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| **Ricarda GROMMES** |

MICHELIN-STARRED CHEF  
WILL TAKE HER CRAFT TO PARIS

WAB 42 | SUMMER 2024

**INVESTMENT**

Wallonia's space sector is reaching for the stars

**FOCUS**

Paris Olympics: talented athletes and a buzz-filled Belgium House

**PANORAMA**

Jean-Marie Louis's Illustro

## GETTING INVOLVED!

Wallonia is a land of opportunity, where men and women have ideas galore and hatch all kinds of projects and creations that help people the world over. Wallonia is also a fertile ground for high-level athletes, who try to outdo themselves day in, day out to reach the Olympic Games.

The Games are about taking part first and foremost—that was the view of Pierre de Coubertin, who revived the modern Games in the late 19th century. Or, as Jean-Michel Saive, current president of the BOIC, puts it, the Games are about “living through incredible moments in sport, but also the emotions that will stay with us our whole lives.” These driving forces are underpinned by values such as respect, friendship, and excellence, which go beyond just competitive performance, and which make this issue of WAB all the richer by serving as lessons for all of us.

For these athletes who are putting their hearts and souls into their performance, the Olympic Games are just one stop in their marathon journey. The same goes for the caterers and artists who will bring the Belgium House to life with our core values of excellence in hospitality, and for the artisans and entrepreneurs who seek to show their progress in this interconnected world, which is changing faster and faster. Between every Pierre de Froidmont, every Ricarda Grommes, every Jean-Marie Louis, and Mentissa or Matexi company, there’s not a dime’s worth of difference: they all have the same down-to-earth values and enthusiasm that set them apart.

Is enthusiastically getting involved contagious? Whether on land, at sea, or in space, I certainly hope so!

*Pascale Delcomminette*

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**Editorial coordination**

Bernadette Pâques

**Reporters** Angélique Belokopytov

Bernadette Pâques

Régine Kerzmann

**Contributors** Jane French

Ciarán Ó Faoláin

Elizabeth Mudie

Ojas Chaudhari

Tom French

**Art director** Angélique Belokopytov

**Layout** Christine Voss

**Wallonia Export & Investment Agency**

Pascale Delcomminette

Marie-Catherine Duchêne

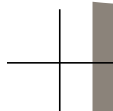
Place Saintelette 2

B - 1080 Brussels

+32(0)2.421.85.76

mc.duchene@awex.be

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**RAPHAËL LIÉGEOIS WILL BE THE 3RD BELGIAN ASTRONAUT IN HISTORY**

This was announced by the Director General of the European Space Agency on 22 May. After Dirk Frimout (1992) and Frank De Winne (2002 and 2009), the 36-year-old from Namur will be the first Belgian French speaker in history to head up to the International Space Station. His 6-month mission is scheduled to start in autumn 2026. In the meantime, Raphaël, who has a degree in biomedical engineering and neuroscience, has already started an intensive and rigorous training regimen, mainly in Houston.



**“WALLONIE AMBITIONS OR”: SUPPORT FOR THE WALLOON SPORTING ELITE**

Each year, the Walloon government names athletes or sports clubs as ambassadors. Within the “Wallonie Ambitions Or” (“Wallonia goes for gold”) project, Wallonia financially supports athletes with notable or unusual careers to help raise its profile. These athletes showcase Walloon sporting infrastructure by promoting their particular sports and facilities. At the end of May 2024, 58 individual candidates were selected, and were awarded a total of €257,000. Similarly, 15 teams were selected and were awarded €42,000 between them.

**HEALTHCARE: FEDERALISM AT THE HEART OF THE BIOWIN - MEVDIA ACCORD**

In mid-May, BioWin, the Walloon healthcare-competitiveness hub, and Mevdia, the Flemish healthcare-innovation hub, announced their ground-breaking strategic partnership to promote healthcare innovation in Belgium. They have several goals: “To present a united front in the face of challenges in the field, and to harmonise financing in order to launch projects in which Walloon and Flemish companies work together, while facilitating the relationship between the key players in both regions—governments, businesses, research institutes, and hospitals.”



### THE UCB GROUP OPENS A NEW BIOPHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTION UNIT

On 26 April 2024, a cutting-edge biotechnology factory was opened in Braine-l'Alleud, on UCB's site. This site will produce next-generation medicines for the global market. The high-tech factory is the result of a 300-million-euro investment. The building is fitted with the latest technology, and was built with sustainability and energy conservation in mind.



