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Follow this Italy itinerary by train with the Eurail Italy Pass and be in for a real treat. Take a memorable gondola ride along Venice's Grand Canal, set out on a shopping extravaganza in Milan, and tour Rome's magnificent monuments and museums. Reserve a seat on Italy's Freccia high-speed trains for a fast and comfortable journey between the country's major cities. Or, hop on board Trenitalia regional trains and visit Italy's authentic towns and villages. The Eurail Italy Pass gives you the freedom to travel around Italy at your own pace and along the route that you choose. For this itinerary, we recommend: Eurail Pass: Italy Travel days: 4 days within 1 month Most of the high-speed trains in Italy require reservations. These reservations are not included in your Eurail Pass. Make sure to book your seats in advance; there are limited seats available for Eurail Pass holders. It's also possible to avoid reservations altogether simply by taking regional trains. Let us help you get more out of your trip. Sign up to get discounts and insider tips for your destination, including top attractions, local food and drink experiences and more – all delivered straight to your inbox. Just tell us when your trip starts. Milan is Italy's city of class and elegance, with some of Europe's best shopping. Head to Quadrilatero d'Oro for a retail experience to die for with all the major designers concentrated together, such as Prada, Giorgio Armani, and Dolce & Gabbana. By night, get tickets for an opera or ballet at La Scala (Teatro alla Scala) for a memorable night of entertainment from the country's most renowned performers. Leonardo da Vinci's 15th-century mural, The Last Supper, is housed within the Santa Maria della Grazie church and is a must-see on a visit to Milan. Another top attraction to include is the magnificent Milan Cathedral – swoon at the Gothic architecture from the exterior and inside, marvel at intricate stained glass windows and a rich array of sculptures and paintings. Admire Milano Centrale station – a monument in its own right. Reservation required Stazione di Venezia Mestre If you're searching for an affair of the heart, Venice will reel you in with its artistic setting and labyrinth of enchanting canals. The best way to taste the city's riches is on board the iconic gondola. As you're propelled along the Grand Canal - Venice's most ancient water thoroughfare - admire views of grand Renaissance palaces and intricate arched bridges. Located just off the Grand Canal is Piazza San Marco, drawing in large crowds as well as musicians and artists. The square's centerpiece is San Marco's Basilica – a fine example of Venetian-Byzantine architecture. The church is known as the "Church of Gold" thanks to its dressing of opulent gilt and intricate frescoes. Reservation required Michelangelo's Statue of David is by far one of the most recognized sculptures on the planet and an absolute must-see on a trip to the Renaissance city of Florence. The original is housed in the Galleria dell'Accademia with a replica standing in Piazza della Signoria. This Renaissance masterpiece represents the biblical hero, David, which is made of marble, and stands at an astounding 17 ft (5.17m). Another popular attraction is il Duomo (Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore) – its impressive dome is the symbol of Florence. Climb the 463 steps up to the top for a panoramic vista across the city. The route also takes you to the dome's interior, where you can get up close to Giorgio Vasari's incredible frescoes of the Last Judgment. Whether you're an art lover, a history buff, or just a curious adventurer, Florence offers a celebration for the eye and palate. Reservation required Rome will be the highlight of your Italy Itinerary. The Colosseum was the largest ever built in the Roman Empire and is regarded as one of the greatest examples of Roman architecture. Step into the cow of the ancient amphitheatre to imagine the buzzing atmosphere of the chanting Roman crowds as barbarous fighting between gladiators took place. Within Rome sits the Vatican – the sovereign city state packed with fascinating museums and imposing architecture. Take a tour of the Vatican Museums, which were established and developed over the centuries by the reigning Popes. In the Sistine Chapel, you'll see Michelangelo's remarkable frescoes that adorn the walls and ceilings – Nearby is St Peter's Basilica – an impressive example of Renaissance architecture and the holiest Catholic site. Reservation required If you're looking for an insight into the real, gritty Italy of the south, Naples is your place. The city is Italy's third biggest and has some of the world's best opera houses and theatres. Head to the Bay of Naples for glorious views of Mount Vesuvius – one of Italy's three active volcanoes. Just a short boat ride away is the stunning Capri Island, where wealthy Italians spend their summer vacations. It makes for the perfect day trip from the hustle and bustle of Naples. Take a clifftop walk to admire views across the sun-kissed Tyrrhenian Sea, and be sure to enjoy a refreshing drink of fresh orange and lemon juice – made with fruit hand-picked from the island's groves. The boat ride to Capri is not