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TRACKS IN THE STREET

Jason Sargeson

Photos: Jason Sargeson

Having grown up in Kawa Kawa, the only town in New Zealand where the railway ran down the main street, I have always had an interest in those locations where this occurred. So when I took a trip on the Bernina Express to Tirano last year I was pleased to see several places where the railway and the road shared the right of way. This situation apparently exists due to the historical development of the railway from a tramway in this almost physically isolated area of Switzerland.

This year I booked to stay in Le Prese, two stops south of Poschiavo on the RhB line, at the Hotel La Romantica which has views from the balcony of the trains in the street. It feels as if you could jump onto the train just like Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid! Le Prese has a long main street where the traffic has to give way to the train and the platform is just the pavement, whilst from the breakfast table the trains can be seen stopping just outside the hotel. At either end of the community there are views of the mountains with the regular services running in the immediate foreground and if, like me, you are lucky an older yellow liveried electric railcar (Class ABe 4/4) may be in use.

Travelling north from Le Prese, before arriving at Poschiavo, the first halt is at Li Curt. Just beyond here is San Antonio where the side of the church has been removed to let the train pass through. Reaching Poschiavo the railway runs into a normal station.

Going further south down the line and across the border into Italy the railway also runs down the street in Tirano before turning across the square in front of the Pilgrimage Church of the Madonna of Tirano. The metre gauge line of the Rhätische Bahn terminates here where the standard gauge line of the Italian Railways begins its journey to Milan. Interchange is easy as the two railway stations sit side by side in the main square.



OPPOSITE PAGE: TOP TO BOTTOM

Sargeson Super-power? A local service passes along the streets of Tirano.

A close thing in San Antonio! Gem4/4 No.801 heads for Poschiavo.

Two Abe4/4s head a train beside the Poschiavino.



THIS PAGE:
TOP TO BOTTOM

A local service passes along the main street in La Presse.

Room with a view. The Hotel La Romantica in Le Prese.

Tirano station, with Abe4/4 Nos.43, 44 and 53 in view.

Montebello. Watching the trains go by.

