



JAMES BOND AND SCHILTHORN CABLEWAY LTD.

50 Years "On Her Majesty's Secret Service"

Interlaken/Mürren, 2019: How did James Bond end up on the Schilthorn summit? And how is it relevant today? This is the story of James Bond's foray into the high-alpine world of the Schilthorn – Piz Gloria.

For the last 50 years, Schilthorn Cableway has pursued a strategy that focuses on the unrivalled mountain landscape and the mystique surrounding James Bond. The scenes for the iconic movie *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* were shot on the Schilthorn between 21 October 1968 and 17 May 1969. Indeed: without the film, the Schilthorn would not exist in its present form...

How did Bond end up on the Schilthorn?

The location scout Hubert Fröhlich was travelling through Europe, tasked by the producers of *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* – the sixth Bond movie – with finding a film location that was in the mountains and suitable for shooting particularly dramatic scenes. After a hotel concierge in Grindelwald showed him a picture of the Schilthorn, Fröhlich approached Paul Eggenberg, the then managing director of Schilthorn Cableway, and the company's chairman Ernst Feuz. They loved the idea and wasted no time in giving the project the go-ahead. Once the location had been given the stamp of approval by the producers Albert R. Broccoli, Harry Saltzman, Eon Productions and director Peter Hunt, the future of the Schilthorn summit was sealed: the film project was to play a pivotal role in the construction and completion of the cableway and the revolving summit restaurant. Named Piz Gloria in the film, the revolving restaurant served as the headquarters of Bond's arch-nemesis Blofeld and his secret organization Spectre. The excursion peak, which carries the Piz Gloria moniker to this day, was propelled into the global spotlight overnight – all thanks to the film.

Preparing for the film shoot

A contract between the cableway and the film set out the responsibilities of each partner: among other commitments, the film undertook to finance the interior fixtures and fittings at the summit station, which would pass into the ownership of the cableway after filming had been completed. The cableway in turn agreed to transport people and equipment free of charge.

In the meantime, the producers had decided to build a heliport. The reasoning behind this was to create the impression that the summit building was large enough to comfortably accommodate all its occupants (Count Blofeld, Irma Blunt, the Angels of Death etc.).

In the film, the cableway was meant to look as if it was privately owned by Blofeld, who was running a secretive institute on the summit. To enhance this perception, the plan was

to paint the five cabins orange. (The cabins operating on each route section were originally painted in different subtle colours.) The idea came up against opposition from landscape conservationists and environmentalists, who feared that a colour change would disturb the landscape. But the proposal found favour with the representative of the Federal Office of Aviation, who believed that the desired colour would have a positive impact on aviation safety. Finally, permission was granted to spray paint the cableway cabins orange – and they continued to operate like this for more than 25 years.

The film was to be set in winter, and it was assumed that there would be enough snow on the ground from mid-October onwards. The film crew was expected in Mürren on 15 October 1968, with filming scheduled to begin on 21 October. Around 180 accommodations were booked for the crew from 15 October until 20 December, which, for all intents and purposes, created an extra or 'third' tourism season for the village of Mürren.

The cameraman declared that he would need at least 2000 amps of direct current, which made it necessary to build an additional power station on the Schilthorn. A contact at the BBC paved the way for the hire of a suitable generator. Installation went according to plan with the help of a Saurer motor, which could supply the required power to the generator.

The film crew arrives

Vast quantities of material and equipment had already arrived in Stechelberg: around 25 tonnes of lighting equipment, costumes in 30 large travel cases, countless boxes with make-up supplies, wigs, hairdryer hoods as well as stationary and office equipment, typewriters and duplicating machines. Fifty enormous crates contained filters for the windows and a vast array of props including weapons and décor.

The costume, make-up and publicity departments were based at the Palace Hotel. The production office was located in the room that is today's main cashier's desk; the producers' office in the corridor space between today's shop and café and the entrance to Mürren station. Schilthorn Cableway had relocated their headquarters, squeezing into the small space that is today's kiosk. Most of the space that houses today's workshop basement was turned into a storage facility for props, furnishings, ropes, pulleys and tools.

Mürren still had five-digit telephone numbers in 1968, and so all international calls had to be made via the long-distance exchange. The prospects of obtaining a telephone line were slim – in fact, some applicants had been waiting for years for a connection. The then director of the district telephone board in Thun came to the rescue and a separate line was installed within days.

The district governor in Interlaken agreed to relax licensing hours for the duration of the shoot in Mürren (and later in Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald). This allowed restaurants and hotels to cater to the crew during night-time filming and contributed to record-busting takings in the local hospitality trade.

The summit building now resembled the lobby of a luxury hotel – wooden ceilings had been installed and the floors covered in an expanse of wall-to-wall orange carpet.

