

TAA Puts Its Rock-Solid Expertise on the Line at Avoriaz

■ Theming and Animatronics Industries (TAA) of Madrid, Spain, was recently selected by Pierre & Vacances Center Parcs Group to do all of the elaborate rock work for the Aquariaz waterpark at the Avoriaz Aquatics Center, part of the Avoriaz resort in Portes du Soleil, France. What makes the waterpark and TAA's project so unusual is the location—not a warm beach retreat or big-city theme park, but a mountain ski resort located some 6,000 feet up in the French Alps.

Aquariaz will be indoors and consist of an experience swimming pool, an aquatic and leisure area with rock landscapes, a lazy river, Jacuzzis, wave pools, and slides. A separate spa is located adjacent to the pool area.

"Theming and Animatronics Industries is very proud to win this project," says Udo Weisenburger, president and CEO of TAA. "It is very significant for TAA in the sense of realizing [its] first project for the French Center Parcs Group."

TAA is understandably pleased to win the project, but executing it will be

quite a task because of the location of the waterpark. TAA always creates all of its rock work on site, and getting everything in place to do so will be a challenge. "TAA executes the cement rock works always on site with professional cement machines of high capacity and a team of specialists," says Weisenburger. "Before the winter period, all major material and cement has to be driven up to the construction site in the mountains because as soon as the snow starts, trucks cannot drive up anymore!"

TAA will create some 10,800 square feet of rock surface area for the waterpark. The work involves applying cement to a water-resistant structure. Then, sculptors give it a natural look. Later, painters come in and execute the fine finishing work. But in this instance, the rock has to do much more than just look good.

"The rock work itself has to be of excellent quality," says Weisenburger. "It is not just decorative, but in direct contact with the guests. The surface has to be very soft and also fit the

requirements of the quality of water and the health and safety requirements, and it has to be long-lasting. Rock work close to and inside of water is challenging, [but] TAA has done this work in the past with success." One example of the rock's use beyond decorative purposes will be a climbing wall with swinging ropes that drop guests into the pool.

Artificial rock that is continuously in contact with chlorinated water often "bleaches out" and loses its natural-looking color, which is quite a problem. But according to Weisenburger, TAA has addressed this: "Over the years of experience and successful rock work in salt and also chlorinated water, TAA created its own special mixture of cement and integrated color in order to prevent the 'bleach out,'" he reveals. "A sample rock has been already executed on site and approved by the client."

The work should take three to four months, with the Avoriaz Aquatics Center expected to open in June or July 2012. www.taaindustries.com ■



THEMING AND ATTRACTIONS INDUSTRIES

Rendering of some of the rock work in the Aquariaz water park at the Avoriaz ski resort