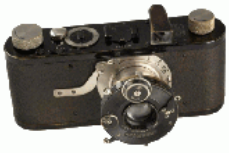
LEICA

60 YEARS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC EXCELLENCE

1913	1st prototype 	Oscar Barnack (1879-1936), researcher at the Leitz's factory of Wetzlar, develops a prototype of photographic camera, using 35 mm cinema film. Use of this film, in a reduced format of 24 x 36 mm, allows Barnack to imagine a very compact camera for that period. This camera has a single achromatic lens and no shutter.
1923	LEICA pilot production 	At the end of WWI, Oscar Barnack restarts his project of compact camera. He improves its concept and its ergonomics by having the idea to link together film advance with the reload mechanism of the shutter. Barnack asks Max Berek (1886-1949) to develop a small size lens able to be adapted on his camera. Then, Berek creates the famous Elmar 1:3.5 f=50 mm. The Leitz company decides to produce a pilot production of 6 cameras named LEICA (contraction of LEItz and CAmera).
1925	LEICA I 	Official commercialization of the LEICA, equipped with the Elmar 1:3.5 f=50 mm, starts this year. These starts are laborious as people, probably accustomed to large negative format, remain distant from the smallness of the 24 x 36 mm format. But soon, the outstanding quality and the compactness of this camera make this one receives the plebiscite of photographers. The small dimensions of this camera make its very discreet, allowing illustrated reports without people's knowledge. Characteristics of the LEICA I are the following : • Focal shutter • Speeds from 1/20 to 1/500 of second and B • Lens Elmar 1:3.5 f=50 mm • Galilean viewfinder (and later on, removable rangefinder mounted on a special stand).
1926	LEICA Compur 	This special model has been produced to ensure a better promotion of the 24 x 36 film format in the opinion of general public. The addition of a Compur shutter allowed to lower the price of the camera and therefore to make it less expensive than a regular LEICA I. On the other hand, this camera does not have the shutter rearmament coupled with film advance. The production of LEICA Compur was left in 1930.

1930	LEICA I for interchangeables lenses 	LEICA I is a big success and the general public is requesting more lenses. Leitz company decides to modify the LEICA I and to adapt it with a screw mount, based on a thread of 100.
1930	Lenses	Arrival of 3 new lenses : • Elmar 1:3.5 f=35 mm • Hektor 1:2.5 f=50 mm • Elmar 1:4.5 f=135 mm
1931	Stereoly 	No new development this year except the stereoscopic adapter Stereoly. Attached in front of the Elmar lens, this equipment was giving two juxtaposed images of 18 x 24 mm each, which were inscribed in the 24 x 36 mm format.
1932	LEICA standard 	The LEICA standard is identical to the LEICA I except on two points : • The film advance button can be pulled in order to help its prehension. • The LEICA standard is available in two different finishes: black or chromed. This camera series uses serial numbers from 101.001 to 355.650. This camera is known in US under the designation of "Model E".
1932	LEICA II (or LEICA Couplex) 	Considering the efficiency of the removable telemetric system which was proposed in addition of the Galilean viewfinder of the LEICA I, Leitz takes the decision to develop a new camera - the LEICA II – with a build in rangefinder.
1932	Lenses	Arrival of 3 new lenses : • Elmar 1:4 f=90 mm • Elmar 1:6,3 f=105 mm
1933	LEICA III 	This model is not an improvement of the LEICA II. The main change is the addition of a range of low speeds. The shutter now operates from 1 to 1/500 of second, with B and T. Other modification: a hinged lens, with a magnification coefficient of x1.5, is added on the rangefinder for a better comfort. It is also with the LEICA III that holes are added allowing the fixing of a strap. The camera is proposed in black or chromed finish.

1933	LEICA 250 	At that time, photoreporters are fervent users of LEICA cameras. To their request, Leitz company invents the LEICA 250 based onto a LEICA III. The production of this model will remain very limited. The main interest of the LEICA 250 is in its docking back able to host 10 meters of 35 mm film. This is giving to this camera a capacity of 250 views. Its other characteristics remain identical than the LEICA III.
1933	Summar 1:2 f=50mm 	Arrival of 2 new lenses : • Summar 1:2 f=50 mm • Hektor 1 :4,5 f=135 mm Production of the Hektor 1:2.5 f=50mm is stopped.
1935	LEICA IIIa 	Arrival of the "a" series. The maximum shutter speed is increased to 1/1000 of second.
1935	Lenses	Arrival of 3 new lenses : • Hektor 1:6,3 f=28 mm • Thambar 1:2,2 f=90mm (blurred lens for special effects) • Telyt 1:4,5 f=200 mm
1935	Nooky 	Production of the Nooky. This equipment can be fixed onto the Elmar 50 mm allowing macro photography up to 50 cm
1936	**Decease of Oscar Barnack on January 16th, 1936.**	
1936	Leicavit 	Arrival of the Leicavit. This device allows fast reloading of the shutter mechanism.
1937	Lenses	Arrical of two new lenses: • Telyt 1:5 f=400 mm • Xenon 1:1,5 f=50 mm

