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Autor: Leutwiler, Ernst B.
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Two Perspectives of Le Locle



The Lift to the Station

Ernst B. Leutwiler

The industrial city of Le Locle in Canton Neuchâtel is considered to be the cradle of Swiss watchmaking. UNESCO declared it a World Heritage Site in 2009. The community of some 10,400 people is strung out along a deep valley typical of those found in the Jura Mountains, so when the railway arrived in the 19thC the engineers carried the line along the hillside above the commercial and residential districts. The station at Le Locle is today served by a half-hourly CFF/SBB service down the valley to La Chaux-de-Fonds, one train of which forms an hourly RE service to Neuchâtel and Lausanne. In addition to this, there is a six-times-daily cross-border SNCF X 73500 railcar service from Besançon and Morteau. Le Locle is also the terminus of the metre-gauge line from Les Brenets. The 24m-height difference between the centre and the station had been conquered by a series of steep steps up the hillside, until the opening in September 2014 of a new inclined plane passenger lift. The lift is a simplified form of funicular with a single cabin that holds 16 passengers for the 35-second trip up the 59m long slope. Lift operation is automatic and currently some 14,000 passenger-trips are made each month on the free service. The mechanism driving the system is located at the base station on the Rue de la Côte, which has been given the locally appropriate name of "Le Remontoir" – or the bezel that is used to wind-up a mechanical watch. 🇨🇭

TOP: Le Locle funicular top station - 'Bergstation'.
MIDDLE: View down the funicular to 'Le Remontoir'.
BOTTOM: 'Le Remontoir', bottom station, Le Locle.

Photos: Ernst B Leutwiler

