



Antique Luminor Tropical Camera By Manufacture Française. France, Circa 1925

590 EUR



Period : 20th century

Condition : Bon état

Length : 12,5 cm (4,9 in)

Height : 16,5 cm (6,5 in)

Description

Exceptional and extremely rare antique Luminor Tropical camera, manufactured in France by the Manufacture Française d'Armes et Cycles de Saint-Étienne around 1925-1930. It is an almost unknown model within the prestigious Luminor line, the "tropical" version designed for expedition and colonial photographers, made from noble materials resistant to humidity. Its rarity is remarkable: it is not documented in standard Manufacture catalogues nor in specialized databases such as Collection-appareils, Collectible, or Camerapedia, which increases its historical and collector interest.

The body is crafted from polished tropical wood, probably mahogany or rosewood, with a deep

Dealer

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silky finish and bright nickel-plated brass fittings on every corner. The honey-colored leather bellows are superbly preserved, flexible, and free from cracks. The rear section features the classic door with folding cover and leather frame, protecting the original ground glass, which remains in very good condition.

The optical-mechanical ensemble is of top quality. It mounts a Krauss Paris Triarar f:4.5 F=13.5 cm lens, no. 78919, coupled with a high-grade Compur shutter manufactured by Friedrich Deckel in Munich. This combination was reserved for mid-to-high professional cameras. The shutter works at all operative speeds, offering smooth release and accurate aperture control, though it has not been chronographed. It also retains its original pneumatic release cable, perfectly attached and functional.

The camera is accompanied by three metal plate holders for 10×15 cm plates, two of them still loaded with original photographic glass plates, adding further appeal for collectors. The entire set shows a uniform patina with no warping or traces of humidity, which is exceptional for a piece nearly a century old.

By its design and materials, the Luminor Tropical reflects the French taste for technical precision combined with artisanal elegance. These tropical versions were offered in Manufrance catalogues for photographers working in extreme climates and are today true museum rarities. This unit, in such magnificent condition and fully operational, represents an outstanding opportunity to acquire an authentic testimony of interwar photographic engineering.

Its visual appeal, perfect preservation, and unique format make this camera an essential piece for collectors of plate cameras or historic French apparatus. It will also make a striking decorative

element in a studio, library, or vintage cabinet, where its mechanical beauty and the contrast of honey leather against reddish wood will attract every eye.

This is one of those unique pieces that appear only rarely. Its rarity, elegance, and functionality make it a magnificent investment in history and technical beauty. It is not merely a camera but a living example of the pioneering spirit of French photography.

Dimensions: 16.5 × 12.5 cm (6.5 × 4.9 in).

History of Manufrance

The Manufacture Française d'Armes et Cycles de Saint-Étienne, popularly known as Manufrance, was founded in 1885 by Étienne Mimard and Pierre Blachon. Based in Saint-Étienne, it became one of France's most emblematic companies during the first half of the twentieth century. A pioneer in mail-order sales, it distributed firearms, bicycles, tools, and, since the early 1900s, photographic cameras under its own brands, including Luminor, Ideal, and Le Photo-Sport.

Manufrance did not manufacture every component but assembled parts from French and German workshops such as Krauss, Hermagis, or Berthiot, offering products of excellent quality, design, and reliability. The Luminor cameras were among its most appreciated lines: folding, solid, and elegant, aimed at both professionals and demanding amateurs.

The "tropical" versions were designed especially for colonies and expeditions, employing moisture-resistant woods and nickel-plated brass fittings. After the Second World War, Manufrance gradually reduced its photographic division, focusing mainly on sporting optics and firearms. Nevertheless, its Luminor cameras

remain as testimonies of fine French industrial craftsmanship. Today they are highly sought after by collectors and technical museums, symbols of refinement and precision in French interwar photography.

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