1938	LEICA IIIb 	Arrival of the « b » series. Changes relate to the focusing organs. Rangefinder and viewfinder are grouped together. The focusing of the rangefinder is done using a lever located around the film advance button.
1938	Leica Motor 	Arrival of the Leica-Motor allowing shooting of 12 views. This new device complements the Leicavit.
1939	**200.000 LEICA cameras have been produced by Leitz.**	
1939	Lenses	Arrival of the lens Summitar 1:2 f=50 mm in replacement of the Summar 1:2 f=50mm.
1940	Visoflex I	Arrival of the Visoflex I. This auxiliary device is offering a reflex viewfinder.
1941	LEICA IIIc 	Arrival of the « c » series. The demand for LEICA cameras is now such important that Leitz must change its manufacturing processes. From that year, camera bodies are made of cast iron. The camera cover is now in one single part. Performances of the shutter are increased; this one reaches now 1/1000 of second.
1942	LEICA IIIc Luftwaffe 	This model is a LEICA IIIc in grey color. It has been adapted to resist to low temperatures. This camera was installed onboard of observation planes during WWII. In addition of its special color, this camera has another distinctive characteristic than others LEICA IIIc: the letter « K » is marked at the end of its serial number as well as on the first curtain of the shutter.
1943	Lenses	Arrival of the lens Summarex 1:1.5 f=85 mm in replacement of the former Xenon 1:1.5 f=50 mm
1948	LEICA IIc 	Equivalent to the LEICA IIIc but its shutter speed is limited to 1/500 of second and does not have low speeds. 10.999 cameras of this model have been produced.
1949	LEICA Ic 	With this camera, Leitz enters the research laboratory market. Intended for scientific and technical activities, LEICA Ic has neither viewfinder nor rangefinder. It is used for the photography with a microscope. On the top are located two stands allowing to adapt a viewfinder or of one external rangefinder.

1949	Summarit 1,5 f=50mm 	Arrival of two new lenses : • Summaron 1:3.5 f=35 mm in replacement of the Elmar 1:3.5 f=35 mm • Summarit 1:1,5 f=50 mm in replacement of the Xenon 1:1,5 f=50 mm.
1949	Duplication bellows	Manufacturing of a duplication bellows which complements the Visioflex I for macro photography.
1950	LEICA IIIf 	Arrival of the «f » series. This range of cameras is adapted for flash bulbes. The shutter has a delaying mechanism allowing to trigger the shutter curtain only when the light is at its maximum efficiency. The synchro-flash speed can be adjusted according to the characteristics of the flash bulb and the selected aperture. The range of speeds is 1/30 – 1/40 – 1/60 – 1/100 and 1/200 of second. Speeds are written using a black serigraphy.
1951	LEICA IIf 	Similar to the LEICA IIIf camera but without low shutter speeds. The range of synchro-flash speeds is still written using a black serigraphy.
1952	LEICA IIIf 	Change in the range of synchro-flash speeds. This one offers now the following setting : 1/25 – 1/50 – 1/75 – 1/100 – 1/200 and 1/500 of second. The range of synchro-flash speeds is now written using a red serigraphy.
1952	LEICA IIf 	Change of the range of synchro-flash speeds is also applied on this model as well as the range of synchro-flash speeds which is also now written using a red serigraphy.
1952	LEICA If 	Logical evolution of the LEICA Ic, the LEICA If has neither viewfinder nor rangefinder. During the first months of its marketing, this model is available with the “black” range of synchro-flash speeds. By end of 1952, this camera is now proposed with the “red” one.
1952	**Opening of a new factory Leitz-Canada in Midland (Ontario).** **Endowed with last sophistications in mechanical machines and computers, this plant allows Leitz to make a jump ahead in mechanical and optic quality.**	

1953	Summicron 2 f=50mm 	Arrival of the lens Summicron 1:2 f=50 mm
1954	LEICA M3 	Taking advantage of the Photokina 54, Leitz reveals its new M3 model which has required 15 years of developments. While the 24x36 reflex cameras takes their essort, the specialists are surprised that Leitz persists to use rangefinders. In fact, Wetslar's engineers think rightfully that focus adjustment using a rangefinder is much better than using a reflex camera, and this true whatever the focal distance is. Thus, the set made of the viewframe and the multifocal rangefinder which equips the LEICA M3, is a superb object. Bright frames appear in the viewfinder, giving a perfect simulation of the framing for the different focal lens 50, 90 and 135 mm. The simulation of the view field of a 35 mm lens can be obtained using the system of framing control located on the lens ring. Only one range of shutter speeds is available and its setting wheel does not rotate anymore when the shutter is triggered. The reloading of the shutter is now done using a lever. The LEICA M3 leaves the screw mount for a bayonet one.
1954	Lenses	Arrival of two new objectifs : • Hektor 1:2.5 f=135 mm • Summaron 1:5.6 f=28 mm in replacement of the Hektor 1:6,3 f=28mm.
1956	LEICA M3 	From that date, the focal frames appearing in the viewfinder can be selected using a small lever located on the front face of the camera. What seems to be just a simple ergonomic improvement is in fact a significant advantage that reflex camera do not have. Simply using this frame selector, the photographer can immediately visualize, without having to change the lens, what is the most appropriate focal distance according to the frame he is looking for.
1956	Lenses	Arrival of two new lenses : • 1st generation of the Summaron 1:3.5 f=35 mm with a framing control system for Leica M3. • 2nd release of the Summicron 1:2 f=50 mm allowing close focusing up to 50 cm.
1956	Duplication bellows	New duplication bellows for LEICA M3.

