



First Slovenian tree top walk to be built in Rogla

Total sustainable tourism investment of 4.5 million EUR

28.9.2018 – Zreče: Slovenia's first treetop walk, to be opened on Rogla mountain in the summer of 2019, was announced today at an official building rights contract signing ceremony in Zreče. Designed by experienced tree top walk architect Josef Stöger, it has been commissioned by the renowned Central European tree top walk operator Zážitková Akademie (ZAK). ZAK's local partner for the project is the town of Zreče, which is providing the land to be leased for the tree top walk. Well-known local resort operator Unitur supports the project and the two parties are discussing ongoing cooperation.

ZAK already operates three tree top walks: two in the Czech Republic in Lipno in the southern Šumava mountain region, Jánenské lázně in the northern Krkonoše mountain region and in Bachledova dolina in the northern Slovakia Tatra mountain region with further locations planned in Central and Eastern Europe. ZAK is a 100% subsidiary of German Erlebnis Akademie AG (EAK), which operates four tree top walks in Germany and has recently opened a location in Gmunden, Austria.

"The total Rogla tree top walk investment should be approx. 4.5 million EUR. Depending on weather, construction should commence before the end of 2018 and, if there are no unexpected delays, we expect to be open for business on 30.7.2019." stated Bernd Bayerköhler, Executive Director of both ZAK and EAG, adding:

"As with all our German and Central European locations, the Rogla tree top walk will be fully wheel chair accessible and made up of a trail and tower. The first part of the trail will be about 560 m long and up to 20 m high. This leads to the tower, which will be 35 m high with an additional inner trail length of 440 m. A toboggan will also be included, allowing for a fun descent from the tower back to the trail and from there to the exit with a souvenir store. The location height of the Rogla tree top walk is 1500 m."

Zreče Mayor, Boris Podvršnik, welcomed the investment: "The first wooden observation tower on Rogla was built in 1934 and visitors will welcome the continuation of this tradition. Over the years we have developed skiing, a spa resort, agritourism, hiking and biking and this is a natural development in terms of sustainable tourism. The word "Rogla" in Slovenian means "forked tree-covered mountain ridge" and a tree top walk is the best way to showcase even better the beauty of this region and tourist destination Rogla-Pohorje."

Barbara Soršak, Unitur Executive Director, explains why they have been supporting the project idea: "This tree top walk is a proven and successful concept in many locations, providing not only relaxation and fun, but also importantly educational elements presenting the nature of the Pohorje massif as well as local flora and fauna. This relates to our Unitur mission of bringing nature and healthy lifestyle closer. For our visitors it will be another activity for them to take part in and at the same time we will be supporting local products as well as introducing local and global environmental themes."

Mag. Teo Hrvoje Oršanič, Director of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, expanded on this theme: “The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation and the Municipality of Zreče have been cooperating for many years. Tourism and nature conservation can each take their own path or, the two can merge and find a common path to follow. At first, the fact that Zreče Pohorje is a part of Natura 2000 may have meant fewer kilometers of ski slopes; however, many possibilities and opportunities for collaboration have arisen. We have implemented numerous projects in this area thus far together with the Municipality of Zreče and we continue to implement many more, with experts in tourism and nature conservation continuously working together and broadening their knowledge base. The Treetop Walk opportunity, which we are currently working on, is a good example of how experts in nature conservation and tourism can work side by side, pursuing individual yet not mutually exclusive goals. It is great that we have been a part of this project from the very beginning and we will complete our Treetop Walk implementation tasks professionally.”

Domen Vogelsang, Director of the local tourist organization Rogla-Zreče, added: “It is with great pride and pleasure that LTO Rogla - Zreče tourist organisation is seeing those activities, which will form the basis for the construction of the Treetop Walk, completed today. Our organisation has supported the Pohorje Treetop Walk project since the very beginning. We believe this project will have a similar impact on tourism as the establishment of ski resorts had in the 1970s and the beginning of thermal tourism had in the 1990s. We see the project as a contribution to local tourism, delivering more diversity and value. We are convinced that the project will have numerous positive effects on tourism and consequently on the entire economy, not only in Rogla-Pohorje, but also throughout the Pohorje area and Slovenia. At the same time, we are aware of the challenges that the project poses. Having said that, proper management of the tourism flow, which will come with the project, will undoubtedly generate satisfying returns not only for investors, but local communities and tourism providers in the wider area. We are looking forward to working together on the promotion and marketing of the project for the benefit of all parties involved. The Pohorje Treetop Walk is an opportunity for us all. Let’s grab it!”

