Bernina Express

The highest railway across the Alps curves around glistening glaciers and roaring rivers toward sun-dappled meadows and pretty Italian towns.

FROM CHUR, SWITZERLAND TO TIRANO, ITALY
4 HOURS

Slow, but steady, this sleek train takes just over four hours to weave its way between Chur in Switzerland and Tirano in Italy. More than a hundred years old, the Bernina Express route includes 55 tunnels and 196 bridges, offering passengers an extraordinary Alpine adventure—all from within the warm confines of a panoramic dome car. In winter, sunshine flashes through the windows, ricocheting off crisp white snow and ice-blue lakes. And in summer, bell-wearing cows graze knee-deep in meadows, picking their way through carpets of purple asters surrounded by snow-capped peaks.

The journey can feel precarious at times, as the train crosses bridges whose pillars are anchored in vertical rock faces, while milky rivers tumble below. But it is all part of the experience, and the train soon emerges from echoing tunnels into valleys dotted with bright terra-cotta roofs, neat wooden churches, and picket fences. A photographer's dream, the route is famous for the Landwasser Viaduct at Filisur, a single-track, six-arched limestone viaduct that takes you skirting above a 213-foot (65-meter) drop and directly into a tunnel built through a sheer rock wall. Consider adding to the adventure with an overnight stay in the medieval town of Poschiavo. If you time it correctly, you can browse the Wednesday market for some local burrata and wine, hike around the lake, then finish the day with a hearty dinner at Hostaria del Borgo, which does wonderful *osso buco*. Reboard the following day for the final 45-minute stretch to Tirano. ♦