PARIS, Dec 16, 2008 (AFP) - Five sticks of dynamite were discovered Tuesday at the Printemps' flagship store on Boulevard Haussmann, a magnet for local shoppers and tourists alike.

The shopping emporium, where five sticks of dynamite were discovered Tuesday, sells top-of-the-range goods to an average of 100,000 customers daily, about a quarter of whom are tourists.

It covers 48,000 square metres (517,000 square feet) over three buildings of five to nine floors each.

The dynamite was discovered in a toilet on the third floor of one of the buildings, in the menswear section.

Printemps was founded in 1865 by Jules Jaluzot, who described it as the "cathedral of commerce". It quickly became one of the capital's main showcases.

Today, it employs 2,000 staff and boasts an international reputation.

Although Printemps Haussmann is only one of 17 stores in the chain, it brings in 450 million euros (620 million dollars) or 45 percent of the group's turnover.

In 2006, Francois-Henri Pinault, head of the French retail and luxury goods group PPR, sold Printemps for 1.1 billion euros to Maurizio Borletti, the chief shareholder in the Italian chain La Rinascente. Borletti had backing from Deutsche Bank.

The new owners invested 30 million euros in major renovations in early 2008, restoring the facades and the cupolas of the buildings, which since 1975 have been listed as historic monuments.

Next door to Printemps lies one of its main rivals, Les Galeries Lafayette another up-market shopping complex that covers nearly 67,000 square metres and attracts 150,000 customers daily, 45 percent of whom are tourists.

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