



The Woodworkers' Trail

1 Březník

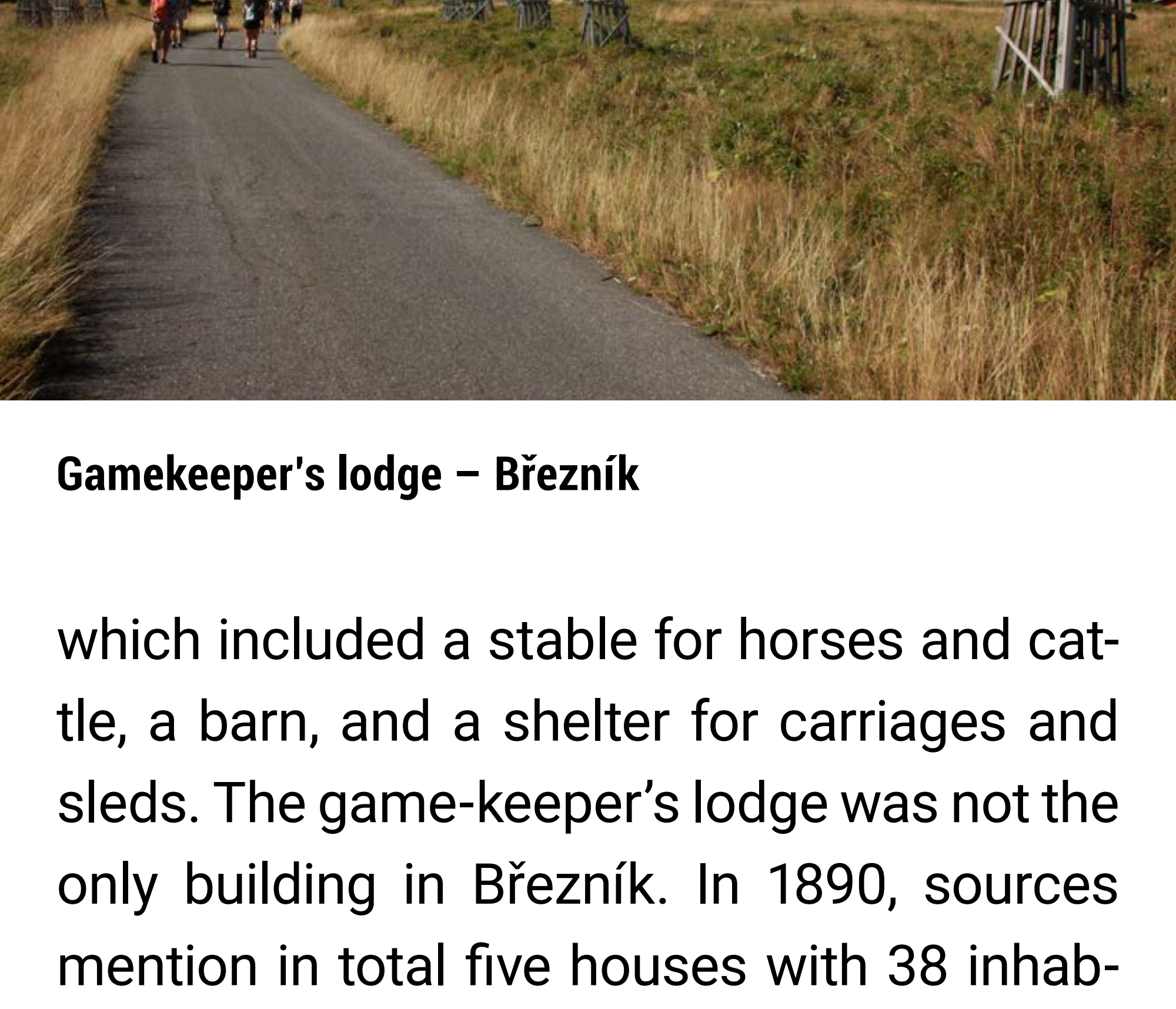


Length of Path 38 km

Březník

Březník, or Pürstling in German, was a woodworkers' village. The wooden gamekeeper's lodge has stood here since 1804 when prince Schwarzenberg divided his new lands into six forest districts and made Březník the centre of one of them. Hans Eisner was its first forest warden, from 1804 until 1810. Apart from game keeping (mainly monitoring the grouses which were common in the region and were becoming a popular target for the prince's guests) his duties soon included controlling the speed of logging, transport and renewal of logged areas.

In 1856, the original wooden lodge was replaced by a fifty-meter-long stone building



Gamekeeper's lodge – Březník

which included a stable for horses and cattle, a barn, and a shelter for carriages and sleds. The game-keeper's lodge was not the only building in Březník. In 1890, sources mention in total five houses with 38 inhabitants, twenty years later it is three houses with thirteen inhabitants. During the First Republic era there were still two woodworkers' houses with little bell towers, where the Frint and Hanza families lived. The lodge was inhabited by the Krickl family.

Between 2002 and 2013, the building was reconstructed. The last reconstruction proved problematic and it has since served as an information centre of the Šumava National Park. It includes an exposition dedicated to Karel Klostermann, who set a part of the story of his book From the World of Forest Plains in the Březník gamekeeper's lodge, using it to describe the problems of life in remote places in Šumava.

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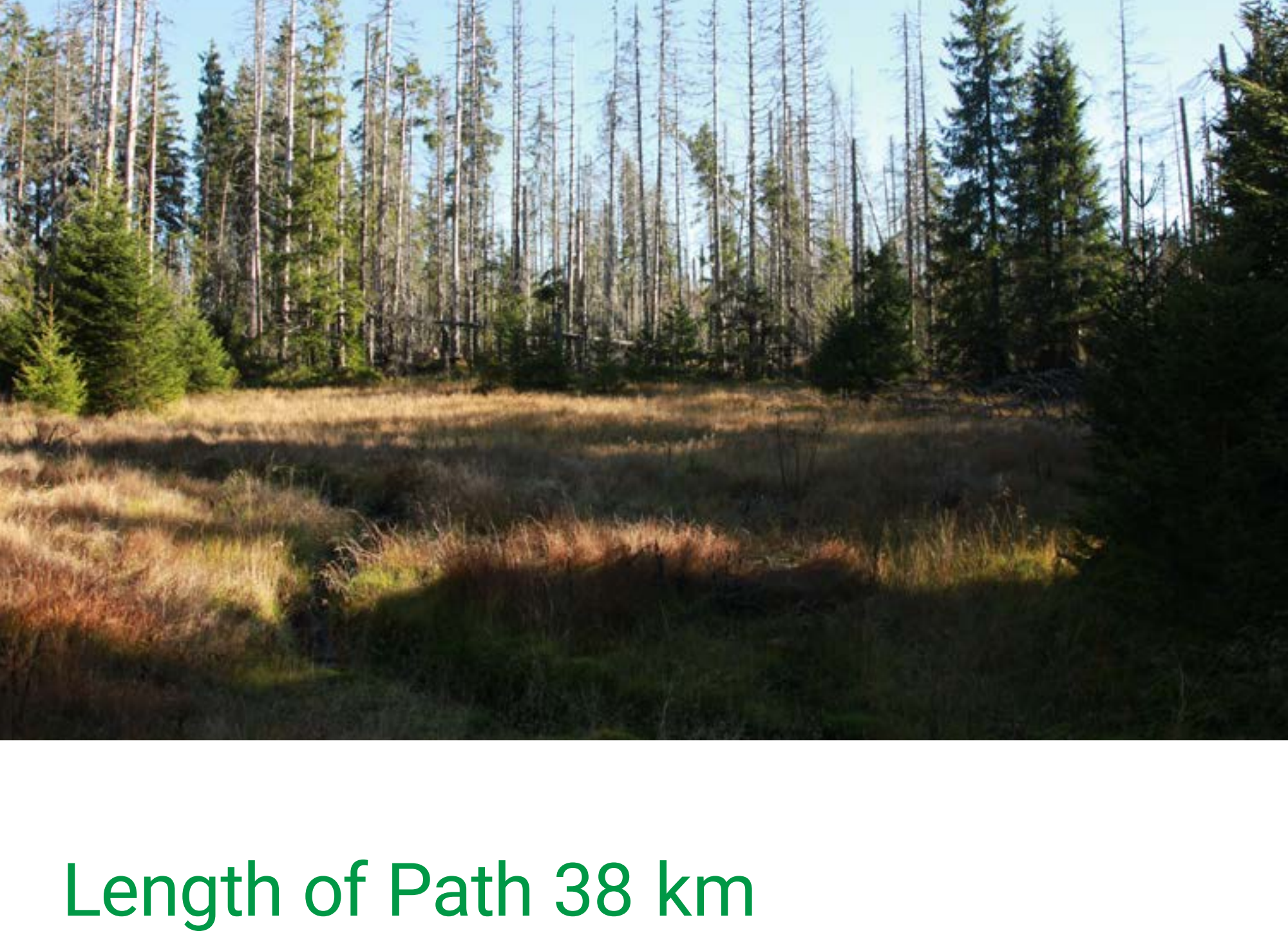