### WALLONIA IS WORKING WITH MICROSOFT AND PROXIMUS TO INTEGRATE AI INTO ITS BUSINESSES

The MIC is a public-private partnership, founded in 2009, between Wallonia, Microsoft, Proximus, and Dell. It aims to contribute to the economic and technological development of Walloon SMEs. At the end of May 2024, it unveiled an action plan to accelerate the introduction of AI within Walloon companies. Wallonia is determined not to miss out on this technology, which is seen as a driver of economic growth, even though only 7% of Belgians use AI for professional purposes. This plan is twofold: first, show how this technology is for everyone, and second, promote innovation and training.



### PAIRI DAIZA OPENS ITS NINTH WORLD ON ITS THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

In early May 2024, the Pairi Daiza animal park opened its ninth world, dedicated to Japan, to mark its thirtieth anniversary. The Japanese ambassador to Belgium was present. The world, called "The Islands of the Rising Sun", covers almost a hectare of land and represents four of Japan's islands—Hokkaido, Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku—with their animals, gardens, and ancestral cultural traditions. The new world, which represents an investment of 1.9 million euros, will now dazzle and delight the 2.3 million visitors who come to Pairi Daiza each year.



## RICARDA GROMMES

WILL BE PUTTING ON A BIG SPREAD  
FOR THE PARIS OLYMPICS



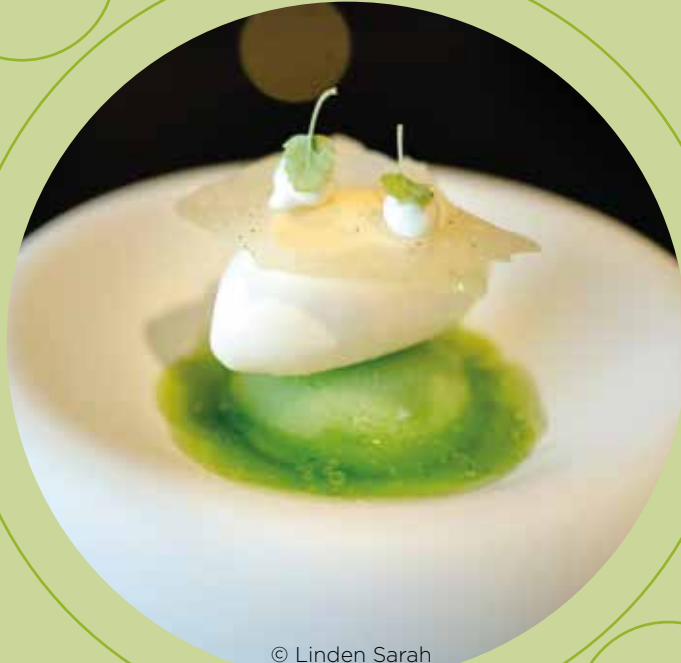
Ricarda is one of only a few women in Belgium to have been awarded a Michelin star.

Although she usually works in the background, she will be in the spotlight during the 2024 Olympic Games, working as part of the Lotto Belgium House team with two other Michelin-starred chefs.





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“Ricarda Grommes doesn’t seek out the spotlight. She prefers to focus on her very pleasant and elegantly designed restaurant, where you can feel how important it is that things are done well.” This is how the Michelin Guide described the person to whom they awarded the title of “Michelin Female Chef 2017” in recognition of her outstanding personality and commitment. The same year, the Guide also awarded a star to Ricarda’s restaurant, Quadras in Saint-Vith, which had been open for barely a year.

Ricarda grew up in the Saint-Vith region of Belgium, and has always had a passion for cooking. “I always loved cooking together with my mother, and I soon realised that I wanted to be a chef.” She trained in great kitchens such as le Clos Saint-Denis (2\*\*) in Kortesseem, and Sonnora (3\*\*), in Dreis,

Germany, where she worked up until she opened Quadras, which has won major plaudits. “All this recognition has been wonderful, of course, but the most important thing for me is that my customers are happy.”

In the kitchen, as in her life, Ricarda believes in “determination, joy, happiness and responsibility”—values that she will be putting on full display at the next Olympics. The Belgium House has brought in three Michelin-starred chefs to showcase Belgian gastronomy. Ricarda Grommes will be working along with Yves Mattagne from La Villa Lorraine in Brussels (2\*\*) and Thijs Vervloet from Colette in Averbode (2\*\*). Ricarda and her team will be in the kitchens from 7 to 11 August. This will be a first for her: she generally turns down big events so she can focus on her restaurant.

