



PRESS KIT
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Iris Festival 2019: A programme packed with festivities to mark 30 years of the Brussels-Capital Region and 150 years of the tram

From 1–5 May, marking 30 years of the Brussels Region and 150 years of the Brussels tram, the Belgian capital is putting on a huge number of original activities for visitors at various locations across the region. From the European Tram Driver Championship to the unmissable Electro Night, including a spectacular fireworks display, there will be a host of free activities celebrating both of these anniversaries. An event not to be missed.

Every year the Iris Festival celebrates the Brussels-Capital Region. It is worth noting that on 16 May 1991 the iris was adopted by the Brussels Parliament as the symbol of the Brussels Region.

Next 1 May, Brussels will be launching a week of festivities. Only **30 years** ago, the **Brussels-Capital Region** was created and **150 years** ago the **first tram** appeared on the streets. Numerous activities have been programmed to highlight these two events. The Belgian capital will also be on exhibition with the European Tram Driver Championship organised by the Brussels Public Transport System (STIB).

“2019 is no ordinary year for the Brussels-Capital Region. This year we’ll be celebrating its 30th anniversary. The region was born in January 1989. Finally, the needs of the population were taken into account when it came to political choices and decisions. It was only right to commemorate this event with the people of Brussels and with Belgium as a whole. This year, the Iris Festival lasts 5 days. It is a long weekend of celebration for Brussels’ 1,200,000 inhabitants and 184 nationalities. But this is not the only important anniversary in 2019. During the Iris Festival, we will also celebrate the 150th anniversary of the tram, a key part of the daily lives of many Brussels residents. You’ll get a unique opportunity to look back at the important milestones of its long history and discover the tram of tomorrow. Concerts, guided tours and numerous activities of all kinds are planned during the festival long weekend. A magnificent firework display on Place des Palais brings events to a close. I look forward to celebrating two incredibly symbolic anniversaries with you.” Declares Rudi Vervoort, Brussels Minister-President



Today Minister of Mobility and Public Works, Pascal Smet and Brussels Minister-President, Rudi Vervoort, presented the program for festivities linked with the 150th anniversary of the tram in Brussels.

The tram has been a vital means of transport for decades in our city. We're celebrating that with three major events: A tour of historic trams on the 1st of May, the exhibition of local trams with the presentation of the new model for Brussels on Place Royale and the European Championship for the best tram driver, organised by STIB, which will take place for the first time in Brussels.

"If chocolate, the Atomium, Art Nouveau or Magritte are symbols of our Region, the tram surely is too. It is part of our Brussels identity. The history and landscape of our city have been marked for 150 years by this mode of transport, which remains one of the most developed networks in the world today. As inhabitants of Brussels, we can be proud of this heritage and we must continue to invest and upgrade this clean and sustainable mode of transport. With the extension of tramline 94 and the creation of tramline 9 in Jette, we have shown our belief in trams for the future. In addition to that we will create two new lines to Tour & Taxis and Neder-Over-Heembeek, and extend tramline 62 to the airport. The tram will always have its place in Brussels." said by Pascal Smet, Brussels Minister for Mobility and Public Works.

Here's a preview of the 5-day festival programme.

Wednesday 1 May

Tram parade

The undisputed highpoint of the festivities celebrating the tram's 150th anniversary in Brussels will be the huge parade of classic trams along the Rue Royale, which will start at 2pm, featuring **some forty historic trams**. Virtually all the different types of tram from Brussels' rich history of trams, will be taking part. From the early horse-drawn trams to the 3000 and 4000 trams that travel through the streets of Brussels today. To organise this huge parade, a real treat for diehard fans as well as members of the public, the Brussels Tram Museum will be enlisting around 100 volunteers.

During the festivities, ten or so historic vicinal vehicles from all four corners of the country, including a steam-powered trams, will be on display on the Place Royale. But the undoubtable star of this exhibition will be... the model of the brand new TNG tram ("the Tram New Generation"), currently under construction, the first versions of which will be travelling around the streets of Brussels in 2020.



