

RIMSKI VRELEC – DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITY AND OPPORTUNITY

The broader area of Kotlje, the famous village underneath the Uršlja Gora (Carinthia, Slovenia), represents an opportunity for the development of health resort, congressional, educational, winter and adventure tourism, providing the use of space and all the tourist and recreation capacities in the greenness of nature and by the water, throughout the whole year. But most importantly, Rimski Vrelec has an option to exploit and bottle the natural and mineral water, which shall be extremely interesting for the market in the future. With the construction of the express road, the competitiveness of both, the Kotlje tourist centre and the tourist and economic use of natural and medicinal water, shall significantly increase.

Mineral water, which springs in Rimski Vrelec, was proven to have medicinal effects. We are dealing with water with the contents of elements, which give it a special taste and make it the real attraction of Rimski Vrelec. The existing discharge is sufficient for drinking, while for the purposes of bottling or more intensive use in the sense of health tourism, the discharge of mineral water should be increased by a well.

In this text, we would like to present business and investment opportunities of Rimski Vrelec tourist destination as well as of the broader tourist-development area underneath the Uršlja Gora, which in connection with Peca and Pohorje, represents a huge tourist potential of international dimensions.

The owner of the Rimski Vrelec is the Ravne na Koroškem Municipality. The Municipality is seeking a buyer or a strategic investor, who shall independently develop and perform the tourist activity. Various tourist and recreational activities are possible in this area, such as mountaineering, hiking, parachute gliding, mountain biking, horseback riding, skiing, ice skating... The future investors may supplement this offers and make them more interesting, according to their plans and their own development policy.

THE HISTORY OF RIMSKI VRELEC

At foothills of the mighty Uršlja Gora, in the Kotlje valley, at the altitude of 510 m, springs **Rimski vrelec**, the natural mineral water, extremely rich with iron. In the Roman period, there was a post, located along the Roman road Celeia – Virunum. Roman remains were found in this place in 1977, mostly monuments. At that time, the place was given a name RIMSKI VRELEC. At the end of the 19th century, the water began to be exploited for the tourist purposes. In time, a well-known resort was created. Back than, this water was appreciated more than any other, the most often used for drinking in all bigger Austro-Hungarian cities and exported even to America.

The locals knew about the medicinal effects of water for a long time. Even in the middle of the 15th century, they called the water the "**sour water**". In the 19th

century, they began to mass distribute this water, the locals drank it at the spring and took it to their homes. At that time, there was only a pit covered by rocks at the spring, therefore the people had to kneel down in order to catch the water and thus they showed the water their respect. Even then, the water was known for its strong odour.

Around 1850, the old building was constructed. The first known owner was Steinhäubl in 187, who built the first resort in this place. He called the bathing site Vojvodska Kopel (Duke's Bath) and the resort and place, Rimski Vrelec.

The structure was taken over by the Schütz family. In 1896, they constructed the second main building (now the hotel). The whole complex was named Römer Quelle. Their resort manager was Osjander, who later also bought the place.

The water was exported to all larger Austro-Hungarian cities and to England. It was internationally acknowledged and they called it **Koroški Rimski Vrelec** (Carinthian Roman Spring), Kärntner Römer Quelle or Fonte Romana della Karinzia. In the Klagenfurt, Graz and Vienna restaurants, it was known as the best table water. It was supposed to be sold also in pharmacies in Vienna. It was said that the emperor Franz Joseph himself, drank this mineral water. The water was distributed around the world in boxes, containing 70 half-litre bottles. The popularity of this water is proven by numerous letters with compliments and thanks of simple folks as well as important people, who came from near and far.

The place and water were especially **recommended for the treatment** of nervous diseases, anaemia, gastrointestinal diseases, diseases of mucous membrane, bladder and kidneys, throat, respiratory diseases and lack of appetite. At the treatment, they used cold and hot baths. The specific of this health establishment at that time was the natural stream bath in the room, where the stream water ran through, however it was abandoned after the World War I. They also had ten cabins with wooden and iron bathtubs, located in the building above the spring.

In 1971, Ana Nešič bought the hotel from Osjander. In this period, there was a transition from the candle lightning to the petroleum lamps, while in 1929, the electricity was installed from their **own power plant**. They also developed winter sports, they constructed a **ski jump** with cooperation of Stanko Bloudek.

During the World War II, the Gestapo headquarters were located in the building, while in 1947, the property was nationalised.

Since 1947 to 1953, this was a **boarding school** for students of the Ravne metallurgical school. When the boarding school was moved to Ravne, the hotel became an open-type restaurant. Also at that time, the water was bottled and sold. In 1954, the place was given to the Shipyard Uljanik from Pula in management. **Numerous renovations** were made during this period. Now, there were 50 beds and snowy white sand around the hotel. This was a closed-type resort, with a season from 15 May to 15 October.

