



Good Practice Story Title: ROGLA: EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Destination: ROGLA - POHORJE

Country: SLOVENIA

Submitting Organization:

LTO Rogla-Zreče, GIZ

Category:

- Destination Management
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

Destination description:

Rogla – Pohorje tourist destination (hereinafter RPTD) is located in northeastern Slovenia and stretches across the mighty Pohorje reigned by Rogla, past the wine-growing hills, where it aligns with the calming Dravinja valley. Hidden [Vitanje](#), touristy [Zreče](#), white [Oplotnica](#) and picturesque [Slovenske Konjice](#) are magical places with energy of Pohorje, gems of nature, remarkable history - and the greatest treasure of all, friendly people. Numerous sustainability certifications awarded to TDRP and publications of destination sustainability stories in reputable domestic and foreign media outlets demonstrate that sustainability and dedication to nature in TDRP are not just words on paper but a destination following the guidelines of sustainable and digitized development. Among the top 5 attractions of the destination are [the Pohorje Treetop walkway](#) on Rogla, [the Oplotnica Gorge](#), the [Noordung Center](#) in Vitanje, [the Terme Zreče Spa](#), and [the Žiče Charterhouse](#).



Summary of Good Practice Story:

Climate change is here and now – we feel its effects right on our doorstep, in agriculture, economy, natural disasters, and everyday life. Climate change strongly impacts the tourism sector, including Rogla, a popular ski resort located at an altitude of 1517 meters. The snow cover is already decreasing, leading to fewer skiing days. Rogla is classified as a mid-altitude winter sports center, where there should still be prudent investment in winter sports tourism and technical snowmaking as a strategy to adapt to winters with a lack of natural snow, while also experiencing accelerated focus on year-round tourism, particularly dominant in the summer. In 2023, the Rogla ski resort began a sustainable transformation, which is an excellent example of successful adaptation to climate change. With this development, they enabled year-round tourism, and the Nature Conservation Information Center was established at Rogla, as well as the Nature Conservation Regional Park of Pohorje.

Issues faced:

Mountain areas where winter sports, especially skiing, are practiced, are known as particularly sensitive areas to climate change and environmental issues (Burki et al., 2003). Climate analysis (ARSO, 2022) indicates that changes are also expected at the climate resort Rogla, although to a lesser extent. In the transitional region to which Rogla belongs, an increase in temperature is expected, which will significantly impact winter sports tourism. Therefore, diverse year-round offerings will be necessary to promote the development of year-round tourism while also helping to conserve natural resources and adapt to climate change. Ensuring sustainable use of natural resources and nature conservation are becoming key in the fight against climate change, which is essential for the long-term preservation of the tourism potential of Rogla and other mountain areas in general.

Solution:

The best way to adapt to climate change is diversifying tourism and seeking alternatives to ski tourism. The climate resort Rogla already successfully combines skiing with spa tourism and offers diverse wellness programs, as Unitur began investing in year-round tourism a decade ago (The ski resort Rogla started operating in the 1970s, and The Terme Zreče Spa in the 1990s).

Rogla features numerous themed trails, a bike park, a year-round sledging track, and wellness facilities. In the past year, they have further upgraded their year-round tourism offerings, which is crucial for adapting to climate change. It's important to follow sustainable strategies in mountain tourism, preserve the sensitive mountain environment, and promote the development and protection of the natural environment, which will now be the task of the emerging Nature Conservation Regional Park of Pohorje. Conserving natural resources also means tourism development, creating new jobs, and ensuring sustainable development. The Nature Conservation Information Center at Rogla already plays a crucial role in raising visitors' awareness about the importance of nature conservation.





Methods, Steps, and Tools applied:

