

wallonia and brussels

summer 2020

wab  
magazine

Discover a region that combines  
technical knowhow with quality of life

# THE GREAT ESCAPE

## WALLONIA LAUNCHES SUMMER TOURISM CAMPAIGN

- Covid-19: Local companies join global response to fight the pandemic
- Meet the fashion designers growing their brands internationally







## Editorial

The unprecedented challenge of Covid-19 drew a sharp response from key sectors across Wallonia. As companies as well as individuals took action to confront the crisis, their actions were pivotal for their economic survival as well as the safety of their employees. For audio-visual enterprise KeyWall, the combination of high-tech expertise and creativity proved critical. Managing director Thibault Baras (pictured, above) tells us how, with global activities curtailed, new opportunities emerged to ensure the company continues to thrive.

Investment, innovation and job creation have been crucial in the mobilisation of the region's biotech, pharmaceutical and medical fields. Our focus article on page 14 outlines their pursuit of urgent research and development projects, from diagnosis and vaccine research to personal protection equipment and data science. Experts from a variety of fields are united in meeting the challenge. Underpinned by financial and technical support from public authorities, local companies are joining the international fight to better understand and address the global pandemic. We look forward to following their ground-breaking journey towards safeguarding public health.

Don't forget to download **the WAB magazine app**, available for Android and iOS. Go to Google Play or iTunes and keep up-to-date with news and events in Wallonia and Brussels

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© Courtesy Transurb

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© Marc Bretillot

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© Courtesy Dubuisson

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**Cover:** Wallonia promotes its natural beauty to tourists. Photo by Olivier Legardien/WBT

## LIVE BROADCAST SPECIALIST EVS ACQUIRES AXON IN €10.5M DEAL

Liège live video technology leader EVS has acquired Axon, the broadcast infrastructure specialist, in a deal valued at €10.5 million.

Axon has more than 30 years of experience in technology innovation, with development centres in the Netherlands and the UK, employing over 80 people. It has an international presence and a product portfolio that complements EVS's existing live production offering.

EVS provides live links for broadcast and media productions. Integrating Axon's portfolio will enable the company to offer its customers a more extensive live production infrastructure. It will also optimise resource management and speed up deployment across multiple sites for remote live operations. The acquisition positions EVS as the only technology company able to provide a comprehensive modern media infrastructure solution, the company says.

"We're extremely excited about the opportunities this acquisition will provide us and our customers over the coming months and years. Axon's strong broadcast reputation and expertise, combined with our shared customer service-focused philosophy, make this marriage a perfect fit," said CEO Serge Van Herck.

[evs.com/en](http://evs.com/en)



## Walloon heads German company leading Covid-19 vaccine research

Walloon bio-engineer Baron Jean Stéphenne has been appointed chair of the supervisory board of German biopharmaceutical company CureVac, which is pioneering a Covid-19 vaccine. Employing 500 people, the company is based in Tübingen. Stéphenne was vice-president of the company from 2015.

Stéphenne, a former president of the Union Wallonne des Entreprises, has played a key role in developing the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industry. "The technology used by CureVac is that of Messenger RNA," said Stéphenne. "It allows cells to be directly armed against the virus to produce an immunological response and, given the production technology, it allows large volumes to be produced quickly. This technique is therefore faster and more effective." Clinical trials were due to begin in early June.

## FREE APP HELPS VISITORS MAKE THE MOST OF WALLONIA

A new free app highlights around 500 interesting tourist spots – with 75% of them in Wallonia. Launched by Walloon entrepreneurs Ludo Daxhelet and Sophie Roscheck with the help of Marche-en-Famenne start-up Apptree, Viziit has already been downloaded 7,000 times, and is continuing to grow.

Users enter their location and the device's navigation system finds the easiest route to their chosen attraction. It also helps plan trips and make reservations, and provides details of upcoming events and promotions.

Daxhelet and Roscheck say it's thanks to the coronavirus confinement that their app has seen the light of day. The travel-loving TV presenter and digital communications expert had never previously found the time to develop their idea. "It took at least

2,000 hours of work, but with the support of Apptree, who developed the codes, we got there," they said. "All the places are validated internally. The idea is to have a positive outlook, no negative criticism. We like somewhere, we'll talk about it. You like something? Tell us about it and we'll approve it."

Viziit can be downloaded on Google Play and Apple Store.

[tinyurl.com/viziit](http://tinyurl.com/viziit)





© Belga/Benoit Doppagne

## LIÈGE IS CRUCIAL EUROPEAN HUB FOR MEDICAL FREIGHT

Liège's international freight airport and railway connections with China have proved key in equipping Belgium and Europe with supplies during the fight against Covid-19. Since the start of the pandemic, one billion masks have passed through Liège Airport, an important European hub

for cargo freight. Chinese medical supplies are arriving by train via a new link with the city of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province.

A dozen trains, entirely filled with Covid-19 medical equipment destined for NHS hospitals in the UK, arrived in Liège in June. "This line, which is the famous silk route that the Chinese have been active with for years, now has an anchor point in Liège, close to the airport," said Liege Airport spokesperson Christian Delcourt. "This is very important because it offers more possibilities for logistics in the Liège region. It allows multimodality."



© Courtesy Sonaca

## A LITTLE BIT OF WALLONIA ON THE MOON

Belgium's largest aerospace manufacturer, Sonaca, is manufacturing an important part for Nasa's Orion spacecraft – designed to help astronauts set foot on the moon again, and further in space, in four to five years' time.

The Gosselies-based manufacturer is supplying a large structural part for Orion's service module. The new Nasa vehicle consists of two parts, making it more spacious than the Apollo spacecraft of the moon-landing era. The service module provides propulsion, regulates the vehicle's temperature and supplies the astronauts with energy, oxygen and water. This cylinder weighs more than 13 tonnes and is the European Space Agency (ESA)'s contribution to Orion.

Sonaca is responsible for the circular bulkhead tank that closes off the service module on top. "This part was quite tricky to manufacture because it combined the difficulty of manufacturing a large component with the usual extremely high precision that is required," said Sonaca's head of space operations, Pedro Romero Fernandez.

The Walloon aerospace manufacturer has built five elements of this type since 2016. The first two were used in the development and ground testing of the first vehicles. The next three parts will be present on Orion's first flights. The crewless inaugural launch is scheduled to take place in 2021.

## BRIEFS



Bertrix company It's Energy has launched a 100% Walloon-made charcoal for barbecues, Tcharbon, available in 20l and 40l bags. The eco-friendly charcoal has a long combustion time and gives a distinct flavour to grilled meat, says operational director François Lotin. [tcharbon.be](http://tcharbon.be)

Two years after the first wolf sightings in Wallonia, the region has adopted an action plan that aims for "a balanced cohabitation between man and wolf". Its first objective is to scientifically observe the return of the wolf in Belgium. The second is to protect wolves from poachers.



