

TRAVELLING WITH TARGET

PART II OF V

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT TOURING EUROPE

... Italian Customs

As luck would have it, **TARGET**'s newly purchased laptop suddenly ceased to function in Milan soon after arrival due to a crash of the computer's hard disk.

It was sent back to Hongkong to be repaired since it was under warrantee by Hewlett Packard.

FedEx Corporation was the courier service that delivered the faulty laptop to **TARGET**'s headquarters in the Central Business District of Hongkong Island.

And, FedEx was also the courier that sent the laptop back Milan.

One week later, the repaired computer was returned to Milan.

However, on arrival in Italy, the Italian Customs charged a tax of €229.91 (about \$HK2,230), based on the declared value of the laptop of about \$US1,000.

The computer reached Milan on a Saturday evening (November 25, 2017, Milan time) and, when **TARGET** was informed, via a telephone conversation with an Italian acquaintance, of the proposed Import Tax penalty, documents were, the following Monday morning, produced, proving that the repaired computer, that had been purchased four months earlier in the HKSAR, had to be returned for the replacement of the failed hard disk.

On the morning of Tuesday, November 28, Milan time, officials of FedEx paid the fine of €229.91 without bothering to sight this medium's documentation that proved, without a doubt, that such a Custom's fine was not warranted.

Time, being of the essence, this medium had to reimburse €229.91 to FedEx's courier in order to obtain custody of the laptop.

Clearly, FedEx's office in Milan must have determined that it was quicker (and cheaper in terms of the high cost of Italian manpower) to pay the Italian Custom's fine rather than bothering to sight **TARGET's** documentation, such documentation, proving the veracity of this medium's claim.

The lesson to be learned is quite evident.

... Florence, Tuscany

The next time that you hear people state that Italy is all pizza and spaghetti, respond with just one word: Steak.

Because Florence (Firenze, in Italian), is, undoubtedly, one of the best places in the world if one enjoys a hearty meal of beefsteak, roast potatoes, cooked in olive oil, and a good bottle of Chianti.

On December 2, 2017, **TARGET's** review team awoke at 0400 hours in order to be at Milano Centrale (the central train station of Milan): The train to Florence was scheduled to leave the station at 0720 hours.

Now, Subscribers might, at this point, start to giggle as to the rationale behind rising from a warm bed three hours and twenty minutes prior to the scheduled departure of the train to Florence, especially since the distance from the apartment that this medium had rented for 50 days was only a 15-minute walk to the central train station.

The reason was that, in Italy, the English language is not as common as it is in most other Western-European countries.

In Milan, especially, it appears that about one in 10 Italian residents may have, at best, only a smattering of knowledge of the most-widely spoken language of the world, today.

On arrival at Milano Centrale, at about 0600 hours on that Saturday morning, this medium could not but be impressed by viewing the superbly constructed edifice with its very high ceilings.

It would be fair to state that for any tourist, intent on a visit to this railway station for the first time and speaking no Italian, at all, that it is not easy to navigate around this massive (and very impressive) structure.

The main problem that foreigners face at Italian railway stations is that, generally, all public announcements are in Italian, with, only on occasion, are the announcements translated into English – if at all.

Taking the lead on noting the flow of Italian travellers, all heading in one particular direction, following the lead of these other early risers, **TARGET** mounted the huge, centrally located staircase to the second floor and, there, on an electronic announcement board, noted that Train Number 9509 for Florence was nowhere to be seen.

For the next 75 minutes, therefore, **TARGET** had to walk up and down the length of the second floor, awaiting the announcement board to state the arrival of Train Number 9509 at Milan.

During this walkabout, it was noted that a small number of what appeared to be African (dark-skinned) males were hauling numerous, very large, cloth-covered bags, some of which they parked close to the entrance to one of the station's doors, leading to train tracks.

One particularly rather obese, African-looking man continuously kept a very close watch on his cloth-covered bags and this journalist could not help but think that, if this man's cloth-covered bags contained something dangerous, such as improvised explosives, passengers, awaiting their trains, could be in terrible danger should this man determine to detonate that which lay hidden in these bags.

At about seven o'clock, two policemen appeared – in order to obtain a cup of coffee from a vending machine!

The poor, fat policemen seemed more asleep than awake as they jiggled the vending machine for a wake-up shot of espresso.

It was, at about this time, that the bulletin board stated the arrival of Train Number 9509.

TARGET had secured three seats in the business section of this train that took two hours for the journey from Milan to Florence.

Seated, at last, in this medium's assigned, comfortable seats in the spotless compartment, **TARGET**'s three-man team awaited the rising of the winter's sun on the flat countryside of Lombardy.

The journey was uneventful, but an anticipated breakfast, expected to be purchased on the train, never materialised ... other than an ounce of warm, black coffee, served in a small paper cup, and a tiny, plastic-covered package, containing three, sugary biscuits.

TARGET learned, later, that this fare was that which most Italians ingested as their first meal of the day.

(This medium is happy to assure Subscribers that there was no detonation of any improved explosive on this train and that this journalist arrived in Florence, alive and well.)

(To Be Continued)

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