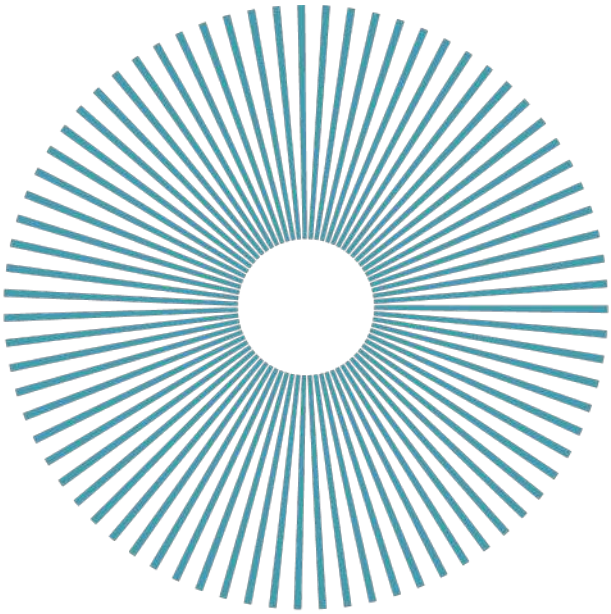


ARSENALE

PRESS COVERAGE

January - April 2026

INDEPENDENT

6 new sleeper train routes coming in 2026

LINK: https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/inspiration/new-sleeper-train-routes-2026-b2907669.html

The Independent's journalism is supported by our readers. When you purchase through links on our site, we may earn commission. Travel Inspiration 6 new sleeper train routes coming in 2026 Roll across Spain, chug between European capitals or travel the Silk Road on trains leaving the station this year Natalie Wilson Monday 26 January 2026 12:56 GMT Bookmark Comments Go to comments Bookmark popover Removed from bookmarks It's all aboard the sleeper train in 2026 (European Sleeper) Sign up to Simon Calder's free travel email for expert advice and money-saving discountsGet Simon Calder's Travel emailGet Simon Calder's Travel email If the rollout of new sleeper train services is any indication, it's all aboard the night carriage in 2026. Anticipated new routes are popping up in several corners of the UK, as well as direct sleeper trains connecting capitals across Europe for some shut-eye as you ride. As railroads forge new paths, travellers looking for a more sustainable option than short-haul flights are going full steam ahead to book both budget and luxury journeys. Scotland's iconic Caledonian Sleeper will now pick up passengers in Birmingham, and another new decadent rail route will spend 22 days traversing the ancient Silk Road. From a roll across Spain to a chug between Amsterdam and Milan, here are some of the most exciting new night routes taking to the tracks this year. Read more: Why the Caledonian Sleeper train is Britain's contender for world's greatest rail journey Best new sleeper train routes for 2026 1. Caledonian Sleeper - London to Scotland via Birmingham The Caledonian Sleeper will now pick up Birmingham passengers en route to the Highlands (Caledonian Sleeper) As of last week (15 January), the Caledonian Sleeper will leave London to pick up passengers in Birmingham en route to the Scottish Highlands. The sleeper train currently runs every night apart from Saturday, with guests being transported from London Euston to some of Scotland's largest cities, including Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness, and more rural locations, such as Fort William. Birmingham International will join the train's 'Highlander' route, the first stop after London, before it heads to Crewe, Preston and then up to the Highlands. The sleeper train intends to bridge the travel gap between the West Midlands and the Scottish Highlands. Read more: Caledonian Sleeper sees 'most significant change to network in three decades' 2. European Sleeper - Amsterdam to Milan via Switzerland A direct connection from Amsterdam and Brussels to Milan will run from 18 June 2026 (European Sleeper) European Sleeper plans to run a direct night train connection from Amsterdam and Brussels to Milan city

La proprietà intellettuale è riconducibile alla fonte specificata in testa alla pagina. Il ritaglio stampa è da intendersi per uso privato

INDEPENDENT

centre from 18 June 2026. Departures from Amsterdam and Brussels will be scheduled for Monday, Thursday and Saturday, with the return service from Milan operational on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. Stops on the sleeper service will include Berne, Switzerland and Stresa on Lago Maggiore, and ticket sales will open to travellers in January or February. Read more: The best boutique hotels in Amsterdam, reviewed 3. Venice Simplon-Orient-Express - Paris to Amalfi Coast The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express passes along both the French and Italian Rivieras from May (Belmond) The Belmond-operated Venice Simplon-Orient-Express will wind along both the French and Italian Rivieras on its inaugural four-day journey from Paris on 4 May 2026. While not on the rails, passengers will partake in a scenic boat tour, a private guided visit to Pompeii and cooking classes with local experts. The experience doesn't come cheap. Tickets start from around EUR10,000 (£8,700) per person, including all meals, excursions and transfers. Read more: This luxury sleeper train will launch a new route to the Amalfi Coast 4. Golden Eagle Luxury Trains - Beijing to Tashkent Travel the Silk Road with Golden Eagle Luxury Trains (Golden Eagle Luxury Trains) Golden Eagle Luxury Trains will offer travellers an exclusive itinerary on a brand new luxury train along the 'storied path' of the Silk Road from September 2026. The 22-day 'The Grand Silk Road' journey will feature two private trains with stops in Unesco-listed sites and ancient cities across central Asia from Beijing to Tashkent. The train's luxurious superior cabins and Han Dynasty suites with fine dining and opulent bar cars are on offer from $53,200 (£39,748) on 2027 departure dates. Read more: Mandarin Oriental Qianmen, Beijing hotel review 5. The Luxury Train Company 'Le Grand Tour' - Paris to Puy du Fou Take a six-day rail journey through France (Getty Images) Also on the uber-luxury sleeper scene, The Luxury Train Travel Company's 'Le Grand Tour' is expected to leave the station this year. The 4,000km six-day French rail journey on an 18-cabin 'Belle Époque styled train' promises passengers 'history, culture, architecture, art and magnificent French cuisine' from £6,210 per person. Travellers will depart Paris Gare de l'Est, with stops including Épernay, Reims, Annecy and Saint-Emilion before finishing at the renowned French historical theme park Puy du Fou. Read more: Famous French theme park submits plans for £600m Oxfordshire site 6. Al Andalus - Seville to Madrid The Al Ándalus train service will run a new itinerary for the 2026 season (Renfe/Al Andalus) Spain's luxury Al Ándalus train service has announced a new itinerary for the 2026 season. The opulent 1930s train will now begin and end its journey in the Spanish capital of Madrid, with a new seven-day, six-night voyage available from April to October. As well as travelling on one of the world's most deluxe rail journeys, passengers can look forward to stopping at some of Spain's most magnificent cities and attractions, including Seville, Córdoba and the Royal Palace of Aranjuez, a Unesco World Heritage Site. New destinations on the 2026 tour, which focuses on Spanish heritage, gastronomy and landscapes, include Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid. For a Grand Class room, expect to pay EUR6,600 (£5,700) per person based on two sharing, while a Deluxe Suite costs EUR7,900 (£6,840). Read more: Luxury Spanish train announces new 2026

La proprietà intellettuale è riconducibile alla fonte specificata in testa alla pagina. Il ritaglio stampa è da intendersi per uso privato

INDEPENDENT

itinerary

La proprietà intellettuale è riconducibile alla fonte specificata in testa alla pagina. Il ritaglio stampa è da intendersi per uso privato

A LOUNGE THAT'S WORTH THE WAIT

it directly impacts the usability of spaces, quality of life, and access to resources... With 'Prison Times,' we addressed a sensitive — and often overlooked — subject through a unique and widely accessible lens: objects. What we presented is a form of design governed by principles of security and punishment, which are fundamentally at odds with conventional design thinking. Following the exhibition, a number of exchanges and new synergies were set in motion, including opportunities to explore these same issues in schools and universities." ▮

pag. 80

A LOUNGE THAT'S WORTH THE WAIT

In Rome's Ostiense neighborhood, a signature lounge designed by Hugo Toro welcomes passengers of the new La Dolce Vita Orient Express. All aboard

words by **Laura Maggi** — photos by **Mr. Tripper**

THE PRELUDE TO A JOURNEY THAT DEFIES TIME, the La Dolce Vita Lounge welcomes passengers "embarking on 'rail cruises' into a space that is more of a threshold than a destination. Sunny, joyful, and cinematic. That's why the ceiling is entirely finished in yellow lacquer: it sets the tone from the very first moment," says architect Hugo Toro, describing his vision for the waiting lounge inside Rome's Ostiense station. From here, the La Dolce Vita Orient Express departs for destinations ranging from Venice to Portofino, Siena to the Sassi di Matera, the vineyards of Montalcino, the truffle trails of Nizza Monferrato, and onward to Sicily with stops in Catania, Palermo, and Taormina. The travel experience begins here, well before departure, within a 600 m2 lounge designed as an elegant reception room, where guests can enjoy local tastings and drinks, relax in convivial seating areas, or browse the in-house boutique, which offers a refined selection of accessories, books, and home decor. Depending on the time of departure, the kitchen led by German chef Heinz Beck serves up lunch or dinner alongside a cocktail bar, while live piano music fills the lounge, creating a relaxed and social atmosphere in the moments before boarding. The experience is completed with exclusive services like private showers and a concierge to handle your luggage — already placed in the cabins ahead of boarding — while guests are presented with traditional paper tickets detailing their itinerary and cabin assignment. "The project required an extremely meticulous and respectful approach, driven by a desire to enhance the station's architectural identity and artistic heritage," notes Marco Girotto, General Manager of La Dolce Vita Orient Express. "Under the creative direction of Hugo Toro, master artisans and artists painstakingly restored the original mosaics by Giulio Rosso and Maria Zaffuto, returning them to their rightful place within the space... Artworks inspired by the spirit of travel — from urban vistas to distant, exotic landscapes — further enrich the experience, transforming the lounge into a space that blends historic grandeur with contemporary refinement, capturing the romance of the Italian journey while remaining fully aligned with the architectural language of Roma Ostiense," explains Girotto. "The lounge fuses the legacy of the iconic train with a bold '70s influence, filtered through a contemporary lens," adds Toro, who also designed the interiors for the Orient Express La Minerva in Rome. "The existing architecture, with its stark travertine structure, provided a powerful backdrop. Rather than soften it, I chose to create a contrast through warmth, color, and rhythm. Unfolding in a carefully choreographed sequence, the space offers atmospheres for solo travelers, couples, and groups alike, creating an environment that feels both intimate and dynamic." Every piece of furniture is custom-designed, from the lighting to the central banquette and the armchairs. "The lounge is conceived as a seamless ensemble, where architecture, furnishings, and lighting converge to create memorable moments," says the architect. Art Deco references — "its geometry, sense of symmetry, and distinct craftsmanship" — were combined to create a nomadic patchwork of inspirations. The goal was not nostalgia, but a modern reinterpretation of a waiting lounge from a bygone era," notes Toro. "Housing the La Dolce Vita Lounge within Roma Ostiense was a conscious decision, tied to the station's strategic role and its significant historical and architectural heritage. We wanted a location that served as the natural gateway to the experience: a welcoming, scenographic space capable of evoking the elegance of the journey from the very first moment, weaving together experiential depth with a cultural narrative," adds Girotto. "With La Dolce Vita Orient Express, we have introduced a new model to the global tourism landscape, leading the emerging trend of 'rail cruises,' which are gaining momentum around the world," concludes Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale Group — a leader in luxury tourism — and of Orient Express. "These trains therefore become a symbol of an Italy that aims to promote its territories, local entrepreneurship, and national railway production, contributing to a more integrated tourism system. It is a vital step in relaunching the Made in Italy brand, particularly within the industrial and tourism sectors." ▮

La proprietà intellettuale è riconducibile alla fonte specificata in testa alla pagina. Il ritaglio stampa è da intendersi per uso privato

Travel AND Tour WORLD

Saudi Arabia Joins Spain, Central Asia, and Canada in Unveiling Groundbreaking Luxury Trains in 2026: Dream of the Desert, Al Andalus, Golden Eagle, and Rocky Mountaineer Set to Redefine Travel!

In an exciting move for the future of luxury rail travel, **Saudi Arabia** joins **Spain**, **Central Asia**, and **Canada** in unveiling a series of groundbreaking **luxury trains** in **2026**.

TTW TM
TRAVEL AND TOUR WORLD

Saudi Arabia's Dream of the Desert: Luxury Train Travel Connecting Riyadh, AlUla, and Qurayyat Redefines Tourism in the Kingdom

Published on January 3, 2026

Saudi Arabia is making an ambitious leap towards rebranding its tourism landscape with the unveiling of *Dream of the Desert*, a luxury train service designed to cater to high-end travelers. This innovative project is set to transform the way tourists experience the Kingdom, offering a unique blend of culture, comfort, and scenic beauty. With its sleek interiors and top-tier services, this luxury rail experience promises to be a key pillar in Saudi Arabia's broader Vision 2030 strategy, which aims to bolster the nation's tourism sector while showcasing its rich cultural heritage.

Running on the Kingdom's extensive rail network, *Dream of the Desert* will connect major destinations including **Riyadh**, **AlUla**, and **Qurayyat**, offering an exclusive and immersive journey across Saudi Arabia's northern regions. With only 40 luxury cabins available, each journey will host just 80 to 90 passengers, ensuring a personalized and intimate experience that emphasizes scarcity over volume. This limited capacity is part of the broader business strategy aimed at attracting travelers seeking both comfort and exclusivity, aligning perfectly with Saudi Arabia's efforts to develop a high-value tourism sector.

A Luxury Train for the Discerning Traveler: What to Expect on Board

Dream of the Desert is not your average train journey. Designed to be a mobile luxury hotel, this exclusive train brings world-class comfort directly into the heart of Saudi Arabia's vast desert landscapes. Inspired by traditional Saudi architecture, the interiors feature contemporary designs coupled with bespoke furnishings, creating a warm yet sophisticated atmosphere. The train boasts panoramic windows that allow guests to fully appreciate the stark beauty of the desert scenery as they glide between iconic locations like **Riyadh** and **AlUla**.

Onboard, passengers will enjoy five-star services, including gourmet dining inspired by Saudi cuisine, curated cultural programming, and guided excursions at various stops. One of the highlights of the journey will be the stop in **AlUla**, one of the Kingdom's most significant and rapidly growing tourism hubs, known for its historical significance and awe-inspiring landscapes. The train's design and operations will position Saudi Arabia as a refined and experiential tourism destination.

Tourism Meets Sustainability: The Environmental Benefits of Luxury Rail Travel

In addition to the luxurious elements of the train experience, the *Dream of the Desert* project offers a more sustainable mode of travel compared to air travel. With a smaller carbon footprint per passenger, rail travel is becoming an increasingly popular option for environmentally-conscious travelers looking to reduce their impact on the planet. Given Saudi Arabia's ambition to position itself as a leader in sustainability, this luxury rail service is a strategic move towards eco-friendly tourism that does not sacrifice luxury.

With rising global interest in slow tourism, *Dream of the Desert* taps into this growing demand for relaxed, scenic, and sustainable travel experiences. By offering a more leisurely mode of transport, the train aligns with global trends in eco-conscious and culturally rich tourism.

A Symbol of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030: Redefining Tourism in the Kingdom

The launch of this luxury train is not just about introducing a new mode of transport; it is a symbolic move that reflects Saudi Arabia's larger ambitions for its tourism industry. As part of the *Vision 2030* plan, which aims to diversify the Kingdom's economy and reduce its dependence on oil, tourism is set to play a pivotal role. By introducing a high-end rail experience, Saudi Arabia is positioning itself as a global luxury destination—one that combines history, culture, and modernity.

With an ambitious goal to attract 150 million visitors annually by 2030, Saudi Arabia is working to increase tourism's contribution to its GDP from 3% to 10%. While the *Dream of the Desert* will cater to a relatively small number of tourists, its role in reinforcing Saudi Arabia's reputation as a high-end destination cannot be overstated. It will serve as a prestigious entry point for affluent travelers and provide a glimpse into the future of luxury travel in the Kingdom.

Is Luxury Rail Travel in Saudi Arabia Sustainable?

While the *Dream of the Desert* train aims to make waves in the luxury tourism industry, it has also sparked debates regarding its environmental impact and long-term sustainability. The project relies heavily on Saudi Arabia's existing rail infrastructure, which reduces initial capital expenditure and allows for optimization of assets. However, questions persist about whether the luxury model will succeed in the harsh desert climate. Some analysts have raised concerns about whether enough repeat visitors will flock to the service to justify long-term operating costs.

Furthermore, critics argue that the focus on ultra-luxury tourism in a region where resources like water are scarce may place additional strain on local environments. This has prompted calls for further exploration of how such projects can balance luxury with sustainability, ensuring that they contribute positively to both the local economy and the environment.

The Future of Saudi Arabia's Luxury Train: A Strategic Asset

Looking ahead, *Dream of the Desert* represents more than just an exclusive way to travel across Saudi Arabia. It is a strategic asset that helps to frame the Kingdom's broader ambitions within the global tourism industry. By combining **luxury hospitality**, **cultural storytelling**, and a focus on environmental sustainability, Saudi Arabia's first luxury train aligns with global tourism trends while providing an experience that cannot be found elsewhere.

For travelers, it offers a rare opportunity to experience Saudi Arabia in unparalleled comfort, exploring the Kingdom's vast desert landscapes in a way that is both exclusive and environmentally conscious. As Saudi Arabia continues to enhance its tourism offerings, the *Dream of the Desert* is a key step toward achieving its goal of becoming a leading luxury tourism destination by 2030.

Neom City

Saudi Arabia's luxury train in desert to redefine tourism

Saudi Arabia's luxury train to introduce a new way of exploring the kingdom

Saudi Arabia is taking a bold step toward reshaping its tourism identity with the launch of Dream of the Desert, an ultra-luxury train experience created for discerning travelers. This ambitious initiative introduces a new way to explore the Kingdom—blending heritage, comfort, and dramatic desert scenery. Designed as a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, the project reflects the nation's commitment to expanding tourism while celebrating its cultural legacy through world-class experiences.

Operating along the Kingdom's growing rail network, Dream of the Desert will connect major destinations including Riyadh, AlUla, and Qurayyat, offering an immersive journey through Saudi Arabia's northern regions. With just 40 luxury cabins and a maximum of 80 to 90 guests per journey, the train emphasizes exclusivity and personalization over mass tourism. This carefully curated capacity aligns with Saudi Arabia's strategy to develop a high-value, premium tourism market.

An elevated rail experience: Luxury on the move

Dream of the Desert reimagines rail travel as a moving five-star retreat. Inspired by traditional Saudi architectural elements and refined with contemporary design, the train's interiors combine handcrafted details, bespoke furnishings, and warm, elegant finishes. Expansive panoramic windows frame sweeping desert landscapes, allowing travelers to fully absorb the beauty of Saudi Arabia's natural environment as they travel between iconic destinations.

Onboard services rival those of the world's finest luxury hotels. Guests can expect gourmet dining inspired by Saudi cuisine, immersive cultural programming, and guided excursions at key stops. A highlight of the journey is AlUla, one of the Kingdom's most important and rapidly developing tourism destinations, renowned for its ancient heritage sites and striking rock formations. Through design and service, the train positions Saudi Arabia as a refined, experience-driven destination.

Where luxury meets sustainability

Beyond its opulence, *Dream of the Desert* represents a more environmentally responsible approach to luxury travel. Rail transport produces a lower carbon footprint per passenger than air travel, making it an appealing option for eco-conscious travelers. As Saudi Arabia works to integrate sustainability into its tourism growth, this luxury rail service offers a balance between environmental awareness and premium comfort.

The project also aligns with the global rise of slow tourism, which prioritizes meaningful, scenic, and culturally immersive journeys. By encouraging travelers to experience the landscape at a relaxed pace, *Dream of the Desert* taps into a growing demand for sustainable travel without compromising exclusivity.

A Vision 2030 milestone: Transforming Saudi tourism

The introduction of Dream of the Desert is more than a transportation upgrade—it is a powerful symbol of Saudi Arabia's evolving tourism vision. Under Vision 2030, the Kingdom aims to diversify its economy and significantly reduce its reliance on oil, with tourism playing a central role in that transformation.

Saudi Arabia has set an ambitious target of attracting 150 million visitors annually by 2030, increasing tourism's contribution to GDP from 3% to 10%. While the luxury train will serve a limited number of travelers, its influence extends far beyond passenger numbers. It strengthens Saudi Arabia's global image as a sophisticated, high-end destination and serves as a flagship experience for affluent travelers seeking exclusivity and authenticity.

Balancing luxury and long-term sustainability

Despite its promise, *Dream of the Desert* has sparked discussion about the sustainability of ultra-luxury tourism in a desert environment. While the project leverages existing rail infrastructure—reducing development costs and maximizing efficiency—questions remain about long-term viability, operating expenses, and repeat demand in extreme climate conditions.

Environmental concerns have also been raised regarding resource usage, particularly water consumption, in a region where sustainability is critical. These discussions underscore the importance of balancing luxury development with responsible environmental stewardship to ensure long-term benefits for both the local economy and ecosystems.

Looking ahead: A strategic asset for the kingdom

Dream of the Desert stands as a strategic tourism asset that reflects Saudi Arabia's broader ambitions on the global stage. By combining luxury hospitality, cultural storytelling, and sustainability-focused travel, the Kingdom's first luxury train aligns seamlessly with global tourism trends while offering an experience unique to Saudi Arabia.

BUSINESS TRAVELLER

Going Places: 26 Extraordinary Experiences to Try in 2026

CREDIT: ETIHAD RAIL

8. Travel by rail

Etihad Rail is set to enter its passenger era in 2026. The 900km network connecting all seven emirates will begin carrying passengers from the Saudi border to Fujairah, initially linking 11 cities across the country, operated by Keolis International (which also runs Dubai Metro).

Saudi Arabia's first ultra-luxury train, Dream of the Desert, will also launch in 2026. Designed by Arsenale Group – the force behind the Orient Express revival – the train will operate five curated routes across the kingdom, complete with fine dining.

fact.

On The Move In 2026

OF ROADS AND RAILWAYS

According to Hilton's 2026 Trends Report, more of us will be taking to the highways in 2026 – it's no surprise that the hashtag #RoadTrip has racked up more than 5.9 million tags globally!

And explore.co.uk says more travellers are choosing epic rail journeys over short-haul flights – making the journey part of the holiday – in fact, the company has seen a 25% increase in rail bookings over the last year.

While Hilton's report finds some travellers are taking to the roads to save cash, others are seeking out the more luxe option with specialist companies turning the road trip into a curated journey built around Michelin-starred dining and one-off experiences.

In rail too there are dual purpose journeys. The appetite for slow, scenic travel is on the rise but rail with its student and multi-journey perks can also prove a cost-effective option. While luxury rail travel too is experiencing an upsurge with the likes of Saudi Arabia's soon to be launched ultraluxe train, Dream of the Desert, due to offer various routes reminiscent of the golden age of rail travel

Slow travel: Saudi Arabia unveils 'Dream of the Desert' sleeper train

January 14, 2026

Saudi Arabia is preparing to launch its first ultra-luxury train, Dream of the Desert, designed to showcase the country's landscapes and heritage through slow travel experiences on rail. Jenny Southan reports

Saudi Arabia has revealed plans for its first ultra-luxury sleeper train, Dream of the Desert, a new rail experience coming in late 2026 that has been developed by Italy-based Arsenale Group, in partnership with Saudi Arabia Railways and national tourism bodies.

Dream of the Desert is designed to carry just 66 passengers across a 1,300km network through Saudi Arabia. The train consists of 14 carriages, including 33 suite cabins, two restaurant cars and a majlis-inspired lounge. Prices start from SAR 30,000 (about £6,000) per cabin per night.

The project marks a significant step in the Kingdom's efforts to expand high-end tourism beyond hotels and resorts, and into experiential travel. It has been conceived as a "slow travel" experience, with journeys that place as much emphasis on time spent onboard as on guided excursions off the train.

The interiors of Dream of the Desert have been designed by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman, founder of Culture in Architecture. The carriages are Italian-built but have been refitted rather than replaced, a decision that reflects a focus on reuse and long-term value.

Materials and design references draw on Saudi traditions, including carved wood, woven textiles and colour palettes inspired by desert landscapes and oasis greenery.

Asmar d'Amman says: "Slow travel is about surrendering to the moment. My aim is to induce this feeling by translating it into a tactile and visual language: velvety textiles that invite touch, warm woods that recall traditional craft, sculptural lighting that creates intimacy.

"The desert's palette of earthy tones, and sandy browns are balanced with a zest of lavender, oasis green and burnt oranges, infusing each space with a sense of culture and serenity. From the reception lounge to the restaurant, the interiors become a continuous meditation on presence and place in motion."

Dining plays a central role in the experience. The two restaurant cars will serve rotating menus created by local and international chefs. One focuses on Saudi flavours and regional produce, while the other blends Italian techniques with global influences. Meals are included as part of the journey, alongside curated on-board programming

Paolo Berletta, chief executive of Arsenale Group, says Dream of the Desert builds on the company's experience in luxury rail, following the launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express in Italy. He describes the Saudi project as the company's first overseas luxury train and a foundation for further expansion in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.

Pre-reservations for Dream of the Desert are now open, with pricing varying by itinerary and including accommodation, meals and experiences. A refundable pre-booking fee of SAR 2,500 per suite (about £500) provides priority access once full reservations open, as well as an invitation to the inaugural launch event.

menus created by local and international chefs. One focuses on Saudi flavours and regional produce, while the other blends Italian techniques with global influences. Meals are included as part of the journey, alongside curated on-board programming and guided off-train experiences.

Five itineraries have been announced, each running between October and May, except for two seasonal routes. These range from a two-day return journey from Riyadh to Jubbah, centred on prehistoric rock art sites, to longer routes that continue north to Al Jouf and AlUla.

One itinerary, "Ramadan Nights", operates during February and March and includes overnight travel with suhoor and iftar served onboard, alongside a stargazing stop in Qassim. Another, "Summer Mirage", is designed for warmer months and takes place entirely onboard, departing from and returning to Riyadh.

Pre-reservations for Dream of the Desert are now open, with pricing varying by itinerary and including accommodation, meals and experiences. A refundable pre-booking fee of SAR 2,500 per suite (about £500) provides priority access once full reservations open, as well as an invitation to the inaugural launch event.

The introduction of Dream of the Desert reflects a broader shift in Saudi Arabia's tourism strategy towards immersive, place-led experiences that encourage longer stays and deeper engagement with the country's culture and geography. For the luxury travel sector, it signals growing demand for rail-based journeys that combine comfort, storytelling and low-paced exploration.

Each itinerary combines rail travel with cultural and natural experiences such as visits to Diriyah, desert camps, guided heritage tours and hosted meals in outdoor settings. Accommodation off the train is included on selected routes, particularly those ending in AlUla.

The project has been developed in collaboration with Saudi Arabia Railways, the Ministry of Culture, the Saudi Tourism Authority and the Tourism Development Fund. Saudi Arabia Railways operates a 5,000km network across the country and plays a central role in the Kingdom's Vision 2030 strategy to improve connectivity and diversify the economy through tourism and logistics.

TRAVEL AND TOUR WORLD

The Dream of the Desert Sleeper Train: A Luxury Tour Through Saudi Arabia's Breathtaking Scenery

Published on January 16, 2026

In a groundbreaking move for luxury travel, Saudi Arabia has announced the debut of its Dream of the Desert sleeper train, set to launch in late 2026. Developed in collaboration with the Italy-based Arsenale Group, Saudi Arabia Railways, and national tourism authorities, this ultra-luxury train experience promises to offer travelers a unique way to explore the kingdom's vast landscapes, rich heritage, and cultural sites.

The Dream of the Desert sleeper train is designed for those seeking a truly exclusive and immersive travel experience. With a 1,300km rail network running through some of the country's most iconic and scenic regions, this innovative rail journey will cater to just 66 passengers at a time, ensuring an intimate and personalized experience. The announcement has generated excitement among those interested in exploring Saudi Arabia's natural beauty and heritage in style and comfort.

Luxury and Comfort on Rails

The Dream of the Desert train is built to be a mobile luxury hotel, consisting of 14 carriages that include 33 suite cabins, two restaurant cars, and a majlis-inspired lounge. Passengers will have the opportunity to relax and enjoy the picturesque views from their private suite, or socialize in the lounge area, designed with elements of traditional Saudi culture.

Each suite will offer a level of comfort typically found in five-star hotels, providing an unmatched level of privacy and relaxation for passengers. The train's design reflects a fusion of traditional Arabic architecture with modern amenities, ensuring that the journey is both culturally enriching and incredibly luxurious.

For those with an appetite for fine dining, the two restaurant cars aboard the Dream of the Desert will serve gourmet meals, showcasing Saudi Arabia's rich culinary traditions and local ingredients. Guests can expect a curated menu that highlights the diversity of Saudi cuisine, from traditional Middle Eastern dishes to contemporary interpretations of regional flavors.

Exploring Saudi Arabia's Landscapes and Heritage

The Dream of the Desert is not just a journey; it is an immersive experience that brings travelers face-to-face with Saudi Arabia's stunning and diverse landscapes. The route is designed to take passengers through the country's vast deserts, mountain ranges, and historic sites, offering a rare opportunity to witness the beauty of Saudi Arabia from the comfort of a luxurious train.

Key highlights of the journey will include views of Saudi Arabia's rugged Red Sea coastline, the mystical Empty Quarter Desert, and the ancient city of Al-Ula, known for its rock formations and Nabataean tombs. The train will also pass through regions that are home to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, such as Diriyah, the historical heart of Riyadh, and Madain Saleh, one of the kingdom's most famous archaeological sites.

In addition to the breathtaking landscapes, passengers will also have the chance to experience Saudi Arabia's cultural heritage through on-board activities, including traditional music performances, storytelling sessions, and guided tours of the destinations visited during the journey. These experiences aim to offer passengers a deeper understanding of the history and culture of the region.

Luxury and Comfort on Rails

The Dream of the Desert train is built to be a mobile luxury hotel, consisting of 14 carriages that include 33 suite cabins, two restaurant cars, and a majlis-inspired lounge. Passengers will have the opportunity to relax and enjoy the picturesque views from their private suite, or socialize in the lounge area, designed with elements of traditional Saudi culture.

Each suite will offer a level of comfort typically found in five-star hotels, providing an unmatched level of privacy and relaxation for passengers. The train's design reflects a fusion of traditional Arabic architecture with modern amenities, ensuring that the journey is both culturally enriching and incredibly luxurious.

For those with an appetite for fine dining, the two restaurant cars aboard the Dream of the Desert will serve gourmet meals, showcasing Saudi Arabia's rich culinary traditions and local ingredients. Guests can expect a curated menu that highlights the diversity of Saudi cuisine, from traditional Middle Eastern dishes to contemporary interpretations of regional flavors.

Exploring Saudi Arabia's Landscapes and Heritage

The Dream of the Desert is not just a journey; it is an immersive experience that brings travelers face-to-face with Saudi Arabia's stunning and diverse landscapes. The route is designed to take passengers through the country's vast deserts, mountain ranges, and historic sites, offering a rare opportunity to witness the beauty of Saudi Arabia from the comfort of a luxurious train.

Key highlights of the journey will include views of Saudi Arabia's rugged Red Sea coastline, the mystical Empty Quarter Desert, and the ancient city of Al-Ula, known for its rock formations and Nabataean tombs. The train will also pass through regions that are home to UNESCO World Heritage Sites, such as Diriyah, the historical heart of Riyadh, and Madain Saleh, one of the kingdom's most famous archaeological sites.

In addition to the breathtaking landscapes, passengers will also have the chance to experience Saudi Arabia's cultural heritage through on-board activities, including traditional music performances, storytelling sessions, and guided tours of the destinations visited during the journey. These experiences aim to offer passengers a deeper understanding of the history and culture of the region.

Pricing and Accessibility

The Dream of the Desert train is positioned as an exclusive luxury offering, with prices starting from SAR 30,000 (approximately £6,000) per cabin per night. This high-end pricing reflects the elite nature of the experience, with the train catering to affluent travelers seeking a distinctive way to explore Saudi Arabia. Given the exclusivity of the service, bookings will likely be limited, adding to the train's appeal as a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

While the price may seem steep for some, it includes all onboard services, from luxurious accommodations and gourmet meals to exclusive excursions and entertainment, ensuring that passengers receive exceptional value for their investment.

The introduction of the Dream of the Desert sleeper train is a direct response to the growing demand for high-end travel experiences in Saudi Arabia. As the country continues to position itself as a global tourism destination, with ambitious plans under the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative, the launch of this ultra-luxury train is part of a broader effort to diversify the kingdom's tourism offerings and attract international visitors.

The Future of Travel in Saudi Arabia

The Dream of the Desert train marks the beginning of a new chapter in Saudi Arabia's tourism development, highlighting the kingdom's commitment to combining modern infrastructure with traditional hospitality. With the continued investment in tourism infrastructure and unique travel experiences like this, Saudi Arabia is positioning itself as a destination that offers something truly special for discerning travelers.

In the future, the train could serve as a model for other luxury rail experiences in the Middle East, providing a new way to explore the region's rich history, diverse landscapes, and cultural heritage. As interest in slow travel continues to rise globally, the Dream of the Desert is set to become a leading example of how luxury trains can offer unforgettable journeys that prioritize comfort, culture, and adventure.

Conclusion: A Journey Like No Other

Set to launch in late 2026, the Dream of the Desert sleeper train offers a transformative way to explore the wonders of Saudi Arabia. With its unparalleled luxury, cultural immersion, and scenic views, this rail experience promises to attract travelers looking to experience Saudi Arabia in a way few ever have. Whether you're a history buff, a nature enthusiast, or someone seeking a unique travel experience, the Dream of the Desert offers a journey that's sure to leave lasting memories.

Condé Nast Traveler

26 Reasons Our Editors Are Excited to Travel in 2026

From faces to watch and books to read, to must-see destinations and events, here are 26 things we're excited about in 2026.

Dream of the Desert will bring ultra luxury train travel to Saudi Arabia. Stephan Julliard

Well trained

The United Arab Emirates's first passenger train services are on track to launch in 2026. Once complete, the Etihad Rail network will run over 900 kilometers, connecting 11 cities across all seven emirates, traversing desert and mountains, and connecting coasts. Then, in late 2026, the new *Dream of the Desert* will bring ultra luxury train travel to Saudi Arabia, with 33 suites, and majlis and dining cars in 14 redesigned vintage Italian carriages. Interiors by Lebanese architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman take inspiration from Saudi's craft heritage, traditional motifs and the beauty of the kingdom's deserts. One- and two-night journeys will begin in Riyadh and travel to destinations such as Al Jouf and Jubbah. —*Nicola Chilton*

AD MIDDLE EAST

6 Luxury Train-Sleepers and Yachts To Book in 2026

Why fly when you can board Saudi's Dream of the Desert in a gown and wake up to desert canyons, crisp white sheets and a butler on hand?

Luxury train travel is having its moment. We're here to give you six of the best luxury train sleepers and yachts for a trip that oozes 1930s glamour.

Flying is not what it used to be. Somewhere along the way, the romance of the journey began to fade away; in place of experience, modern air travel began to promise efficiency above all else. Pair that with a growing consciousness of our environmental footprint, and a shift feels inevitable. Switching from a domestic flight to rail can cut carbon emissions by as much as 86 per cent, according to analysis by Our World in Data on travel's carbon footprint, and since the term was coined in 2018, "flight shame" has slowly evolved from niche Scandinavian slogan to widespread cultural sentiment.