“But when we got the request to go to Paris, we made up our minds pretty much on the spot. We’re so proud to be part of the delegation: it’s not every day that this sort of opportunity comes along.” With the support of her female sous-chef, Lorena, and her pastry chef, Marc, the team has to serve 300 covers a day, which “will represent Wallonia by showcasing the region through a range of different produce.”

Ricarda is especially pleased that she and her team are set to meet this challenge against the backdrop of the Olympics. She’s always been sporty herself: she jogs, and runs marathons. “When you run a marathon, passion, stamina and absolute determination are key, even in the preparation phase. And these factors are all just as important when it comes to cuisine.

# GANTREX DROPS THE ANCHOR IN THE WORLD OF PORT CRANE SERVICES

**Port crane services are the new market that is opening up for Nivelles-based company Gantrex, the global leader in engineering solutions for crane rails and specialty rail tracks.**

Since 1971, Gantrex has specialised in the design, supply, and installation of tracks for heavy industrial machinery. Today, they are a world leader in the field: “Gantrex has a unique position in the market as a one-stop shop”, says COO Axel Boitel. The company has now taken on a new sector, port crane services. First it took over Spanish company ABS Consultor in 2022, and then Dutch company Liftcom (in Rotterdam, the number-one harbour in Europe) in 2024: “We carry out operations directly on harbour cranes, such as repairs and maintenance”, as well as diagnostic processes “such as visual inspections of equipment and vibration analysis.” The company does both predictive and corrective

maintenance with tools such as 3D Scanning, with which it can create a 3D model of a harbour crane, as well as data acquisition and processing. “This helps us to determine the causes of any problems the cranes might run into, and to recommend solutions to fix any defects.”

Gantrex is thus developing within a niche market, even as it stays true to its Belgian roots. “We produce part of the solution in Belgium, and we don’t have any distributors.” Although “the talent war has become global”, Belgium has true know-how as well as a qualified workforce, even if, as Axel Boitel says, “it’s getting harder to justify our positioning in terms of competitiveness compared with other countries.” This is because

of the economic context, the administrative complexity involved, and a certain mismatch between what is taught in universities and technical schools and what companies are looking for.

And that’s not even to mention AI. “We’re currently trying out various AI tools within our digitisation process, even as we focus on the potential to add value to our customers’ experience.” That’s very much in line with many of Gantrex’s future plans in the ever-evolving field of port crane services, such as “preparing the factories for tomorrow’s technological context and ESG criteria, and investing in human capital.”





2023 turnover: 113 million euros



450 employees in roughly 20 countries



Horizon 2026: double the turnover from PCS activities



Over 50 years in existence

# WALLONIA'S SPACE SECTOR IS REACHING FOR THE STARS

At the end of 2023, the European Investment Bank (EIB) signed a memorandum of understanding with Wallonia regarding the Wallonia's space sector. According to Michel Stassart, Deputy Managing Director for Space Activities at Skywin, Wallonia's aerospace cluster, the sector has a bright future.



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This agreement sets out a framework for cooperation between the EIB and Wallonia to develop the Walloon space sector, by identifying ambitious projects. "Skywin's role will also be to put projects forward", says Michel Stassart, so they could benefit from EIB support in terms of financing as well as technical and financial advice. This agreement puts Wallonia on the European map: "It will attract the attention of the public, but also of financiers. It is important to have that visibility, and to have an active and attractive industrial base."

Some projects are already underway, including Aerospacelab. This scale-

up, which was started just six years ago, aims to become a major entity within the Belgian and European space sector, with a production plant in Louvain-la-Neuve, which started operating in 2022 and produces 24 satellites a year, but also with its 16,000-square-metre "Megafactory" project, which is slated to be completed in Charleroi by 2026. The idea is that it will become the third-largest factory in the world after those of Amazon and SpaceX, and that it will produce up to 500 satellites a year.

"We are currently experiencing a phase of consolidation within the industry", says Michel. In fact,

the space strategy for 2025 that Skywin drew up two years ago "already needs to be reviewed". The shift is now away from a strategy that positions Walloon scientific and industrial skills into Earth Observation and Launchers at a European and global level, and towards a new component, "space defence", which is set to "take on increasing importance in Wallonia and Belgium and thus ensure that Europe secures its autonomy in this strategically important area."



