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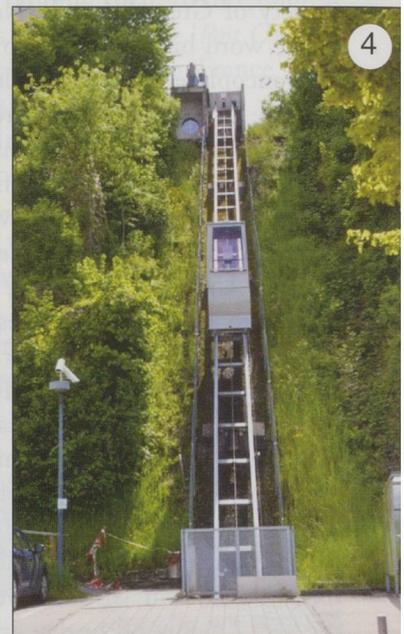
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Bern gets a lift – or two

Ernst Leutwiler reports on the commissioning of two new inclined plane lifts



The City of Bern is rightly proud of its world famous bears, that since 2009 have been enjoying the extra space afforded by their new Bear Park across the River Aare from their old home in the restricted confines of the old bear Pit. The new park is situated on a steep slope that leads down to the river, a superb location but one that was not fully accessible for persons with any form of mobility impairment. To meet the requirements of Switzerland's Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) the City Council studied many proposals for improving access for all visitors and finally settled on a CHF3m proposal to install an inclined plane lift. The 43m long track connects a height difference of 20m, using a spacious cabin that has room for a combination of 2 wheelchairs and up to 15 people. The lift, built by Inauen-Schätti AG of Schwanden (GL), is fully automatic, operates during the opening hours of the Bear Park, and is free to users. The 'Barengaben' is well worth a visit and is only a 7 minute bus ride on Line 12 from the Hauptbahnhof – but beware, during the winter months the bears are invisible as they are hibernating!

In Bern's southern suburb of Belp the district hospital and nursing home is situated on a hill and from its opening in 1992 it had been connected to a lower level, for parking and the short walk to the BLS Station, by a 2-person

1, 3 & 5. Bern, Bärengaben.

2 & 4. Belp Spital Bergstation.

inclined plane elevator. This was 49m long and climbed 25m but due to its small size, and the requirements of the DDA, it has recently been replaced by a larger cabin that can take 2 wheelchairs and more people. This was a joint contract between Von Rotz & Wiedemar AG, and Frey AG, of Stans. Again it is fully automatic, but this one operates from 05.30 to 23.00. 

