



## Forget the View... Check Out Those Gears!!



On May 20, the city of Pittsburgh celebrated the 130th anniversary of the Duquesne Incline, a funicular railway that allows passengers to travel via cable car to an observation area and catch a panoramic view of the city and—most importantly—get a bird’s eye glimpse of the gear teeth in action.

The Duquesne Incline, at 800' long, 400' high and at a 30° inclination, scales Mt. Washington and zips groups of 25 visitors up the mountain and into downtown Pittsburgh within six minutes. Some visitors love the fact that the Upper Station deposits customers in the heart of Restaurant Row. For three years running, *USA Weekend* has distinguished The Duquesne Incline as the second most scenic spot in the U.S., with the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers fusing together to create the Ohio River, and the nighttime view of more than 15 lighted bridges illuminating downtown Pittsburgh.

Staff members swear that, for a significant segment of the visitors, it’s really the mechanics behind the incline that make every penny of the \$1.75 trip worthwhile. Tourists with “gearhead” tendencies may be interested to learn that the incline was steam-driven and remained so until 1932 when it was converted to electricity. In the 1970s, the incline was modernized with Westinghouse receptacles and a maintenance-free drive system.

One of the features that stuns tourists, says Jim Presken, vice president of operations, is the location of the hoisting machinery at right angles with the plane. This method was initially adopted to save the expense of buying an additional piece of real estate. Over the years, it has evolved to two working cables wound together on a single grooved drum.

The single drum is 12' in diameter and 3'10" wide. It has a grooved periphery into which both pulling cables wind. The original cable drum and wooden tooth drive gear are still in use today and operate without any problem. Replacement teeth of aged rock maple are on hand at all times.

Aside from tourists, a large part of the incline’s traffic is daily commuters. For those lucky workers, this mechanical masterpiece is part of the daily grind. As for the rest of us, we’ll have to make a vacation of it.

### For more information:

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