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# + OVERDRIVE RACING: HYDROGEN-POWERED RACING CARS IN THE DAKAR RALLY

**On the world motorsports scene, Overdrive Racing and its boss, Jean-Marc Fortin, need no introduction. With a string of rally and rally-raid victories behind them, the company and the man in its driver's seat are now looking to the future by developing HySE, a hydrogen-powered buggy.**

The project is backed by a consortium of Japanese companies, Toyota, Kawasaki, Honda, Suzuki, and Yamaha). Fortin, who is François Duval's former co-driver and who hails from Huy, is proud of the HySE (Hydrogen Small Engine) prototype: "We designed it in 2023. The idea was to create a hydrogen-powered buggy, and we pulled that off in 9 months." At the moment, it can go for 120 to 150 kilometres on 3 canisters of hydrogen. It took part in the Dakar Rally 2024, in a special category. "The idea is to

increase its range. We're working with our partners to offer fully autonomous hydrogen cars by 2029." The cars will take part in the Dakar Rally over a distance of 400 to 500 kilometres.

Overdrive Racing can rely on its solid track record. Founded in 2007 and backed by Toyota since 2012, the company has successfully raced its Toyota Hilux Dakar cars in the Rally-Raid World Championship. Asked whether hydrogen is the way forward, Jean-Marc Fortin is clear: "Yes. It's the

technology of the future", with two major advantages: "it's got a noisy engine for enthusiasts, but only emits water."

This season, incidentally, the Villers-based company is fielding a certain Guillaume de Mévius, the son of Grégoire, who was Fortin's co-driver a few years ago. Guillaume took an historic second place in the Dakar Rally on 19 January, in the car category. It seems clear that the baton's been passed and the story continues.







From 26 July to 11 August, during the Paris Olympics, Wallonia will be working hard to showcase not only the performances of its athletes such as Pierre de Froidmont, Claire Michel, and Maxime Hodries, but also its values and outlook. And the Belgium House will be playing its part, serving as a unique meeting place for partners, athletes, the media, and supporters.





# THE BELGIAN DELEGATION WILL BE SHINING IN THE CITY OF LIGHT

**The 2024 Paris Olympic Games will be full of firsts for the Belgian delegation. Jean-Michel Saive says that, for competitors and supporters alike, these Games will be all about outdoing ourselves, and about sharing the excitement and the experience, whether on the track or in the Belgium House.**

“Respect, friendship, and excellence, beyond the competitions themselves—these are the values that represent the Games, says Jean-Michel Saive, President of the Comité Olympique Interfédéral Belge (Belgian Interfederal and Olympic Committee). “The Olympic Truce is also important: it’s a moment of peace”, adds Saive, who is widely recognised as one of the best table tennis players of all time. “It’s a time for true grit and for dreams”, whether you’re a supporter or an athlete. With many talented athletes taking part, Belgium will be shining, with a larger delegation than at the last Games in Tokyo. It is also an opportunity for Belgium and its regions, including Wallonia, to showcase their athletes and sports facilities. “There will be 3 hubs where athletes can train, including one at Louvain-la-Neuve,” focussing on athletics, tennis, and judo. “Belgium, including Wallonia, has a reputation for nurturing sports: it’s because athletes can train in their home country that we have such a great delegation.” This goes for able-bodied athletes and our Paralympians. Belgium will be just as well represented in the Paralympic Games. “Inclusion is the driving force. The sense of sharing and the self-sacrifice on the part of these athletes can serve as a lesson to us all.”

The Olympic Games will also be an opportunity to get together at the Lotto Belgium House. “It was my first decision when COVID ended: it’s key that we have an Olympic house” that will serve as a meeting for supporters (with or without tickets), athletes, partners, and enthusiasts. “It’ll be a great opportunity to show that Belgium is bursting with talent!”



# PIERRE DE FROIDMONT

## FROM NADIR TO ZENITH



**For top athletes, performance is key. But sometimes, behind the scenes, there are trials and tribulations.**

Twenty-seven-year-old Pierre de Froidmont has won one of the two places on the Belgian mountain bike team for the Olympic Games. But he admits: "I never thought that one day I'd turn pro." Between the moment he got his first bike at the age of 12, and the day he signed his first professional contract in 2021, he competed in mountain bike events out of sheer passion and with his raw talent. But his new professional status brought with it all the competitive pressures of having to get results. "It wasn't an easy switch for me. When you're getting a salary, you've got to get results." Having had an excellent year in 2022, he succumbed to burnout at the end of 2023. "I'm not a natural competitor. I like to outdo myself, and I've had to learn. I wasn't feeling like myself anymore." So he took a break. "I took the time to find out what I loved doing, what had been obscured by the competitiveness." Now, passion and enjoyment will be the name of the game in Paris. "I don't know what's in store for me mentally. But my aim will be to go up to the start line with the thought in my head that this has been a wonderful adventure."

