

Gazing safely into the abyss of the Grand Canyon – thanks to TROSIFOL

Until now, the view from the plateau of the Grand Canyon down to the Colorado River far below has definitely not been for the faint-hearted. In places, the gaze plunges as much 1800 metres into the depths below. The UNESCO World Heritage Site in Arizona, USA, is 350 km long and up to 29 km wide.

But now, since 20th March, things have changed. The Grand Canyon is no less deep, but it is now safer. It was on this day that Buzz Aldrin, the second man on the moon after Neil Armstrong and a man with experience of heights, officially opened a new tourist attraction in this incomparable and unspoilt natural setting – the Skywalk. 1,220 metres above the chasm hovers a horseshoe-shape, 100-metre long steel and glass walkway. Between his or her feet, the visitor looks straight down into the seemingly endless abyss.

You certainly have to have a certain confidence, but there's no need to worry. The view down through the parapet is absolutely safe, as its glass is manufactured with a special TROSIFOL film made of polyvinyl butyral (PVB) from Kuraray Europe GmbH in Troisdorf, Germany.

The laminated safety glass for the floor and parapet was made by the two glass manufacturers, Kinon Porz in Cologne and Glas Döring in Berlin, both of them TROSIFOL customers of many years. It is the parapet in particular that extends the horseshoe floor construction of the Skywalk into three-dimensional space. Attached to the inner and outer edges of the platform, highly transparent, colourless laminated safety glass extends for about 100 metres and, thanks to these properties, prevents annoying colour effects and reflections. 2 x 10 mm white glass and 1.5 mm thick TROSIFOL PVB film together make up the parapet glass "SGG Glabie VSG 20/1". This parapet

with its total surface area of 170 m² was assembled from 49 individual glass panes – 28 curved and 21 straight.

The panes for the floor and parapet were individually fastened to a semicircular, welded steel structure. Centimetre for centimetre, the walkway weighing a total of 482 metric tons was nudged out over the abyss and anchored with eight gigantic steel girders in the rock plateau. The Skywalk will now take force 7 storms and wind speeds up to 160 km/h in its stride. It can theoretically carry a load of 33,000 tons – equivalent to the take-off weight of over 70 fully laden jumbo jets.

The investment of about \$40 million was financed by a businessman working together with the Hualapai Indians. The latter own the area around the Skywalk and the new “glass balcony” above the canyon. The Skywalk can only be visited in connection with a guided tour through the Grand Canyon – this is a concession to the protection of this virtually untouched natural setting. Even Buzz Aldrin had to acknowledge this, admitting at the press conference accompanying the opening ceremony: “It is very well built and it gives you an open-air sense of freedom.”

The Skywalk was opened to the public on 28th March.

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This film for laminated safety glass has been produced in Troisdorf for over 50 years. Today, TROSIFOL belongs to the globally active Kuraray Group with its over 7,500-strong workforce and its headquarters in Tokyo, Japan.

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