



Janet Reuter

July 2020

**Now is a good time to write about the things that are made for women to love.**  
**So this month I will start with the history of the luxury Louis Vuitton handbag.**  
**From a simple practical travel trunk to the most expensive handbag ever made!**

These handbags originated in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, like so many of the iconic fashion items that we know so well today. This was the start of innovation in design developed from a practical need for a product to suit the rise of a new wealthy and mobile society. In order to travel you needed a trunk!



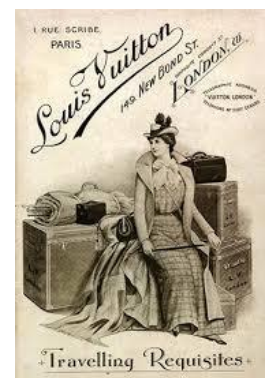
Louis Vuitton was born in 1821 to a farmer and milliner and came from a long-established working-class family in eastern France. Vuitton grew up understanding the effects of perseverance and a strong work ethic from watching his family. At the age of 16, he made the decision to walk 470 km from his hometown to Paris to try and make a new life for himself. When he arrived the city was in the midst of industrialization with current modes of transportation evolving quickly allowing for longer journeys. With this came the need for sturdy travel pieces. Vuitton was taken as an apprentice for a successful box maker and packer named Monsieur Marechal. He learned to make durable containers and how to pack them.

In 1854, Louis Vuitton opened his own shop in the Rue Neuve des Capucines and soon made himself a good name as a luggage maker and in 1858 he designed his own original steamer trunk.



At first travel trunks had rounded tops so that water could run off them. They had in the past been transported on the back of a coach. This design took up too much storage place on a ship, so he designed his first model with a flat top and it was made of a plain waxed waterproof grey canvas. It was later in 1876 that he introduced a new striped canvas pattern and then in 1888 the now famous Damier print was born. His luggage became such a sought after fashion item that he had them hand painted to prevent counterfeiting.

Counterfeiting his designs became such a problem that his son, now working in the company, designed an ingenious locking system which was very difficult to copy.



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## Louis Vuitton (continued)



Louis Vuitton passed away at the age of 70. His son, Georges Vuitton, became the new head of what was now a luxury goods house. Louis Vuitton's death would prompt his son to once again change the print of their luggage, and in 1896, to honour his father, the signature LV monogram was introduced and patterned with LVs, quatrefoils, and flowers. Under his son's direction more success followed and the iconic monogram rose to fame among elite clientele.



With this rise in prominence, the brand caught the eye of one of the most established of fashion icons of the time, Coco Chanel. A dome-shaped handbag with the distinctive lock, meant for personal use, rather than travel, was created specifically for Chanel. It wasn't until 1934 that she allowed the brand to mass produce the bag for the general public. It was redesigned to be more compact and streamlined for everyday use and named the **Squire** until it was renamed the **Alma** in 1955.

With the success of its smaller goods, Louis Vuitton expanded its product line to include the **Keepall (1930)**, **Speedy (1930)**, and the **Noe (1932)**. The demand for these bags was extraordinary, so much so that they are still currently made in a myriad of materials and sizes.



Keepall



Speedy



Noe



Papillon

In 1936, Georges passed away and his son, Gaston-Louis Vuitton, stepped up to run the house. During Gaston-Louis's 50 year tenure, Louis Vuitton began to incorporate leather into its products and revamped their signature monogram canvas to use across multiple styles, including the famous cylindrical **Papillon (1966)**.



Jeff Koons



Mini Car



Rucksack



Never full

Today Louis Vuitton is no longer a family business but is a world wide brand name for luxury goods within the LVMH conglomerate which includes Moët Chandon champagne and Hennessy cognac. The top creative directors have included Marc Jacobs and artists such as Jeff Koons. They have designed special editions which has increased the design range to use more colour and many new handbag styles. The actress Emma Watson from Harry Potter fame is now one of their advisers and board member.

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## Louis Vuitton (continued)

Louis Vuitton handbags are not just expensive, they are unbelievably expensive! Sadly it seems that there are no reptiles in the world safe from being turned into a so called luxury handbag.