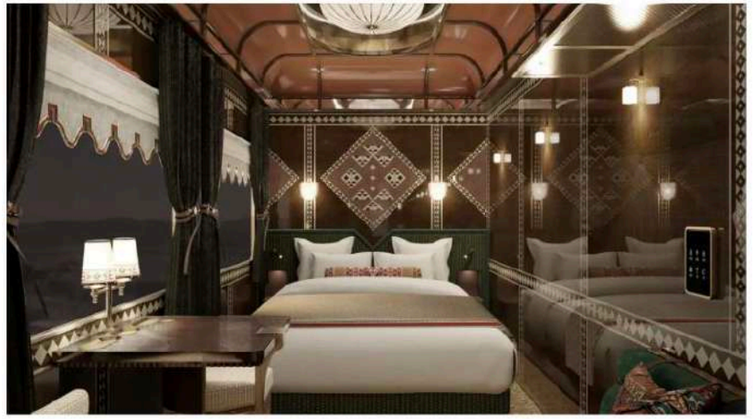
Slow is the operative word. It is slower travel, by rail and increasingly by sea, that is rising in its place. Specialist operators such as Railbookers, who curate independent rail holidays across Europe and North America, report a noticeable surge in travellers choosing panoramic windows over departure gates, trading the so-called efficiency of a middle seat for a journey that feels like part of the holiday. And while ships are hardly without environmental scrutiny, their impact on oceans and emissions is the subject of growing debate, a new generation of smaller-scale, design-led vessels is positioning the voyage itself as something more considered and intentional.

Photo: Stephan Julliard

It harkens to a time gone by. In the 1930s, the world marvelled at the Blue Train and the Orient Express, at ocean liners where a crossing could unfold as both social theatre and cinematic spectacle. Nostalgia for that "golden age" has never completely vanished; what's new in 2026 is the reasoning behind its revival. A recent trend report by design studio JPA Design calls it "The Golden Age Reimagined", a return to rail, sea and slow travel driven not only by retro glamour, but by a desire for immersion, narrative and more mindful movement. This shift is already visible in how travel is being captured online. On social media, the appetite for slower, more intentional journeys has become unmistakable: content tagged #slowtravel on TikTok grew nearly 330 per cent in 2025, while #wellnesstravel surged 150 per cent.

The message is clear: a second golden age of travel is taking shape, and the industry is designing for it. Hotel groups, rail operators and luxury hospitality brands are expanding beyond static destinations, investing in long-form journeys shaped around narrative, craftsmanship and immersion. From Saudi Arabia's Dream of the Desert to Italy's cinematic La Dolce Vita, from the Britannic Explorer to a new wave of hotel-branded yachts, the following projects are redefining the art of the journey.

Dream of the Desert



Saudi Arabia's Dream of the Desert is more than the region's first luxury sleeper train. Running from Riyadh through 1,300 kilometres of shifting terrain, the 14-carriage experience carries just 66 guests at a time, making it intimate in scale as well as in design. The project, developed by Italy's Arsenale Group in partnership with Saudi Arabia Railways and designed by Aline Asmar d'Amman, layers Saudi craft traditions onto refurbished Italian carriages. Carved wood panels, woven textiles and brass detailing nod to regional heritage without slipping into pastiche, while a palette drawn from sand, sage and burnt terracotta feels instinctively grounded.

Light filters through geometric screens; lounges echo the convivial rhythm of a majlis. It's plush but composed, perhaps even a touch less ostentatious than expected, which somehow makes it all the more powerful. The interiors are luxurious, but more so is the quality of time: the unhurried hours spent watching desert light shift from amber to indigo. It arrives at a moment when the Kingdom is shifting toward experiential tourism.

Hospitalitynews MIDDLE EAST

Aline Asmar d'Amman on designing meaningful journeys

January 28,2026 Rita Ghantous

Aline Asmar d'Amman is renowned for crafting spaces where heritage, culture and contemporary design meet with purpose. From palaces to trains, her work explores luxury rooted in emotion, context and timeless cultural relevance worldwide.

You have worked on iconic projects worldwide. How do you balance heritage and modernity when redesigning historically rich spaces?

My work is rooted in transmitting heritage through dialogue between past and future, therefore guided by stories of cultural connection. For me, craftsmanship and artistry represent ultimate luxury, honoring millennial gestures while capturing the spirit of our times today. This philosophy fuels every project, as I constantly seek purpose, emotional intelligence and cultural relevance through meaningful architectural narratives. Although designing a train interior was a first, the philosophy mirrors my work on patrimonial hospitality landmarks worldwide. Furthermore, projects like Hôtel de Crillon or Orient Express Venezia begin with context, stories and poetic materiality while resolving construction constraints carefully. Moreover, for Dream of the Desert, I studied Saudi architecture, crafts, textiles, wood carvings and nomadic elements through a contemporary lens. Ultimately, capturing spirit of place and time remains artistry at its finest, where culture and craft build meaningful futures.

As an architect inspired by history, what essential architectural lessons should contemporary cities learn from the past?

Design must tell virtuous stories that elevate the soul, therefore inducing joy, wonderment and purpose through thoughtful material choices. Therefore, every material carries memory and authenticity, so architecture should respect cultural narratives while creating spaces built to endure. Consequently, I strive for balance, connecting raw and precious past and future, while grounding every project in its local culture.

You founded Culture in Architecture to foster dialogue. How do you see this initiative shaping future global design collaboration?

Culture in Architecture thrives on abundance of ideas, layering stories across architecture, interiors, décor, art and curated objects. Thus, in a fast-moving world, creativity rooted in emotional intelligence and truthful narratives will always remain deeply valued. Moreover, this freedom to invent allows modernity to emerge from tradition, creating what I call the concrete poetry of architects.

What has been your most meaningful project so far, and what made it especially significant personally?

Choosing a favorite project is impossible, because every creative journey carries its own purpose, place and emotional responsibility. At Hôtel de Crillon, I imagined Marie Antoinette awakening today, designing a contemporary stage balancing heritage and bold modernity. Working alongside Karl Lagerfeld was a lifelong gift, as his erudition, generosity and humor deeply shaped my creative vision. Renovating Le Jules Verne within the Eiffel Tower united engineering audacity, gastronomy and symbolism into a powerful architectural narrative. Dream of the Desert was envisioned as an emotional passage, where each space becomes a poetic chapter rooted in Saudi heritage.

Which architectural or design direction are you most excited to explore in your upcoming work?

My work stands beyond trends, instead pursuing timeless elegance that bridges past and future with sustainable relevance. Architecture holds a moral duty to seek contextual truth, beauty and responsible material use through lasting meaningful projects. From buildings to objects and trains to boats, diverse scales inspire me, while poetic materiality and storytelling remain constant.

Construction Week
MIDDLE EAST

Luxury, in motion: Discover the design story behind Dream of the Desert

In this exclusive Q&A, Aline Asmar d'Amman unpacks the design philosophy behind the Dream of the Desert project

By Pranati Yekula

January 29, 2026

Save

Highlights by Level4 AI — Unlock AI insights - Subscribe

As travellers increasingly seek depth over speed, slow travel is redefining luxury, shifting the focus from constant documentation to meaningful immersion in culture. Rail journeys, in particular, are emerging as a new frontier for this movement.

Dream of the Desert is one such journey. Much like the rhythm of the train itself, interior architect Aline Asmar d'Amman translates Saudi Arabia's Najdi architectural language into a contemporary, ultra-luxury hospitality experience, seamlessly blended with Italian savoir-faire. In this Q&A, she unpacks the design philosophy behind the project, the nuances of designing for movement, and how heritage and modernity coexist on board.

How does the project design respond to its Saudi Arabian context?

In my recent realisation for the Dream of the Desert train interiors, I passionately studied the details of Saudi architecture and artisanal traditions – from the monolithic romains at Madain Saleh, alUlA, to the intricate textile weavings of regional artisans, the wood carvings on Jeddah's facades with their distinctive green colour, and the nomadic oil lamps that cast a cinematic glow in the desert, translating these elements through a refined contemporary lens with the gesture of today's artisans. Capturing the spirit of place and time is artistry at its finest. Everywhere, spaces capture the shades and textures of the desert poetic sandy hues and darker tones of the roc formations, while deep oasis green and burnt oranges complete its wonder palette.

I loved discovering the profound love and symbol of the purple colour adopted since 2021 by Saudi Arabia as the kingdom's royal colour. Inspired by the purple-pink flowers that bloom across the Saudi deserts in spring, mainly in the Asir region, the specific hue of the renowned *"Roses of Taif"* that bloom in unexpected and truly magnificent ways punctuates discreet elements of design, in unusual noble touches. Such as delicate stitching of pink thread on camel tinted leather in the restaurant banquettes, a node to the equestrian saddler language.

Dream of the Desert's elegant reception lounges are inspired by traditional majlis settings, adorned with intricately hand-carved wooden elements, patterns and woven textiles that embody the distinctive signature and warmth of Saudi hospitality. The glass texture of Murano handmade luminaries evoke drops of water on the sand, while others reminisce the Arabian lanterns we call *'nafous'*. The glass shimmering tops are born from sand cast that recalls rock textures. Inspired by the delicate trimmings that adorn abayas and traditional garments, the fabric lampshades seem to have dressed up with

How did the overall interior concept for the Dream of the Desert take shape?

My vision for Dream of the Desert emerged as a cinematic reverie, an immersive journey unfolding like a poem across the vast Saudi landscape. From the outset, I wanted the interiors to feel in motion, as though composed of shifting scenes, textures and colours infused with the mystique of the desert.

Saudi heritage has been familiar to me since early childhood. Growing up in Lebanon, I was exposed to this layered and refined culture through neighbours' homes in Beirut and dear friends' houses in Riyadh. Alongside this, the writings of Arabian poets – from Rumi to Ibn Arabi – deeply shaped my imagination. Ibn Arabi's belief that "a desert may be dry, but it is rich in spirit" became my guiding principle: the idea that apparent emptiness allows beauty and meaning to unfold.

Aline Asmar d'Amman

Dream of the Desert's elegant reception lounges are inspired by traditional majlis settings, adorned with intricately hand-carved wooden elements, patterns and woven textiles that embody the distinctive signature and warmth of Saudi hospitality. The glass texture of Murano handmade luminaries evoke drops of water on the sand, while others reminisce the Arabian lanterns we call *'nafous'*. The glass shimmering tops are born from sand cast that recalls rock textures. Inspired by the delicate trimmings that adorn abayas and traditional garments, the fabric lampshades seem to have dressed up with piping satin contours. Textile weaving and geometric patterns underlining the curtains and cushions evoke traditional high craft in a clean and singular approach. Elegance and hospitality are at the core of the design philosophy that infuse past and modern touches into a tailored lifestyle.

In the lounge, duo seats induce a more intimate moment of conversation while a strong cultural connection impregnates the design, infusing a unique sense of belonging with a modern reinterpretation of the rich country's heritage.

The bar design is inspired by the ancient architecture of Hegra, the archaeological mountain of Hijaz, in a modern reinterpretation of patterns and design. Cultural immersion and true connection with the natural surroundings elevate the art of travelling.

How did durability, movement, and environmental conditions influence material choices?

Durability and movement were fundamental considerations. Every material had to withstand vibration, temperature variations and continuous use, while maintaining refinement. Italian engineering excellence provided a robust foundation, onto which Saudi-inspired artistry could be layered.

Bespoke metal panels, tinted and patinated, were developed to ensure stability while creating intimacy in the lounge spaces. These elements are deeply anchored, balancing technical performance with aesthetic depth. In the restaurant car, a raised ceiling and bespoke Murano glass sconces introduce lightness without compromising structural integrity.

Textiles and finishes were selected not only for beauty, but for longevity and ease of maintenance. Many details conceal complex engineering, allowing craftsmanship to remain visible while function remains seamless.

This fusion of performance and poetry is essential to the project. Materials are not decorative; they are emotional carriers of memory, culture and purpose – designed to endure both physically and culturally.

I studied the proportions and architectural language of Saudi landmarks, from AlUla and Madain Saleh to Hail, drawing from Najdi and Hijazi details. These references were translated subtly, through craftsmanship rather than literal quotation: sculpted wood panels, earthy tones, luxurious textiles and a sense of quiet monumentality.

Each space was conceived as part of a continuous narrative, bridging past and future. Close collaboration with the Saudi Ministry of Culture, its Fashion Department, and the Ministry of Transport enriched the project with deep insight into regional crafts and traditions. Ultimately, Dream of the Desert became a dialogue between Italian craftsmanship and Saudi heritage –a design rooted in cultural relevance, comfort and emotional resonance.

How do you define luxury in the context of this project?

Luxury, in this project, is defined by intention rather than excess. It lies in transformation, craftsmanship and meaning. Working with existing Italian wagons, we embraced upcycling as an act of creative reinvention – layering them with Saudi soul rather than starting anew.

For me, this approach reflects the future of ultra-luxury: respectful of history, sustainable, and emotionally intelligent. Rather than erasing what existed, we chose to elevate it. Italian savoir-faire meets Saudi artistry through a careful balance of materials, techniques and cultural references. This cross-cultural dialogue, developed in collaboration with Arsenale and the Saudi Ministry of Culture, became a defining element of the project.

What did the planning process look like with physical constraints of a train in mind?

From the earliest stages, the planning process was shaped by the reality that a train is not a static architecture, but a moving body. This required a fundamental shift in perspective. Every decision had to anticipate motion, vibration, weight distribution and technical limitations, while preserving the emotional and narrative depth of the project.

The work began with an intensive dialogue between concept and constraint. Volumes were studied meticulously, circulation refined to avoid rigidity, and proportions adjusted to ensure comfort without excess. The challenge was to create a sense of generosity within finite dimensions – spaces that feel expansive emotionally, even when physically compact.

Materials, too, were considered early in the planning process. Their thickness, anchoring systems and resistance to movement informed the design language. Nothing could be purely decorative; every element had to serve both a poetic and a functional role.

Rather than perceiving these constraints as limitations, I embraced them as a creative framework. They encouraged clarity, precision and restraint. The train became a disciplined canvas – one that demanded coherence and intention. In many ways, this rigour sharpened the project's identity, allowing the interiors to feel composed, fluid and deeply considered.

What lessons from this project might inform your approach to future transport or hospitality design?

Dream of the Desert reaffirmed a belief that has long guided my work: that the most meaningful projects emerge from listening – to context, to culture, and to constraint. Designing for movement sharpened my understanding of rhythm, sequencing and emotional pacing within space.

The project reinforced the importance of restraint. When space is limited and conditions are demanding, every gesture must be intentional. This discipline enhances clarity and strengthens narrative coherence – principles that are equally relevant in hospitality, residential and transport design.

Materials, too, were considered early in the planning process. Their thickness, anchoring systems and resistance to movement informed the design language. Nothing could be purely decorative; every element had to serve both a poetic and a functional role.

Rather than perceiving these constraints as limitations, I embraced them as a creative framework. They encouraged clarity, precision and restraint. The train became a disciplined canvas – one that demanded coherence and intention. In many ways, this rigour sharpened the project's identity, allowing the interiors to feel composed, fluid and deeply considered.

What lessons from this project might inform your approach to future transport or hospitality design?

Dream of the Desert reaffirmed a belief that has long guided my work: that the most meaningful projects emerge from listening – to context, to culture, and to constraint. Designing for movement sharpened my understanding of rhythm, sequencing and emotional pacing within space.

The project reinforced the importance of restraint. When space is limited and conditions are demanding, every gesture must be intentional. This discipline enhances clarity and strengthens narrative coherence – principles that are equally relevant in hospitality, residential and transport design.

Materials, too, were considered early in the planning process. Their thickness, anchoring systems and resistance to movement informed the design language. Nothing could be purely decorative; every element had to serve both a poetic and a functional role.

Rather than perceiving these constraints as limitations, I embraced them as a creative framework. They encouraged clarity, precision and restraint. The train became a disciplined canvas – one that demanded coherence and intention. In many ways, this rigour sharpened the project's identity, allowing the interiors to feel composed, fluid and deeply considered.

What lessons from this project might inform your approach to future transport or hospitality design?

Dream of the Desert reaffirmed a belief that has long guided my work: that the most meaningful projects emerge from listening – to context, to culture, and to constraint. Designing for movement sharpened my understanding of rhythm, sequencing and emotional pacing within space.

Finally, the project highlighted the value of collaboration across disciplines. When design, engineering and craftsmanship evolve together, the result is not a compromise but an elevation. These lessons will continue to inform my approach: creating spaces that are emotionally generous, culturally anchored and designed to endure – both materially and meaningfully.

Luxury is also expressed through time. Dream of the Desert is about slow travel, surrendering to the rhythm of the journey. That philosophy informed every design choice: velvety textiles that invite touch, warm woods reminiscent of traditional dwellings, and sculptural lighting that creates intimacy rather than spectacle.

The palette draws directly from the desert: sand, earthy browns, lavender hues and oasis greens – establishing a sense of grounded serenity. Each space, from the reception lounge to the restaurant, encourages presence and contemplation. Here, luxury is not loud; it is tactile, cultural and deeply considered.

What considerations shaped the interior experience for passengers spending time onboard?

Design, to me, is a form of storytelling – a way of conveying humanistic values through materials and space. When conceiving interiors for extended journeys, comfort alone is not enough; emotional rhythm becomes essential. I wanted passengers to feel a sense of belonging and suspension, where time slows, and the experience unfolds gradually.

Rather than recreating tradition as pastiche, the interiors reinterpret Saudi heritage in a contemporary, respectful manner. Each space acts as a chapter in a continuous narrative: the welcoming majlis-inspired lounge, the contemplative private suites, and the refined restaurant. Together, they form a journey not only through landscape, but through atmosphere and emotion.

Material choices play a crucial role in sustaining comfort over time. Soft textiles, warm surfaces and carefully modulated lighting reduce sensory fatigue, while subtle variations in colour and texture maintain visual interest throughout the day. Movement is embraced rather than hidden – the gentle rhythm of the train becomes part of the experience.

Passengers are invited to inhabit the train as they would a living space, not a transient one. Spaces encourage both social interaction and solitude, allowing individuals to choose their own pace. Ultimately, the design seeks to create a sensorial crescendo – where culture, comfort and beauty coexist effortlessly.

What aspects of train design required a completely different way of thinking compared to homes or hotels?

While this is the first time I work on the design of a train interior, the philosophy remains the same as with working on large-scale hospitality projects steeped in patrimonial buildings (like Palazzo Dona Giovannelli, the Orient-Express Hotel to come in Venice or Hotel de Crillon, a Rosewood Paris, place de la Concorde). The creative journey starts with context and stories – taking us to unexpected yet fertile horizons. I like to think that challenges make the best projects. Dream of the Desert is therefore not only about luxury hospitality on rails and slow travel, but also a remarkable opportunity to pay homage to a highly sought-after culture – one with so much to share with the world.

My architectural work is rooted in the transmission of past to future, elevated by cultural connection stories. For me, craftsmanship is the ultimate bridge between past and present, a form of luxury passed down through generations, from one skilled hand to another. I spent hours studying the details of a Saudi architecture – the intricate textile weavings, delicate wood carvings, and oil lamps that cast a cinematic glow – translating these elements through a refined contemporary lens, thoughtfully adapted to the unique spatial and technical constraints of a train.

The future I imagine is one of thoughtful modernity, where innovation honours memory, and where cultural dialogue becomes the new definition of luxury.

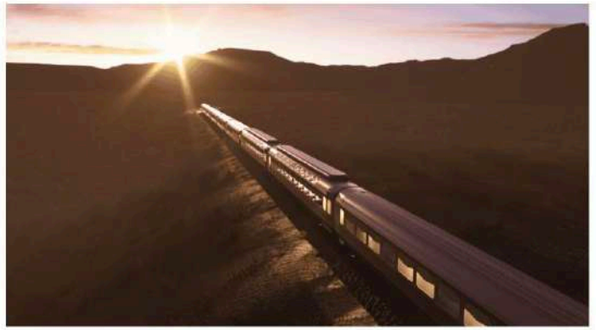
Leaders

Year-End Review: The Leaders-Mena Website's most-read Stories of 2025

11 – Riyadh Metro, Desert Dream Train Emerge among Most Anticipated Projects in 2025

The Riyadh Metro Project and the Dream of the Desert Train have emerged among the world's highly-anticipated transportation projects in 2025, according to CNN. These two projects have gained global prominence owing to their unique designs and outstanding nature.

Read more..



Riyadh Metro, Desert Dream Train Emerge among Most Anticipated Projects in 2025

The Riyadh Metro Project and the Dream of the Desert Train have emerged among the world's highly-anticipated transportation projects in 2025, according to CNN. These two projects have gained global prominence owing to their unique designs and outstanding nature. The two projects are part of Saudi Arabia's developmental infrastructure projects, further underscoring the Kingdom's commitment ... Continue reading

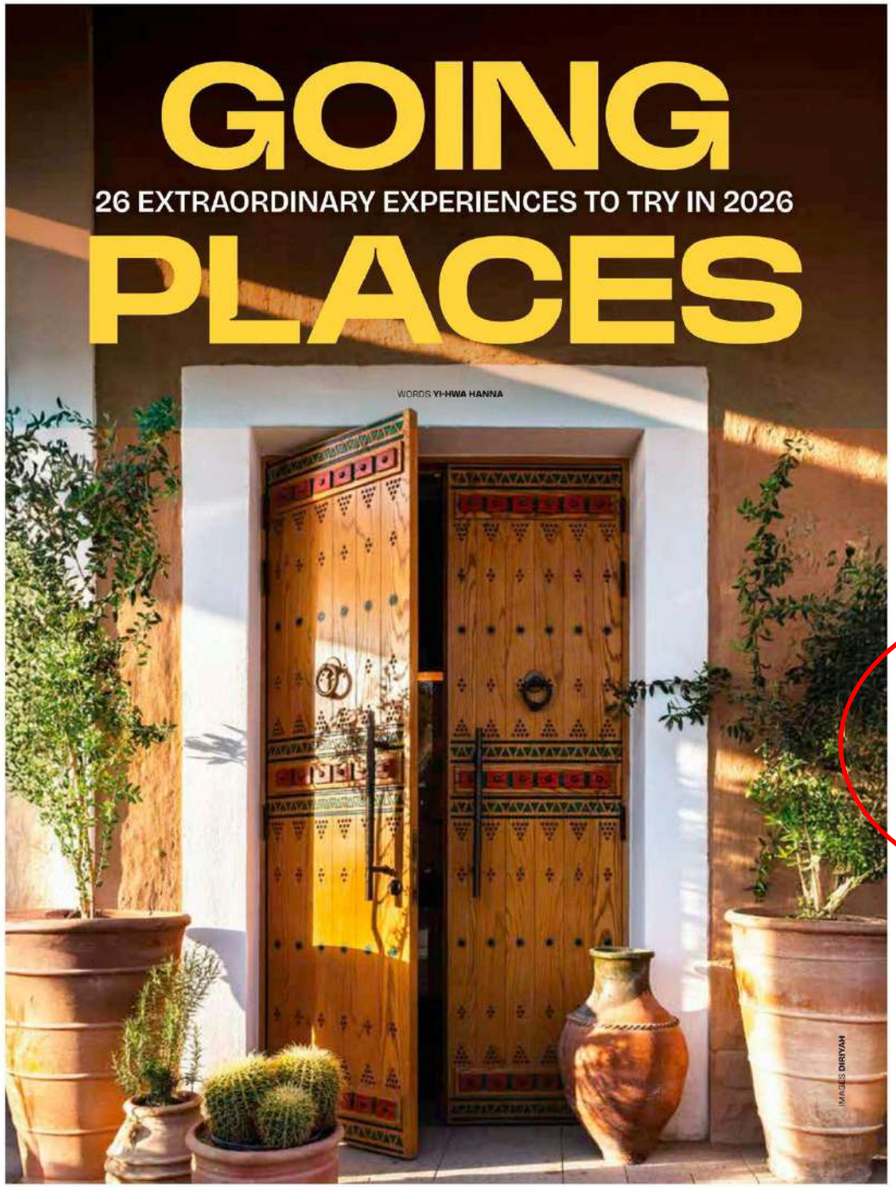
Leaders 0

Business Traveller MIDDLE EAST

GOING PLACES

26 EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES TO TRY IN 2026

WORDS YI-HWA HANNA



IMAGES DIRIYAH

5 Take a thrill ride

High-adrenaline environments are studies in risk management, safety systems, and human response under pressure – key lessons in the boardroom and life. With an opening date of 31 December 2025, Six Flags in Saudi Arabia's Qiddiya is an immense new tourism attraction that represents the kingdom's push to anchor entertainment within large-scale economic diversification. The park has six themed lands, 28 rides and the world's fastest, tallest, and longest roller coaster.

6 Soothe your soul

The quest for well-being has pervaded almost every industry across the world – including travel. Wellness travel increasingly focuses on ways to regulate our stress, sleep, attention, and nervous systems, rather than indulgence. For busy professionals, it can offer a chance at recalibration. Taking place amidst the natural wonders of the ancient landscape, AlUla Wellness Festival – which typically runs for about two weeks – offers holistic experiences like yoga, meditation, music, and desert adventures alongside fitness classes. While the 2026 edition's dates have yet to be announced, the festival is typically held from late October to early November.

7 Immerse into nature

Spending time in nature can help to improve cognitive function and emotional resilience. From late June to September each year, the usually dry terrain of Salalah in Oman's Dhofar region transforms into a lush landscape of waterfalls, greenery, and cool breezes that shroud its mountains with an atmospheric mist. In Saudi, the UNESCO-recognised Taif Rose Festival closes the rose-picking season each April, offering a chance to learn how its fragrant Damask rose is used in food, perfume and more. In Jordan, Yarmouk Eco Lodge – a new sustainable tourism project by Jordan's Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature and EcoHotels in the Yarmouk Biosphere Forest Reserve – is set to open in 2026.

8 Travel by rail

Etihad Rail is set to enter its passenger era in 2026. The 900km network connecting all seven emirates will begin carrying passengers from the Saudi border to Fujairah, initially linking 11 cities across the country, operated by Keolis International (which also runs Dubai Metro). Saudi Arabia's first ultra-luxury train, Dream of the Desert, will also launch in 2026. Designed by Arsenale Group – the force behind the Orient Express revival – the train will operate five curated routes across the kingdom, complete with with fine dining.

9 Take a flying taxi

Dubai will be launching its first commercial air taxi services, using JOBY aircraft, in early 2026. The service will be bookable via an app, with rides priced akin to premium ride-hailing services. There are four vertiports scheduled within the initial network, at Dubai International Airport (DXB), Palm Jumeirah, Downtown Dubai, and Dubai Marina.

10 Up your style quotient

Good style is a visual language that signals taste, confidence, and attention to detail. While we'll have to wait until 2027 for the next edition of Dubai Watch Week, in 2026, you can catch the brand-new Dubai Mall Festival of Fashion from 29-30 January, and Dubai Fashion Week from 1-6 February.

ABOVE Six Flags Saudi Arabia

LEFT Dream of the Desert

BOTTOM Red Sea Film Festival

11 Be well-read

Literature can expose us to new ideas that strengthen how we think, help us gain new perspectives, build empathy, and expand our imagination. The Emirates Airline Festival of Literature – the Arab World's largest celebration of the written and spoken word – has evolved into a major cultural anchor in the region, and the 2026 edition will be held at the InterContinental Dubai Festival City from 21 to 27 January.

12 Walk the red carpet

Events such as the Red Sea International Film Festival, Istanbul Film Festival, and El Gouna Film Festival place the Middle East firmly within the global cinematic circuit, spotlighting regional talent alongside international premieres. Dates for their 2026 editions have yet to all be announced, but for professionals across various industries, these festivals can offer insight into storytelling, soft power, and creative economies, while reminding us how art often leads social change long before policy follows.

13 Travel by water

Cruises can give us a sense of efficiency by offering the chance to visit multiple destinations without having to deal with constant packing, airport transfers, or logistics. New itineraries entering Middle Eastern ports include those by Celestyal, MSC Cruises, and Saudi Arabia's homegrown AROYA Cruises.

14 Experience the tech of the future

The Middle East is fast emerging as one of the most tech-forward corners of the world, and the region's innovation hubs – such as the upcoming Jaddaf Urban Tech District, a net-zero carbon innovation hub set to be the world's largest urban tech district – provide insight into where industries – and careers – are heading. Events such as LEAP and DeepFest in Saudi Arabia, Dubai Esports and Games Festival, and the Dubai Future Foundation's annual Dubai Future Forum bring together technologists, pioneers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and investors shaping tomorrow's systems. Attending one will keep you on the pulse of the cutting-edge, helping contextualise the disruption that's emerging across markets, and reinforcing the importance of adaptability in a shifting global landscape.

15 Indulge in fine food

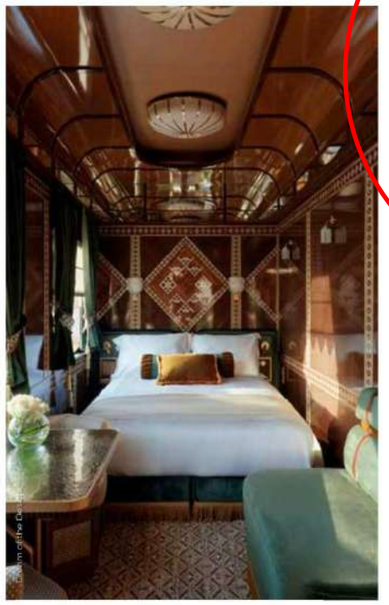
The Middle East's dining scene continues to mature, with chef-driven concepts, hyper-local sourcing, and experimental formats

IMAGES SUPPLIED

fact. QR

ON THE MOVE IN 2026

From chasing the upcoming total solar eclipse to bagging tickets for major sporting events and from going solo and quiet to seeking ultra-personalised experiences, there's loads to look forward to on the travel calendar over the coming year. If you're looking for inspiration for your next big trip, we take a look at some of the top trends to bear in mind when you make that all-important booking.



Lawson Griffiths

saying 45% of its clients are adjusting plans due to climate change. Respondents also said they wanted to reduce pressure on local communities and preserve the authenticity of experiences.

This change in mindset has led to the rise in popularity of destinations outside major tourism hubs with online travel platform Agoda experiencing a significant rise in the number of searches for non-traditional locations.

The company's 2026 Travel Outlook Report noted that governments and tourism authorities are very aware of the trend with countries such as Indonesia and Japan adopting strategies to drive visitors to alternative destinations, aside from Bali and Tokyo.

Check Out: Notjustravel.com and net-a-porter.com for alternative travel ideas.

OF ROADS AND RAILWAYS

According to Hilton's 2026 Trends Report, more of us will be taking to the highways in 2026 – it's no surprise that the hashtag #RoadTrip has racked up more than 5.9 million tags globally!

And explore.co.uk says more travellers are choosing epic rail journeys over short-haul flights – making the journey part of the holiday – in fact, the company has seen a 25% increase in rail bookings over the last year.

While Hilton's report finds some travellers are taking to the roads to save cash, others are seeking out the more luxe option with specialist companies turning the road trip into a curated journey built around Michelin-starred dining and one-off experiences.

In rail too there are dual purpose journeys. The appetite for slow, scenic travel is on the rise but rail with its student and multi-journey perks can also prove a cost-effective option. While luxury rail travel too is experiencing an upsurge with the likes of Saudi Arabia's soon to be launched ultra-luxe train, Dream of the Desert, due to offer various routes reminiscent of the golden age of rail travel.

Check Out: The Society of International Railway Travelers irtsociety.com for information on the world's top luxury trains.

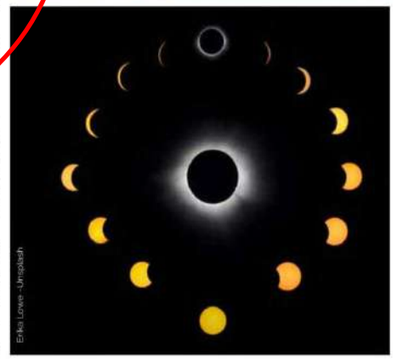
Nicolas Hamel-Lamy - Unsplash

OFF-SEASON BREAKS

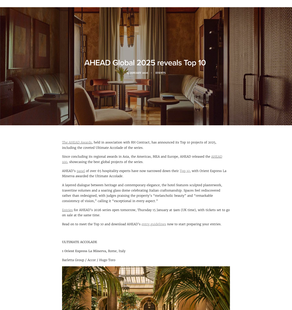
ABTA – The Travel Association says a major emerging trend is September Travel. In terms of both favourable weather and good value, booking a break outside the regular school holidays is growing in popularity. In fact, ABTA's most recent report found one in four people (24%) said they planned to holiday in September, up seven percent on previous years.

While older people aged 55–64-years (29%), and 65+ year olds (35%), said they were most likely to travel in September, there was also an increase in intention to travel during this month across all ages. In particular, the biggest increases were for 18–24-year-olds from 11% to 17% and 35-44-year-olds from 12% to 20%.

September is not the only time proving popular – other



Erika Lowe - Unsplash



AHEAD Global 2025 reveals Top 10

Jonathan Crane

The AHEAD Awards, held in association with BD Contract, has announced its Top 10 projects of 2025, including the coveted Ultimate Accolade of the series.

Since concluding its regional awards in Asia, the Americas, MEA and Europe, AHEAD released the AHEAD 100, showcasing the best global projects of the series.

AHEAD's jurors of over 25 hospitality experts have now narrowed down their Top 100, with Green Express La Méseyna, Rome, Italy, in the lead.

Inspired dialogue between heritage and contemporary elegance, the hotel features sculpted plasterwork, travertine volumes and a soaring glass dome embracing Italian craftsmanship. Spaces feel enhancement rather than redesigned, with judges praising the property's "fantastically literary" and "remarkable consistency of vision," calling it "exceptional in every aspect."

Further, for AHEAD's social series open innovation, Thursday 15 January at 4am (UK time), with tickets set to go on sale at the same time.

Read on to meet the Top 10 and download AHEAD's entry guidelines now to start preparing your entries.

ULTIMATE ACCOLADE

1 Green Express La Méseyna, Rome, Italy

Sacheen Group / Acito / Hugo Tere

Blending refined residential charm with retrieved Roman architecture, the hotel was given a new lease of life by Hugo Tere for Acito and Sacheen Group, earning it titles of both AHEAD Europe Hotel of the Year and now the series' Ultimate Accolade.

From the renovated cobble straight to sculpted bar, velvets and travertine-lined volumes, the design unfolds as a layered narrative where retrieval of architectural history meet modern refinement. Bespoke guestrooms and suites incorporate curved forms, tactile finishes and soft lighting, while public areas reveal layered details, while the hot footwork a soaring glass dome channels the romance of grand travel with its poetic restraint and richly textured palette. Throughout, the intervention is both bold and deeply respectful – a contemporary chapter written into a historic character while introducing a fresh, atmospheric language. The result is a hotel that feels unfiltered and rather than redesigned, its spaces infused with resilience, geometry and unmistakably Italian craft.

Judges praised the project's "remarkable harmony" and "remarkable consistency of vision," celebrating its "beautiful warmth and layering," "extraordinary use of geometry and pattern" and "exceptional art condition" contrasting so diverse and iconic sites. They described it as "exceptional in every aspect," a benchmark for how to revive history with both sensitivity and ambition.

TOP 10

2 Desert Rock Resort, Tabuk Province, Saudi Arabia

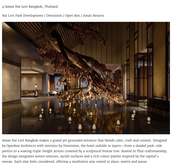
Red Sea Global / Operations Architecture / Studio Paolo Ferrari

Set within the rugged, rocky landscape, carved into the mountain-face, Desert Rock's monumental forms emerge from rock and stone into a distinctive presence. Named AHEAD MEA Hotel of the Year, the tactile yet emotional design by Operations Architecture and Studio Paolo Ferrari redefines the relationship between architecture and landscape – planter, limestone and charred wood compose spaces that feel at once ancient and refined. Each guestroom offers a meditative connection to nature, with Bedouin-inspired textiles, hand-woven rugs and bespoke furniture. The resort is designed to LEED Gold and Dark Sky standards, Desert Rock exemplifies regenerative luxury in one of the world's most dramatic environments.