1. The most significant investment in 2023 was the Mašinžaga Park project – Phase 1 at Rogla, which received €8 million in non-refundable funds from the Public Call for Investments in Quality and Sustainable Transformation of Slovenian Tourism to Strengthen its Resilience. The total value of the project was €11.351 million. The measure aims at high-quality and sustainable transformation and reducing seasonality to increase competitiveness and added value in Slovenian mountain centres.
2. Another good practice example is the Transtat project – Sustainable Transformation of Ski Resorts in the Alps, which is still ongoing until October 2025. **The TRANSTAT project** aims to:
 - Create tools and approaches for the sustainable tourism, economic, social, and environmental transformation of Alpine ski resorts.
 - Promote participatory approaches to identify challenges and prepare scenarios and solutions for the future development of mountain resorts.
 - Develop policy recommendations at the local, regional, national, and transnational Alpine levels. The project encourages transformation processes in mountain resorts based on a combination of economic diversification and improving the quality of life for residents. The proposed solutions will be suitable for transfer to other ski resorts in the Alps. The Upper Gorenjska Development Agency coordinates activities related to LIVING LABS. At the ski resorts of Kranjska Gora and Rogla, methodologies developed within the project are implemented, tested, and verified, providing necessary data for internationally preparing methodologies with proposed solutions. Duration of the program: November 2022 – October 31, 2025.
3. To preserve the sensitive and vulnerable mountain environment, a new protected area, **the Pohorje Regional Park**, is being established. The co-founders of the Pohorje Regional Park are the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the municipalities of Zreče, Vitanje, Mislinja, Lovrenc na Pohorju, Ruše, and Slovenska Bistrica, bordering the Rogla climate resort with the ski center.
4. **The construction of wooden walkways** around the Lovrenška Lakes and the establishment of the **Nature Conservation Information Center at Rogla** in 2023 as part of the Pohorka project. The Info center is equipped with numerous interpretive elements, presenting various habitats and their inhabitants, as well as the interdependence of nature and humans. Visitors also learn about factors endangering the environment, how they can contribute to nature conservation, and why it is essential. The establishment of wooden walkways, which ensures organized paths, is a measure to reduce disturbances to wildlife in the Pohorje forest. This measure will significantly reduce off-trail walking, which will greatly contribute to improving the conservation status of the bog forest habitat type. The Pohorka project is funded by the Republic of Slovenia and the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund, with a 20% and 80% share of eligible costs, respectively. The total value of implementing both measures – the development of an interpretive plan and on-site interpretation – is €195,783.43 including VAT.
5. [Establishment of Destination Pohorje](#) - comprehensive management of the entire area (19 municipalities). Project objectives: to bring Pohorje closer to other similar destinations in developed Europe as a green destination; to create smaller projects for the promotion of the entire area; to develop municipal, road, and tourist infrastructure (cycling, hiking, and other trails, cable cars, etc.); and to systematically manage the entire Pohorje area as a tourist-natural park.

We are pleased to see ideas from paper transitioning into nature.





Achievements and Results:

Rogla has enriched its offerings with the **new 6-seater chairlift Mašinžaga**, a prime example of state-of-the-art technology in its category. It provides skiers with a significantly faster and more comfortable experience, while also enabling transportation of hikers, cyclists, and bikes outside of the winter months, especially those descending on **the Flying Toboggan** (Length of the track: 1,700 meters at an elevation of up to 5 meters with attractive turns) or **the mountain tricycle trail**, financed as part of the Mašinžaga project – Phase 1 at Rogla. In the Rogla Bike Park, **two new family trails** have been established, catering to all family members. This enhanced offering came to life in May 2024 and will substantially contribute to the further development of year-round tourism. Additionally, **new tourist offerings** are being prepared, including the **Forest Challenge**, an innovative nature experience for families and groups. The Forest Adventure Challenge creatively takes participants on an exploration of Rogla and its surroundings, combining nature walks, treasure hunts, and outdoor escape rooms. The Unitur company, which owns the Rogla ski resort, is also sustainably aware. Hotel Natura on Rogla and Hotel Atrij Superior in Zreče (Zreče Spa), which is also owned by the company Unitur, have a sustainable environmental label.

The company Unitur d.o.o., which manages the Rogla ski resort and the Terme Zreče Spa, has also established its **Fundation for Nature Pohorje**, where funds from the sale of ski passes and cross-country ski tickets are collected each spring. Specifically, 1 cent from each daily ski pass and 10% from each cross-country ski ticket sale, representing revenues from specific services that have the greatest impact on nature, are allocated to this fund. The funds collected in the Nature Fund Pohorje, along with other contributions, are intended for implementing actions, projects, and activities related to nature conservation, user awareness, and execution of initiatives.

Visitors to the most frequented attraction of the Rogla - Pohorje destination (the Rogla ski resort) contribute financial resources from certain purchased tickets for sustainable destination management, thus helping to offset the carbon footprint.