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2 The Former Bird Reservoir



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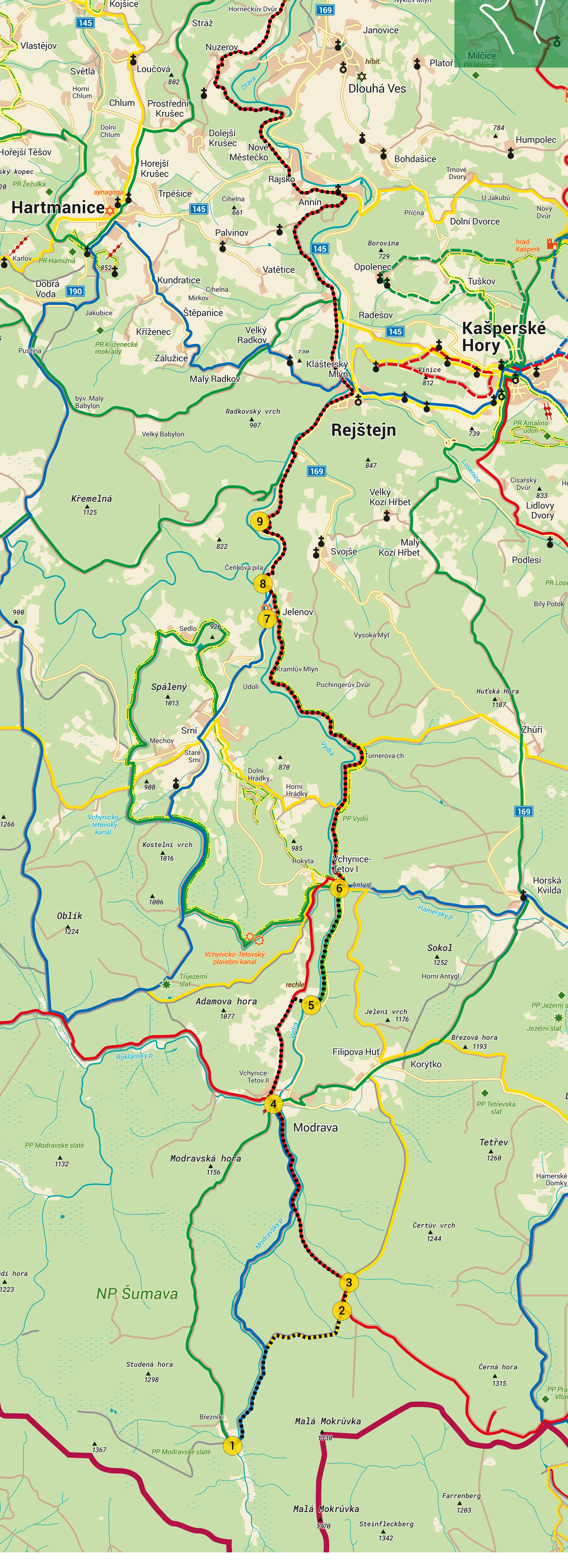
The Former Bird Reservoir

The former reservoir at the confluence of Ptačí and Mokřůvka, lying in 1140 meters above sea level, served to catch water for the purposes of timber rafting. During it, the water from it was let out into the Modrava stream. The wave of the let out water then carried the logs to the needle dam below Modrava. The reservoir was able to hold up to 1000 m³ of water.

Today it is an integral part of the unique technical work – the Vchynice-Tetov channel, built between 1799 and 1801 to transport timber in otherwise inaccessible parts of Šumava. It is a part of eight similar reservoirs and protected as a historic sight since 2013. The reservoir has been dry since the 1950s, its bottom is heavily waterlogged, covered in grass and short spruces. Through the crown of the dam leads a solidified path from Filipova Huť to Březník. In the middle of the dam is a recently repaired drain.

The reservoir has a vaguely triangular shape, its straight dam is placed on its northern side and is 65 meters long. The artificially heaped rampart is trapezoidal in shape. Approximately in the middle of it is a drain. The eastern side of the rampart still has an outlet leading into the stream. By the reservoir is a highland peatbog covered by mountain pine, taking up the area of 58 ha and with maximum depth reaching three and a half meters. The reserve of peat is assumed to be around 290 thousand cubic meters.