Judges praised the project as "stunning" and "timeless," commending its "seamless integration with the landscape" and "bold yet sensitive architectural expression." They described it as "a regional benchmark" that balances formal strength with calm intimacy, contributing meaningfully to Saudi Arabia's evolving hospitality landscape.

3 Shelburn Resort, Tabuk Province, Saudi Arabia

Red Sea Global / Kilo Design / Studio Paolo Ferrari



Offering an innovative experience that balances innovative design and warmth, the 132 key resort by Kilo Design and Studio Paolo Ferrari floats above coral-laden waters in polished stainless steel orbs. Inside, curved forms, tactile finishes and panoramic glazing create a sensory environment that blurs boundaries and encourages deeper connection with the coral reef, accentuated by immersive lighting and soundscapes. Sustainability is deeply rooted in the resort, centered on conservation and regeneration of the reef, with guests invited to participate in restoration, offering a forward-looking approach to hospitality and conservation.

Judges were captivated with the resort, including it as "very futuristic," with a "daring, unique and bold" design that pushes the boundaries. They noted the property's originality, experimental quality and seamless integration of interiors and architecture, described as "fantastical, mesmerising, out of this world" and "a must-see in lifetime stay."

4 Aman Nai Lert Bangkok, Thailand

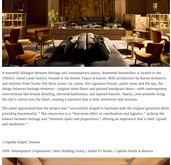
Sap Lert Park Development / Interstudio / Open Box / Aman Resorts

Aman Nai Lert Bangkok makes a great yet grounded entrance that blends calm, craft and control. Designed by Opendoor Architects with interiors by Interstudio, the hotel unfolds in layers – from a shaded pale-tile portico to a soaring triple-height atrium crowned by a sculptural bronze tree. Rooted in Thai craftsmanship, the design integrates woven textures, tactile surfaces and a rich colour palette inspired by the capital's energy. Each step feels considered, offering a meditation step rooted in place, poetry and pause.

Judges praised the "richness of Thai heritage and warm hosts" blending with the brand's identity. "A remarkable blend of modern and traditional, balancing tactile with sense of place" to create "a visual feast" that emanates "a sense of peace."

5 Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree, Singapore

Mandai Park Development / WOW Architects / Marsan Wong Design / Banyan Group

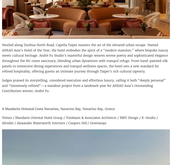


Designed by Wow Architects and Marsan Wong Design, the resort is embedded within Singapore's Mandai precinct – home to rare biodiversity and a new kind of ecotourism. Gilmland mudrooms, semi-energy-efficient villas, and a lagoon-like pool blur the boundary between nature and shelter. Guests hear birds, natural ventilation and continuous landscaping cast the experience in both sustainability and local spirit. As a regenerative model for future resorts, Mandai doesn't just offer escapism but meaningful re-engagement with the natural world.

Judges commended the project's holistic approach to sustainability, calling it "a regenerative model" with "impressive execution." The juxtaposition between natural and built forms was also highlighted for creating "a great symbiosis," making the project a standout winner.

6 Rosewood Amsterdam, Netherlands

CFP Amsterdam / Rosewood Hotels & Resorts / Arrme Architects / Archer Humphryes / Studio Pier Basso / Studio Sagrada / Pet Outfitt / DFA Lighting Consultants

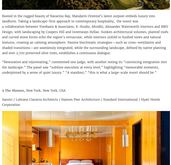


A masterful dialogue between heritage and contemporary luxury, Rosewood Amsterdam is located in the former Amsterdam Stock Exchange, designed by Arrme Architects. The intervention preserves the building's iconic interiors from Studio Pier Basso across 154 rooms, five signature houses, public areas and the spa. Its design balances heritage elements – original stone floors and painted woodgrain doors – with contemporary interventions like bronze detailing, textured bathrooms, and layered textures. Nearly a year remains living the city's culture into the hotel, creating a narrative that is both immersive and intimate.

The panel appreciated how the project was "successfully shaped in harmony with the original geometry while providing functionality." The intervention is a "Herculean effort of coordination and logistics," striking the "perfect balance between heritage and "futuristic space and proportions," offering an experience that is "both grand and exclusive."

7 Capella Taipei, Taiwan

GPPI Development Corporation / Mori Building Group / Andel Fu Studio / Capella Hotels & Resorts

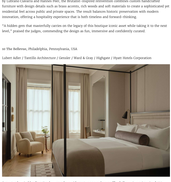


Nestled along Dunhua North Road, Capella Taipei reasserts the art of the elevated urban escape. Named AHEAD Asia's Hotel of the Year, the hotel embodies the spirit of a "modern mansion," where bespoke luxury meets the rhythm of the city. Designed by Andel Fu Studio, the interiors blend Taiwanese craftsmanship and modernity throughout the 90 room sanctuary. Detailing colour dimension with tonal contrast, Andel Fu's hand painted silk panels to immersive dining experiences and tranquil wellness spaces, the hotel sets a new standard for refined hospitality, offering guests an intimate journey through Taipei's rich cultural tapestry.

Judges praised its storytelling, considered execution and effortless luxury, calling it both "deeply personal" and "immensely relevant" – a standout project from a landmark year for AHEAD Asia's Outstanding Contribution winner, Andel Fu.

8 Mandarin Oriental Costa Navarino, Navarino Bay, Greece

Tessera / Bauakademi / Oriental Hotel Group / Footbaum & Associates Architects / MKV Design / K-Studio / ddmdd / Alexander Wiatzewski Interiors / Gregory Hill / Greenwaqs



Rooted in the rugged beauty of Navarino Bay, Mandarin Oriental's latest outpost redraws luxury into nature. Tessera's design blends Mediterranean modernism with local craft, shaped by a collaboration between Footbaum & Associates, K-Studio, ddmdd, Alexander Wiatzewski Interiors and MKV Design, with landscaping by Gregory Hill and greenwaqs Stefan. Southern architectural volumes, planted roofs and curved stone forms echo the region's vernacular, while interiors settled in leashed tones and natural textures, creating an calming atmosphere. Passive ventilation strategies – such as cross-ventilation and shaded outdoor spaces – complement the site's low-impact design approach, delivered by native planting and over 2,500 protected olive trees, establishing a continuous dialogue.

"Innovative and unconventional," "continental one judge, with another noting its "convincing integration into the landscape." The panel saw "sublime execution at every level," highlighting "memorable moments, underpinned by a sense of quiet luxury." "A standout," "this is what a large-scale resort should be."

9 The Manness, New York, New York, USA

Sensei / Lafayette Canyon Architects / Hannes Peer Architecture / Standard International / Hyatt Hotels Corporation

The Manness is a bold reinvention in the heart of SoHo. Following a meticulous nine-month transformation by Lafayette Canyon and Hannes Peer, the iconic cast-iron building's original cornerstone combines custom handcrafted furniture with design details such as brass accents, rich woods and soft materials to create a sophisticated yet residential feel across public and private spaces. The result balances historic preservation with modern innovation, offering a hospitality experience that is both timeless and forward-thinking.

"It hidden gem that masterfully carries on the legacy of the boutique iconic asset while taking it to the next level," praised the judges, commending the design as fun, immersive and confidently curated.

10 The Bellevue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Lubert Adler / Tinsella Architecture / Gensler / Hyatt & Co Asia / Highgate / Hyatt Hotels Corporation

A masterclass in blending timeless grandeur with contemporary luxury, The Bellevue is a reimagined 120-year-old landmark in the heart of Philadelphia. Named AHEAD Americas Hotel of the Year, the project was a Herculean effort of coordination and logistics, with the design team working closely with the city's Historic Commission. Throughout the property, a storied mix of antique furniture, rich marble details and carefully curated artworks ensuring that every step feels unique. A modern interpretation of classic luxury, the new design honours the hotel's storied past, while introducing an air of refinement inspired by French Art Deco sensibilities and Parisian elegance.

The judges were captivated by this "beautiful take on modernizing traditional luxury," demonstrating a "deep understanding of the luxury guest experience." "Masterfully designed and executed."

RELATED POSTS

AHEAD | AHEAD GLOBAL | AHEAD 2025 | AHEAD AWARDS | LAFAYETTE CANYON | GREGORY HILL ARCHITECTS
MARTIN SAINT-PIERRE GROUP | MANDARIN ORIENTAL COSTA NAVARINO | MARTIN SAINT-PIERRE ARCHITECTS | MANDARIN ORIENTAL GREGORY HILL
MARTIN SAINT-PIERRE | THE BELLEVUE | THE MANNESS

Home | About | Media Pack | AHEAD | Subscribe | Contact | Cookie Policy

Sign up for Sleeper's free email alerts

Sign up

SLEEPER MEDIA

© 2025 Sleeper Media Ltd. Registered in England and Wales 6330 Company Number 5905242.

More possibilities at London Stansted.
Discover more

26 destinations for 2026

BY CHARLOTTE MCCURRY, ALEXANDRA MOSCONA, ALEXANDRA SCHWARTZMAN, ALEXANDRA SCHWARTZMAN, ALEXANDRA SCHWARTZMAN

The biggest travel trends of 2020

By Hannah Madans, Melissa Gonzalez, Rachel Gresham, Nicole Hernandez Kanter, Jennifer Polk, Dori Saltzman, Beth Stebner, Carolyn Twersky Abramoff, Rachel Wolfson, Erin Snodgrass, Erin Snyder, Business Insider India Team, Business Insider Nordic Team, Business Insider Australia Team, Business Insider Singapore Team, Business Insider Malaysia Team, Business Insider Indonesia Team, Business Insider Philippines Team, Business Insider Thailand Team, Business Insider Vietnam Team, Business Insider Japan Team, Business Insider Taiwan Team, Business Insider Hong Kong Team, Business Insider Korea Team, Business Insider Spain Team, Business Insider Portugal Team, Business Insider Mexico Team, Business Insider Brasil Team, Business Insider Italy Team, Business Insider Netherlands Team, Business Insider Poland Team, Business Insider Turkey Team, Business Insider Russia Team, Business Insider Nigeria Team, Business Insider South Africa Team, Business Insider UK Team, Business Insider France Team, Business Insider Germany Team, Business Insider Arabia Team, Business Insider Israel Team, Business Insider Pakistan Team, Business Insider Bangladesh Team, Business Insider Sri Lanka Team, Business Insider Nepal Team, Business Insider Ukraine Team, Business Insider Romania Team, Business Insider Greece Team, Business Insider Czech Republic Team, Business Insider Hungary Team, Business Insider Bulgaria Team, Business Insider Croatia Team, Business Insider Serbia Team, Business Insider Slovenia Team, Business Insider Slovakia Team, Business Insider Estonia Team, Business Insider Latvia Team, Business Insider Lithuania Team, Business Insider Kazakhstan Team, Business Insider Azerbaijan Team, Business Insider Georgia Team, Business Insider Armenia Team, Business Insider Moldova Team, Business Insider Belarus Team, Business Insider Uzbekistan Team, Business Insider Kyrgyzstan Team, Business Insider Tajikistan Team, Business Insider Turkmenistan Team, Business Insider Mongolia Team, Business Insider Cambodia Team, Business Insider Laos Team, Business Insider Myanmar Team, Business Insider Iceland Team, Business Insider Luxembourg Team, Business Insider Malta Team, Business Insider Northern Ireland Team, Business Insider Scotland Team, Business Insider Wales Team, Business Insider Ireland Team, Business Insider Cyprus Team, Business Insider Kosovo Team, Business Insider Montenegro Team, Business Insider Albania Team, Business Insider Malawi Team, Business Insider Zambia Team, Business Insider Zimbabwe Team, Business Insider Botswana Team, Business Insider Kenya Team, Business Insider Uganda Team, Business Insider Ghana Team, Business Insider Tanzania Team, Business Insider Ethiopia Team, Business Insider Somalia Team, Business Insider Namibia Team, Business Insider Morocco Team, Business Insider Algeria Team, Business Insider Maldives Team, Business Insider Guam Team, Business Insider Qatar Team, Business Insider Kuwait Team, Business Insider Oman Team, Business Insider Bahrain Team, Business Insider Jordan Team, Business Insider Lebanon Team, Business Insider Yemen Team, Business Insider Iraq Team, Business Insider Cameroon Team, Business Insider Senegal Team, Business Insider Ivory Coast Team, Business Insider Rwanda Team, Business Insider Guinea Team, Business Insider Gambia Team, Business Insider Liberia Team, Business Insider Sierra Leone Team, Business Insider Burundi Team, Business Insider Eritrea Team, Business Insider Madagascar Team, Business Insider Cape Verde Team, Business Insider Puerto Rico Team, Business Insider Jamaica Team, Business Insider Haiti Team, Business Insider Bermuda Team, Business Insider Trinidad and Tobago Team, Business Insider Guyana Team, Business Insider Suriname Team, Business Insider Belize Team, Business Insider Bolivia Team, Business Insider Paraguay Team, Business Insider Uruguay Team, Business Insider Panama Team, Business Insider Costa Rica Team, Business Insider Honduras Team, Business Insider El Salvador Team, Business Insider Nicaragua Team, Business Insider Guatemala Team, Business Insider Cuba Team, Business Insider Dominican Republic Team, Business Insider Ecuador Team, Business Insider Peru Team, Business Insider Chile Team, Business Insider Colombia Team, Business Insider Venezuela Team, Business Insider Brunei Darussalam Team, Business Insider Papua New Guinea Team, Business Insider Fiji Team, Business Insider Vanuatu Team, Business Insider Samoa Team, Business Insider Tonga Team, Business Insider Solomon Islands Team, Business Insider Bhutan Team, Business Insider Afghanistan Team, Business Insider Syria Team, Business Insider Libya Team, Business Insider Tunisia Team, Business Insider Sudan Team, Business Insider Angola Team, Business Insider Mozambique Team, Business Insider Mauritius Team, Business Insider Seychelles Team, Business Insider Reunion Island Team, Business Insider Mayotte Team, Business Insider Gabon Team, Business Insider Congo Team, Business Insider Chad Team, Business Insider Mali Team, Business Insider Niger Team, Business Insider Burkina Faso Team, Business Insider Mauritania Team, Business Insider Sao Tome and Principe Team, Business Insider Equatorial Guinea Team, Business Insider Guinea-Bissau Team, Business Insider Lesotho Team, Business Insider Swaziland Team, Business Insider Cayman Islands Team, Business Insider Aruba Team, Business Insider Curacao Team, Business Insider Bahamas Team, Business Insider Barbados Team, Business Insider Antigua and Barbuda Team, Business Insider Dominica Team, Business Insider Grenada Team, Business Insider Saint Lucia Team, Business Insider Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Team, Business Insider Saint Kitts and Nevis Team, Business Insider Anguilla Team, Business Insider Turks and Caicos Islands Team, Business Insider British Virgin Islands Team, Business Insider Faroe Islands Team, Business Insider Gibraltar Team, Business Insider Guernsey Team, Business Insider Jersey Team, Business Insider Isle of Man Team, Business Insider Andorra Team, Business Insider Liechtenstein Team, Business Insider Monaco Team, Business Insider San Marino Team, Business Insider Vatican City Team, Business Insider Bermuda Team, Business Insider Cayman Islands Team, Business Insider British Virgin Islands Team, Business Insider Anguilla Team, Business Insider Turks and Caicos

How to hit the sweetspot every time!
GOLF MONTHLY
MARCO PENGE
The rise of England's next superstar
10 ways to hit it further this year
POWER
UP YOUR GAME!
World Handicap System
Should golfers put a card in every round?
New year, new grip?
Easy ways to hole more putts
FEB ISSUE
FUTURE
Ultimate tour preview
Key questions answered ahead of the new season PLUS Hot new irons for 2026 revealed inside!

GOLDEN TICKET

Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany

Travelling in true style aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express, **Jeremy Ellwood** plays four of Italy's top golf courses from Rome down to Puglia in the south and all the way back up to Tuscany

Photography **La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Jacob Sjoman, Getty Images, Jeremy Ellwood**

I love golf, most of the time. I couldn't have done this job for as long as I have without an enduring passion for the game, though Lord knows it can be frustrating. I also (whisper it softly) have more than a passing interest in trains. Not in a geeky, standing on the platform in an anorak kind of way, but as more of a curious observer.

Disused railways fascinate me and I've walked many a mile on them; on holiday I'll always try to engineer a stop-off at any nearby heritage steam railway; and I still have boxes of model railway stuff in the loft, acquired over the years from charity and junk shops for a project that somehow never quite happened (maybe in retirement).

So, when word of a golf press trip in Italy on La Dolce Vita Orient Express hit my inbox, my eyes lit up. Having only just made my maiden golfing river cruise in Bordeaux, I knew that it wasn't really 'my turn', but when other writers had to decline for various reasons, the opportunity was all mine. Well, mine and my wife's as she wasn't about to pass it up once the PR had indicated that 'plus ones' were a possibility.

My ticket to ride on La Dolce Vita Orient Express' 'Italian Swing' and the restaurant car where Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck served up many a tempting treat

And so it was that we found ourselves checking into the Orient Express La Minerva hotel in Rome on November 21. Ahead lay four days' golf and three nights aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express as it made its way to Puglia in the south and back up to Tuscany before returning to Rome. This was to be the first golf-specific trip for a train only inaugurated in April 2025 when the hotel, close to many of Rome's famous landmarks, had also opened.

We headed up to the Gigi Rigolatto Roma rooftop restaurant on the seventh floor to meet our fellow passengers over dinner, then reassembled in the ground-floor Minerva Bar next morning for breakfast (complete with live harpist) after a comfortable night in a lovely fifth-floor room, styled to reflect the heritage of this most famous of railway companies.

My wife and I then went our separate ways, me to the Marco Simone Golf and Country Club, scene of Europe's famous victory in 2023, and her to take in the sights of Rome. She ended up walking 12 miles with regular accompaniment from talented street musicians as it was St Cecilia's Day (the patron saint of music), with mandolin and cello among the instruments she stopped and listened to.

This also meant the Pope was in town, and she was delighted to see him addressing the people in front of St Peter's Basilica, not far from the hotel. Among the other sites crossed off on her 'Rome attractions' bingo card were the Pantheon, the Trevi Fountain, the Colosseum and the Torre Argentina Cat Sanctuary in among some ancient ruins. I also ticked off several of these on our final night back at La Minerva, along with an obligatory pit-stop at one of the ubiquitous gelaterias.

MY MARCO SIMONE DEBUT

For me, it was good to finally see Marco Simone in the flesh and reduce my 'home Ryder Cup venues not yet played' count down to one (Le Golf National). Having Italian Ryder Cupper Costantino Rocca on hand for a few tips added to the occasion as I teamed up with an American called Nick to take on two more Americans – Jason and Shaun.

The course at Argentario in somewhat better weather than we experienced

The 1st is strong visually as it climbs gently towards a rollercoaster green and distant, snow-capped mountains. There's a well-bunkered short par 3 at the low point on the 4th, and the front nine closes with two par 5s either side of the same lake. Even the lay-up on the 8th is no pushover.

The back nine ventures onto higher ground, with risk-reward on the 11th where you need to decide how much to take on as the hole climbs and turns left alongside a ditch. The 12th is a big, downhill dogleg-left with a scintillating drive and before long you're standing on the 16th tee, a short risk-reward par 4 that served up much drama in 2023. By this stage, our match was well and truly lost so only personal pride was affected by my finding the water off the tee, then three-putting the cracking par-3 17th and finding water again on the excellent 18th.

ALL ABOARD LA DOLCE VITA

But as I made my way back to La Minerva hotel to be reunited with my weary wife, a gutsy up-and-down from 80 yards to salvage bogey on 18 had buoyed me. Back at the hotel, a quartet was playing in the Minerva Bar, where we were presented with tickets to make our journey on La Dolce Vita Orient Express' 'Italian Swing' official (carriage D, cabin 3).

We were greeted on board by the smiling staff, lined up in front of the train, and then finally got to understand the need for the strict baggage limits as the cabin was elegant and cosy but space was understandably at a premium, so careful organisation was required.

One of the cabins and the evening entertainment

As the train pulled away, we headed to the restaurant car for the first of three dinners exquisitely crafted by Michelin-starred chef, Heinz Beck. Veal stuffed with dried fruit in a pistachio crust was the pick of our first night's multiple courses. Near the end, a roving clarinettist and singer appeared in the carriage to entice us into the bar, and who were we to resist? I got to experience Tuscan whisky for the first time – for me, highly palatable shades of vanilla and Speyside malt with a hint of Cognac.

We had covered many of the 500km from Rome to Fasano in Puglia by the time we turned in. As we ploughed on through the night, a thought occurred to me... when the train banked sharply, might I roll out of bed or would my body subconsciously brace itself to remain firmly on the mattress? All I can say is that at no point did I awake to find myself on the

floor, but I can't really answer the second part of the question.

A short drive from Faseno station lies the course at San Domenico, which I'd played soon after it opened 22 years ago. While individual holes had slipped from my memory I really remembered the wildflower areas dotted about and was glad to see some were still there. The layout is mainly flat with sea views at times, especially on the back nine closer to the coast.

The occasional hole came back to me on a bright and breezy day and I did remember that some bunkers were sleeper-faced, including one at the rear of the wonderful par-3 13th, played across a kind of waste area. There's water on the 1st and 5th, while the 2nd and 3rd play towards the sea. From the 6th to the 8th, there is plenty of challenge on and around the greens, which were quick for November. After a fine lunch halfway, the breeze freshened further and holes like 15 and 16 closest to the sea played very tough into the wind.

In a return match, it was looking forlorn for my partner and me, trailing dormie four. However, aided by ample shots over the last four holes, we won them all with gritty pars to snatch an unlikely half. While all that drama was unfolding, my wife was relaxing at the superb Borgo Egnazia spa next door, enjoying a massage and dips in the pools.

The train staff were there to welcome us back on board, and we whiled away time in the bar before dinner as we set off on the long trek north to Tuscany. More Italian wine and whisky were taken before a splendid meal that started with ample cold cuts and cheese and ended on a dessert of chocolate, mascarpone, hazelnut and chestnuts, which was beyond rich.

BATTLING THE ELEMENTS

Sadly, next day the weather had turned and opening the blinds revealed a grey, wet landscape. The first station sign I saw was Albinia, but we alighted at Grosseto for the hour's drive to the fine Tom Weiskopf course at Castiglion del Bosco. I'd played it ten years ago, so knew what a treat lay in store, a well-bunkered layout with many clever, testing green complexes and views to die for.

Studying a weather app as we came back up from the range, the manager suggested we might just get away with it, and we did... for five holes. After that, we most definitely did not, and got a real drenching as the course turned back into a strong wind to complete the figure-of-eight front nine. I was delighted to scrape three bogeys and a par before the sanctuary of the wonderful clubhouse, where a restorative lunch and glass of the fabulous local Brunello wine helped us to dry out, at least mentally.

Having thought play had been called for the day, I was surprised when a slight improvement (definitely not a brightening) had my American friends clamouring for more. I'm not sure Castiglion del Bosco really had in mind English journalists drying off socks and trousers with a hairdryer in the locker room, but I managed to tee off on the inviting but awkwardly angled downhill 10th with at least a vague sense of dryness.

The rain held off for the excellent back nine on which you can opt to take on the par-5 13th at a whopping 686 yards, a glorious hole played from an elevated tee gazing back down the valley. The American pair beat us fair and square this time, closing things out on the strong, uphill 17th. The rain was just starting again as we all wedged it close on the cracking little 19th hole, named Brunello.

Tonight, Matthew, I'm going to be Tommy Fleetwood...

Saving bogey on 18 at Marco Simone after visiting water

The 5th green and clubhouse at San Domenico in Puglia

As we headed back to meet the train once more, my wife told me all about her Brunello wine-tasting (a newly developed liking for the reds), and her tour of the stunning Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco resort set a little way above the golf course. Back on board, I'm pretty sure we headed away from our next destination for a while as our final game was at The Argentario Resort, also in Tuscany.

Before that, there was one final superb meal to savour, followed by the standout entertainment of the week provided by a talented and amusing singer and his piano- and saxophone-playing accomplices. The words may often have been Italian, but we all understood the sentiment and everyone joined in. Top-class from all concerned.

Sadly, top-class didn't describe the weather again next day at Argentario, and although we warmed up in the dry and optimism hung in the air, the rain arrived in abundance after four holes and never let up, such that this time, no-one wanted to venture back out after nine. We must have cut comic figures with our waterproofs, clothing and shoes drying in front of a roaring log fire over another superb lunch, possibly partly created by my wife.

While we were getting soaked, she'd been learning how to make and serve authentic Italian pasta at the resort and was convinced one of the dishes was her handiwork. Either way, it was delicious.

UNDAMPENED SPIRITS

As for the course, the nine holes I played were fun, with a draw a real asset early on, particularly on the attractively bunkered par-5 2nd that darts surprisingly to the left late on. We were still just about able to enjoy the distant Mediterranean views away to the left as we tackled a cheeky pin position on the shortish par-3 6th.

As we boarded the train for the final two-hour leg back to Rome's Ostiense Station, I made a mental note to one day return to finish my round at Argentario. I certainly hope another trip like this might fall my way again as it had been a real adventure, and although the weather had dampened things on the course for our final two rounds, it had definitely not dampened spirits on board the train.

After pulling into Ostiense, we had one final treat – a drinks reception in the Orient Express' spacious and stylish La Dolce Vita lounge, inspired by the spirit of the 1960s. It rounded off the mood and feel of the whole trip beautifully as we headed back for a final night at La Minerva before flying back to reality next morning.

OR TRY THE NORTHERN GREENS...

The 'Italian Swing' trip I enjoyed features four rounds of golf (Marco Simone, San Domenico, Castiglion del Bosco and Argentario) in various regions of Italy, with three nights on board La Dolce Vita. The next departures are in March and November 2026, with prices from €12,360 per passenger.

An alternative 'Northern Greens' itinerary departs in May 2026, with two courses remaining the same – Marco Simone and Argentario – while Franciacorta Golf Club and Royal Park I Roveri complete the line-up as the train heads further north to Brescia and Turin.

There are various activities planned for non-golfers, with the chance to explore Rome at leisure as my wife did on day one. At Franciacorta, guests can enjoy a premium tasting of the local sparkling wine during a visit to the renowned Ca' del Bosco winery or visit the Mille Miglia Museum for a guided tour of the legendary race's vintage cars and memorabilia.

At Royal Park I Roveri, there's an exclusive tour of the Royal Palace, a private visit to Casa Zegna to discover the brand's heritage and craftsmanship, or a hands-on chocolate workshop in Turin, to learn traditional techniques and enjoy a guided tasting.

At Argentario, relaxation is the aim, with a fun class celebrating local Tuscan flavours, or a restorative day at the resort's spa. Prices for the Northern Greens trip start from €14,160 per passenger.

W: orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita/itineraries/

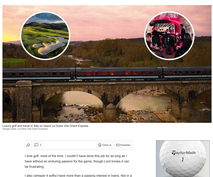
The Orient Express La Minerva hotel's wonderful rooftop restaurant

Travel

Golden Ticket: Luxury Golf And Travel Aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express In Italy

Travelling in true style aboard the Orient Express, Jeremy Elwood plays four of Italy's top courses from Rome down to Puglia in the south and all the way back up to Tuscany

BY JEREMY ELWOOD PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2, 2020



Luxury golf and travel in Italy on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express
Credit: Jeremy Elwood

Follow us
Newsletter

Share this article: Share This on Twitter | Share This on Facebook | Share This on Google+

LATEST VIDEOS FROM ALL CATEGORIES

How To Ace Your Tailoring On-Site Shoots
Tips from stylists who've dished them out on everything you want to know

Cheap Chairs Change 1100 Plus Aust Chief Condemned Whose They Cert Ward Food Could Correct Completely Chief Since Cover I Plant People 1

Pictures: The Cold Monthly Years Are Hopping At Plus In 2020

Pictures: The Cold Monthly Years Are Hopping At Plus In 2020

So, when word of a golf-trip-plus-a-trip on La Dolce Vita Orient Express hit my inbox, my eyes lit up. Having only just made my maiden golfing road cruise in Bordeaux, I knew that it wasn't really my turn.

But when other writers had to decline for various reasons, the opportunity was at mine. Well, mine and my wife's as she wasn't about to pass it up once the PR had indicated that plus-one were a possibility.

One of the suites on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express
Credit: Credit: La Dolce Vita Orient Express

And so it was that we found ourselves checking into the Orient Express La Minerva hotel in Rome on November 27. Aboard for four days, golf and three nights aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express as it heads its way to Puglia in the south and back up to Tuscany before returning to Rome.

One of the suites on La Minerva Orient Express Hotel in Rome
Credit: Credit: Orient Express Hotels

Get the Golf Monthly Newsletter
Subscribe to the Golf Monthly newsletter to receive all the latest news, equipment reviews, lessons, tips and more! A buyer's guide from our team of experienced experts.
Your e-mail address
SIGN UP
Contact me with news and offers from Future brands
Receive email from us on behalf of our trusted partners or sponsors
By submitting your information you agree to the Terms & Conditions and Privacy Policy and are aged 16 or over.

We headed up to the Cigo Vigilatto Roma rooftop restaurant on the seventh floor to meet our fellow passengers over dinner. Then requestmeet the Orient Express Hotels Group's Chief Operating Officer Giovanni Ferrero who has stepped after a comfortable night in a lovely fifth-floor room stylish to reflect the heritage of this most famous of railway companies.

The Orient Express La Minerva bar's wonderful coffee interpretation is Rome
Credit: Credit: La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Wy wife and I then went our separate ways, me to the Marco Simone Golf and Country Club, scene of Europe's famous victory in 2023, and her to take in the sights of Rome.

She ended up walking 10 miles with regular accompaniment from talented street musicians as it was St Cecilia's Day (the patron saint of music), with repeated and calls among the instruments she stopped and listened to.

The Orient Express La Minerva bar's wonderful coffee interpretation is Rome
Credit: Credit: La Dolce Vita Orient Express

My wife and I then went our separate ways, me to the Marco Simone Golf and Country Club, scene of Europe's famous victory in 2023, and her to take in the sights of Rome.

She ended up walking 10 miles with regular accompaniment from talented street musicians as it was St Cecilia's Day (the patron saint of music), with repeated and calls among the instruments she stopped and listened to.

READ ST BRIAC'S NEXT

A Beautiful Pink Tour Operator Aurelie Dubois Disappeared... Then Her 17 Subscribers Found Out Of The Best Bikers Of Ile Lake

The Tie Rebel Brand Ambassador Tour Venue Tarbert Away In South-East Scotland

3 Physical Issues Beautiful Parkland Golf At Aust Around Bellaway In South-West Around Time Are Some Highlights

They also meant the Pope was in town, and she was delighted to see him addressing the people in front of St Peter's Basilica, not far from the hotel. Among the other sites crossed off on her Rome attractions' bingo card were the Pantheon, the Trevi Fountain, the Colosseum and the Torre Argentina Cat Sanctuary in among some ancient ruins.

The Trevi Fountain, a Rome not far from La Minerva Orient Express hotel
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

I also followed off wherever of Rome on our final night back at La Minerva, along with an obligatory pit stop at one of the ubiquitous gelaterias.

MY MARCO SIMONE DEBUT

For me, it was good to finally see Marco Simone, the Italian venue that will induce my Ryder Ryder Cup remake not yet played' court down to one Le Golf National.

Teeing off at 1.00 hole at Marco Simone
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

Teeing off at 1.00 hole at Marco Simone
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

By this stage, our match was well and truly lost so only personal pride was affected by my finding the water off the tee. Ever three-putting the cracking par-3 17th and finding water again on the excellent 18th.

Teeing off at the 18th hole at Marco Simone
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

Having Italian Ryder Cupper Costantino Rocca on hand for a few tips would have helped considerably, but he was in the American cabbie field to take on his home Americans – Jason and Brian.

The 14 is strong visually as it climbs gently towards a rollercoaster green and diabolic, sneaky-sopped mountains. There's a well-bunkered short par 3 at the sun-prime on the 4th, and the front nine closes with two par 5s either side of the same lake. Even the par-3s up on the 8th is a pulsner.

The back nine ventures onto higher ground, with risk-reward on the 11th where you need to carry a ravine if you're to take on the little dribble and turn left alongside it. The 12th is a big, downhill dogleg left with a tempting shortcut for those who can carry the ravine. The 16th has a short risk-reward par 4 that served up much drama in 2023.

Teeing off at the 14th hole at Marco Simone
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

Teeing off at the 14th hole at Marco Simone
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

ALL ABOARD LA DOLCE VITA

But as I made my way back to La Minerva hotel to be reunited with my sleepy wife, a group up and down from 60 joined me for a nightcap in a hot tub beyond me. Back at the hotel, a quartet was playing in the Minerva Bar, where we were presented with tickets to make our journey on a Dolce Vita Orient Express' Italian Swing' offshoot (carriage 5) called 3).

The bar in the La Dolce Vita Orient Express' Italian Swing
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

The bar in the La Dolce Vita Orient Express' Italian Swing
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

We were greeted on board by the smiling staff, lined up in front of the train, and then finally got to understand the need for the strict baggage limits as the cabin was elegant and cosy but sparse was unbelievably at a premium, so careful organisation was required.

Being greeted on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

Being greeted on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

The restaurant car aboard Dolce Vita Orient Express' Italian Swing is thoroughly Italian
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

The restaurant car aboard Dolce Vita Orient Express' Italian Swing is thoroughly Italian
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

Near the end, a moving clarinetist and singer appeared in the carriage to entice us into the bar, and who were we to resist? I got to experience Tuscan whisky for the first time – for me, highly palatable shades of vanilla and Sassyside mad with a hint of Cognac.

We had covered many of the 300km from Rome to Fiaeno in Puglia by the time we turned in. As we ploughed on through the night, a drought-stricken Po Valley, the Italian Swing's stopping point for the night, had or would be lovely subconsciously leave itself to remain firmly on the mattress?

All I can say is that at no point did I awake to find myself on the floor, but I can't really answer the second part of the question.

A short drive from Fiaeno station lies the course at San Domenico, which I'd played soon after it opened 22 years ago. While individual holes had slipped from my memory I really remembered the wildflower areas dotted about and was glad to see some were still there. The layout is mainly flat with two crews at times, especially on the back nine closer to the coast.

The spectacular and well-bunkered second hole at San Domenico, which I'd played soon after it opened 22 years ago. While individual holes had slipped from my memory I really remembered the wildflower areas dotted about and was glad to see some were still there. The layout is mainly flat with two crews at times, especially on the back nine closer to the coast.

The bridge over to 13th at San Domenico
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

There's water on the 1st and 5th, while the 2nd and 3rd play towards the sea. The 4th is a par 3 over a ravine, the 6th is a challenge par 4 and also the greenest, which was a pure for Nicolaus Mann. The 8th is short but challenge for breaca Hawkesmar further and holes the 11 and 12 closest to the sea that players were caught into the wind.

In a return match, it was looking bleaker for my partner and me, trailing dormie four. However, aided by ample shots over the last four holes, we won them all with gritty pars to snatch an unlikely half.

While all that drama was unfolding, my wife was relaxing at the superb Bongo Cigrasso spa next door, enjoying a massage and dips in the pools.

The train staff were there to welcome us back on board, and we retired away time in the bar before dinner as we set off on the long trek north to Tuscany.

Wines Italian wine and whisky were taken before a splendid meal that started with antipasti and continued with pasta and a dessert of chocolate, mascarpone, raspberry and mint ice cream, and we returned north.

