

# Out and About

By Renata Rubnikowicz

## Happy birthday Rembrandt

Although music lovers may be focusing on 2006 as the 250th birthday of Mozart, art lovers are celebrating a birthday of their own: Rembrandt van Rijn.

The old master would have been 400 years old in 2006. Acclaimed as the greatest painter of the Dutch Golden Age, he left a wealth of portraits, self-portraits, biblical scenes, drawings and etchings, which will be on show at different times throughout the year. Museums and galleries around the world are lending works by the old master to provide the most comprehensive exhibitions of his art ever displayed.

Art lovers can celebrate the birthday in Rembrandt's birthplace in Leiden. There, the Municipal Museum De Lekenhal is showing Rembrandt's "Mother, Myth and Reality" until 19 March. Art lovers can also celebrate the birthday in Amsterdam, which was Rembrandt's home from the age of 25. His house in Amsterdam, now a museum, presents "Rembrandt: The Quest of a Genius," from 1 April to 2 July. The exhibit includes a recreation of the artist's studio. Later in the year, visitors to Amsterdam's Royal Carré Theatre can get a different angle on the artist by booking a seat for Rembrandt, the Musical, which opens on 15 July. For details, visit: [www.rembrandt400.com](http://www.rembrandt400.com)

## Marking the death of Cézanne

In the south of France, particularly in Aix en Provence, art lovers will also mark 2006 as the centenary of the death of Paul Cézanne, the Impressionist painter who loved to portray the region's light, its red earth, and the mountain of Sainte Victoire.

From April, many of the places where he lived and worked will open their doors to visitors. These will include his studio at Les Lauves, where he painted his last masterpieces; the Bibémus Quarries, where the hut he rented while painting still stands; and the manor house of Jas de Bouffan, which has never before been opened to the public. Cézanne found Provence endlessly inspiring – even the card players he painted were workers at the Jas de Bouffan estate.

More energetic travellers can follow guided walks up Mont Sainte Victoire and to Gardanne, a village where the houses are piled on top of one another like children's toy bricks. Gardanne is often said to be the birthplace of art's Cubism movement.

For details, visit: [www.cezanne-2006.com](http://www.cezanne-2006.com)

## Follow the gateway to culture through

## Greece

Lying between Delphi, Epidaurus, and Olympia, the ancient city of Patras has always been a gateway to the rest of Europe. For its reign as European City of Culture 2006, it has devised a calendar of events grouped around themed periods.

Carnival Days, which draws to an end on 5 March, is based on a 170-year-old tradition of carnival in the city. One of the highlights is sure to be the unexpected



Test your endurance against the snow dogs  
Wolfgang Greiner/Imagebank Sweden

sounds made by the First Vienna Vegetable Orchestra whose members reject violins and clarinets in favour of instruments made of carrots, cucumbers, aubergines, and pumpkins.

In Days of Poetry and Music Days, which begins on 27 April and runs until 11 May, the plan is to create links between international and Greek artists. The Polish flute soloist Iwona Glinka will almost certainly not be playing an instrument that had to be harvested first. Meanwhile, the local tradition of setting poetry to music will be continued by the New Hellenic Quartet.

For details, visit: [www.patras2006.gr](http://www.patras2006.gr)

## Join the bears on parade

On March 26, the townspeople of Andenne, which lies on the river Meuse in Belgium, will continue their unusual tradition of commemorating one of their ancestors.

For the past half-century, about three weeks before Easter, they have thrown 250 teddy bears from the town-hall balcony as the climax of a parade in honour of Charles



Fire breathing dragons in Patras

Martel. Martel was the grandson of Sainte-Begge, who is said to have founded the town in the 7th century, and was only a boy when he strangled a bear that was preying of the citizens of Andenne. About 2,000 people join in the parade, many in bear costumes. Some even growl as they prowl.

For details, visit: [www.andenne.be](http://www.andenne.be)

## Test your endurance against the snow dogs

Better not take your poodle to Vindelalven in Swedish Lapland between March 16 and 19.

Over those days, the annual Vindelälvsdragnet dog sleigh race will test man and beast. The locals say that all kinds of skiers and dogs are welcome to take part, whether pedigree or mongrel. Be warned, however, that this is a 400-km relay race in 30 stages of between 6 km and 22 km.

As well as the Siberian huskies, you might expect to see other brave hounds that have taken part in the past, including whippets and beagles. The teams set off from the mountain village of Ammarnäs, racing down the frozen Vindel River to Vännäsby, where the Vindel joins the Ume River.

For details, visit: [www.vindelalven.se](http://www.vindelalven.se)

## Commemorate the builders of the Titanic

It was, of course, a marvel of its time. However, the Titanic wasn't unsinkable, as an iceberg proved on its maiden voyage in 1912. Belfast, the city that built the world's most

famous shipwreck, is still proud of the skills of the people that created it.

Between April 15 and April 22, the "Titanic Made in Belfast" programme will exhibit artifacts from the ship itself, live historical re-enactments of the Titanic story, ship models, a history of shipping and shipbuilding in Belfast, and many tours and talks with Titanic experts. The Titanic festival will serve as a curtain-raiser for the ambitious "Titanic Signature Project," which it is hoped will open on the slipway where the Titanic and its sister ships were built by the centenary of the ship's launch.

For details, visit:

[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/celebratebelfast2006](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/celebratebelfast2006)

## Row London's river

Since 1829, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge have challenged each other to a boat race.

This year, the race celebrates the 150th anniversary of its present course on the Thames, from Putney to Mortlake.

Former race participants include the photographer Lord Snowden, the actor Hugh Laurie, and the four-time Olympic gold-medallist, Matthew Pinsent. This year's race, held on 2 April, will be fiercely contested as ever.

Crowds, many of whom know nothing whatsoever about rowing, turn up to watch and yell for their favourite teams, perhaps hoping for the additional excitement of a sinking. Cambridge first sank in 1859. Last year, an estimated 250,000 spectators took to the towpaths and bridges along the Thames to watch.

For details, visit: [www.theboatrace.org](http://www.theboatrace.org)