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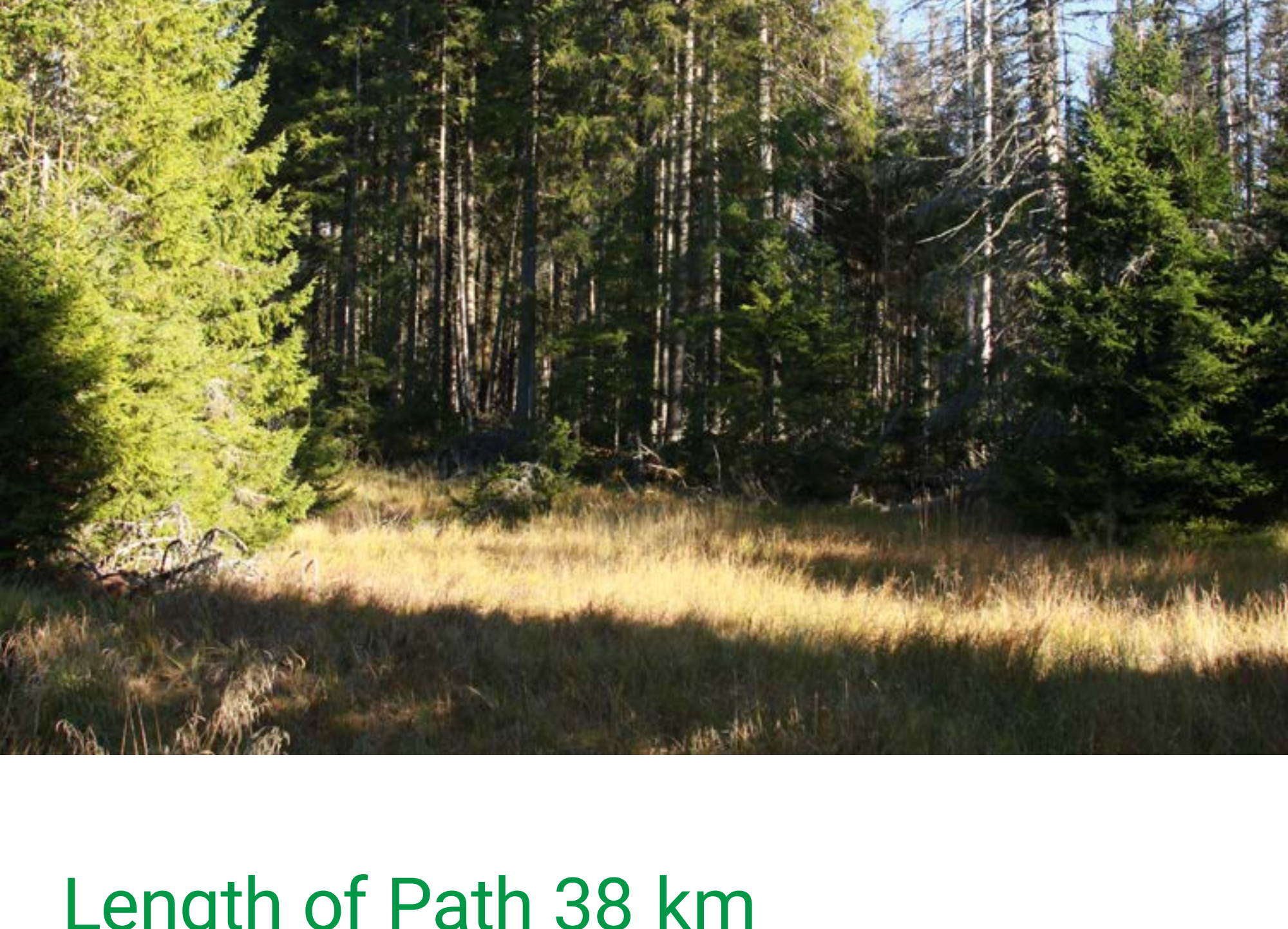


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3 Černohorská Reservoir



Length of Path 38 km

Černohorská Reservoir

The Černohorská Reservoir used to serve in times of timber rafting as a source of water which was let out through the Černohorský stream into the Modrava stream and then to the rafting system.

It was able to hold up to 2 200 m³ of water.

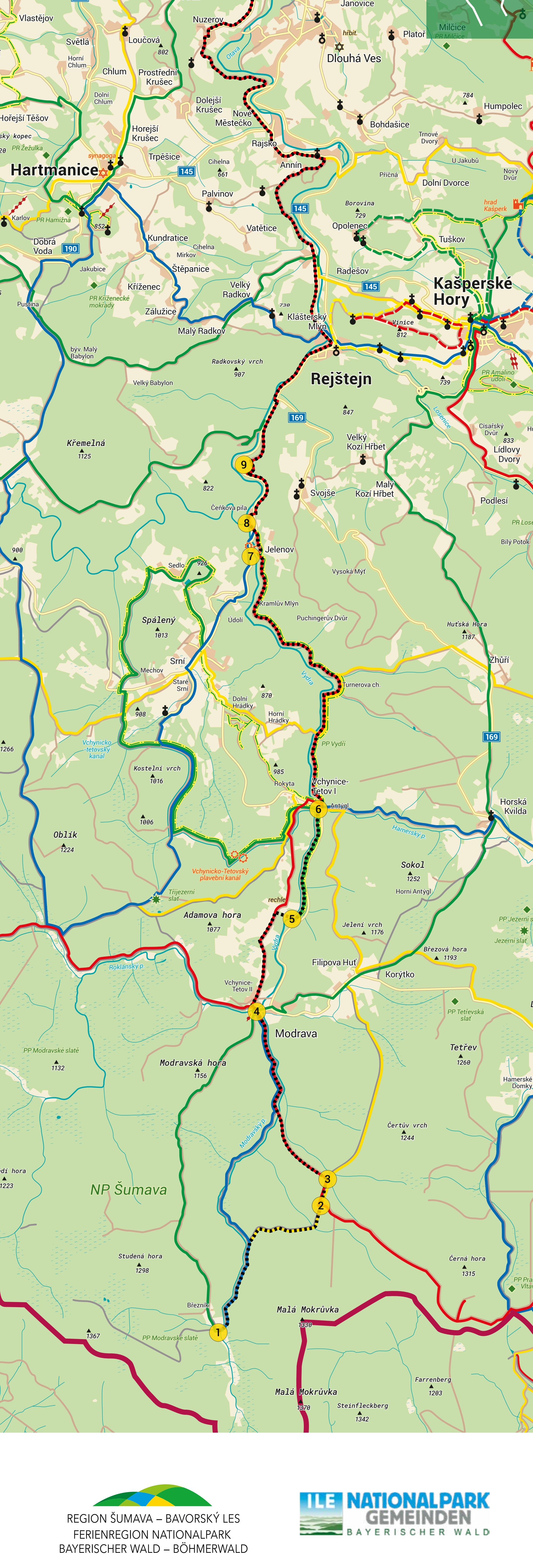
Today it is empty.

The reservoir lies in the area of the Filipova Huť forest, by a road to Filipova Huť, in the northern part of an area called Bahniště. The bottom of the reservoir is covered with grass and self-seeded spruce. Through the crown of the rampart leads a solidified road from Filipova Huť. The reservoir has a trapezoidal shape. Its straight rampant is situated on the western side and around 70 meters long, its crown is 4,5 meters wide and the height of the rampant in the lowest spot is around 2 meters. More or less in the middle is a drain made out of concrete tubes with 150 cm in diameter.

Since 2013 it is protected as a part of the cultural landscape and an integral part of the Vchynice-Tetov channel, built between 1799 and 1801 for timber rafting in otherwise inaccessible parts of Šumava.

At the same time, the reservoir is located in the core habitat of the western capercaillie and is a part of an area left to self-development. It is also in the same area as a forest-type peatbog. It lies is 1130 meters, takes up 22 hectares and is 1,2 meters deep. The peat reserve is assumed to be 154 thousand cubic meters.