included in your Eurail Pass. Train travel in Italy is relatively easy, but may pose some challenges if you have never been to the country or if you are not used to this mode of transportation. This is why we have created this ultimate guide to traveling by train in Italy, which you can also print out and carry with you during your trip as a reference. Let's look at the main points to consider. What is the Best Way to Get Around Italy? The train is one of the easiest and most convenient ways to travel around Italy, however this does not mean you have to do it all by train. Whether you use the train for all or part of your Italian trip depends on the itinerary that you are planning. If you do the classic Rome-Florence-Venice tour, then you can do it all easily by train, and it is the recommended option because the train stations in these cities are conveniently located in the city centers and you do not need a car to tour them. If you plan to visit the countryside or the mountains, you should consider renting a car as it gives you more freedom and flexibility. You can also combine different modes of transport: train between major art cities, a rental car for an on the road, and to reach smaller towns and hilltop towns that may not be as well connected, plane if you need to go from the north to the south of Italy or vice versa. Most train stations in Italy are located in or very close to the city center (hence why many have "centrale" in their name), so they're very easy to reach, sometimes even on foot from your centrally located hotel. Where Italian trains are the best or only choice: Rome, Florence, Venice, Naples, Milan, Cinque Terre Where Italian trains are better avoided: Amalfi Coast, Sicily, Sardinia, remote countryside Where a car is a good option, but you can also get by with trains and buses: Tuscany, Umbria, the Dolomites Buying an Italian Train Ticket You have two options to buy train tickets for your Italian trip: Buy your ticket online in advance via the train company's website (Trenitalia and Italo), an intermediary like Italian train travel specialists ItaliaRail, or through your travel agent; Directly at the train station in Italy, either at the ticketing window or using the self-serve ticket machines (instructions are available in English and the machines accept credit cards). We recommend buying your tickets in advance whenever possible so that you do not have to wait in line, deal with a machine if you're in a hurry, you have more seat options, plus having your trip mapped out beforehand can save you precious time while in Italy. As a general rule of thumb, the sooner you book, the cheaper the fare. Seniors and children (or family packages) generally have reduced fares on Trenitalia's Freccia and Italo. *For more information about buying train tickets in Italy, see our dedicated feature. Arriving at the Train Station in Italy First of all, always arrive early (at least 20 minutes before your train's departure time). Train stations in major cities like Rome, Milan and Bologna are very big and you may have to walk five to ten minutes to reach your track (binario in Italian). The first thing you want to do when you get to the train station in Italy is to find the electronic board with the trains departure information. There are several throughout the stations, with the bigger one in the main hall and ticketing area, and smaller ones on each platform, in underground passages and waiting areas. The board has the following information: Type of train and train number (treno) Train's final destination (destinazione) Departure time (orario) Delay (ritardo) expect a 5-10 minute delay as standard in Italy information (informazioni) - this usually displays the intermediate stops of the train with arrival times and where the different classes are located scrolling by Platform number (binario) To identify your train, look for the train number on your ticket, as the destination shown on the board is the final one, but your destination may be an intermediate stop (which you will see in the part of the display that scrolls by). If your train does not have a specific train number, date and time printed on it, you must validate it before boarding. Look for a green, white or yellow electronic box and insert your ticket into it to get it timestamped (ie validated) before getting on your train (the validation lasts for six hours). This mostly applies to regional trains. You do not need to validate your ticket if you are taking a Freccia high-speed train or Italo train (see below for specifics). When at the platform, double-check that the train you are about to board is the right one by looking at one of the several boards positioned overhead along the track, it specifies train number and destination. Also, make sure to board the correct carriage; the number is visible on the side of the train, on an electronic sign on the door, and before boarding, on a screen overhead. This way you will avoid creating more confusion and blocking aisles as you walk through carriages to reach your seat. Safety at the Train Station Generally speaking, traveling by train in Italy is safe, but be vigilant of pickpockets and other petty criminals that may target disoriented travelers intent on finding their way through the station. Always carry