© Muriel Thies

Trinkhall Museum in Liège's Parc d'Avroy opened on 18 June. Following extensive refurbishment, the 1960s building – now home to Madmusée and Madcafé – houses an Art Brut collection. Due to confinement measures, the museum's grand opening has been delayed until September. [trinkhall.museum](http://trinkhall.museum)



## SPOTLIGHT ON Thibault Baras

The managing director of Charleroi-based virtual reality production company KeyWall - part of 100 employee-strong DreamWall Media Solutions - first built a virtual studio for broadcaster RTBF in 2005. Now, the company has an international reputation for cutting-edge virtual studios and sets that are used in animated films and major sporting events



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Before the crisis we had to be flexible. Now we have to be hyperflexible

**What was the immediate impact of Covid-19 on the company?**

The first was the cancellation of all sports events and the postponement of Euro 2020 and the 2020 Summer Olympics. We were due to travel to India on 15 March as we had developed a scenography for the Indian Premier League cricket competition, but the country decided not to let foreigners in without quarantine. The second, the big one, was the cancellation of football championships and leagues. For two to three days a week, we rent a big space and equipment for these events, so the impact was really important.

**How did the company adapt to this situation?**

We were lucky in that we produced already around 25 weather shows a day for various customers, including RTBF and TV5. From the beginning, we took measures so that a reduced number of people remained on set, and so far no one has been infected by the virus. We focused on a project – a new scenography for the RTBF weather show, using new technology to see the weather conditions inside a virtual studio. It will be on air in September.

**Have any new opportunities arisen?**

We had a request to do a live mass for RTBF, which was new, and we have done five or six, with the next one in July. As it costs less to produce in a studio, maybe it will continue. Another opportunity was the EuroMillions

lottery show, which could not continue because of social distancing. Now it is in our studio and we have put in place a new workflow using Zoom. It could continue this way. We also produced an alternative Eurovision show for RTBF with Belgium's best five songs. The management was very happy with it, and I am very proud that we did it from scratch in a short space of time. Some directors are astonished to see the possibilities of virtual technology. Some things will happen in the future that without corona would not have occurred.

**How agile has the company needed to be?**

Before the crisis we had to be flexible, now we have to be hyperflexible. In June, an advertising company contacted me for a big worldwide project for July. It took six days to exchange ideas and discuss the budget, and we had 13 working days to organise it. Before, it would have taken six months just to have a decision. We have requests from the US, Canada and Africa, so I think our market will grow thanks to the crisis. Even if I'm not always a supporter of globalisation, if I need something in Korea, India, wherever, we now have the tools and don't need to travel. The crisis has been an accelerator, and I'm sure that virtual technology has permitted growth, that it will enhance the global market. I'm quite confident that we will be able to grow our business activity.

[keywall.be](http://keywall.be)



# Missing link

## UCLouvain designs invisible innovation to improve internet connections

By Andy Furniere

With the Multipath TCP innovation, researchers at the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) are making our internet connections more stable and faster. Their revolutionary development, which was quickly adopted by Apple, recently gained them the SIGCOMM Networking Systems Award – a prestigious international prize in computer science.

The Multipath TCP solution may be highly technical, but its function is simple to explain. It enables devices to have an internet connection using different interfaces – like WiFi, mobile networks or DSL – at the same time, thus making that connection more resilient and faster.

Before, devices always had to switch between those interfaces, which caused ripples in the connection. For example, if you leave a coffee bar whose WiFi you were using, your smartphone takes a moment to switch to mobile data, with a short break in the connections as a result.

“What we did is to correct a limitation of the early internet developed in the 1970s,” says Professor Olivier Bonaventure, head of the UCLouvain lab in which the research for Multipath TCP was conducted. “At that time, there were only computers connected to a server via a cable, but since then we have invented many other ways to exchange data. Multipath TCP ensures we adapt to the changes in the way we use the internet.”

The Multipath TCP initiative started about a decade ago as part of the European Trilogy project, in which UCLouvain worked with a number of international partners. For UCLouvain, five PhD theses have contributed to this research. Multipath TCP was conceived according to the open-source model, which involves open collaboration between a large number of actors.

The innovation quickly attracted the interest of Apple, which used it for its virtual assistant Siri on iPhones and then applied it to Apple Music and Apple Maps. In the meantime, third-party apps on iPhones have begun to use it. Other global brands, such as Samsung and Huawei, have equipped their phones with Multipath TCP in South Korea and China.







According to Bonaventure, it's just a matter of time before it becomes a mainstream feature on all our phones. It's being integrated in the Linux kernel – an essential tool for internet use, as the servers of all cloud providers including Google, Amazon and Facebook run it. Multipath TCP is also



• Tessares at the European Parliament

included in the global standard for the 5G network, so it is an integral part of today's internet use. Bonaventure also believes the innovation might have a big impact on autonomous vehicles, which require a reliable connection, for obvious safety reasons.

The revolution driven by Multipath TCP will go largely unnoticed by the general public, as it's not a feature that will be visible on our smartphones. "It works behind the scenes, like magic," says Bonaventure. The international Association for Computing Machinery, however, recognised the importance of Multipath TCP by awarding the team the 2019 SIGCOMM Networking Systems Award.

About five years ago, UCLouvain established the spin-off company Tessares, to valorise the insights gathered in the Multipath TCP project. The Walloon govern-

ment provided support for the initiative. "We use the innovation to improve the DSL connections of people in rural areas, for example," says CEO Denis Périquet. "The speed of DSL connections decreases if you live far away from a centre from which an operator distributes the internet, and it is not profitable to set up such centres in all scarcely populated areas. We use the Multipath TCP solution as a glue between the DSL and mobile connections, so that their forces can be combined, and everyone can have fast and stable internet."

After a successful pilot project in the Hainaut town of Frasnés-lez-Anvaing, Tessares now serves more than 10,000 homes in Belgium, with telecoms operator Proximus an important partner. It is currently commercially active in six countries and has many pilot projects running, many of them in rural areas.

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We use Multipath TCP as a glue between the DSL and mobile connections, so everyone can have fast and stable internet

# Showtime

## Walloon companies shine on the global stage

By Andy Furniere

For the third consecutive year, Walloon companies have showcased their innovations at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, the most prestigious event of its kind in the world. Export agency AWEX provided the necessary support to put the Walloon region in the spotlight on this global stage.

A group of 16 companies, seven start-ups and nine SMEs made the trip from Wallonia to Las Vegas in January. That's one more than last year and two more than during Wallonia's first participation two years ago. AWEX has already signed up for next year and hopes to send even more delegates.

"It's positive that we are gradually increasing our numbers, but quality is much more important than quantity," says Guy Vanpaesschen, digital sector and North America specialist at AWEX. "This year was our most successful edition to date because our business ecosystem has become more mature and the companies were more pre-







pared, while we improved the organisation of our events and meetings at the CES.”