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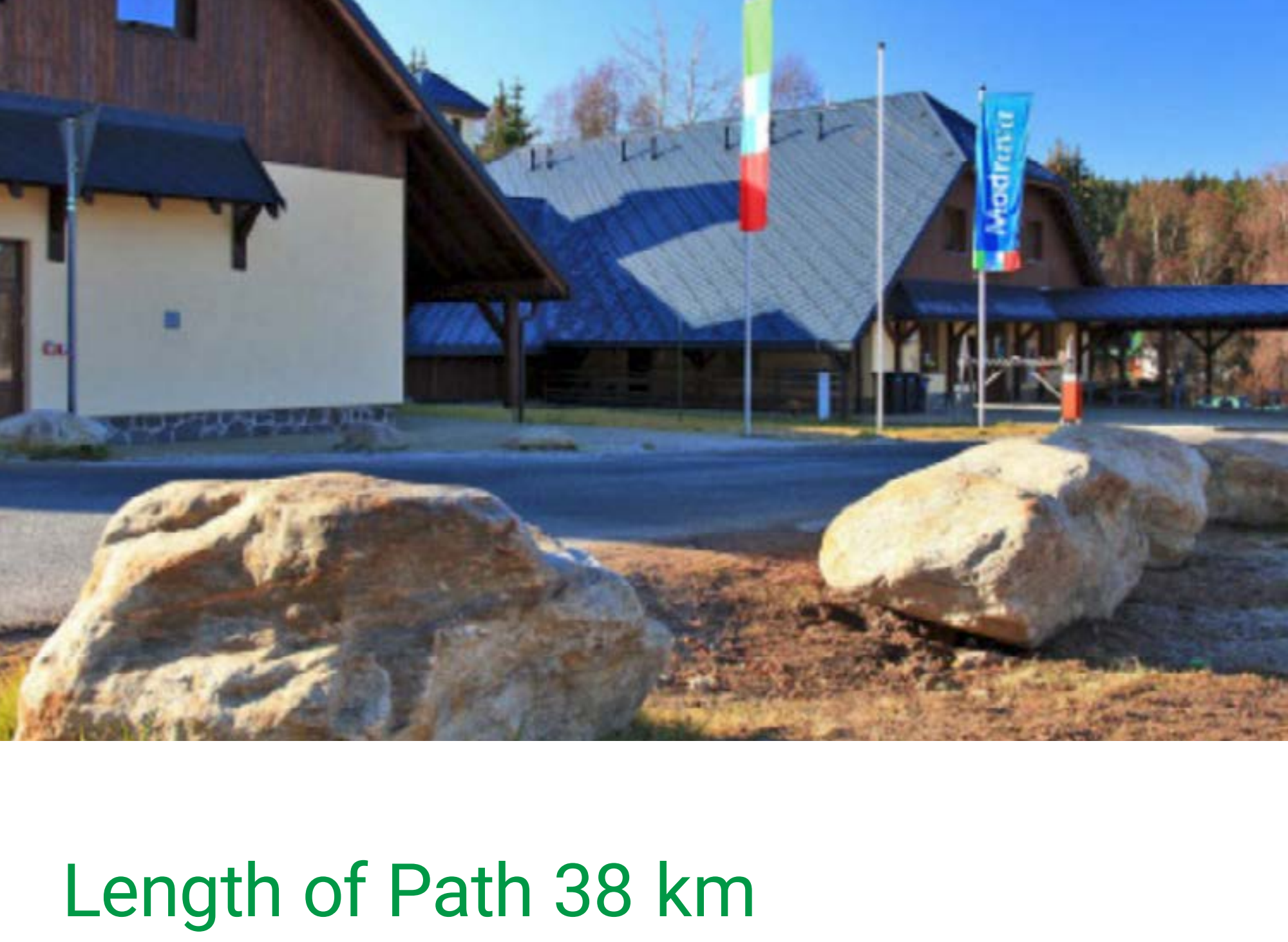


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4 Modrava Information Centre



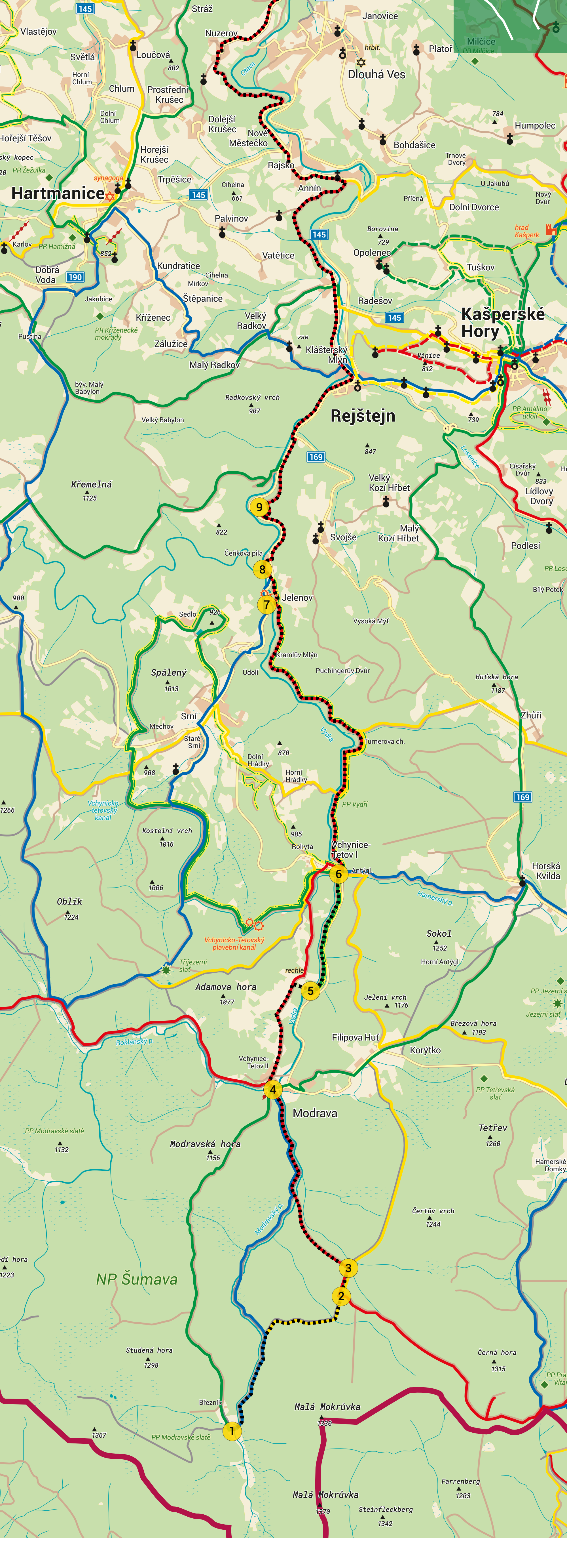
Length of Path 38 km

Modrava Information Centre

The village of Modrava (Mader in German) was founded in 1757 as part of the ‘woodworkers’ colonisation wave, just as Prášily or Vchynice-Tetov. However, it is likely that a smaller fishing village had already existed here 20 years prior to that. Since 1804, it was a centre of one of the five forest districts of the Schwarzenberg estate.

In 1826, the entrepreneur Franz Bienert (1788-1866) from Varnsdorf bought a mill house from Jakub Gruber and rebuilt it into a sawmill. The sawmill specialised in processing resonant woods, which demand special selection and methods of processing. Evenly grown spruce trunks with high density were picked out and then cut along the fibres. After that the excess resin was extracted by putting the wood in water and letting it dry. The wood was cut down in winter and in spring it was soaked in water for a couple of weeks, then dried and chopped for material for string instruments or piano boards were cut. After that the material was soaked for four more weeks, then dried and bleached in the sun. The product was then shipped out across Europe as well as to America. Bienert’s sawmill employed 50-100 people. However, production began to fall due to competition and the fact that a wind calamity of 1970 destroyed many of the old growths and resonant wood had to be imported from far away. His widow sold the sawmill to Schwarzenberg in 1871 and he relocated the business to Sušice in 1880.