“Brussels is one of the rare cities that never did away with the tram, and that has always continued to invest in its tramway infrastructure”, points out Brieuc de Meeûs, the CEO of the STIB. “And that’s not all. We’ve got lots of plans to extend the tram network in the pipeline, and we are proud to be able to let our passengers be the first to see the life-size model of the trams of the future. It is also a huge honour for us to host the European Tram Driver Championship. An unusual competition that will help the people of Brussels appreciate the skills exhibited by our driving staff.”

The Next Generation Tram

With the 150th anniversary of the tram, we have a chance to look back over its rich history and a perfect opportunity to see what the future holds for us. STIB has ordered 60 new trams from the manufacturer Bombardier. The first examples of the Next Generation Tram will be appearing on the streets of Brussels early next year. The public will already have had a foretaste with the arrival of **the full scale model of the vehicle**. It will be on display from **1-5 May**, alongside vintage trams on Place Royale.

Thursday 2 May

Bruxelles-Brussels: a city journey

Premiere of the documentary film directed by Luc Jabon Bozar (The Henry Le Bœuf Hall)

Talking about Brussels with a walk through certain streets, boulevards, squares, lanes, and urban spaces... With these streets as the star of the show, discover the men and women walking, passing through, strolling or spend time there, celebrating and expressing themselves.

Immerse yourselves in some Brussels neighbourhoods, with informed speakers taking part, rediscover the origins and the past of these streets, ask about their changes, destruction, current transformation, and imagine what they will be like in the future. A street is not just a public thoroughfare for using and passing through. It throws up some political, economic, urban planning, social, cultural, poetic...and amusing challenges. Asking questions about those challenges shows the cost of Brussels' constant changes and how today the public is being able to reclaim their urban spaces. After all, when a street is alive, people get to share in the city...



Free guided tours on a classic tram.

To celebrate the tram's 150th anniversary, professional guides will be giving you a tour through the districts of Brussels on board a classic tram. The tours will be departing from the Place Poelaert on Thursday and Friday 2 and 3 May, and will be in French, English and Dutch. The journey will take around 2hr30 and will include a stop at the vicinal exhibition on the Place Royale. A unique, free event to find out more about this public transport heritage in the company of an expert.

Friday 3 May

Manneken Pis in STIB uniform

Brussels' most famous little boy, Manneken Pis, is going to be dressed up in the STIB's new driver's uniform. This uniform, designed by Maison Strelli, will be the 3rd STIB outfit that Manneken Pis has worn over the years. The change of uniforms for STIB staff will take place on 2 May.

Electro Night

Electro Night brings music lovers together year after year. DJ sets will be taking place in Place des Palais, in the heart of the capital, and will once again be headlined by some of the major Belgian and international names.

Saturday 4 May

Iris Festival across the Brussels districts

This event invites all passers-by, be they natives of Brussels or tourists, to discover a Brussels that is off the beaten track. A huge number of secret places or places normally closed to the public will be offering exceptional visits on this festive Saturday, under the banner of discovery and togetherness.

As part of the 2019 events, the Iris Festival taking part across the communes will be showcasing Brussels City, Ganshoren, Berchem-Sainte-Agathe and Koekelberg. Guided visits or walks are also organised in each of the four communes taking part.

Europe Day

The European Institutions will open their doors to the public and offer guided tours all day long. A unique occasion to discover the inner workings of the European Union. Guided tours of sites, information stands, interactive activities, talks, concerts and exhibitions in the European quarter – it's all on the menu to guarantee a day of fun and learning for the family or among friends.

More info: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/symbols/europe-day/open-day-brussels_en



The European Tram Driver Championship

The 8th European Tram Driver Championship will be taking place on Saturday 4 May too. Mixed teams of tram drivers from 25 European cities will battle it out over the course of a number of different challenges.

This year, Brussels' public transport company will be organising the event. The championship will be held on Saturday 4 May along the Rue Royale, by the Parc de Bruxelles, and will be open to the public. The competition, which will take place in public, starts at 10 o'clock and finishes at around 5 o'clock when the winners will be announced. Practices will be held on Friday 3 May at the STIB depot in Haren.