The diversity of the Walloon delegation this year was striking. There were companies focusing on drones (ALX Systems), text-to-speech solutions (Acapela), smart cars (Phasya), smart health (MintT, Intersysto), 3D modelling (Cabin3D), intelligent videos (Capflow), smart home (Domestia), energy saving systems (e-Peas), docking stations (Linedock), IT consultancy and auditing (Han Communication) and even smart wine distribution (Invineo).

Phasya, based at Seraing in Liège province, for example, developed software and eye-tracking technology to detect whether a person is tired and likely to fall asleep. This innovation can be particularly interesting in transport, to prevent accidents because of driver drowsiness. But applications are also possible in different fields such as healthcare, research, gaming and education.

Invineo, a start-up based in Namur province, meanwhile, created a smart wine distributor for quality wines typically served in restaurants. The technology not only preserves the quality of wine for about a month, but allows staff to monitor the



• The Walloon delegation at CES

temperature and other important data via their smartphone. “The CES was particularly interesting for Invineo as not only is the US a huge market, but Americans also tend to order a glass of wine instead of a bottle, which makes their device perfect for this audience,” says Vanpaesschen.

AWEX set up stands in two zones at CES, one dedicated to start-ups and the other to companies with a longer track record. It offers financial and logistic help, while also supporting them to get optimal visibility and meet the right people.

“It’s a serious investment for us, but it’s worth it, because the CES truly is the ‘place to be’ for companies developing consumer electronics,” says Vanpaesschen. “It’s the event where you get global press coverage, meet investors from all over the world and can examine how well your product is positioned compared to your competitors.”

The companies also took part in the Village Francophone, an initiative that organises events specifically for the French-speaking digital community – including companies from Canada, Switzerland, France and Luxembourg. There was a competition in which all start-ups pitched their own concepts, for example, which was an excellent chance to generate visibility.

Apart from the American and French-speaking markets, AWEX also helped companies to explore the possibilities offered by other markets, including in Asia. It offered the services of its expert in charge of the Digital Wallonia International Hub of Shenzhen, helping companies to attract investors from this Chinese city. AWEX has set up a network of hubs in cities and regions that are leaders in digital innovation. There are representatives active in Barcelona, San Francisco, Shenzhen, Montreal, Berlin, Tel Aviv, Singapore, Paris, Stockholm and London.



It’s the event where you get global press coverage

# On track

## Rail, tram and metro simulators made in Wallonia are training drivers around the world

By Sarah Crew

**T**ransurb Simulation may be a niche business – making bespoke train simulation systems – but it is winning contracts in the highly competitive global rail market. At the railway sidings of SNCB's repair workshop in Namur, engineers and graphic designers come together to create a full range of simulator packages. They are destined for Australia, Singapore, Colombia and Gabon, and throughout Europe.

These simulators and advanced training tools serve passenger and freight trains as well as metro and light rail networks. They range from computer-based nano simulators to compact and full-cab models with

sophisticated virtual reality software – all geared to highly specialised traffic management and communication systems.

More than 40 years of experience in the rail sector lie behind Transurb's success and positioning as market leader. Set up in 1979 as a subsidiary of national railway SNCB and Brussels public transport operator Stib, its mission was to export local expertise. Belgium was the first country in continental Europe to build a railway and has a long history of exercising its rail know-how abroad.

In 2002, a first simulator was made in the SNCB workshops of Salzinnes in Namur to train the operator's own drivers. Previously, they had to learn on the job, but with advances in computers the rail industry was able to teach safely and more cost-effectively via simulators, as in the aviation sector. With orders growing for the new training systems, the company fused with another subsidiary to form Transurb Simulation and concentrate almost solely on the export market.

Then, in 2017, railway pioneer John Cockerill (then CMI Groupe) became the largest shareholder, with SNCB and Stib retaining minority interests. The Liège industrial heavyweight has opened up its international network to

Transurb, and securing contracts in the US market is one of its current objectives.

Employing a total of 110 people, the SME's Namur base – focused on the simulation aspect of the business – is backed up by technical assistance at the Brussels office. All mechanical and electrical parts are sub-contracted. Exports represent more than 90% of the company's turnover and around 80% of its business comes from public tenders. Wallonia's export wing, AWEX, assists in promoting the company abroad, via international fairs and economic missions.

"Our speciality is anything using rail tracks," says general manager Gauthier Van Damme, who explains that each project is customised depending on the client's security systems and requirements. After a detailed site visit, graphic designers and engineers reproduce train models and tracks, while a management tool for instructors enables them to create scenarios such as breakdowns. "Each operator organises their own training, integrating the simulator in their training practices," he adds.

Belgium is one of the first countries to introduce the new safety standards of the European Rail Traffic Management System, and the integration of the system into simulator training has proved an advantage in securing contracts. The advance in automatic driverless trains, such as those used in Singapore's metro system, has in fact increased the demand for simulator training. "All staff in each station need to undergo basic training in the event of a breakdown," says Van Damme.







The company's client base is diverse. In Gabon in Central Africa, where drivers can be in charge of freight trains for days on end in the bush, they must fix technical problems themselves. In contrast, Transurb equipped the Colombian city of Medellín with a compact simulator for its metro system that serves 1 million passengers a week.

Having entered the specialised market later than its competitors, Transurb "battles to win over new clients and then keep them", says Van Damme, who cites intense collaboration and meeting all expectations as the company's winning strategy. "It's a real partnership with the client; we are very flexible and find solutions to avoid potential legal problems."

Diversification includes developing a training tool, called TrainLab. This is a multi-platform training programme connected to a central system, enabling exercises to be sent to students' tablets, computers or phones so they can be trained anytime, anywhere, and for their progress to be monitored at a distance.

[simulation.transurb.com](http://simulation.transurb.com)



• Above & below, Transurb's rail simulator



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Our speciality is anything using rail tracks

# Fight club

Experts across Wallonia are joining forces to tackle the coronavirus, from advanced detection techniques to potential vaccines

By Saffina Rana

Universities, hospitals and the medical, biotechnology and smart technology sectors in Wallonia were quick to come together, mobilise their research efforts and challenge the spread of the coronavirus (Covid-19) as it took hold in Belgium.

Wallonia's government, meanwhile, approached the European Union for support and received €25 million for research and development (R&D) activities on solutions to address the crisis.