your bag in the front, and consider investing in a money belt to place your passport, credit card, money and important documents. If your luggage on the train is not close to you (ie if it's big you're going to have to place it in the luggage area at the front or end of the carriage), take a look at it when the train stops at intermediate stations. Do not accept help from strangers who may offer to carry your luggage or help you get a ticket at the ticketing machine. They may insist on getting a "tip" from you once their "service" is done and not leave until you do. Just send them away as soon as they approach you. Types of Italian Trains Two companies run trains in Italy: Trenitalia and Italo. For a long time, Trenitalia has been the only railway company in Italy and to this day it has the widest network and routes. Italo began operating in 2012, and offers high-speed service between major Italian cities. When traveling on Trenitalia, you have three different types of train to choose from which differ based on speed and price. Le Freccie - they are Trenitalia's most modern, comfortable and fastest trains, which also means they cost more. They require advance reservation, have seat assignment, and provide most of the high-speed service on the main lines between Turin, Milan, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, and Bari. There are three types of Freccie: Frecciariossa: the fastest and most expensive trains, traveling up to 300 km/h. They connect Italy's biggest cities (Turin, Milan, Bologna, Florence, Rome, and Naples), but not Venice. Frecciargento: these trains use both the high-speed and traditional lines; they are not as fast as the Frecciariossa and take you to main cities such as Florence, Bologna, Rome, and Naples, but not to Milan or Turin. They go to Venice and southern regions like Apulia and Calabria. Frecciabianca: the slowest among the Freccie, they run on traditional lines and connect large and medium-sized cities in 14 of the 20 Italian regions (Valle d'Aosta, Trentino Alto Adige, Umbria, Basilicata, Sicily and Sardinia are not covered). Intercity - these trains are less expensive than the Freccie; they operate outside of the high speed line, therefore your trip will take longer. They connect medium to large cities across Italy, making few intermediate stops. It is not always possible to reserve your seat in advance. These trains are usually quite old and don't have amenities like wi-fi and restaurant service, available on the Freccie. Regional trains - the cheapest option, these trains are used by locals to get to and from work and school, connecting minor towns and villages. You cannot reserve a seat in advance, therefore if you need to take a regional train, try to avoid rush hours. Coaches are mostly second class, with only one or two reserved for first (which in this case you may want to get). These are the trains you would take for example if you were going to the Cinque Terre or to Assisi. General tip: use the Freccie to reach the biggest cities, then use regional to move around the region to smaller centers (when possible - sometimes you will need to take a bus instead; sometimes renting a car will be the easiest option). Should I Book a First Class Ticket or a Second Class Ticket? All trains generally offer first class and second class, or, in the most modern trains, "standard", "premium", "business", "executive" (the most expensive, the less seats available and the less people around you). What corresponds to second class (or standard) on the Freccie and Italo is absolutely decent, but obviously more crowded, so if you wish for tranquility and silence, go for an upper class of service. You may want to step up to first class on the Intercity and regional trains. What To Do If Your Train is Canceled or Delayed When you travel by train in Italy, you should be aware that things don't always go as smoothly as you may expect in countries such as, say, Switzerland or Germany. Try to remain patient as your train may be canceled or delayed because of a strike, an accident or repairs on the line. As reported on the Trenitalia website: - If your Freccia train is delayed by 30 to 59 minutes, Trenitalia will issue a bonus equal to 25% of the ticket price that you can use for future purchases. - If your Freccia train is over an hour late when you get to your destination, you are entitled to a compensation equal to: 25% of the ticket price for a delay ranging from 60 to 119 minutes; 50% of the ticket price for a delay of more than 120 minutes. The compensation may be issued in the form of a bonus for a new ticket to be purchased within 12 months; cash if the ticket was paid cash or refund on the card that you used for payment. You can request your bonus after 24 hours from the date of travel and up to 12 months, at the ticket office of any train station, online on the Trenitalia website, at the travel agency that issued the ticket, or by calling the Call Center. Use this page for reference. How to Pack for Train Travel in Italy Pack light! You don't want to have to carry around a huge suitcase that is hard to lift and lower when you get on and off the train. Remember, there are a few steep steps up (and down) the train, there are a few steps to the platforms, especially in the older