

Travel in Italy by Train

Italy has an extensive railway network, most cities and towns in Italy are connected to it and can easily be reached by train. Therefore European consumers who decide to visit Italy might well consider to choose the train as their means of discovering the country. ECC Italy, Bolzano office, has put together some useful information and tips on this topic.

Purchase of Tickets

First and foremost: never board a train in Italy if you have not purchased a valid ticket beforehand. You risk a heavy fine if you are caught. Travellers in Italy should bear in mind that buying a ticket from the conductor on the train is only possible in very exceptional cases, namely when there is absolutely no way to get a ticket at the station of departure. A long queue or even a closed or a non-existing ticket office are not a reason good enough! Only if there is no possibility at all to buy a ticket (a functioning ticket machine, sometimes cafés, shops or bookstalls sell tickets), you can get your ticket on board. In this case you must inform the conductor immediately, otherwise he will assume that you were "trying your luck" wanting to dodge the fare.

Travellers are therefore well advised to purchase their tickets in advance. It is not recommended to arrive at the station without ticket just a few minutes before the departure. You can also buy tickets online (http://www.ferroviedellostato.it/homepage_en.html) or from authorised travel agents.

Different Types of Tickets for Different Types of Trains

Always make sure you have the correct ticket for the train you are boarding. There are several different kinds or categories of trains (*Regionale*, Intercity (IC), Eurostar (ES), etc.) and different tariffs apply.

Tickets of certain higher train categories like Eurostar, Intercity Plus, Night trains but also Express trains (*Espressi*) etc. are issued at an all-inclusive price which comprises the seat reservation. They are only valid for the day and the train specified on the ticket. In this case no validation is required. If the traveller wants to (or has to) use another connection, he must change his ticket at the ticket office. This is free of charge only if the new train connection is of the same category as the original connection, otherwise an exchange fee has to be paid in addition to a possible difference in price.

If you have absolutely no time to go to the ticket office and you have no choice but to board the train with the wrong kind of ticket, validate your ticket and inform the conductor immediately. If no more than 3 hours have passed since the departure of the originally boarded train, you will just have to pay a surcharge of 8,00 Euros plus the difference in price.

Validation of Tickets and Seat Reservation

Regional train tickets must be properly validated before boarding. In every station you can find little yellow boxes with a black slit - the validation machines - where you insert your ticket and the machine prints the current date and the time on it. After this procedure, the ticket is valid for 6 hours if the journey is not longer than 200 km, it is valid for 24 hours if the journey is longer. If you forget to validate the ticket, you are subject to the same fines as those who do not have a ticket at all. Hence if

the machine is out of order, it is imperative that the passenger informs the conductor about this immediately and spontaneously. Again, never wait until the conductor finds you, find him first. Also, as a last resort, if the conductor is nowhere to be found, it might be a good idea to write the date and the time of your boarding on the ticket yourself, thus proving your good faith.

Moreover, because of organizational reasons, seats that have been reserved by travellers are no longer marked as such on the compartment doors or above the seat. A seemingly available seat may hence already "belong" to another traveller.

Penalties

If a passenger is caught on an Italian train with no ticket at all, or if he has a ticket but it is not validated or its validity has expired, a so called surcharge (*sovratassa*) – in addition to the price of the ticket - of 200,00 Euros will be applied. If you pay immediately, this amount is reduced to 50,00 Euros, if you pay within 15 days it is reduced to 100,00 Euros. If you pay later than 16 days, the whole amount is due, plus an administrative penalty! In case of abuse, the payment of a surcharge of three times the amount of the ticket price (but a minimum of 200,00 Euros) must be paid. In this case the amount cannot be reduced by paying immediately.

Regional regulations might provide different penalties.

International Connections

For international connections to and from Italy generally all-inclusive price tickets are sold, where the seat reservations are already included in the price. This means that the ticket is valid solely for the booked train. These tickets do not need to be validated. If the traveller decides to use a different connection, he must change his ticket, otherwise he risks a penalty. Furthermore no stopovers are allowed.

You can purchase tickets at the standard international tariff for passenger transport (TCV) only for international routes to and from Italy for which there are no international train connections sold at an all-inclusive price. These tickets can be used within 2 months from the date of purchase and must be validated at the beginning of the journey. They are valid 24 hours from the time of validation. A stopover is possible within this time frame. Depending on the category of trains used, additional surcharges and reservation fees may apply.