# CLAIRE MICHEL

## SWITCHING TRACKS

**Following a successful career as a triathlete, Claire Michel will be taking on the role of Technical Director of the Ligue Francophone de Triathlon (LF3), (the French-speaking Triathlon League), with the aim of promoting the sport in Wallonia.**

Paris 2024 will be Claire Michel's third Olympics. If previous Games weren't the easiest, she embodies "the Olympic spirit 100%", as triathlete Lotte Miller put it, thanks to her determination and her ability to push herself to the limit. "There are so many things that we can't control", she says. "But we can gain an edge through our attitude and the approach we take to the hurdles we face". The Belgian-American says she feels "calm" in the run-up to Paris, feeling she has "unfinished business" to see to. Once she finishes these Games, and "having done my absolute best", she will take on another challenge in 2025. As Technical Director of the LF3, she wants to help build up the sport in Wallonia—in one sense, literally, "by developing training hubs", but also by working with young people to "teach them to have the courage of their ambitions." She also wants to bring about equality between men and women in the sport, and to organise sports events at the national level. "We have all the ingredients in Wallonia to produce great sportsmen and women."



## MAXIME HORDIES

“JUST GO FOR IT”



**On his way to qualifying for the Olympic Games, Para-cyclist Maxime Hordies has epitomised perseverance and passion.**

“Sport has been and continues to be part of the way I live my life”, says Maxime Hordies, who brought home the first gold medal for Belgium at the World Para-cycling Championships. He played a lot of sports as a youngster, but he had a thing for cycling. Then in 2014, there was a turning point. At the age of 18 he had an accident, which, as it turned out, started a top-flight career. He discovered the handcycle through a friend, and he was spotted by the Ligue Handisport Francophone (the French-speaking League of Paraspports), who, he says, “must have seen that I was an enthusiastic sportsman.” Since then, he has had several podium finishes and medals, most notably with a third place in Tokyo. “It’s a driving force to want to do even better than before.”

Maxime is also an ambassador for the Paralympic Movement, which he says gives him “an opportunity to represent this family I’m part of.” He hopes that, “if my voice can help bring more recognition to Paraspports, that would be a big plus.” And he has a message: “Just go for it”. As he is about to compete in perhaps the only Olympics of his career, he says one thing is certain: “Sport will always be part of the way I live my life.”





**Lotto BELGIUM HOUSE**

26<sup>th</sup> of July 2024  
 ↳ 11<sup>th</sup> of August 2024

**SALONS HOCHÉ, PARIS**

[www.lottobelgiumhouse.be](http://www.lottobelgiumhouse.be)

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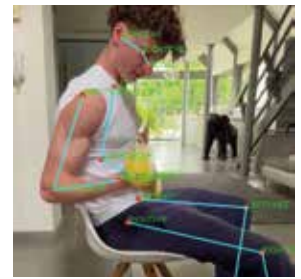
Amid the festivities surrounding the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, you'll find the Lotto Belgium House, where partners, athletes, supporters, and the media will come to meet and mingle. It will be a unique spot, where Walloon movers and shakers such as Matexi can interact with other major business players, where Laurent Baijot, can present his solution to improve young people's health, and where you can take in a concert by Mentissa, have a laugh with Elastic & Francesca, and dance to sets by Funky Fool and Henri PFR.

**WHERE? LES SALONS HOCHÉ,**  
 a stone's throw from the Arc de Triomphe  
**WHEN? 26 July to 11 August 2024**

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S HEALTH IS NOW IN THEIR POCKETS!



In collaboration with the University of Mons, Laurent Baijot is working to get young people to start being more active. He will be launching some new app features that have a combined focus on sports and health, at the Belgium House.



Having already created an innovative app for runners, Laurent is looking even farther ahead. “We discovered that the average level of physical fitness among kids has dropped by more than 30% from that of their parents’ generation. This means chronic conditions will set in earlier and earlier in Europe.” This alarming finding prompted him to work with ADEPS and the major faculties of motor science to “suggest ways of getting kids to be more active.”

At the Belgium House during the Olympics, Laurent will launch an

innovative digital solution that can measure various parameters such as coordination, strength, and balance. By combining a sophisticated system of webcams, algorithms, and powerful computers, this solution will be capable of recording each movement of the human body and produce an accurate assessment.