BATTLING THE ELEMENTS

Sadly, next day the weather had turned and opening the blinds revealed a dreary, wet and windy day. The weather rigor here was intense, but we arrived at Grosseto. The train's drive to the Tre Torri Venerdì course at Castiglion del Bosco.

I'd played it ten years ago, so knew what a treat lay in store, with bunkered layout with many clever, testing green complexes and views to die for.

Studying a weather app as we came back up from the range, the manager suggested we might just get away with it, so we did. Too far-flung, tiffer that, we most definitely did not, and got a nice drenching as the course turned back into a strong wind to complete the figure-of-eight front nine.

I was delighted to escape three dogleg and a par before the sanctuary of the wonderful clubhouse, where a restorative lunch and glass of the fabulous local Brunello were helped us to dry out, at least mentally.

Tre Torri Venerdì's beautiful course at Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

Tre Torri Venerdì's beautiful course at Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany
Credit: Credit: Jeremy Elwood

Having brought play had been called for the day, I was surprised when a slight improvement (definitely not a brightening) had my American friends clamouring for more.

I'm not sure Castiglion del Bosco really lived in mind English journalists drying off socks and trousers with a hairdryer in the toilets mind, but I managed to keep off on the rocking but awkwardly angled downhill 10th with at least a slope and a fairway.

The rain kicks off for the consultant doctor mate on which you can opt to take on the par-5 13th or a challenging 600-yards, a glorious hole played from an elevated tee going back down the valley.

If you dare to take it on it is at least downhill
(Image credit: Jeremy Ellwood)

The American pair beat us fair and square this time, closing things out on the strong, uphill 17th. The rain was just starting again as we all wedged it close on the cracking little 18th hole, named Brunello.

As we headed back to meet the train once more, my wife told me all about her Brunello wine-tasting (a newly developed liking for the redo), and her tour of the stunning Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco resort set a little way above the golf course.

Back on board, I'm pretty sure we headed away from our next destination for a while as our final game was at The Argentario Golf & Wellness Resort, also in Tuscany.

Before that, there was one final superb meal to savour, followed by the standout entertainment of the week provided by a talented and amusing singer and his piano- and saxophone-playing accomplices.

The words may often have been Italian, but we all understood the sentiment and everyone joined in. Top-class from all concerned.

The final night's post-dinner entertainment was first class
(Image credit: Jeremy Ellwood)

Sadly, top-class didn't describe the weather again next day at Argentario, and although we warmed up in the dry and optimism hung in the air, the rain arrived in abundance after four holes and never let up, such that this time, no-one wanted to venture back out after nine.

The course at Argentario in considerably better weather than we were treated to
(Image credit: Argentario Resort)

We must have cut comic figures with our waterproofs, clothing and shoes drying in front of a roaring log fire over another superb lunch, possibly partly created by my wife.

While we were getting soaked, she'd been learning how to make and serve authentic Italian pasta at the resort and was convinced one of the dishes was her handiwork. Either way, it was delicious.

UNDAMPENED SPIRITS

As for the course, the nine holes I played were fun, with a draw a real asset early on, particularly on the attractively bunkered par-5 2nd that darts surprisingly to the left late on. We were still just about able to enjoy the distant Mediterranean views away to the left as we tackled a cheeky pin position on the shortish par-3 6th.

As we boarded the train for the final two-hour leg back to Rome's Ostiense Station, I made a mental note to one day return to finish my round at Argentario.

I certainly hope another trip like this might fall my way again as it had been a real adventure, and although the weather had dampened things on the course for our final two rounds, it had definitely not dampened spirits on board the train.

After pulling into Ostiense, we had one final treat – a drinks reception in the Orient Express' spacious and stylish La Dolce Vita lounge, inspired by the spirit of the 1960s.

The classy Orient Express lounge at Ostiense station in Rome
(Image credit: La Dolce Vita Orient Express)

It rounded off the mood and feel of the whole trip beautifully as we headed back for a final night at La Minerva before flying back to reality next morning.

OR TRY THE NORTHERN GREENS OPTION...

The 'Italian Swing' trip I enjoyed features four rounds of golf (Marco Simone, San Domenico, Castiglion del Bosco and Argentario) in various regions of Italy, with three nights on board La Dolce Vita. The next departures are in March and November 2026, with prices from €12,360 per passenger.

An alternative 'Northern Greens' itinerary departs in May 2026, with two courses remaining the same – Marco Simone and Argentario – while Franciacorta Golf Club and Royal Park I Roveri complete the line-up as the train heads further north to Brescia and Turin.

Royal Park I Roveri is part of the 'Northern Greens' itinerary
(Image credit: Unknown)

There are various activities planned for non-golfers, with the chance to explore Rome at leisure as my wife did on day one.

At Franciacorta, guests can enjoy a premium tasting of the local sparkling wine during a visit to the renowned Ca' del Bosco winery or visit the Mille Miglia Museum for a guided tour of the legendary race's vintage cars and memorabilia.

At Royal Park I Roveri, there's an exclusive tour of the Royal Palace, a private visit to Casa Zegna to discover the brand's heritage and craftsmanship, or a hands-on chocolate workshop in Turin, to learn traditional techniques and enjoy a guided tasting.

At Argentario, relaxation is the aim, with a fun class celebrating local Tuscan flavours, or a restorative day at the resort's spa. Prices for the Northern Greens trip start from €14,190 per passenger.

W: orient-express.com/la-dolcevita/itineraries/

Jeremy Ellwood , Contributing Editor

Jeremy Ellwood has worked in the golf industry since 1993 and for *Golf Monthly* since 2002 when he started out as equipment editor. He is now a freelance journalist writing mainly for *Golf Monthly*. He is an expert on the Rules of Golf having qualified through an R&A course to become a golf referee. He is a senior panelist for *Golf Monthly's* Top 100 UK & Ireland Course Rankings and has played all of the Top 100 plus 81 of the Next 100, making him well-qualified when it comes to assessing and comparing our premier golf courses. He has now played 1,000 golf courses worldwide in 35 countries, from the humblest of nine-holes in the Scottish Highlands to the very grandest of international golf resorts. He reached the 1,000 mark on his 60th birthday in October 2023 on Vale do Lobo's Ocean course. Put him on a links course anywhere and he will be blissfully content.

Jezz can be contacted via Twitter - @JezzEllwoodGolf

Jeremy is currently playing...

Driver: Ping G425 LST 10.5° (draw setting), Mitsubishi Tensei AV Orange 55 S shaft

3-wood: Srixon ZX, EvenFlow Riptide 6.0 S Slig shaft

Hybrid: Ping G425 17°, Mitsubishi Tensei CK Pro Orange 80 S shaft

Irons 3- to 6-iron: Ping i525, True Temper Dynamic Gold 105 R300 shafts

Irons 8-iron and PW: Honma TWorld TW747Vx, Nippon N3 Pro regular shaft

Wedges: Ping Glide 4.0 50° and 54°, 12° bounce, True Temper Dynamic Gold 105 R300 shafts

Putter: Kiramski HPP 325

Ball: Any premium ball I can find in a charity shop or similar (or out on the course!)

READ MORE

FEATURES
'Some Clubs Charge £100 Plus And I Don't Understand Where They Get That From. Golf's Gone Completely Daft Since Covid. I Want People To Walk Off And Feel They've Had A Good Deal And A Good Experience'

UK AND IRELAND
I Stayed On A Gorgeous Scottish Island Close To Some Spectacular Golf

FEATURES
9 Courses The Golf Monthly Team Are Hoping To Play In 2026

FEATURES
I Attended My First Masters And It Didn't Disappoint... Here Are 17 Takeaways From One Of The Best Weeks Of My Life

LATEST IN FEATURES

FEATURES
Ready For Take-Off: Putting Stromberg's New LaunchPad Golf Shoes To The Ultimate Test

FEATURES
The Equipment Debrief: Masters Driver Leaderboard, New Metalwoods Seen On Tour And A Spider Spotting

FEATURES
McIlroy Was Incredible At The Masters... But Should You Be Able To Win A Major With Such Erratic Driving?

FEATURES
The Specialist Shaft Brand Making More Major History

LATEST IN FEATURES

BUYING ADVICE
These Are Our Top 3 DTC Blade Irons, But Which Is Best? - This Week On Kick Point

BUYING ADVICE
TaylorMade's 'Shadowfall' Collection Has Delivered The Coolest Looking Drivers I've Ever Seen

FEATURES
Ready For Take-Off: Putting Stromberg's New LaunchPad Golf Shoes To The Ultimate Test

FEATURES
The Equipment Debrief: Masters Driver Leaderboard, New Metalwoods Seen On Tour And A Spider Spotting

ABOUT US CONTACT FUTURE'S EXPERTS CONTACT US TERMS AND CONDITIONS PRIVACY POLICY
ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT COOKIES POLICY CAREERS ADVERTISE WITH US GDPR CONSENT

Golf Monthly is part of Future plc, an international media group and leading digital publisher. **Visit our corporate site**

© Future Publishing Limited Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All rights reserved. England and Wales company registration number 2008885.

HOSPITALITY & CATERING NEWS

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Unveils Two Exceptional February 2026 Itineraries: Carnival Party and Valentine's Day

January 24, 2026

Share | Share | 0 | Share

aha accessible hospitality alliance
For a hospitality world that welcomes everyone

In February 2026, La Dolce Vita Orient Express celebrates the art of travel through two itineraries conceived as immersive cultural and sensory experiences. From the exuberance of the Venetian Carnival to the intimacy of a romantic escape to Verona, the train offers two rare interludes.

Valentine's Day – Love Is on the Rails – 13 – 15 February 2026 | 3 days – 2 nights | Rome – Verona – Rome

For Valentine's Day, La Dolce Vita Orient Express offers a romantic escape between Rome and Verona, the legendary city of Romeo and Juliet.

On the evening of February 13th, guests board in Rome. From the moment of departure, the atmosphere is intimate and refined. A three-Michelin-starred dinner by Heinz Beck, accompanied by live music, turns the train into a world apart.

On the morning of February 14th, the train arrives in Verona. The day is devoted to discovery: Juliet's balcony, Renaissance palazzi, sunlit piazzas… A private musical experience, conceived as a contemporary serenade, deepens the immersion.

That evening, back on board, a Valentine's dinner specially designed for the occasion accompanies the return journey. The mood favours intimacy.

On February 15th, the train returns to Rome. Guests depart with the memory of a journey written for two.

The Carnival Party – 16 – 17 February 2026 | 2 days – 1 night

To mark Carnival, La Dolce Vita Orient Express presents an elegant and festive journey linking Rome to Venice, where the tradition of masks dates back to the 13th century.

The voyage begins in Rome with a private welcome at the La Dolce Vita lounge. On board, a gastronomic lunch by three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck accompanies the passage through vineyards and olive groves.

A stop in Siena offers time to explore the medieval city. Guests may wander its narrow streets or choose from a curated selection of cultural experiences: a private visit to the Duomo, exclusive access to historic palazzi, immersion in the traditions of the Contrade and the Palio, or an introduction to the ancient art of gold-leaf painting led by local artisans.

As evening falls, the train is transformed. Fine dining gives way to a masked celebration: live music, piano bar and Carnival-inspired games create the atmosphere of a ball carried along the rails.

The following morning, the train arrives at Venezia Santa Lucia. Venice, in the height of Carnival, extends the experience through its calli, on St Mark's Square and within the masked balls for which it is renowned. The journey concludes, but the Voyage continues.

« Accessible Hospitality Alliance launches Mediterranean Accessible Hospitality Hub

EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Subscribe to our email newsletter and keep a close eye on the UK hospitality and catering business

SUBSCRIBE

aha accessible hospitality alliance

INSTITUTE OF HOSPITALITY GOLF DAY 2026

SEARCH H&C NEWS

Search the site ...

JOIN OUR EMAIL NEWSLETTER COMMUNITY

SUPPLIER NEWS

Signature Sausages Join CRG's Premium Product Portfolio

En Route Strengthens Category Development with Leadership Appointment

Bordeaux Distilling Co Rolls Out The World's First Transparent Organic Coffee Liqueur

Hospitality Groups Face January Deadline to Reclaim Unlawful Card Fees

Visa & Mastercard Interchange Claim Deadline Extended

Birchall Foodservice Celebrates Landmark Year of Growth, Awards and Leadership Success

Country Range Group Celebrates Members & Suppliers with Showpiece at The National Gallery

Inclusion does not need Complexity to be Meaningful

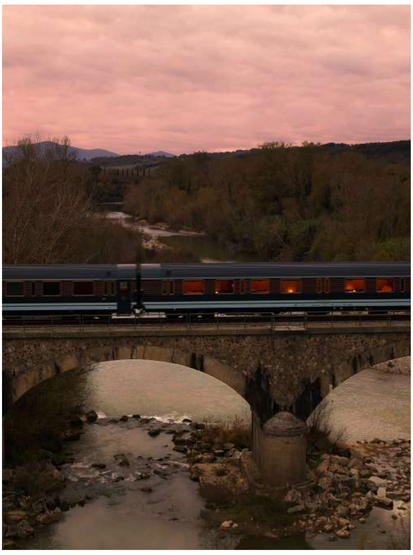
Legal precedent set on unlawful Visa and Mastercard interchange fees impacting hospitality

Copyright © · Hospitality & Catering News

TRAVEL

LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS UNVEILS TWO EXCEPTIONAL FEBRUARY 2026 ITINERARIES: CARNIVAL PARTY AND VALENTINE'S DAY

January 26, 2026



In February 2026, La Dolce Vita Orient Express celebrates the art of travel through two itineraries conceived as immersive cultural and sensory experiences. From the exuberance of the Venetian Carnival to the intimacy of a romantic escape to Verona, the train offers two rare interludes.

Valentine's Day – Love Is on the Rails

13 – 15 February 2026 | 3 days – 2 nights | Rome – Verona – Rome

For Valentine's Day, La Dolce Vita Orient Express offers a romantic escape between Rome and Verona, the legendary city of Romeo and Juliet.

On the evening of February 13th, guests board in Rome. From the moment of departure, the atmosphere is intimate and refined. A three-Michelin-starred dinner by Heinz Beck, accompanied by live music, turns the train into a world apart. On the morning of February 14th, the train arrives in Verona.

The day is devoted to discovery: Juliet's balcony, Renaissance palazzi, sunlit piazzas… A private musical experience, conceived as a contemporary serenade, deepens the immersion.

That evening, back on board, a Valentine's dinner specially designed for the occasion accompanies the return journey. The mood favours intimacy.

On February 15th, the train returns to Rome. Guests depart with the memory of a journey written for two.

Discover the itinerary: https://www.orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita/itinerary/love-is-on-the-rails/

The Carnival Party

16 – 17 February 2026 | 2 days – 1 night

To mark Carnival, La Dolce Vita Orient Express presents an elegant and festive journey linking Rome to Venice, where the tradition of masks dates back to the 13th century. The voyage begins in Rome with a private welcome at the La Dolce Vita lounge.

On board, a gastronomic lunch by three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck accompanies the passage through vineyards and olive groves.

A stop in Siena offers time to explore the medieval city. Guests may wander its narrow streets or choose from a curated selection of cultural experiences: a private visit to the Duomo, exclusive access to historic palazzi, immersion in the traditions of the Contrade and the Palio, or an introduction to the ancient art of gold-leaf painting led by local artisans.

As evening falls, the train is transformed. Fine dining gives way to a masked celebration: live music, piano bar and Carnival-inspired games create the atmosphere of a ball carried along the rails.

The following morning, the train arrives at Venezia Santa Lucia. Venice, in the height of Carnival, extends the experience through its calli, on St Mark's Square and within the masked balls for which it is renowned. The journey concludes, but the Voyage continues.

Discover the itinerary : https://www.orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita/itinerary/the-carnival-party

Share this:

X Facebook

Reblog Like Be the first to like this.

Donna Richardson

← Previous Post Next Post →

Leave a comment

Write a comment...

Comment

Find us on:

Join the fun!

Stay updated with our latest recipes and other news by joining our newsletter.

Type your email...

Categories

- ARTS (8)
- aviation (2)
- Celebrities (9)
- Cruises (5)
- Fashion and lifestyle (12)
- Food and Drink (32)
- Hotels (16)
- Motor cars (5)
- Ski (11)
- Sport (4)
- Travel (60)
- Travel Trends (2)
- Tried and Tested (10)
- Uncategorized (7)
- wine (2)

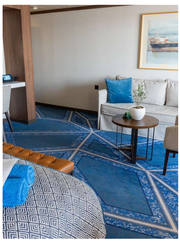
Recent Posts

ARTS, SKI

A guide to Alta Badia

TRAVEL

Winter Season travel from East Midlands Airport



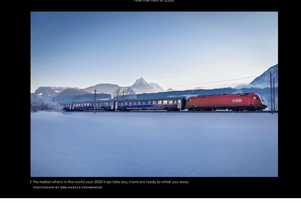
CRUISES

Celestyal introduces in-cabin tablets to enhance guest experience

TRAVEL

Everything you need to know about rail travel in 2026

Train services are seeing a renaissance the world over, with flash cruises, new luxury lines and tour operators increasingly focusing on rail journeys. Here's the latest for travellers looking to ride the rails in 2026.



1 No matter where in the world your 2026 trips take you, trains are ready to whisk you away. PHOTOGRAPH BY TIMO PAVELA SCHWARTZ

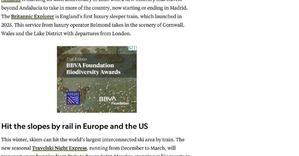
By Lauren Farth
January 15, 2026

This article was produced by National Geographic Traveller (UK).

In light of climate change, flygskam (Swedish for flight shame) and the ease of arriving at a city-centre train station instead of the hassle of a far-flung airport, the world is all abroard for train travel. Advocating by rail is starting to feel a lot less like a nostalgic throwback and more like stepping into a new era of travel. No matter where in the world your 2026 trips take you, trains are ready to whisk you between capital cities and unforgettably scenic landscapes — here's everything you should know about rail travel in the year ahead.

Europe gets a slew of new sleeper services

It's becoming easier than ever to zip around Europe by train. A high-speed network is set to link the continent's capitals by 2040, and night trains in particular are seeing a resurgence of interest. The sleeper service linking Paris, Berlin and Vienna was set to be scrapped after France withdrew funding — even though the trains had 70% occupancy — but European Sleeper, a Dutch-Belgian railway company founded in 2021, is taking over the route from March. It's also launching night trains between Amsterdam, Brussels, Bern and Milan in June. In the UK, the Caledonian Sleeper is introducing a new overnight route from Birmingham to the Scottish Highlands in January, the first time the service has added a new calling point in more than 30 years.



1 The Britannia Explorer is England's first luxury sleeper train. PHOTOGRAPH BY BELMOND

Sleeper trains in Europe are also going luxe. La Dolce Vita Orient Express started high-end trips around Italy in 2021 in vintage refurbished carriages. Spain's Al Andalus is marking its 40th anniversary in 2026 with a new itinerary that travels beyond Andalucía to take in more of the country, now starting or ending in Madrid. The Britannia Explorer is England's first luxury sleeper train, which launched in 2025. This service from luxury operator Belmond takes in the scenery of Cornwall, Wales and the Lake District with departures from London.

Hit the slopes by rail in Europe and the US

This winter, skiers can hit the world's largest interconnected ski area by train. The new seasonal Trenchki Night Express, running from December to March, will transport snow bunnies from Paris to Bourg-Saint-Maurice, stopping at big resorts in Courchevel, La Plagne, Tignes, Méribel, Val d'Isère and more. For 2026, Eurostar's Ski train from London St Pancras to Bourg-Saint-Maurice is extending its timetable from 14 weeks to 16 weeks, ending in early April instead of mid-March, too.

Across the pond in the United States, Amtrak's Winter Park Express, running between Denver and Winter Park, Colorado's longest continually operated ski resort, expanded its services and reduced ticket prices for the 2024/25 winter season and saw a record-breaking 150% increase in ridership. For a second year, the service continues to run four days a week from mid-December to the end of March, with 57 return trips.

Canyon Spirit extends scenic route to Salt Lake City, Utah

Previously called Rocky Mountaineer in the US, Canyon Spirit is expanding its luxury Rockies to the Red Rocks trip from Moab to Salt Lake City on one of the most iconic train routes not just in the country but the world, too. Moab, the gateway town to Arches and Canyonlands national parks, is a fractional drive size of Utah's capital city and is better connected with an international airport and two interstate highways. The new route runs from April onwards.

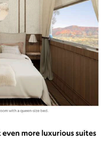
2 A new Rocky Mountaineer train will connect the mountain towns of Banff and Jasper in Canada. PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS STEPHEN, ALAMY

Rocky Mountaineer starts a new route in Canada

In summer 2026, passengers can travel by train to the wild heart of the Canadian Rockies on the new Passage to the Peaks route, which runs between the mountain towns of Banff and Jasper. This new service is the only Rocky Mountaineer route that doesn't go to Canada's West Coast, instead focusing on the craggy mountains, electric blue glacial lakes and towering forests further inland.

Amtrak set to roll out new Airo carriages

In 2026, Amtrak, the United States' only nationwide passenger rail service, is introducing new carriages to its medium-distance trains, including the Northeast Regional (Washington, DC to Boston) and Amtrak Cascades (Portland, Oregon to Vancouver, Canada). In August 2028, Amtrak launched the 'next generation' Avelia carriages on North America's only high-speed train line, continuing to improve the rail offering across the United States.



Saudi Arabia is getting its first luxury train line

All that glitters is gold, especially in a region known for its over-the-top decadence. Saudi Arabia is launching a new luxury train called Dreams of the Desert in autumn 2026, the first of its kind in the Middle East. Passengers will depart from capital Riyadh on a seven-day journey that ends near the border with Jordan, passing through AlUla, an ancient Nabataean city, and necropolis Hegra, which is often compared to Petra in Jordan.

The first passenger trains will roll out in the United Arab Emirates

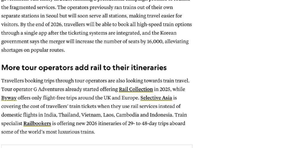
The UAE is introducing its first countrywide passenger train services in 2026 on Etihad Rail. The first stations will be in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and Fujairah. The journey between Dubai and Abu Dhabi will take about 50 minutes until the high-speed line is unveiled, cutting journey times down to half an hour. A train link to Oman is also under discussion.

3 Passengers on the Tasman Heritage Railway in New Zealand will now be able to stop off at Tranz Stream, a picturesque gorge only accessible by train. PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID MALLA, ALAMY

New Zealand cities get reconnected by rail

Revived after more than two decades out of service, a train route will once again link up Christchurch, Dunedin and Invercargill, the only passenger service on the South Island. From 20 January, the Mainlander will run monthly, with plans for more frequent services to be brought on board at a later date.

The South Island's scenic lines are also getting updates to draw in more travellers. Passengers on the Tasman Gorge heritage railway can stop off at Deep Stream, a picturesque 1,800ft-deep gorge, and walk across the bridge to take photos of the 1930s locomotive amid the landscape only accessible by train. The train is also adding open-air viewing carriages from 2026.



1 The new Australis suites will feature a separate bedroom with a queen-size bed. PHOTOGRAPH BY VISIONET BERLIN

Australia's iconic trains get even more luxurious suites

In April, Journey Beyond is bringing a higher level of luxury to the Ghan, Indian Pacific, Great Southern and Overland trains in Australia. Travellers staying in the new art deco-inspired suites, called Aurora and Australis, can expect private butlers, personalised in-suite bars, an unpacking service, chauffeurs at arrival and departure, and exclusive off-train experiences. Aurora suites will be double the size of the Platinum cabins, and Australis suites give travellers three times the space with a separate bedroom with a queen-size bed.

Japan's most popular bullet train is adding private rooms

Hidden by more than 150 million people a year, the Tokaido line connecting Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka is Japan's busiest and the world's oldest high-speed train lines, founded in 1964. In autumn 2026, some trains on this route are seeing a return of private rooms with closable doors for the first time in two decades since they were removed in 2003. The rooms — just two per train to start with — will be available in first-class and include reclining seats, leg rests, wi-fi, adjustable thermostats, volume control and dimmable lights. Travellers using the JR Rail Pass need to pay an additional charge to upgrade to the room suite.

1 Tokaido line connecting Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka in Japan sees the return of private rooms with closable doors on some trains. PHOTOGRAPH BY HARUO SUGIMURA, ALAMY

South Korea's high-speed services are merging, boosting capacity

After splitting apart in 2013 in an effort to foster commercial competition, KTX (Korea Train Express) and SRT (Super Rapid Train) are set to recombine into a single government-run entity in 2026, fulfilling a presidential campaign promise to reunite the fragmented services. The operators previously ran trains out of their own separate stations in Seoul but will soon serve all stations, making travel easier for visitors. By the end of 2026, travellers will be able to book all high-speed train options through a single app after the ticketing systems are integrated, and the Korean government says the merger will increase the number of seats by 16,000, alleviating shortages on popular routes.

More tour operators add rail to their itineraries

Travellers booking trips through tour operators are also looking towards train travel. Tour operator G Adventures already started offering Rail collection in 2025, while Bweep offers only flight-free trips around the UK and Europe. Selective Asia is covering the cost of travellers' train tickets when they use rail services instead of domestic flights in India, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Indonesia. Train specialist Railbookers is offering new 2026 itineraries of 29- to 48-day trips abroad some of the world's most luxurious trains.

To subscribe to National Geographic Traveller (UK) magazine click here. (Available in select countries only).

Features

Cruise travel is changing—here are the biggest trends for 2026

We explore the trends — from neuro-friendly onboard design to silent sailings — making waves in the coming year and beyond.

Sam Chapman and Jessica Hagan dive into Scandinavian design and sound sensitivity at Silver Journey's Nordic spa. Jessica Hagan

By Rebecca Burton
January 22, 2026

This article was produced by National Geographic Traveller (UK).

The Gen Z influence

There has a time when a cruise was considered a holiday for seniors, but the perception is quickly becoming a thing of the past. Today, the industry is charting a totally different demographic: Generation Z. Born between 1997 and 2012 — some already familiar with cruising thanks to family holidays — are eager to embark on their own adventures, and cruise lines are rolling out the red carpet to welcome them. Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. reported that 70% of Gen Z who have previously been on a cruise plan to sail again, while Royal Caribbean has reported a 18% increase in Gen Z customers in 2025 compared to 2024.

So it's no surprise that more and more cruise companies are embracing the full power of social media to connect with a younger audience and build momentum. Celebrity Cruises and Virgin Voyages are leading the way and utilising influencer marketing, formatted of traditional crewed promotions, content creators and vlogger-led sailings are now introducing the world of cruising to digital-savvy travellers who often turn to social media for inspiration and trip planning.

"Influencers show the real experience in a way that feels authentic, set the same cruise vision conversional," says Billy Bohan Christian, senior director, global brand marketing at Virgin Voyages. "They're large hope in helping us break down deep-old stereotypes about cruising being for an older demographic. When people see influencers having a blast on board, it sticks that this isn't your typical cruise experience."

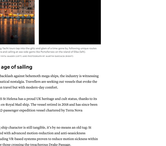
Explore Journeys is also meeting the demand. In January 5 Journey through Mediterranean and Cultural Adriatic Cruise, Gen Z will be joining Explore Journeys' first-ever Nordic voyage, of Silver in the mechanical elegance of Sean Sonnes Syon.

Another option is Variety Cruises, owned and operated by the same Lionel family for over 50 years, which has been specifically designed for Gen Z and Millennials, offering sail into harbour that guests may not be familiar with. "We pride ourselves in offering guests the opportunity to discover lesser known islands, just like our passenger-minded," says Filippos Vourvopulos, CEO of Variety Cruises. "Our Unexplored Greece itinerary visits the Aegean islands that big ships can't easily access — for us, it's all about hiking on uninhabited Cyclades, extra stops in secluded coves and tasting local wines in Lesvos."

Explore Journeys' eight-day Unexplored Cruise itinerary calls at Skaros, Paros, Ugini, Kalymnos, Levitha, Amorgos, Koufonissia, Iraklia and Serifos, departing in May, June, July and September 2026. Explore Journeys 2026 Paul Jones at Lofoten port

Connecting with local culture

Rocket Star cleans are increasingly looking to move to the crowds and book exclusive, money can't buy experiences — and often in smaller groups. The luxury sector arguably does this best. Lynn Narraway, VP UK and EMEA at Seabourn, confirms an uptick in the desire for more meaningful connections, with small group experiences taking off first, a Tuscan vineyard tour is shapping with the chef and brewing beer with a local family.



"Today's luxury traveller is seeking more than just sightseeing — they want to immerse themselves in the culture, cuisine and character of place," says Lynn. "That's why we've created a range of intimate, exclusive experiences that allow guests to connect with local life, from small-group culinary experiences to private dining in a hand-to-remove Venice, hearing their stories and tasting traditional dishes passed down through generations — these are the moments that stay with you long after the voyage ends," Lynn continues. "It's about forging genuine human connections, not just ticking off landmarks."

In partnership with Lucy Shaud Bacciarelli of Kim, Crystal's voyages now extend beyond the ship — the 'Bi-Discoveries & Inner' cruises land adventures are available as part of small group tours or as an individual basis. Guests will discover mid-voyage and extend at subsequent ports, visiting sites such as the Great Wall of China, Taj Mahal and Giza. Each journey is meticulously planned into the cruise itinerary, with logistics managed by expert local teams.

Fortnightly cruises have gain prominence as one of the most in-demand small group sporting adventures. Explore Journeys' partnership with F1 will continue in 2026, with the cruise line returning to the Monaco Grand Prix 20th. EXPLORE LA will be docked and from the track, and guests who book on to journeys falling over the Grand Prix will have access to exclusive events and curated destinations. Jacy Fabre be able to extend their trip with three day grandstand access at Fr Sakhir Gulf hospitality.

Intrepid types looking for the ultimate 'cool-action' itineraries should check out HX Expeditions' Natural Wonders and Sailing programme — there's a 100% increase in booking capacity and double the camping spots.

"We're opening the polar regions to more adventurers than ever before," shares Karin Strand, VP of expeditions development at HX Expeditions. "It's about making these once-in-a-lifetime moments available to everyone, while delivering them in small, responsible groups. Importantly, all experiences are designed to harmony with nature and to give back to the environmental regulations that govern human activity in Antarctica."

EXPLORE
ROUTE 66 IN ONE
OF A KIND CITY
Discover more

How to do it

HX Expeditions' 29-day Antarctica and Falklands cruise on 19 March 2026 costs from £7,247 per person, including one night hotel accommodation, internal flights, transfers and gratuities. International flights not included.

A Scandinavian sailing Silver Nordic spa with large panoramic windows and sea views, with Sean Sonnes Syon, Jessica Hagan and Sam Chapman, at the Island of Rica Sartorio, Chile. Sean Sonnes Syon, Jessica Hagan and Sam Chapman at Silver Journey's Nordic spa, Chile

The golden age of sailing

In something of a backlash against hallowed-mega ships, the industry is witnessing a move towards nautical nostalgia. Therefore are sailing out vessels that evoke the golden age of ocean travel but with modern day comfort.

The legendary SS0 St Helena has a proud UK heritage and cult status, thanks to its starring role as an on-board Hall of Fame. The iconic ship's last voyage since been converted into a 132-passenger expedition vessel chartered by Swiss Navy Expeditions.

While the working ship character is still tangible, it's by no means an old rag to bedraggled. Wind-rich physical tourists reduction and and carbon footprint. The technology, fitted by hoped systems power to reduce noxious aloxes within streams — vital for those crossing the treacherous Drake Passage.

"SS0 St Helena embodies the charm and reliability of classic ocean travel, now reimagined for fantastic waters," says Greg Carter, founder and CEO of New Navy Expeditions. "We've kept the soul of the ship intact — the wooden decks, the nostalgia and contemporary comfort — so it's as much a grey new life to a legendary vessel by recycling and reusing rather than replacing, so that sustainability is at the heart of this extraordinary chapter of her journey."

There then are the ships with underlying sails, used for propulsion — Windstar, Star Clippers, Pyrmont and Sea Cloud Cruises are leaning into the trend, but Silver Explorer's forthcoming ship GC Centurion elevates it with its sister sale. This will be the world's largest sailing yacht, with 54 spacious suites, an art deco style spaboard and even a recording studio.

Discover Ukraine
Ukraine is waiting for you. Discover its cities, culture, nature and people.
Discover

"Nautical nostalgia speaks to the romance of travel, the luxury of the sea, emotions that no conventional cruise ship or yacht can inspire — true to the very value of Orient Express," says Vanessa Vanatier, chief operating officer at Orient Express Sailing Yachts. At the same time, GC Centurion is the only sailing yacht of its kind on the market, uniting the majestic spirit of sailing with cutting-edge technology and unrivalled comfort. It's both a tribute to maritime heritage and a bold step into the future of luxury travel."

How to do it

Orient Express Sailing Yachts' seven-night Italian Riviera cruise on a July 2026, calls at Portofino, Portofarina and Porto Cervo. Check website for prices and details.

A Sailing yacht navigate around a Mediterranean port, with a wide variety of Orient Express Sailing Yachts, ideal for a luxurious cruise. Orient Express Sailing Yachts

Slow things down

The era of 'quiet cruising' is upon us. If you look beyond the mega ships, there are many options offering slower-paced sailing — whether you want to meander along the Norwegian coastline or traverse Europe's diverse waterways. Set to launch at the end of 2026, expeditions cruise line Swan will debut the world's first nature-powered ship. The close-to-zero-emission Captain Arctic will use the sun and wind to chart its course, with five sailed-only covered in 20 differing 8-of-a-kind suites.

Norwegian coastal voyage also ticks the sustainable box, and offers a quieter, contemplative way of sailing. Unlike traditional ships, the vessels stay close to land, allowing guests to soak up their surroundings.

"Operating sustainably has always been a key priority for us," says Matthew Valentine, global head of sales at Hurtig Voyages. "Over the summer, our four ships were installed with some of the largest batteries on a passenger ship, meaning they can sail emissions free for up to four hours at a time through vulnerable areas such as the Geiranger Fjord — we're currently planning a 12-day climate-neutral voyage along the Norwegian coast, using electric propulsion and HVO biogas."

This shift towards quieter, more conscious cruising is also being embraced on waterways. River cruises eliminate the sensory overload often associated with larger ocean vessels.

Discover more

How to do it

Crystal Cruises is looking into building additional hotel barges, which will operate in new destinations. A six-night hotel barge cruise through Belgium and Holland costs from £2,499 per person, including all meals and drinks on board, excursions and port fees.

The slow cruising on Hotel Barge's Rhine's Lorelei is a popular picture spot for those seeking to remake the iconic Romantic-era painting. Hotel Barge's Lorelei

Discover more on Hotel Barge's website

Special interests at sea

Special interest voyages have been popular for a while, but they're become increasingly sophisticated and mainstream. Cruise lines are leaning into what's cruise with a vetted audience, but now you can and step to the category of mentored sporting legends, celebrity chefs and other high profile names. Itineraries revolve around a specific subject or theme — history, food, sport, wellness and fitness, or TV and film. According to a survey from cruise.co.uk, 46% of passengers are interested in wellness-focused cruises, and 32% are interested in food-focused a cruise of this kind, indicating the potential for future demand. Silver Wave is one to watch for fitness-mania focused voyages same set on-up with 40% of the time, food and drink at 20% of itineraries and culture at 9%.

Windstar's new handpicked Pinnacle Collection is curated. Partnering with Ellen of Harper's Bazaar, Chefs Gastronomic Festivals and La Cucina Sea, Cunard's Great Voyages feature live presentations and workshops, with the aim of inspiring guests in the things they love the most, and providing cool-long experiences.

