

## **NIGHT TRAIN TO PARIS: JANNE SELETTO**

We got to the station two hours before the train was due to leave. We were early because we were taking the night train from Rome to Paris and we needed seats. We were travelling on Eurail passes - so no booked seating, and we didn't want to spend the night sitting on the floor in the corridor.

At first it looked pretty good - just us and a few others on the platform. But twenty minutes before the 9pm departure time, the crowds started to arrive. And not just any crowds: these were tough, battle-hardened Italian train travellers equipped with blankets, pillows, thermoses and big hampers of food.

We knew we'd have to fight for it, and we thought we could: we were young and fit - we just had to forget about being polite and use our elbows and force our way in. We HAD to get a seat.

We didn't get a seat. At five to nine, the empty train started to roll into the station. As soon as it was next to the platform, people started throwing their bags through the open windows and then climbing in after them. We couldn't believe it. By the time the train had come to a stop, it was full. We rushed on and found, to our horror, that every compartment was full of Italian families, already unpacking their salami and cheese.

We sat on the floor in the corridor with our backpacks arranged so people wouldn't tread on us. It was pretty depressing. After a while I got up and had a scout around. As we were coming into Firenze I saw a family organising their bags and getting ready to get off. I called the others, and we grabbed the compartment the minute the family were out the door. We spread our bags everywhere, turned off the lights, pulled the curtains and locked the door. When the new passengers banged on the window, we ignored them.

When in Roma...