The Walloon service for R&D has identified 15 urgent areas of related research. They

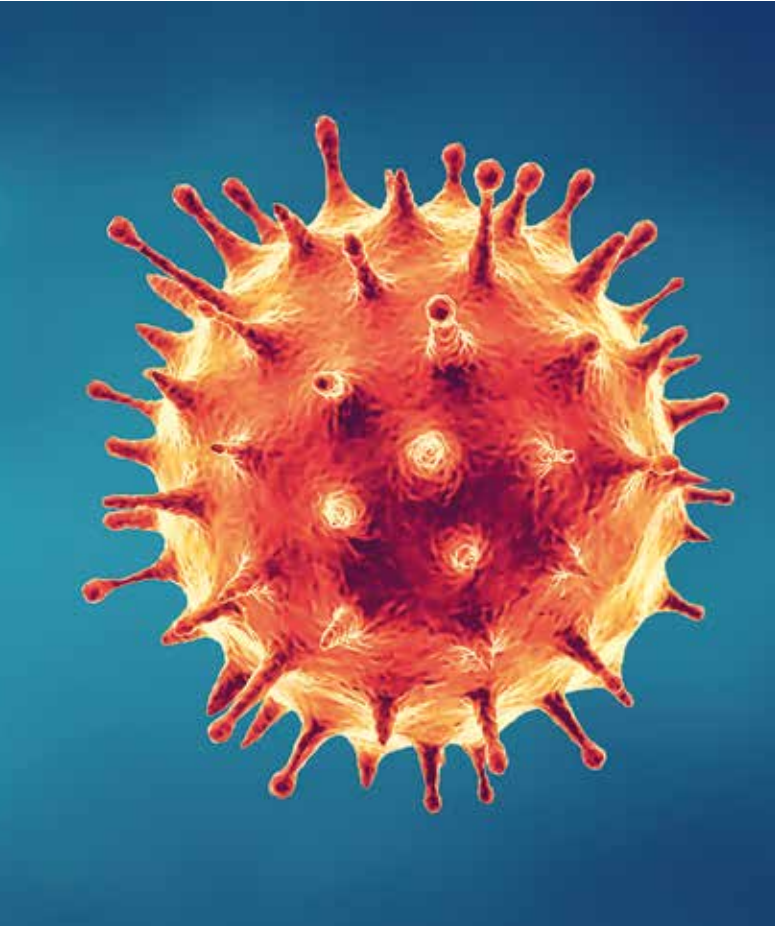
include the research, clinical validation and industrial production of diagnostic approaches, vaccines, biobanking, data science, and the manufacture and recycling of personal protection equipment – masks, disinfectants and sanitisers.

The deadline for applications for research

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The pandemic is behind some of the jobs due to be filled at Gosselies BioPark





© Getty Images/ffikretow

proposals was 30 June and projects will begin no later than 30 November. "I can't say anything about the focus of the research proposals we've received yet, but we have received 25 to 30 very interesting proposals," says Dr Isabelle Haubert, director of research projects at the Department of Research and Technological Development of the Service Public de Wallonie.

Meanwhile, the first corona-related shortages in the healthcare sector prompted Wallonia's cluster platform, BioWin, to set up a specific collaborative platform to centralise and structure supply and demand at a national level. It's well-placed to gather and structure initiatives around the urgent themes, and to foster interaction between industrial and academic players to build the critical mass needed to develop projects. It brings together stake-

## DETECTION

After three months of development under lockdown, Mons company D-tek has a world first in launching a diagnostic kit that can simultaneously detect five antibodies specific to Covid-19, increasing the precision of the test. Until now, existing kits on the market have been developed to test for one antigen or another. However, not all patients develop all the antibodies, so test results can be negative. The D-tek kit allows the diagnosis in just 1 hour. It is currently only available for research purposes but D-tek is working with its scientific partners on registration to make it accessible to all analysis laboratories in Belgium. D-Tek already has distribution partners waiting for the kit in Italy, Spain, Tunisia, India and Russia. [d-tek.be](http://d-tek.be)

Coris BioConcept in Gembloux has developed a rapid and user-friendly antigen test in just a few weeks that can detect the SARS-CoV-2 antigen responsible for Covid-19 with an accuracy of 82.6% in just 15 minutes. It needs only 100cl of nasopharyngeal secretion from patients in severe and critical stages of the infection. [corisbio.com](http://corisbio.com)

The University of Namur has gone live with a new diagnostic procedure. The technique eliminates the shortage of reagents given their global demand, and has increased the capacity of diagnosis in Belgium. The university itself has gone from being able to deliver 300 tests a day to 500, although a shortage of swabs had previously impeded them in April. [unamur.be](http://unamur.be)

Liège based company ZenTech (below) has launched its own production line for rapid Covid-19 serological screening tests to detect the presence of antibodies that appear in the blood after a coronavirus infection. Certified by the Federal Medicines Agency, they can now be marketed in Belgium and ZenTech is aiming to produce 1 million each month. [zentech.be](http://zentech.be)



© Belga/John Thys

## DISINFECTION & PROTECTION

When it comes to the decontamination and re-use of medical grade FFP2 face masks, SalamanderU based in Aye, SolidFog Technologies based in Ciney and the ADC Group based in Milan have come up with a system that can be set up in half an hour, and can decontaminate up to 350 masks in six hours. Running three cycles a day, it can cope with 1,000 masks and can be set up quickly anywhere – hospitals, airports, hotels, schools, gyms and outdoors in dry weather.

[salamanderu.com](http://salamanderu.com)  
[solidfog.com](http://solidfog.com)

After just a few weeks of research, Materia Nova research centre in Mons has developed a microwave and plasma treatment to sterilise face masks, which attacks pathogens such as viruses or bacteria found on the material's surface. Each mask is freed from the residues of Covid-19 and enclosed in an airtight bag in about a minute.

[materianova.be](http://materianova.be)

Riem, a small enterprise specialising in household use products based in Ligny, developed an in-house alcohol-based sanitiser spray to protect its staff, which destroys 99.9% of viruses. With a 300ml aerosol, both hands can be disinfected around 250 times. The company scaled up its production following requests from other organisations and donates some of the sanitiser and other surface disinfectants to front-line staff in high-risk jobs. Donations have been made to paramedics and firefighters in the Val de Sambre rescue zone, several care homes and schools.

[riem.be](http://riem.be)

Following the national shortage of face masks, Fleurus-based industrial equipment & Deltrian International was given a €1.2 million contract to create two production lines capable of delivering a total of 30 million protective face masks a year. The Walloon region needs two million masks a year in normal circumstances and five million during a crisis period. The additional orders have resulted in a dozen new jobs.

[deltrian.com](http://deltrian.com)

The Ovifat Alpine Ski Club, meanwhile, has come up with an ingenious way to use snow cannons to disinfect large areas, such as public places. Initial tests have been proving successful.

[skialpin-ovifat.com](http://skialpin-ovifat.com)



holders in health and medical technology sectors, biotechnologies, biomedical engineering and pharmaceutical development in the region – 155 based in Wallonia and 39 worldwide.

These include large industrial groups, small and medium-sized enterprises, universities, academic and clinical research centres, service providers, business incubators, investors, policymakers and associated bodies.

With the announcement of €25 million of research funding in May, the BioWin platform was extended to include the most successful regions of biotechnological innovation in Europe – Germany, Switzerland, France and across several Nordic countries in which BioWin already has successful collaborations.

The pandemic is also behind some of the several hundred jobs due to be filled in the coming months at Gosselies BioPark in Charleroi, which groups more than 80 companies and research centres in the fields of biotechnology and biopharmacy.

