

# Belgium King's Day Special

## Over 150 years of robust ties united by shared interests

**ROXANE DE BILDERLING**  
AMBASSADOR OF BELGIUM



It is a great pleasure for me to celebrate my first King's Day in Tokyo, as the Belgian Ambassador, recently arrived in this country. I feel really honored to be posted in Japan as our two countries enjoy excellent, friendly, rich and diverse bilateral relations.

This was again reflected when Their Majesties King Philippe and Queen

Mathilde of the Belgians traveled to Tokyo to attend the enthronement ceremony and reaffirm the strong bonds that unite them with Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako of Japan.

The links between the two families date back from several decades. For many Japanese people, the first word to come to their mind when thinking about Belgium might be chocolate, with several excellent Belgian brands present on the Japanese market, or it might also be the waffles, or of course the many delicious Belgian beers present in Japan (actually not so many if you realize that a small country like Belgium has thousands of types of beers!).

Some might also know Belgium for its diamonds, as our country hosts an international center where no less than 80 percent of rough diamonds pass at some point in their cycle. As Japan is known for manga and anime, Belgium is known for its comic strips, many of which have been translated into Japanese.

All of this is true, but it is as important to point out that Belgium is most of all a modestly sized multicultural country, at the heart of Europe. A kind of a condensed summary of various cultural influences.

Throughout history, many powers have occupied the land where Belgium now stands, which gave us this unique

openness, modesty, pragmatism and a certain gift for finding compromise, helping to find solutions.

This might be the reason why our country hosts at least two important organizations for Japan: the European Union and NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

It also convinced us of the true need to build an international order based on rules, on respect and multilateral agreements, a firm belief that we share with Japan.

We cherish our more than 150 years of friendship with Japan and wish to build further bonds to enrich those relations even further in the economic, trade,

cultural, academic, political, security, and many other fields. This is why I am so passionate about my job here as the Ambassador of Belgium to Japan. I am

truly committed to work on ensuring that these bonds flourish even further, like the beautiful *sakura* cherry blossom flowers in spring.

*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*

## Friendship represented by royal diplomacy

**KIMIKAZU SUGAWARA**  
PRESIDENT, THE JAPAN-BELGIUM SOCIETY



On the occasion of King's Day, it is with great pleasure that I express my sincere congratulations.

After the Reiwa Era started in May, the ceremony of ascension was organized recently

for the enthronement of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito in front of many foreign and domestic leaders, representatives and royal guests.

Their Majesties King Philippe and Queen Mathilde were among them with beautiful smiles to celebrate the king's

long-time friend.

The king of the Belgians was crowned in 2013. Since then, he has come to Japan twice, including his latest October visit.

These visits represent how close Japan and Belgium are, as are the Japanese imperial and the Belgian royal families. The mutual respect and close friendship of our two nations are surely inherited by our thrones and it was a pleasure for people of Japan to witness it in the festive atmosphere. I am sure that our relationship will be deepened further and enriched in the years to come.

This year, I would also like to congratulate the Crown Princess Elisabeth, as the heir of the monarch has just come of age. I hope she will visit Japan to meet our people one day soon.

When it comes to The Japan-Belgium

Society, we marked our 50th anniversary this year. There are 70 corporate and 234 individual members who are the true force of the citizen diplomacy of our two countries. I would like to thank all of them and ask for their continuing assistance to us.

The society has been working closely with the embassy since its establishment. This year, former Ambassador Gunther Sleenwagen left Japan and we welcomed Ambassador Roxane de Bilderling in Tokyo. We are very much looking forward to collaborating with her and her team to open up a new chapter of our history.

I sincerely wish that Belgium and Japan will further develop our close relationship and deepen exchanges in many fields.



King Philippe (second from left) and Queen Mathilde with Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako at the enthronement ceremony held in Tokyo on Oct. 22.



Belgian Ambassador Roxane de Bilderling (second from left) takes part in the opening ceremony of Belgian Beer Weekend 2019 at the Roppongi Hills Arena in Tokyo on Sept. 11. HIROKO INOUE

## Congratulations on the Belgian King's Day

# JBS

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## Congratulations on the Belgian King's Day

Belgian Restaurant



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## Congratulations on the Belgian King's Day



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ON THE BELGIAN KING'S DAY

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