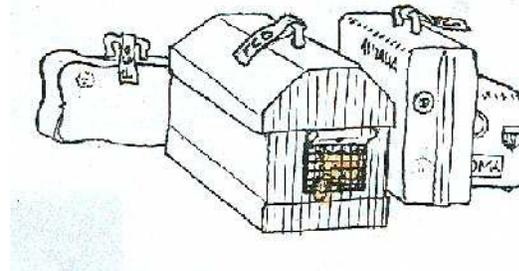


ARRIVING IN ROME

Most English speaking visitors to Italy travel by air and most coming to Rome arrive at Leonardo da Vinci Airport at Fiumicino, about 30 kilometers from the center of Rome. The airport is still reasonably compact and functional, despite large-scale expansion.



Customs officials rarely bother tourists and arrival is generally quicker and less irritating than arriving in the US. Years ago, the easy way to get to the city was by bus, and the bus had the advantage of taking a scenic route past EUR and then the Colosseum and the Baths of Caracalla. Of course, there were and still are taxis and limousines, either of which make sense if you're traveling in a group of three or more. However, for the single traveler or couple, the bus has been replaced by a train, which goes to Termini station in Rome. There are direct trains, which make no intermediate stops. They cost about Euro12.00. The regular trains, which use the same track but which make about ten or twelve stops, cost a little less. Take the express train if one is available. Getting to the train is fairly simple, with one minor glitch. When you come out of customs with your baggage on the arrivals level (lowest floor), look for the elevator. Yes THE elevator. There may actually be two but there's just one at the center of the airport. When you can get on it, take it to the top level. There you can wheel your baggage across the street on a covered bridge and straight into the Train Station. Check the train schedule and buy a ticket at the ticket office. Before getting on the train, remember you have to have the ticket stamped on a time stamp machine. There are enough of them around. They're little orange boxes. This applies to all RR tickets in Italy. Often the conductors never get around to checking the tickets, but you have to validate the ticket before getting on, so you won't be able to use the ticket another time if it isn't checked. If your ticket isn't stamped, you get a fine, although tourists can usually away with this by acting dumb, ignorant, innocent, etc.

In addition to Rome, there are trains that go from the airport directly to Florence or Naples. The little local train that goes to Rome also goes all the way to Orte, about 50 or 60 km north of Rome, but it takes two hours and about 25 stops to get there. When you buy your ticket to Rome, you can also get a ticket to go on to anywhere else in Italy, without waiting till you get to Rome to buy it.

The airport trains have another nice feature. Although they're double-decker, or split level trains, they are like subway cars in that you get directly on them at platform level, and they have space to store luggage, right near the door.

As in airports all over the world, you can rent a car at the airport, but if you're planning to stay in Rome, I suggest you don't do so. Get a car when you're ready to leave town.