Sleep Aboard The Tito Japanese Train (It's Heaven)
Tom Jones | Contributor

Cunard's seven-night Southampton to New York 'Abbey Road at Sea' voyage (from £1,499 per person) and Queen Elizabeth's 'Great Voyages of Discovery' cruise (from £1,499 per person), based on the sharing a Tuscan vineyard tour, and cooking with the chef and brewing beer with a local family, are both sold out. Cunard's Queen Elizabeth's 'Great Voyages of Discovery' cruise (from £1,499 per person), based on the sharing a Tuscan vineyard tour, and cooking with the chef and brewing beer with a local family, are both sold out.

Related Topics
Cruise | Cruise Ships | Cruise Lines | Cruise Ship | Cruise Lines | Cruise Ship

You May Also Like

Big adventure, small price: 15 of the best voyages to book for 2026

Your travel will have to 2026: Here's what you need to know

SURPRISING SWITZERLAND
Take an extra 24 hours!

THINK SWISS

EXPLORE
ROUTE 66 IN ONE
OF A KIND CITY
Discover more

New and reimagined hotels shaping hospitality in 2026

2026 is a bumper year for hotel openings, from European coastal retreats to a wave of luxury stays in Mexico, and a bright new base in Bangkok

BY ANDREA CARTER · 21 JAN · 2026

What defines a great hotel in 2026? Slick design, personalised service, social spaces that sing and a clear sense of place. Buildings that shape and give back to the communities they inhabit, more than simply exist.

Out of the hundreds of properties that are opening, a select number have caught our attention, chosen for their thoughtful interiors, environmental credentials and a commitment to meaningful, culture-led hospitality. From long-awaited openings from big name groups to emerging boutique brands and from renovations, these are the hotels on our radar for the year ahead.

Hotels in Europe

Chesa Marchetta, Sils Maria, Switzerland

Why we rate it: An intimate, art-led alpine hideaway
Address: Via da Marlun 88, 7514 Sils im Engadin/Surlej, Switzerland

Artificum (Chesa Marchetta & Wirth) reversed hospitality partnerships, which also includes the Elle Arena in Bergamo, Scotland. The group has unveiled its first Swiss hotel in the peaceful village of Sils Maria, where founders Swan and Manuela Chai their first date. Set in a renovated 16th century guesthouse, preserving the building's historic character was essential to the project, which is furnished with locally crafted furniture and antiques. As expected, there is also a world-class art collection, which mixes Old Masters with contemporary works. Look out for works by Swiss painters Alberto Giacometti and Giovanni Giacometti, alongside global names such as Louise Bourgeois.

VISIT SITE

Na Praia, Comporta, Portugal

Why we rate it: Understated luxury on the rugged Portuguese coast
Address: Estrada nacional 253-1, Freiria, 7570-788, Carvalhal, Portugal
Opening: Spring 2026

Na Praia is the second hotel from Jesse Ivatts's (ex, owner of Roadbook favourite Sao Lazaro) co-founded Ai Aimbles. Located just beyond Comporta's expansive beaches on the ocean and wild nature reserve, sculptural buildings emerge from the untamed landscape. Architecture is deeply guided by environment, while the hotel is committed to conservation and preserving Portuguese heritage. Endorsed as luxury is expressed through artisanal craftsmanship and local materials, such as raw earth and clay. Aim, considered pace of life is encouraged, with rolling dunes and untouched coastline right outside.

VISIT SITE

Pullitzer Barcelona, Spain

Why we rate it: An art-filled base in the Catalan capital
Address: Carrer de Bergara, 8, L'Eixample, 08002 Barcelona, Spain

Pullitzer Hotels belong to boutique charm with bending social spaces, where flat-file spirits sit beneath bespoke art and menus spotlighting local produce. In Barcelona, choose between Hotel Regina and Pullitzer Barcelona, the latter of which has been brought to life by designer and artist Lázaro Rosa Violan. Linger in lush courtyards over plates of Catalan brunch followed by rooftop cocktails, before retreating to an elegantly appointed room, where high ceilings and floor-to-ceiling balcony windows instill openness and calm. Satisfyingly underpins everything Pullitzer does, as reflected in its recently earned positive B Corp status.

VISIT SITE

Ytri, Traena Island, Norway

Why we rate it: A Nordic hideaway shaped by land and sea
Address: Fiskehamna 8, 8770 Traena, Norway
Opening: Spring 2026

Part of the restored Helsø & Chilcaus group, Ytri is set to be Norway's most remote luxury hotel, located in the Traena Archipelago on the Helgeland coast. The island cluster is home to one of the country's oldest fishing communities, with just 450 residents. Ytri's 100 hectare "the outer one", reflecting its windswept coastal setting, is one might expect, there will be a stellar outdoor restaurant, alongside a glass-walled Northern Lights lounge and 28 guest rooms. A wood-fired sauna sits on the edge of the Arctic Sea, and guests are encouraged to embrace the wildness of the land.

VISIT SITE

Orient Express Venezia, Italy

Why we rate it: A palazzo-turned-five-star residence on the water's edge
Address: Strada Nova 2250, 30121 Venice, Italy
Opening: Spring 2026

Orient Express launched its first hotel in 2025 to mixed reviews, reeling a historic palazzo in Rome. The hotel group is set to repeat this success in Venice, transforming Venetian Palazzo into a five-star residence infused with the legendary train's savoir faire. Guests arrive by private boat, while original frescoes, mosaic floors and gilded ballrooms have been painstakingly restored to preserve the building's Neoclassic and Baroque heritage. The hotel follows the 2025 launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express luxury train, which rolls through Italy's most picturesque landscapes.

VISIT SITE

Laura Cliff, Paros, Greece

Why we rate it: An adults-only clifftop retreat with Cycladic charm
Address: Agia Irini, Paraporos, Paros Island, Cyclades, Greece, 844 00
Opening: Spring 2026

Laura is a new hospitality brand, created in partnership with Emotionery and Acme. It will make its debut with Laura Cliff, an adults-only boutique hotel perched on a cliffscape in Paros, Greece. Gallery-have private terraces, overlooking the vast blue Aegean, while some have private plunge pools. Handcrafted Greek furnishings and local art are thoughtfully integrated throughout, reflecting the island's rich cultural heritage. There is a cliffside Japanese bar and restaurant, alongside a spa and fitness centre, creating a serene retreat amongst the natural beauty of the Cyclades. An additional hotel is planned for Paros, as well as openings in Athens and Athos.

VISIT SITE

The Dean, Berlin and Munich, Germany

Why we rate it: Bold design and local flavour
Address: To be announced
Opening: Spring 2026

Independent Irish hospitality brand Dean Group has built a reputation for its design-forward hotels, rich with local art and character. The group is expanding into Europe this year, with a flagship opened debuting in February. Contemporary design flourishes throughout 80 guest rooms, with the social heart of the hotel is its beautiful, whiskery, restaurant and bar that hums from morning until late. The Dean Munich will follow in March, with a smart interior that reflects the city's Art Nouveau heritage. A Japanese restaurant, four bars, swimming pool, gym, fitness classes and treatment rooms will create a complete lifestyle offering in the city's cosy Westend district. An additional opening in Munich is set to follow towards the end of 2026.

VISIT SITE

Six Senses London, UK

Why we rate it: Supreme wellness in an Art Deco London landmark
Address: 1 Bulmer Place, London W2 4RA
Opening: Spring 2026

One of the most anticipated luxury hotel launches finally arrives in 2026, with the opening of Six Senses London. Set within The Whiteley, the former department store in Bayswater, 106 rooms and suites honour the building's historic character. A supreme subterranean spa is home to London's first heated magnesium pool, as well as a 20m swimming pool and thermal bathing lounge.

The opening also marks the arrival of Six Senses Place, a members' club with a focus on wellness and community. As with everything Six Senses does, you can expect thoughtful design, uncovering wellness and genuine sustainability efforts throughout the hotel and club.

VISIT SITE

Hotels in Asia

Andaz Bangkok, Thailand

Why we rate it: Design-forward lifestyle hotel overlooking lush Lumphini Park
Address: 200 Wireless Road, Lumphini, Pathum Wan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

2026 is slated to be an exciting year for Andaz, as the brand continues its repositioning as a locally-rooted lifestyle brand, with a focus on modern craftsmanship. The new Andaz Wine Bangkok is a towering example of the brand's group new direction, blending contemporary flair with local character. Thai design elements are found throughout, with a spotlight on works by Thai limited artists. Guests can graze over the city from the rooftop infinity pool, sample Chinese cuisine at Jing and finish with cocktails in the Andaz Lounge, where weekend DJs spin against an open-air skyline backdrop. The hotel faces One Bangkok, an expansive hub of retail and restaurants, with lush Lumphini Park on its doorstep.

VISIT SITE

Hotel Tokyo, Japan

Why we rate it: Serene, sustainable luxury and local craftsmanship
Address: 2-Chome-17-22 Akasaka, Minato-ku Minato City, Tokyo 107-0052, Japan
Opening: Spring 2026

The Hotels group, known for its responsibly minded, nature-driven hotel designs, is expanding its footprint in 2026 with openings in Tokyo and Aarhus. Reflective of the brand, you can expect reclaimed materials and serene, natural tones throughout each property, infused with local craftsmanship. Plant-forward menus are still champion a zero-waste ethos, featuring seasonal, locally-sourced ingredients in thoughtfully curated menus.

First up, the Tokyo outpost hovers above Akasaka in the World Gate development by Mori Trust. Interiors celebrate Japanese artistry through hand-crafted woodwork, tatami-inspired textures and minimalist design accents. There is also a fitness centre, spa and swimming pool, with an outdoor deck supporting urban biodiversity.

VISIT SITE

Park Hyatt Tokyo, Japan

Why we rate it: A freshly reopened icon with a legendary bar
Address: 3-7 Chome-7-1 Nishishinjuku, Shinjuku City, Tokyo 163-1055, Japan

Park Hyatt Tokyo has reopened following an 18-month refurbishment, including newly designed guest rooms and suites. Open layouts unfold in marble and wood, with Aesop toiletries and Japanese cotton robes. Much loved social spaces have also been given a fresh lick of paint, including the famed New York Bar, as featured in Lost in Translation. Akira Isozaki has created a new menu at hotel restaurant, Gyoraku, where a gourmet breakfast is served beneath a vast collage of black and white photographs by Yasu Inoue. It is still the Park Hyatt Tokyo that guests know and love, but freshly invigorated for the next generation.

VISIT SITE

Hotels in North America

Amanwari, Baja California, Mexico

Why we rate it: All-out luxury where the Sea of Cortez meets the desert
Where: 23570 La Ribera, Mexico
Opening: Spring 2026

A highly anticipated Mexican debut from Aman resorts debuts on Baja's East Cape this Spring 2026, set across 18 acres of rolling farmland. Responsible, luxurious design abounds, with arresting views of the desert and Eden's de La Lagna mountains. Aman's reputation for exceptional wellness experiences is upheld here, with a dedicated spa and high-punching fitness and recovery facilities.

Aman also unveils a new six bedroom villa at Amangalré in Utah this February, which looks set to be the most luxurious residence in the American Southwest, replete with a private pool, gym and spa.

Chablé Valle de Guadalupe, Baja California, Mexico

Why we rate it: Villas with vineyard views, and a thoughtful celebration of Mexican culture
Where: Valle de Guadalupe, Mexico
Opening: Winter 2026

CHABLÉ VALLE DE GUADALUPE, CAMPO DE LA CUMBRE, MEXICO

Family-owned Chablé Hotels is known for its luxury properties in Mexico that place nature and wellness at the fore, while honouring Mexican culture. Its latest opening, Chablé Valle de Guadalupe, comprises twenty villas and 10 private residences in Baja California, Mexico's largest wine region, with panoramic vineyard and valley views. Guests are encouraged to connect with the landscape on hiking trails, while the spa draws on traditional Mexican medicinal practices. The social heart of the property is the Clubhouse, with an all-day restaurant that champions the region's landscape. The hotel also offers properties in Yucatán and Oaxaca.

VISIT SITE

TRAVEL

Hottest hotel openings for 2026

From a private island in the French Riviera to a wine tasting retreat in Guadalupe, Suzannah Ramsdale rounds up next year's most intriguing new hotels

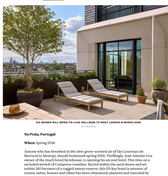
SUZANNAH RAMSDALE · FREELANCEWRITER
IN ASHER AND

Six Senses, London

When: March 2026

Finally, it's about time London had a Six Senses. It feels like a natural fit for Soho: our city folk desperate for rest, relaxation and the chance to press pause on the hustle and bustle. Nestled in the heart of the city, between Oxford Street, Regent Street, Kensington and the capital's other shopping meccas, guests will be able to escape the city and its pollution in the wellness sanctuary. The hotel promises to give New Londoners an injection of Zen. Along with 109 rooms and suites, there will be a spa with a pool, steam room, sauna and treatment rooms, plus an central international gym. It will have a four-restaurant, co-working space, and wellness rooms along with a drought-proofing row of rooms, pools and saunas. Guests can book in for a day of pure pampering, or stay for a night to design inspiration from an old Fashioned London underground. A Sea II treatment rooms, a spectacular pool, cryotherapy, Hyaulon, contrast therapy as well as yoga and meditation classes. Book in for the British Revival.

From £600, sixsenses.com



THE WORK HALL, OPENS TO LIVE ACTIVELIKE THE HOTEL'S LOBBY & WORKS FROM

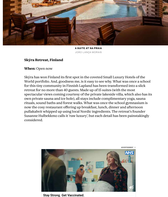
ALEX SANDERS

Ne Pousa, Portugal

When: Spring 2026

Anyone who has travelled in the olive grove-scented air of Alto Lavouro do Barroiral in Alentejo should backtrack spring 2026. The Blue, Just Jessica Cox, Ne Pousa is a rustic-chic retreat with 10 bedrooms, a pool, a spa and an orchard stocked with 47 organic counties. Buried within the sand dunes and set within 340 hectares of a rugged nature reserve, this £5 key hotel is minutes of the Atlantic Ocean and Vicentian Coast. Its restaurant, Ne Pousa, overseen by Paris designer Studio 65 for over a decade. The result promises to be extraordinary. Five restaurants will conjure up hyper local meals using produce from the hotel's organic vegetable garden, including a Mediterranean Sea, Carnaxuprita's traditional old pier to vegetarian gems on and Bonate vary. Here, there is also a spa, a Kids Club and a menu of life-affirming activities including cycling, surfing, yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, Qigong, Nordic Walk and walking classes to help you nature traditional sound recipes.

Room rates TBC, neopousa.com



A SUITE AT NE POUSA

CREDIT: NE POUSA

Skyra Rovinari, Finland

When: Open now

Skyra has sun Finland its first spot in the coveted Small Luxury Hotels of the World collection. Nestled in the Finnish Lake District, Skyra Rovinari is the perfect for this day commutely to Finnish Lapland has been transformed into a rich retreat for no more than 60 guests. Made up of 9 suites (with the most spectacular lake views), the hotel has a Finnish Lapland feel to it. There also has its own private sauna and ice bath, all-day room include complimentary yoga, sauna and ice bathing, and a Finnish Lapland-inspired tasting menu. Guests can also enjoy some the cosy restaurant offering up breakfast, lunch, dinner and afternoon tea. Skyra Rovinari is a 3 hour drive from Helsinki, and 1 hour from Rovaniemi (home to Santaus Clubhouse, calls it 'our luxury'). Sun-lock detail has been personalised, considered.

From £1,00 per night, skyrovarinari.com

SUITE DETAILS

CREDIT: SKYRA

Cambridge House Auberge, London

When: Summer 2026

As part of the Rosleen Brothers £1 billion regeneration of Piccadilly, Auberge Collection is set to open its first UK hotel — separate Green Park in winter's three-year-long transformation. Inspired by the Grand Tour, Cambridge House Auberge has been meticulously busy balancing away to transform the old Grand Hotel into a 200-room, 40-suite hotel. Guests can expect a Mediterranean feel to the restaurant (it's Nigel's Cyrill and by the great Italy behind Carbone Irina) and a Mediterranean-inspired menu. The interiors are also to be based on the old Roman bathhouses and some excellent people-watching.

Room rates TBC, auberge.com

SPOKES'S BIKES PARK, AMERICAN HOME AMONG BEST TO DINE IN THE SUMMER

CREDIT: SPOKES

Zanzier De Ste Rosalie, French Riviera

When: Spring 2026

A seven-minute boat ride from the pretty Provençal town of Sainct is also the private island of Ste Rosalie. As of May 1 it will be home to Zanzier's latest hotel, a 19-room property with a pool, spa, and a Michelin-star restaurant. Its pitch-perfect only spices stepping in 1960s French Riviera chic. Sunbeam, a spared lush and stunning space near the sea gardens covers both spa and Zanzier. Its Ste Rosalie Restaurant, Sunbeam, is a Mediterranean-inspired menu, with a focus on the fresh fish for the Sunbeam. The Classic unique will have rooms with sweeping views of the Tuscan hills, as well as for family-friendly apartments. The restaurant, Sunbeam, is a Mediterranean-inspired menu, with a focus on the fresh fish, locally sourced ingredients and there will be two pools and a spa.

From £ 200 per night, ladarlhe.com

A RENDERING OF ONE OF THE VILLAS AT ZANNIER HOMES

CREDIT: ZANNIER

La Parlita in Chianti, Tuscany

When: May 2026

Just 25 minutes from Florence, at the end of a pretty pine-tree-lined avenue you'll find this 19-room property, which is set to open in May. Its 19 rooms, suites and residencies are all contemporary Italian reimagined (one of Italy's hilltop hotel Architect brothers Gian Carlo and Matteo Fioranzato have followed the blueprint of the Tuscan farmhouse, with a few modern touches, and a stunning pool and hideaway for dinner in the farm. The Chianti unique will have rooms with sweeping views of the Tuscan hills, as well as for family-friendly apartments. The restaurant, Sunbeam, is a Mediterranean-inspired menu, with a focus on the fresh, locally sourced ingredients and there will be two pools and a spa.

From £ 200 per night, ladarlhe.com

LA PARLITA IN CHIANTI

CREDIT: LA PARLITA

Pregon, Seychelles

When: October 2026

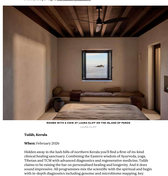
This is also ultra-luxury. After a complete overhaul, the private island paradise of Pregon will reopen in October 2026 with 20 villas, 3 restaurants and a wellness lagoon (it allows to host a maximum of 70 people at any one time for ultimate privacy).

As the heart of the island there will be a distillery, patisserie, cigar lounge, library, boutique, atelier shop, café, museum, interactive 4D room, conservation lab, kids' club, and a wellness lagoon with a 25-metre infinity pool, Turkish bath and Cryotherapy. Pregon is further on gut to the new world-class spa (offering Hyaulon water therapy, Hydration pods, ice baths), a new room, sleep capsules and pressure chambers, ceramic and pastel resorts, and yacht club.

CREDIT: TUNE

If that isn't enough, guests will have the pick of seven private waters same security beaches and a chance to spot one of the 4,500 giant tortoises or see Seychelles Black Parrots, Seychelles Magpie Robins, Fairy Terns, Madagascar Fody, Zebra Doves and Seychelles White-eyes (if the gentle pools and rainforest hotel. A may worth crossing jaging your focus for? Kinda sounds like it.

Room from £20,000 per night, Pregon.com



CAMPER LIKE LUXURY AT PREGON

CREDIT: PREGON

Delano Miami Beach

When: March 2026

This art deco icon is set to re-open after five years of extensive renovation. Just steps from the sand, the property will be a stunning mix of Miami's legendary South Beach hotel: Grace Jones, Leonardo DiCaprio, George Clooney, Lenny Kravitz, Madonna, Mick Jagger, Naomi Campbell, Paris Hilton, Rihanna, Lenny Kravitz and just to name, Nine Inch Nails, Madonna — the pioneer behind Glastonbury and The Hoxton — they are promising a return to its former glory. The 2026 Delano Miami Beach will feature 200 rooms and suites, a rooftop pool, four restaurants and bars, including a 1950s version of the Ramon Rose Bar. The pool will be the place to be seen.

From £500 per night, delanobeachfl.com

CAT AND CHAIR

Lunera Cliff, Paros

When: Sep 2026

For many, Paros is the perfect Greek island. Secluded sandy beaches, ship towns as well as white washed villages and fresh from the Aegean seafood. Adding to its appeal this summer is Lunera Cliff. A serene adult only hideaway on the southwest coast of the island, Lunera Cliff will have 30 suites, a pool bar and an offsite restaurant Mon Kabanis, while dishes will have French flair at La Cantine. The hotel's menu of extra curricular experiences is unique: marble carving, pottery, cooking classes, Pilates, Tai Chi, Qigong, a spa of citrus-minds — as well as diving, windsurfing and guided trail running.

From £600 per night, mariamaurogiannakou.com

PHOENIX SUITE A VIEW OF LUNERA CLIFF ON THE ISLAND OF PAROS

CREDIT: LUNERA

Tulalik, Kerala

When: February 2026

Hidden away in the lush hills of northern Kerala you'll find a few of its kind Tulalik, a wellness retreat that combines ancient healing with modern medicine. Tibetan and CN will advanced diagnostic and regenerative medicine. Tulalik claims to be raising the bar on personalised healing and longevity. And it does seem to have thought of everything: guests will undergo a comprehensive health check-up with diagnostics including genome and microbiome mapping, full hormonal, cardiovascular profiling and functional testing. From a clinical perspective, Tulalik's team of CN, Tibetan and Ayurvedic doctors will be operating from its complex north and its sister Sanctuary Medical Hospital is just 15 minutes away. Tulalik's treatments are a mix of Ayurvedic and Tibetan healing, regenerative treatments spun from hyperbaric oxygen chambers to cryotherapy and infrared saunas. Guests can expect a transformative stay in a secret retreat 30 acres of manicured gardens and wooded forest, in the heart of it all-the The Sanctuary, the world's largest wood healing dome, where it's said that the harmonic frequencies can restore balance at a cellular level.

Rates TBC, tulalik.life

TULALIK'S ROOMS, THE SANCTUARY, THE WORLD'S LARGEST WOOD HEALING DOME

CREDIT: TULALIK

Orient Express Venezia

When: April 2026

Orient Express continues its expansion with the opening of a particular new property in Venice. It takes eight years for the supremely skilled architect Aline Asmar d'Avenier to bring the project to life, transforming a 16th-century palace into a gem in the Duke of Urbino. The results are extraordinary, with Giovanni Battista Medaccci's original spiral staircase acting as a true showstopper, topped off with a stained glass ceiling. The hotel's 24 rooms and suites are dotted with Murano chandeliers throughout. We predict the Pegaso Bar will become a must-visit cocktail spot. Part sumptuous hotel, part living history, this is one for the bucket list.

From £1,140 per night, orient-express.com

ORIENT EXPRESS HAS RESTORED A 15TH-CENTURY PALAZZO
ORIENT EXPRESS VENEZIA

Chablé Guadalupe, Mexico

When: TBC

Chablé Yucatan is regularly declared to be one of the best hotels in the world. Excitement is high then for the new outpost by this family-owned brand in the heart of Mexico's largest wine region, Baja California Norte. Guests will have the run of 10 hectares of vineyards, conservation trails and a spa offering yoga and sound baths. Just over the border from San Diego, the hotel will have 70 keys as well as 10 residences. If this opening is anywhere near as good as Chablé Yucatan, book your flights now.

Rates TBC, chablehotels.com

A CABANA AT CHABLÉ GUADALUPE
CHABLÉ HOTELS

EDITION Lake Como

When: March 2026

Across the water from beguiling Bellagio is the gleaming new EDITION. Injecting a bit of cool to the storied shores of Lake Como, the floating pool and lounge bar will be where you'll find the beautiful people this summer. Three-Michelin-starred chef Mauro Colagreco will be in charge of food in the restored 19th century palazzo and the longevity spa will help to undo throbbing heads from the night before.

From £690 per night, editionhotels.com

A PALATIAL ROOM AT EDITION LAKE COMO
NIKOLAS KOENIG

The Dean, Berlin

When: February 2026

Taking up its rightful spot in charming Charlottenburg, The Dean marks the Irish hotel brand's first foray outside of Ireland (openings in Munich and Miami follow next). Expect to see rows of Gen Z tapping away at their laptops in restaurant and bar Benedict by day and knocking back gimlets by night. Art is curated by Thom Oosterhof — themed around the idea of *Wanderers* — to reflect the city's creative scene, gorgeous bespoke amenities are provided by the always-delicious DS & Durga and the stylish rooms have been designed by Londoner Rachael Gowdridge.

From £120 per night, thedeanberlin.je

MORE ABOUT HOTEL OPENINGS THE RITZ SIX SENSES GOMPORTA PARIS
HAVE YOUR SAY... VIEW COMMENTS
Discussion LOG IN | SIGN UP
Start the conversation
ALL COMMENTS NEWEST
Start the conversation
Powered by viafoura

The most exciting new hotels to stay at in 2026

These exceptional destinations planned to open up in 2026 are worth the wait. Hilary Kimber reports

By Hilary Kimber

Facebook
Twitter
Email
Save this story

Since travelling after the Covid-19 pandemic, Spectacular Alnwick has been a magnet among wanderlust-ridden, culture-vulture Brits. Alongside Britain's prime-time-worthy castle and Harry Potter-filmed gardens, the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland have created a dazzling array of attractions, including a Bamburgh Castle-inspired treehouse, a Michelin-starred restaurant, a Grade I-listed Italianate mansion, a Jurassic-inspired adventure playground and a Grade I-listed Victorian glasshouse. Now, the Duke and Duchess are adding a luxury hotel to the mix, in the form of the Grade I-listed Alnwick Castle Gatehouse, which is being transformed into a 14-room boutique hotel, due to open in 2026. Thanks to their international campaign for Visit Britain, we can't help wondering if some of the Duke and Duchess's guests will be Americans.

Top 5 Best Vacuum Cleaners

Accurate reviews, with thorough standards for our ranking, based on a lot of time, more than one hour, hundreds of hours, and thousands of hours, for the highly-rated products. Updated January 2026

Top Picks
- Lista Dragon
- Lista Cyclone
- Cordless Wand

Alnwick Gatehouse
Wallpaper* Handbook
Alnwick, Northumberland

Alnwick Gatehouse is a new addition to the Alnwick Castle estate, which is being transformed into a 14-room boutique hotel. Including some of the conserved Northumberland sandstone, it was, until recently, the home of the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland's children, who now live in a nearby cottage.

Alnwick Gatehouse, which is being transformed into a 14-room boutique hotel, due to open in 2026, is a Grade I-listed Italianate mansion. Alongside Alnwick Castle, it is one of the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland's most-visited attractions, with its Michelin-starred restaurant, Bamburgh Castle-inspired treehouse and Jurassic-inspired adventure playground. Now, the Duke and Duchess are adding a luxury hotel to the mix

The insider secrets to avoiding Venice's crowds

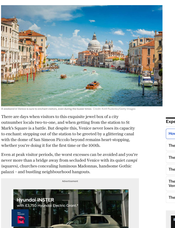
Our expert guide details how to best spend a weekend in the Floating City

Anne Hanley
Destinations expert

12 January 2026 9:15am GMT

Rachael Tepper
Europe, Italy, Venice

Gift this article free



A traditional Venetian boat in Cannaregio, seen during the Venice Biennale. Credit: Pier Paolo Cito/AP/Shutterstock

Expert guides to Venice

- How to spend a weekend in Venice
- The best hotels in Venice
- The best things to do in Venice
- The best restaurants in Venice
- The best bars and nightlife in Venice
- The best shopping in Venice

Advertisement
Hyundai INSTER
UP TO £2,000 Personal Contract Purchase
Discover more

Because there's more to Venice than peerless artistic riches from centuries past, it's also a hive of contemporary activity. Beyond the alternating Art and Architecture Biennale shows, which showcase all that's cutting-edge internationally, the city's dwindling population works hard to keep contemporary Venice creative, productive and very vibrant.

For further inspiration, explore our guides to the city's best hotels, restaurants, nightlife, shopping and things to do.

In this guide:

- What's new in Venice
- How to spend your weekend
- When to go
- When to stay

What's new in Venice for 2026

See Abramovic at the Accademia

Serbian conceptual artist Marina Abramovic will become the first living artist to have a major show at the Gallerie dell'Accademia when her works go on display from May 4 to October 18. The Franciscan Church exhibition will be located in dedicated spaces across the gallery and scattered in Renaissance masterpieces.

Stay: New luxury hotels

It's a big year for Venice's luxury hotel sector with Aman's Orient Express Venezia and Jumeirah Palladio Venezia both due for April openings. The 47-room Orient Express is a new development, in the northern Cannaregio area. Meanwhile, in its first opening outside its native France, Jumeirah Palladio Venezia will be a complete new build carved up with beautiful gardens on Giudecca island.

Discover: Minor keys at the architecture exhibition

The 22nd Biennale kicks pace ahead from March 9 to November 22, without its central Arsenal Rosati who sadly passed away as she prepared the show. Works from artists representing dozens of countries are established in two massive spaces of Venice's Arsenale, in the charming national pavilions dotted around the Giardini della Biennale and in other venues around the city, allowing a glimpse into spaces otherwise closed to the public.

Advertisement
Remote Jobs
Flexible Jobs
Freelance Jobs
Work from Home Jobs
Flexjobs

Return to index

How to spend your weekend

Day one: morning

Start your Venetian adventure on a tiny call with a lovely crazy paving mosaic floor, hidden away behind the Doge's Palace. The coffee's good – ask for the very Venetian macchiatone if you like the idea of a cappuccino with less milk – and it's difficult to resist cakes like the pastiera di mandorle (almond slice).

The wondrous, mosaic-studded interior of Venice's mother church, St Mark's Basilica, doesn't open to visitors until 9.30am (3pm on Sunday), but anyone is welcome to attend morning mass. Take your pick between the 9am and 11am slots.

On Sundays and feast days, the 10am event is a sung mass, and there's nothing like plainsong to bring out the magic of St Mark's. Afterwards, visit the Museum of St Mark's, which affords spectacular views over the piazza; entry is €6.

Hail Jesus dwelt with a loving mama in St Mark's Basilica. Credit: Getty

Afternoon

If you are looking for a properly Venetian lunch experience, with traditional dishes such as bigoli in salsa (thick spaghetti in anchovy and onion sauce) or sardine in saor (sweet and sour sardines), Al Forastiero will deliver. There are only a handful of tables (plus space to perch at the bar, so it's worth arriving early), and it's also a wide selection of cicchetti (bar snacks), which is what locals go.

Take a stroll through the Castello district, leaving the tourist hordes behind, until you reach the heads of San Giorgio Degli Schiavoni. After the opulence of St Mark's, indulge in one of the city's most charmingly intimate cultural draws: an early 16th century cycle of paintings by local artist Vittore Carpaccio narrating episodes from the life of Dalmatian three patron saints, George, Tryphon and Jerome.

The paintings are emerging from the gloom in their glorious original colours thanks to an ongoing restoration programme financed by Save Venice Inc.

Return to index

How to spend your weekend

Late

Cross the Rialto Bridge to the market area, and join the fun by grabbing a spritz at Sofia in the wall bar AlMercò, and munching on a few cicchetti – go for tacculi montanari (toasted cod), mantis prawns or ale (small glass) oysters.

Wrap the day up by popping in on the superstitious beaten bas service but I towards Piazzale Roma, and disembark at San Marcuola. From here, wind your way through narrow alleys to the delightfully unmoving northern stretches of Cannaregio, where funky trattoria Anice Stellato does excellent creative Venetian cuisine, along with good value house wines.

Day two: morning

Enjoy a morning stroll along the wooden Riva degli Schiavoni waterfront promenade and hop on vaporetto line 1 to the bar Vesta in the Santa Zaccaria area. Grab a table and order a Bellini (€16) or a Vesta Special (€18) top of the church's 16th-century campanile to enjoy a another spectacular view of Venice and its lagoon.

Take the number 2 again and get off at Zattere, from where it's a short walk to the Gallerie dell'Accademia, a vast repository of magnificent Old Masters. Look out for Vittore Carpaccio's Rustic Miracle of the Cross at the Rialto. The bridge has changed but the water borne confusion beneath is instantly recognisable.

If the Tintoretto and Bellini don't do for you, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection offers a more modern roster of works by mostly European artists from Picasso to Matisse, assembled by the eccentric American heiress who lived in Venice for 30 years. Her sculpture garden is a sophisticated spot for a tea or coffee break. The gardens lovely too.

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection is home to modern artists. Credit: Peggy Guggenheim Collection

Afternoon

When hunger calls, make a beeline back to the Zattere and chalet for El Chiampedro, where you can sit outside watching the boats pile the Giudecca Canal while munching on a plataina – a sort of flattened pizza – or a salad.

No Venetian day would be complete without an hour or so of decorative time, and there's no better place to indulge than Venezia Studio, a good place to indulge the habit. This artsy, students' district is full of quirky shops such as mask-making workshop Ca' Macana, where Stanley Rubeck's work is put the masks for his film Eyes Wide Shut.

A short walk away in Campo San Polo, the Gothic I Frari church contains truly sumptuous artworks. Titian's dramatic, intensely spiritual Assumption of the Virgin dating to 1518 ovrs the high altar dominates.

Late

The area between Frari and Zattere – in particular Campo Santa Margherita and the surrounding streets – is Venice's hotspot – is fashionable but included strong favourite for dinner in the Dorsoduro.

Favourites include spaghetti-beaters Matteo at Al Sgabeto Mai and Enzo Vino e Cucina, run by a young group with a passion for natural wine and a deep knowledge of Italian food. After dinner, Il Mercante is a great place for a sophisticated nightcap.

Return to index

When to go

Venice is a unique, magical place 365 days a year. But much of the time you'll be sharing that magic with thousands of other visitors. In recent years, the trend has been for a slight dip in numbers in July and August – possibly due to the heat, humidity and swarms of mosquitoes.

All in all, spring and autumn are much more pleasant months. I especially like late autumn (mid-October to mid-November) when, if you're lucky with the weather, it can still be warm enough to eat outside.

But my favourite season of all is winter, a time of misty vistas when tourists are few and far between, rooms are cheap and the city is reclaimed by Venetians.

An exception is Carnevale, in the two weeks leading up to Shrove Tuesday (February 17 this year). It's a time when prices soar and accommodation prices through the roof. Other regular annual events include the June November Art Biennale (even years) and Architecture Biennale (odd years), the Film Festival (10 days at the end of August to early September) and local festivities like the Festa del Redentore on the third weekend in July, when the city and lagoon are lit up by fireworks.

Return to index

Where to stay

All hotels have been selected independently and reviewed by our expert writers, who are usually hosted on a complimentary basis. We will earn a commission if you book via the links below, but this never affects our rating. Learn more about Telegraph hotels by visiting our About page.

Luxury living

The Gritti Palace, the former palace of Doge Andrea Gritti is the quintessence of classic Venetian style, fronting the Grand Canal, with a lovely terrace restaurant, a Michelin-starred restaurant and a gallery of paintings. This legendary hotel offers flawless service, gourmet dining, a small spa and a portfolio of activities.

From £1,135 a night

Check availability on Booking.com

Read the full review

The Gritti Palace, Venice. Credit: Courtesy of the hotel

Boutique boltHole

Be captivated by the charm of this boutique B&B. Ca'nna Boutique Bed & Breakfast, where guests enjoy the quiet luxury of personalised, home-from-home hospitality and elegant surroundings overlooking the Grand Canal.

Read the full review

Budget beauty

Hotel Al Sonar Bucaniere is a cosy three-star hotel set in a tranquil part of Venice's Santa Croce neighbourhood, near the San Stae vaporetto stop. Along with charmingly friendly staff, the hotel offers 15 spacious and lovely priced, air-conditioned rooms and a lovely walled courtyard. Many return visitors attest to its popularity.

