

BERNINA RAILWAY

The historic railway station of Tirano is the point of departure of a spectacular train route that links the southern sector of the Alps with the northern one and allows you to enjoy breathtaking views! In fact, the Bernina Express departs from Tirano at 429 m and reaches St Moritz in Switzerland at 1800 m along a route of about 60 km.

The exceptional nature of the railway is not due to the departure or arrival but to the difference in altitude that the train travels to reach its Swiss destination. The train climbs, in fact, up to 2253 m at the Bernina Pass and it operates on a narrow gauge railway, without a rack or gear wheel!

For the engineering characteristics that made this route possible and for the exceptional nature of the landscape that we can observe along the way, the Bernina Express obtained the UNESCO World Heritage status in 2008.

During its journey the train, which represents the spearhead of the Rhaetian Railway, crosses all the vegetation belts of the Alps and allows you to observe very different landscapes, including even high altitude glaciers!

This railway route was built over a century ago, between 1906 and 1910, and was initially active only in the summer months; from winter 1913-1914 the line became active all year round, constituting a very important link between Italy and Switzerland and allowing travelers to observe high altitude panoramas of rare beauty.

This railway was one of the first lines conceived and designed for electric traction. The energy was in fact available here thanks to the hydroelectric plants powered by the water of the Lago Bianco dam and this represented an exceptional condition for that era characterized otherwise by great difficulties in the transport of energy over long distances.

Let's now briefly see what possibilities this railway offers travelers!

After leaving Tirano railway station and after passing alongside the Basilica of the Madonna di Tirano, the Bernina Express enters the Swiss Poschiavo Valley. This is the steepest stretch that the Bernina Express must overcome in its uphill path up to the Bernina Pass.

After a few km from the departure, in Switzerland the Bernina Express passes the famous Brusio viaduct, symbol of the railway. The helical viaduct, a true engineering masterpiece, was created to allow the train to overcome the difference in height by extending its path, the only possible alternative to using a rack. The Bernina Express in fact manages to climb at altitude without using any rack and reaches a slope of 7% (that is every 100 meters of route it overcomes a difference in altitude of 7 meters).

After passing the first stretch of the valley, you will come across the lake of Poschiavo at Le Prese stop at almost 1000 meters above sea level. The valley widens and in the distance you can see the eponymous pass, the summit point of the railway, to the right of the rock spurs of the Bernina group. After passing the Poschiavo lake, the train crosses a vast alpine prairie.

From Poschiavo the Bernina Express gains altitude by following a different path from that of the car route and the panoramic carriages allow travelers to comfortably observe the Valposchiavo and the other wonders of nature that are encountered along the way, such as the pastures and spruce woods crossed immediately afterwards.

Continuing the journey you can observe a dense larch forest, and upon reaching the Alp Grum stop, at 2091 meters above sea level, you can enjoy the view of the Palù glacier and the Poschiavo valley up to the Valtellina peaks. The train continues its ascent and reaches its maximum altitude at the Bernina Pass at 2253 m at the Ospizio Bernina stop, and from here it runs alongside the artificial lake called Lago Bianco, whose water feeds numerous hydroelectric plants. Before starting the descent, a sign clearly visible from the carriages indicates the watershed point between the Mediterranean sea and the Black sea.

The train then passes Morteratsch, a recommended stop for those who want to travel an easy route to the terminus of the eponymous glacier. The route is well signposted and several signs indicate the position of the glacier terminus over the years, thus allowing visitors to understand and visualize on the field the intensity of glacier regression over the past 150 years.

Finally, after the stop in Pontresina, the Bernina Express reaches its final destination, the station of St. Moritz, at 1775 meters above sea level.