stations where you won't find the automatic ones, and you may have to walk the distance in large train stations like Roma Termini or Bologna Centrale. Go for a light carry-on or even a backpack, this will be helpful in general as you may decide to also walk between your hotel and the train station. We have a great feature with general tips on how to pack for travel to Italy by Sarah Murdoch, a Rick Steves tour guide and Italy expert. Train Travel Times for the Most Common Italian Routes Rome – Florence 1 hour 31 minutes (Frecciariossa - Trenitalia) 1 hour 23 minutes (Italo) Rome – Venice 3 hours 45 minutes (Frecciargento - Trenitalia) 3 hours 45 minutes (Italo) Rome – Milan 2 hours 55 minutes / 3 hours 20 minutes (Frecciariossa - Trenitalia) 3 hours 14 minutes (Italo) Rome – Naples 1 hour 10 minutes (Frecciariossa - Trenitalia) 1 hour 20 minutes (Italo) Florence – Milan 1 hour 40 minutes (Frecciariossa - Trenitalia) 1 hour 50 minutes (Italo) Florence – Venice 2 hours 5 minutes (Frecciargento - Trenitalia) 2 hours 5 minutes (Italo) Milan – Venice 2 hours 23 minutes / 2 hours 35 minutes (Frecciabianca - Trenitalia) Milan – Naples 4 hours 40 minutes (Frecciariossa - Trenitalia) 4 hours 31 minutes (Italo) The Most Important Train Stations in Italy Rome: Roma Termini Florence: Firenze Santa Maria Novella Venice: Venezia Santa Lucia Milan: Milano Centrale Naples: Napoli Centrale Turin: Torino Porta Nuova Bologna: Bologna Centrale Now that you know everything you need to know about train travel in Italy, enjoy the ride as you watch Italy's beautiful scenery roll by! For more Italian train travel, check our dedicated section, Italy by Train. There's a certain charm to traveling Italy by train. Each time I sit on my window seat, I just can't help but look out the window. The views are spectacular. From picturesque ancient hamlets to heavenly countryside and beautiful seaside views, there's seriously loads of scenic views to take in if you travel Italy by train. But it's not just for the beautiful views that you should travel by train. If you're thinking of visiting more than one city, trains are your best transportation! Here are some useful tips on how to travel Italy by train. Seriously, Italy has a fantastic railway network that will pretty much take you to any city or town. If you're planning on visiting other Italian cities during your time in Italy, definitely move by train. There are different types of train that you can take to travel Italy: There are two high-speed train companies in Italy: Trenitalia and Italo. High-speed trains are called Freccie for Trenitalia. You will find the Frecciariossa (fastest), Frecciarente (second fastest), and Frecciabianca. These are all high-speed trains that can take you to central stations of major Italian cities. Personally, I only take the Frecciariossa or the Frecciargento when possible, because the Frecciabianca takes longer to get between its great cities. Example of a mobile train ticket bought from Omio Buying Italian train tickets is generally easy – in most cases, you can purchase tickets online and have them sent electronically to your phone/app. Let's first take a look at where and how early to buy tickets... Travel Tip: Most train tickets in Italy are now electronic so having reliable high-speed data for your phone is super helpful. Here are a few articles I've written to help you get cheap mobile data in Italy: Guide To Mobile Data Plans and Smartphone Phones in Europe, How To Buy A SIM Card and Mobile Data Plans in Europe, and Guide To Buying SIM Cards and Mobile Data Plans in Italy Buying Italian train tickets online is fairly simple and straightforward these days – but there can sometimes be a few quirks. Note: Trenitalia is the official Italian Railways website. The site is known to have weird translation issues and some people have problems with getting their payments processed. Personally, I'd avoid using this if you're not Italian. The options below are much more user-friendly for non-Italians. Omio is a search engine that lets you compare and book trains (and buses and flights) anywhere in Europe. It lets you easily book tickets with your credit card at essentially the same prices as the Trenitalia website. Additionally, Omio searches routes for multiple rail services across Europe so it's great for international trips (since it can easily combine rail journeys of multiple countries). TrainLine is a website that searches multiple rail services across Europe so it's great for international trips (since it can easily combine rail journeys of multiple countries). It's also a good option for single-country travel. Plus, it's designed for English-speaking travelers so it's super user-friendly. ItaliaRail is a worldwide distributor of Italian train tickets so their site is also simple to use for English speakers. You can use a credit card to pay in most currencies so anyone in the world use to able to buy tickets through the site. As an added bonus, the tickets are electronic so they can be sent straight to your phone (or can be printed at home if you prefer). ItaloTreno is a private rail company that runs modern high-speed trains between most major cities—these trains only run between major cities. Be sure to check them out as there are some deals to be found. Luckily, when