

JEŠTĚD SKY RIDGE OR SPORT FOR HEALTH

The Ještědský Ridge (on the southwestern edge of Liberec) is easily accessible from the town by public transport. The summit of the mountain (1012 m above sea-level) can be reached by a **cabin cable-car**, which has been running since 1933 and is the oldest working cable-car in the CR. In both the winter and summer seasons there is also a **two-seater cable-car**, which carries tourists up to the top of Black Hill.

Of course, you can get to Ještěd, and onto the hill itself, using your own car. There are **several car parks** along the road, with information boards showing how full they are. Buses can be left in the car park by the cable-car or at "Výpřež". Those who feel physically and mentally up to the challenge can of course take the alternative route and test their fitness by **ascending on foot** along one of the many footpaths. Otherwise, the steep peak of Ještěd has long attracted determined sporting types to try their strength, and one particular form of entertainment is now the "**závody stovkařů**" (a contest to find who has climbed Ještěd the greatest number of times). It might sound surprising to some but the most successful record-holders have been women, such as Mrs. Flassaková, who, during the 365 days of 1937, conquered the peak a total of 709 times, and Mrs. Mandelinková who exceeded the magic figure of 5,000 ascents in the same year.

Ještěd is a popular destination practically all year round.

Tourists are enticed by the gorgeous views over the surrounding area – if the weather is good almost a third of Bohemia can be seen from the summit. Summer also attracts cyclists, who can take their bikes up on the cable-car free of charge and then try their hand at riding on mountain terrain.

The Ještědský Ridge has **many years' tradition of winter sports**. There are two cable-cars, six chair-lifts, and most of all there are all kinds of ski slopes. There are also the K90 and K120 ski-jumps (the venue for international and continental cups in ski-jumping and the northern combination), mountain services stations, ski-schools and ski-hire. Financial investment in the development of the complex has made it possible to extend the network of ski-slopes, safety-nets have been installed, and the quality of artificial snow has improved since a conduit regulator was constructed. What is more, Liberec was honoured when the Ještěd complex was selected as the venue for the **FIS world championships in classic skiing to be held in 2009**.

JEŠTĚD MOUNTAIN HOTEL – BUILDING OF THE CENTURY

The history of the building as it stands now on the peak began in the year 1966 – three years after the first hotel on Ještěd had burnt down. The architectural tender originally required the construction of two buildings, "a television tower with a restaurant and a small hotel", and so it is amusing that the winner of the tender turned out to be the **architect Karel Hubáček** (from the firm of SIAL Liberec), who actually breached the conditions of the tender with his design for a single building. His project created a **simply unique mountain skyline**, and was unanimously approved.

Doc. Ing. arch. Karel Hubáček, dr.h.c.¹ is not, however, the only person responsible for this unusual work. The stress-analysis work was done by **Zdeněk Patrman** and the interior designed by **Otakar Binar**, who made extensive use of glasswork as a testimonial to the traditional commodity of this region.

The foundation stone was laid with great ceremony on **30th July 1966**, and the construction work was performed by the Liberec company Pozemní stavby (site engineer Oto Friml, succeeded by Jaroslav Zapadlík). This unusual building also called for **unusual building techniques**, some of which were put into practice for the first time here. In order to place the antennae inside the building it was necessary to develop a special laminate casing; the only company willing to make a 12-metre-long post from man-made materials was a factory making fishing-rods (and because of this post the hole into the fabric had to be widened, as it was too small), etc.

This bold project has caught the attention of architects not only from this region, but has also found a host of professional admirers abroad, and in **1969** it was rightly awarded the prestigious **Perret Award**. The prize was awarded in Buenos Aires, although the man behind the design was unable to attend for political reasons.

This modern landmark of Ještěd was opened to great celebration on 21st September 1973. It measures an impressive 94 metres from the foot to the tip of the antenna, its odd shape is technically described as "rotational hyperboloid" and it was designed to take account of the truly extreme climatic conditions at the top. On the lower of the two floors there is the machine-room, technical equipment

¹ Dr.h.c.= čestný doktor (Honourable Doctor) – a non-examination-based title awarded for exceptional service to science, art, the country, etc.

and operations room. Above these there is the look-out terrace, a buffet, restaurant with cafe and a hotel. The upper part houses the communications technology, with the top comprising a tubular extension on the top of which is placed a 17-metre-long antenna.