“We have four players specialising in



© Getty Images/appliedesign

bio-production: gene and cell therapies, vaccines and immunotherapy,” says BioPark CEO Florence Bosco. “These four companies alone have announced 300 jobs in the twelve months to come. In the current post-corona context, which is difficult for many, we are happy to be able to offer numerous recruitment and retraining opportunities for different profiles.”

They include Univercells, which delivers biomanufacturing platforms and solutions aimed at making biologics available and affordable. Working alongside its subsidiary Exothera, its large-scale production of a vaccine (see box, right) will create dozens of jobs within the BioPark.

Novasep, which provides services and technologies for life science and chemical industries, has signed an agreement



© Getty Images/JOHNGO SHIN

## VACCINES

Biotech company Univercells is developing a vaccine using adenovirus technology, in a European consortium with two other partners ReiThera (Italy) and Leukocare (Germany), which it plans to produce in its new Jumet facilities next year. Univercells is participating in 17 international projects linked to Covid-19, and hopes to produce other types of vaccines against the virus.  
[univercells.com](http://univercells.com)

Professor François Chaumont and Dr Catherine Navarre at UCLouvain are researching the possibility of a vaccine from the production of SARS-Cov-2 glycoproteins in glyco-engineered plant suspension cells. The work is being conducted through their own funding and WALInnov – the Walloon government research department programme to support innovation.  
[uclouvain.be](http://uclouvain.be)

British pharmaceutical company GSK has joined forces with the French Sanofi in the search for a Covid-19 vaccine. Part of the research is being done in the gigantic research centre in Rixensart, in Wallonia where 2,000 vaccine researchers work. Another pharmaceutical giant, Anglo-Swedish AstraZeneca, has selected French company Novasep to supply the active substance for its potential future Covid-19 vaccine, developed in partnership with the University of Oxford. This substance will be produced on its site in Seneffe, and has an advanced order for 400 million doses.

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The Walloon service for R&D has identified 15 urgent areas of related research



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We are happy to be able to offer numerous recruitment and retraining opportunities for different profiles

with pharmaceutical group AstraZeneca to manufacture in Europe the largest part of the active substance of the vaccine against Covid-19. It has confirmed that it is recruiting dozens of new employees for the AstraZeneca project.

Recently acquired by the American company Catalent, cell and gene therapy specialist MaSTherCell predicts it will create more than 300 jobs over the next three years due to strong growth. Finally, Delphi Genetics has quadrupled its production capacity, creating several dozen jobs. It is due to announce a project to develop a treatment against Covid-19, based on its technologies.

The new posts in the biotech sphere are addressed at candidates with existing experience in the field or a related one, such as food agriculture. But recent graduates as well as people willing to undergo a professional conversion are also invited to apply. BioPark is relying on its close partnerships with universities and higher colleges of education to fill the vacancies as well as the region's training and reconversion centres.

To monitor local efforts in tackling the virus, the Royal Academy of Sciences, Letters and Fine Arts of Belgium (FNRS) has created a catalogue of all corona-related initiatives set up across Brussels and Wallonia, which currently lists 260 actions.

[covid19-wb.be](https://covid19-wb.be)



© Belga/Reuters/Yves Herman

## RESEARCH

Dr Souad Rahmouni at the GIGA biomedical research institute of the University of Liège is working with the FNRS to identify human genetic factors impacting the pandemic. Within the Covid-19 host genetics initiative, they will establish a shared set of phenotypes to be combined with genomic data for further meta-analysis. [covid19hg.org](https://covid19hg.org)

ULiège, ULB, FNRS and Saint-Pierre and Erasmus hospitals are collaborating to investigate immune responses to the infection in humans. Cohorts of patients are being recruited and followed up for several months following infection. The quality and dynamics of antibody and cellular responses will be analysed to identify correlates of protection against severe disease and to determine the duration of natural immunity to the virus. The project will help define deconfinement strategies and develop prophylactic and therapeutic interventions against Covid-19.

ULiège and FNRS have also launched a project to compare diagnostic tools such as swabs, saliva, serology and antigen detection in order to define the best one, depending on the clinical presentation and the duration of the disease.



• Marc Bretillot's La grande-epicerie: réinterprétation du millefeuille

© Marc Bretillot

# Food for thought

## Serial Eater exhibition shines a light on food design

By Sarah Schug

**H**ave you ever wondered who made your chocolate bar or French fry look the way it does? Or who gave the Pringle chip its signature wave? Food designers are behind it all. Even star designer Philippe Starck, normally known for his elegant chairs, loudspeakers and boats, has designed Barilla pasta. But that's not all a food designer does, as an exhibition at CID Grand Hornu reveals.

"The exhibition is an attempt to define the term 'food design' and familiarise a wide audience with the topic," says Benjamin Stoz, a Belgian-born interior designer and curator of the intriguing show. "I want to make it clear that food design is something entirely different from creative cooking or decorating pretty cakes, as many might think." Serial Eater shines a light on a discipline that is only now emerging from

the shadows of its famous siblings such as furniture or fashion design – despite being part of the curriculum of design schools and playing a significant role at today's major design fairs.

Food design is having something of a moment. Eating has become much more than a mere necessity to survive, there's a culture of 'You are what you eat', and food

choices are being increasingly politicised. Today, food is not just a matter of taste, but an important piece in the climate change puzzle, as well as a means to improve people's health. "What kind of consumers are we? What impact do our eating habits have on the environment, and what should we possibly change? These are some of the questions today's food designers explore," Stoz says.

With drawings, videos and lots of mock-ups, *Serial Eater* – the title being a reference to the repetitive nature of eating – attempts to respond to these issues. The exhibition traces the history of food design, examines eating rituals and gives us a glimpse of how the future of food could look. "Personalised food will become a big trend," Stoz says. Accordingly, Japanese design collective Open Meals has thought up the Super Sushi, a system where the composition of the sushi you eat is determined by the results of a blood test, assembled to fit your nutritional needs and to compensate for potential vitamin deficiencies.

Another significant development is the rise of veganism. "It's not just a trend. People are becoming much more conscious of how animals are held and treated. Meat replacement products are increasingly popular. It's a big market," Stoz says. The exhibition spotlights research on in vitro meat, for instance – meat that has been produced in a laboratory from cell cultures, avoiding the slaughtering of animals. Next Nature Network, an interdisciplinary team



• Arvid Jense & Marie Caye's SAM: The Symbiotic Autonomous Machine

© Arvid Jense & Marie Caye



• Digital Seasoning by Laila Snevele

© Laila Snevele

in Amsterdam, exhibits speculative recipes with lab-grown meat that might end up on your plate one day.

Food design, it is clear, tries to translate scientific research and technological innovation into the world of food while reflecting on our future and finding ways to improve it. British designer Susana Soares, addressing possible future food shortages, developed pasta made from insect flour, and Austrian designer Julia Schwarz created a pesto based on lichen, a fungus that grows on tree bark.

But not all the objects and ideas on view are socially or politically loaded: South Korean

designer Jinhyun Jeon presents her playful Sensory Dessert Spoon, for example, demonstrating that the texture and shape of cutlery can change our perception of taste.

