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Five Stars of Rocco Forte's Prague Hotel to Shine over Lesser Town

Prague (16 October 2006) – By the end of 2007, the capital city of Prague will rank amongst the top European cities offering luxury accommodation. Rocco Forte Hotels will open its doors to the elite traveller and offer luxury accommodation and 5-star services and facilities to their guests. The unique Prague project will be set sensitively into the premises of the Augustinian monastery in the Lesser Town which boasts spectacular views over the Prague Castle, the Wallenstein Gardens and other renowned monuments. The complex restoration of the buildings located in the historical centre of Prague will be carried out by Skanska CZ between September 2006 and August 2007. The project's developer is SC - Master s.r.o., a joint venture between Waldeck Capital LLC and Raiffeisen evolution, Vienna.

Prague is visited by millions of people from around the world each year. The capital is famous for its rich cultural and historical heritage; however, it lacks sufficient luxury hotel accommodation for the demanding elite traveller. This led to Waldeck Capital, a well-known luxury hotel developer, to focus on this sector and joined forces with Sir Rocco Forte in 2003 and the team, including Olga Polizzi, they set about perfecting this extremely difficult and complex design and lay-out aspects of the development. The challenge facing the developers was to incorporate and join five individual buildings into a functioning luxury hotel, whilst giving priority to maintaining each building's original design and character. Sensitive reconstruction and significant preservation work on the monastery buildings, the brewery and the adjacent buildings forms an essential part of the project. The architectural and historical significance of the location is reflected in the choice of the architect: Martin Kotík of the architect studio Omicron–K. A joint venture was established in 2005 between Waldeck Capital and Raiffeisen evolution in Vienna.

“Prague is an extraordinarily beautiful city. It is a gem that needs to be polished and presented to the world. In terms of accommodation and services it cannot yet compare itself with Paris, Rome or London because it still does not function at the top end of the market as a luxury tourist destination. Travellers who prefer high-end luxury accommodation tend to treat the buildings they stay in carefully, respecting their historical and cultural values and return home as ambassadors of Prague. The City of Prague should therefore focus on the market segment



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which brings higher quality visitors who add to the cultural wealth Prague has to offer. It is incumbent upon all enterprise, the authorities included to make Prague a world class city,“ said Thomas Smit, president of Waldeck Capital LLC.

Rocco Forte Hotels

Owned and run by Sir Rocco Forte & Family, Rocco Forte Hotels is a luxury collection of European 5-star hotels and one of the most prestigious names in the hotel market. Of the 101 top luxury hotels in the world, 3 of these belong to the Rocco Forte stable. The collection includes London, where Rocco Forte Hotels own one of the most historic hotels in the city, the recently restored Brown’s Hotel, The Balmoral in Edinburgh, Hotel Savoy in Florence, Hotel Astoria in St. Petersburg and Hotel Amigo in Brussels. Rocco Forte’s Prague hotel has been inspired by Hotel de Russie in Rome, famous for its jet-set and aristocratic guests.

Rocco Forte’s Prague Hotel

Rocco Forte’s yet to be named Prague Hotel is being developed around five historic buildings, gardens and inner courtyards which date as far back as 1285. The hotel area is surrounded by the Wallenstein Gardens, Feldovský House, Wallenstein Palace, St. Thomas Church and Letenská Street, where the future hotel’s main entrance will be located. The property’s exclusive Lesser Town location at the foot of Prague Castle provides stunning views of the city.

As with all Rocco Forte Hotels, each building will retain its individuality and careful reconstruction will turn the area into a secluded property of exquisite beauty. Rocco Forte Hotel’s Director of Design, Olga Polizzi, will oversee the concept design of the guest rooms and interiors, highlighting the unique character of the interiors and absolute comfort. One hundred and one comfortably furnished and generously proportioned bedrooms and suites will be reconstructed in unique buildings that – according to historians and certain public authorities – are in critical condition that require intense reconstruction.

Original historical features such as cloistered gardens, wooden ceilings, wine vaults and stone arches have been incorporated into the hotel’s design.

A spa and fitness centre will be located in the basement, and a function room will be created out of the famous grotto that was previously part of the Wallenstein Garden. A large reception hall, restaurant, tea room, private dining room and conference rooms will be on the ground floor. The renovated monastery garden with original greenery will be accessible from the



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reception hall. Upper floors will comprise 81 luxury rooms and 20 suites, including one Presidential Suite and one Honeymoon Suite. The Honeymoon Suite has spectacular 360 degree views of Prague. Each room will provide state-of-the-art amenities and technology.

The monastery buildings and the St. Thomas brewery will remain the property of the Augustinian Order and have been leased from the Order for an undisclosed period. The monks are keeping a part of the monastery for their continued use. The reconstruction of the monastery is being financed by the developer as part of the agreement and is currently under way.