1957	LEICA IIIg 	With the arrival of the LEICA M3, almost everyone was thinking the series III will be abandoned. Leitz induced a big surprise when marketing the « g » series of the famous LEICA III. This one is equiped with a new collimated viewfinder and automatic adjustment of the parallax. The synchro-flash speed selector has disappeared.
1957	LEICA Ig 	The LEICA Ig remains a camera for laboratory activities. It still has neither viewfinder nor rangefinder.
1957	Lens	Arrival of the lens Elmar 1:2.8 f=50 mm in replacement of the former Elmar 1:3.5 f=50 mm
1958	LEICA M2 	The multifocal viewfinder is modified to match the new lenses proposed by Leitz. It allows now to simulate framing for the focal distances of a 35mm, 50mm and 90mm lenses.
1958	Lenses	Arrival of 4 new lenses : • Summicron 1:2 f=36 mm. This one is proposed with regular mount or the system of framing control for LEICA M3. • 2nd generation of Summaron 1:2,8 f=35 mm in replacement of the Summaron 1:3,5 f=35 mm. • Super-Angulon 1 :4 f=21 mm • Summicron 1 :2 f=90 mm Also marketed starting form 1958, a new duplication bellows for the LEICA M3.
1958	Visioflex II 	The auxiliary device Visioflex I is replaced with a version II. This one allows all types of lenses, starting from 65 mm of focal distance.
1959	LEICA M2 	Arrival of the self-timer on the LEICA M2.
1959	LEICA M1 	In line with its commercial offer, Leitz proposes the LEICA M1 which has the same characteristics than the M2 but without rangefinder and a bi-focal viewframe for only two focal distances (35 and 50 mm). When using a different focal distance lens, it was possible to use an external focal viewframe fixed onto the top of the camera body.

1959	Lenses	Arrival of 3 new lenses : • Summilux 1:1,4 f=50 mm. • Elmarit 1:2,8 f=90 mm in replacement of the Elmar 1:3,5 f=35 mm. • Telyt 1:4 f=200 mm
1960	Lenses	Arrival of the lens Elmar 1:3.5 f=65 mm which is planned to be used with the Visioflex II
1963	Visioflex III	The Visioflex II is replaced by the version III.
1965	LEICA MD 	The LEICA MD is for the LEICA M2 what the LEICA I was for the LEICA II : a simplified version, without viewfinder nor rangefinder, used for laboratory works..
1967	LEICA M4 	Evolution of the LEICA M3. The viewfinder-rangefinder is modified in order to support the new focal distances 35-50-90 and 135 mm. The camera is now equiped with an automatic film loading system. Film rewind is done using a tipped up handle. The counter of views is builded in the body of the camera and protected by a magnifier making easier its reading.
1967	LEICA MDa 	Evolution of the LEICA MD which takes also advantage of the automatic film loading capability and the tipped up rewind handle.
1971	LEICA M5 	With this model, Leitz is at the peak of the range M. After having become the masters in rangefinders, the engineers of Wetslar are the first to successfully install a photoelectric cell behind the lens, right in the optical axle of the film and close from it. This exclusive refinement makes LEICA M5 being the camera giving the best reading of the exposure time on the market. The body of the LEICA M5 is also new, with a better ergonomics than any of its predecessors. This camera is well known for being silent and its total absence of vibrations.
1960 to 1974	Summilux 1.4 f=35mm 	From 1960 to 1974, Leitz increases or updates its lenses offer. • Super Angulon 1:3,4 f=21mm in replacement of the former 1:4 f=21mm • Elmarit 1:2,8 f=28mm • Summilux 1:1,4 f=35 mm • Noctilux 1:1,5 f=50mm, for night photography • Tele-Elmarit 1:2,8 f=90mm • Tele-Elmar 1:4 f=135 mm in replacement of the Elmar 1:4 f=135mm • Elmarit 1:2,8 f=135 mm • Telyt 1:4,8 f=280 mm • Zeiss-Hologon 1:3,5 f=15mm, can be mounted on a LEICA M