With this system, “the idea is to give a key role back to phys-ed teachers through an initiative at the institutional level, so they can use the system to monitor the fitness levels of secondary-

school students, help with any remedial work needed, and spot talent.” It will also make it easier to objectively evaluate data from various sources and to have discussions with health authorities, while respecting all the mandatory data-protection measures, of course. The system could be integrated into the Moov Insights app by the end of the year, in an effort to improve the physical condition of kids in Wallonia. And it could even be used in the drive by the Belgian Ministry of Defence to recruit 8,000 military personnel by 2030.

# MATEXI: SPORTSMANSHIP AT THE HEART OF REAL ESTATE

**The Belgium House includes big-name partners and business players from Wallonia and elsewhere in Belgium. One such household name is Matexi, a sponsor of the Belgian Olympic and Interfederal Committee since 2021.**

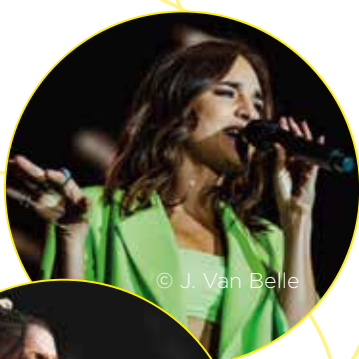
Matexi is a property developer in Belgium and a market leader in urban projects. It has set itself the ambitious goal of creating inclusive neighbourhoods with a strong focus on social interactivity. And the truth is, there are a lot more similarities between sports and real estate than we might imagine. “Perseverance, responsibility, concentration, team spirit, trust, and respect—these are core values in sports, but our employees also have them in spades”, said Regional Business Director Martine Rorif. The partnership with the

country’s Olympic Committee has given Matexi the opportunity to make financial contributions to Team Belgium, and to “support indirectly around 30,000 sports clubs and their 2 million members across the country.” It has also benefitted Matexi itself. For example, athletes have visited the business, Matexi staff have taken trips alongside Team Belgium during training courses, and sporting challenges, all of which contribute to Matexi’s employer branding.





# THE LOTTO BELGIUM HOUSE WILL ALSO BE SHOWCASING WALLOON ARTISTS



The programme includes concerts by Typh Barrow and Mentissa, and DJ sets by Henri PFR and Funky Fool, as well as comedy by Elastic & Francesca and magic by Maxime Mandrake. These Walloon artists are living proof that, just like sports, culture also needs a lot of discipline, and that it can stir up emotions and bring people together.

## MENTISSA

SINGER

"I hope to see people from all sorts of places. I like the fact that the Olympic Games draw people from all around the world."

<https://mentissaofficiel.com/>

## STÉPHANE DELVAUX

COMEDIAN, "ELASTIC & FRANCESCA"

"This kind of event doesn't happen often in the career of a Walloon athlete, so for a comedian, it's even more extraordinary. If we can do a death leap during the show at the Olympic Games, it'll be very funny, and we'll be honoured."

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsmgY2V6BTib-42YYuvt3vQ>

## FUNKY FOOL

DJ & PRODUCER

"Sports and music help people break away from their daily routines. Culture and sports are important when representing a country."

<https://open.spotify.com/intl-fr/artist/4GQbEubUneU1YIR4KFvUPm?autoplay=true>

## MAXIME MANDRAKE

MAGICIAN

"This will be a chance to show the wealth of talent we have here in Wallonia. To be an excellent magician, you need to persevere and keep pushing yourself."

<https://www.maximemandrake.com/>

# TRAVELLING BY BIKE, IN WALLONIA AND BEYOND

With a 10% rise in the number of cyclists on the EuroVelo routes between 2019 and 2023, Wallonia is positioning itself as one of Europe's top performers in terms of cycling amenities, and is doing more than ever to encourage slow tourism by bicycle. To this end, it is relying on the considerable development of its Autonomous Network of Slow Routes (RAVeL), the green routes through which the area can be explored in peace and tranquillity in an area of more than 2,000 square kilometres. This is a great way to discover big cities, rural areas and unspoiled natural spaces. But that's not all. The region is also covered with

signposts from the "points-nœuds" network, which help you create an endless number of trails based on your preferences. What's more, as indicated on the VISITWallonia.be website, more than 900 operators have been awarded the "Bienvenue Vélo" (Welcome by Bike) label, so as to ensure that cycling tourists get the best welcome and service possible. Info: [VISITWallonia.be/cycling](https://www.visitwallonia.be/cycling)

The new brochure from VISITWallonia, "20 Unforgettable Bike Trails", promotes the most beautiful paths to discover on an outing or on the roam.