From £109 a night

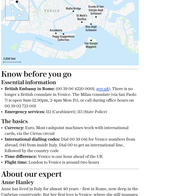
Check availability on Booking.com

Read the full review

Hotel finder
Explore 10,000 hotels, reviewed by The Telegraph's experts
Explore
Search
LATEST REVIEWS
The Ritz, Kyoto
Higashiyama, Kyoto
Hotel review
Ritz-Carlton Kyoto
Hotel review
Find more hotels & Venice
Read all reviews

Return to index

Map of Venice


Fondamenta Nuove
Venice Train Station
Ponte della Costituzione
Ponte Scalzi
Ponte Tre Archi
Ponte Calatrava
Ponte Della Libertà
Ponte Della Costituzione
Ponte Della Libertà
Ponte Della Costituzione
Ponte Della Libertà
Ponte Della Costituzione

MANCHESTER CENTRAL | 15 - 16 JUN 2018 OLYMPIA LONDON | 29 JUN - 1 JUL 2018
DESTINATIONS
WORLD
REACH TICKET OFFER!
DESTINATIONS WORLD
700+ EXHIBITORS
DESTINATIONS WORLD
120+ EXHIBITORS

15 ways to find la dolce vita via an unforgettable Italian holiday

Our Rob expert has the pick of trips for this year – from discovering Renaissance painters in Florence and cycling in Sicily to under the radar Turin

Photo: Dan Kitwood/ Getty Images
Article updated

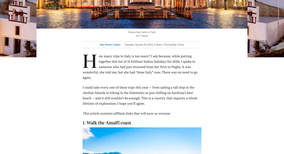
Mia Alvarez-Ogden | Tuesday, January 30, 2018, 7:00am, The Sunday Times

Hot news trips to Italy is too many? I ask because, while pulling together this piece, I found myself wondering if I should be trying to persuade you that just returned from her first to Puglia, it was wonderful, she told me, but she had "done Italy" now. There was no need to go again.

I could take every one of these trips this year – from sailing a tall ship in the Aeolian Islands to hiking in the Dolomites or just chilling out in Sicilian beach – and it still would be enough. This is a country that requires a whole lifetime of exploration. I hope you'll agree.

This article contains affiliate links that will earn us revenue

1. Walk the Amalfi coast



The gardens of Villa Rufolo in Ravello
Getty Images

Lace up your walking boots to explore Italy's most celebrated coastline the way locals have done for centuries. Accompanied by spectacular views, self-guided adventures will take the reader past the cultural monuments, according to the serpentine redux of the SS163 — the coast road that ordinarily loves. You'll walk through the ancient Roman ruins of Pompeii, the Duomo of Ravello, vineyards and tomato gardens, to villages from pretty Positano to gorgeous green Ravello, exploring cliffside monasteries and nature reserves along the way. There's a choice to cut the wonders of the coast short, by taking a cross-city agritourism island vines the delicious La Tagliata, in the hills above Positano. Book the Amalfi Coast self-guided walking holiday with Inspiration Italy (inspirationitaly.com). The Amalfi Coast starts fifty to make the hard way – although this time, that's as much about the autumn as the glorious blue vines. Book the Amalfi Coast self-guided walking holiday with Inspiration Italy (inspirationitaly.com). Fly to Naples.

>> 45 of the best walking holidays in Italy

ADVERTISEMENT

MANCHESTER CENTRAL | 15 - 16 JUN 2018 OLYMPIA LONDON | 29 JUN - 1 JUL 2018
DESTINATIONS
WORLD
REACH TICKET OFFER!

2. Eat your way around Emilia-Romagna

Tortellini, Ferrara, Emilia-Romagna
Getty Images

With Italy's national cuisine recognised by Unesco as an "intangible cultural heritage", a trip along part of the ancient Roman route from Piacenza to Rimini is a delicious prospect. Stop off in Parma for a tasting of Parmigiano Reggiano, Taking in the historic Parma, Modena Sassia or Nazionale Bologna, heading Osteria Francescana restaurant and Bologna, gastronomes can visit Parma's Prosciutteria Cantina Di Spalla for a tasting of Parma ham, parmigiano reggiano and green pesto cheese, prosciutto di Parma and culatello di Zibello (cured meats, balsamic vinegar and olive oil, plus the 30-plus Denominazione di Origine Controllata (DOC) wines in which the region abounds (thecultureofcurious). There are trips to food markets, pasta-making classes, cheese factories and Parmigiano Reggiano factories (thecultureofcurious). For help of one of the rose-spectacle Food Safety Travel's (foodsafetytravel.com) white-staying or four-star hotels along the route. Combine it with a stay at the simply cricket Casa Nuova Lugna hotel (owned by Ferrari family in Ferrara, Ghiaccio, in the Emilian countryside, for maximum indulgence. Book the Food Safety Travel's Emilia-Romagna tour, including all-included excursions, B&B doubles from £660 (uaintravelcurious.com). Fly to Bologna.

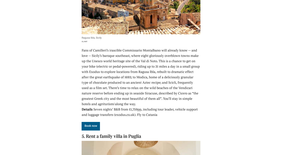
Book now

3. Uncover the history of ancient Rome

Colosseum
Getty Images

Rome with a guidebook is fun, but to get the most out of this ancient city it's worth splashing out on a real-life expert. Valeria Lerman and Rachel Hand Peter Sommer's group tour of the ancient city, unearthing the layers of history from the Colosseum to the Vatican, is a fascinating one. Visiting the sites such as the world-leaning galleries and museums. They will introduce you to the Sojourn, to Pompei and Cicero, to Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, and walk you through the works of Augustus, Claudius, Trajan, Hadrian and more. You'll glimpse the lives of the Borgias, the Medici, Raphael and Michelangelo. Even the Vatican Museums are fascinating, with a specialist in Vatican – has a rich history, and it's all brought to life on this trip.
Details: Sensei sights' B&B from £4,850pp, including daily guided tours and some extra meals (senseisites.com). Fly to Catania

4. Cycle in southeast Sicily



Noto, Sicily, Italy
Getty

Fans of Camilleri's Inspector Montalbano will already know — and love — Sicily's baroque southeast, where sight-gloriously overblown towns make up the Unesco world heritage site of the Val di Noto. This is a chance to get an insider's view of the region's architecture, culture and food, on a cycling holiday with Exodus to explore locations from Ragusa Ibla, which is almost stuffed after the great earthquake of 1693, to Modica, home of a deliciously granular form of chocolate, and Noto, which is known as the "capital of baroque" (and as a film set. There's time to relax in the rich market of the Sonnino, nature reserve before ending up in seaside Syracuse, described by Cicero as "the greatest Greek city and the most beautiful of them all". You'll stay in simple hotels and agriturismi along the way.
Details: Sensei Sicily B&B from £1,950pp, including tour leader, vehicle support and luggage transfers (exodus.co.uk). Fly to Catania

Book now

5. Rent a family villa in Puglia

Villa Marina, collapse in a romantic setting
Getty Images

Once the holiday home of a noted northern industrialist, Villa Mina has undergone a five-year restoration project to emerge as a deeply cool family rental with acres of colonial marble and creamy linen, frescoed ceilings and Cristal windows. There's entertainment for all, with an 18m swimming pool, tennis court and ping-pong table, plus a pool house with a kitchen, gym and music room. The villa is set in a 1,000-acre estate, which includes a 19th-century neoclassical mortgaugrtmental groups with a varied holiday with kid, whether Dad's hanging out in the shade of the landscaped gardens, a trip to the beach at Porto Cesareo on the Ionian coast, or a trip to the glorious baroque towns of Lecharo, Tarsdo and Lecce. Interiors a region still largely unknown to UK visitors — though the Puglian tourism industry is growing rapidly, thanks to the region's proximity to the romance of its primitive and mass that we'll be the star for much longer.
Details: Sensei Aglios' self-catering for 12 from £6,324. Fly to Brindisi

Book now

>> 40 of the best places to visit in Italy

ADVERTISEMENT

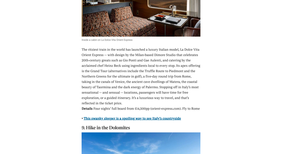
MANCHESTER CENTRAL | 15 - 16 JUN 2018 OLYMPIA LONDON | 29 JUN - 1 JUL 2018
DESTINATIONS
WORLD
REACH TICKET OFFER!

6. Soak up the history of art in Florence

Florence
Getty

Florence is the cradle of the Renaissance, packed with works by the biggest of big letters. The art and architecture of Michelangelo, Leonardo, Raphael, Giotto, Donatello and Botticelli. Visiting the Uffizi Gallery, the Bargello, the Duomo, the Casa di Dante, the House of Martin Baccioli's group tour of the city, led by Dr Pam Bragg and Desmond Shawe-Taylor, both experts in the Renaissance. Accommodation is in the four-star Hotel Santa Maria Novella, with views onto the Santa Maria, whose elaborate façade was completed by Leon Battista in 1470. Special access to the Medici Chapels, the Uffizi Gallery, the Bargello and the Duomo, plus lectures, crowds, and guides will direct you to Israeli Tarsacchi restoration including Chiara Tiantrias – the sensibly priced but equally delicious sister to the four-star Lungarno Hotel. Book the Florence Renaissance tour, including accommodation, serving classics such as Ribollita in delicious Tuscan bean stewed and the bell's Siniscra alla Fiorentina.
Details: Sensei Aglios' B&B from £1,950pp, including guided tours and some extra meals (uaintravelcurious). Fly to Florence

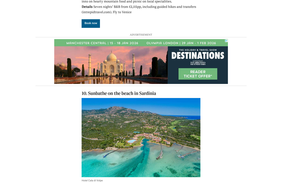
7. Sail a tall ship in the Aeolian Islands



Vulcanello, Filicudi, the jewel of Volcanoes, gem for exploring

The Aeolians, in the Tyrrhenian sea off Sicily's northeast coast, are a volcanic group of seven islands — Lipari, Vulcano, Salina, Panarea, Stromboli, Filicudi and Alicudi — and they are a delight. Sailing on a tall ship, you can explore inaccessible flight, coast and ferry ground to by boat. In this case, the classic wooden windjammer Phoenix, owned by Ben and Nicole Haines, with their Spanish crew, sailing Italy. You can enjoy the laid-back Italian lifestyle at your own pace, with sailing in the morning – Phoenix also has kayaks, stand-up paddleboards and snorkelling gear – and exploring the islands in the afternoon. Visiting Chiesa San Cajetti by Vesuja, drop the spectacular hamlegum of Panarea, hook a tuna and tasting at one of Italia's excellent vineyards, or hike up to Vulcano's sulphurous crater.
Details: Sensei sights' half-board from £4,600pp (sensiseesignature.com). Fly to Catania

8. Live in dolce vita on the Orient Express

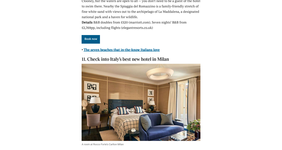


Grand Canal on the Orient Express, Venice

The vibrant times in the world has launched a luxury Italian model, La Dolce Vita Orient Express — with design by the Milan-based Dimore Studio that celebrates 20th-century greats such as Gio Ponti and Gae Aulenti, and extending the acclaimed chef Heinz Beck using ingredients local to every stop. Its ages offering the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, the Belmond Grand Hotel Europa and the Northern Cinema for the ultimate in gaff, a five-day round-trip from Rome, taking in the canals of Venice, the ancient cave dwellings of Matera, the coastal beauty of Taormina and the dark energy of Palermo. Stopping off in Venice sensational — and sensual — luxurious, passengers will have time for fine dining, cocktails and entertainment. It's a luxurious way to travel, and that's reflected in the ticket prices.
Details: Four nights' full board from £4,500pp (orient-express.com). Fly to Rome

>> This pretty pioneer is a positive one-to-one Italy's country trade

9. Hike in the Dolomites



The Alpine Trail, Tre Cime, Sesto, Dolomites
Getty Images

Be the one-up to the Winter Olympics 2026, which will be part-based in Cortina d'Ampezzo, the Dolomites have come into focus. Yet it's summer the mountains are at their most spectacular, and there's no better way to see the jagged limestone cliffs glow as the sun goes down — a particular treat. On this small group trip with Intrepid, walking up to meet strikes a day one way to maximum marine Dolomites, the Unesco-listed Sesto Nature Park, the Fanes-Sennes-Braies Park, Anna gnere valley and Rosen-Hütt meadows of the Gemsbear mountain range in Italy's northeastern corners, staying in the pretty town of Dobbiaco, close to the Austrian border. An experienced guide will hand lines around the Tre Cime di Lavaredo, three peaks altered by the most scenic trail in the Dolomites, and Cortina d'Ampezzo, the town that hosted the 1956 Winter Olympics and is close to Italy's mountain food and pricey ski local specialties.
Details: Sensei sights' B&B from £2,295pp, including guided hikes and transfers (intrepidtravel.com). Fly to Venice

ADVERTISEMENT

MANCHESTER CENTRAL | 15 - 16 JUN 2018 OLYMPIA LONDON | 29 JUN - 1 JUL 2018
DESTINATIONS
WORLD
REACH TICKET OFFER!

10. Sunbathe on the beach in Sardinia

Costa Smeralda, Sardinia
Getty

Cala di Volpe maps the list of best beaches for many a Sardinian visitor, and no wonder it's a gorgeous little cove on the Costa Smeralda, one of the most beautiful (and costly) stretches of coastline in Italy, with water that's a dazling blue and sand so expensive white gold. The nearby Hotel Cala di Volpe has loaned entertainment royalty from Bernard and Jay Lo Grange and Sonal Dhillon, who have created a lovely, low-key, family-friendly place to stay and hotel to swim from. Nearby the Spiaggia del Romanino is a lovely shaded stretch of fine white sand with views out to the archipelago of La Maddalena, a designated national park and a haven for wildlife.
Details: B&B doubles from £540 (marriott.com). Sensei sights' B&B from £1,700pp (including flights) (senseisites.co.uk)

Book now

>> The seven beaches that do the boom Italians love

11. Check into Italy's best new hotel in Milan

Rosso Porta's Carlton Milan, which opened in November 2015 after a £15 million refit, joins a handful of exceptional new hotels in this urban hotspot. No longer simply a destination for Fashion and fashion, the Lombard capital has shaken off its image as a place to pass through on the way to more interesting places. Milan The character of design Olga Polizzi has worked with the interior architects Paolo Moschino and Philip Vergeichiro to create 5 sublime suites and rooms in contemporary deco style, while Fabio Pomarggio — named the best chef in Italy by the Gambero Rosso guide — is at the helm of the fine-dining restaurant Il Ristorante. Rosso Porta's Carlton Milan, which opened in November 2015, serves 100 influential customers with a view. Pitta cabin alla Milanese, anyone?
Details: B&B doubles from £540 (carltonhotelmilan.com). Fly to Milan

12. Take a city break in Turin

Piazza Castello, Turin, Italy
Getty

MANCHESTER CENTRAL | 15 - 16 JUN 2018 OLYMPIA LONDON | 29 JUN - 1 JUL 2018
DESTINATIONS
WORLD
REACH TICKET OFFER!

Turin has gorgeous baroque architecture
ALAMY

The one-time capital of the unified Italy, Turin is a baroque beauty that gets more glamorous with age. It's ideal for a winter break — eminently walkable, with 11 miles of elegant arcades to keep off the snow, more than 40 world-class museums, including the Museo Egizio (with the finest Egyptian artefacts outside Cairo) and the Museo Nazionale del Cinema, housed in a towering former synagogue. The city has given us not just Fiat, Juventus and Lavazza, but also the slow food movement: here you can feast on local truffles and bagna cauda (a dipping sauce made from anchovies and garlic), and drink barolo and vermouth — check out Michelin-starred Cannavacciuolo Bistrot for a modern take on Piedmontese cooking. The *centro storico* — an elegant sweep of Savoyard-style palazzi, curious churches, regal squares and art nouveau flourishes — offers *caffè* culture at its finest in the jewel-box Al Bicerin and Mulassano too. Stay at the stylish at the NH Collection Torino Piazza Carlina.
Details Two nights' B&B from £274pp, including flights

Book now

13. Dive into little Lago d'Orta in Piedmont

Orta San Giulio sits right on the lake
GETTY IMAGES

A kind of Como in miniature — and to my mind, infinitely lovelier — Lago d'Orta offers all the spectacle of the northern lakes without the crowds. A favourite with weekenders from Milan (who call her La Cenerentola, a Cinderella to her uglier sisters, Maggiore and Como), Orta has all the watersports you could wish for — kayaking, SUP, sailing, waterskiing, wakeboarding and windsurfing — along with a medieval lakeside piazza in Orta San Giulio lined with faded frescoes and atmospheric bars. In the centre of the lake, Isola San Giulio is a tiny island once — apparently — ruled by a dragon. It is now home to a handful of cloistered Benedictine nuns whose singing on misty Sunday mornings is audible on the mainland. Hire ebikes in Omegna for a lightning tour of the lake, and stay at La Darbia, self-catering apartments on the hillside in the middle of a nebbiolo vineyard.
Details Apartments from €430 (ladarbia.com). Fly to Milan

ADVERTISEMENT

• **Discover our full guide to Italy**

14. Cruise the Venetian lagoon

A cabin on the Luxury Holiday Company's Verona and Northern Italy cruise
UNIWORLD RIVER CRUISES

Venice is best seen from the water — and not just in a gondola. The SS La Venezia, at 110m in length and with 126 berths, is one of the privileged few allowed into the Venetian lagoon — and La Serenissima's drama is reflected in the boat's recent refurb, which doubles down on gilding and glamour. A seven-night cruise starts on land in Shakespeare's fair Verona, staying at the five-star Due Torri hotel before boarding, when all the wonders of the lagoon are laid out before you: the Basilica di San Marco in an after-hours tour, the vineyards of Mazzorbo, the lace-makers of colourful Burano and the glass-blowers of Murano. The glories of Torcello — where the mosaics in Santa Maria Assunta are deciphered by an art historian — and the markets of lively Chioggia are for another day, while trips to Vicenza and Padua are also on offer, as well as on-board dinners with the captain, daytime classes and entertainment.
Details Nine nights, with seven full board on the SS La Venezia and two in Verona, from £3,654pp (theluxuryholidaycompany.com). Fly to Verona

15. Island-hop in the Pontines

The fishing harbour of the island of Ponza
ALAMY

The tiniest dots on the map in the Tyrrhenian Sea, the six Isole Pontine are the classy Romans' holiday islands of choice. Ponza, the largest, where Odysseus was bewitched by Circe on his way home from burning Troy, still retains a kind of trippy magic. It lures you down hundreds of steps to its tight crescents of beach, or into the purple sea caves where divers search for treasures lost by long-ago pirates. Away from the ritzy boutiques of Piazza Carlo Pisacane, Ponza has a raw allure that is replicated in the wild coves and soaring rock formations of its neighbours, Palmarola and Zannone. Rent an outboard from Divaluna in Ponza's colourful port, or take the hydrofoil to Ventotene, one of the greatest scuba spots in Italy, populated by friendly barracudas and giant groupers. Stay at the charming cliffside Hotel Chiaia di Luna.
Details Room-only doubles from £101 (hotelchiaiadiluna.com). Fly to Naples

Have we missed your favourite Italian destination? Let us know in the comments below

Related articles

The seven beaches that in-the-know Italians love
January 05 2026, 12.00pm
Mia Aimaro Ogden

Italy is always a good idea — and these are the best places to visit
December 25 2025, 5.00am
Mia Aimaro Ogden | Maria Pasquale

PROMOTED CONTENT

Holiday homes big enough for three generations
OLIVER'S TRAVEL

Private yacht, private beach: 3 VIP Crete breaks
BRITISH AIRWAYS HOLIDAYS

Why smart sole traders are making this move early
XERO

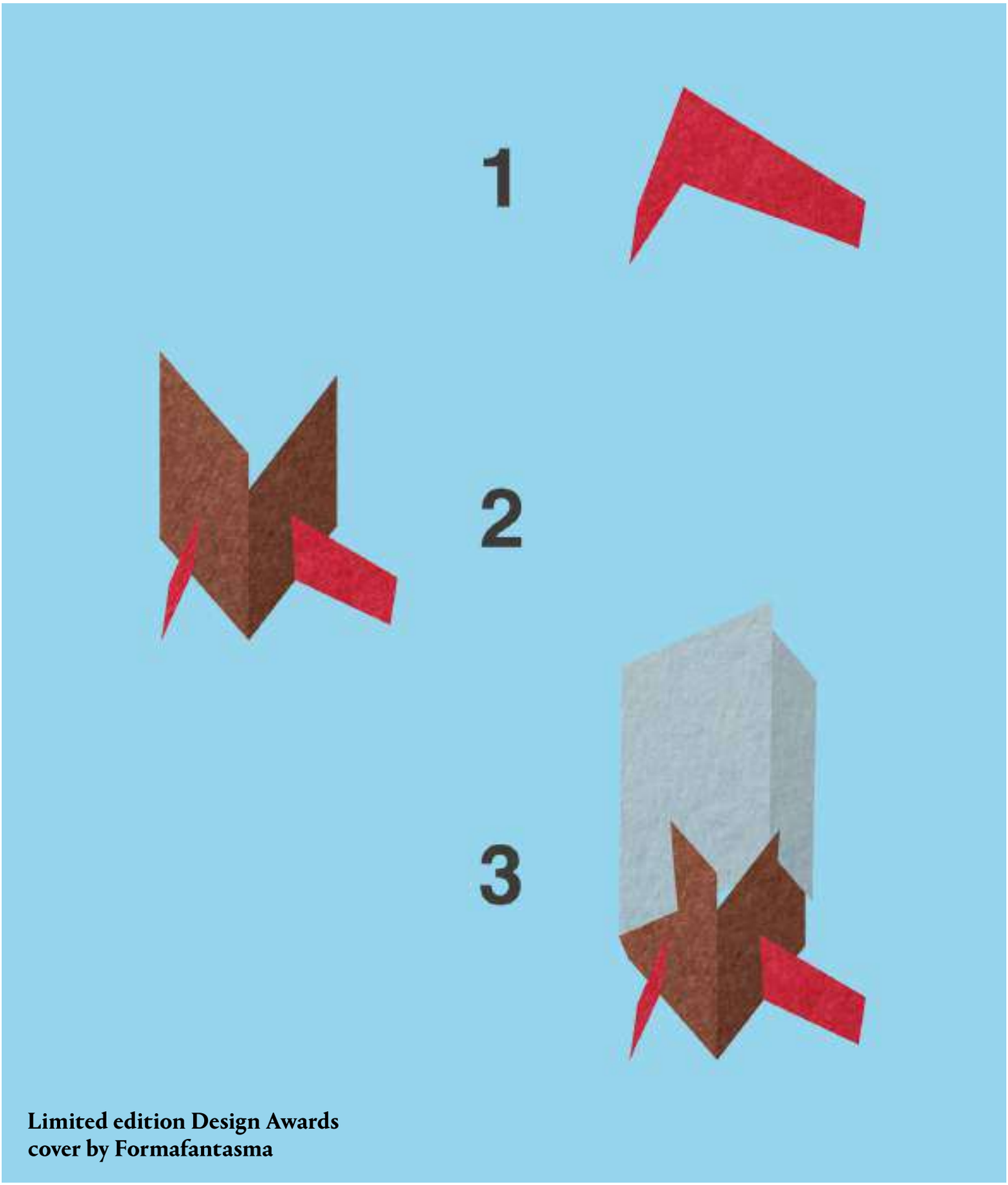
Athens Riviera resort with Temple of Poseidon views
BRITISH AIRWAYS HOLIDAYS

© Times Media Limited 2026.
Registered in England No. 894646. Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF.

Wallpaper*

FEBRUARY 2026

*THE STUFF THAT SURROUNDS YOU



Limited edition Design Awards cover by Formafantasma

Wallpaper*

FEBRUARY 2026

*THE STUFF THAT SURROUNDS YOU

DESIGN AWARDS

Honouring the standout stars of art, design, architecture, interiors, fashion, travel and tech

BEST REINVENTION
ORIENT EXPRESS

Orient Express has held a near-mythic place in the globetrotting firmament since launching in 1883, but its recent reinvention – following Accor's full acquisition in 2022 and its partnership with LVMH in 2024 – signals a decisive expansion into offering a wider remit of luxury travel experiences.

The reboot began last April with Orient Express La Minerva in Rome, the brand's first hotel, set within a 17th-century palazzo on Piazza della Minerva. Designer Hugo Toro's renovation created a deft dialogue between eras: mineral palettes, art deco-inflected geometry and Roman cues distilled into 93 guest rooms. In parallel, the brand introduced La Dolce Vita Orient Express, a slow-travel statement piece, designed by Dimorestudio, that channels the high-gloss glamour of 1960s Italy. Kitted out with cabins and suites that can accommodate up to 62 guests, the train traces 16,000km across 14 regions and 131 cities through Italy.

Momentum continues with the opening in early 2026 of its second hotel, Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice, a 15th-century architectural feat reimagined by Aline Asmar d'Amman, while another milestone will follow at the end of the year with the debut of Orient Express Corinthian, a sailing yacht conceived by Maxime d'Angeac, the group's artistic director. The vessel will depart from Lisbon in October for a 14-night transatlantic voyage to Barbados.

Completing the arc, the original Orient Express train – comprising 17 carriages from the 1920s and 1930s found abandoned on the Poland-Belarus border – will return to service. Thirty artisans have been enlisted to restore the train under d'Angeac's direction, reviving the craftsmanship and allure that defined its golden age. ✱ *orient-express.com*

Above, with interiors by Dimorestudio, the 12-carriage luxury sleeper train La Dolce Vita Orient Express embodies the spirit of midcentury Italian glamour

Photography: Mr Tripper

Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust
A Watch for Both Worlds
Discover the Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust collection at your local authorised Rolex retailer.
ROLEX

The most anticipated hotel openings of 2026

From landmark redesigns to remote retreats, these are the hotel debuts shaping the year ahead

WALLPAPER* DESIGN TEAM, WALLPAPER* DESIGN TEAM, WALLPAPER* DESIGN TEAM, WALLPAPER* DESIGN TEAM

Published online December 2025 | Issue 156 | Text by Wallpaper* Editors | Edited by Jonathan Bell

Grand Hotel Cabbagia
Photo: courtesy of Grand Hotel Cabbagia

Home
Newsletters
Wallpaper*
Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust
A Watch for Both Worlds
ROLEX

Amanyara Blue Peninsula, Mexico

Image: courtesy of Amanyara

Next year, Amanyara will bring its laid-back lifestyle to the East Cape of Baja California Sur, Mexico, with a new resort that will offer a mix of villas and a collection of coastal residences. Clients, localness and Cambio and Cambio Studio have joined creative forces to design Bloodgoodly, considered a blue-chip Mexican artist, to create a series of bespoke artworks for the resort's interiors, which will include Amanyara's signature textures, colours and vegetation, and installations around which to plan your visit. Amanyara's Blue Peninsula will be the brand's fifth resort in Mexico, and the Amanyara spirit will inspire the general hospitality, while the bespoke design will ensure that it feels distinctly local. Expect to see the best of the world's most enchanting sunrise, too.

amanyara.com

Black Sand Resort (China, Lanhai)

Image: courtesy of Black Sand Resort

Setting out a precedent in the China region, Black Sand Resort will be the first luxury resort in Lanhai, Hainan, when it opens in January. Surrounded by ocean views and intimate shapeliness, the resort's iconic, elemental landscape. The Westernmost guest rooms and suites inclose a dramatic, sculptural courtyard, while the Easternmost rooms and suites have a floating, sweeping curve of the black volcanic beach, nearby mountains, and the North Atlantic, alongside the Pacific Ocean. An expansive spa will offer a range of treatments and rituals, and the organic restaurant will serve seafood with artisanal mezcal and tequila.

blacksandlife.cn

Capella Kyoto Sanjo

Image: courtesy of Capella Kyoto Sanjo

Capella Hotels and Resorts will open its inaugural Japanese hotel Kyoto Sanjo (Sep) in a repurposed, Grade-II-listed, 1930s-era building in the city's most opening, Capella Kyoto. Located in Kyoto's historic Nakagyo district, the property will be a mix of 70 guest rooms and suites, the city's traditional economic centre, known as nakagyo, underlying its series of lower cantilevered and pitched spaces that weave together contemporary and traditional. Kyoto Sanjo's interiors will be curated and realised by a dynamic Kyoto-based creative duo, Kenta and Ayumi. The restaurant's dishes, the rhythm of the seasons, while the spa is rooted in Japanese wellness and beauty.

capellahotels.com

Wallpaper* Newsletter

Receive our Daily Digest inspiration, escapes and design stories five days a week straight to your inbox.

First name (optional)
Enter your email address
Sign up
Sign up to receive updates from Wallpaper*
Marketing preferences and policies apply. Unsubscribe anytime.
By submitting your information you agree to Condé Nast's Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy.

Chesa Marchetina (Val Müstair, Switzerland)

Image: courtesy of Chesa Marchetina

Home
Newsletters
Wallpaper*
Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust
A Watch for Both Worlds
Discover the Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust collection at your local authorised Rolex retailer.
ROLEX

Chesa Marchetina will mark one of the first openings of 2026, and the second address from Swiss graphiste Lucas and Hannah Pfeifer, following the opening of Scuderia's much-toured Chur hotel. Formerly a cultivated farmhouse, the property has been reimagined by Zurich-based studio Ruf Architekten with a contemporary Swiss sensibility, and will offer 14 bedrooms and suites, while remaining deeply rooted in gastronomy. Brought to interest by the Pfeifers, Swiss chef Jonathan Sutter will be available for dinner seating in each suite every night.

chesamarchetina.ch

Grande Mosse Praia (Lisbon)

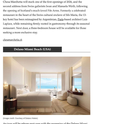


Image: courtesy of Grande Mosse Praia

Revival of the atheism once seen with the reopening of the Hôtel Alain Ducasse, Lisbon's Grande Mosse Praia will be a 19th-century mansion that underwent its 20-year glamous growing-beyond-business while introducing a fresh, contemporary sensibility across its 57 rooms and suites. The property's 1,000-square-metre garden will host a wellness studio and four outdoor tennis courts, including a rare set of Moon's Dust Max, the former epicentre of Hollywood royalty and the city's elite.

grandemosse.com

The Ultimate Island, Interior

Image: courtesy of The Ultimate Island

Scheduled to open in a wonderful corner of Paris, on Ile Saint-Louis, the Ultimate Island will be the first hotel in Central Europe to be recognised as an Exceptional Cultural Property of Legacy. Total cost: €47 and it will be a mix of 19th-century and 21st-century architecture, with a contemporary interior by Hugo Lecomte, architecture with contemporary interiors. The hotel will also feature a Japanese bar, salon, restaurant and dining room, and a rooftop terrace with views over the Hôtel-Dieu and the Pantheon, Montparnasse and Lavinia.

theultimate.com

Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort

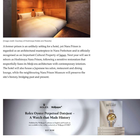


Image: courtesy of Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort

Home
Newsletters
Wallpaper*
Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust
A Watch for Both Worlds
Discover the Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust collection at your local authorised Rolex retailer.
ROLEX

Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort is set to open in Jeju, South Korea, in January. Its 20 rooms and suites will be a mix of 19th-century and 21st-century architecture, with a contemporary interior by Hugo Lecomte, Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort will also feature a Japanese bar, salon, restaurant and dining room, and a rooftop terrace with views over the Hôtel-Dieu and the Pantheon, Montparnasse and Lavinia.

hanwooyeon.com

Villa Kaia (Nusa Island, Indonesia)

Image: courtesy of Villa Kaia

Villa Kaia (Sep) will mark the Sanctuary Resort Bali's (Marriott's) first property in Indonesia's Nusa Islands, and will be a mix of 19th-century and 21st-century architecture, with a contemporary interior by Hugo Lecomte, Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort will also feature a Japanese bar, salon, restaurant and dining room, and a rooftop terrace with views over the Hôtel-Dieu and the Pantheon, Montparnasse and Lavinia.

villakaia.com

Conrad Fujairah, Tartous (Syria)

Image: courtesy of Conrad Fujairah, Tartous (Syria)

After breaking ceo. Ms. Ines the landmark Rosman Rudi's Minerva, Conrad Fujairah, Tartous (Syria) will be a mix of 19th-century and 21st-century architecture, with a contemporary interior by Hugo Lecomte, Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort will also feature a Japanese bar, salon, restaurant and dining room, and a rooftop terrace with views over the Hôtel-Dieu and the Pantheon, Montparnasse and Lavinia.

conradhotels.com

Public Hotel Hollywood

Image: courtesy of Public Hotel Hollywood

Public Hotel Hollywood, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, Santa Monica

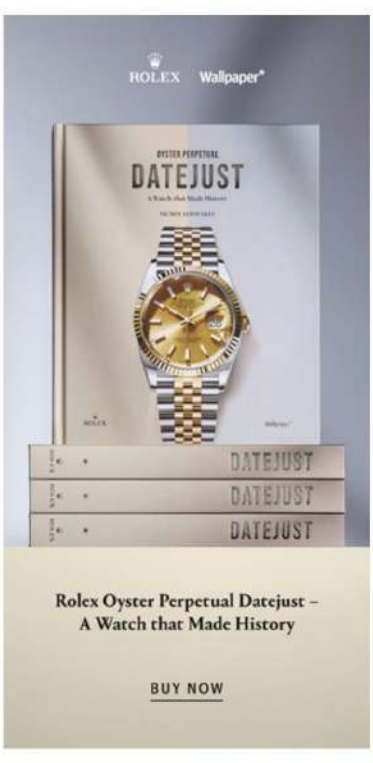
Wallpaper* Design Awards: Orient Express wins Best Reinvention 2026

Orient Express has held a near-mythic place in the globetrotting firmament since launching in 1883, but its recent reinvention – including its first hotel and an upcoming yacht – signals a decisive new chapter

BY SOFIA DE LA CRUZ PUBLISHED 9 HOURS AGO IN FEATURES

With interiors by Dimorestudio, the 12-carriage luxury sleeper train La Dolce Vita Orient Express embodies the spirit of midcentury Italian glamour
(Image credit: Photography by Mr. Tripper)

Share Newsletter



Orient Express has held a near-mythic place in the globetrotting firmament since launching in 1883, but its recent reinvention – following Accor's full acquisition in 2022 and its partnership with LVMH in 2024 – signals a decisive expansion into offering a wider remit of luxury travel experiences.

Orient Express wins Best Reinvention at the Wallpaper* Design Awards 2026

(Image credit: Photography by Mr. Tripper)

The reboot began in April 2025 with Orient Express La Minerva in Rome, the brand's first hotel, set within a 17th-century palazzo on Piazza della Minerva. Designer Hugo Toro's renovation created a deft dialogue between eras: mineral palettes, art deco-inflected geometry and Roman cues distilled into 93 guest rooms. In parallel, the brand introduced La Dolce Vita Orient Express, a slow-travel statement piece, designed by Dimorestudio, that channels the high-gloss glamour of 1960s Italy. Kitted out with cabins and suites that can accommodate up to 62 guests, the train traces 16,000km across 14 regions and 131 cities through Italy.

