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Furka-Bergstrecke News

After 18 years of “Tunnel only”, a Furka train again takes the high road past the Rhone Glacier!

by George M. Hoekstra

All this time, a small group of intrepid enthusiasts were convinced they could re-open the old Furka route past the Rhone Glacier (in today's “Glacier Express”, you cannot see the glacier any more as you are in the 9.5 mile long Furka Basis tunnel). But they did not just talk about it, they worked more than 100,000 volunteer-hours and donated more than 20 million Swiss francs in hard cash. This incredible dedication now has brought them a decisive step closer to their goal: on the

30th July 1998 a few hundred people watched the first train for 18 years to reach Gletsch over the Furka from Realp. It was a diesel worked works train, as volunteers will have to work a lot on the track, to make it suitable for the heavy steam locomotives (see Swiss Express sept. 1994). Also, a specialist firm needs to repair a few critical spots in the summit tunnel. But in the year 2000 it should all come true: passengers can once again admire the Rhone Glacier from a steam train!