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STREETWISE IN THE SUNSHINE

On its 100th anniversary Jason Sargerson looks at street running on the Bernina route.



Le Prese,

ALL PHOTOS: Jason Sargerson

The Bernina line from St Moritz to Tirano has some interesting street running that developed at the southern end of the line due to its origins as a tramway. The small community of Le Prese is set on the northern shores of Lago Poschiavo, in the Val Poschiavo which has the benefit of a warm sunny Mediterranean climate in the summer. There are numerous walks around the area; the key attractions of the Bernina line are only minutes away, whilst there are several hotels in the village.

Via Principale, the very long main street of Le Prese has the railway track set in the street for all its length. There are no passing loops here, although these are available at Miralago

Le Prese

to the south and at Li Curt to the north, so trains have to be carefully timed on this section. The station at Le Prese is by the Post Office and adjacent to the hotels. The station has no platform; passengers simply board and alight from the pavement beside the road and railway track. Travelling south, following the station, the line curves around the Hotel



Le Prese as it starts its journey along the western shore of Lago Poschiavo.

When approaching Le Prese from Poschiavo by train road traffic from Poschiavo is stopped to allow the train to take the left side of the road. Only when the train has stopped in the station is this road traffic allowed to proceed. Once the train has stopped at the station the road traffic from the south is then stopped until the train has cleared the station. After Le Prese the railway gently descends into the Italian town of Tirano, where it crosses the Poschiavino River, and makes a right hand turn down the Via Elvezia. This is a long street that descends all the way to the square of the pilgrimage church of Madonna di Tirano. At the square road traffic has to give way as the train crosses in front of the church and over the Via Italia, proceeding parallel to the road, behind the houses to the adjacent RhB and FS stations. Given these difficult street-running sections all train movements have to be carefully timed, to allow train marshalling both at Tirano station and Campocologno, the next station northwards from there, just over the border into Switzerland.



1: Le Prese 2, 3, 4: Tirano