

ARMOUR



Iron Man 3 - Mark XLII, unauthorized
replica by Secret Compass

FUN FACTS



The Anatomy of Armour

A full suit of armour usually had 12 to 14 components, and weighed between 18 and 20 kilograms. This is less than the weight of the protective gear worn by today's firefighters and soldiers.

Flexible Fighters

A fully armoured person could still jump, run and fight freely, thanks to the many articulations, hinges and straps that made the suit flexible where it counted.

Swordplay

Although it may look heavy, the average medieval sword weighed only 1 to 1.5 kilograms — about as much as a large bunch of bananas, and less than a Chihuahua.

Not Just for the Rich

The armour collected and displayed by museums tends to reflect the expensive armour of royalty and other elite classes. The less elaborate but more affordable armour of ordinary warriors is not as likely to have been preserved.

Sallets in Space

What inspired the helmets worn by Darth Vader and other villains in George Lucas' *Star Wars* movies? The ancient samurai *kabuto*? The 20th century German *Stahlhelm* (steel helmet)? Maybe the sallet, a battle helmet that originated in Italy during the early 1400s? These styles all curve outwards to protect the neck, and the *Stahlhelm*, originally developed for trench warfare in the First World War, was based on the medieval sallet.

Form or Function?

Some features of historical helmets — such as metal crests and beaks — may seem silly, but they served a specific purpose. Crests and ridges added strength, while a pointed or rounded visor deflected blows away from the face, and allowed more space for ventilation holes. Some embellishments, such as spikes, horns and wings, were meant both to intimidate the enemy and identify the warrior, while others were merely fashion statements.



Fresh From the Farm

Medieval and Renaissance weapons often had agricultural origins. Peasant soldiers developed various polearms — long-handled weapons that could pierce armour or dismount knights and horsemen. The bill — a thick, hooked chopping blade mounted on a staff — was based on the billhook, a traditional cutting tool used to clear brush and shrubs. The guisarme was a pruning hook attached to a spear shaft; and the glaive was based on the scythe, a long-bladed tool for cutting grass or wheat.

Armour for Animals

Protective armour for horses dates back thousands of years, but did you know it was also used to protect elephants and dogs?

Armour From Animals

Turtles, porcupines, armadillos, snails, rhinoceros, beetles and crocodiles are among the many animal species with built-in defences that have served as inspiration for armour. But scientists and engineers have also studied fish scales, sea sponges, snakes and butterflies while working on the next generation of lightweight armour.

Fauld Line

A cuirass protected the torso, and consisted of a breastplate, backplate and fauld. The fauld — a series of small steel plates attached to the lower edge of the breastplate — protected the lower torso, while still allowing the wearer to ride a horse.



Bulletproof Products

Kevlar, the tough but lightweight synthetic fibre in bulletproof vests, is also used in bicycle tires, canoes, table-tennis paddles, archery bow strings, woodwind reeds, brake pads, sails, wind turbines and more.

Samurai Status

The suit of samurai armour in the exhibition is on loan from Dr. Richard Béliveau. Béliveau, a top medical researcher, philanthropist, collector and well-known personality in Canada and abroad, owns a vast collection of Japanese objects and art — including dozens of suits of samurai armour, swords, helmets and masks, along with ceremonial and everyday objects.

Pit Stop

Relieving yourself is probably not top-of-mind in the heat of battle, but at any other time, it would be like having to go when you're wearing a snowsuit — you'd have to remove a few layers first!

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warmuseum.ca/armour

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