



CRIKEY, IS THAT THE TIMES?

Buying a Christmas present for the person who has everything never gets any easier but, even if your "problem" happens to be in the private-jet league, a new watch may be the answer to the perennial gift-giving conundrum.

In fact, those who live their lives at jet speed are exactly the people for whom Mike Vogt's Vogard Timezoner watches are intended, because they offer a long-awaited alternative to the fiddle and faff normally associated with resetting wrist-wear when arriving in a new time zone.

True, there are plenty of high-end watches with the facility to tell the time in different parts of the world simultaneously, but in the 121 years since our planet was officially divided into 24 time zones no one has come up with such an elegant solution to the issue of switching from one to another. Vogt's achievement has been to develop a mechanical time-zone watch which can be adjusted instantly, as often as you like and with no loss of accuracy, by simply rotating the bezel.

There are no buttons to push, crowns to pull or hands to twiddle – just pick the relevant time zone on the engraved bezel, click it round to 12 o'clock and the watch automatically adjusts. It is a true horological first which should provoke shouts of "hallelujah" from international business travellers and transcontinental phone callers all the way from Toronto to Tonga.

"For me, new luxury is smart luxury," says Vogt, who began his career with Swatch in

Breakfast in London, lunch in New York – you can cope, but can your timepiece? As an ingenious new watch solves an age-old problem, Simon de Burton zone-hops till he drops.

1983 and moved on to work for TAG Heuer, Ebel and Gucci. "Luxury for the sake of luxury was a phenomenon of the 1980s and 1990s, but now I believe luxury items need to have a purpose and that is the philosophy behind Vogard. I was travelling a great deal and simply realised that it can be a real nuisance to change the time on any watch, be it a conventional one or one designed to show additional time zones.

"It made me wonder why the offering from the Swiss watch industry was so limited and I realised there might be room for a truly innovative travel watch which was prestigious, mechanical and easy to use."

Vogt decided that the key was going to be in the creation of a movement which allowed adjustment by that elusive twist of the bezel and which also broke new ground by being able to take into account daylight saving time, something which even the finest World Time watches by makers such as Patek Philippe and Girard-Perregaux cannot do.

Being a horological first, the mechanism had to be invented and built entirely from scratch, so Vogt called on the skills of celebrated watchmaker Tomas Prescher and leading designer Renato Scarinzi.

After five years of research and development, they perfected a now-patented

system of gearing wheels connected to the movement by means of a "clutch" which can be engaged and disengaged by a locking lever at the side of the case. The ratio between the diameter of the revolving bezel and the gear train it activates has to be so precise that the watch itself cannot be made in anything other than a single size.

"Function leads to design, and the mathematical formula needed to create the transmission means you can't just shrink the watch, not only because the system won't work properly but also because the bezel would become more difficult to turn and also harder to read," Vogt explains.

Adjustment of the Vogard is a simple matter of pulling back the lever and turning the bezel so the city nearest the relevant time zone is at 12 o'clock. Once the lever is returned to the closed position, the hands are reconnected to the movement and smoothly adjust to the correct time. Even if the lever is left open, the watch remains accurate and the hands will still assume the correct time as soon as it is closed, while daylight saving time is accounted for by the simple expedient of setting the bezel at the "s" position nearest to the relevant city.

The watch, which costs from £3,550 to £13,200,

also features a fourth hand to confirm whether it is am or pm in any particular time zone – a handy way of ensuring you don't incur anyone's wrath by inadvertently ringing in the middle of their night.

Launched in the US late last year, Vogard has now come to Britain through the legendary Bond Street watch retailer Marcus Margulies, who can spot a short-lived gimmick from three time zones away.

"When Mike Vogt said he wanted to show me his watches I agreed to see him although, quite honestly, I had made my mind up not to take any," Margulies explains. "But when I saw what a clever invention it was and how beautifully finished the pieces were I was mesmerised and took the brand on board."

Vogt has also exploited the potential of the engraved and easily interchangeable bezel rather cleverly by offering a version of the watch for licensed pilots on which the city names are replaced by airport codes. There is also the Bogey Golfer (bezel engraved with 24 of the world's top golf courses); the Black Card, a black version only available to black AmEx holders, and the limited edition F1, marked with 24 of the world's top race circuits.

Personalised versions may be commissioned for an extra £500, and Vogt says women who have ordered Vogards as gifts for husbands or partners have asked for the city names around the bezel to be

Top from left: rose gold Vacheron Constantin, £12,450; polished steel Vogard, £3,550; yellow gold Patek Philippe, £15,775.



substituted for other locations – some have specified places which hold romantic memories, while those whose other halves run international corporations have opted to have the locations of their various offices around the world. The bespoke service was taken advantage of in a less earnest manner by an Italian client who had his bezel engraved with the names of 14 girlfriends scattered across the globe, leaving 10 spaces blank for the future.