"I hope it makes people examine and rethink their eating habits," Stoz says. Has curating the exhibition had an impact on his own culinary habit? "Indeed. I discovered algae as a food and I eat much less meat."

The exhibition runs until 29 November, with the participation of the executive master's in food design at Brussels fine art academy ARBA-ESA.

[cid-grand-hornu.be](http://cid-grand-hornu.be)

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What kind of consumers are we?  
What impact do our eating habits have  
on the environment?





• The Giant's Tomb viewpoint at Botassart, near Bouillon

© WBT/JP Rémy

# Change of scene

## Wallonia launches tourism campaign inviting visitors to get away from it all

By Sarah Crew

**R**elieve the tedium of lockdown by exploring Wallonia's natural and cultural charms. That's the message from the region's tourism sector in its new campaign – Destination Wallonia, the Ultimate Escape.

The region's hundreds of tourist attractions are emerging from lockdown with additional safety measures in place, making Wallonia the ideal destination for a summer staycation. Targeting families, couples and groups, the new campaign invites visitors to reconnect with nature, while avoiding crowds and enjoying simple pleasures closer to home.

"This campaign to promote Walloon tourism is much more than a relaunch cam-

paign," tourism minister Valérie De Bue said. "It is a new era for Walloon tourism. Tourism that I hope will be more sustainable, even more attractive and the driving force behind a complete ecosystem."

Sustainable tourism ranges from supporting local businesses to conserving natural resources and encouraging visitors to participate in the community. The campaign also chimes with Wallonia's tourism theme for 2020 – nature – with activities divided into four categories: explore, sleep, events and experiences.

After long stretches indoors, many people are ready to get outside. Awaiting them are the rolling green hills of the Ardennes,

the sweeping countryside of the Condroz-Famenne and Hennuyer plateau, the lesser-known charms of the Entre Sambre et Meuse area and idyllic flowing rivers and other water spots.

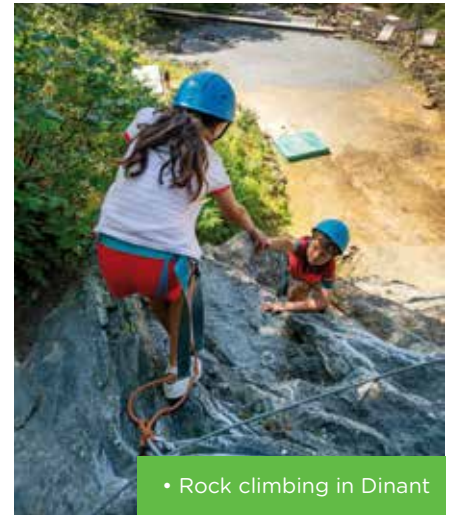
An extensive network of trails and country paths are ideal for walks and hikes as well as cycling and horse riding. The Hautes Fagnes nature reserve in Liège province is an environmentally unique upland area that attracts nature lovers, as do the Famenne-Ardenne Geopark and the many forests in the Ardennes.

A vast selection of outdoor nature activities are centred on adventure parks. Durbuy is one of the bigger ones and lays on climb-

© WBT/Olivier Legardien



• The Trappist abbey at Chimay



• Rock climbing in Dinant

© WBT/Denis Closon

ing, caving and water sports, all in a forest setting.

Heritage sites are another source of nature tourism and many have glorious parks and gardens. Villers Abbey and the stately homes of Beloeil, Mariemont, Freÿr-sur-Meuse, Bouillon and Seneffe are a few examples. Many have exceptional viewpoints, as do – for a contrasting experience – the former industrial slag heaps in Charleroi and Liège that now display extraordinary biodiversity.

Heading underground, there are numerous caves to explore. Han-sur-Lesse in Luxembourg province is one of the region's most popular tourist sites, with an animal park among its attractions. Fascinating caves are also open to the public in Goyet, Remouchamps, Hotton and Spiennes. Another major family draw in Wallonia is Pairi Daiza animal park near Mons. With more than 7,000 species, it takes visitors on a global journey around eight themed worlds.

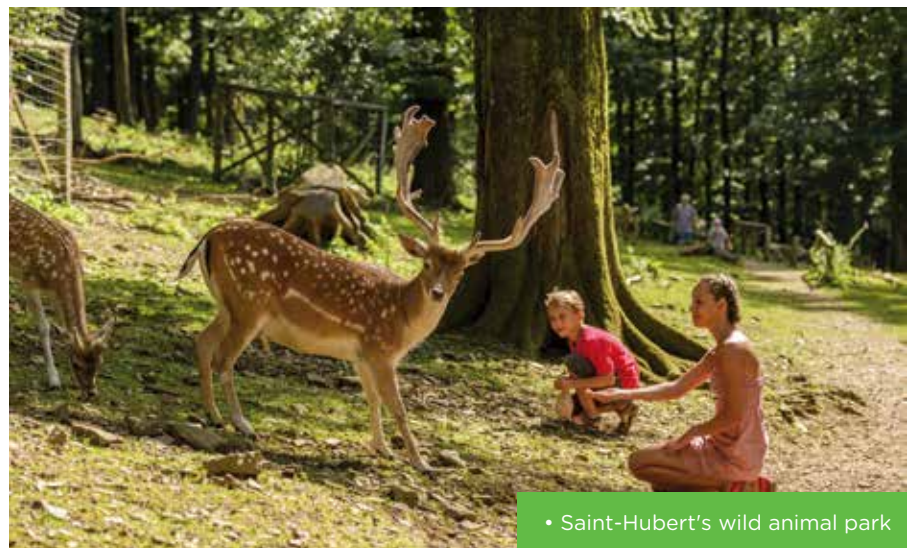
Water is one of Wallonia's most important natural resources, providing water sports, wild swimming, relaxing spas or simple strolls along a river bank. The largest lake

system in the country – Lacs de l'eau d'Heure – lies in the south of Hainaut and offers activities and accommodation for all ages. A popular summer pastime is to kayak and paddleboard down the Lesse, Meuse, Ourthe and Semois rivers.

Farms across the region welcome visitors to learn about local agriculture, from animal life to food production. A programme of trails introduces local beers, wines and other products, and lists events that are an opportunity to sample regional specialities.

To make the most of these activities there's an array of simple, luxury and quirky accommodation. Hotels, B&Bs, gîtes, cabins and farms are reopening with new practices to protect guests' health and peace of mind. It's hard to imagine getting closer to nature than sleeping on a lake: transparent bubble sleep pods are one way to sleep under the stars and over the water. Other original lodgings include treetop cabins and wagons.

VISITWallonia.be



• Saint-Hubert's wild animal park

© WBT/JP Rémy

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This is much more than a relaunch campaign. It is a new era for Walloon tourism





# Family values

## After 250 years, Wallonia's oldest brewery is all about tradition

By Tomáš Miklica

In 1769 the world was a very different place. It was the year of Captain Cook's first voyage. James Watt had just received the first patent for his steam engine. Napoleon Bonaparte was born. In 1769, most of modern-day Belgium was still part of the Southern Netherlands. So indeed, plenty has changed since then. But not everything. Just as in 1769, there is a brewery in Pipaix, Hainaut, today, and it's still owned by the same family.

