The world’s highest 3S gondola lift

LEITNER ropeways' superlative gondola lift in Zermatt sets new standards

29 September 2018 marks a historic day in the history of ropeway systems. With the opening of the world's highest 3S gondola lift on the Klein Matterhorn, several record- breaking facts have now been rolled into a single project. The four-kilometer journey to almost 4,000 meters above sea level leads to Europe's highest top station. With an investment of CHF 55 million, the project represents a milestone in the almost 40-year history of the Swiss ski resort.

After two and a half years of construction, the highly technically demanding tricable gondola lift to the Klein Matterhorn was opened on 29 September. Those responsible for the project will remember it as a particularly challenging time, which put man and material to an extraordinary test. The eight-kilometer long hauling rope alone weighs an impressive 67 tons and is freely suspended over a distance of three kilometers at the longest span of the system. The working conditions in the high Alpine environment with temperatures as cold as minus 30 degrees Celsius and peak winds up to 240 km/h also required top logistical and physical performance from the 145 people involved in construction. The best example of this was the construction of the top station at almost 4,000 meters above sea level. "A total of 27,000 hours of project work by our technicians went into the 3S system. In addition, the highly specialized team mastered a multitude of challenges, from transport logistics to the prefabrication of the stations in Vipiteno and the work on the mountain, which was characterized by the most difficult weather conditions," says Martin Leitner, Member of the Board of Directors of the LEITNER group of companies.

Cabins in Pininfarina design with thousands of Swarovski® crystal beads

The "Matterhorn glacier ride" is a tricable gondola lift that is ideally equipped for all weather conditions. 3S technology offers highest wind resistance and has the structural foundation for the completion of a project in this area due to the extra long spans compared to other ropeway types. The high standards are also reflected in the design of this exceptional project. The year-round used installation features 25 cabins, each with 28 seats, which are built in the premium version with extra-wide access area, all-round glazing, large panoramic windows and leather and Alcantara materials. During the trip, wholly new panoramic views of the glacier landscape open up to guests. The Symphony cabins imagined by Italian design master Pininfarina also represent an additional world’s first on the Matterhorn. For the first time in the history of LEITNER ropeways, thousands of Swarovski® crystal beads refine the exterior of four of the 25 cabins and also decorate the lettering on the comfortable seats. Thanks to another technical feature, these cabins offer a spectacular view during the nine-

minute ride: After three minutes, at an altitude of 170 meters above ground, the cloudy glass floor clears up in seconds to provide guests with a magnificent view of the glacier landscape below. This is made possible by active laminated glass that changes from milky white to transparent under the influence of electric current.

The design of the stations also blends harmoniously into the style of the new ropeway. The top station resembles a rock and thus imitates its surroundings. The valley and top stations consist of large-area photovoltaic and glass elements in rhythmic arrangement, which extend from the lower edge of the garaging level to the upper edge of the roof. A total of 765 solar modules were installed at both stations.

“This project demonstrates that the impossible can be made possible!"

After almost four decades, a new era in Zermatt has begun with the new 3S gondola lift. “Enormous progress has been made since the first summiters took the aerial tramway up to the Klein Matterhorn in 1979. But one thing remains true: the magical attraction that the Klein Matterhorn exerts on people. Thanks to the "Matterhorn glacier ride", a technical masterpiece by LEITNER ropeways, this magical mountain is easily and quickly accessible for our guests. In addition, the foundation was laid for the planned Alpine Crossing, which will connect the areas of Zermatt (CH) and Cervinia (IT) all year round for hikers," says Markus Hasler, CEO Zermatt Bergbahnen AG. The 3S gondola lift is the first step to realizing a unique Alpine crossing between northern Italy and Zermatt and in the long run the connection of the Zermatt, Cervinia/Valtournenche and Monte Rosa ski resorts.

For Martin Leitner, too, the "Matterhorn glacier ride" is a ropeway system of superlatives in every respect. "The facility is a prestigious project with a worldwide reputation that fills me with great pride. It not only increases the value of our company, but also proves that the seemingly impossible can be made possible!"

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