© Julien Gillis



© WBT - Henning Angerer-RAVeL Erguelinnes



**VISIT**  
**Wallonia**  
**.be**

[VISITWallonia.be/summer](https://VISITWallonia.be/summer)

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'Maison des Cyclistes' - Bike



## TRADITIONAL BISCUITS WITH A TASTE THAT TAKES YOU BACK TO CHILDHOOD

The Biscuiterie Namuroise is a sweet success story with family tradition at its heart.

It all started in 2019 when Laurent, a baker and pastry chef, suggested to his partner, Paul, the idea of taking inspiration from recipes of yesteryear, “like those my grandfather would have known, making biscuits like they did in 1908.” Paul, whose background was in business and project development, had his doubts at first, but he was willing to give it a shot. In autumn 2019, they introduced their first batch of biscuits at the KIKK Festival in Namur. They went down a treat, and the business was launched.

The biscuits are crafted at the company’s facility in Bois-de-Villers: a selection of sweet, savoury, and organic biscuits, made with natural products from local distribution networks, with no additives or preservatives. The secret of their success? Just like one of Proust’s madeleines, it’s a moment of pure biscuity heaven that tells a story in each bite. Since then, the small company has kept on making its mark and developing sales outlets, while its biscuits are being savoured around the world, including on the other side of the Atlantic.



# FOUNTAIN PENS BY **ANDY DESCHACHT:** GENUINE WORKS OF ART

**Andy Deschacht marches to the beat of a different drum, on a path all his own, as he crafts his top-of-the-range personalised pens.**



Andy, who originally trained as a chef, is curious about the world around him. A true all-rounder, he developed a passion for sculpture and woodworking before devoting himself to crafting fountain pens six years ago.

What sets his creations apart? “Everything is crafted by hand. There are very few companies in the world that work this way.” But above all, he listens: “The pen will stay with the client their whole life, so every detail counts.” Designs range from the most traditional to the most inventive, and may call for sculpting or for materials such as marble and precious stones. “I don’t impose any limits on myself, other than ethical ones.” Thanks to the contacts he’s made, he can get his hands on and work with rare materials, such as wood from the first few centuries AD. And because he is self-taught, he learns through experience, from the internet, and from the advice he gets from other artisans.

“Each client gets a unique pen, with its own name.” The fountain pen is now a work of art, straight from Wallonia—specifically, Durbuy, where Andy finds the “warmth and sensitivity” he needs to get his creative juices flowing.

<https://www.garcia-deschacht.com/>



Custom Pen Ardenne



Custom Pen Smurfs Luxury Collection



Custom Pen Musica Viva

# KALY ORA

## THE “WOW” FACTOR IN TOP-NOTCH RECYCLED SEASIDE FASHION

Kaly Ora, winner of the 2024 Wallonia-Bruxelles Design Mode fashion programme, has developed a brand of chic, inclusive, and sustainable swimsuits that feature invisible seams and that are made of 78% recycled plastic (and 22% spandex). “Our swimsuits are made of rubbish from the ocean. Each piece is designed to be timeless, with a modern twist so that all women can see themselves reflected in the designs and values we champion”, says Trang Nguyen, the brand’s founder, who has been working with Flore Carlier for the past 3 years. Since its online launch in the summer of 2020, Kaly Ora has been working to meet the demands of all women with a small few designs. The 2024 collection—the result of a creative collaboration with Bordeaux-based influencer Chlosetoyou—comprises 4 tops and 3 bottoms in 3 colour combinations, as well as 3 one-pieces and other beachwear. It will be available in 6 sizes until 15 July in the Brussels pop-up shop. With colourful, reversible prints, and both bikinis and one-pieces, this range encapsulates a perfect blend of worlds and kinds of energy. The result? Top-quality swimwear that’s trendy, recycled, joyful, and elegant.



**La Casa Kaly Ora pop-up,**  
Rue Jean Stas 3, 1060 Brussels  
OPEN UNTIL 15 JULY  
[www.kalyora.com](http://www.kalyora.com)






INSPIRE | PANORAMA







# ILLUSTRO, THE SECOND CREATION OF JEAN-MARIE LOUIS, A YOUNG WATCHMAKER AND JEWELLER FROM LIEGE, CASTS A BRIGHT LIGHT

A showcase for age-old crafts, Jean-Marie's creation incorporates, revisits, and transcends everything from the finest clock mechanisms, the setting of precious stones, blown and cut Val Saint-Lambert crystal glass, and fine marquetry. It evokes the Eiffel Tower, offering a masterful nod to the Paris Olympics.

