

New Cable Car for the Schnalstal Valley Glacier

From the time of its commissioning in 1975, the “Maso Corto/Kurzras – Grawand” Cable Car (B42p) has had just two major overhauls: in 1995 and 2015. Originally the brainchild of Leo Gurschler, credit for the construction of the cable car was also due to the ingenuity of South Tyrolean design engineers involved in the project. Now, almost fifty years later, the existing cable car is due for replacement. The contractor is, once again, Doppelmayr, the international engineering conglomerate that in 2002 merged with Garaventa, its former Swiss rival.

The cable car directly connecting Maso Corto in the valley to the glacier and the Alpin Arena Senales glacier skiing area has added immeasurably to the touristic and economic infrastructure of the entire Schnalstal Valley, enabling a critical mass of visitors to enjoy the spellbinding scenic beauty of the area.

At a total length of 2,150 m, the cable car system covers an elevation difference of approx. 1,180 m in under 6 min, resolving gradients of even up to 100%! The Schnalstal Valley Glacier Cable Car is one of the most prestigious and spectacular in the Alps, bringing sightseers up to 3,212 m to admire this stunningly beautiful high mountain landscape.

With important new features: re-opening in time for Christmas 2023

In the course of the overhaul, the technology driving the cable car system is being completely replaced with only certain elements of the existing stations retained or refurbished. Among the innovations, a new and fully inspectable wire rope ring is being installed enabling continuous monitoring. This completely eliminated the end fixings of the wire ropes. In accordance with the “integrated rescue” principle, the new design incorporates the latest technical solutions, which in an emergency enables (in most cases) both cabins to be returned to the end stations.

Due to the sometimes harsh environmental conditions (mainly strong winds) a new drive was installed, and the track widened together with the total replacement of the support structure.

Several new environmental safeguards also being introduced into the new design. This includes a variety of vibration attenuation measures together with noise reduction (both on the line as well as in the stations), as well as energy recovery during descent which is recycled into the electricity distribution network. Another feature of the new system are the fully glazed cabins and heated underflooring to prevent the formation of ice on the ground endangering passengers. The new, more comfortable cabins also offer 30% extra floor space and enable the rotation of 800 persons/h.

Completion of the new cable car and temporary access is envisaged by the start of winter season. However, construction of the underground car park at the Maso Corto valley station including the new covered entrance from the slopes and the various service outbuildings can only commence after the end of the winter season (as from 7th April 2024). Following the existing timetable, all works should have fully been completed by the start of the 2024 winter season.

Open all year round ... worth a visit both winter and summer

The cable car and the Hochjochferner glacier are internationally renowned, particularly among winter sports enthusiasts, attracting athletes from ski clubs and national teams from around the world for their training programmes in preparation for the winter competitions. However, the conditions are also well suited to amateurs, recreational athletes, and families. On its snow covered slopes, cross-country ski trails, 3.3-km toboggan run and breath-taking Ötzi viewing platform, adventures abound!

Those whose experience of the Alpin Arena Senales is limited to a snow-covered paradise should also try visiting the Schnalstal Valley glacier in summer at least once – the difference is amazing! With the sun shining at high noon, the scenic trails that lead through the green fields and forests beneath the sheer rockfaces offer perfect conditions for adventurous hikers. All this surrounding the Ötzi Iceman Peak at the Grawand peak and a spectacular view of no less than 126 summits towering above 3,000m where Ötzi used to roam over 5,000 years ago. Since then, much has changed with challenging via ferratas to guide climbers across the exposed rockfaces and mountain carts in Lazaun as well as numerous enchanting mountain huts offering sumptuous homemade meals, refreshments and even a place for an overnight stay.

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