Filming on the Schilthorn Piz – Gloria

Filming was scheduled to begin on 08:30 am on 21 October 1968. Part of the team travelled to the summit at 07:30; the rest followed at 07:45. In keeping with tradition, a chimney sweep was there to bring luck to the crew and the director. After he had given a short speech, director Peter Hunt gave the order to shoot the first scene. It wrapped at exactly 8:27, three minutes ahead of schedule. This might just be a first in the history of film.

The Schilthorn – or Piz Gloria, as it was now known – appeared as if made for the movie with its breathtaking, 360-degree panoramic views, cutting-edge design and infrastructure. Despite the fact that the thinner air at just under 3000 metres above sea level meant that work had to proceed at a slightly more leisurely pace than normal.

The helicopter company Heliswiss in Belp could supply two Bell 204 machines. Peter Hunt, however, wanted three identical helicopters for Draco's attack on the Piz Gloria. The Heliswiss managing director was charged with sourcing and leasing a third Bell 204. He found one in Norway, north of Oslo. Despite the considerable transport costs, the decision was taken to have the helicopter brought over. And again, as with the cabins, there was a paint problem: the three helicopters had to look identical. And it was necessary to find a paint that would not flake away from the base coat and could be washed off again after filming. A satisfactory solution for this – like many other problems during the making of the film – was duly found. The helicopter attack on the Piz Gloria is without doubt one of the most stunning scenes in the movie. The subsequent detonation of the summit was one of the showpieces of the special effects department at Pinewood Studios near London.

Even the oldest locals couldn't recall the last time there had been no snow on the Schilthorn at this time of year. But a fast-paced schedule meant that sitting tight and hoping for snowfall was out of the question. There was nothing else for it: the snow had to be brought to the summit. Helicopters were available, as were plentiful shovels and volunteers. Walter Stähli from the Eiger Hotel supplied 1000 plastic bags, which were filled with slow-melting glacier snow on the Petersgrat ridge and flown to the Schilthorn by helicopter. It was a tremendous feat that paid off, leaving the Schilthorn resplendent in its winter finest.

James Bond leaves his mark on Mürren

Towards the end of November, Mrs Broccoli said: "I want to give a party for the crew and the village, please arrange it for me." It took place just a few days later – an extravagant, luxurious affair of the sort Mürren had never seen before – and probably hasn't seen since. Some 200 people attended.

The ice rink scene was to be filmed in the village. This required a grandstand, which was brought up from Gstaad and installed in Mürren. Peter Hunt had once said that a mountain village wasn't a proper mountain village without a church spire, so a 14-metre-high spire was built on the spot where the giant chess board can be found today. But snowfall still didn't materialize, and both structures were dismantled again.

Meanwhile, the name Piz Gloria had entered the vernacular and was known far and wide. The mountain itself retained its own name, but the unique summit station with the spectacular revolving restaurant has since shot to global fame as the Piz Gloria.

It was impressive to witness how the presence of the film crew changed Mürren in the space of 10 weeks. The concept of the breakfast buffet had been entirely unknown in

Mürren up until then; just a few days after the film crew arrived, everyone had to have one. Free of the constraints of fixed licensing hours, the hotels rarely served dinner before 9 pm. Some even began to serve delicacies such as oysters and lobster to their clientele. Before the film came to town, hardly anyone in Mürren knew who or what Jack Daniels was. At the Hotel Edelweiss, draught beer was on tap in Mürren for the first time, thanks to a proprietor who was eager to satisfy the special requests of his guests. Many hotels engaged live orchestras to perform during this "third season".

Car racing in Lauterbrunnen and hair-raising stunts

The car race in which James Bond and Tracy are fleeing from Count Blofeld's henchmen was one of the most thrilling highlights. On the southern outskirts of Lauterbrunnen, an area of land covered with snow was carefully levelled, rolled and watered to create a sheet of solid ice. Racetrack construction could now begin. The track was oval with a circumference of 300 metres, 1.4-metre-high wooden perimeter boards and a large grandstand with seating for 600 spectators. Flagpoles were erected and everything else required to make the set look like a real stock car racetrack. In the movie, the race was to provide an opportunity for James Bond to shake off his pursuers. A vehicle sponsor was found: two large transporters delivered 10 brand-new Ford Escorts and 2 new Cougars. In order to make the race scene appear as authentic as possible, 1500 spectators were required. The Swiss Post Office was contacted and agreed to supply the extras as well as the post buses needed to transport them back and forth. The race itself proved every bit as dramatic as envisaged. Cars collided and overturned. But Tracy and James Bond were able to weave their way through the melee and give their assailants the slip. By the end of this scene, 9 Ford Escorts, 1 Cougar and 2 Mercedes had been completely written off!

