

“Going up” in a growing market

GF is the world's largest producer of cast parts for escalators and moving walkways

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The escalator has been one huge success story since its European debut at the Paris World Fair in 1900. Escalators, along with moving walkways, have become one of the most important means of transport for short distances. Especially where large crowds of people have to move quickly, safely and without any physical exertion.



As buildings get ever larger and more and more people are on the move, escalators and moving walkways have become an essential part of our everyday lives. They are a familiar sight in airports, railway stations, department stores, exhibition buildings and even in many large office complexes. And what's more: they have long since ceased being purely a means of transporting people and are now considered a formative element in interior design.

Growing demand

The world market for escalators and moving walkways is growing durably and steadily. Every year, some two million aluminium die-cast parts are manufactured. Georg Fischer accounts for just under 30 percent of this total. This makes Georg Fischer the world's no. 1, a place it shares with the Schindler foundry. The world market leader in escalators is Otis, with a market share of 26.3 percent, ahead of Schindler (24 percent), ThyssenKrupp Elevator (14.2 percent) Kone, (10 percent), and Hitachi and Mitsubishi (8 percent each). Toshiba and CNIM have 9.5 percent.

Georg Fischer raised its share of production of steps from 23.5 percent to 29.8 percent of total world demand, as a result of Thyssen deciding in 2006 to reduce its vertical integration in escalators and moving walkways. It chose Georg

Fischer as the sole supplier of the steps and pallets for its escalator business.

New records being set all the time

The first escalator of the type used today is said to have been built by the Otis Elevator Company in 1920. Since then, escalators and moving walkways have become popular the world over. New records are being set all the time. The world's longest escalator is 155 metres in length and is located in the Wheaton metro station in Washington, D.C. The longest uninterrupted escalator in Western Europe is under the Kiel Canal in Rensburg, northern Germany. It is 55 metres in length. A journey on this escalator takes three minutes.

The speeds at which escalators and moving walkways travel are standardized. They move between 0.5 and 0.75 metres a second. Escalators have 62 steps on average, moving walkways 120 pallets. Modern versions are equipped with sensor switches that start the escalator moving when a person is near the entry point. Moving walkways are used primarily in airports and shopping malls, and the newest models have variable speeds. The speed at the beginning rises almost to double the usual speed and then decreases before the end back to normal.

Basic attitude

Confidence in Georg Fischer

“The order from ThyssenKrupp Elevator is of utmost importance to us. Whereas we used to manufacture 450,000 steps, we now produce almost 600,000.”

Klaus Sterner, Head of Light Metal Casting at GF Automotive

Pressure die-casting in demand

Georg Fischer is the world's no. 1

Production in Herzogenburg and Suzhou The escalator steps and moving walkway pallets are manufactured by pressure die-casting. Georg Fischer produces these parts in Herzogenburg, Austria and Suzhou, China. Proximity to end customers ensures rapid delivery.

Innovative power ... GF Automotive has extensive experience in pressure die-casting, thus enhancing its innovativeness and reinforcing its market position.

...and manufacturing competence The Corporate Group's combined competencies in materials, development and manufacturing drive permanent improvements and developments. For instance, Georg Fischer has succeeded in significantly reducing the weight of the steps by as much as three or four kilograms, depending on the model. This breakthrough was made possible by a modified design without any loss of solidity.

Examples from around the world

It all started in an amusement park

From Coney Island ... In 1896, the world's first escalator started operation at an amusement park on Coney Island near New York. The first escalator in Europe was also a big event, with the public flocking to see it at the Paris World Fair in 1900.

... to the Berlin Main Station There are 54 escalators in Berlin's Main Station, the largest and most modern in Europe. They transport 300,000 visitors a day and bear the brunt of the station's traffic. The five storeys are linked by means of escalators that cover differences in height of between 4.5 and 10.7 metres.

...and Zurich Airport Switzerland's most important traffic hub is inconceivable without escalators and moving walkways. They channel the constant flow of traffic and ensure that people can move quickly to their destination. In 2006, almost 20 million people used Zurich Airport for departures, arrivals and for changing planes.

Again a crowd-puller As at the beginning of their history, escalators have again become a crowd-puller. So-called spiral escalators and escalators with landings are big attractions. “Curved” escalators can be found in department stores in Hong Kong, Las Vegas, San Francisco, Shanghai and Singapore. Escalators that feature landings are found, for instance, at the Franz-Josef Station in Vienna and Barcelona Airport.

«Adding Quality to People's Lives»

Ideal for short distances

Environmentally friendly and efficient The increase in mobility requires environmentally friendly, safe and efficient means of transport. Escalators and moving walkways are ideal for short distances and are very much appreciated by travellers with luggage and people with walking disabilities.