

MOONSWATCH Pays Tribute to the Omega Speedmaster's Space Flight Qualification in 1965

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In 1965, the OMEGA Speedmaster was the only watch to pass the tests of the American space agency NASA. That was exactly sixty years ago, on March 1, 1965. As part of the development of the American space program, NASA required a watch that was reliable, precise, easy to read, and easy to use for its space missions. The objective: to have a qualified timepiece for all future manned space flights, amidst the race to conquer the moon.



MOONSWATCH 1965

As a government agency, NASA was obliged to issue a formal call for tenders, requesting “RFPs” (Request for Proposal) from watch manufacturers. The U.S. space agency required series models. OMEGA submitted its Speedmaster model (ST105.003 from 1964), Longines proposed its Wittnauer 235T model and the ...X brand sent its reference 6238. NASA then tested these chronographs through 11 successive trials, following rigorous criteria specially designed for the occasion by the U.S. space agency. Of the three timepieces tested, only one was awarded the prestigious flight qualification for all NASA manned space missions and extravehicular activities on March 1, 1965: the OMEGA Speedmaster. The new MOONSWATCH 1965 pays tribute to the unique watch and the flight qualification by NASA six decades ago.

NASA testers preferred and recommended the OMEGA Speedmaster

for its “superior precision, reliability, legibility and ease of use” over the other models. The flight qualification awarded to OMEGA soon became a reality. Three months after the tests and during the “**Gemini IV**” mission, on June 3, Ed White ventured more than 20 minutes outside the spacecraft with the OMEGA Speedmaster on his wrist.

The MOONSWATCH 1965 bears all the visual hallmarks of the Speedmaster tested sixty years ago by NASA. The OMEGA logo used at that time (also present on the strap and crown), the hands and the typeface of the inscriptions all echo the style of the original watch, giving its modern version an appealing vintage feel. But the watch holds even more surprises. The dial, for example, is another nod to the immaculate, white-dialed OMEGA Speedmaster Moonwatch Professional launched in March 2024 (310.30.42.50.04.001)

The two counters at 10 and 2 o’clock on the new MOONSWATCH 1965 are also new. The first indicates the number 19 (normally 60) at the top, while the other displays the number 65 (normally 10), referencing the year 1965.

To this end, the chronograph counters have been modified to total:

Counter at 10 o’clock: 19 hours

Counter at 2 o’clock: 65 minutes

In this way, 19 and 65 are highlighted on the dial, making it possible to read 1965, as well as 60 at the small second at 6 o’clock (which remains unchanged). The chronograph reading is a little different, as the counter first totals 65 minutes and only after the hours. More specifically, the hands of both counters operate as follows:

- The 10 o’clock counter (19 hours) and the 2 o’clock counter (65 minutes) make a “**lap of honor**” at the end of the 64th minute.

- The 10 o'clock counter rotates once and displays 1 hour (or rather, one hour more).
- The 2 o'clock counter rotates once and displays the 5th minute.

In this way, and without restarting the 2 o'clock (minute) counter at zero, the time can be read normally by adding up the hours and minutes. This animation repeats every 65 minutes, with both hands performing the movement simultaneously.

The counters also display the year 1965 and the 60th anniversary of the NASA flight qualification. The number "19" appears on the counter at 10 o'clock, the number "65" on the counter at 2 o'clock and the number "60" on the counter at 6 o'clock, which are also visible under UV light. The hands and hour markers are coated with Grade A Super-LumiNova for optimal visibility in the dark.

The MOONSWATCH 1965 features its mission statement on the case back and the OMEGA X SWATCH logos on the dial and crown. A gray VELCRO strap, suitable for space suits, completes the astronaut chic style, and features contrast stitching that matches the color of the case and strap. The main features of the original OMEGA Speedmaster Moonwatch are still present: the asymmetrical case, the famous tachymeter scale with dot over ninety and the distinctive Speedmaster counters. Like all Bioceramic MOONSWATCH models, this new watch features a chronograph function. The non-limited "1965", like all the watches in the OMEGA X SWATCH collaboration, is made of Swatch's patented Bioceramic material, a unique blend of two-thirds ceramic and one-third biosourced materials derived from castor oil.

The new model in the Bioceramic MOONSWATCH Collection is available from March 1 (the date NASA qualified the Speedmaster back in 1965) only in selected Swatch stores

worldwide. As with the entire Bioceramic MOONSWATCH Collection, only one watch can be purchased per person, per day and per Swatch store.

NASA's eleven successive tests

NASA demanded a great deal from the watches tested, in order to qualify them and send them on manned space missions. Reliability was paramount during the 11 successive tests it put the chronographs of three different brands through. The prerequisite was a precision of 5 seconds over 24 hours, ideally within a range of +/- 2 seconds per 24 hours. The watches needed to feature a stop function, be easy to read, and antimagnetic.

1. High temperature test: 70C for 48 hours, then 93C for 30 minutes in a partial vacuum.
2. Low temperature test: -18C for 4 hours.
3. Vacuum test: heated in a vacuum chamber and then cooled to -18C for several cycles.
4. Humidity test: ten 24-hour cycles in >95% humidity with temperatures ranging from 25C to 70C.
5. Corrosion test: in an atmosphere of oxygen at 70C for 48 hours.
6. Shock resistance test: six 40 G shocks in six different directions.
7. Acceleration test: progressive acceleration to 7.25 G for about five minutes and then to 16 G for 30 seconds in three axes.
8. Low pressure test: pressure of 10^{-6} atmospheres at 70C for 90 minutes, then at 93C for 30 minutes.
9. High pressure test: in an air pressure of 1.6

atmospheres for 60 minutes.

10. Vibration test: random vibrations in three axes between 5 and 2,000 Hz with an acceleration of 8.8 G.
11. Sound test: 130 decibels at frequencies from 40 to 10,000 Hz for 30 minutes.

(Source: OMEGA archives)

