

Travel Tips for Cinque Terre - Arrival into Pisa Airport

In the height of the summer Pisa can be quite busy. So here are a few tips to try to make the journey a little easier. We have put this together from our experience as it can be very daunting trying to work it all out for yourself especially if you do not speak Italian.

To get to Cinque Terre ideally you need to catch a train. To get to the station you need to get either a bus from the airport or a taxi. Both are available immediately outside the airport doors. Do not be fooled by the train station at the airport. This does not go to Cinque Terre. You must get to "Pisa Centrale Station".

The journey to Cinque Terre is too far to travel by taxi. In addition driving to Cinque Terre can be an ordeal due to the winding roads and hot summer temperatures.

There are primarily two types of train, the intercity or the regional slower train. The intercity takes about an hour. The slower train is usually about two hours. The intercity is the much preferred journey and usually costs about 15-20 Euros per person each way. The slower train is about 10-15 Euros. However you may wait an extra hour for the Intercity. So you must see what time you arrive. If you want to check you the timetable you could look on the Italy Train Website at www.trenitalia.com before you travel.

The taxi to the train station should be no more than 10 Euros. The bus will only be about 2 Euros each. The buses in Italy are very efficient. Both journeys are the same time and should only take about ten minutes. You may have to wait an additional ten minutes for the bus. If you do opt for the bus when you board the bus you must stamp/validate your ticket in the yellow machines which are located on the bus. You will be fined if you do not.

Decide whether to travel by bus or taxi before you get to Pisa. Plan ahead.

If you decide to get on the bus you cannot board the bus unless you buy a ticket first, you will of course also need a ticket for the train to Cinque Terre, you can actually buy both before you leave the airport. There is a ticket office immediately outside of the airport luggage hall. As you leave the baggage hall turn right and the ticket kiosk is on the far wall. The tickets here are very slightly dearer than the train station but you can beat the queues at the train station by buying here.

There is a cash point here, however from our experience this never seems to work, so our advice is to have some Euros ready.

Once you have your tickets as you exit the airport terminal the relevant bus stop is towards the road but headed right, (head in a two o'clock direction from the airport building). The relevant bus you need is called the "Red" bus service. This will be called the "Linea Rosso" it may also be called "Lam Rosso"

If you are going to get a taxi you need not necessarily queue at the airport kiosk for a train ticket but our advice is, if there is not much of a queue get your train ticket here because there could be a queue at the train station.

When we travel to Pisa, because the kiosk for the tickets is so close to where you exit with the bags, to beat the queues we separate, one of us goes for the bus and train tickets whilst the other waits for baggage to arrive. This way once the baggage arrives we already have our tickets and we are off, thus beating the emerging queue from the baggage hall. If you do separate our advice is to make sure you keep your own passport with you. (Perhaps I should not tell everyone that!)

If you travel by bus you should not miss the train station just keep watching out of the left hand window. (Left when facing forward on the bus). As mentioned before the journey is about ten minutes.

Once you arrive at Pisa Centrale Station the train times and platform arrivals are printed on large yellow sheets in framed windows around the station. You will need to find out what platform your train will be departing on. Look at the current time then go over to the yellow "DEPARTURE" sheets. (Do not get confused by looking at the arrivals sheets). You will see the yellow sheets are set out in order of time. Now you know the time, look on the sheet for the time and then look forward from that time to find the relevant train that you must catch.

If you are travelling to Vernazza, Corngilia, Manarola or Riomaggiore you may not find a direct train. You will need to look for a train that goes to La Spezia. Once at La Spezia you can change to get to these smaller towns. Trains that travel onwards to these smaller stations arrive at La Spezia every twenty minutes. So do not wait ages in Pisa Centrale for a direct train when you can very simply change at La Spezia.

If you are travelling to Monterosso you may be able to get a direct train but again it may be quicker to get a train to La Spezia and then change. For your information we have never known the intercity train to stop at Vernazza, Corngilia, Manarola or Riomaggiore. It does however usually stop at Monterosso.

Unless you have booked the intercity train your train ticket will be valid which ever route you take.

The platform that your train leaves on is clearly shown by a number in a blue circle on the yellow sheet next to the relative time of your train. Once you have found the platform that your train departs on, you must now make sure you stamp/validate your train ticket in the yellow machines that are dotted around the station. Your ticket must be stamped before you board the train. Please note this is very different to the bus. On the bus you can stamp your ticket whilst on the actual bus, on the train you cannot. Finally once you arrive at the platform listen to the announcements as they change the platform at the last minute occasionally. Fortunately announcements are generally made in English as well as Italian.

Have a great trip