



Zip Zag first phase now open, promoters now working on second phase of project

By Madeleine Leclerc

While some waited nervously, others gazed wide-eyed at the steel cables which would soon bring them to the other side of the gorge. As they listened to the last-minute instructions from their guides, some of those waiting to cross the gorge as clients of the new Zip Zag zip lines on Oct. 2 tried to bolster their courage by making jokes, saying a prayer, etc.

The first two to "drop off" the edge of the wooden tower and soar across the gorge were father and son team Aldéo (Babe) and Denis Gagnon of Grand Falls. Both had won the opportunity to go first after winning the online auction which raised money for the local museum and a kung fu school.

The father and son duo later said the experience was "quite exhilarating". Both finished their adventure with big smiles on their faces and memories which will last a lifetime.

For Zip Zag president Eric Ouellette and company partner Danny Trites, the opening day was a success. "After having to reschedule our first day due to unforeseen delays in construction and shipping, we were hoping the public would attend and we are very happy with the turnout," stated Ouellette.

This type of attraction which offers locals and tourists alike the opportunity to literally fly over the falls and gorge by means of zip lines has been gaining popularity in the tourism industry.

With the opening of the zip lines on

Oct. 2, the new business completed its phase one development. The first lines depart from the tower located near the Ron Turcotte bridge while the second set of lines departs from the Lovers' Lane side of the gorge, crosses the falls and finishes at the tower near the Malabean tourist information centre.

"The cables returning to the Malabean centre also have great historical significance since they overlap the area walked by Van Morell in 1904 when he crossed over the falls on a tightrope," stated Ouellette.

Phase two of the project would see additional zip lines incorporated into the mile-long gorge taking visitors on an amazing adrenaline rushed experience. "While phase one is focused on the thrill of the ride, the second phase will focus on gorge exploration. In small groups of eight, the participants would be accompanied by two trained guides. At each stopping point in the forest canopy, guests will alight on a platform where their guides would provide information about forest and gorge ecology before continuing on to the next platform and scenic vantage point," stated Ouellette.

"The tour would include views and exploration of the gorge from vantage points not previously possible and provide opportunities to experience the feeling of flight as they ride the cables at speeds up to 60 km/h. The total tour time would range between two and three hours," Ouellette added.



Look Ma, no hands!
Zip Zag guide Denise LeBlanc shows how it's done. (Madeleine Leclerc photo)



Awaiting their turn

Left to right: Dorothy Hansen of New Denmark, Tobique-Mactaquac MP Mike Allen and Grand Falls, Drummond and St. André MLA Danny Soucy wait their turn prior to zipping across the gorge on Saturday, Oct. 2. (Madeleine Leclerc photo)



Enjoyed the experience

Father and son team Aldéo and Denis Gagnon thoroughly enjoyed their zip line adventure on opening day, Oct. 2. (Madeleine Leclerc photo)



Didn't quite make it

Denis Gagnon waits as a Zip Zag guide makes his way out to him to pull him to the tower. Gagnon who was finishing his run on the new zip line didn't quite have the momentum necessary to carry him to the end of the line. (Madeleine Leclerc photo)



Happy president

Zip Zag company president Eric Ouellette floats over the Grand Falls gorge on opening day. (Madeleine Leclerc photo)