When it came to filming the bobsleigh scene, the producers had to choose between using the existing bobsleigh run in St Moritz or reactivating the disused run in Mürren. The main problem in Mürren was the water supply pipeline, which, together with snow and cold temperatures, is the lifeline of a bobsleigh run. It had been shut down for more than 45 years and had largely rotted. The former bobsleigh run had in the meantime become part of a ski slope – in order to keep it operational, three bridges had to be built in a short time to allow skiers to traverse the bob run. The excellent English stuntmen frankly admitted to having no bobsleigh experience whatsoever. So two members of the bobsleigh club were called in – both were successful Zurich businessmen who literally risked their necks in some scenes. Other members of the bob crew were Willy Bogner, an excellent cameraman and, most importantly, one of the best skiers in the world, the unforgettable cameraman and aerial photography specialist Johnny Jordan and two Air Glaciers pilots, Bruno Bagnoud and Ferdinand Martignoni.

The film crew had made every conceivable effort to film a spectacular avalanche that was meant to catch James Bond and Tracy simultaneously. All their attempts had been in vain, however, and it was decided to trigger a huge avalanche. The Tschingelgrat ridge was the only suitable spot for this. Bruno Bagnoud was to fly his Alouette III along the ridge while an accompanying ski master dropped buckets containing explosives every 50 metres in order to trigger the slide. This required 150 kilogrammes of explosives divided into 6 buckets, each containing a lit fuse of different lengths. There was an eerie silence after the explosives had been dropped. After what seemed like an eternity, the first load exploded,

immediately followed by the second, third and so forth. A crack suddenly appeared and streaked like a bolt of lightning across the glacier. Gigantic quantities of snow and ice were now on the move, thundering unstopably towards the valley.

Peripheral anecdotes

During an evening meal at the Jungfrau Hotel – the starter had contained a few slices of salami – Mr Saltzman claimed that the best salami in the world was made by a kosher butcher in New York. Eager to deliver proof, he placed a phone call to America that same evening to order one such salami. It had already arrived in Zurich the next day, and the driver who drove to Zurich Airport every day with the footage (the films were developed in England) was tasked with collecting it. But he forgot to pick it up at customs. To save him another trip to Zurich, he was sent to pick up a salami ordered from a butcher in Lauterbrunnen. Mr Saltzman tasted it and declared: "Now you can see for yourself that it's the best salami in the world."

Filming in Switzerland wrapped on 17 May 1969. The entire film shoot had lasted seven months. Despite many dangerous scenes, there had only been two accidents. There was no doubt however that much would not have been possible without the excellent cooperation between Schilthorn Cableway and the film crew. Not to mention the accommodating stance and goodwill of the Swiss authorities, the district governor in Interlaken, the entire local population and the great work and support of the contractors and tradespeople involved in the making of the film.

What about today?

Schilthorn Cableway is conscious of the world-spanning community of James Bond fans and their expectations of a visit to the Piz Gloria, and always takes this into account when undertaking renovations or introducing new attractions. The film's most striking props and features – such as the golden grille or the decorative lamps on the pillars – still have pride of place in the revolving restaurant. New film-themed attractions have proven particularly popular: BOND WORLD lets visitors totally immerse themselves in the world of the film. Guests walking along the 007 WALK OF FAME will encounter traces of the actors at every step. And no summit visit would be complete without a stop at the BOND CINEMA to take in the most dramatic film scenes and spectacular mountain images. On the culinary side, the offering includes a James Bond Brunch and a 007 Burger. Even a visit to the restroom holds a Bond-themed surprise or two.

Anniversary activities in 2019

Numerous events will take place during the anniversary year. The year-long "50 Years James Bond" Package offers a one-of-a-kind opportunity to visit the Piz Gloria and includes the Stechelberg – Schilthorn return trip, a glass of Bollinger, Martini or (non-alcoholic) Rimuss, small salat and a 007 Burger at the Piz Gloria 360° revolving restaurant, a 007 coffee or hot chocolate, morphing photo and a Bond-themed giveaway, admission to Bond World and the Bond Cinema.

In addition, the James Bond Club Switzerland and other James Bond clubs have put together a commemorative anniversary VIP gala weekend titled OHMSS50.com. The tour

takes in the movie's pivotal locales and film settings and includes a gala evening on the Schilthorn summit. (These events are being organized independently, without affiliation with MGM, Danjaq or EON.)

Source material:

Schilthorn Cableway Ltd.

A detailed report of the film shoot written by Hubert Fröhlich for Schilthorn Cableway Ltd.

January 2019