

# Caring for your antique and vintage luggage



Leslie Verrinder, specialist dealer at Tin Tin Collectables, gives his expert tips for keeping your treasured suitcases and trunks in shipshape condition

According to our expert there are really just two things you need to keep old leather luggage looking its best, whether it be a trunk, a suitcase or a soft-sided bag. ‘Elbow grease and a clear wax polish,’ proclaims Leslie, owner of Tin Tin Collectables at Alfies Antique Market, a shop stacked to the ceiling with an astounding array of antique and vintage suitcases, hatboxes, holdalls and trunks.

‘The worst thing you can do,’ he continues, ‘is to put a coloured polish on, like a brown shoe polish. What you are trying to do is bring out the natural patina and original beauty of the leather.’

Fastenings and locks can likewise be given a shine with a metal polish, but this is down to personal taste as many people prefer to keep these authentically tarnished or dulled. It’s the same with the linings – if you are going to use your piece to store something precious, or the lining is very tatty, you may want to get it re-lined (speak to a dealer for advice), otherwise a good vacuuming will suffice.

Original labels and stickers can add to the visual appeal and should be left on but, beware, says Leslie, of the labels that look too artfully placed, as these are likely to have been added later. ‘Labels would have been slapped on by a luggage handler, so there should be no artistic merit. If you get a hint of artistic talent having been involved, alarm bells should ring.’

Leslie’s clients buy his luggage for ‘storage and for interest’ he says. ‘Three suitcases in a pile with a lamp on top will make a great side table or



ABOVE Perfect for storage in the home: a selection of vintage leather cases from Bentleys and Henry Gregory

bedside table and people use the trunks as end-of-bed storage or as coffee tables.’

One thing Leslie would certainly not recommend using an antique or vintage leather suitcase for is travelling. ‘These are heavy pieces with brass locks that were made long before the luggage allowance came in, and can weigh 10, 12 or 15kg, even before you’ve put anything in them,’ he says. Best, then, to leave them at home, where you can admire their beauty and dream about the golden age of travel.

## WHERE TO BUY

- ✦ **Bentleys**, 91 Lower Sloane Street, London, SW1W 8DA. 020 7730 6832; bentleyslondon.com
- ✦ **Fine and Vintage**, Stall 24, Portobello Road, London, W11 2DY. 07876 500685; fineandvintage.co.uk
- ✦ **Henry Gregory**, 82 Portobello Road, London, W11 2QD. 020 7792 9221; henrygregoryantiques.com
- ✦ **London Vintage Luggage**, 07850 936469; londonvintageluggage.com
- ✦ **Tin Tin Collectables**, Alfies Antiques Market, 18–25 Church Street, Marylebone, London, NW8 8DT. 0207 258 1305; tintincollectables.net

## WHERE TO SEE

- ✦ **Victoria and Albert Museum**, Cromwell Road, London, SW7 2RL. 020 7942 2000; vam.ac.uk
- ✦ **Walsall Leather Museum**, Littleton Street West, Walsall, WS2 8EW. 01922 652288; cms.walsall.gov.uk/leathermuseum

## WHAT TO READ

- ✦ **Louis Vuitton: The Spirit of Travel** by Patrick Mauriès and Pierre Léonforté (Flammarion, 2016)
- ✦ **Trunks, Traveling Bags & Satchels** by Roseann Ettinger (Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 1998)
- ✦ **Vintage Luggage: A Case Study** by Helenka Gulshan (Philip Wilson, 1998)

## Brands to look out for

### ✦ Alfred Dunhill

Originally a saddlery business specialising in luggage for motor cars, now a luxury gentleman’s clothing and accessories company.

✦ **Asprey** One of the best of the British brands. Famous for its royal patronage, it still

trades from its flagship store on New Bond Street, London, which opened in 1847.

✦ **Goyard** Famous French trunk maker based in Paris, of similar age and pedigree to Louis Vuitton but rather shy of the limelight.

### ✦ John Pound and Co

A top British trunk and leather goods manufacturer, which began trading in 1823.

✦ **Moynat** Another top French name. Its famous boutique on Avenue d’Opera, Paris, traded for 100 years from 1876 to 1976.