The holiday home existed until 1962, when it was taken over by the Ljubljana Transport company, later called the Golfturist, tozd catering activity in Carinthia.

The busiest period was in the winter, mostly because of preschool and schoolchildren, who attended ski courses during the winter holidays.

Between 1985 and 1990, the hotel was being renewed. The old building, behind the hotel was torn down in 1990, the kitchen was moved back to the first floor and the reception room was arranged downstairs. On the south side, they added a dining room with over 200 seats and a bar underneath. On the north side, they added the service area and a staircase. The renewed hotel had 52 beds and rooms with central heating.

In 1992, the complex was taken over by the company De profundis and was later managed by the steel plant Logistični Center Ravne. After the denationalisation procedure was concluded, the hotel was bought by the **Ravne na Koroškem Municipality**.

THE HOTULJSKA SLATINA MINERAL WATER

Natural mineral water, pure alkaline and sulphur-free **Hotuljska Slatina**, springs at the altitude of 510 m. The water is extremely rich with iron and was successfully marketed over more than a century ago. It has numerous medicinal properties (scientific-research and cultural-historical meaning). **Benevolent effects of water** are known from the time of Romans, since it was used for treating nervous, respiratory and gastrointestinal problems. It was recommended to anaemic people and for the cardiovascular diseases. The locals call this spring, where we can still drink from, the "Sour water". The springing water retained the same chemical compounds over the last century.

Water analysis:

The water is completely clear, with specific odour and typical metallic taste. After a few days, red-coloured precipitation begins to form (iron (III) oxide). The radiological analysis, performed at the Jozef Stefan Institute showed that the water does not demonstrate any radioactive abnormalities. The water temperature ranges from 8 to 9.5 degrees Celsius, therefore it is almost constant. There is a lot of free CO₂ in the water, around 2000 mg/l.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE PLAN OF INVESTMENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM

In the Kotlje area, considering spatial possibilities and impacts on the narrower environment, it would be possible to realize the **bottling plant of medicinal and natural water** and an adrenalin park.

In the framework of the annual tourist offer of the Kotlje tourist centre, it would be sensible to supplement the primary offer of the Rimski Vrelec Complex with forms of the **tourist product**, which consider the basic starting points:

- optimal exploitation of natural and human resources of narrower and broader environment,
- integrity and complementarity of the tourist offer,
- recognisability and identity of the tourist product,
- tourist offer throughout the whole year in the sense of investment economising,
- purposeful use, management and maintenance.

Further steps and interventions in this area must be integral and inseparable parts of the final image, which shall result in the **integral tourist product**, possibly with an established brand name, recognisable in the narrower – Slovenian and broader – European space.

We are talking about **building up the identity**, as an element of the tourist offer, in the sense of individualisation of tourist services and tourist product. This type of tourism offers uniqueness and exceptionalness of natural and cultural potentials and usually results in the highest earnings per tourist product unit.

In order to provide the tourist offer of the Kotlje tourist centre throughout the whole year, it would be sensible to supplement the primary offer with forms of tourist product such as recreational programmes in natural and built environment, educational and congressional tourism, entertainment tourism and adventure tourism.

Long-term programme conception of the construction of the Kotlje tourist centre is based on the following conceptual starting points:

- forming the tourist offer, which reflects the recognisability of Carinthia and Slovenia in Europe and in the world,
- considering modern tourist trends,
- considering natural and cultural characteristics of the narrower and broader environment.

Priorities of tourist products:

Health resort tourism

- Curative treatment: - drinking medicinal water
- beauty – controlled loss of weight

Less demanding aesthetic surgery

- wellness

Rest and relaxation

- holidays in mountains
- holidays on snow

- holidays by the lake

Educational tourism

- out-of-school classes
- learning languages
- computer training – internet workshops

Business tourism

- congresses, seminars, meetings

Cultural tourism

- the Voranc trail
- workshops for culture workers and other intellectuals

Sports

- Swimming in the swimming pool
- Ball games (table tennis, squash, badminton) and billiards
- paint ball
- bawling alley
- archery

Recreation

- skiing and acrobatic skiing
- cross-country skiing
- ice-skating
- swimming and sunbathing
- boating
- golf in mini golf
- horseback riding
- fishing
- children's playground

Cuisine

- culinary events – Carinthian House

Games and entertainment

- casinos
- adrenalin park
- amusement park

Events

- fashion events
- promotions
- weddings and anniversaries
- welcome evenings

Production and marketing

- mineral medicinal water,
- natural water.

The appropriately formed programme in Rimski Vrelec (including the new bottling plant of natural and medicinal water) may present an important contribution to the development of the health resort tourism in the broader region. Together with the potential golf course and horseback riding centre, the concept of the tourist centre Kotlje – Rimski Vrelec shall be about complementary activities, which ideally complement one another.