

# QUIRKY COLLECTIONS

Touring Portland's unusual museums

By Susan G. Hauser

» Portland is known for its many strange and curious museums. Touring these labors of love is a fun way to see something different while exploring the city's many neighborhoods.

Probably the best-known museum on this list is The Freakybuttrue Peculiarium and Museum, located in the Northwest District of downtown Portland. This pastiche of sci-fi items, historical oddities and urban legends is a fun family stop, especially if there are adolescents in tow. It is a little like visiting a haunted house, but without the screams. However, be prepared for plenty of gross sights, such as the tub o' guts and the popular alien autopsy, a display depicting visitors from another planet dissecting someone. You can stick your head up through a hole in the table, so it looks like you are the subject being dissected. And for those who need a hug, there's an enormous, but kindly, Bigfoot model waiting by the door ([peculiarium.com](http://peculiarium.com); \$5).

At first glance, Movie Madness, in East Portland's Belmont neighborhood, looks like your average video-rental shop. However, on closer inspection, you'll see that it is also home to a collection of rare items of movie memorabilia. When owner Mike Clark announced his retirement and imminent store closing last year, Portlanders realized their love of his collection and came to the shop's rescue. A robust crowdfunding campaign allowed Portland's non-profit Hollywood Theatre to take over the shop and Clark's large collection of movie costumes and props.

Among the rental videos, you'll see authentic costumes such as Faye Dunaway's dress from *Bonnie and Clyde*, the pants worn by Frank Morgan as Professor Marvel in *The Wizard of Oz* and Peter Boyle's monster attire from *Young Frankenstein*. The shop's film props include the knife from *Psycho*, an alien head from the movie *Aliens*, and a statue of the Maltese Falcon made from the original mold, as well as dozens of vintage posters ([moviemadnessvideo.com](http://moviemadnessvideo.com); free).



» Flightless Spinybirds, above, is an art piece at The Zymoglyphic Museum. Below, Peter Boyle's costume worn in *Young Frankenstein* is on display at Movie Madness.



For a different experience, visit The Zymoglyphic Museum. This is one of the more bizarre collections found in the city, and its displays can defy description. Owner Jim Stewart has located the collection in his two-story garage in the Mount Tabor neighborhood. The museum is open to the public every second and fourth Sunday of the month. It is

A replica of a Native American Sugpiaq kayak from the Lincoln Street Kayak & Canoe Museum.







» Cliff Barackman, far left, who stars in the TV show *Finding Bigfoot*, poses at *The Freakybuttrue Peculiarium and Museum*. A marionette of Queen Elizabeth I, left, is on display at the *Portland Puppet Museum*.

dedicated to the fictitious land Stewart calls the “Zymoglyphic region,” and it is full of whimsical figurines, strange artifacts and pieces of art, such as the *Self-Destroying Automaton*, which is composed of an aging clock face with a doll’s arm and a crab’s leg on a metal stand. Stewart has been collecting odds and ends and making his own make-believe museums since he was 10. His enchanting and sometimes very odd dioramas include fossils, shells, rocks, small items, toys and mounted bugs. One piece, titled

*Deception*, includes a plastic squid and crabs, and an oyster shell wearing sunglasses (zymoglyphic.org; free).

For paddling enthusiasts, Lincoln Street Kayak & Canoe Museum is a gem. Owner Harvey Golden says the boat museum is one of the largest collections of replica kayaks and canoes in the world. Golden has traveled the world to find centuries-old original kayaks and canoes in museums. He has measured them meticulously and then built nearly 60 replicas with modern materials—all tested on the Columbia River. His third book on the history of the boats will be published soon (traditionalkayaks.com; free).

In a charming Sellwood-neighborhood shop in South Portland, visitors will find the Portland Puppet Museum, where you can admire rotating exhibits of owner Steven Overton’s 2,000 hand-built puppets, as well as puppets from around the world. A veteran puppet master of stage and screen, Overton offers workshops on making intricate marionettes and hand puppets. The museum also converts into a stage for live performances. During the summer, Overton performs many shows outdoors (puppetmuseum.com; free). ✈

FROM LEFT, MIKE WELLINS; PORTLAND PUPPET MUSEUM



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