you search with Omio you'll also get ItaloTreno trains in the results so I prefer searching there since you can compare all the rail companies. Of course, you can buy any Italian train ticket from any train station—either from a ticket window or an automated machine. You can purchase tickets in advance from train stations as well. Tickets purchased online can be collected in a few different ways. Sometimes you're given multiple methods and sometimes you're only given one option: Electronic Tickets: Tickets are sent to your phone or sometimes an App. Simply show your phone to the conductor on the train when he checks the tickets. Print-At-Home Tickets: Print them and show them to the conductor on the train when he checks the tickets. You can often simply save the PDF to your phone/tablet and the conductor can scan it from there. Pick Up At the Station: Use your credit card or a booking number to print your tickets at the train station. Reference Number (PNR): You're sent a booking reference number (PRN) and you show it to the conductor on the train when he checks tickets. Long-Distance/High-Speed Trains: Yes – book early. Booking ahead online will get you the cheapest tickets and prices will continue to rise as the departure date approaches. For example, I just did a search for a day-of ticket for Rome-Milan and it was €95 but tickets bought two months in advance are €32—that's a pretty big difference. High-Speed Trains: Frecciariossa (180mph), Frecciargento (160 mph), Frecciabianca (155mph), Italo (180 mph), InterCity (125mph). Note: Trains between major cities will almost always be high-speed trains (Rome-Milan, Rome-Venice, Rome-Florence, Venice-Milan, etc). Also, most train tickets are available for purchase between three to six months in advance. Regional Trains: Price-wise, there is no need to book early. Regional trains are priced by distance traveled so there is no discount for booking early. Simply show up at the station and buy your tickets at the window or automated kiosk. Of course, you can still buy regional train tickets online so they're ready to go on your phone and you can skip any lines at the ticket machines. Slow Trains: InterRegionale (IR), Regionale (R), and Diretto (D) High-Speed Vs. Intercity/Regional Trains: High-speed trains are faster (obviously) and nicer/more comfortable than Intercity/Regional trains. They're also more expensive but we usually think the time savings are worth the cost. But if you're on a budget then there is no shame in taking a cheaper Intercity train. International train tickets (i.e. tickets between Italy and another country) can sometimes cause a few issues. Let's take a look at a few: Not Every Country's National Rail Service System Plays Nice With Eachother; Sometimes one country's national rail site doesn't know what another country's rail system is doing so it won't allow you to book an international ticket. Third-party booking sites like Omio and TrainLine cover multiple countries so they'll let you book these more complicated international journeys without a hassle. Otherwise, you can book two separate journeys (one for Country A and another for Country B) but that's kind of a hassle. Buy Ticket From Departure Country's Site: Always purchase your tickets from the country in which your train departs. This is because you can often simply pick up your ticket from a station in the country where the trip originates. For example, for a journey from Nice, France to Milan, Italy you'll want to buy your ticket from the French rail network but if you're going from Milan to Nice then you'll want to buy the ticket from an Italian site. NOTE: This isn't an issue when you book through a third-party booking website. On most high-speed trains in Italy, your ticket is only good for the time on the ticket. You'll also be given an assigned seat. You don't need to validate your ticket because your seat is reserved (but they might check your ID). NOTE: Your ticket will show the car and seat number so make sure you're in the right car (the trains are clearly marked). On regional trains, you might have a physical ticket. Make sure to validate (i.e. stamp) your ticket in the validation boxes on the platform before you get on the train. They're sometimes hard to see so watch what the locals are doing. If you forgot to validate, seek out the conductor immediately and have him stamp it – if you wait until he comes around you might be given a fine. Regional trains won't have seat reservations so just sit anywhere. Once you're on the train the conductor will eventually walk through the aisles to check tickets. Most high-speed trains require you to make a reservation when using a Eurail pass – the reservation costs around €10/seat. You must make the reservation before you get on the train. There are a few ways to make reservations: Online: ItaliaRail.com lets you book your reservations online through their platform. Simply look for a button that says something like "I Have A Railpass" and follow the prompts. At The Train Station: You can simply go to the train station and book your reservation from the customer service desk or self-service kiosks. You can book it weeks in advance or you can do it the day you depart. We suggest using the kiosks because the ticket window can take forever. Check