

The movie on the famous cartoon journalist has re-ignited interest in the city of Brussels. From cartoon-themed bars, to La Boutique Tintin and the house where Snowy's creator was born, you can take a tour of Tintin town in this Belgian city.

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WHEN the first of the *Tintin* trilogy – directed by Steven Spielberg and made with state-of-the-art performance capture technology developed by Peter (Lord Of The Rings) Jackson – came out, fans of the globe-trotting teenaged boy reporter and his faithful fox terrier Snowy flocked to Brussels to see the sites associated with the character's creator, Hergé a.k.a Georges Prosper Remi.

Yes, now is as good a time as any to take a tour of Tintin's town, the city where the comic's author lived and died.

Plunge straight into the décor of *The Secret Of The Unicorn* at the flea market in the Place du Jeu de Balles. You probably won't find the model ship containing the map to the buried treasure of Sir Francis Haddock, but if you keep a weather eye open you might spot some original drawings and other Tintin tchotkes amongst the mounds of mouldering books, vintage clothes and other junk sold in this lively bazaar that Hergé used as inspiration in 1943.

After sifting through a billion bilious blue blistering barnacles' worth of tat, you'll be gasping for Haddock's favourite tippie.

Get your fix of Loch Lomond whiskey – soaked up with a planeload of spicy Belgian sausage speciality *frikandel* – at La Fleur en Papier Doré (Rue des Alexiens, +32 (0)2 511 1659), the city's oldest bar. It also happens to be the favourite watering hole of surrealist pope Rene Magritte, pop art forerunner Jean Dubuffet and Georges Remi – alias Hergé – himself.

A stone's throw from this 18th century snuggery – and just opposite the city's legendary Mannekin Pis statue, is a life-size fresco of Tintin, Snowy and Haddock running down a fire escape in a scene from detective masterpiece *The Calculus Affair*. Other frescos – including a vast 135m-long mural featuring the comic strip's 140 characters that was drawn by Hergé shortly before his death in 1983 – can be found at Stockel Ribaucourt and Porte de Hal underground stations.

# Welcome to Tintin town



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Figurines of cartoon characters during the annual Comic Strip Street Festival.



A marching band during the annual Comic Strip Street Festival.



A signed mural by Hergé at the Gare du Luxembourg Metro station.

## Other films set in Brussels

DOZENS of films have used this photogenic city as a backdrop. One of the most memorable include Fred Schepisi's *Plenty*, where Meryl Streep is Susan Traherne and Sting plays a good-natured cockney in a city torn apart by war.

Claude Miller's brilliant thriller *Mortelle Randonnée*, which includes a game of hide-and-seek in the corridors of the Metropole Hotel, was also filmed here, as was Frank van Passel's *Manneken Pis*, where the hero falls for a tram driver and lives in an apartment opposite the city's celebrated statue.

And did you know that with 700 comic strip authors, Belgium has more comic strip artists per square kilometre than any other country in the world? It publishes some 40 million works of comic art per year. These include... *The Smurfs*.

Turn left behind the Gothic cathedral and the statue of other much-loved Brussels character King Baudouin, you'll find the superb Italian, renaissance-styled Théâtre Royal des Galeries (32, galerie du Roi, [www.theatredesgaleries.be](http://www.theatredesgaleries.be)) with its ceiling decorated by Belgian-born René Magritte. Step inside and admire this stylish playhouse where *Tintin In The Indies*, a play adapted from Hergé's *Mystery Of The Blue Diamond*, premiered in 1941.

Just across from here in the web of streets radiating out from the cobbled Grand Place, you'll find La Boutique Tintin (Rue de la Colline, [www.tintin.com](http://www.tintin.com)). This is the best place in town to buy Snowy face towels and "I love Castafiore" coffee mugs, models of Tintin's rocket and other souvenirs.

Pockets bulging with cartoon goodies, you can then make a beeline for the Belgian Centre for Comic Strip Arts (Rue des Sables, [www.comicscenter.net](http://www.comicscenter.net)), housed in an ornate glass and iron building designed by father of Belgian Art Nouveau, Victor Horta. Here you can follow Tintin's evolution from a simple line drawing in 1929 to a hero of 24 comic books.

Other fascinating Tintin artefacts that you'll find here include a 2m high bronze sculpture of Tintin and Snowy, and a 4m high model of the rocket that carried our heroes into space in the *Destination Moon* album written in 1953, 16 years before Apollo 11 made its celebrated journey.

A few blocks away from the comic museum is the city's opera house ([www.lamonnaie.be](http://www.lamonnaie.be)), the setting for Madame Yamilah's astounding predictions in *The Seven Crystal Balls*. It was also the favourite hangout of dreaded opera diva Bianca Castafiore, whose character is said to be based on that of Hergé's first wife.

By now you're probably feeling peckish, so wend your way across town to the Faubourg Saint Antoine restaurant (65, Avenue Albert Giraud, Schaerbeek; +32 (0) 2 245 6394). Surrounded by Tintin-themed bric-a-brac, including a life-sized Snowy astronaut suit, you can dine on *lapin à la kriek* (rabbit stewed in beer) and *stoemp* (potatoes, carrots, onion sauce and sausages in a sapid broth) and other Belgian classics.

After a nightcap in the Hotel Radisson's swanky, cartoon-themed Bar Dessiné (47, Rue du Fossé aux Loups; +32 (0) 2 219 2828), you can wind up your tour of Tintin town at the recently renovated Crowne Plaza (3, Rue Gineste, [www.CrownePlaza.com](http://www.CrownePlaza.com)).

Sweet dreams are sure to greet you in this turn-of-the-century sleeper depicted in *The Seven Crystal Balls* as a backdrop for explorer Marc Charlet when he returns from the Sanders-Hardmuth expedition with a lethargy-inducing Inca mummy.

Download a map of the Tintin trail, or ask about the city's mural tour at [www.brusselsinternational.be](http://www.brusselsinternational.be)

Tintin, Snowy and Haddock running down a fire escape in a scene from the detective masterpiece *The Calculus Affair*.



A mural of Tintin and other characters from the strip at the the Métro Stockel station.



Cartoon heroes, Tintin and Snowy.

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