

Close royal ties at the ceremony of the National Day of Belgium



Belgium's National Day at Expo 2005 was held on 14 June, when Belgian Prince Philippe and Japanese Prince Hitachi, who serves as the honorary president of the Japan-Belgium Society, along with his wife, Princess Hitachi, visited the Belgian pavilion. A delegation of some 200 Belgian business people led by Marc Verwilghen, Minister for the Economy, attended a series of events in and around the Belgian Pavilion.

To mark the sister city relationship between Waterloo in Belgium and Nagakutecho, which dates back to 1992, about 800 primary and middle school students sang a song after performances by an orchestra and a Belgian flutist.

The Belgian Pavilion is without any doubt one of the most successful of Expo 2005 Aichi. Visitor figures show that in the first two months of this universal expo between 10,000 and 15,000 have come to the Pavilion every day to see and admire the exhibition. The greatest interest has been in the guided tours of Schuiten and

Obolensky's "pictorial Opera", showing the way Belgian artists have incorporated nature within their work.

A survey reveals that Japanese visitors who had never been to Belgium said, after viewing the 270° panoramic film about Brussels, Flanders and Wallonia, that they would love to visit the country.

The Belgian Pavilion's cafe-restaurant is also a must-see attraction. Beer sales, for example, are three times higher than Belgian brewers had imagined even in their wildest dreams. Every day the queue for Belgian waffles is a landscape feature: on 14 May, waiting times reached 90 minutes, meaning that sales of 6,000 waffles a day are nothing special.

The investigation also revealed that visiting the Pavilion changed most people's idea of Belgium. To quote one of those interviewed: "for us, Belgium meant chocolate, lace, beer and French fries. Well, it still does, but we've also learned that Belgium is a magnificent country as well, with a rich cultural heritage: a treasure house of creativity."

For more information, visit the Belgian Pavilion Web site at

www.expo2005.be or contact: info@expo2005.be