The Departure Board: You'll find your train platform via the departure board at the train station. Don't worry if you can't see your train because they often only display trains departing within the next 10-20 minutes. Cheap Tickets Are Non-Refundable: One downside to cheap tickets is that they're non-refundable and they can't be changed. Pack A Picnic: You're allowed to bring your own food and alcohol on trains. It's great for those long train rides. Luggage: There aren't any weight limits on luggage and you can bring as much as you want (well, as much as you can carry). Simply bring it on and store it above your head, behind your seat, or in the luggage racks in each car. Get To The Train Station Early: Train stations are usually fairly easy to navigate but they can be a little confusing—especially larger stations. There isn't any security that you have to go through but it doesn't hurt to arrive about 20 minutes early. Know Train Station Names: Most large city hubs have multiple train stations so this often creates confusion. Double-check to make sure you have the right station – especially when booking your ticket. Learn Italian City Names: Italian cities will often be called by their Italian name – for example, Roma (Rome), Firenze (Florence), Napoli (Naples), Milano (Milan), etc. First Class Vs Second Class Tickets: First Class tickets normally cost 1.5x the second class rate. Second Class is perfectly comfortable but First Class seats are a bit bigger. There isn't much more of a difference. Use A Credit Card With Chip: Automated ticket kiosks require a card with a chip so make sure you know your PIN code. Get High-Speed Mobile Data: Train tickets are electronic so you'll want data on your phone. Check out my guide to the best prepaid eSIM plans for Italy to get a cheap data plan. Here are a few articles I've written about traveling around Italy: The Savvy Backpacker is reader-supported. That means when you buy products/services through links on the site, I may earn an affiliate commission – it doesn't cost you anything extra and it helps support the site. Thanks For Reading! – James Questions? Learn more about our Strict Advertising Policy and How To Support Us. Skip to content There are a lot of reasons to travel by train in Italy: the romance, the convenience, the cost, and the scenic settings are the first that come to mind. However, the best thing about train travel in Italy is that it works like a charm – saving you time and money while also allowing you to see the country like a local. Ready to explore Italy by train? Here is the complete guide to how to travel by train in Italy, starting with why it is your best choice for getting around the country. Updated 29 June 2021 Why to Travel by Train in Italy Train travel in Italy is often the fastest way to get between two points. Driving between Rome and Florence takes close to four hours depending on traffic. The train takes as little as 1.5 hours. Italian highspeed trains travel on dedicated tracks at well over 100 mph, so you are going to be able to get between major cities in less time than it takes to drive. Check-in for Italian trains is a breeze. Show up at the train station with your tickets and you are ready to go. All you need to do is make the short walk to your platform – no messing around with check-in, security lines, or gates and boarding procedures. Italian train stations are easier to get to than airports. Most major Italian train stations have "centrale" in their name because they are indeed very central. Train stations are major hubs for transportation and so they tend to be right in the middle of Italian cities, or at least on the edge of the city center. Because of flight restrictions and the space needed to safely land a plane, airports are the opposite and tend to be located pretty far outside of the city. Train stations are 100% easier to get to, which is one reason that train travel in Italy is so much faster and more convenient than flying. Traveling in Italy by train is incredibly beautiful. Trains in Italy pass through much more countryside than any road. In most cases, your train journey is going to travel through fields and vineyards. You will catch glimpses of untouched natural reserves and you won't be distracted by any zipping traffic. Taking in the sunset over a tiny village as you sit on the train towards your next Italian destination is not only scenic but also romantic. Planning to travel by train in Italy is also easy. Once you are on board, all you have to worry about is remembering to get off at your stop. You don't have to mess with directions or check the GPS – just keep your eyes on the clock so that you are ready to gather your things when you are getting close to your arrival time. Stops are announced in Italian and in English so you really won't mess up. If you still don't believe how easy it is – here is a complete guide to buying train tickets in Italy. Driving takes longer and can be much more expensive. Having your own car does give you more flexibility but between the cost of renting a car, getting insurance, and paying for gas, driving is almost always more expensive than taking the train in Italy. If you are driving between cities you will likely be on the A1 autostrada and this also means that you