

Weekend Travel Tips

Picking a Location For Your Free Weekend: It is best to pick your destination based on where the field trip is located. (Example: If you want to go to Venice, it is easier to get to it from Florence than Rome since Florence is closer to Venice.). You can also choose to stay in Montepulciano for your free weekends or travel to towns close by for a day trip.

Trains: For your weekend travel, you will most likely be taking the trains to your destinations. Trains are the most important mode of transportation to and from Montepulciano. Italian trains are mostly reliable, on time, and easy to figure out. Again, Chiusi-Chiacciano Terme is the best train station to use for Montepulciano. To book train tickets, we highly suggest the **Trenitalia** website/phone application (<https://www.trenitalia.com/>). (There is an alternative service, but it is used less.)

There are three main types of trains: Regionale Veloce, Intercity, and the Freccia trains (rossa, bianca, argento).

- **Regionale Veloce (R or RV):** These trains are generally the slowest, the least expensive, primarily traveling within a region (Tuscany, Umbria) or between neighboring regions (Lazio, Umbria, Tuscany). There are no assigned seats, just first class and second class. Tickets purchased at the train station or at Pro Loco (the tourist store in Montepulciano that I pointed out on our Saturday tour) need to be validated. If you do not validate your ticket, you will be fined by the train company.
- **Intercity (IC):** These trains travel between cities (often major cities). They are slightly more expensive than the Regionale, and they offer assigned cars and seats. Tickets purchased at the train station or at Pro Loco do not have to be validated.
- **Freccia (Frecciarossa or FR and Frecciaargento FA):** These trains are the fastest and often the most direct between major cities. They are also the most expensive. Like Intercity Trains, these trains have assigned cars and seating and thus do not need to be validated.

Purchasing a Train Ticket: If you purchase a train ticket at the train station, through the Trenitalia app, or online, you will do the following: <https://www.trenitalia.com/en.html>. Do this as you are making plans in order to see what is available.

- If you are taken to taken to the Italian site, look to the right hand corner of the navigation bar. There you will see an “Italian Flag.” Click on it, and you will be able to choose English.
- Enter the destination. If you are travelling from Lucca, simply select “Lucca.” Traveling from Rome, select Roma Termini. Travelling from Siena, select “Siena.” Travelling from Florence, select “Firenze S.M. Novella” (the main train station in Florence.) Know the main train stations of your destination.
- Select the date and the time when you would like to depart. Important note: the Italian train system uses “military time,” 1:00 – 24:00. Hit enter, and you will be given a variety of options from which to choose.
- When choosing a ticket, you want to look for how many transfers there are as well as how close together those transfers are. (You do not want them too close in case the train, especially the regionale, is late.)
- Make your choice and follow the steps for purchasing the train ticket.

Where to Purchase Train Tickets:

- Pro Loco: This is the tourist store outside the main gate (the one leading out to the Conad).
- Train Station: You can purchase tickets at the train station, either at a machine or at a ticket office. If you do this (and, this is how I often do it), be sure to guard your things, especially in Florence and Rome. Do not accept help from anyone unless they are a train station attendant.
- Trenitalia App: This is a free app that can be downloaded from your app store.
- Online: You can go to www.Trenitalia.it

Boarding the Train:

- When you arrive at the train station, look for the large schedule board that says, “Partenze,” meaning “departures.”
- The board will generally have seven items: the type of train (Frecciarossa or FR, Intercity or IC, Regionale or R/RV), the number of the train, the final destination of the train (which may not be your destination if the train continues after your destination), the time of arrival, the amount of time the train might be late, information about the train, and the bin/platform number.
- If you have purchased a physical ticket for a Regionale, be sure to validate the ticket at the little green or red validation box.
- As the time for your train approaches, go to the appropriate binario or platform. Once there, make certain that the train at the bin is in fact your train. (Usually, there will be an electronic board that identifies the train.)
- Locate the class (1st or 2nd) if you are on a Regionale. Locate the car and seat if on an Intercity or Freccia Rossa/Argenta train.

What if I miss my train?

- If you are travelling by regionale, you can take the next train up to 24 hours after the reserved train. However, you should not time stamp your card until you are ready to board the train you are actually taking.
- If travelling Intercity or Freccia Rossa/Argenta, you can go to the ticket office to see if they will give you a ticket for the next train. (Sometimes they do; sometimes they make you purchase a new one.)

What if I go past my stop?

- Get off at the next stop, go to the ticket office. Usually, they will help you get back to your destination station.

Returning from Chiusi to Montepulciano:

- Taxi: you can take a taxi to “Porto Prato” (the main gate at the bottom of Montepulciano) and “Piazza Grande.” You can catch the taxi in front of the Chiusi-Chianciano train station. The cost is between 50-65 euros per cab. This amount can be split between 4-5 people.
- Bus: On Mondays-Saturdays, you can catch the bus to “Montepulciano Autostazione.” You simply purchase a ticket behind the snack counter at the train station, go out the train station, go to the left of the train station, where you will see a road with a bus sign and a bench. On the bus sign, locate the time that the bus arrives at Montepulciano Autostazione, wait for the bus (a bus will stop and then you will see its electronic marquee change from Chiusi-Scalo to Montepulciano Autostazione.) Ride the bus to the very last stop, which will be the bus station. (You can get out prior to the bus station if you want.).

Regional Buses: The public buses will allow you to explore more of Tuscany without the expensive price of a private car or bus. The bus will take you to all the neighboring towns of Montepulciano and then some. Montepulciano Autostazione is set right outside the walls of Montepulciano and has all the bus information, schedules, and that is where you purchase bus tickets.