There were some dramatic moments once it was completed, when the building has swayed in the strong winds and threatened the destruction of the tower. The constructors resolved this tricky situation by adding a **600 kg ballast weight and a vibration damper**. With this kind of load any such high jinks are out of the question and Ještěd has led an unblemished life up to the present day.

The building of the Ještěd hotel is a **unique symbol**, not only of Liberec, but of the whole of the Liberec region. No matter where you are in the town it literally follows your every step, and its characteristic shape means that it can't be missed, even at a good distance. Therefore it is no wonder that the logos of many companies in the town include the Ještěd.

In 2018 the Ještěd mountain hotel celebrated its 45th anniversary (1973) and despite its youth, this keen collector has already swept up a host of awards and well-deserved titles: **National Monument to Engineering, Building of the 20th Century, International Perret Award for Architecture**, and is now trying to join the ranks of the "elite" – as a **Unesco monument**.

The people of Liberec are naturally proud of their landmarks. They have shown their respect, for example, by **organising public collections** to raise funds to have the building permanently illuminated at night. It is thanks to the interest shown by ordinary people, institutions, schools, companies, as well as the surrounding villages that they managed to scrape together the required sum of 750 000 CZK and since **5th September 2001 the Ještěd skyline is lit up at night** like a weird spaceship hanging motionless in the sky above the lights from a metropolis of a hundred thousand people far below it.

Although Liberec is known under many nicknames – town of rhododendrons, town of sports, etc. – it is still most frequently referred to by the more fitting term: "**town below Ještěd**".

HISTORY OF THE BUILDINGS ON JEŠTĚD RIDGE

According to the historian Johann Carl Rohan, the first building on Ještěd Ridge was a **stone cross**, which was erected in **1737** and bore the brunt of the winds and storms until **1812**, when it was destroyed. To cut a long story short it was restored and remained in place even after the year **1834** – from which time wooden crosses were clearly erected.

Sometime around the middle of the 19th century even greater numbers of pilgrims were heading for Ještěd; worn out by the tough climb they looked in vain for somewhere to get something small in the way of refreshments. **Mr. and Mrs. Hasler** luckily saw their chance, and on Sundays in **1844** they carried supplies of food up on their own backs for the famished and thirsty trippers. In **1847** the keeper of the Rohan woods, **Hebelt**, offered refreshments, and built a wooden chalet below the summit. This, however, lasted for no more than a year, so **in 1850** the Haslers built their own chalet, where, in addition to providing refreshments, there was a place to spend the night on beds of moss. Once the chalet had served its time **in 1868**, the couple began work on a new building, of which only part of a stone hut remains and which is recorded in the annals of mountain construction under the name of **"Rohan Chalet"**. Other unofficial "queens of the mountains" have also sprung up over the years – **viewpoints**. The first was built by the people of Liberec (led by A. Hoffman and Neumann the carpenter) **in May 1876**. The five-metre-high wooden look-out tower ruled the summit until **1889**, by which time it had become dilapidated and had to be replaced with a new viewpoint, eight metres high, which remained there until **the year 1902** (when it was closed) and was demolished a year later.

The foundation stone of **a hotel** was laid on **27th June 1906** and was opened to great celebration a mere six months later (**13th January 1907**). The large lounge, able to hold 100 visitors, led onto a covered veranda for another 50 people. There were 23 rooms for guests, as well as a shared dormitory. The building was topped by a 28-metre-high look-out tower and it is no wonder that the mountain association which owned it was justly proud of what the **designer and builder, Schäfer** had achieved. However, the fateful sixties brought some major changes. On the bitterly cold winter's night of **31st January 1963** (apparently when carelessness had allowed the pipes to freeze) a fire broke out which destroyed the hotel; a year later Rohan Chalet also burnt down. **Thus a new chapter in the history of Ještěd was begun...**

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JEŠTĚD^LIBEREC

the dominant feature of the City of Liberec
the mountain hotel * an aerial tramway
the building was awarded the prestigious Perret
Award*architect Doc. Ing Arch. Karel Hubáček
a renowned summer and winter sports centre
hiking * cycling * downhill skiing *snowboarding
*** ski jumping**

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