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5 Needle Dam

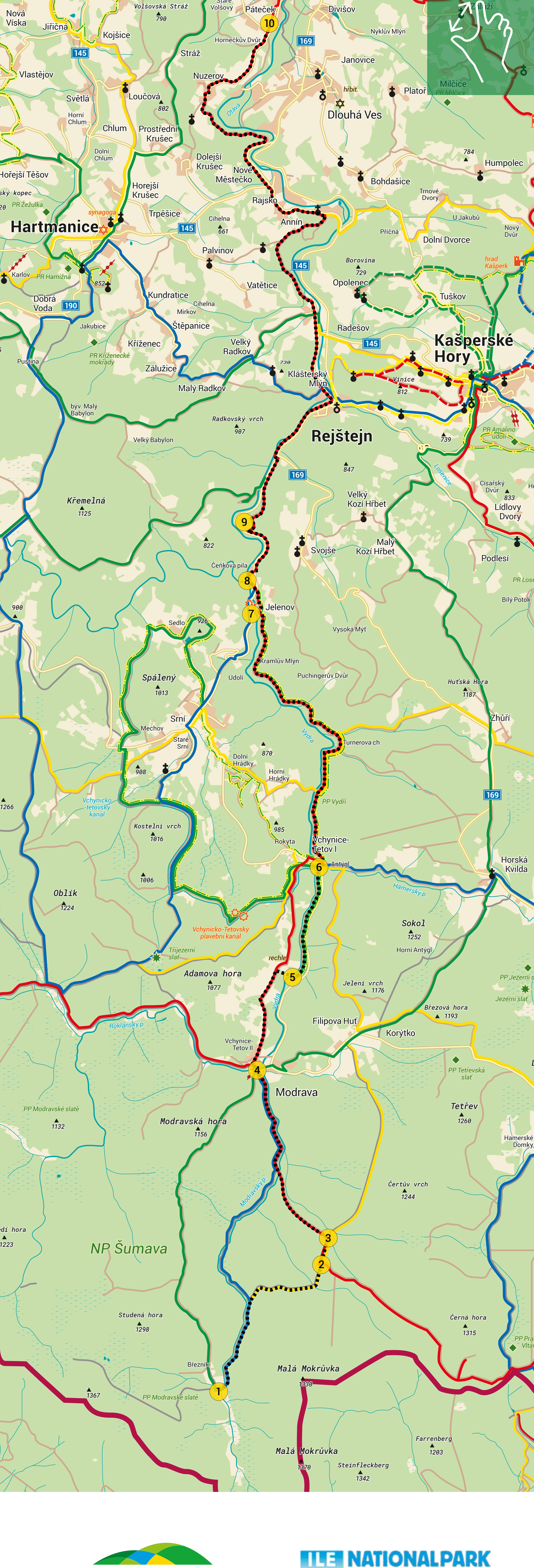


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Needle Dam

The 72 meters long wooden needle dam is a replica of a historic wooden bridge. In this spot, the rafted logs were caught by a system of poles, counted, and directed from the Vydra river into the Vchynice-Tetov canal, which begins here. Moreover, it regulated the flow rate in the canal. The openings in the floor were meant for the poles which caught the rafted logs when there were low water levels. Then they held the timber up until water levels were pumped up by a higher wave from the surrounding ponds. The original, over 200 years old, bridge was removed in 1953. After the end of timber rafting, it connected Rokyta and Modrava and the wooden pieces were torn down after it ceased being used thanks to a newly built road through Antýgl. In 2002, it was renovated using the National Park and CEZ funds. Part of the areal is also a so-called fish crossing, which allows a more comfortable run of fish. Today timber rafting is organised by the National Park administration to display tying rafts. The water which is redirected from the Vydra river powers the turbines of the Vydra Hydroelectric plant.

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6 The Vchynice-Tetov Canal



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The Vchynice-Tetov Canal

Timber rafting was the easiest way to transport large amounts of wood from less accessible forests in a relatively short amount of time. After the logs were tied into rafts, they could make it through the Otava and Vltava rivers (let us remember that there were no dams on them at the time) in a matter of days.

Josef Rosenauer designed the plan for the project in 1799 and construction began immediately after. In total, 203 carpenters, 108 masons and over a thousand day labourers worked under the leadership of engineer František Adler and the rafting could begin in the spring of 1801.

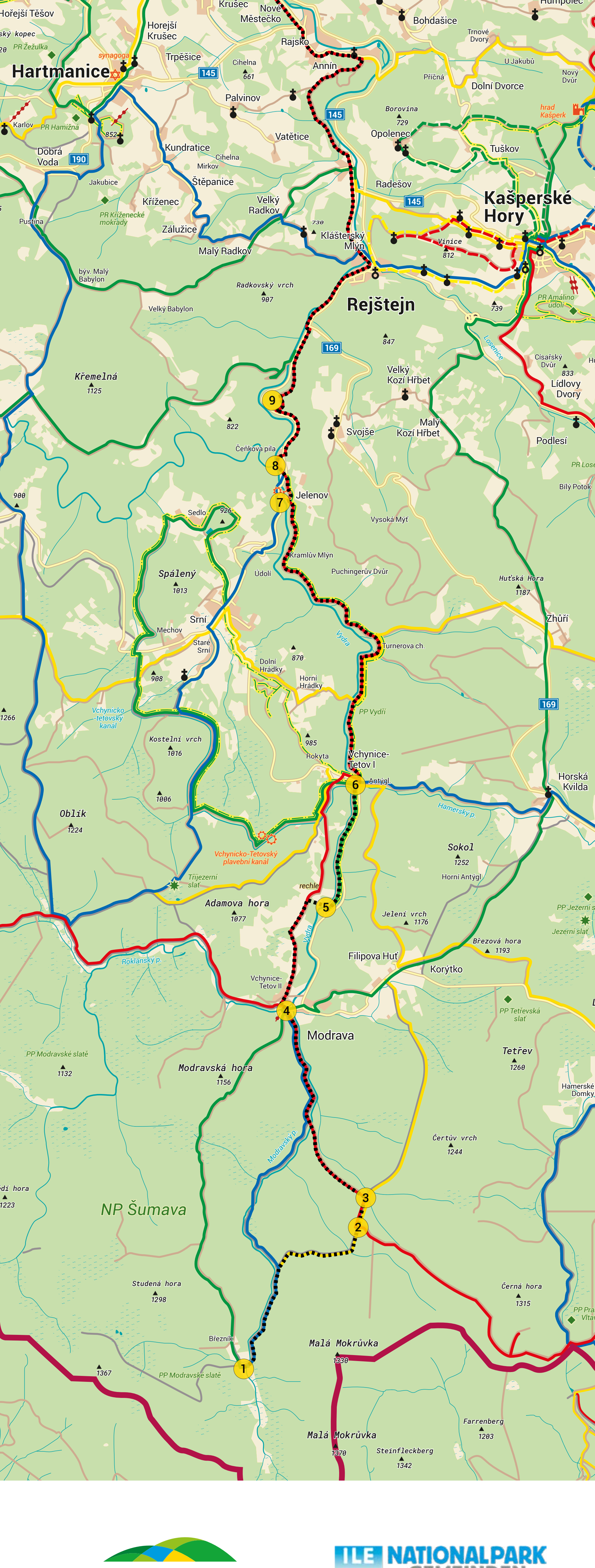
The construction of the canal with its three connecting drains of total length 17 843 meters cost around 120 000 golden pieces.

In the highest area of the system, that being around 1100 meters above sea level, were eight water reservoirs. Thanks to them it was possible to float the timber through Roklan-ský and Modrava streams into Vydra and from there into the canal. At the same time, they also created the wave on the canal.