"It is one of the largest and most complex reconstructions of historic buildings in Prague, comprising architecture from the gothic period to 19th-century style," said architect Martin Kotík.

Work Schedule

"Construction works are carried out in accordance with our exact schedule. Each building has characteristic architectural features that will be preserved. We are using repaired and restored original sections of the buildings or faithful replicas," said Milan Vaňkát, project team manager from Skanska's Division of General Constructions, who is experienced in restorations of historic buildings. All construction adaptations have been planned down to the last detail with a team of experts and the team frequently consults with preservationists.

Preparation for reconstruction began in July 2006, when Skanska took over the building site and demolition works started in August, including the demolition of recently constructed buildings. Access to the building site is from the existing entrance in Letenská Street and through the space that emerged after tearing down a recently constructed building. Entrances through the former St. Thomas brewery and from the Lesser Town Square are under preparation. *"We are well aware that construction works in Prague's centre may cause traffic complications. However, we are doing our best to minimize the time of closure, without affecting the quality of life in the area,"* said Jiří Bažata, CEO of Skanska's Division of General Constructions. Construction works started in mid-September and the property's first guests should be welcomed in the hotel towards the end of 2007.



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History of the Augustinian monastery and adjoining buildings

The monastery, including the St. Thomas church, was founded by Czech king Wenceslas II in the year 1285. The former brewery belongs to the monastery and together with the church still carries some Gothic features. In the years 1419 and 1541, the monastery was damaged by a massive fire. The buildings were repaired and reconstructed in Renaissance style during the second half of the 16th century and the library's existence was evidenced in 1603. Other wings were built by the end of the 17th century and the brewery's reconstruction has been documented in 1656. The current Baroque style was added during a complex reconstruction started in 1727 by K.I. Dienzenhofer. After 1989 the buildings were given back to the Augustinian Order. The retirement home, opened there in early 1950s, was moved out in early 1990s and the building is currently inhabited by 7 Order members. According to expert opinion, the buildings are in a very bad condition due to lack of basic maintenance.

The history of the brewery's construction is directly related to the monastery's development, major part having been built in Renaissance style around the year 1560. The construction of the Wallenstein complex after 1621 was reflected in the St. Thomas brewery's style. The grotto formed part of the Wallenstein Garden's stalactite wall, adjacent to the Wallenstein Palace's Sala Terrena, but later, probably around mid-1750s, the grotto became the property of the brewery.

The Golden Rooster and Virgin Mary Houses were built in late 16th century and their Renaissance-style core is visible on every storey. Both houses were interconnected during Classicism, according to the project by J. K. Zobel; today, this style is visible only on the facades. Painted wooden ceilings are preserved in two places, and after restoration will become a distinctive feature of the hotel's interior.

The Blue Key House was built in early 16th century in Renaissance style and was enlarged and reconstructed in Baroque style in early 18th century. Renaissance and Baroque ceilings are preserved in several rooms; painted wooden ceilings remain in two rooms. Part of the house and the adjoining house number 31 were torn down in 1960 due to an extreme dilapidation. Reconstruction carried out in 1997 gave the house back its original exterior design.

"All the buildings' major issue is their extreme dilapidation that in some cases is almost an emergency. If reconstruction is further delayed, the buildings' bad technical states are going to



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worsen and their renovation, on the other hand, will require much more finance; the existence of these historic buildings is under direct threat," warned PhDr. Jan Vojta, historian and project advisor.

Basic details:

Project name: Rocco Forte Hotel

Location: Prague, Lesser Town

Developer: SC - Master s.r.o. – joint venture between Waldeck Capital LLC and Raiffeisen evolution, Vienna

Constructor: Skanska CZ a.s., Division of General Constructions

Architect: Omicron-K studio, architect Martin Kotík

Construction period: July 2006 – August 2007

Number of rooms: 101

Waldeck Capital LLC

Waldeck Capital LLC is a family owned investment trust company. Through locally established companies in each country, the firm now develops and invests only in unique and characteristic luxury hotels. The firm has completed 17 hotels since 1988, of which 4 are luxury hotels. Further developments are planned and include Egypt, Montenegro and Kazakhstan.

Rocco Forte Hotels

Rocco Forte Hotels was established in 1996 to create a collection of luxury hotels in Europe. The hotels have individual styles, with each hotel reflecting its nationality and location. The collection is linked together under the Rocco Forte Hotels brand, which guarantees attention to detail, quality and service delivery.

Raiffeisen evolution project development GmbH

Raiffeisen evolution is a real estate company operating in Austria, Central and Eastern Europe with its headquarters in Vienna. The company portfolio includes primarily residential and office buildings, but also hotels, shopping and retail centres as well as mixed-use objects.

Skanska CZ group, a member of the international concern Skanska, is the largest construction company on the Czech market. The company focuses on structural and traffic engineering, performs its own development activity, facilities management and recently also focused on environmental constructions. It has long experience in the restorations of historic buildings.

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