This first handbag above is in the range called **The Steamer**. It is made of alligator skin. It is the most expensive bag in the collection and sells at around **55.000 €**. You can, of course buy it in other design variations. It can be hand painted and mixed with python if you prefer. The last bag in the row is called the **Junk Bag**. This bag is recycling all the old rubbish you have in your new Louis Vuitton handbag at a high price! But maybe it has something to do with the Louis Vuitton company trying out sustainability.

You can of course pop into **Bond Street, London** or the **Goethestrasse in Frankfurt** and all these handbags can be bought for a less limited edition price of around **1000 € to 20.000 €**. If you still don't have enough money there is a huge market in selling second hand bags. The internet is full of such offers for luxury goods. It is not possible to get a shop sale bargain at Harrods or any other exclusive retailer. The price is never reduced. Louis Vuitton has been the subject of masses of criticism for it's practice of burning excess goods not sold in order to keep the prices up and therefore keeping up the exclusivity. This I find totally unacceptable. Well, if you don't need a new handbag the Louis Vuitton basic design motifs can be bought on clothing, sports cars and furniture. If you still don't have the cash you can have a Louis Vuitton rubbish bin or toilet seat. In fact there is not much that you can't buy with the brand name LV printed all over it. As a last resort the Chinese are masters of producing imitations. It all seems such a long way away from that first travel trunk! I very often wonder about what these hard working entrepreneurs of the 19th century would think of all this today but I suppose luxury has always had it's price! If I were rich enough there is only one handbag I would buy: **The Launer**.



Whatever you might think of the Queen's fashion style she knows exactly what she likes! For almost her entire reign she has handbags from the London company **Launer**. In fact she has over **200** of them. Her favourites are the black leather **Royale**, the black patent **Traviata** and a special custom handbag only for her use.

The firm Launer was founded in the **1940's** by a refugee leather maker from the Czech Republic. It was the **Queen Mother** who bought the first one in the **1950's** and then gave her daughter her first Launer as a gift. In **1968**, the Launer company received the **royal warrant**.

The Queen's handbag is not just a fashion item to carry her personal things around. It is a special code to signal to her staff who accompanies her, what she is thinking and if she wants action!

If the Queen moves her bag from her left arm to the right arm while she is talking to someone it means the conversation is over.. If she puts her bag on the floor whilst sitting she wants to be saved from the situation and if while dinning she puts her bag on the table then dinner is over! Very clever.

Margate Thatcher was also a Launer lady!



**Queen Elizabeth II and her Launer handbags.**



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## News for and about the English ladies

### The History of the Art of Fashion and Movement.



In the late 19th century society began to undergo major changes. Class barriers fell and industrialisation gave women the chance to take on different roles in the new order. Clothing had also to change to allow more physical movement of the body. Changing gender roles in both living and working environments meant that the whole concept of what a woman should wear had to change as well. This new exhibition covers a broad spectrum of these changes in women clothes between 1850 and

the 1930's. There are 200 exhibits showing various aspects of women's lives, household chores, at the work place, free time, sports and also women taking on the roles usually reserved for men such as business and politics. These items range from the first ever bathing costumes to the revolutionary trouser suit. **Historisches Museum, Saalhof 1, Frankfurt. Until 24/02/20.**

### A book to read on long sunny Summer afternoons and fall in love with.

#### Die neuen englischen Gärten by: Tim Richardson with photos by Andrew Lawson.

At the beginning of the corona crisis it seemed like all hope of visiting my beautiful homeland had come to an end in 2020. Then the door bell rang and one of my lovely English ladies, Uta Schöllner delivered this lovely book as a present for me to enjoy while it is not possible to visit the gardens now. There are fourteen gardens, some I have seen but many that are new to me which I hope I can see in the future. 330 pages full of lots of information and lots and lots of photos of gardens in all seasons.

**A must have! Many, many thanks to Uta !!!!!!!**



**Birthdays in July**

**Helga Müller Lorenz**

**Birgit Haubold**

**Happy Birthday, ladies.**