Protected areas within the Pohorje Regional Park provide added value to the area due to preserved nature, enabling significant ecosystem services and benefits (such as water source replenishment and clean air provision), physical and spiritual relaxation in natural environments, enhancing the area's recognition and enriching the cultural pulse of settlements, as well as offering opportunities for additional developmental prospects (brand development, new job opportunities, provision of new tourist facilities, and the establishment of coordinated mechanisms to support residents).

Data for the ski season December 2023 – March 2024:

- Number of skiers (season 2023/24): 173,754
- On average, there were 1,609 skiers per day at Rogla
- Number of ski days (season 2023/24): 108
- Number of overnight stays (December 23– March 2024): 89,337 (The Terme Zreče Spa and Rogla)
- 2 major events: FIS Snowboard World Cup (January 2024) and Balkan Ski International Conference (March 2024).
- Ensuring sustainable mobility: A free ski bus was available for guests staying with them (Terme Zreče Spa - Ski resort Rogla), for all guests a free summer bus to Rogla (July and August); result: reduction of Co2 emissions
- 12 km ski tracks on Rogla



- 24 km running tracks on Rogla
- 11 ski lifts on Rogla
- 2 chairlifts on Rogla
- Number of new year-round experiences for visitors: 8
- Sustainability initiative: 1 (Fundation for Nature Pohorje)

Lessons Learned and Advice:

The new additional tourist offerings enable both seasonality reduction and numerous synergistic effects with the existing sports, wellness, gastronomic, and experiential offerings of the mid-mountain center Rogla, as well as with The Terme Zreče Spa and the Rogla – Pohorje destination. Despite the negative impacts on winter sports tourism, climate change can bring new opportunities or market segments to mountain tourist destinations. In the Mašinžaga project, applicants faced various challenges: very short deadlines, meaning a short application window for the call for proposals, and even that during the winter season, which makes it challenging to prepare offers and accompanying project documentation. There was also a very short timeframe for completing all works, including due to environmental restrictions (preservation of the capercaillie, a rare and endangered species, nesting during mating season). Lastly, the weather, especially at an altitude of 1,500 meters, presents an additional challenge.

It's essential to consider the sensitivity and vulnerability of the mountainous environment and the tradition of mountaineering, which dictates a sustainable approach to visiting, including minimal impact on the mountain environment with infrastructure and leaving a minimal environmental footprint. Protection within the framework of the Pohorje Regional Park will contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and the favorable condition of endangered species and habitat types in areas of the European ecological network Natura 2000.

The establishment of the Pohorje Regional Park aims to preserve forests, meadows, and wetlands, to continue ensuring and directing the sustainable use of natural resources, to enable quality leisure time for locals and visitors, and to reduce existing environmental burdens and prevent additional environmental impact. One of the main attractions in Rogla are the Lovrenška Lakes, the largest wetland or high moor in Slovenia and one of the most important in southern Europe. Healthy wetlands are the cradle of biodiversity, a source of drinking water, and of exceptional importance for mitigating and adapting to climate change. The Lovrenška Lakes are a specially protected part of the largest Slovenian forest reserve and will now be further protected within the framework of the Nature Conservation Regional Park of Pohorje. To facilitate awareness and education among visitors and residents about environmental and climate issues, the Nature Conservation Information Center was also established at Rogla. It is an outdoor interpretive center that also serves as an experiential space, a classroom in nature, and a relaxation area. Visitors learn about the factors threatening the natural environment and ways in which everyone can contribute to preserving nature in its most pristine form. All these innovations involve educating visitors/participants about understanding nature, raising awareness about current climate change issues, and emphasizing the importance of a sustainable approach to the environment. This is achieved through challenges, interpretive boards, or direct contact with nature.





Recognitions and Additional References

1. [Mountain tourism – Towards a more sustainable path](#) (UNWTO), 2020, Joining forces for a greener future: Alpine tourist destinations in Rogla – Pohorje, Slovenia (page number 83).
2. [Novelties of this winter season at Rogla, 2023 -2024](#)
3. [Transtat – Transitions to Sustainable Ski Tourism in the Alps od Tomorrow](#)
4. [Forest adventure challenge video](#)
5. [Activity for children and families at Rogla](#)
6. [Fundation for Nature Pohorje](#)
7. [Rogla – Pohorje 365° video](#)



