

Ticket-checking Tribulations on the Fiumicino Express

A PERPLEXED AMERICAN STRUGGLES WITH HIS CONSCIENCE ON THE TERMINI/FIUMICINO EXPRESS TRAIN, ANSWERING THE QUESTION WE SHOULD NEVER HAVE TO ASK – ‘TO PAY OR NOT TO PAY’?

by Bezdomny

On the train to Fiumicino Airport there are never any ticket-checkers. – Is ‘ticket-checker’ even the right term? I have occasionally found myself debating with friends over the correct way to identify the person who checks your ticket on the train. I used to call them conductors, but one time a fellow rail frequenter pointed out, “If that’s the conductor, then who’s driving the train?” From then on I decided to call them ticket-checkers.

The train ticket morality test

It might be that there’s some residue of morality left in my brain after so many years in America, but I actually buy the ticket for the Roma Termini/Fiumicino line at least one out of every five trips to the airport. Out of at least 100 trips to the airport I’ve only seen a ticket-checker one



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time, and that was because a man got robbed and the ticket-checker was needed to record everything for the police; so technically not even on that occasion was the ticket-checker checking tickets.

The price went up since the last time I bought a ticket. Now it costs €12. I asked the ticket-seller why the price was so high because I remembered it being just €7, the “last time I bought one.” The man rolled his eyes and fired back at me that tickets hadn’t cost €7 for “yeaaaaaaars,” upon which I surrendered my fare to the ticket-seller feeling that he had more than justified the price increase.

As usual the ticket-checker was nowhere to be seen and, as usual, I feel like a schmuck for buying a ticket. I look around and begin to scrutinize the people seated near me. I think to myself, “I bet he didn’t get the ticket... she didn’t get one either... I’m the only idiot that paid the fare! Well, at least I am honest, and I’m helping the train company, which is going bankrupt anyway.”

No escaping a guilty conscience

When it happens that I’m ticketless I go through a similar thought process: “Oh no! I am the only one on the train without a ticket! Why am I such a cheapskate? It’ll be soooo embarrassing if the ticket-checker comes. They will give me a fine and everyone will stare.” Once again I scrutinize my fellow passengers, “Look at him, I bet he has a ticket. She definitely has one. I had better go and look for other people who might be ticketless so we can share the blame for the train company’s continued failure.”

If, in the future, I ever do get checked by a ticket-checker while I am in possession of a ticket, I am going to come right out and tell him, “Yes I bought a ticket, but your company is full of lazies just the same and I can’t wait until it goes out of business so the French can buy it and manage it properly!”

Bezdomny is Jeffrey Andreoni, a half Italian/half American who lives in Rome. ■

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