

TRAIN/BUS/TAXI INFORMATION FOR GETTING TO PRATO

1. If coming from Pisa, Bologna, etc, you can get a direct local train to Prato. You will need to check on the train timetable board at the railway station. Try to see if the train stops at Porta Serraglio--this is the stop nearest to Hotel Flora, the Monash Centre etc. You will be able to buy a ticket from a machine or a person. For those coming from King Ferry NY or all points west, sorry, there is no train, you need to get a plane, I can't help you ;).

See the information about how long the trains take and LOCAL MAPS OF PRATO available at <http://www.ita.monash.edu/visit/gettingthere.html/>

For costs of train trips, see www.trenitalia.it, but they are not substantial. If you are very sure of your travel plans, you should check the Trenitalia site at in early October to see if there are any early-bird specials on pre-purchased tickets. Look under offers and specials or discounts or Frecciarossa specials (click the English button). The savings can be quite substantial.

2. IF YOU ARE COMING FROM FLORENCE AIRPORT, PLEASE ALSO SEE THE MONASH WEBSITE.

If coming from Milan, you may need to go into Florence first, then get the local train. Use the Trenitalia site.

3. COMING FROM ROME AIRPORT TO ROME MAIN STATION (TERMINUS)

Assuming you are coming from Rome Airport, follow the signs and walk under the airport and up again to the railway station. You should get a Leonardo Express ticket to Roma Termini. or else you will be on the local train for a long time. It is about 12 euros. you can buy it from a machine, the kiosk, or the ticket office. MAKE SURE YOU VALIDATE THE TICKET IN THE LITTLE MACHINES. THE INSPECTORS ARE UNFORGIVING. There are different sorts and sizes of tickets depending on the machine or place you get them, but validate them.

4. GETTING FROM ROME TO PRATO

General information about Rome-Florence travel <http://www.frommers.com/destinations/florence/0051020009.html>

If you are adventurous, you can book the tickets on line --via www.trenitalia.it, but you need to be sure you can get the train you book. I recommend you get the tickets from an automatic ticket machine, either at the airport station or Rome station. If you are completely bamboozled by the machines (and watch out for pickpockets etc), you can stand in a queue for a ticket. Depending on the time of day you get the train, and the type of train (express, local), times can vary from 2 to 3 hours. You may, depending on the train, be able to choose window, middle or aisle seat. there are luggage racks at the end of carriages.

In any case, you need to get off at Florence Santa Maria Novella (Sta Maria Novella), and then get a local train to Prato. You only need to get a second-class ticket for any journey. Prices vary from 27-45 euros one way to Prato. The much slower local train is the cheapest.

If you can, get off at the PORTA AL SERRAGLIO station (the one nearest Monash and most hotels). You should see the name on the airport type board. If you aren't sure, ask the conductor--just say Porta al Serraglio and smile. The other station, on the other side of the river is Prato Centrale. Coming from Florence, Centrale comes first, and Porta al Serraglio about 3 minutes later--don't miss it!

5. WHICH PLATFORM DOES THE PRATO TRAIN LEAVE FROM IN FLORENCE?

It's a lottery--look at the notification boards in the main hallway, which unfortunately, now contain less information than they used to, but there are also screens at the end of platforms which show the different stations that a train is going to stop at. The other way to check the timetable is to look at the big poster timetables at the end of platforms--look at the andata (going) side!, but of course, because it is Italy, the times may or may not be right, but you will see the sequence of stations to look for on the screens.

6. AT THE PRATO AL SERRAGLIO STATION..

Go down the stairs, turn right, and the newspaper kiosk will be on your left.

Information in Italian --<http://www.po-net.prato.it/versoprato/htm/treno.htm>.

The other place that looks like a kiosk used to sell tickets --now it only does parking tickets.

Cross the road and that is the street that leads to the piazza, the Duomo and the Prato Centre and hotels (see map). The kiosk also sells tickets. The machine that was there last year at least was broken a lot of the time.

If you get out at Prato Centrale, you are on the other side of the river to the old part of Prato. It is about a 15 minute walk to the Monash Centre. The best thing to do if you are walking is to look at the maps on the Monash Prato Centre website. A taxi ride will be at least 5 euro, probably more if you have luggage.

7. SEATING ALLOCATION ON INTER-URBAN TRAINS

Please be aware that on the Rome Florence train, or any train that is not a local train, you are booking a particular train, time, carriage (carrozza) and posto (seat)--the ticket will indicate whether your seat is aisle, middle or window (eg carrozza 5, posto 56). Try to be in the right place when the train comes as the trains can be loooooooooooog, and don't stop forever. The station staff know a bit of English. The trains have coffee cars etc.

If you only need a local ticket because you are in Florence and are going to Prato, you can get a ticket from a local ticket machine, or a kiosk. It is about 2euros. MAKE SURE YOU VALIDATE THE TICKET IN THE LITTLE MACHINES. THE INSPECTORS ARE UNFORGIVING.

Please see here for what tickets and machines look like etc. <http://www.ccmoperaluca.org/content.jsp?articleId=88> (though it is a French ticket, it is sort of the same), but there is a lot of useful information here.

8. BUS INFORMATION

There are buses--see the Monash website. If there is a strike (sciopero) you will have to use the bus system and try to work it out like everyone else where the bus station is at various locations...:(. In Florence, the local busses are next to the station. For Rome, see <http://www.frommers.com/destinations/florence/0051020009.html>

9. TAXIS --See the Monash website for information. If you get a taxi from Prato Centrale, the larger, central station, expect to pay about 10 euros at least to go not very far around windy streets.

10. BASIC ITALIAN PHRASES

This is a wonderful pre-trip project to print and prepare. http://www.single-serving.com/Italian/phrase_booklet.php

11. SAFETY

Watch your handbags, luggage etc. Use common sense.

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