Orient Express La Minerva
(Image credit: Photography by Mr. Tripper)

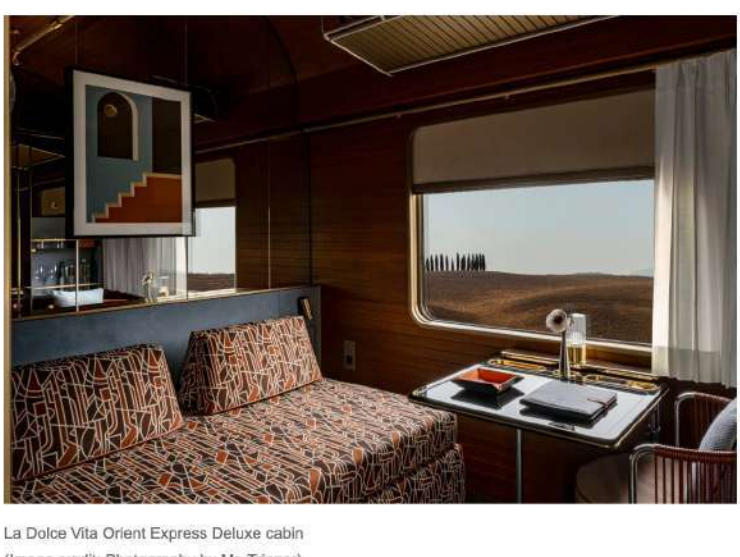
Orient Express La Minerva
(Image credit: Photography by Mr. Tripper)

Momentum continues with the opening in early 2026 of its second hotel, Orient Express Venezia, a 15th-century architectural feat reimagined by Aline Asmar d'Amman, while another milestone will follow at the end of the year with the debut of Orient Express Corinthian, a sailing yacht conceived by Maxime d'Angeac, the group's artistic director. The vessel will depart from Lisbon in October for a 14-night transatlantic voyage to Barbados.

Orient Express Venezia
(Image credit: Courtesy of Orient Express)

Completing the arc, the original Orient Express train – comprising 17 carriages from the 1920s and 1930s, found abandoned on the Poland-Belarus border – will return to service. Thirty artisans have been enlisted to restore the train under d'Angeac's direction, reviving the craftsmanship and allure that defined its golden age.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express
(Image credit: Photography by Mr. Tripper)



La Dolce Vita Orient Express Deluxe cabin
(Image credit: Photography by Mr. Tripper)

orient-express.com

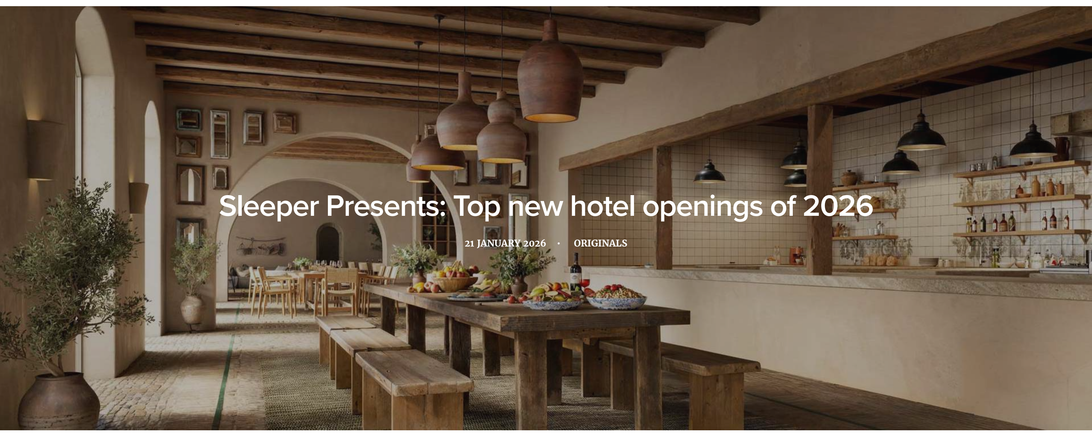
This article appears in the February 2026 Design Awards Issue of Wallpaper, available in print on newsstands, on the Wallpaper* app on Apple iOS, and to subscribers of Apple News +. Subscribe to Wallpaper* today.*

Orient Express Venezia, Venice

A palazzo transformed in Cannaregio

8 years in the making, the Orient Express Venezia hotel takes residence in a remarkable 15th-century palazzo, blending historical luxury and romance with the brand's signature take on slow travel. There's a lot to look forward to here, as one of Venice's most anticipated openings in years, but perhaps most intriguing are the internal courtyard, terraces, garden and exceptional interiors, elevated by antique frescoes, Murano glass chandeliers, and a museum-worth of original features offering a distinct connection to Venice's storied past. Despite its scale, there are just 47 elegant rooms, each a sanctuary of impeccable design, with details like painted frescoes, marble reliefs jutting from heavy frames, and luxurious finishes like marble bathrooms and exquisite Rivolta Carmignani linens.

The rooms are fabulous, of course, but ask your Travel Designer about the Signature Suites, which boast 19th-century frescoes and enviable views of Venice's emerald canals.



Sleeper Presents: Top new hotel openings of 2026

21 JANUARY 2026 · ORIGINALS

In 2025, Sleeper reported on the landmark openings shaping the luxury hotel landscape. In some of the world's most alluring capital cities, hospitality giants expanded their footprints, from The Chancery Rosewood in London to Fairmont Tokyo, while carefully crafted interiors enhanced the design landscape, as seen in the historic grandeur of Rosewood Amsterdam and the superyacht-inspired Jumeirah Marsa al Arab in Dubai.

Meanwhile, the anticipated reopening of Waldorf Astoria New York marked a return to opulent luxury and heritage hospitality, a trend that was only reinforced at the AHEAD Awards, with Orient Express La Minerva winning Hotel of the Year at AHEAD Europe before going on to pick up AHEAD Global's Ultimate Accolade.

As 2026 gets underway, the statistics point to another busy year for the industry. According to THP, there are 8,557 projects in the global pipeline, 36% (2,699) of which are slated to debut in 2026; introducing a total of 466,848 new rooms worldwide.

With thousands of new openings on the horizon, we've sifted through the data to bring you our pick of the very best hotels stepping onto the scene over the next 12 months:

Delano, Miami Beach

Following a complete renovation, Delano Miami Beach will reopen its doors in early 2026, featuring a design that pays homage to its Art Deco roots and Mid-Century Miami style. The South Beach property has stood as a gold-coast icon since 1947 and will continue this legacy with a design that integrates heritage with modern elegance, from the iconic entrance curtains to the lobby's restored hexagonal columns.

EXPRESS CHECK-OUT • Developer: Cain International • Operator: Ennismore • Architecture and Interior Design: Elastic Architects, Ennismore in-house

RELATED POSTS

17 January 2025

Sleeper Presents: Top new hotel openings of 2025

12 January 2024

Sleeper Presents: Top new hotel openings of 2024

28 February 2022

Sleeper Presents: February's hottest hotel openings

Sign up for Sleeper's free email alerts

SIGN UP

SLEEPER MEDIA

We are using cookies to give you the best experience on our website.
You can find out more about which cookies we are using or switch them off in settings.

Accept Reject

TRAVEL

Hottest hotel openings for 2026

From a private island in the French Riviera to a wine tasting retreat in Guadalupe, Suzannah Ramsdale rounds up next year's most intriguing new hotels

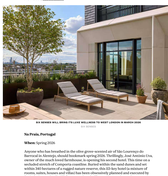
SUZANNAH RAMSDALE · FREELANCEWRITER
IN ASHER AND

Six Senses, London

When: March 2026

Finally, it's about time London had a Six Senses. It feels like a natural fit for Soho: our city folk desperate for rest, relaxation and the chance to press pause on the hustle and bustle. Nestled in the heart of the city, between Oxford Street, Regent Street, Kensington and the capital's other shopping meccas, guests will be able to escape the city and its pollution in the wellness sanctuary. The hotel promises to give New Londoners an injection of Zen. Along with 109 rooms and suites, there will be a spa with a pool, steam room, sauna and treatment rooms, plus an central international gym. It will have a four-restaurant, co-working space, and wellness rooms along with a drought-proofing row of rooms, pools and saunas. Guests can book in for a day of pure pampering, or stay for a night to design inspiration from an old Fashioned London underground. A Sea II treatment rooms, a spectacular pool, cryotherapy, Hyaulon, contrast therapy as well as yoga and meditation classes. Book in for the British Revival.

From £600, sixsenses.com



THE WORK HALL, OPENS TO LIVE ACTIVELIKE THE HOTEL'S LOBBY & WORKS FROM

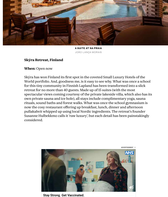
ALEX SANDERS

Ne Pousa, Portugal

When: Spring 2026

Anyone who has travelled in the olive grove-scented air of Alto Lavouro do Barroiral in Alentejo should backtrack spring 2026. The Blue, Just Jessica Cox, Ne Pousa is a rustic-chic retreat with 10 bedrooms, a pool, a spa and an orchard stocked with 47 organic counties. Buried within the sand dunes and set within 340 hectares of a rugged nature reserve, this £5 key hotel is minutes of the Atlantic Ocean and Vicentian Coast. Its restaurant, Ne Pousa, overseen by Paris designer Studio 65 for over a decade. The result promises to be extraordinary. Five restaurants will conjure up hyper local meals using produce from the hotel's organic vegetable garden, including a Mediterranean Sea, Carnaxuprita's traditional old pier to vegetarian gems on and Bonate vary. Here, there is also a spa, a Kids Club and a menu of life-affirming activities including cycling, surfing, yoga, Pilates, Tai Chi, Qigong, Nordic Walk and walking classes to help you nature traditional sound recipes.

Room rates TBC, neopousa.com



A SUITE AT NE POUSA

CREDIT: NE POUSA

Skyra Rovinari, Finland

When: Open now

Skyra has sun Finland its first spot in the coveted Small Luxury Hotels of the World collection. Nestled in the Finnish Lake District, Skyra Rovinari is the perfect for this day commutely to Finnish Lapland has been transformed into a rich retreat for no more than 60 guests. Made up of 9 suites (with the most spectacular lake views), the hotel has a Finnish Lapland feel to it. There also has its own private sauna and ice bath, all-day room include complimentary yoga, sauna and ice bathing, and a Finnish Lapland-inspired tasting menu. Guests can also enjoy some the cosy restaurant offering up breakfast, lunch, dinner and afternoon tea. Skyra Rovinari is a 3 hour drive from Helsinki, and 1 hour from Rovaniemi (home to Santaus Clubhouse, calls it 'our luxury'). Sun-lock detail has been personalised, considered.

From £1,00 per night, skyrovarinari.com

SUITE DETAILS

CREDIT: SKYRA

Cambridge House Auberge, London

When: Summer 2026

As part of the Rosleen Brothers £1 billion regeneration of Piccadilly, Auberge Collection is set to open its first UK hotel — separate Green Park in winter's three-year-long transformation. Inspired by the Grand Tour, Cambridge House Auberge has been meticulously busy balancing away to transform the old Grand Hotel into a 200-room, 40-suite hotel. Guests can expect a Mediterranean feel to the restaurant (it's Nigel's Cyrill and by the great Italy behind Carbone Irina) and a Mediterranean-inspired menu. The interiors are also to be based on the old Roman bathhouses and some excellent people-watching.

Room rates TBC, auberge.com

SPOKES'S BIKES PARK, AMERICAN HOME AMONG BEST TO DINE IN THE SUMMER

CREDIT: SPOKES

Zanzier De Ste Rosalie, French Riviera

When: Spring 2026

A seven-minute boat ride from the pretty Provençal town of Sainct is also the private island of Ste Rosalie. As of May 1 it will be home to Zanzier's latest hotel, a 19-room property with a pool, spa, and a Michelin-star restaurant. Its pitch-perfect only spices stepping in 1960s French Riviera chic. Sunbeam, a spared lush and stunning space near the sea gardens covers both spa and Zanzier. Its Ste Rosalie Restaurant, Sunbeam, is a Mediterranean-inspired menu, with a focus on the fresh fish for the Sunbeam. The Classic unique will have rooms with sweeping views of the Tuscan hills, as well as for family-friendly apartments. The restaurant, Sunbeam, is a Mediterranean-inspired menu, with a focus on the fresh fish, locally sourced ingredients and there will be two pools and a spa.

From £ 200 per night, ladarlhe.com

A RENDERING OF ONE OF THE VILLAS AT ZANNIER HOMES

CREDIT: ZANNIER

La Parlita in Chianti, Tuscany

When: May 2026

Just 25 minutes from Florence, at the end of a pretty pine-tree-lined avenue you'll find this 19-room property, which is set to open in May. Its 19 rooms, suites and residencies are all contemporary Italian reimagined (one of Italy's hilltop hotel Architect brothers Gian Carlo and Matteo Fioranzato have followed the blueprint of the Tuscan farmhouse, with a few modern touches, and a stunning pool and hideaway for dinner in the farm. The Chianti unique will have rooms with sweeping views of the Tuscan hills, as well as for family-friendly apartments. The restaurant, Sunbeam, is a Mediterranean-inspired menu, with a focus on the fresh, locally sourced ingredients and there will be two pools and a spa.

From £ 200 per night, ladarlhe.com

LA PARLITA IN CHIANTI

CREDIT: LA PARLITA

Pregon, Seychelles

When: October 2026

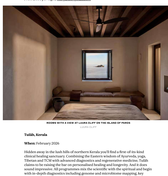
This is also ultra-luxury. After a complete overhaul, the private island paradise of Pregon will reopen in October 2026 with 20 villas, 3 restaurants and a wellness lagoon (it allows to host a maximum of 70 people at any one time for ultimate privacy).

As the heart of the island there will be a distillery, patisserie, cigar lounge, library, boutique, atelier shop, café, museum, interactive 4D room, conservation lab, kids' club, and a wellness lagoon with a 25-metre infinity pool, Turkish bath and Cryotherapy. Pregon is further on gut to the new world-class spa (offering Hyaulon water therapy, Hydration pods, ice baths), a new room, sleep capsules and pressure chambers, ceramic and pastel resorts, and yacht club.

CREDIT: TUNE

If that isn't enough, guests will have the pick of seven private waters same security beaches and a chance to spot one of the 4,500 giant tortoises or see Seychelles Black Parrots, Seychelles Magpie Robins, Fairy Terns, Madagascar Fody, Zebra Doves and Seychelles White-eyes (if the gentle pools and rainforest hotel. A may worth crossing jaging your focus for? Kinda sounds like it.

Room from £20,000 per night, Pregon.com



CAMPER LIKE LUXURY AT PREGON

CREDIT: PREGON

Delano Miami Beach

When: March 2026

This art deco icon is set to re-open after five years of extensive renovation. Just steps from the sand, the property will be a stunning mix of Miami's legendary South Beach hotel: Grace Jones, Leonardo DiCaprio, George Clooney, Lenny Kravitz, Madonna, Mick Jagger, Naomi Campbell, Paris Hilton, Rihanna, Lenny Kravitz and just to name, Nine Inch Nails, Madonna — the pioneer behind Glastonbury and The Hoxton — they are promising a return to its former glory. The 2026 Delano Miami Beach will feature 200 rooms and suites, a rooftop pool, four restaurants and bars, including a 1950s version of the Ramon Rose Bar. The pool will be the place to be seen.

From £500 per night, delanobeachfl.com

CAT AND CHAIR

Lunera Cliff, Paros

When: Sep 2026

For many, Paros is the perfect Greek island. Secluded sandy beaches, ship towns as well as white washed villages and fresh from the Aegean seafood. Adding to its appeal this summer is Lunera Cliff. A serene adult only hideaway on the southwest coast of the island, Lunera Cliff will have 30 suites, a pool bar and an offsite restaurant Mon Kabanis, while dishes will have French flair at La Cantine. The hotel's menu of extra curricular experiences is unique: marble carving, pottery, cooking classes, Pilates, Tai Chi, Qigong, a spa of citrus-minds — as well as diving, windsurfing and guided trail running.

From £600 per night, mariamaurogiannakou.com

PHOENIX SUITE A VIEW OF LUNERA CLIFF ON THE ISLAND OF PAROS

CREDIT: LUNERA

Tulalik, Kerala

When: February 2026

Hidden away in the lush hills of northern Kerala you'll find a few of its kind Tulalik, a wellness retreat that combines ancient healing with modern medicine. Tibetan and CN will advanced diagnostic and regenerative medicine. Tulalik claims to be raising the bar on personalised healing and longevity. And it does seem to have thought of everything: guests will undergo a comprehensive health check-up with diagnostics including genome and microbiome mapping, full hormonal, cardiovascular profiling and functional testing. From a clinical perspective, Tulalik's team of CN, Tibetan and Ayurvedic doctors will be operating from its complex north and its sister Sanctuary Medical Hospital is just 15 minutes away. Tulalik's treatments are a mix of Ayurvedic and Tibetan healing, regenerative treatments spun from hyperbaric oxygen chambers to cryotherapy and infrared saunas. Guests can expect a transformative stay in a secret retreat 30 acres of manicured gardens and wooded forest, in the heart of it all-the The Sanctuary, the world's largest wood healing dome, where it's said that the harmonic frequencies can restore balance at a cellular level.

Rates TBC, tulalik.life

TULALIK'S ROOMS, THE SANCTUARY, THE WORLD'S LARGEST WOOD HEALING DOME

CREDIT: TULALIK

Orient Express Venezia

When: April 2026

Orient Express continues its expansion with the opening of a particular new property in Venice. It takes eight years for the supremely skilled architect Aline Asmar d'Avenier to bring the project to life, transforming a 16th-century palace into a gem in the Duke of Urbino. The results are extraordinary, with Giovanni Battista Medaccci's original spiral staircase acting as a true showstopper, topped off with a stained glass ceiling. The hotel's 24 rooms and suites are dotted with Murano chandeliers throughout. We predict the Pegaso Bar will become a must-visit cocktail spot. Part sumptuous hotel, part living history, this is one for the bucket list.

From £1,140 per night, orient-express.com

ORIENT EXPRESS HAS RESTORED A 15TH-CENTURY PALAZZO
ORIENT EXPRESS VENEZIA

Chablé Guadalupe, Mexico

When: TBC

Chablé Yucatan is regularly declared to be one of the best hotels in the world. Excitement is high then for the new outpost by this family-owned brand in the heart of Mexico's largest wine region, Baja California Norte. Guests will have the run of 10 hectares of vineyards, conservation trails and a spa offering yoga and sound baths. Just over the border from San Diego, the hotel will have 70 keys as well as 10 residences. If this opening is anywhere near as good as Chablé Yucatan, book your flights now.

Rates TBC, chablehotels.com

A CABANA AT CHABLÉ GUADALUPE
CHABLÉ HOTELS

EDITION Lake Como

When: March 2026

Across the water from beguiling Bellagio is the gleaming new EDITION. Injecting a bit of cool to the storied shores of Lake Como, the floating pool and lounge bar will be where you'll find the beautiful people this summer. Three-Michelin-starred chef Mauro Colagreco will be in charge of food in the restored 19th century palazzo and the longevity spa will help to undo throbbing heads from the night before.

From £690 per night, editionhotels.com

A PALATIAL ROOM AT EDITION LAKE COMO
NIKOLAS KOENIG

The Dean, Berlin

When: February 2026

Taking up its rightful spot in charming Charlottenburg, The Dean marks the Irish hotel brand's first foray outside of Ireland (openings in Munich and Miami follow next). Expect to see rows of Gen Z tapping away at their laptops in restaurant and bar Benedict by day and knocking back gimlets by night. Art is curated by Thom Oosterhof — themed around the idea of *Wanderers* — to reflect the city's creative scene, gorgeous bespoke amenities are provided by the always-delicious DS & Durga and the stylish rooms have been designed by Londoner Rachael Gowdridge.

From £120 per night, thedeanberlin.je

MORE ABOUT HOTEL OPENINGS THE RITZ SIX SENSES GOMPORTA PARIS
HAVE YOUR SAY... VIEW COMMENTS
Discussion LOG IN | SIGN UP
Start the conversation
ALL COMMENTS NEWEST
Start the conversation
Powered by viafoura

The most exciting new hotels to stay at in 2026

These exceptional destinations planned to open up in 2026 are worth the wait. Hilary Kimber reports

By Hilary Kimber

Facebook
Twitter
Email
Save this story

Since travelling after the Covid-19 pandemic, Spectacular Alnwick has been a magnet among wanderlust-ridden, culture-vulture Brits. Alongside Britain's prime-time-worthy castle and Harry Potter-filmed gardens, the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland have created a dazzling array of attractions, including a Bamburgh Castle-inspired treehouse, a Michelin-starred restaurant, a Grade I-listed Italianate mansion, a Jurassic-inspired adventure playground and a Grade I-listed Victorian glasshouse. Now, the Duke and Duchess are adding a luxury hotel to the mix, in the form of the Grade I-listed Alnwick Castle Gatehouse, which is being transformed into a 14-room boutique hotel, due to open in 2026. Thanks to their international campaign for Visit Britain, we can't help wondering if some of the Duke and Duchess's guests will be Americans.

Top 5 Best Vacuum Cleaners

Accurate reviews, with thorough standards for our ranking, based on a lot of time, more than one hour, hundreds of hours, and thousands of hours, for the highly-rated products. Updated January 2026

Top Picks
- Lista Dragon
- Lista Cyclone
- Cordless Wand

Alnwick Gatehouse
Wallpaper* Handbook
Alnwick, Northumberland

Alnwick Gatehouse is a new addition to the Alnwick Castle estate, which is being transformed into a 14-room boutique hotel. Including some of the conserved Northumberland sandstone, it was, until recently, the home of the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland's children, who now live in a nearby cottage.

Alnwick Gatehouse, which is being transformed into a 14-room boutique hotel, due to open in 2026, is a Grade I-listed Italianate mansion. Alongside Alnwick Castle, it is one of the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland's most-visited attractions, with its Michelin-starred restaurant, Bamburgh Castle-inspired treehouse and Jurassic-inspired adventure playground. Now, the Duke and Duchess are adding a luxury hotel to the mix

Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust
A Watch for Both Worlds
Discover the Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust collection at your local authorised Rolex retailer.
ROLEX

The most anticipated hotel openings of 2026

From landmark redesigns to remote retreats, these are the hotel debuts shaping the year ahead

WALLPAPER* DESIGN TEAM, WALLPAPER* DESIGN TEAM, WALLPAPER* DESIGN TEAM, WALLPAPER* DESIGN TEAM

Published online December 2025 | Issue 156 | Text by Wallpaper* Editors | Edited by Jonathan Bell

Grand Hotel Cabbagia
Photo: courtesy of Grand Hotel Cabbagia

Home
Newsletters
Wallpaper*
Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust
A Watch for Both Worlds
ROLEX

Amanyara Blue Peninsula, Mexico

Image: courtesy of Amanyara

Next year, Amanyara will bring its laid-back lifestyle to the East Cape of Baja California Sur, Mexico, with a new resort that will offer a mix of villas and a collection of coastal residences. Clients, localness and Cambio and Cambio Studio have joined creative forces to design Bloodgoodly, considered a blue-chip Mexican artist, to create a series of bespoke artworks for the resort's interiors, which will include Amanyara's signature textures, colours and vegetation, and installations around which to plan your visit. Amanyara's Blue Peninsula will be the brand's fifth resort in Mexico, and the Amanyara spirit will inspire the general hospitality, while the bespoke design will ensure that it feels distinctly local. Expect to see the best of the world's most enchanting sunrise, too.

amanyara.com

Black Sand Resort (China, Lanhai)

Image: courtesy of Black Sand Resort

Setting out a precedent in the China region, Black Sand Resort will be the first luxury resort in Lanhai, Hainan, when it opens in January. Surrounded by ocean views and intimate shapeliness, the resort's iconic, elemental landscape. The Westernmost guest rooms and suites inclose a dramatic, sculptural courtyard, while the Easternmost rooms and suites have a floating, sweeping curve of the black volcanic beach, nearby mountains, and the North Atlantic, alongside the Pacific Ocean. An expansive spa will offer a range of treatments and rituals, and the organic restaurant will serve seafood with artisanal mezcal and tequila.

blacksandlife.cn

Capella Kyoto Sanjo

Image: courtesy of Capella Kyoto Sanjo

Capella Hotels and Resorts will open its inaugural Japanese hotel Kyoto Sanjo (Sep) in a repurposed, Grade-II-listed, 1930s-era building in the city's most opening, Capella Kyoto. Located in Kyoto's historic Nakagyo district, the property will be a mix of 70 guest rooms and suites, the city's traditional economic centre, known as nakagyo, underlying its series of lower cantilevered and pitched spaces that weave together contemporary and traditional. Kyoto Sanjo's interiors will be curated and realised by a dynamic Kyoto-based creative duo, Kenta and Ayumi. The restaurant's dishes, the rhythm of the seasons, while the spa is rooted in Japanese wellness and beauty.

capellahotels.com

Wallpaper* Newsletter

Receive our Daily Digest inspiration, escapes and design stories five days a week straight to your inbox.

First name (optional)
Enter your email address
Sign up
Sign up to receive updates from Wallpaper*
Marketing preferences and policies apply. Unsubscribe anytime.
By submitting your information you agree to Condé Nast's Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy.

Chesa Marchetina (Val Müstair, Switzerland)

Image: courtesy of Chesa Marchetina

Home
Newsletters
Wallpaper*
Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust
A Watch for Both Worlds
Discover the Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust collection at your local authorised Rolex retailer.
ROLEX

Chesa Marchetina will mark one of the first openings of 2026, and the second address from Swiss graphiste Lucas and Hannah Pfeifer, following the opening of Scuderia's much-toured Chur hotel. Formerly a cultivated farmhouse, the property has been reimagined by Zurich-based studio Ruf Architekten with a contemporary Swiss sensibility, and will offer 14 bedrooms and suites, while remaining deeply rooted in gastronomy. Brought to interest by the Pfeifers, Swiss chef Jonathan Sutter will be available for dinner seating in each suite every night.

chesamarchetina.ch

Grande Mosse Praia (Lisbon)

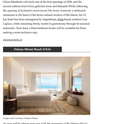


Image: courtesy of Grande Mosse Praia

Revival of the atheism once seen with the reopening of the Hôtel Alain Ducasse, Lisbon's Grande Mosse Praia will be a 19th-century mansion that underwent its 20-year glamous growing-beyond-business while introducing a fresh, contemporary sensibility across its 57 rooms and suites. The property's 1,000-square-metre garden will host a wellness studio and four outdoor tennis courts, including a rare set of Moon's Dust Max, the former epicentre of Hollywood royalty and the city's elite.

grandemosse.com

The Ultimate Island, Interior

Image: courtesy of The Ultimate Island

Scheduled to open in a wonderful corner of Paris, on Ile Saint-Louis, the Ultimate Island will be the first hotel in Central Europe to be recognised as an Exceptional Cultural Property of Legacy. Total cost: €47 and it will be a mix of 19th-century and 21st-century architecture, with a contemporary interior by Hugo Lecomte, architecture with contemporary interiors. The hotel will also feature a Japanese bar, salon, restaurant and dining room, and a rooftop terrace with views over the Hôtel-Dieu and the Pantheon, Montparnasse and Lavinia.

theultimate.com

Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort

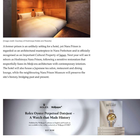


Image: courtesy of Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort

Home
Newsletters
Wallpaper*
Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust
A Watch for Both Worlds
Discover the Rolex Oyster Perpetual Datejust collection at your local authorised Rolex retailer.
ROLEX

Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort is set to open in Jeju, South Korea, in January. Its 20 rooms and suites will be a mix of 19th-century and 21st-century architecture, with a contemporary interior by Hugo Lecomte, Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort will also feature a Japanese bar, salon, restaurant and dining room, and a rooftop terrace with views over the Hôtel-Dieu and the Pantheon, Montparnasse and Lavinia.

hanwooyeon.com

Villa Kaia (Nusa Island, Indonesia)

Image: courtesy of Villa Kaia

Villa Kaia (Sep) will mark the Sanctuary Resort Bali's (Marriott's) first property in Indonesia's Nusa Islands, and will be a mix of 19th-century and 21st-century architecture, with a contemporary interior by Hugo Lecomte, Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort will also feature a Japanese bar, salon, restaurant and dining room, and a rooftop terrace with views over the Hôtel-Dieu and the Pantheon, Montparnasse and Lavinia.

villakaia.com

Conrad Fujairah, Tartous (Syria)

Image: courtesy of Conrad Fujairah, Tartous (Syria)

After breaking ceo. Ms. Ines the landmark Rosman Rudi's Minerva, Conrad Fujairah, Tartous (Syria) will be a mix of 19th-century and 21st-century architecture, with a contemporary interior by Hugo Lecomte, Hanwoo Yeon Pilsner Resort will also feature a Japanese bar, salon, restaurant and dining room, and a rooftop terrace with views over the Hôtel-Dieu and the Pantheon, Montparnasse and Lavinia.

conradhotels.com

Public Hotel Hollywood

Image: courtesy of Public Hotel Hollywood

Public Hotel Hollywood, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, Santa Monica

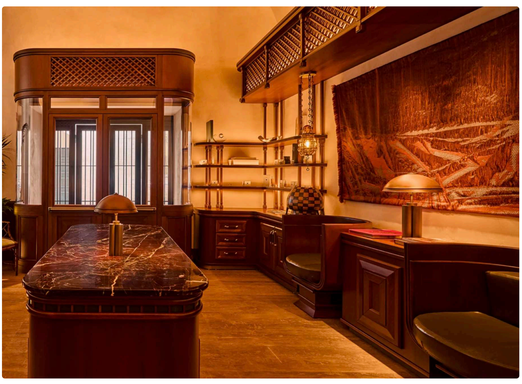
Orient-Express La Minerva Rome has opened its luxury Spa which draws on the legacy of Roman thermae and the Ottoman hammam. Designed by Artist-Architect Hugo Toro and conceived as a place of transformation, The Spa offers a journey through baths and treatments in which time slows, and each stage prepares the next. This approach echoes the spirit of the Orient Express journey, understood as a passage, a crossing, and a fully immersive sensory experience.

The Spa's essence is structured around steam and a sequenced spatial progression inspired by the three stages of the ancient thermal ritual: the tepidarium, a temperate space of gradual acclimatisation; the calidarium, a warm environment combining pools and steam; and the frigidarium, the final invigorating cold bath.

Spaces alternate between shared relaxation areas, and single and double treatment rooms. Hand-blown Murano glass fixtures cast a soft, candle-like glow, heightening the tactile atmosphere. Brown travertine, red and veined marble, Roman-style plaster and stained oak create a powerful dialogue of textures. The contrast of stone, wood and richly woven textiles, including the canopy beds in the relaxation area, anchors the space in a distinctly earthy, elemental sensibility.

A finely crafted marble hammam rises as the heart of The Spa, surrounded by delicate fountains resembling Triton basins, echoing those found in the hotel's guest rooms. Contemporary moucharabieh screens filter sightlines, deepening the exploration of light and texture. The hammam, an ancient Ottoman purification ritual, integrates Roman influences, establishing a dialogue between East and West, recalling the historic route of the Orient Express linking Paris to Constantinople.

Among the treatments offered, the signature rituals Dea Minerva and Stop Constantinople invite guests on a complete sensory journey: rose-infused foot baths, aromatic steam, kassa exfoliation, ghassoul clay wraps, foaming massages, and face and hair treatments. Raxul rituals leave guests feeling refreshed, with their senses awakened and skin radiant. Passed down from Byzantium to Istanbul, these experiences celebrate the regenerative power of water, heat, and touch.



Orient Express La Minerva Rome new Spa

Furtuna Skin, the Italian luxury skincare house rooted in regenerative agriculture and clinically proven performance, is the exclusive skincare partner of The SPA at Orient Express La Minerva. Formulated using ingredients cultivated on the brand's 800-acre organic estate in Sicily, La Furtuna Estate, its products harness extra-virgin olive oil, wild-foraged botanicals, and medicinal herbs grown in accordance with biodiversity-led restoration practices. Deeply aligned with the Spa's reverence for ancient ritual and elemental healing, Furtuna Skin's approach bridges heritage and high-performance.

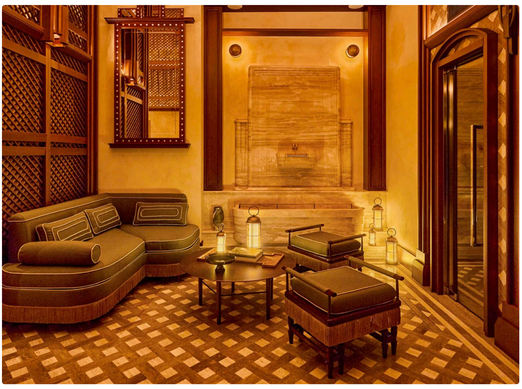
"At Furtuna Skin, our philosophy has always been rooted in the idea that true beauty is born from ritual, heritage, and a deep respect for the land. Partnering with The Spa at Orient Express La Minerva felt like a natural extension of that belief. The Spa's reverence for ancient purification traditions, historic elegance, and holistic restoration aligns with our own commitment to time-honored botanicals and transformative wellness. – **Agatha Relota Luczo, Furtuna Skin Founder & CEO**

Obsidian treatments, including the signature Furtuna Skin x La Minerva Exclusive Vibrancy Facial, have been developed for The Spa, combining manual techniques, beauty tools such as an obsidian Gua Sha, and natural active ingredients. The treatments signed by Furtuna Skin designed nature's most potent skin-reviving ingredients, and awaken the senses with unique combinations of circulatory stimulation and detoxifying techniques.

Simone Giorgi, General Manager of Orient Express La Minerva states: "Collaborating with Furtuna Skin represents a meaningful addition to Orient Express La Minerva. Together, we have created an experience that elevates our wellness offering through a shared Italian heritage, and exceptional know-how and craftsmanship. Our spa offer our guests an exclusive journey inspired by Ottoman rituals, while remaining deeply connected to the vibrant heart of Rome and land-driven innovation."

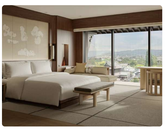
Accessible at all hours, The Gym and The Kinesis Room complete the experience. Equipped with Technogym Artis and dedicated functional training tools, each session may be guided by a personal trainer upon request, with programmes in fitness, yoga or Pilates tailored to your individual goals.

The Spa at Orient Express La Minerva is a coherent architectural ensemble, where space, ritual, and movement converge in a holistic path to regeneration. Inspired by the ancient healing traditions of the East, its treatments transport guests on a sensorial journey that evokes distant cultures and timeless rituals, offering an immersive experience of wellness in the heart of the Eternal City.



Orient Express La Minerva Rome new Spa

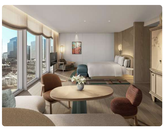
More from CONCIERGE



Capella Hotels opens Capella Kyoto, its first property in Japan

Posted On February 26, 2026 CPP-LUXURY

Capella Kyoto will open on 22 March 2026, just as Kyoto's legendary cherry blossoms reach their fleeting peak. Set in the historic ...



Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Marunouchi reopens following renovations

Posted On February 25, 2026 CPP-LUXURY

Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo at Marunouchi is now taking reservations for stays starting April 29, 2026. Marking a thoughtful evolution ...

INDIGO London K West Shepherd's Bush opens March 2026

Posted On February 25, 2026 CPP-LUXURY

The new hotel which is owned by the Lancaster Landmark Hotel Company (The Landmark London; Royal Lancaster London) will feature ...

FOLLOW US

Get notified on new posts

Subscribe to notifications

Newsletter

Don't miss a thing!
Sign up to receive daily news

Your email address

Sign up

By using this site you agree with our privacy and cookie policy. Accept Read More

La Dolce Vita Orient Express: In the Presence of the Palio

12 February, 2026 by **Monicha Tully**

BOOK YOUR TICKETS HERE ONLINE
With 24/7 customer service, you'll get the support you need whenever you have questions.
GetYourGuide
Book Now

Twice each summer, on 2nd July in honour of the Madonna di Provenzano and on 16th August for the Assumption, Piazza del Campo becomes the stage for one of Europe's most visceral and venerated rites: the Palio. What unfolds in this shell-shaped square is not merely a horse race, but a centuries-old covenant between contrade, faith and fervour, a spectacle whose origins stretch back to the thirteenth century.

