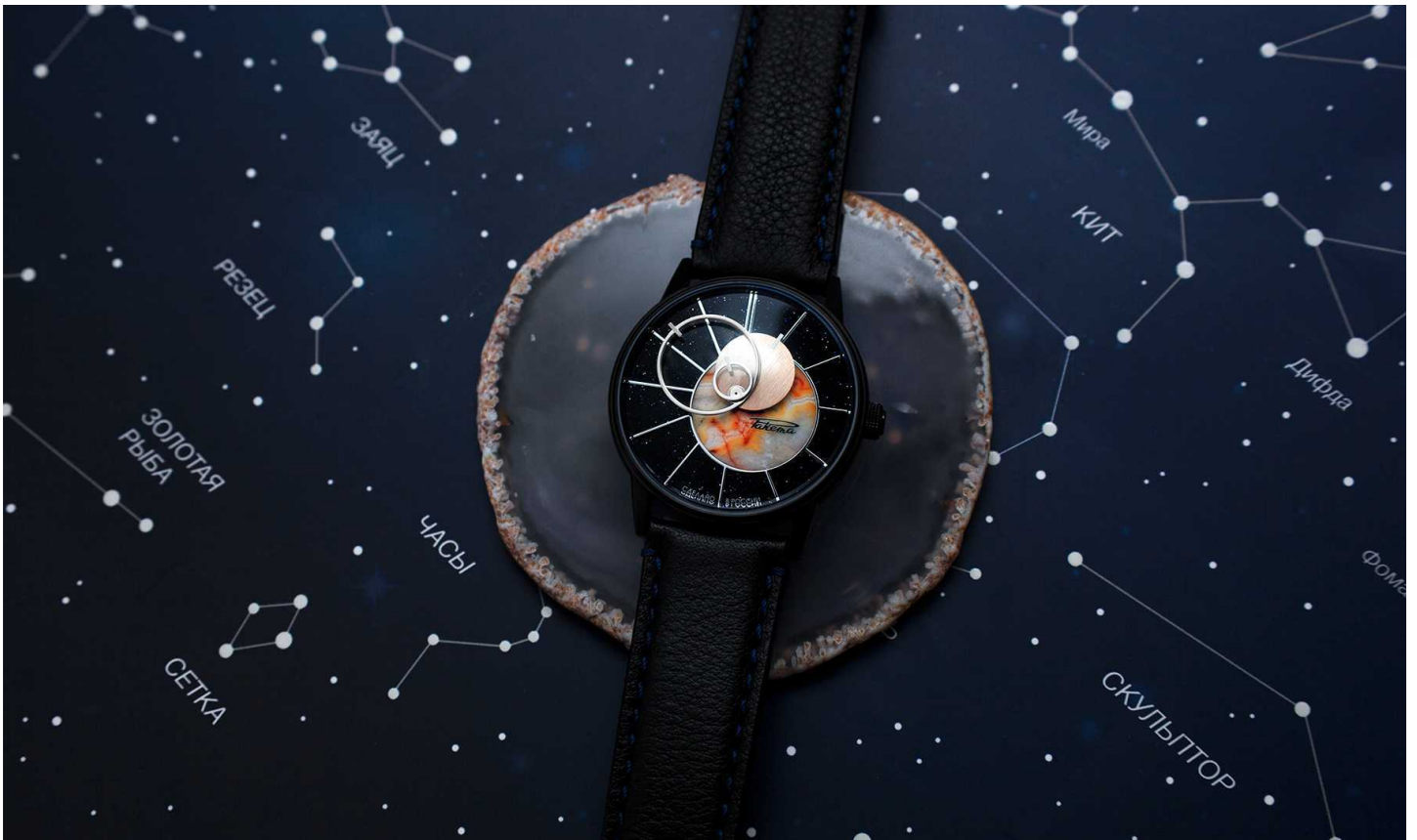


Raketa Copernicus: a watch inspired by Yuri Gagarin and space flight

Russian watchmaker Raketa may not be a household name in the UK, but its long history and ties to the space industry make its latest watch the Raketa Copernicus a worldly wonder



THE WORLD IS full of great watchmaking nations. The Swiss and the Germans are obviously the home of haute horlogerie, while Japan, France, USA Great Britain each have their own rich history of creating impressive timing instruments. Indeed, so deep is our knowledge of some of the most renowned on the planet that us watch geeks can recite the story of a popular model from its origin to the present day. Yet, for even the most ardent horophiles there blindspots.

One country that perhaps doesn't immediately come to mind when thinking of watchmaking is Russia, and yet hidden behind the Iron Curtain has existed fascinating history to rival many of the nations mentioned above. Raketa is one of the most popular brands in Russian watchmaking and has a history that some of the oldest brands on the planet.

According to its official website, Raketa was founded in 1721 by decree of Emperor Peter the Great. Then known as the Imperial Peterhof Factory, its main business was on lapidary – cutting and polishing stones, such as the diamonds found in the Great Imperial Crown (created in 1762) – and providing various stonework elements of cathedrals and fountains. However, it wasn't until 1945 that the Imperial Peterhof Factory transitioned into a watchmaking facility.

In honour of the end of World War II, it created the Pobeda ("victory" in Russian) watch by order of the Kremlin – a charming timepiece similar in style and execution to the "Dirty Dozen" military watches we celebrate today.

Raketa, meaning 'rocket', celebrated one of the greatest Russian achievements: the first manned space flight by famous cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin

By the 1950s the factory had rebranded as the Petrodvorets Watch Factory, and in 1961 the world was first introduced to the Raketa watch brand. Translated into English to 'rocket', Raketa celebrated another great Russian achievement: the first manned space flight by famous cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin.

These days Raketa is best known for creating elegantly designed, durable timepieces that aren't so much built for the harshness of space, but inspired by foray into the great unknown.

The Raketa Copernicus, featured here, is a quirky automatic watch that features three planets (the three hands on the dial) turning around the sun against a backdrop of stars sparkling in space. Why Copernicus? The design is inspired by Copernicus' 16th century discovery that the sun lies at the centre of the system, and all the planets revolve around it. It's a novel design, but one that conjures the whimsy of the early days of the Space Race.

When Soviet Raketa designers first created the Copernicus model, they intended the big circle (minute hand) to symbolise the Earth and the intermediate (hour hand) to symbolise Jupiter – due to the fact the Earth orbits the sun in one year and Jupiter every 12 years: exactly the same ratio as between the minute hand and the hour hand 'orbiting' the dial.

This new limited-edition iteration of just 300 pieces features a beautiful dark blue aventurine dial to represent the starry background, and a round yellow agate depicting the sun. It's finished with a black PVD watch case, and engravings of stars and planets on the automatic bridge.

€1,290 EUR (without VAT). For more information, see raketa.com

