



A class full of extras

The design of the two Excellence Class carriages led to a much closer cooperation between RhB and MGBahn than ever before, while also placing great demands on the Landquart workshop – the likes of which have seldom been experienced. The result is two premium class vehicles without parallel on Europe’s narrow gauge tracks.

From the outside, all that distinguishes the two premium carriages is the additional gold diagonal stripes, which were part of the original design of the series of panoramic cars procured in 2005, 2009 and 2011 from Stadler Rail. In keeping with Glacier Express AG’s fine system of equality, RhB (Bp 2538) and MGBahn (Bp 4068) each contributed a second-class carriage. Each carriage was completely stripped, rebuilt and upgraded to create the two Excellence Class carriages RhB Aps 1321 and MGBahn Aps 4046. This high-class upgrade proved to be a major technical and scheduling feat, as David Wiegatz and Thomas Wyer, project managers in rolling stock engineering at RhB and MGBahn, explain: «The demands were tough, especially the schedule.»

Landquart always finds a solution

A business plan drawn up by the two operating railways in 2016 clearly demonstrated the need for a new «superclass» to reposition the Glacier Express as a USP on the global market. In spring 2017, the stakeholders gave the go-ahead to take the Glacier Express to the next level of comfort and service with a premium carriage and to make it visually stand out from all previous classes. In order to manage such a major project within the required 18-month time frame, both railway companies – RhB and MGBahn – shared the workload. As RhB had far more resources and experience, the conversion was carried out in RhB’s workshop in Landquart. Nevertheless, RhB still had to expand its rolling stock engineering team and pool of external resources. Solutions had to be repeatedly found with the designer and the suppliers in order to meet the high-grade interior specifications, and the vast expertise of the experts had to be drawn upon to install exclusive features such as the compass dome and the lamps with gold leaf finish. A particularly cosy atmosphere permeates the bar through the use of the entire carriage width: as Excellence Class is always at the front or rear of the train, there was no need for a gangway connection – an unfamiliar sight in Switzerland.

The start of a full train refit

«The engineering expertise of both railway companies perfectly combined to create all the new solutions necessary. Thanks to this challenge, we have cooperated on a much closer level than ever before,» explains RhB Director Renato Fasciati, proudly.

The new Excellence Class marks the start of a full Glacier Express rolling stock refit all carriages are scheduled to adopt the new look from 2020 (e.g. by using the same materials), with 2nd class set to follow the year after.

Quote

«Our aim is to successfully reposition the Glacier Express as a premium product.»

David Wiegatz, RhB project manager