The championship predominantly tests drivers' driving skills, for example with a route marked by cones that must not be touched, stopping as close as possible to a particular obstacle, or "tram bowling".

Cities taking part: Basel, Barcelona, Bergen, Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, Krakow, Dresden, Dublin, Gothenburg, Helsinki, Istanbul, Luxembourg, Malaga, Manchester, Milan, Moscow, Oradea, Paris, Porto, Prague, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Stuttgart and Vienna.

Concert on the Place des Palais

To close the day with a flourish, people are invited along to several exceptional concerts being performed by Belgian and international artists.

A spectacular fireworks display will begin at around 11 p.m. at the Place des Palais.

Sunday 5 May

Festive Park

Street arts

During the Iris Festival, street art is showcased through an artistic programme which brings together the best and brightest in this field from Brussels and elsewhere. Circus arts, street theatre, interactive games, all kinds of workshops, dance demonstrations, children's activities and much more. Brussels Park will be transformed for a day into a theatre.

Sporting entertainment

A host of sporting activities will also punctuate the day.

Thematic villages

From 12:00–6:00 p.m., a hundred or so associations from the Region's different districts will be present in Brussels Park, including:



- Discover the City Village
- Europe Village
- Kids Village
- Mixity Village
- Arts, Cultural Heritage & Museums
- Public Village
- Science Village
- Sports Village
- ULB Village
- Districts Village

Festival at the Parliament

The Iris Festival at the Brussels Parliament is the chance to discover, while having some fun, an historical building right at the heart of the lives of its inhabitants. Marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Brussels region, you also have a chance to get to grips, alongside some real Brussels citizens, with zwanze (Brussels humour)... and even discover an exhibition dedicated to the parliamentary democracy and architecture.

Brussels Swings!

A documentary film by Marie-Jo Lafontaine screening as part of the "Brussels on screen" retrospective

Flagey (Studio 5)

19:30 (Screening with the director)

To mark the 30th anniversary of the Brussels-Capital Region and the 150th anniversary of the Brussels tram, Flagey and Cinematek are showing a retrospective entitled "Brussels on screen". This film cycle travels back through time to the very beginning of silent cinema, from amateur short film to fiction, taking in the documentary, with Brussels taking pride of place as film backdrop.

The documentary "Brussels Swings" is being screened as part of the retrospective. Marie-Jo Lafontaine has captured the energy of musicians, audiences and a city on the move. The audience is projected into the space of a thousand and one music, seen as pulsations of the City of Brussels. The music describe the city's diversity, from the appeal of the cello to the Congolese rumba, from punk to electro-acoustic music, from noise to opera, from the strains of the accordion to rap.

Further information about Brussels on screen:

<https://www.flagey.be/en/group/6027-bruxelles-a-l-ecran>



A trip on a classic tram

On Sunday 5 May, visitors will also be able to enjoy a journey on a classic tram for free along the original 1869 route (around the Parc de Bruxelles). And this will not be a one-off event. From now on, the Tram Museum will be putting on trips along this part of the route on bank holidays, as is already the case every weekend from April to September inclusive, along the Avenue de Tervueren in Woluwe.

Willem Draps, CEO of the Tram Museum: "As the managers of the historic heritage of Brussels' public transport, we really had to tell the locals about the 150th anniversary of the launch of the first tramline along the Avenue Louise on 1 May 1869. With the support of the STIB and the regional authorities, more than a hundred volunteers will be helping our not-for-profit organisation bring this magnificent heritage back to life on Wednesday 1 and Sunday 5 May. After that, on every bank holiday during the summer, these same volunteers will also be helping to run a new line, 'BS', connecting the Bois (Legrand stop) to the Église Sainte-Marie, on the classic tramways from the early 20th century."

Throughout the weekend

Experience.brussels

Since 2008, experience.brussels has been showing visitors the capital of Europe as they have never seen it before. The exhibition presents Brussels, its districts and its districts in an innovative, playful and original manner. With a quiz, an interactive model of the Brussels-Capital Region, a photo exhibit and even sonic umbrellas, visitors can discover Brussels: a modern, cosmopolitan, multifaceted city.