If the unique technology of the Vogard doesn't appeal, however, there are numerous other wristwatches with multiple-time capability to consider. (The feature has long held horolophiles in thrall – why else would a circa 1939 Patek Philippe World Time have become the most expensive wristwatch ever sold when it was auctioned for more than £2m by Antiquorum in 2002?)

In fact, there are any number of quartz-powered, digital watches which can tell you the time in different countries at once, but such technology rarely appeals to anyone who likes to maintain their wrist as an area of style, dignity and sophistication. For watches that truly tick sartorial boxes, you must look to the top manufacturers of mechanical pieces.

The current Patek Philippe World Time (from about £16,000) remains for many the quintessential tool for the job. It has an ingenious mechanism whereby pushing a button at 10 o'clock on

the case rotates a 24-hour ring around the dial's outer edge until one of 24 city names aligns with 12 o'clock. The hands on the inner dial automatically adjust to show local time with no loss of accuracy and, for good measure, the hour in each of the remaining zones can be read off the 24-hour ring.

A similar system is used on Girard-Perregaux's WWTC watch (from £14,135 for white gold) which includes the additional complications of a date indicator, a chronograph and 46-hour power reserve, while Jaeger-LeCoultre has cracked the problem with its Master Compressor Extreme World

Japan to the US – crossing five time zones on the way.

A Lange & Söhne, a veteran of time-zone watch manufacture, has been typically ingenious with the design of its new Lange 1 Time Zone (from £18,000 for yellow or rose gold) which has two dials, large and small, and enables the wearer to choose which one he or she wants to use as "home time" by a nifty mechanism for reversing the priority of the two times. A nice additional touch is that, instead of resorting to a secondary, 24-hour dial to show separate yet synchronised day or night indications, the Time Zone indicates them with small arrows which sweep around a circle divided into light and dark halves.

As A Lange & Söhne's press and public relations officer Arnd Einhorn points out: "This seemingly modest information about the time elsewhere can save embarrassment – for anyone who makes overseas calls it is not immaterial whether it is night or day for the person at the other end of the line."

So there appears to be no end of mechanical solutions that show two or more time zones. Vacheron Constantin, for example, offers its Malte Dual Time Regulator (from £12,450 for rose or yellow gold), which not only tells the time in two different places at once, but does so to a super-accurate degree – as does the new Malte Tonneau Dual Time (from £12,650 for rose gold).

François-Paul Journe, the "watchmaker's watchmaker", has spent 15 years perfecting his Chronomètre à Résonance featuring two movements so in harmony that each enhances the other's accuracy. Two movements means two dials, which can be set

Above from left: Girard-Perregaux's chrono in platinum, £21,470; A Lange & Söhne in platinum, £24,200; and Jaeger-LeCoultre, £7,400. Below: FP Journe's Chronomètre à Résonance in rose gold, £28,650.

to two times. The multiple-dial approach has been adopted by plenty of other brands too – Franck Muller, for example, offers the three-dial Master Banker (from £6,830 for steel) – but, if not well executed, this method

can sometimes be an inelegant, unimaginative way around the twin-time problem.

Perhaps the most straightforward answer was pioneered by Rolex in 1955 with its famed, and still in production, GMT Master (from £2,210 in steel). The watch was developed at the behest of PanAm before it put into service the Boeing 707, the first successful intercontinental passenger plane. It was decided that pilots would be more likely to maintain awareness if they could fly on home time yet be aware of the time in the zone they were in. Rolex met the challenge by producing a four-handed watch with a rotating 24-hour bezel which enabled the wearer to tell the time in two zones. ♦

IN A DIFFERENT WORLD

A Lange & Söhne, www.lange-soehne.com and see Wempe. **FP Journe**, www.fpjourne.com and see William & Son. **Franck Muller**, www.franckmuller.com and see Marcus. **Girard-Perregaux**, www.girard-perregaux.ch and see Marcus. **Jaeger-LeCoultre**, 1 Old Bond St, London W1 (020-7491 6970; www.jaeger-lecoultre.com). **Marcus**, 170 New Bond St, London W1 (020-7290 6500). **Patek Philippe**, 15 New Bond St, London W1 (020-7493 8866; www.patekphilippe.com). **Rolex**, 020-7024 7300; www.rolex.com. **Vacheron Constantin**, 020-7312 6830; www.vacheron-constantin.com. **Vogard**, www.vogard.com and see Marcus. **Wempe**, 135 New Bond St, London W1 (020-7493 2299). **William & Son**, 10 Mount St, London W1 (020-7493 8385).

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chronograph. Unveiled at this year's Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie in Geneva, the Extreme World (from £7,400 for stainless steel) uses Jaeger-LeCoultre's first in-house automatic chronograph movement and displays the time in each zone on a disc controlled by a two-pronged hand which completes a revolution every 24 hours. The watch recently proved its worth on the wrist of Emmanuel Coindre, a long-distance oarsman who set off in June to row his way across the north Pacific from