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50 Years of NEOPLAN Skyliner: Loyal since day one

When the NEOPLAN Skyliner was introduced in 1967, it immediately gained countless fans as the world's first double-decker coach. Among them, Voyages Leroy. The Belgian tour operator bought the first double-decker in Belgium. Since then, it has bought every subsequent model.

- **Voyages Leroy brought the first NEOPLAN Skyliner to Belgium in 1973**
- **To date, the coach company has bought every new model of the NEOPLAN Skyliner**

Right from the first moment, Francis Delmuelle, the owner of Belgian tour operator Voyages Leroy in 1968, was enthusiastic about the NEOPLAN Skyliner: "I saw a spectacular coach that I absolutely had to have for our company!" And so it happened in 1973: the company bought the first NEOPLAN Skyliner to be delivered to Belgium, a milestone for Belgium's travel industry.

Today, Emanuele Delmuelle stands in his father's shoes and can well remember the decision about the NEOPLAN Skyliner: "We've always been in front when it comes to pleasing our passengers with comfort and great design. The Skyliner was pure magic! It gave us a fantastic opportunity to enhance our profile." The high level of efficiency provided another reason to buy. 80 passengers to a single driver and vehicle – until then, that had been unthinkable. "New markets opened up for us with the Skyliner. Our image benefited from the comfortable coach and we gained much stronger visibility," Delmuelle adds. "Many of our competitors laughed off our decision

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and thought we were taking too much of a risk. The coach still cost 3.5 million Belgian francs at that time.”

Even Belgian customs then were taken aback by the novel appearance of the NEOPLAN Skyliner. “We came from Stuttgart and we wanted to cross the German-Belgian border right away with our brand new Skyliner, at which point customs stopped us. The officials gazed at the coach for a solid hour. They had no idea what to think of it. In the end, they called up the transport ministry in the evening to make sure that it really was just a coach,” Emanuelle Delmuelle recalls.

Today, double-decker coaches are an integral part of tourist traffic – as they are in Voyages Leroy’s fleet of vehicles. In 1985, the coach company bought the second NEOPLAN Skyliner, which grew further in safety and comfort. There were toilets and a video system on board for the first time. By 1988, there were four double-deckers at the depot, followed by six more NEOPLAN Skyliners, a Megaliner, and most recently two Starliners in 2011. The first double-decker from 1973 was retired after 17 years with some three million kilometres on the clock and it was naturally replaced by another NEOPLAN Skyliner.

Delmuelle especially praises the simple cooperative work with the NEOPLAN: “Since Belgium is a small market compared with Germany, it was initially harder to find someone for maintenance. My father was so NEOPLAN crazy that he often drove to Stuttgart himself for servicing, where he got full support from the staff.” The coaches’ exterior design has been consistently fine-tuned to Voyages Leroy’s needs in the case of the NEOPLAN. On the other hand, there has almost never been the need to change the interior fittings: since leaving the factory, the interior could hardly be surpassed in terms of exclusivity.