In 2019, the **experience.brussels** exhibition is blowing out ten birthday candles, and for this exceptional birthday, there's an exceptional event! Up to 5 May 2019, visitors are being invited to express their love for Brussels. All they need to do is to take a photo in their favourite spot around the capital and take their place in the Time Capsule to record their hopes for Brussels over the next 10 years. Their stories will be sealed and revealed to the public in an exhibition taking place in 2028. And 500 first-comers will get to take part in a tempting competition...

Further information: <http://www.experience.brussels> and www.time-capsule.brussels

The Iris Food Corner

The public can enjoy a gourmet break with the Iris Food Corner, where many original and tasty dishes will be on offer: cocktails, falafels, bagels, vegan burgers, Thai, African, Italian, Greek, Moroccan, Lebanese, Belgian and many more specialities... This year the Food Corner will be taking place on the Place des Palais and in Coudenberg street. In total, no less than 40 food trucks will be present.



The Museum of Natural Sciences is planning to put on its own surprise to celebrate the Region's 30th anniversary...

This Museum is one of the most popular in Brussels. Each year, more than 300,000 visitors make their way around its 10,000m² of permanent and temporary exhibitions. Galleries dedicated to the Dinosaur (the biggest in Europe), Evolution and Humankind, the Mosasaur Hall, more recently the arrival of Ben the Plateosaurus, and coming soon, the Living Planet: there are lots of past and future projects that have been made possible thanks to the Region's support.

Something spectacular is going on in the laboratories and behind the scenes at the Institute... Scientists, museologists and all the teams are working all out on a massive surprise... But that's all we're going to say about it... A birthday without a surprise just isn't as much fun! Some clues will be revealed on 1 April and during the Iris Festival, where we look forward to seeing you at our stand! Watch this space! We look forward to seeing you at the Museum on 7 May for the public opening!

**Audrey Hepburn : the woman behind the legend
Espace Vandenberght**

Intimate Audrey is an exhibition on the life of Audrey Hepburn created by her son, Sean Hepburn Ferrer, to celebrate her 90th birthday in the town of her birth, Brussels. The exhibition focuses entirely on the woman and not on the icon through photographs, souvenirs, dresses, accessories and her fashion drawings.

The exhibition, which covers more than 800m² on the first two floors of the Vandenberght Gallery in Brussels, includes several hundred original and reprinted photographs, a limited number of souvenirs, dresses and accessories, as well as her unpublished works, fashion drawings and humanitarian writings. A series of poignant videos brings each chapter of the icon's life to life.

All profits will go to EURORDIS-Rare Diseases Europe and to Brugmann and Bordet hospitals in Brussels.



The Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences is preparing a surprise to mark 30 years of the Region

The Museum is one of Brussels' most visited. Every year, more than 300,000 visitors discover its rooms. They have the Dinosaur Gallery (the largest in Europe), halls on Evolution and the History of Mankind. Countless projects that have been created with the support of the region.

It is also the showcase of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, a true centre of excellence in scientific research that flies the flag of Brussels and Belgium high and well beyond its borders, often in collaboration with the Brussels-Capital Region.

There is something spectacular going on in the Institute's laboratories and corridors. Scientists, museologists and all the teams are working hard to prepare a major surprise. But we're not going to spoil the surprise, because birthdays without surprises are no fun at all! Little clues will be revealed from 1 April and during the Iris Festival where we will welcome you at our stand! Come down to the museum on 7 May for the grand opening.

Additional information

150 years of the tram: a rich history of the tram in Brussels

On 1 May 1869, the first horse-drawn tram officially started operating on the first tramline in Brussels along Avenue Louise (between the Porte de Namur and the Bois de la Cambre). In those days, only the well-off could afford to take the tram. The aim of this first tram line was also to show off Avenue Louise, created five years before, and to allow local residents to get to the Bois, sheltered from any bad weather.

