

## ‘Larreineta Funicular Railway: iron railway’ - a journey through the history of Trapagaran

- Euskotren today opened a permanent exhibition at the funicular railway’s premises. The aim is to highlight the uniqueness of this means of transport and its importance in the tourist and economic development of the mining valley.
- Ministers Iñaki Arriola and Javier Hurtado, accompanied by the Bizkaia Provincial Councillor for Transport and Sustainable Mobility, Miguel Ángel Gómez Viar, and the Mayor of Trapagaran, Xabier Cuellar, visited the exhibition that features the funicular car from 1926
- This initiative is part of a far-reaching interinstitutional project, involving the Basque Government, Provincial Council and Trapagaran Local Council, to drive sustainable mobility locally

Euskotren, the publicly-owned company answering to the Basque Government’s Ministry for Spatial Planning, Housing and Transport, today opened a permanent exhibition at the Larreineta funicular railway premises. Its aim is to showcase the uniqueness of this means of transport and its importance in the tourist and economic development of the Trápaga mining valley. The exhibition shows the general public an important part of our history and offers a new tourist attraction to enjoy the protect natural area that is home to La Arboleda and the Peñas Negras Interpretation Centre, among others.

The exhibition is divided into two main areas – La Escontrilla and Larreineta stations – connected by the funicular railway. Different information panels and videos take visitors through the valley’s cultural, social and economic evolution through history. It seeks to pay tribute to those people whose work and effort contributed to the industrial growth of the area and to the emergence of the workers’ movement, closely linked to the development of mining. In fact, the funicular railway was originally designed to transport goods and people to the upper districts of Trapagaran, whose population had increased exponentially as the result of the mining in La Arboleda.

This morning, the Basque Government’s Minister for Spatial Planning, Housing and Transport, Iñaki Arriola, visited the exhibition, accompanied by the Basque Minister for Tourism, Commerce and Consumption, Javier Hurtado, the Bizkaia Provincial Councillor

for Transport and Sustainable Mobility, Miguel Ángel Gómez Viar, and the Mayor of Trapagaran, Xabier Cuellar.

Since 1926, the year it came to service, to the present, the funicular has proven to be an essential means of transport for the people living in Trapagaran. In fact, a neighbourhood initiative – led by the Larreineta-Funicular Association – highlighted the need for measures to preserve the railway. They are now a reality as the funicular railway has had Cultural Asset status, with the category of Site of Cultural Importance, since 2014.

One of the exhibition's main features, both due to its sentimental value for the local residents and for its tourist interest, is the opportunity to see the original funicular car. It has been restored by Euskotren and placed on the terrace next to Larreineta station. It is the original wooden car from 1926, which had fallen into disuse after it was replaced by more modern and comfortable rolling stock in 1985.

The opening of this exhibition is part of a far-reaching interinstitutional project, involving the Basque Government, Provincial Council and Trapagaran Local Council, to drive sustainable mobility locally. As part of the venture, the three public institutions are working to convert the Trapagaran-La Arboleda section into a sustainable transport vector with zero emissions. The goal is to generate a large decarbonised and zero-emission area for sustainable mobility area between La Escontrilla and La Arboleda. Euskotren will therefore run an e-bus to provide a shuttle service along that stretch. Furthermore, bicycles can travel free-of-charge on the funicular as of today. In turn, Bizaka Provincial Council's Department of Transport and Sustainable Mobility has recently opened two bicycle repair and maintenance points at both stations.

The dissemination activities will include group tours organised with schools and associations. The three institutions will coordinate the activities with specific tickets introduced to mark the opening of the exhibition.

## **QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE FUNICULAR RAILWAY**

The Larreineta Funicular Railway was built by Bizkaia Provincial Council pursuant to the concession awarded by the Ministry of Development on 11 March 1921 and came into service on 25 September 1926. For more than 95 years, the Funicular was used to take the workers up to the mine and to transport the iron ore from La Arboleda mining operation to the factories. Furthermore, Decree 150/2014, of 15 July, awarded the funicular railway Cultural Asset status, with the category of Site of Cultural Importance.

The Larreineta Funicular Railway and its surrounding area is an important feature for citizens to learn about the Basque Country's mining past. Its vehicles, with a horizontal platform on which the passenger cars can be placed or left bare to transport road vehicles and any type of freight more efficiently, are clearly one of its main particular characteristics. The metal structure was originally built in Switzerland.

The passenger cars, built at the Ferrocarril de Triano workshops in Ortuella and weighing nearly three tons, were closed units built in wood. They had three compartments to carry up to 60 people and a covered platform to transport freight and an open porch. These original cars were used until 1985, where they were replaced by ones with a new design built by Irizar (Ormaiztegi, Gipuzkoa).