Travellers with Disabilities

For travellers with disabilities Trenitalia – the Italian railway company - offers assistance in 251 train stations; this is done through assistance areas called *Sale Blu* (Blue Halls). These are found at 14 main stations and are open daily from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. You can find a list of train stations that are equipped with *Sale Blu*, as well as their respective email addresses and phone numbers at <http://www.trenitalia.com/cms/v/index.jsp?vnextoid=8337ed012abea110VgnVCM1000003f16f90aRCRD>.

In order to receive assistance, travellers must book the service in advance via email, by calling 199 30 30 60* (this is not a toll-free number) or by directly approaching a Blue Hall. Travellers using the service should reach the railway station at least 30 minutes before departure.

The advance that Trenitalia requires for travellers wishing to book assistance depends from the type of journey, the departure station and whether it is a national or international connection. Travellers should hence enquire how long in advance they must notify the Blue Hall, according to the specifics of their journey.

More than 260 mid- and long-distance trains are equipped with cars that can be accessed by wheelchairs. In order to take advantage of these areas travellers should turn to the Blue Halls or call 199 30 30 60*. More information is available on the following page:

I-00161 Roma via Lancisi 31/A
Tel. (+39) 06- 44238090 - Fax (+39)06- 44118340
info@ecc-netitalia.it - www.ecc-netitalia.it

I-39100 Bolzano via Brennero 3 - I-39100 Bozen Brennerstr. 3
Tel: (+39)0471-980939 - Fax: (+39)0471-980239
info@euroconsumatori.org - www.euroconsumatori.org

Membro della rete ECC-Net, il Centro Europeo Consumatori è promosso dalla Commissione Europea, dal Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico con il supporto della Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano e dalla Regione Autonoma Trentino-Alto Adige ed è gestito dal Centro Tutela Consumatori ed Utenti Alto Adige e dall'associazione consumatori ADICONSUM.

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Travelling with Pets

The Italian railway company Trenitalia has quite strict - albeit not generally known - rules with regard to the transport of animals.

In fact only small dogs, cats and other small animals travel free on all trains (except on Eurostar ETR 450 trains) if they are transported in an appropriate container (70 x 30 x 50 cm).

Larger dogs that do not fit into such a container can be transported on *Espressi*, IC, IC Plus and ICN trains if muzzled and leashed. On regional trains, dogs and their owners must stay on the vestibule of the carriage and are not allowed to travel from 7-9 a.m. on working days, when the trains are packed with commuters. In addition, the dog owner has to buy a ticket for his dog, which costs half the price of the normal ticket. These tickets are available exclusively at the ticket office or in travel agencies. Lastly, pet-owners must not forget to take the EU pet passport with them.

Travelling with your Bicycle

When travelling on regional trains, you can take your bike along by buying a 2nd-class ticket for your bike; however the ticket is only valid for one journey and must be validated before boarding. Alternatively, travellers may buy a "travelling with your bicycle"-ticket (*bici al seguito*), which costs 3,50 Euros. This latter one is valid for 24 hours after validation and can be used for multiple journeys.

You can also take your bike on board of some IC-trains; this costs 5,00 Euros. IC-trains that allow boarding with bicycles are marked as such on print timetables. With international connections, taking your bike on board costs 10,00 Euros. More information about travelling with your bike can be found at <http://www.trenitalia.com/cms/v/index.jsp?vnextoid=872311e84819a110VgnVCM1000003f16f90aRCRD>

Complaints

There are a number of channels through which unsatisfied travellers can voice their complaints:

- you can fill out a complaint form online (available only in Italian), on the website of Trenitalia (<http://reclami-e-suggerimenti.trenitalia.com/Reclami/Default.aspx>);
- you can request a complaint form at the *Ufficio Assistenza alla Clientela* or at ticket offices in train stations;
- you can send a complaint letter; the department to which the complaint must be addressed depends from the type of train you boarded (regional, national or international). You can find a list of relevant departments at <http://www.trenitalia.com/cms/v/index.jsp?vnextoid=4eed9861d2eda110VgnVCM1000003f16f90aRCRD>;
- you can send a general complaint to the following address:
Trenitalia S.p.A. – Vendita e Assistenza N/I – Contact Call Centre e Customer Care – Piazza della Croce Rossa, 1 – 00161 Roma.

Consumers can find more information about travelling in Italy by train on the homepage of the Italian railway company. The information is available in Italian and English:

<http://www.trenitalia.com/cms/v/index.jsp?vnextoid=2aaeb5fac465a110VgnVCM10000080a3e90aRCRD>

* Note that this number can only be called from Italy!