Horse traction proved very costly, though, on account of the slow advance of the horses, especially on the many hills around Brussels. In 1894, when trams started running on electricity, it gradually became more cost-effective. Meanwhile, many private operators began to merge with each other until a group was formed, on 1 January 1928, as a limited company called "Les Tramways Bruxellois" ("Brussels Tramlines"). A significant rationalisation of the tram fleet followed. And they were all given the same colour: a shade of yellow (called primrose), which lasted until 1991.

The Universal Exhibition of 1935 and the constant concern with improving productivity led the operator to adopt a new tram model using bogies in place of the train made up of a tractor engine and trailer. This enabled it to dispense with one of the two conductors that were needed for each vehicle. From 1977 onward, the driver became the only member of staff on board.

The vehicles continued to evolve and thanks to fully-integrated bogies, the first "low-floor" appeared in 1994. This made it easier for passengers to get on and off.



Over the years, trams have met stiff competition from cars, especially in the period following the Second World War. Contrary to many other cities though, Brussels never said goodbye to its trams. The introduction of the first pre-metro tunnels (the underground tram) in 1969 and 1970 and above all the entry into service of the low-floor tram in the early 90s saw a revival of the tram in the capital.

Today, STIB is proud to be able to transport their passengers on modern trams fitted with leather seats and which operate on a constantly growing network.

150 years of the tram: part of Brussels' rich heritage

On 1 May 1869, the first horse-drawn tramway officially travelled on the first ever tramline in Brussels along the Avenue Louise (between the Porte de Namur and the Bois de la Cambre). At this time, the tram was only accessible to the wealthy bourgeoisie. The purpose of this first tramline was to showcase the Avenue Louise, the prestigious thoroughfare inaugurated five years before, and to make it possible for locals to get to the Bois, sheltered from any bad weather.

The use of horses proved very expensive, and not very well-suited to Brussels' sloped roads, and so the gradual introduction of electricity offered a new way of running the tramway in 1894, coinciding with a new lease of life. In the meantime, lots of private operators began to merge, and ended up by forming "Les Tramways Bruxellois SA" on 1 January 1928. The result of this merger was the significant streamlining of the tram fleet and the standardisation of the vehicle colours: a particular shade of yellow (called "primerose") was chosen. It was used until 1991.

The 1935 World's Fair and the constant commitment to improving productivity led the operator to choose a new model of tram using bogies instead of the traditional convoy made up of a locomotive and a trailer. This new configuration of vehicles meant that one of the two conductors, who accompanied each vehicle, was no longer needed.

The full integration of bogies under the floor meant that it was easier than ever for travellers to get on and off. The first so-called "low-floor" trams appeared in Brussels in 1994, and they were called T2000s.

Over the years, trams have experienced plenty of competition from cars, especially in the years following the Second World War. At this time, growing cities needed road networks offering automobiles as much space as possible. But unlike many other European cities, Brussels never abandoned its trams. The arrival of the first pre-metro tunnels (the underground tram) in 1969 and 1970, and more importantly the introduction of the



beautifully designed low-floor tram in the early 90s, helped to breathe new life into the Capital's tramway.

Today, the STIB is proud to be able to transport its passengers on trams boasting a modern design, equipped with leather seats, travelling around a network that is constantly growing, running on their own lanes over many sections.

European Tram Driver Championship

The European Tram Driver Championship is an institution in the public transport world. Launched 8 years ago, this competition recognises the skill of drivers working for public transport companies in Europe.

On Saturday 4 May, for the first time, Brussels will be hosting this championship, this year organised by the STIB. Brussels' public transport company will be entering a team made up of a male driver from the depot on the Avenue du Roi and a female driver from the Ixelles depot. They will both be bearing the STIB and Brussels colours.

Their driving skills will be judged over the course of 6 challenges organised into two rounds. One challenge will test their anticipation and braking abilities. But the most unusual challenge will no doubt be the tram bowling test, where our representatives will have to skilfully guide a huge bowling ball using the nose of their vehicle so that it knocks over as many skittles as possible.

The time taken to complete this round will contribute to the end result.

Further information at www.fetedeliris.brussels (website regularly updated), www.stib.brussels, www.trammuseum.brussels and www.tramem.eu

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