The first section of the canal has an inclination of about 3‰ and is about 3,3 kilometres long. It flows in approximately the same direction as the Vydra but takes a sharp turn by Rokyta and begins its first, about 540 metres long slide with 23 meter elevation difference. The slide would open when enough wood accumulated at the end of the first section of the canal. Thus it got to section two, a bit less than 6 kilometres long. Another, steeper slide (570 m long with a 47-meter elevation difference) followed by Mechov. Then came the third section of the canal, about 3,5 kilometres long, on the end of which the timber entered the river Křemelná through another slide. Due to the unstable wooden construction, this slide had to be replaced in 1807 by another one close to Mechov, leading into Sekerský stream, through which timber flowed to another slide and into Křemelná.

Rafting could only take place when there was enough water, so only during 20-30 days of the year, mainly in spring.

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7 Čeněk's Sawmill – power station



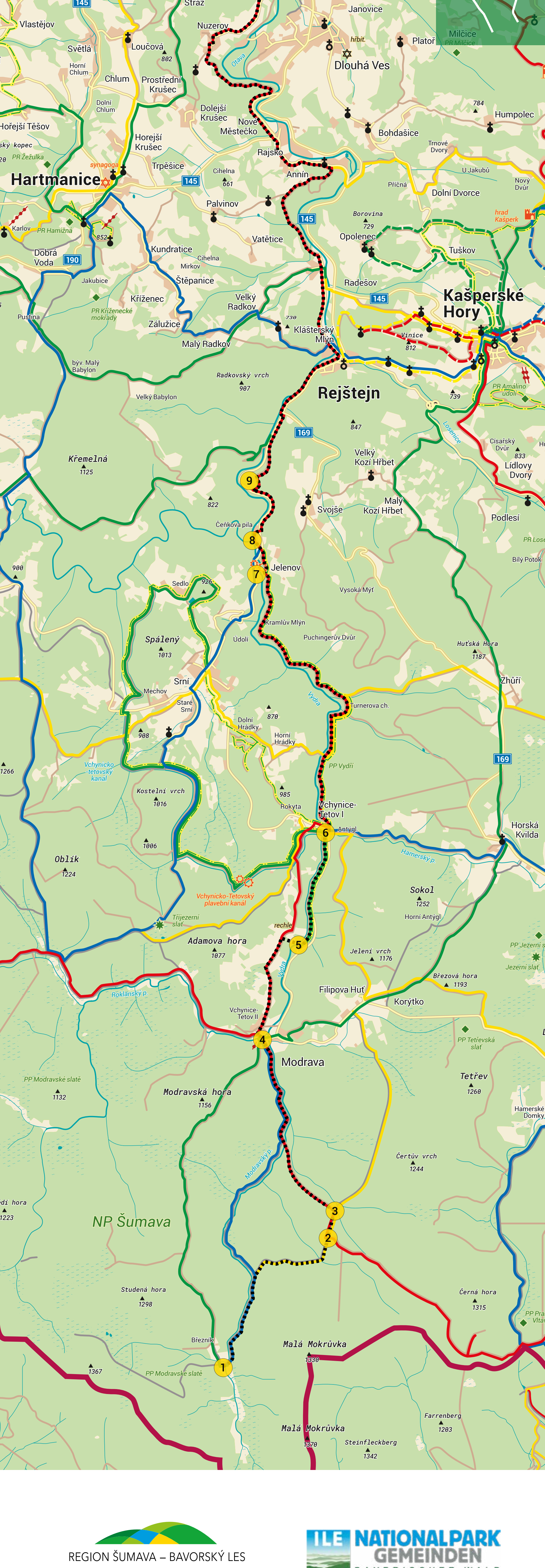
Length of Path 38 km

Čeněk's Sawmill – power station

The hydroelectric power station Vydra is powered by the Vchynice-Tetov canal. The water is led into an accumulation reservoir and then it powers the turbine under a gradient of 250 m. The average output is 6,4mW. It is a still functioning power station, built in 1937 in accordance with a design by Ing. Karel Koska (though it only became fully operational after the completion of the accumulation reservoir in 1942 when Čeněk's sawmill was a part of the Bayerische Ostmark Reich county), it is accessible to the public – visitors are welcome to see the Šumava Energy exhibition, which has been here since 1997. It is possible to see “functional” models of hydroelectric plants, historical machinery, short films or a model of a section of Šumava from Modrava to Čeněk's Sawmill. An significant part of the exhibition is devoted to the Vchynice-Tetov canal.

The water from the canal is led underground into the accumulation reservoir in the village of Sedlo. The reservoir has 67 000 m³ in volume and is fed by water from the former timber floating canal through an underground 3,2 km long pipeline. The accumulated water is used to generate electricity especially during a maximum strain on the electrical grid. The water flows through metal screen-bars into a meter wide and 500 meters long side pipeline leading into a stability chamber, the so-called “water lock”. Over a spillway, which is equipped with a safety device and placed in a circular construction in the reservoirs, the water is led through a 240 meters long pressure pipeline into the station's engine room. Today the power station is a functioning technical sight. The yearly energy output reached 30 million kWh in 1995.

