

Media release

Pontresina, 7 October 2020

Unique “Virtual Reality Glacier Experience” visitors’ centre to open in Pontresina

Graubündner Kantonalbank offers a virtual journey through time into the world of glaciers and water

A new interactive exhibition in Pontresina in the Upper Engadine reveals the impacts of climate change. From 10 October 2020, the “Virtual Reality Glacier Experience” will offer visitors a one-of-a-kind virtual journey through time around the Morteratsch Glacier. This tourist attraction has been made possible by Graubündner Kantonalbank (GKB) as part of its 150th anniversary celebrations.

The interactive Virtual Reality Glacier Experience exhibition provides answers to questions about glaciers and water, and takes visitors on a journey through time and space. Interested visitors can immerse themselves in the past and the future, and experience the area around the Morteratsch Glacier by taking part in four virtual tours. An array of climate scenarios illustrate how the glacier tongue is retreating. Visitors can find out about what could potentially be achieved by the MortAlive glacier protection project headed by glaciologist Felix Keller. The idea behind MortAlive is to cover the glacier tongue with technical snow made from melt water in summer in order to protect the ice sheet. What's more, the project aims to do all of this without using any electricity. “With this new exhibition, we aim to raise awareness of glacial melting and the need for pioneering projects. Well-founded science coupled with state-of-the-art knowledge transfer techniques give rise to the kind of innovation that Graubündner Kantonalbank wants to support,” said GKB CEO Daniel Fust. Whether you are young or old, from the local area or from another country, this topic affects everybody.

To celebrate its anniversary, Graubündner Kantonalbank joined forces with renowned partners to create an exhibition that allows visitors to experience the impacts of climate change. Over the past two years, an old restaurant at the Diavolezza valley station has been transformed into an attraction that underlines the Bank's anniversary motto of setting an example with sustainability in mind: “The Virtual Reality Glacier Experience shows visitors the global impact of water being removed from the environment and the ways in which Graubünden is trying to meet this challenge at a local level”, said Peter Fanconi, Chair of GKB. Surrounded by the rugged natural landscape and the imposing Bernina massif, the centre is located right at the heart of the action and can thus have an optimal impact on visitors.

A journey through time focusing on glaciers and water

The interactive exhibition highlights the impacts of climate change on the mountains. “As the bank of the people of Graubünden, we always make sure that our business activities are in harmony with nature and the environment,” said Daniel Fust. He continued by saying: “Water is the life blood of our canton. It carved out our valleys, our mineral water ranks among the best, and hydropower generates is a reliable source of our electricity.” The exhibition measuring about 250 square metres offers visitors a journey through time, from the past to the future. By using the virtual reality goggles or the holo screen, visitors can view the various scenarios that illustrate how the Morteratsch Glacier has changed and can change from 1875 to 2100. Visitors can play an active role, for example by helping to count the ptarmigans. The Virtual Reality Glacier Experience also showcases another Swiss innovation: NESSy ZeroE. The patented snow lance produces technical snow without using any electricity. The importance of this invention is highlighted by MortAlive, a global glacier rescue project.

Experiencing science at first hand

The science-backed exhibition was made possible by close cooperation with the Zurich University of the Arts and the University of Freiburg. Over the past two years, they joined forces to develop detailed glacier models and create the virtual world of the Morteratsch Glacier in Pontresina. From 10 October 2020, the Virtual Reality Glacier Experience at the Diavolezza Mountain Railway valley station will be open every day to individuals, families and groups. Entry is free of charge.

Future-oriented 150th anniversary celebrations #gkb2020

From the outset, Graubündner Kantonalbank's anniversary celebrations were designed to leave a mark. The Bank did not want to simply celebrate its own successes. #gkb2020 successfully achieved this objective, summarised Daniel Fust, who names a few highlights from the #gkb2020 anniversary programme. "Together with TRUMPF Schweiz AG in Grüşch, we repositioned the INNOZET Foundation and set an example for the promotion of start-ups. The public is highly appreciative of the "Graubünden Musik" platform for the marketing of music and our greater commitment to culture, sports, business, social issues and the environment. Our online summit registers provide unforgettable mountain experiences for young and old alike. The new drinking fountains at Grossalp Safien symbolise a project that was made possible by the Climaqua Fund of Allegra Passuger Mineralquellen AG." In keeping with the anniversary motto "Setting an example for the future with sustainability in mind", all of these projects will continue to operate and provide benefits after the anniversary year.

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Images and videos

www.glacierexperience.com/medien

Graubündner Kantonalbank – the leading bank in Graubünden

Graubündner Kantonalbank offers everything that makes up a modern universal bank – for private individuals, businesses and the public sector. The Bank employs 1,015 members of staff (as at 30.06.2020). The company has 50 branches spread across the large, sprawling and multilingual canton of Graubünden, with its headquarters in Chur. Graubündner Kantonalbank holds stakes in Privatbank Bellerive AG in Zurich and in Albin Kistler AG in Zurich. In its half-year results, the bank reported total assets of CHF 30.9 billion and a consolidated profit of CHF 95.2 million. The GKB participation certificate has been listed on the stock exchange since 10 September 1985.

Key dates

Annual figures for 2020:	4 February 2021
Stakeholder meeting:	24 April 2021