EAK and its subsidiaries such as ZAK open forests and landscapes to the public with a strict adherence to environmental principles and cooperation with local partners. These include the administrators of national parks and protected landscape areas, towns and villages, tourist resorts and specialized organizations and associations. Its aim in each individual location is to deliver sustainable tourism.

Slovenia, one of the five greenest states on the planet, has sustainable tourism as a central tenet of its tourism promotion activities. “We aim to address the individual by raising their awareness and encouraging them to take care for our planet. Tourism plays an important role in this process. In Slovenia, this process is based on the principles of sustainable development and equally considers treatment of economic, social and environmental components. The Slovenian Tourist Board (STB), placed sustainability at the core of development and promotional activities and promotes more responsible behavior towards the environment and aims to the position green Slovenia in the world,” explains Maja Pak, Director General of the Slovenian Tourist Board and adds: “We approve all initiatives and projects that support this philosophy”.

Zážitková Akademie s.r.o. (ZAK <http://www.z-ak.cz/en/home>) – based in Prague and a subsidiary of German Erlebnis Akademie AG, ZAK currently operates three joint venture tree top walks:

- Stezka korunami stromů Lipno – located in Lipno in the southern Šumava mountain region, Czech Republic: <https://www.stezkakorunamistromu.cz/>
- Stezka korunami stromů Krkonoše – located in Jánské lázně in the northern Krkonoše mountain region, Czech Republic: <http://www.stezkakrakonose.cz/>
- Chodník korunami stromov – located in Ždiar in the north-eastern Tatra mountain region, Slovakia: <https://chodnikkorunamistromov.sk/>

Stezka korunami stromů Krkonoše was recently voted absolute winner of the Czech Tourism award DestinaCZe for 2018. Rogla will be ZAK's fourth tree top walk region.

Erlebnis Akademie AG (EAG <https://www.eak-ag.de/eakag/>) – based in Bad Kötzting, EAK is the largest operator of outdoor adventure areas in Europe. The company employs 100 professionals, with a 2017 turnover of over 300 million CZK (12 million EUR). EAK has been designing, implementing and operating treetop trails, adrenaline and family areas as well as educational centers since 2001. EAK's tourism concepts are for the general public and are based on sustainable tourism, combining adventure, relaxation and local as well as global environmental awareness in easy to access formats and locations. EAK currently operates five tree top walks:

- Baumwipfelpfad Schwarzwald – located in the Schwarzwald region, Germany: <http://www.baumwipfelpfad-schwarzwald.de/schwarzwald-en/>
- Baumwipfelpfad Bayerischer Wald – located in the Bayerischer Wald region, Germany: <https://www.baumwipfelpfad.bayern/bayerischer-wald-en/>
- Naturerbe Zentrum Rügen – located on Rügen Island, Germany: <https://www.nezr.de/nezr-en/>
- Baumwipfelpfad Saarschleife – located in Saarland, the Saarschleife region, Germany: <https://www.baumwipfelpfad-saarschleife.de/saarschleife-en/>
- Baumwipfelpfad Salzkammergut – located in Gmunden, the Salzkammergut region, Austria: <https://www.baumwipfelpfade.at/salzkammergut/>

Unitur d.o.o. – based in Zreče, Slovenia, Unitur's mission is to bring a natural and healthy lifestyle closer to the visitor. It is developing a long term program, striving for successful operations, global competitiveness and satisfaction of its guests. Investment in the new tree top walk in Rogla dovetails with its philosophy of delivering to visitors a wide range of hotel products and services. Unitur operates the Mountain Sport & Ski Rogla and Terme Zreče Spa.

- <https://www.rogla.eu/en/>
- <https://www.terme-zrece.eu/en/>

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