will need to add toll fees on top of everything else. You also have to deal with actually driving in Italy, a country where lane markers are treated like a general suggestion rather than a rule. If you plan to drive, come with nerves of steel! Trains are one of the most popular forms of transportation in Italy. For all of the reasons listed above, taking the train is the norm in Italy. I mention that in case you come from a country (like the US) where trains seem like an old fashioned way to get around. Because they are so popular in Italy, they are high-speed, new, and convenient. There are usually hourly departures for major Italian cities because the demand is so high. So when in Rome, travel by train like a local. How to Travel by Train in Italy Ready to climb aboard? Train travel in Italy is very straight forward if you remember a few general guidelines. Know the name of the stations. Italian train stations have names much in the same way airports have names. The name of the station often starts with the name of the city, e.g. Roma Termini or Firenze Santa Maria Novella. Many cities have more than one train station, so save yourself some time and confusion by making sure you know the exact name of the station you want. You need the station name to buy tickets, and you can simply google "main train station (INSERT CITY NAME)" if you are unsure. For the big cities, the main train stations are: Roma: Roma Termini (Roma Tiburtina is another large station but it is further outside the city center. Roma Trastevere and Roma Ostiense are two smaller stations which mainly handle regional trains) Florence: Firenze Santa Maria Novella Milan: Milano Centrale Venice: Venezia Santa Lucia (this will drop you at the Grand Canal. Venezia Mestre is on the other side of the Venetian lagoon) Turin: Torino Porta Nuova Naples: Napoli Centrale Buy your Italian train tickets in advance. As with flights, cheap train tickets in Italy are easiest to find if you are buying train tickets few months in advance. Even a few days in advance is going to be cheaper than booking the day of travel. You will also have the greatest selection if you look in advance because popular times and routes tend to sell out. If you aren't 100% about your travel dates, use a service that allows you to book a flexible ticket and buy insurance. It may cost a few euro more but it will save a lot in the long run if you need to change anything. Select a highspeed train whenever possible. Fast trains in Italy are generally more expensive than regional trains, but time is money and they will get you there as quickly as possible. The regional train from Rome to Florence takes almost four hours instead of 1.5 hours on the highspeed train. That means a lot more time to explore (and more a more updated, comfortable train environment). Plus, if you are booking in advance, you can get an amazing deal on even the newer, highspeed trains. Regional trains in Italy are also first come first serve, so you will not have a guaranteed seat if you choose to book this option. Arrive at the train station with at least 20 minutes before departure. You don't need to worry about long security lines but you will need enough time to check the electronic boards which display the train numbers and their corresponding track number (or bin/binario in Italian). Since you will have your luggage, you want to give yourself time to find the track number and board the right train. Check the partenze. Partenze are departures in Italian, whereas Arrivi are arrivals. Make sure you find your train number under the Partenze column to ensure that you go to the correct platform for your departure. Knowing your train number is key because the Partenze will display the final destination o the train. If you are traveling from Florence to Rome, your train might actually keep going to Naples – so it will be Napoli which shows on the board. If you keep watching, all of the stops will scroll by in the smaller letters next to the main destination. This should help put you at ease, but you really can't go wrong if you focus on the number of the train (usually 4 digits) and the departure time. Validate your regional ticket before boarding. If you do choose to take a regional train instead of a fast train, be sure to validate your ticket before boarding. There are small, brightly colored machines at the end of the platform where you can place the corner of your ticket so that it is stamped with the day and time, thus activating the ticket. You need to do this if your train ticket says regional, but you do not need to do this if you are traveling on Frecciariossa, Frecciargento or Italo. These train tickets are like plane tickets and unchangeable unless you make a flexible reservation in advance. You can tell if you have one of these if your ticket has your name and/or a specific carriage and seat number listed. Board the correct carriage. Train tickets in Italy will include your train number (like a flight number to identify the correct train), the date and time of your departure, and a carriage and seat number. In order to avoid blocking the aisles while walking through many carriages to reach your seat, try to get on the right carriage to begin with. The carriage numbers are clearly visible either on the side of