You can view Jean-Marie's creation at the Belgium House during the Olympic Games, and throughout the summer at the Place Vendôme.

<https://www.jeanmarielouis.com/>



## PRESTIGE, TRADITION, AND ENTHUSIASM ALL AROUND

It all began with a religious procession, and a Flemish name that translates as “walking around” (the Church of Our Lady of the Sablon). In 1549, this procession was the highlight of the welcoming ceremony for the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who came to present his son, the future Philip II of Spain, along with his sisters, Maria, Queen of Hungary and Eleanore, Queen Dowager of France, at the Grand-Place in Brussels.

In 1930, to celebrate Belgium’s centenary, the Ommegang was born anew as a historical reconstruction. It was included in UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2019, as it is now more than a simple folk tradition: it’s a major showcase for the nation’s capital.

Centred around a crossbow-shooting competition, a procession of key

figures from the region’s history and its guilds, and a colourful spectacle on the Grand-Place, it brings together more than 1,400 proud and enthusiastic participants over two evenings in early July. As Paul Le Grand, President of Ommegang Brussels Events, puts it: “It seems as though tradition is at the root of our shared existence.”





**Paris Olympics 2024: all together at the Lotto Belgium House**

The Belgium House was set up by the Comité Olympique Interfédéral Belge (Belgian Interfederal Olympic Committee). Its doors will be open from 26 July to 11 August 2024, to coincide with the Olympic Games. A stone's throw from the Champs-Élysées, it will welcome over 30,000 supporters. It will also serve as a spot to showcase the athletes, as a meeting place for partners, as a welcome point for the media, and as a place where fans can share all the excitement. It's got something for everyone: a sports bar, Belgian specialities to tuck into, coverage of the events, a fan zone, concerts and shows—everything to make Team Belgium proud!

<https://www.lottobelgiumhouse.be/fr/home>

**The Libramont Agriculture and Forestry Fair**

While athletes are lining up on the track in Paris, farmers will be lining up their best tractors and cattle in Libramont. The largest outdoor fair in Europe for professionals and enthusiasts in the agriculture and forestry sector, is being held from 26 to 29 July 2024. Every year, this family-friendly event welcomes no fewer than 200,000 visitors, 700 exhibitors 4,000 brands to an area covering 2,000 square metres. And for the first time this year, there'll be a village themed on the biobased economy.

To find out more, and to see the programme of events, visit <https://www.foiredelibramont>



**Gamescom 2024**

From 21 to 25 August 2024, more than 1,200 exhibitors from 45 different countries will be getting together for the most important gaming event of the year: Gamescom 2024 in Cologne, Germany. Organised by the Agence Wallonne à l'Exportation et aux Investissements étrangers, in collaboration with the Wallonia Games Association, Flanders Investment & Trade, and Games.Brussels, the show has already been a resounding success: a record number of companies have registered, and the exhibition space will be even larger this year.

<https://www.gamescom.global/en>



**Bio Japan 2024**

This is Asia's premier partnering event, involving three exhibitions, a seminar and a partnering programme organised by the Wallonia Export Investment Agency. The themes will include the growth and industrialisation of R&D in the field of regenerative medicine, and the fusion of digital technology and the life sciences. The event will bring together businesses, universities, research institutes, and biotechnology institutions. See you in Yokohama, Japan, from 9 to 11 October 2024.

<https://jcd-expo.jp/en>



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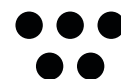
# Wallonia, the land of **SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION**



- ✓ **Circular materials** eco-design, industrial symbiosis, encouraging the reuse and repair of these materials within the economy, recycling innovation, etc.
- ✓ Innovations for **enhanced health** biotechnologies, medical equipment, eHealth, mHealth, silver economy, prevention, etc.
- ✓ Innovations for agile and safe **design** and **production methods** (IoT, 3D printing)
- ✓ Sustainable **energy** systems and **housing**
- ✓ **Agri-food** chains of the future and innovative management of the **environment**

CONTACT US TO EXPLORE GREEN OPPORTUNITIES IN WALLONIA

[welcome@investinwallonia.be](mailto:welcome@investinwallonia.be)



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