

NEW EIGHT-SEATER GIFTHITTLI CHAIRLIFT: COMFORT, TECHNOLOGY AND SUSTAINABILITY COMBINED

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Zermatt Bergbahnen is ushering in a new era for winter sports fans with its innovative eight-seater Gifhittli chairlift. After more than two decades of dependable service, the six-seater chairlift dating back to 2003 has now been replaced by a modern installation boasting greater comfort, increased efficiency and innovative technology. The lift, produced by Leitner, went into service in time for the start of the winter season in the resort's central region. An opening ceremony took place on 28 November, conducted by TV presenter Cloé Maria Salzgeber, whose roots reach back to Valais.

The main points at a glance

- The Gifhittli chairlift has been replaced after 22 years of operation. Together with the Furgsattel chairlift it was the first to be installed by Zermatt Bergbahnen AG after the merger in 2002.
- The old lift carried an average of around 1.2 million winter sports enthusiasts per season and was the company's busiest winter sports lift.
- The new Leitner-built system will be one of Switzerland's first eight-seater chairlifts.
- Investment in the project came to CHF 25 million.

Greater comfort and efficiency for passengers and staff

As one of the first eight-seater chairlifts in Switzerland, the new installation will offer passengers maximum comfort and a more seamless experience during everyday operation. Access will now be in the direction of travel, which will increase passenger throughput and make boarding much more convenient. The new layout of the boarding area with a bigger waiting zone will benefit both passengers and staff. Staff will have a better view over the boarding area while the clearer demarcation of the queue from the piste will increase passenger safety. The lift will be operated with the aid of the LeitControl system, with automated processes and an intuitive user interface set to make its day-to-day running easier for employees.

Highest standards of technology, design and ride comfort

The lift is not only technically advanced, it looks good too. The modern station design by Ferrari collaborators Pininfarina gives the system an elegant contemporary appearance. The lift has 75 chairs, each with eight comfortable seats, and a maximum speed of six metres per second. It can transport around 3400 people an hour.

The premium-quality chairs manufactured by Leitner are fitted with comfortable upholstery and blue canopies to guarantee a pleasant ride whatever the weather. Zermatt Bergbahnen invested a total of CHF 25 million in the construction of the new lift. Fabian Imboden, Head of Technical Services North, explains: "Along with the Riffelberg Express, the chairlift plays a key role in connecting the southern, central and northern ski areas. This lift is a major asset to the ski area as it acts as a central link between the different areas. It is the only lift in the central area and provides access to four different slopes, offering guests a range of skiing experiences."

Taking social responsibility seriously

A new building was constructed above the mountain station garage to house offices, a base for the rescue service and sanitary facilities. “Our Gornergrat rescue service team will be able to work more efficiently in the new modern offices. The location for our new rescue station is ideal for operations,” says Daniel Imboden, Head of Mountain Rescue Service, Northern Region.

Sustainability and state-of-the-art technology as key principles

Zermatt Bergbahnen is focusing on the new standards relating to sustainability and innovation. The DirectDrive system guarantees almost noise-free operation with maintenance costs at a minimum. Unlike conventional drives, it completely eliminates the need for gear oil. In addition, solar panels have been installed in the station’s windows, helping it generate its own energy. Being able to reuse more than half the existing tower bases meant that the potential impact on nature was reduced considerably. These measures not only cut the use of materials and resources but protect the environment. The new eight-seater Gifhittli chairlift underscores Zermatt Bergbahnen’s commitment to innovation, sustainability and the highest levels of passenger comfort, laying down another marker for the future of Alpine tourism.

“Gift” theme for opening ceremony

“It is a gift to be able to put this ultramodern installation into operation,” said Martin Hug, CEO of Zermatt Bergbahnen at the opening ceremony. The Gifhittli chairlift gets its name from the English term “gift house” used for the former ticket booth and gift shop for visitors who once travelled up to the Gornergrat. The theme accompanied the official opening and blessing of the lift in the run-up to Christmas, all presented by Cloé Maria Salzgeber.

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Photos:



Chairlift Gifhittli © Zermatt Bergbahnen



The ribbon was ceremoniously cut. © Zermatt Bergbahnen