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8 Čeněk's Sawmill

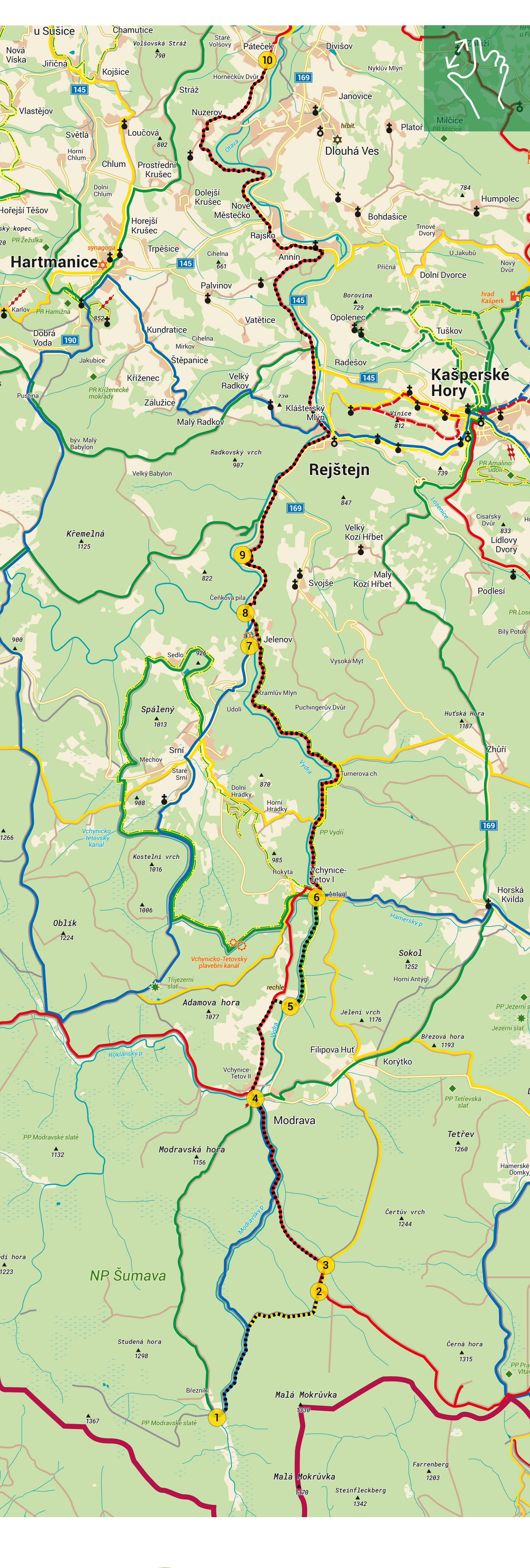


Length of Path 38 km

Čeněk's Sawmill

Between the years 1864 and 1867, the highest located raft tying station was set up here. Today's name is a couple years younger. The original sawmill and later the village got their name from the businessman Čeněk Bubeníček, who built a sawmill at the confluence of Vydra and Křemelná in 641 meters above sea level between 1868 to 1870. It processed wood of which there was an abundance thanks to the calamities of 1868-1870. In 1908, three water wheels were added to the sawmill to power the wood processing machines. Four years later, councilmen in Kašperské Hory decided to rebuild the building into a hydroelectric power station. This power station, equipped with what was then a very modern automatic voltage regulator, still functions today and has been declared a national technological heritage site. Originally it could generate 500 MWh annually, which used to be enough for the whole town of Kašperské Hory. After 1948 the output went down to 90 kWh. A Francis turbine from the Voight company is used to generate power and can be found in a brick fountain with a small tower next to the engine house. The power is transferred to the nearby Vydra power station.

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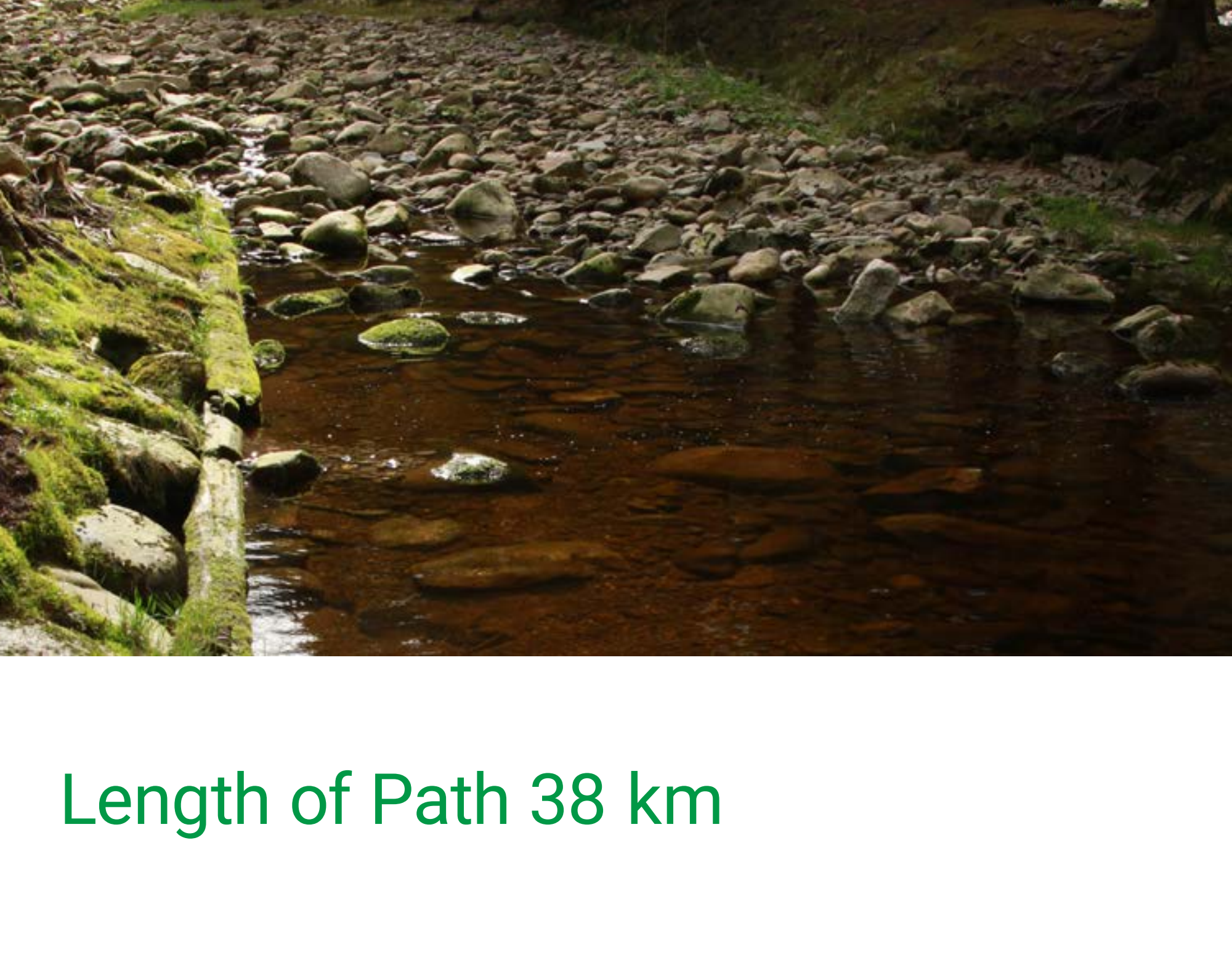


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9 Paula's Meadow Raft Tying Station



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Paula's Meadow Raft Tying Station

Paula's meadow served as a raft tying station. The stations were specially modified areas on the bank of the river, often close to weirs, where timber logs would be tied together with withe into raft, which were then sent down the river. Often there was a wooden shelter or box, in which the rafters stored their equipment or themselves hid from bad weather.

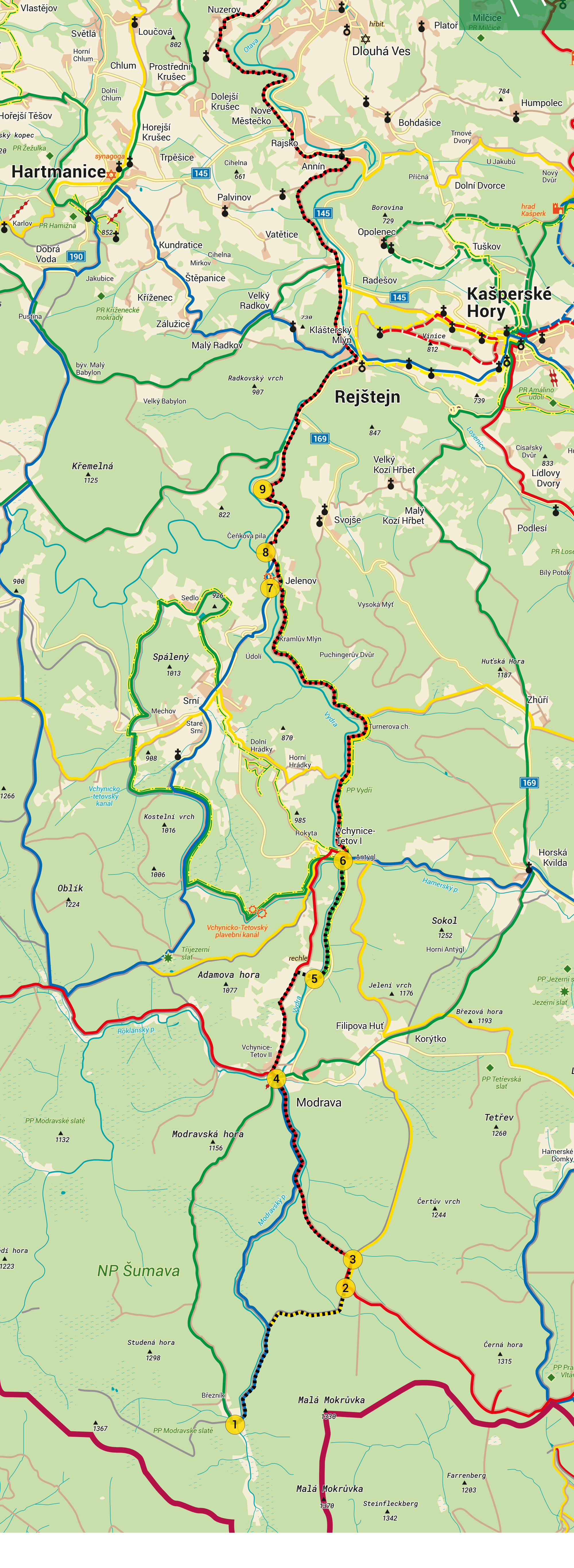
Apart from typical tying stations such as Paula's meadow, there were also the so-called "slides" along the bank – those were tying stations which were not close to the river's surface but higher up and the logs were slid down the sloped bank to the river. Rafts were tied with withe or wire to an iron circle with a diameter of 14-20 centimetres, which was then reeved through a hole in a stone.

