 354 days in the year. This would create a major problem as, at some point, the football, baseball, hockey, basketball and Sumo seasons would all occur at the same time. Think what this would do to the primetime television schedule. On to tracking the moon from a device on one's wrist.



For starters, I am **not** talking about watches that display night and day or "sun" and "moon" by means of a subdial or wheel. This AM/PM feature is nice, and simple to execute, but it is **not** a "moon phase" watch. Back to our 29.5 days. This passage of time can be readily approximated by the motion of a wheel with 59 teeth. As you have probably guessed, this is actually **two** cycles of 29.5 days (*yes, you're very clever*) so two little "moon" disks must be painted/applied to the 59 tooth wheel. On the face of the watch, an opening must be cut in the dial such that only one of the two "moons" is visible at any given time. To give a (*fairly*) accurate indication of the current phase of the moon, this wheel must be advanced by one tooth every day. This is by far the most commonly used method for displaying moon phase in a wristwatch. As you are no doubt thinking, this means that your moon phase watch would be "off" by one full day every 2 and ½ years (*yes, you're really very clever*). There are watches that take this discrepancy into account and make provision for it, such as the Patek Philippe reference 5054. It will be 122 years and 45 days before the moon phase display on this watch needs to be adjusted. It's a bit pricey though. Nope, don't even think of asking..... OK, it's about \$21,000. Not bad really, as far as Patek Philippe's are concerned.



So how about something a little more realistic in price? There are many brands that offer moon phase watches in both quartz and mechanical movements. I am fairly fond of the Invicta Swiss Elites which have a 29.5 day moon phase display and chronograph functions in a Swiss quartz watch. The quality is very good and the price is affordable at \$255.00. The moon phase indicator was a popular complication in older watches and I frequently get vintage pieces that have very cool moon phase displays. As always, I am only too happy to search out a little something that will be just what you're looking for. You have but to ask.

Once you have a moon phase watch, how about setting it? The procedure varies from watch to watch, but most newer models adjust from the same stem position as the date, just in the opposite direction. For example, if you pull the crown out to the first stem position (*click*) and turning it anti-clockwise advances the date, then it's likely that turning it clockwise will advance the moon phase display. There is a good website for finding out the current phase of the moon, just click on the picture below.



That's about it for this time, thanks for your feedback on these emails. It is ***your input*** that drives the content of these messages as well as the content and offerings of our websites. Thanks again for your ongoing support.

David Harrington