The oldest brewery in Wallonia was established by Joseph Leroy, who previously brewed beer in the nearby Ghissegnyes castle. The farmer-brewer, an ancestor on the maternal side of the current owner, Hugues

Dubuisson, started a tradition that has lasted eight generations. However, as the brewery's export manager, Stijn Destatsbader, points out, it was Alfred Dubuisson who finally closed down the farm in 1931 to become a full-time brewer.

"The passion and the visionary spirit of Alfred Dubuisson between the two world wars certainly helped the brewery in facing the 20th century," says Destatsbader. "When most breweries tried to hop on the 'Pilsner train' at the beginning of the brewing process's industrialisation, Alfred took on the challenge of creating a top fermented strong Belgian speciality beer: Bush Beer was born and kept the sales and renown of

the brewery alive until the arrival of Hugues Dubuisson, who expanded the range from 1991."

Under Hugues, the business grew considerably. New microbreweries and taverns were opened throughout Wallonia, and between 2013 and 2018 the brewery doubled its production from 45,000 to 90,000 hectolitres. The company now employs 45 people and Dubuisson beer is sold in 35 countries, including Australia and Chile. According to Destatsbader, amid the expansion it is very important that the brewery remains family-owned and managed. "No contract brewing, no outsourcing," he says. "Being independent and having full control over our



brewing process is the guiding principle of the Dubuisson spirit.”

It is therefore significant that Hugues is not only the company’s CEO but also the master brewer, who directly oversees the production of all 10 beers. “Each beer has its taste characteristics that make it best suited to one situation or another,” he says when of the current range. “I would gladly drink a Surfine, for example, after exercise. On the other hand, if I’m relaxing with friends, I usually drink a Cuvée des Trolls. Finally, at apéro time, I love to enjoy a Bush Triple or a Bush Caractère.” Which is, incidentally, one of the oldest speciality beers in Belgium – with the English translation of the brand name (‘buisson’ in French means ‘bush’), it was introduced in 1933 and the recipe has remained unchanged ever since.

Similarly, Hugues is hoping his brewery won’t change too much after the ninth generation of the family, represented by Séverine and Alexandre Dubuisson, takes over. “For the next 250 years of the Dubuisson Brasserie, I wish above all that it remains a family brewery and that it continues to defend the values that we hold dear today,” he says, meaning independence with respect for the tradition, the product and the environment. “The beer is brewed with living substances, and if these were lacking we could simply no longer offer quality products. Finally, I hope that the production and tasting of beer will remain at the heart of our passion. It is love for beer that motivates us more than anything today and I hope it will stay that way.”

[dubuisson.com](http://dubuisson.com)



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Being independent and having full control over our brewing is the guiding principle of the Dubuisson spirit



# Shrewd style

## Two local designers have won tailored support to help them expand their young brands

By Saffina Rana



© Elodie Timmermans

• From the Imprevu SS20 collection

**W**ith the coronavirus finally in slow decline, this year more than ever the Wallonie-Bruxelles Design Mode (WBDM) Fashion programme has come into its own in supporting the commercial development and growth of fashion designers in an uncertainty-laden, post-pandemic world.

The WBDM Fashion programme was set up in 2017 to offer two large financial grants and six coaching subsidies every year, providing designers with bespoke expertise in expanding their brands into new markets. They've enabled past winners to establish their labels in the UAE, China and the US as well as focusing on local markets in Europe.

Qualifying applicants for this year needed to have established their first collections and at least five sales points for the last three seasons, and to demonstrate a clear potential for commercial expansion, whether at home or abroad. The winners were elected before the onset of the



Covid-19 pandemic in Europe. This year's highest grant of €35,000 went to Valentine Witmeur, creator of Valentine Witmeur Lab, elegant, ethically conscious knits produced by a family atelier in Portugal using luxury yarns such as merino and cashmere, which she sources in Italy.

Born and raised in Brussels, Witmeur is a communications graduate with a master's in fashion and luxury brand management from Istituto Marangoni in Milan, who established herself as an influencer long before she launched her brand in 2016.

She describes what she makes as "clothes that are cool and chic at the same time" and her "deepest desire" she says "is to elevate every woman's style to make her feel on-trend, feminine and cunningly confident".

Having presented two collections a year at Paris Fashion Week for several years, Witmeur is no ingénue when it comes to growing her own business. She established online sales early on and her lines are available in eight countries.

According to Laure Capitani, coordinator at WBDM and a member of the selection jury, she "has sold abroad, and has online sales, but needs to develop and the grant will help with this".

The second prize, worth €15,000, was awarded to Liège-based Justine God, creator of a vintage-inspired, low ecological impact clothing brand for women, Imprevu. God began her career as a buyer for a Belgian textile group before launching Imprevu in 2017 with small-scale production in Italy.

Her collections are now distributed in more than 80 sales outlets in Belgium,



• From the Valentine Witmeur Lab SS20 collection

France and the Netherlands but were purposely never marketed online. "I chose not to sell online ... to keep a direct link with the stores and to ensure a certain exclusivity. And as such not to flood the market," she says.

According to Capitani, it was a shrewd move. "She has been prudent, developing her brand bit by bit, and Imprevu is developing a really good partnership with retailers buyers and owners of multi-brand stores, especially in Belgium. It is now beginning to sell abroad and we feel it is the right moment to support her," she says.

Both labels offer an ethical approach to design and manufacture as well as a certain

amount of exclusivity, and both need to offer up their stories and build on customer relationships, especially in unstable times, says Capitani. "People who buy designer brands buy part of the story and history of the product. This is possible with online sales but needs a very good customer relationship, keeping personal contact, and privileges for loyal customers. The experience is important, they need to feel taken care of."

As well as Capitani, the nine-strong 2020 award jury was drawn from fashion industry analysts and buyers as well as specialists from AWEX, Wallonia's trade and export agency. These included Pascale Delcor, director of communications at



© Louis Vrière



Hermès for Benelux, journalist and stylist Stéphane Gaboué and Alexis Bellavoine of the exclusive Blender 01 boutique in Brussels.

They were unanimous in their decision. “The two big winners are very different, but we were seduced by both for their clear points of view and strategy, and the quality of their collections,” says Capitani.

The jury decided on a shortlist of eight brands after two days of interviews and discussions with each of this year’s 21 eligible competitors. In reality, all the competitors are winners given the depth and intensity of the selection process, explains Capitani.

“Applicants had to submit a business plan and a strategy on how they were going to develop their brand – in words and figures. Getting to know their weaknesses, jury members took the time to advise the brands, so just this on its own was handy to them and a good way of making contacts within the industry,” she says.

