European Network for Rural Development

Ivenack Treetop Trail

EAFRD-funded projects

GERMANY

Biodiversity restoration, preservation & enhancement

Location
Gielow

Programming period
2014 – 2020

Priority
P4 – Ecosystems management

Measure
M8 – Investments in forest areas

Funding (EUR)
Total budget 3 739 000
RDP contr. 2 425 000
Other 1 314 000

Project duration
2016 – 2017

Project promoter
Landesforst Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Forstamt Stavenhagen

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Website
www.wald-mv.de/Forstaemter/Stavenhagen/Baumkronenpfad/

The construction of a treetop path that enhances visitors' experience in one of the oldest oak forests in Europe.

Summary

The Ivenack Tiergarten (zoological garden) is a forest that was used for centuries for pasture. It has the oldest oaks in Europe, some are over 1 000 years old, and their trunk girth can be greater than 14 metres. The forest has an enormous variety of species which live around the ancient oaks.

Support from the Rural Development Programme (RDP) of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern was used for the construction of a barrier-free treetop path. The path leads through the treetops, over platforms and filigree footbridges to several adventure trails, where visitors can find information about the forest and its history.

Results

Today the tree path is a popular tourist attraction.

Since the opening of the treetop path, the number of visitors to the Ivenack Tiergarten has doubled from around 50 000 to 100 000 people per year.

Lessons & Recommendations

The following factors played an important role in the success and quick construction of the treetop path:

- ❑ Intensive research was carried out on comparable projects in Germany and beyond, before the design stage.
- ❑ RDP support, combined with a private donation from the Jost Rheinhold Foundation made the project possible.
- ❑ The unconditional will of local actors to finish the project and a large number of allies and partners was key.
- ❑ Protection of the natural environment was ensured at every stage.

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Context

The oaks of Ivenack in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, are an feature of cultural and natural history which are not encountered anywhere else in this form in Germany. They are not remnants of primeval forest but evidence of the wide-spread way the land was used as 'Hudewald' (Huetewald), i.e. as pasturage, throughout the Middle Ages. This form of use survived from the deer park of Ivenack throughout the centuries until the present day.

At the end of the first millennium A.D., when these oaks had sprouted, this area was used by a Slavonic tribe. Using forests as pastures was a common practice. Pigs, cattle, sheep, goats, and horses were driven into sparse forests to graze and feed. The forests became sparse because grazing livestock ate young shoots thus allowing only a few beeches and oaks to grow.

Grazing livestock remained in the forest for a long time. Only its owners changed. Slavonic settlers were the first owners who had their livestock grazing into the forest, followed by the herdsmen of the monastery of the Cistercian Order in Ivenack. After the Reformation in 1555, the oaks of Ivenack became property of the Ducal authority. The deer park of Ivenack was then founded in 1709 and fallow deer took over the role of grazing livestock.

The preserve existed until the world economic crisis of 1929. That year the area stopped being kept as a preserve and young trees could grow uncontrolled. In 1972 a new deer park was set up. It was smaller, however, it still provided space for the old oaks to grow as young trees were once again removed.

The use of artificial constructions in the protected forest are in principle not allowed by the forestry office Stavenhagen.

Objectives

The objective of this project was to establish a treetop path that would serve as a tourist attraction that enhances visitors' experience of nature and the history of the area.

The project aimed to create an active nature experience focussing on the 1 000 years old oaks, combined with forest educational elements.

The entire path was designed to be barrier-free and suitable for use with buggies and wheelchairs, whilst fitting in with the surrounding environment without dominating the oaks.

Activities

The construction of the treetop path began in April 2016. The integration of the treetop path into the protected forest was achieved through an extraordinary filigree construction method using coiled access ramp. This makes it possible to closely experience the giant trees from the trunk to the top of the crown. In the 2nd construction phase, the treetop path was extended by a braided suspension bridge with a total length of 43 metres. This is the longest example of this type of bridge in all of Germany.

The treetop path is a steel construction of a total length of 620 metres, 11 supporting pylons and an adventure tower with a large viewing platform at a height of 35 metres (with an elevator). A spiral ramp with a maximum gradient of six percent meanders upwards through the forest and gradually leads into the fascinating world of treetops at heights up to 23 meters. The adventure tower is located at the end of the treetop path and rewards visitors with a breath taking panoramic view over the treetops of the ancient oaks and Lake Ivenack.

In order to protect the soil around the trees' roots from solidification, caused by walking visitors, a simple fence was placed around the trees.

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Main Results

After one year of construction work, the tree path was officially opened on 30 August 2017. The opening ceremony was attended by about 100 invited guests, among others Dr Till Backhaus, the Minister for Agriculture and Environment of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and representatives of the Tourism Association of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

Today the tree path is a popular tourist attraction. Since the opening of the path, the number of visitors to the Ivenack Tiergarten has doubled from around 50 000 to 100 000 persons per year.

Key lessons

The following factors played an important role to the success and quick construction of the treetop path:

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Additional sources of information

n/a

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