New inclined elevator takes passengers to the top of Turku's former prison hill

LEITNER ropeways builds an urban ropeway in Finland's oldest city

Kakolanmäki hill in Turku is a special and also highly prominent place in the 2011 European Capital of Culture. While the jail built here in 1853 housed prisoners until just a few years ago, the area is now being transformed into a new urban district. In line with this development, the hill is now being connected to the surrounding areas by local public transport. The city chose an inclined elevator by LEITNER ropeways, which ferries passengers free of charge to and from Turku's public transport network. The system was officially opened some days ago to the sounds of the well-known Italian folk song 'Funiculì, Funiculà!'.

Finland's fifth-largest and also oldest city is currently making a clear statement in urban development. The current development on Kakolanmäki will create new apartments, a hotel, restaurants and bars by 2020. In future, up to 2,500 people will live here. That will turn the former prison hill into a new city district in particularly attractive surroundings. The city also wanted the infrastructure connections of the district to the surrounding areas to be particularly attractive. The solution is the 'Kakolan Funicolaari' inclined elevator by LEITNER ropeways, which has proven the ideal solution for the terrain and won the public tender. Martin Leitner, member of the Board of Directors of Leitner AG, expressed his delight at the commissioning of the ropeway: "We are proud of this installation that is so important for Turku. The installation is a true urban ropeway and the perfect symbiosis of high-tech and design." The system is just 132 m in length and can transport 480 passengers per hour, spanning a vertical distance of 30 meters. As inclined elevators use the same fundamental technology as vertical elevators, short, straight routes like that on Kakolanmäki are the perfect application for them. In operation, the system impresses in particular with its functionality, without needing operating staff thanks to its integrated automation: like conventional elevators, passengers call the carriage themselves by pushing a button.

The inclined elevator is owned by the city of Turku and operated by a Finnish elevator manufacturer. A key 'side effect' of opening the 'Kakolan Funicolaari' is the associated expansion of local public transport at this critical location. For example the system, which is free to use, connects directly to a bus stop at the foot of Kakolanmäki, and runs roughly 21 hours a day. The City of Turku also prioritized the attractiveness of the system. Due to its high visibility, the stations were designed by a Finnish architect, and when choosing the carriage, the owners plumped for an exquisite Italian design. Overall, the city invested a total of 5 million euros in the project.

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