[valentinewitmeurlab.com](http://valentinewitmeurlab.com)  
[imprevubelgium.com](http://imprevubelgium.com)

© Alice Pallot



## THE RUNNERS-UP

The remaining six designers on the programme’s shortlist were each awarded €4,000 worth of consultations with industry specialists. This will enable them to navigate changes in the sector after the pandemic and develop a focused commercialisation and communications strategy that will help to expand their brand reach.

Accessories designer Geoffrey Moreels for a collection of handmade hats launched through his MY BOB label created in 2008. [mybob.be](http://mybob.be)

La Cambre School for the Arts graduate Charlotte Mounzer for her sustainable small-volume brand Sé-em, which sources quality fabric salvaged from stocks of luxury Parisian brands (pictured above, right). [se-em.com](http://se-em.com)

INDEE, a fresh, brightly coloured clothing range for girls aged from eight to 18. [indeecollection.com](http://indeecollection.com)

Psychologist turned jeweller Enora Antoine for her unique and wearable creations working precious gems in gold and silver (pictured above, left). [enoraantoine.com](http://enoraantoine.com)

Designers Leonneke Derksen and Joëlle Laederach for their ready-to-wear women’s range, LÉO. [leo-official.com](http://leo-official.com)

Royal Academy of Fine Arts graduate Sarah de Saint Hubert’s classically sexy rock chic range launched in 2017. [sarahdesainthubert.be](http://sarahdesainthubert.be)

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People who buy designer brands buy part of the story and history of the product

## IT'S MAGIC!

A pair of Liège magicians drew quite the crowd when they made a luxury watch in a shop window in Singapore fly. As the Roger Dubois Swiss timepiece revolved 360°, passers-by gasped at the gravity-defying trick. Conjurers-turned-entrepreneurs Clément Kerstenne and Philippe Bougard are behind the company LEVITA, which creates customised gravity windows to showcase artworks, jewellery, fashion and watches. Their eye-catching concept is targeted at high-end retailers, museums and luxury events. "People stopped, the time they took to admire the window was increased. They were filming, talking to the seller, asking to touch the watch and see if it was real," said Kerstenne. Their gravity window has since been installed at boutiques in Macao and Dubai.

[levita-magic.com](http://levita-magic.com)









© Yann Arthus-Bertrand



© Eva Eyraud



© Dieter Telemans



© Yann Arthus-Bertrand



FOOD & DRINK  
**MADE IN BIOUL**

1

Sample local organic wines and explore the Château de Bioul with the Made in Bioul discovery trail, in a 11-hectare vineyard in the Meuse Valley. It offers visits of the castle – which dates from the 11th century – and its tree-filled garden as well as a tour of the wine cellar. Music is played to aid the maturing of the wine; the vibrations are thought to help. Naturally, there are plenty of opportunities to taste the result and enjoy accompanying platters of food selected to match the wines, all made from Riesling, Muscat and Pinot grapes.

UNTIL 30 SEPTEMBER  
[chateaubioul.be](http://chateaubioul.be)





## TOUR ART PUBLIC

2

It's the turn of Liège to host the outdoor art event, which is staged every three years in Wallonia. Some 18 emerging artists have been invited to create a work that responds to the urban environment, taking into account the human aspect of various public spaces. These locations have been selected for their social or historical significance, with the ensuing art trail aimed at highlighting the city's heritage and geography before the public domain is transformed by works to install a new tram network. A visitor's guide is available. The fourth edition of the Triennale is organised by public authorities with the assistance of a local private benefactor.

1 AUGUST-31 OCTOBER  
[liege.be](http://liege.be)

## EXHIBITION LEGACY

3

The city of Mons welcomes two exhibitions of photos by French ecologist Yann Arthus-Bertrand, entitled Legacy: The Heritage We Leave Our Children. Displayed in the Beffroi park, the highest vantage point in the city, are some 80 photos from his emblematic book Earth from Above. Lesser-known works by the environmental campaigner from the 1980s can be viewed inside Salle Saint-Georges. Security measures are in place at both sites and visitors are advised to book tickets in advance.

UNTIL 25 OCTOBER  
[beffroi.mons.be](http://beffroi.mons.be)

## THEATRE NOTRE-DAME DE PARIS

4

While the planned production of *Lucrece Borgia* has been postponed until next summer, the annual outdoor theatre performance at Villers Abbey has adjusted spectator numbers to safely stage a homage to the Victor Hugo classic *Notre-Dame de Paris*. Seasoned actor Eric Staercke brings to life the colourful characters of Quasimodo and Esmerelda, among others, while also recounting episodes from the life of Hugo, who spent time at the abbey during his sojourn in Belgium. The romantic ruins of the Cistercian abbey provide a dramatic backdrop for this regular summer fixture on the cultural calendar.

15 JULY-16 AUGUST  
[deldiffusion.be](http://deldiffusion.be)

## THE NATURAL ROUTE

**Vanessa Vaxelaire and her husband, Andy Wyckmans, planted their first vine at Château de Bioul in 2009. The Meuse Valley property in Namur province has been in the Vaxelaire family – who founded a series of department stores in Belgium – since 1906**

We lived in Brussels and after my husband sold his company we looked for a project in the countryside that was connected to nature. We tasted some Belgian wines and found they were good. We had experience of drinking wine, but not of making it, so we surrounded ourselves with some good people. Our cellar master, Mélanie Chereau, has been with us from the beginning and together we have created the 11-hectare vineyard.

An important step was selecting the vines. We didn't go down the classic route, Chardonnay for example, but chose more resistant grapes as we wanted to follow a natural path. Working sustainably is a lifelong project. We've always been organic, but in 2019 we received the organic label. I think we must be the only winery in Belgium to treat our vines in a bio-dynamic way.

The main challenges have been the weather, which is sometimes extreme – either too much rain or too much sun, and occasionally hailstones. We've had three years of frost over the past five years. Thanks to our grapes, there aren't too many fungus or bacteria diseases. We make 50,000 bottles a year from vines grown in the domain and also in the village.

The Made in Bioul tour explains the history of the castle and my family, while concentrating on the wine. We explain the natural process of growing grapes and there are a number of formulas for tasting the wine. It's also possible to have lunch here, and we have a magnificent terrace overlooking the park.

[chateaubioul.be](http://chateaubioul.be)



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Working  
sustainably is a  
lifelong project

# Feel inspired



Wallonia, a world of opportunities

**1,602** FOREIGN INVESTMENTS  
\_\_\_\_\_ in 18 years

**400 M** CONSUMERS  
reachable  
WITHIN ONE DAY \_\_\_\_\_

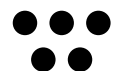
 Very high density  
Of **UNIVERSITIES**  
and **HIGH SCHOOLS**

**6** COMPETITIVENESS  
\_\_\_\_\_ CLUSTERS in  
LEADING-EDGE sectors

an exceptional  
**QUALITY**  
OF LIFE 

Highly skilled  
AVAILABLE  
**WORKFORCE** 

**70%** of business  
turnover comes  
from **EXPORTS**



Wallonia.be