the train or on an electronic sign on the door. (But if your train is about to depart – just get on! You can find the right seat after it leaves). Feel free to relax, but keep your arrival time in mind. You can sleep on a plane without every worrying about missing your stop, but most trains in Italy make multiple stops. If you want to sleep, make sure you place any valuables like a purse, securely between your feet or somewhere that you can feel it at all times. This makes it less likely to disappear along with someone who is disembarking before you. But you CAN sleep, or get on the free WiFi, read, or stare dreamily out the window. Set an alarm for 10 minutes before your scheduled arrival time just to be sure you are alert when it is time to get off the train. Bring your own food, if you want. If you are going on a long train trip in Italy, it is totally fine to bring food on the train. Some people even bring wine or beer, there are no rules against this. Trains do not tend to have any hot food available, so bring your own sandwiches or picnic items if you are going to be hungry along the way. Expect most of the same comforts of a plane. If you are on a highspeed train, your seat won't have a seatbelt but it will have a tray table and space to place your personal items. If you are traveling in first class, you will likely be treated to a beverage cart and snack. Otherwise, there is a bar car or vending machines where you can purchase water and simple foods like chips. And don't worry: train travel in Italy is comfortable even when it is not at its most glamorous. For example, even regional trains have bathrooms. There might not be a bathroom in every carriage but you are free to move around the train at any time, so go ahead and follow the signs (which might say "WC") until you find one. Potential Drawbacks of Traveling by Train in Italy Every form of travel within Italy comes with pros and cons. In this case, the pros of traveling by train far outweigh the cons but for total transparency, here are a few drawbacks to There is no checked baggage. Trains in Italy have luggage racks over the seats and also have dedicated spaces for large bags right inside the doors when you board. If you are traveling with a lot of stuff, you are going to have to get it all onto the train and then take it down again when you reach your destination. One upside? There are absolutely no baggage fees when you are traveling by train in Italy so you do save some money with the DIY approach to handling the luggage. There might be a strike. This is fairly rare but transportation systems, including trains, sometimes go on strike in Italy. If there is going to be a full strike, flights can also be affected so flying is not always the easier choice in this case either. Delays sometimes happen. Even when there are no serious issues like strikes, train delays do happen. Usually, these are 10-20 minute delays but if there is a problem with the weather or the mechanics, these can be significantly longer. It shouldn't stop you from booking a train in Italy – just give yourself some padding time if you really need to be somewhere by a specific hour. Getting stuck with a delay is bad luck – much like getting caught in a random traffic jam. Trains in Italy sometimes don't go to the smallest, hilltop towns. Train travel in Italy can be incredibly fast but some smaller towns are only served by older, regional trains which make frequent stops and move slowly. Other towns, particularly hilltop towns in Tuscany, don't have train stations. In these cases, having your own car is better than relying on the rural bus services that connect the nearest train station to the more remote villages. Flying within Italy If you really are not convinced about train travel in Italy, or if you simply prefer to fly, then there are, of course, options for flights between many Italian cities. There are also a few cases like if you need to go somewhere like Sicily or Sardegna – when flying within Italy is going to be your best option. Yes, there are ferries but most are overnight and are going to take you a longer time to travel. If that works with your schedule, then go for it! I personally use SkyScanner whenever I am looking for flights within Italy (or around Europe). I find that it works slightly better than US-centric sites like Kayak.com because it does a good job of pulling in all of the low fare budget air carriers in addition to the national carriers. Flights between Rome and Milan are under an hour, versus the four hours the trip takes by highspeed train. However, considering how much time you need to have to get out to the airport, go through security, wait for boarding, then get back into the city center at your new destination – the entire process of flying can actually take longer door-to-door. Do you have any other tips or questions about train travel in Italy? What are you waiting for! All aboard! Please note: this post may include affiliate links to companies that I personally recommend and use myself. If you choose to book through the link, I may earn a small commission. Natalie is a food and travel writer who has been living in Rome full time since 2010. She is the founder and editor of this blog and prefers all of her days to include coffee, gelato, and wine.