The rafters would dress the same as forest labourers – their trousers were made out of solid rough fabric to protect from abrasion, shirts were made out of a slightly lighter fabric. They wore vests or coats to protect themselves from cold. It was their footwear which differentiated them from forest workers – they wore high leather boots with buckles which allowed for easy putting on. Apart from the strength of the material they were made out of, additional layer of protection was provided by grease, fish oil, or fat. These special boots which they had to have made specially were later on replaced by cheaper and more practical rubber boots.

The rafters usually went through the whole process of rafting, from the very cutting down of the tree to its delivery to Prague.

. Each string of rafts was marked with the name of a company. Usually it was written on a sail on the second raft. Apart from the timber owner's name there was also the name of the gatekeeper – the rafter leading the whole string of rafts. It could not just be anybody, a gatekeeper needed a special patent which he used to prove his identity. To receive this patent, one had to pass an exam in Prague to prove he was capable of the task. Rafts were tied together so the final length of the whole sting could be up to 150 meters.

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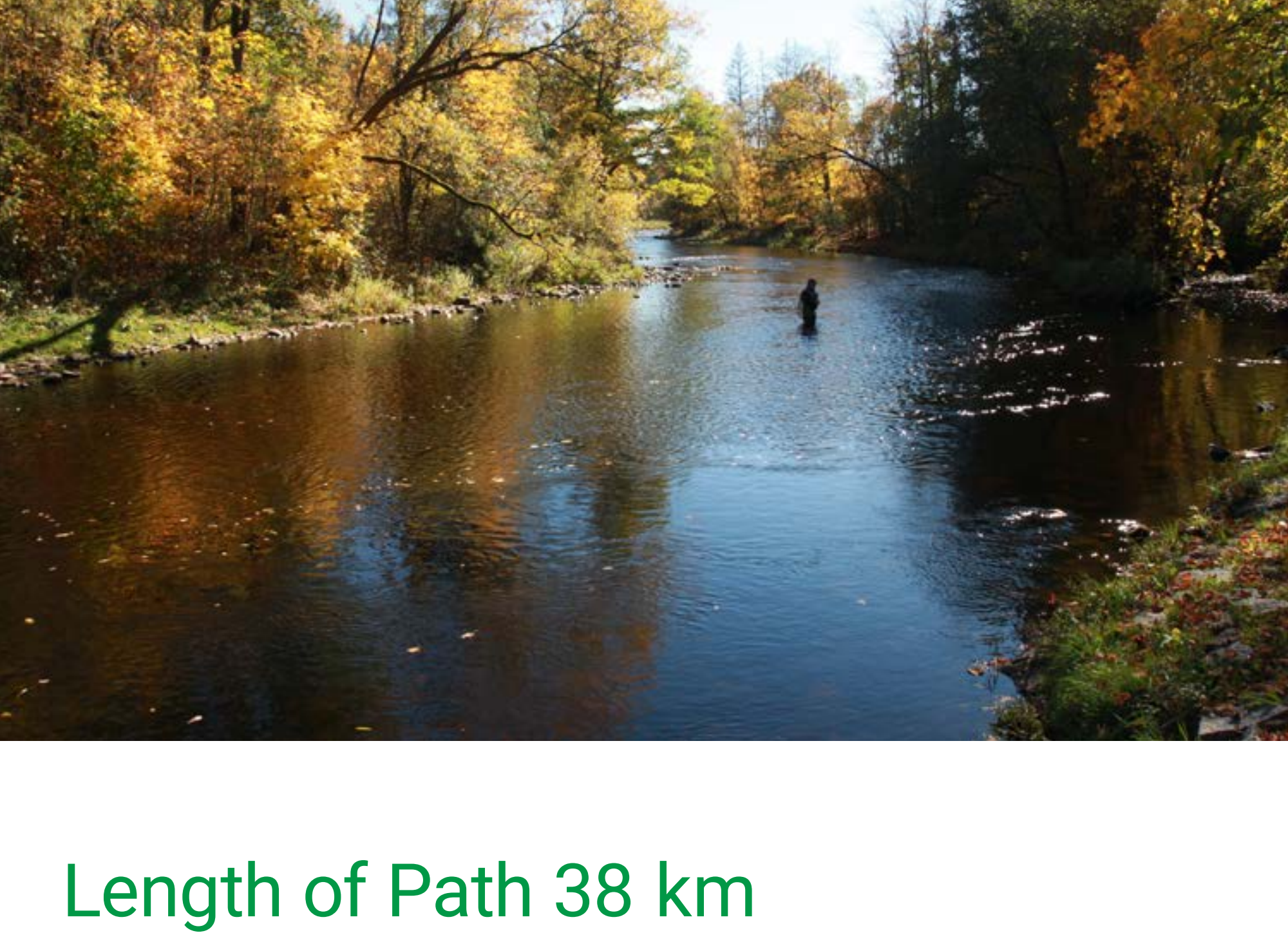


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10 Dlouhá Ves Raft Tying Station



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Dlouhá Ves Raft Tying Station

Dlouhá Ves (Langendorf) was founded in 1290 in times of intensive gold panning on the Otava river.

In 1800 it was bought by the house of Schwarzenberg and connected to the Prášily estate. Around 25 semidetached houses were built to house Bavarian labourers (that is why they were called “Bavarian houses”) working in wood storage. This line of houses, named New Dlouhá Ves, was about 600 meters long and southwest of the original village.

After buying Dlouhá Ves, the administration of the whole estate moved there from Prášily. A needle dam was built to catch the floated timber from the canal. Then it was dragged ashore and stored, dried and tied into rafts (It took three to four days for a raft to reach Prague from Dlouhá Ves, depending on the weather and water levels, the rafters then walked back for a week). Other artificial canals allowed for an easier manipulation with the wood. There was a tying station on the so-called Páteček (Little Friday), where a canal was leading out of Otava. The canal remains to this day and there is a hydroelectric power station on its upper end. Tying stations were places on the bank of the river, where logs were tied or re-tied together. The logs reached the station in various ways, for example via carriage, tractor, or horses. In some places the rafters cut the trees themselves – which made them woodworkers at the same time.

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