



Information for railway enthusiasts

25 June 1930 The first trip

The three railways Brig-Visp-Zermatt Railway (BVZ), Furka-Oberalp Railway (FO) and Rhaetian Railway (RhB) deployed their best vehicles:

- RhB its ABs C4ü61, which is still being used today as saloon car AS 1161, and a 2nd/3rd class coach of the 604-607 series,
- BVZ a 1st & 2nd class coach with a saloon compartment,
- the FO a C4ü 260;
- these were accompanied by a new dining car provided by MITROPA in Neuhausen (which today is the "Gourmand" coach 3812).

Saloon car 61 (now 1161), that RhB deployed for the maiden voyage, was too heavy for daily operations on the rack and pinion ramps. This is why the AB4ü, which weighed just 14 tonnes, was used for the Glacier Express. The trains also had 3rd class coaches from the outset and 2nd class coaches from 1956.

Electrification

The Glacier Express was powered by electricity between Zermatt and Brig as well as between Disentis and St. Moritz from the very beginning. The section between Brig and Disentis was not powered by electricity until 1 June 1941. Until that point, trains travelled this route with steam engines.

From 1931, if at all possible, carriages with closed platforms and with gaiters were used. The dining cars used by Mitropa in 1929 and 1930 could only be used on the Rhaetian Railway section from and to Disentis as the FO ran on steam until 1942. In the 1930s, the locomotives were the Crocodiles from Rhaetian Railway, the steam engines of the FO and the "small Crocodiles" of the BVZ.

In 1947, with the resumption of railway operations after the Second World War, electric trains were used throughout. The dining car travelled to Lake Oberalp or Andermatt where it was then attached to the train travelling in the opposite direction.

Lightweight carriages and the Furka Base Tunnel

Light steel and lightweight metal carriages were used from 1961. Apart from the dining car, the train was made up entirely of such carriages from 1968.

The opening of the Furka Base Tunnel in 1982 made all-year-round operation possible. Since then, however, passengers have had to do without a view of the Rhone Glacier. This old mountain route is now owned by the Furka Cogwheel Steam Railway (DFB) and was gradually put back into operation. On 12 August 2010, after a break of 28 years, operations were restarted on the whole of this mountain section. Only historical locomotives and carriages are used on this route.



Panoramic cars and Excellence Class

A composition consisting entirely of panoramic cars was first deployed in first class in 1993. After further panoramic cars were procured, several train units with panoramic cars were able to be used from 2006 – also in second class.

From 2019 onwards, one Excellence Class carriage was introduced in train pair 902/903 between Zermatt and St. Moritz. The carriages Bp 2538 (RhB) and 4068 (MGB) were renovated and renamed Aps 1321 and 4046. These carriages have 20 new seats at tables for two and a bar. The gaiter transition at the end of the bar is no longer necessary as the Excellence Class carriages are always positioned at one end of the train. The carriages were designed by Swiss company NOSE and converted in RhB's own workshops. From the outside, these carriages can be distinguished by the additional gold diagonal stripes.

To mark the 90th anniversary in 2020, all 1st and 2nd class panoramic cars were redesigned and equipped with a new infotainment system.