To witness it is rare. To arrive by La Dolce Vita Orient Express is extraordinary.

A Departure from the Eternal City

The journey begins at Rome Ostiense, where guests are welcomed into the La Dolce Vita Lounge — a prelude of polished brass, soft light and quiet anticipation. As dusk descends, the train slips from the capital with cinematic grace, carrying its passengers north through the amber folds of the Tuscan countryside.

Dinner is served beneath a ceiling of lacquered elegance: a menu conceived by three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck, whose cuisine balances precision and poetry. Fine wines trace the contours of the landscape beyond the window; silver glints; conversation hums. Later, in the Bar Car, a pianist coaxes Italian classics into the night. The carriage becomes a salon — intimate, knowing, impossibly chic.

The Drama Unfolds in Siena

By morning, Siena awaits.

A private transfer delivers guests into the heart of the historic centre, itself a UNESCO World Heritage Site. From the vantage of Palazzo Chigi Zondadari, overlooking the Campo, the Palio reveals its full choreography. An aperitivo is served as drums begin to reverberate through medieval stone. Silk banners ripple. The air thickens with allegiance.

From private balconies, a privilege few will ever know, the race erupts below. Bareback riders thunder around the square's earthen track, the roar of the crowd rising in waves. It lasts scarcely more than ninety seconds. It feels eternal.

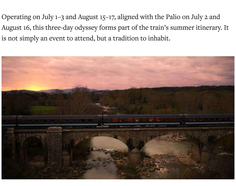
Afterwards, the palace retreats into candlelit calm. A Tuscan dinner is served in rooms where history seems to exhale from the frescoed walls. Outside, the city celebrates. Within, refinement reigns.

Guests return to the train as night deepens. The Bar Car glows once more, laughter, music, a final glass. The drama lingers in the air like perfume.

A Rite, Reimagined

On the third morning, the train glides back into Rome. The journey concludes, yet the experience resists closure. The Palio belongs to Siena — but through La Dolce Vita Orient Express, it also belongs, fleetingly, to those who arrive in this manner: enveloped in elegance, suspended between centuries.

Operating on July 1–3 and August 15–17, aligned with the Palio on July 2 and August 16, this three-day odyssey forms part of the train's summer itinerary. It is not simply an event to attend, but a tradition to inhabit.



In Siena, history does not perform for the present. It absorbs it.

And aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express, one does not merely observe a rite — one enters it.

@orientexpress | orient-express.com

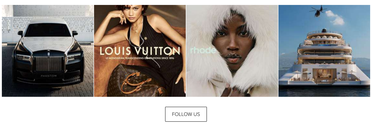
SHARE

Facebook Twitter Email

PREVIOUS ARTICLE
GAME, SET,
MEYYAFUSHI MALDIVES

BOOK YOUR TICKETS HERE ONLINE
Planning on the go is easy with 24/7 customer service support and flexible cancellation.
GetYourGuide
Book Now

INSTAGRAM



FOLLOW US

NEWSLETTER

Our monthly edit of the best in culture, style, food and luxury travel.

Email Address SIGN UP

CONTACT US ABOUT US PRESS DISCLOSURE & AFFILIATE ADVERTISING POLICY TERMS AND CONDITIONS
CONTENT DISCLAIMER

© 2026 THE ARCADIA ONLINE. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Pelorus offers trips that allow guests to live alongside nomadic herders in Mongolia

Home > Travel

How Luxury Travel Is Rediscovering Its Purpose

By Tatler House
3 Days Ago

For those who have everything, purpose can be the missing ingredient – and travel companies are catching on, says Francisca Gollott

The Post Hero Contain Affiliate Links, Learn More

You've got next-level life obsessed with Harry Potter and you're looking for an exciting holiday idea. What do you do? Take a magic spa adventure in Dad Sanctuary, led by two 'wizards'? Starting in London, you'll head to the Scottish Highlands via Oxford, where the kids are given a quest and tetted out in their own personalised uniforms. The next ten days include everything from a Sorting Hat ceremony and out-of-hours access to the Hogwarts-inspired Oxford University Botanic Garden, to a Quidditch match and spot of Quidditch. The whole thing will be brought to life by scripted actors, and will be about as close to a magical holiday as is humanly possible. Sounds good? Triangle to.

This is what Harry Wallace, luxury travel specialist at Kirsch, calls 'related luxury' – the company's creative tailor-made experiences. Clients who want to be surprised exactly this by has a client from the US, and co-founder Ben Lavender says it's not one of the ordinary to have that level of detail – and theatricality – is a holiday. His clients are what calls 'type 0' personalities: competitive, ambitious, successful people. They claim love luxury, but they often want to build up to it, not just have it handed to them.' Instead they want to feel something meaningful on holiday and to have earned rewards, hence the detailed, hyper-personalised adventures. 'For people who have everything, there has to be a purpose.'

It's that sense of purpose – or earned rewards – that is driving luxury travel right now. It might mean funnelling your money to a good cause, travelling a little slower, or looking for an experience that connects you a little deeper to a location. For The Tatler, we'll creates off-the-charts experiences in Australia, it's about offering something that no-one else can. Chief commercial officer Emma Welling says that is especially true for those who aspire to be on the Tatler list. 'Our members are looking for ways to be recognised, amazing, they can pay for any luxury. But what we can do is move them. It's all about moving people – connecting them to people, nature and wildlife.'

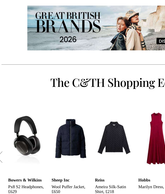
Feeding into this idea is that the very concept of 'luxury' has completely changed in recent years. Gone are the days of simply flashing the cash, and in their place, there's a new to top brands has become that much more accessible. Back in the day, you'd need to spend a year's wages to get your hands on something by Dior, whereas now you can buy a pair of Dior sunglasses for a few hundred quid. It's cheap, but not yet to-the-list, either. True luxury today, he says, is about access to things money can't buy, such as an exclusive visit to the pantries from the supplies Chanel scents and that only he – and a few lucky guests – have access to.

Glasgow can arrange 6 days on the Italian Grand Tour, revealing various Ferrari

If access is the ultimate luxury, then time comes a close second. 'One of the best pieces of advice we give our clients is to resist the temptation to do more,' says Jarrad Kyle, product director at Insight. Instead, do less and do it at a place where there is time for a deeper understanding of the places you are visiting.' Journeys by train or riverboat offer more opportunities to immerse yourself than a flight, and Kyle's clients are a fan of taking in a lot off lists of things. A case in point: its 12-day rail journey on the Golden Eagle train, travelling east to west across China, taking in Beijing, the Great Wall, the Terracotta Army and then train-town of Turpan.

Train travel provides exactly that sense of connection that bopping on a flight simply can't – and travellers are learnt those ropes. There's been a slew of new routes opening up over the last year, from the Britannia Explorer, offering three-night itineraries from London to Cornwall, the Lake District and Wales, to Italy's 1960s-style Calabria Sleeper Orient Express, with glamorous one- to two-night journeys through Venice, Tuscany and Sicily. New for next year will be the subtly named Normal Tourist, a luxury which will traverse Norway's dramatic landscapes.

For trips that incorporate the journey into a wider adventure, Natawatch has joined forces with Rivage to offer outdoor adventures coupled with train travel (and reducing the carbon footprint of a trip by up to 90 percent in the process). As an ethos, Natawatch's donations to conservation has amounted to over £4.5 million and includes using its profits to establish several wildlife reserves in Ecuador, Scotland and Italy. Flight-free journeys with Rivage include a vegetarian birdwatching tour in Spain's Extremadura, a botanical tour of the Swiss Alps and a slow-mo tour of Croatian and Dalmatian islands.



A Venice, Turquoise rowboat offers cabins to lower skilled national parks away from the crowds.

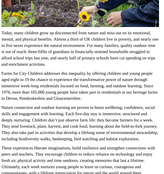
Even for those who love classic fly-and-flop holidays, demand is shifting towards something a little more meaningful. Turquoise Holidays, for example, is finding clients are increasingly keen to immerse themselves into conservation stories and connect with local communities. Its Cycle Kenya to Mara National Park, for example – famous for Bern Free, where Joy and George Adamson reintroduced the orphaned lioness 'Elsa' into the wild – combines guest, crowd free safari experiences. The lodge is credited with saving this relatively unvisited national park, which at one point was at risk of being decommissioned and transformed into rice plantations. As well as added extras such as walking safaris (brilliant for getting closer to wildlife), guests can watch private screenings of the Bern Free movie beneath the stars.

That sense of connection is key for Greville Mackay Lewis, co-founder and CEO of high-end adventure operator Pelorus, who sees their trips are shifting focus from high-adrenaline to high-connection. That might be bringing nomadic herders to Mongolia's Khuvsgul Lake to meet the people who live there, or it's deliberately disconnecting from technology and schedules. 'I will never forget a journey through northern Kenya with local conversationists and elders from the Southern community. What began as a safari ended up with something far more meaningful: a conversation about heritage, stewardship and resilience. It reminded me that adventure – at its best – creates connection.'

Read More

Travel
British Travel Companies with a Conscience

Travel
Here's How Britain Is Leading The Way On Global Travel Trends



Travel
10 Reasons You Should Travel With A B Corp Brand

Travel
The Hottest New Hotels Opening Their Doors In 2026

GREAT BRITISH BRANDS 2026
DISCOVER MORE

The C&TH Shopping Edit

Bowers & Wilkins
Px8 S2 Headphones, £450
BUY NOW

Sheep Inc
Wool Puffer Jacket, £450
BUY NOW

Reiss
Amaya Silk Satin Mini, £270
BUY NOW

Hobbs
Marilyn Dress, £149
BUY NOW

Plane Eight
Class Knitted Jacket, £95
BUY NOW

C&TH Newsletters

Sign-up today for the very best of Country & Town House, delivered straight to your inbox.

Your Email Address
SIGN UP

By signing up you confirm you have read and agree to our Terms & Conditions

Home > Culture

C&TH X Farms For City Children: Bid On Incredible Prizes In Our Silent Auction

By Helena Cox
2 Months Ago

Our charity auction is now live

The Post Hero Contain Affiliate Links, Learn More

This season, Country & Town House is proud to support Farms for City Children with a special silent auction to aid of their vital work – and the prizes on offer are every bit as inspiring as the cause they support.

From cabaret-packed VIP experiences and unforgettable nights out in Chelsea, to a one of a kind Champagne Methoxalde signed by the next generation of sustainable leaders, this charity auction brings together exceptional experiences with meaningful impact. Every bid placed helps give children and young people the chance to step away from the city and into nature — many for the very first time.

Why We're Supporting Farms For City Children

Founded in 1970 by Lady Clare and Sir Michael Messenger, Farms for City Children exists to give every child – regardless of background – the opportunity to experience the freedom, wonder and confidence that comes from being immersed in the natural world.

Today, many children grow up disconnected from nature and miss out on its emotional, physical and developmental benefits. Farms for City Children's residential programmes give them the best possible experiences the natural environment. For many families, quality outdoor time is one of rarely three-fifths of guardians in financially strained households struggled to afford school trips last year, and nearly half of primary schools have cut spending on trips and enrichment activities.

Farms for City Children addresses this inequality by offering children and young people aged eight to 19 the chance to experience the transformative power of nature through immersive week-long residentials focused on food, farming, and outdoor learning. Since 1976, more than 105,000 young people have taken part in residentials at our heritage farms in Devon, Pembrokeshire and Gloucestershire.

Nature connection and outdoor learning are proven to boost wellbeing, confidence, social skills and engagement with learning. Each five-day stay is immersive, structured and deeply nurturing. Children don't just observe farm life: they become farmers for a week. They tend livestock, plant, harvest, and cook food, learning about the field-to-fork journey. They also take part in activities that develop a lifelong sense of environmental stewardship, including biodiversity walks, beekeeping, bird watching and habitat exploration.

These experiences liberate imaginations, build resilience and strengthen connections with peers and teachers. They encourage children to reduce reliance on technology and enjoy fresh air, physical activity and time outdoors, creating memories that last a lifetime. Ultimately, such work nurtures young people to leave as curious, courageous and compassionate, with a lifelong appreciation for nature and the world around them.

The Prize

London Culture, Comedy & Champagne Experience

This exclusive silent auction prize brings together some of London's most exciting cultural, dining and entertainment experiences, alongside a truly extraordinary Champagne collector's piece.

The winning bidder will enjoy:

- Two tickets to a Chelsea Arts Festival 2026 event of their choice (line-up to be announced), with access to the Festival VIP Lounge, including complimentary food and drinks (here's what happened at 2025's festival for a taste of the action)
- A three-course dinner for two at The Tudorbethan, Chelsea's much-loved neighbourhood pub
- A bottle of Methoxalde Cuvée Prestige 2015 Extra Brut Champagne, featuring some of the UK's finest local comedians in a beautiful Grade II-listed venue.
- A Chef's tasting menu for two at STK Steakhouse, featuring signature dishes served sharing-style and paired with a bottle of house wine
- A show-stopping 6-litre Methoxalde of Champagne Tétreau Réserve Brut NV, signed by winners of Country & Town House's Future Leaders Awards — the equivalent of eight standard bottles and a truly one-of-a-kind piece

You might also like...

GREAT BRITISH BRANDS 2026
DISCOVER MORE

Travel
The Lana Marks A New Chapter In Dubai Luxury
By Lauren Ho

Travel
A Luxurious Pilates Backpacking In Vietnam
By Francesca Gollott

Travel
Here's What It's Like To Visit The Amazon In Peru
By Nathan Gruger

Travel
A Cultural Tour Of Tokyo's Hidden Gems
By Lauren Ho

Travel
Artsy Dining At Ochre, The National Gallery's All Day Dining Destination
By Helena Cox

Travel
A Collection Of Impressive Hotel Staircases
By Helena Cox

Lifestyle
The British Brands Who Joined The UN Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action
By Helena Cox

Bid Now

By bidding in the FFCC Silent Auction, you're not just securing an unforgettable experience, you're helping give children the chance to step into nature, build confidence and create memories that last a lifetime.

Place your bids via our Givergy auction page. Every bid truly makes a difference.

Closing date: 9 *February 2026* | *uk.givergy.com*

The C&TH Shopping Edit

Grove England

Anemone Eau De Parfum, £120

BUY NOW

Angara

Emerald And Diamond Tennis Bracelet, £3,559

BUY NOW

HERD

Whitby Bonnet In Moss, £145

BUY NOW

Sheep Inc

Wool Puffer Jacket, £650

BUY NOW

Ruth Tomlinson

Pink Sapphire & Diamond Ring, £2,990

BUY NOW

C&TH Newsletters

Sign up today for the very best of Country & Town House, delivered straight to your inbox.

First Name | Last Name | Your Email Address | SIGN UP

By signing up, you confirm you have read and agree to our Terms & Conditions.

COUNTRY & TOWN HOUSE

DON'T MISS AN ISSUE

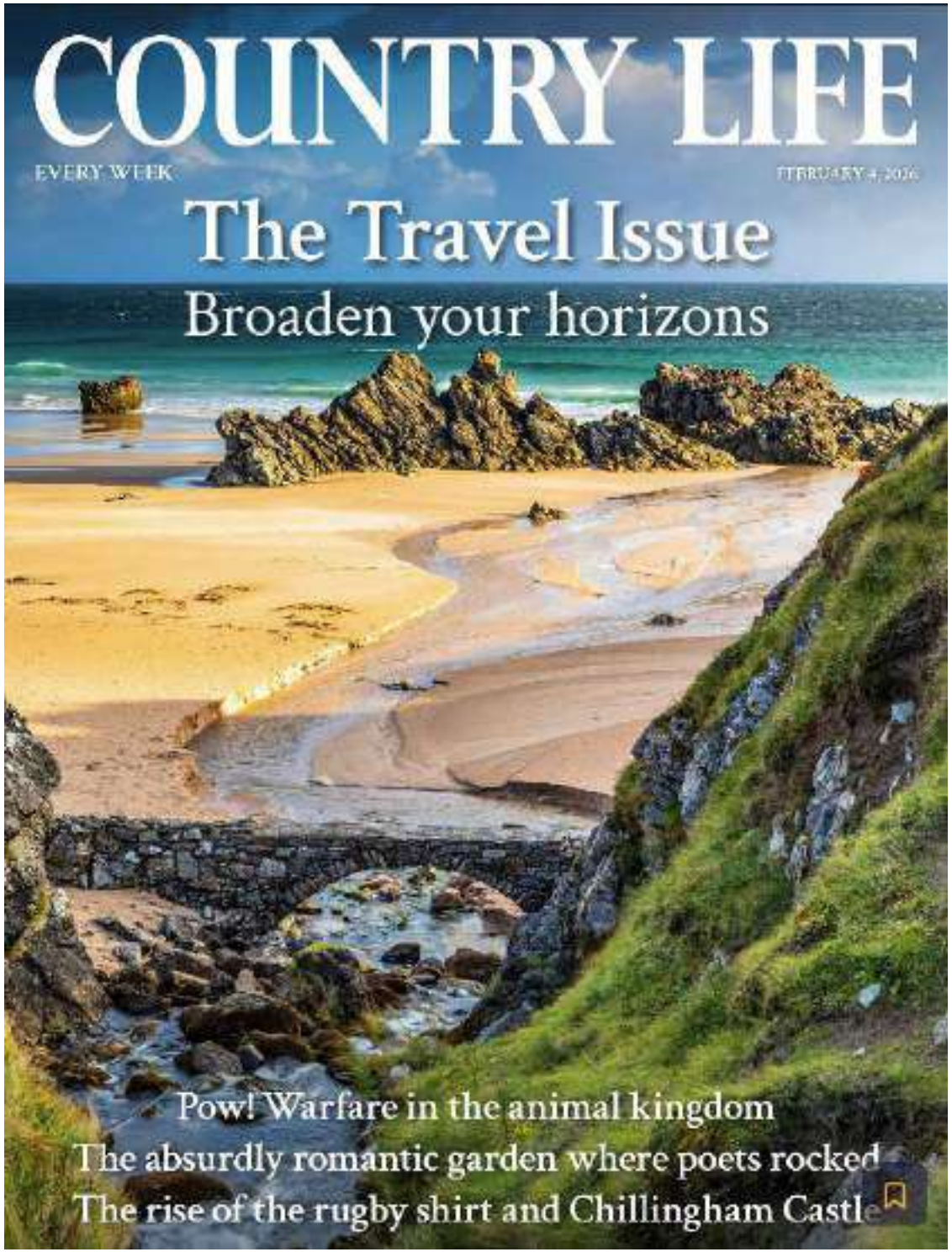
Subscribe to Country & Town House in print or the app to make sure you get the very best of property, interiors, style, food and travel every month.

SUBSCRIBE

Certified B Corporation

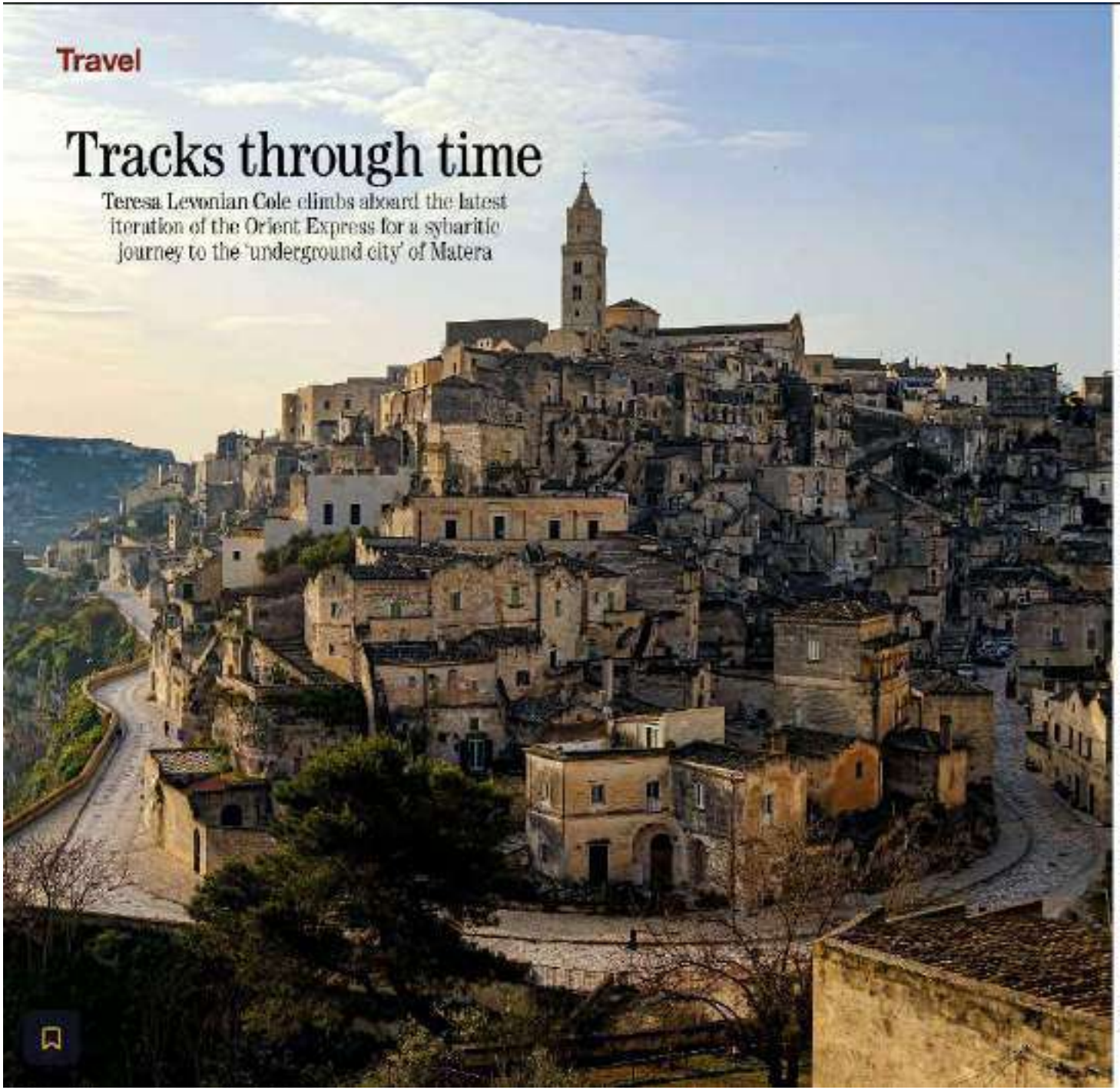
© 2026 Country & Town House. All rights reserved.

DMCA PROTECTED


COUNTRY LIFE
EVERY WEEK
FEBRUARY 4, 2026
The Travel Issue
Broaden your horizons
Pow! Warfare in the animal kingdom
The absurdly romantic garden where poets rocked
The rise of the rugby shirt and Chillingham Castle

Tracks through time

Teresa Levonian Cole climbs aboard the latest iteration of the Orient Express for a sybaritic journey to the 'underground city' of Matera



History built upon history: the ancient city of Matera, a UNESCO World Heritage site that has been continuously lived in—and fought over—for some 9,000 years

SMALL wonder, I muse, that this place has served as a location for numerous Biblical films, from *Ben-Hur* to *The Passion of the Christ*. I am looking out from my balcony on Piazza Vittorio Veneto, over two deep limestone bowls pitted with troglodytic dwellings. The most, as much dwellings are known, are a strange jumble of rock, stone façades and moss-faded terracotta tiles, piled up one on other to the depth of 12 storeys or levels and connected by a warren of steps, courtyards and plunging alleyways that make Venice's labyrinth feel like a Roman road. Beneath my feet lies a cast cistern you could sail about through. It was first excavated in the 1200s and provided the city's drinking water until the 1950s. There, across the depressions, I see the Civita district on a crest between the two vessels, crowned by the city's elegant 13th-century Romanesque Duomo: a vision of celestial order above the encircling chaos.

Just over 12 hours ago, I was pulling out of Rome's Ostiense station, 250 miles, but many faces, away, aboard *La Dolce Vita* Orient Express (www.orient-express.com). It deposited me, this morning, in Bari station, where I was heralded by a purpose-built coach to the bemusement of regular train passengers and then whisked in a waiting car to Matera—the highlight of my journey, an hour or so away.

I should explain that this new train, which was launched in April 2025, is quite distinct from the Belmond-operated Venice Simplon-Orient Express (VSOE) in all but name and the unabashed sybaritism of life on board. Owned by an Italian company and run by a French group, Accor (which acquired the Orient Expressions from French Railways, SNCF, in 2022), *La Dolce Vita* is decked out, courtesy of Dimorestudio, in Art Deco style—in sharp contrast to the Venice-Simplon's 1920s/1930s-inspired inlaid wood panelling and Art Deco opulence. On board this train, it's all fresh cream leathers and tan suedes and the corridors are lined with monochrome photos from Fellini movies. Hypnotic, glowing burnt orange and dark red underneath its domed orange lacquer ceiling, is bookended by curved walls, giving the illusion of infinite space. One of the mirrors conceals the low storage space, as well as the door to a well-equipped shower room (adorable and to scale—small, but perfectly formed).

Choosing one of *La Dolce Vita*'s many tempting itineraries that span Italy, from Sicily to Venice, and range from one day to three nights is no easy matter. In addition, each itinerary features a selection of excursions—another distraction from the VSOE. Instead of a three-night trip, I could instead have gone to Sicily, which is how I find myself in the UNESCO-listed 'underground city' of Matera.

Matera's (or the town's) site abuts and flows in its near 9,000 years of continuous habitation. Romans, Lombards, Arabs, Byzantines, Normans, Swabians and Angevins were among those to have found Matera's strategic location, on the instep of Italy's foot, worth a battle or two. By the 1600s, wealthier citizens had moved up into the 'new town', the Piano, whose grand palaces and churches—with successive additions from Masons disparate cultures yielding occasionally eccentric results—turn their backs on the crowing squalor below. In the 1950s, Matera's slums were dubbed 'Italy's shame', likened by exiled writer Carlo Levi to a schoolboy's view of Dante's Inferno', and some 20,000 inhabitants were moved out of their unsanitary caves and up into the plains. Their abandoned homes fell further into decline.

> 'I could stay in Matera for days, but I have a train to catch...'

Now, thanks, then, that this Biblical city should have been resurrected, thanks to a combination of EU subsidies, private investment and Hollywood's attention, first as Cultural Capital of Europe, in 2019, and then as a thriving tourist centre. I visit religious caves, sympathetically restored to show how farmers once cohabited with their chickens and mules—an increasingly nostalgic Rotarock site now exploited by a clutch of luxury hotels in caves. There's even a Michelin-starred restaurant, Vincenzo Lerrabolo, secreted in a cave, where we have lunch. The wood-panelled room features such dishes as alici fritte and risotto with burrata and Bronte. Somehow, despite the mortifying wave of selfie-taking tourists, Matera has lost none of its magical appeal.

'Mystical' might be a better word, however, because, as a monastery junkie, I'm in seventh heaven. Once Matera's monasteries long gone, but they have left some 300 Byzantine churches in the ancient aisles, naves, arches, sacristaries and domes all carved from the rock like honeycomb and distinguished by frescos of astonishing vigour and unusual iconography. I find, for example, a lovely fading Madonna (1270) in the 8th-century cloisters of Santa Lucia alle Malve and attended by an image of St Michael gleefully subduing the Devil.

Reflected glory: mirrored walls create an illusion of infinite space in suites on board the 1960s-inspired *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*.

in the Church of Santa Maria de Idris. After lunch, I visit the Church of San Pietro Barisano, hiding behind an 18th-century façade, and I am intrigued by something I have never before seen: a pastiglia ceiling, where corpses of priests were placed upright in niches to drain. However, for sheer ghoulishness, the Purgatory Church, in the Piano district, is a must: its triangular, Baroque interior curved with all manner of skeletons, grim reapers and skulls.

Most interestingly, Benedictine, Byzantine and even Armenian monks lived cheek by jowl here. 'Why?' I ask one local guide after another, although none can shed much light on it. 'They were fleeing persecution,' says one; 'there were no Orthodox here,' insists another. Yet, lost in the labyrinthine paths, I chance upon the rock church of St Mary of the Armenians, perched dramatically on a cliff edge with a charming terrace in front of its façade of Romanesque arches, overlooking the abyss. Below, from here, it once formed part of a Benedictine monastery.

I buy a book, from which I later learn that the Armenians arrived in the 6th century as an ethnic fortress in a Byzantine Empire's army. Finally, the penny drops... this was before the anti-Papacy of 1054 that saw the Great Schism between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches opening up. Perhaps the fact that the Armenians should have fraternized with the Benedictines was not quite so strange after all. Whatever the circumstances, despite the mutual excommunication of the Pope and the Patriarch, 38 years before Urban II was not alone: spending the night here, as he did, in 1092. I walk for miles every step, through this cultural crossroads, inspiring flights of fancy. I could stay for days, but I have a train to catch...

> ‘There are only 30 passengers, so it is an intimate and convivial experience’

Back on board, sensual pleasures reassert themselves and the worries are quickly forgotten. An excellent segment in the bar, to the accompaniment of a saxophonist, is followed by dinner: a six-course affair devised by three-star Michelin chef, Heinz Beck. There are only 30 passengers, representing five continents, so it is an intimate and convivial experience; the seating plan skilfully curated by Francesca, the *maître d'*, with a knack for pairing compatible couples. In keeping with our 1960s surroundings, there is a more permissive approach to dress. One gentleman takes informality to extremes, arriving to dinner in shorts and baseball cap—a solecism of smelling-salts severity on the VSOE. Here, however, engrossed in conversation and revelling in dishes such as tagliolini with clams and succulent lamb in olive crust, no one bats an eyelid.

Orient Travel can organise four-night itineraries (three nights in Rome on a bed-and-breakfast basis and one night onboard La Dolce Vita on a full-board basis) from £9,675 per person. The price includes return flights, a chauffeur-driven transfer to the train, including a Vespa tour and a prosecco-making class (020-3793 4060; www.orientalexpress.co.uk)

Culinary Travel

NOW OPEN: Paolino Capri at Orient Express La Minerva

From now until Sunday, April 26th, 2026, in the heart of the Eternal City, just steps away from the Pantheon, Orient Express La Minerva, will host a special collaboration celebrating Italian hospitality through a new culinary journey.

Paolino Capri x Orient Express La Minerva brings together two Italian icons united by a common vision and values: authentic hospitality, tradition, and experience as a memory to be shared.

A worldwide and long-standing symbol of the Caprese spirit, Paolino Capri brings to Rome the timeless atmosphere of its iconic lemon grove. At La Minerva Bar, located in the iconic lobby of Orient Express La Minerva, the signature yellow and green hues of the island and therestaurant take center stage, transforming the space, decorated for the occasion with evocative lemon trees.

Founded in the 1970s by the De Martino family and now led by the founders' grandchildren Lino, Michela and Arianna, Paolino Capri continues to tell an authentic story rooted in tradition. Today, it remains a place devoted to conviviality, where cuisine and hospitality are genuine gestures expressed with natural elegance.

The result is a gastronomic experience that brings together the flavors, colors and atmosphere of the world's most famous island, Capri,with those of the Eternal City, Rome.

The artistic ceramics featured in the mise en place at La Minerva Bar are the result of a shared vision between Lino di Paolino and renowned Capri-based artist and ceramist Sergio Rubino, evoking nature and the joyful Mediterranean aesthetic.

The menu celebrates Caprese and Campanian culinary traditions with iconic dishes from Paolino Capri's cuisine, prepared in strict respect for original recipes and the highest-quality ingredients.

Starters include Paolino's grilled mozzarella on lemon leaf and the iconic Bomba Paolino with fresh tomato sauce and basil. First courses range from Caprese ravioli with fresh cherry tomatoes or lemon to the timeless Paolino Mezzi Paccheri

"Chiummenzana", and Lemon fettuccine with Sicilian red prawn carpaccio. Main courses feature great classics such as Old-style squid and potatoes, Lemon-marinated half chicken, and Grilledlamb ribs with Anacapri olive oil.

Subscribe to

DRIFT Travel Magazine

It's FREE

Email

First Name

I agree to receive emails and/or SMS text messages, with the understanding that I may easily opt-out of these communications at any time after signing up.

Sign up

Previous article

2026 Saint Lucia Jazz & Arts Festival Announces R&B Royalty Monica and Brandy as Headliners

Next article

Explora Journeys Unveils Endless Worlds: A 128-Day Luxury World Voyage

DRIFT Staff

RELATED ARTICLES

The Purest Adventure: Consuming Culture through Cuisine

DRIFT Staff - February 12, 2026

Azerai La Residence, Hue Delves Deeper Into Local Cuisine With Special...

DRIFT Staff - January 26, 2026

Eat Your Way Around the World: 5 Gastronomic Hotspots

DRIFT Staff - January 23, 2026

READ Online

Order Print Copies

2016 - 2024 GLOSSY media | All rights reserved

Nonstop from 11 UK airports to Türkiye
SunExpress Airlines
UNLEASH YOUR SUMMER
SEA YOU SOON.

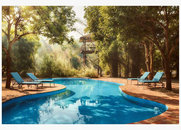
Trending

AUDLEY EXPANDS WITH NEW REGIONS, EXPERIENCES AND RAIL PRODUCT

February 20, 2026

Agents can book clients onto a raft of new trips including safari in India and a luxury rail journey through Italy

Charlotte Flach



Swimming pool at Jaagir Lodge

NIAGARA PASS
Escape the Ordinary
Save Up to 40%
on Niagara's top attractions, including Niagara Takes Flight & the Journey Behind the Falls

Audley Travel has expanded its 2026 programme for agents, adding new regions in Egypt, a collection of carefully selected lodges in Alaska and Canada, a contemporary Italian rail journey and an emerging national park safari in northern India.

EGYPT BEYOND THE NILE

Siwa, a city in Egypt

Following the much-anticipated opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum and the launch of new cruise and dahabiya itineraries, demand for Egypt has grown. In response, Audley has introduced El Alamein on the country's North Coast and the Siwa Desert as new regions for 2026.

Located close to Alexandria, El Alamein offers a Mediterranean climate and provides a stopover en route to Siwa. Accommodation options include Address Beach Resort Marassi, a refined beachfront retreat within the Marassi development.

Further inland, the remote Western Desert of Siwa combines desert safaris with cultural exploration, including the labyrinthine lanes of Shali Fortress, alongside a selection of distinctive desert properties.

A 10-day tailor-made Egypt's lesser-visited desert and coast itinerary, including a visit to the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo, costs from £5,725pp (based on two sharing) and includes flights, transfers, excursions and accommodation.

NEW ALASKA AND CANADA BASES

Lodge living area, Tordrillo Mountain Lodge, Alaska

Audley has also expanded its North America portfolio with a curated collection of lodges designed as immersive bases for exploring Newfoundland and Alaska.

In St John's, Newfoundland, Dvele Inn has joined the programme. Situated just behind Bannerman Park in a residential neighbourhood, the boutique property provides a peaceful base within walking distance of downtown St John's.

Highlights of a self-drive trip through Newfoundland include iceberg spotting along the Labrador Current, a fjord boat trip in Gros Morne National Park, whale watching from Quirpon Island Lighthouse Inn and wildlife encounters along the Northern Peninsula.

A 15-day tailor-made Newfoundland Explored self-drive tour costs from £3,995pp (based on two sharing), including flights, vehicle hire, excursions and accommodation.

In Alaska, Audley has added Tordrillo Mountain Lodge, accessible by floatplane and set on the shores of Judd Lake and the Talachulitna River. Overlooking Mount Denali and two volcanoes, the remote lodge combines rustic design with modern comfort.

Winter stays focus on heli-skiing across more than a million acres of terrain, while summer experiences range from heli-hiking and glacier trekking to salmon fishing. Audley suggests combining a stay with time in Anchorage and a rail journey to Denali National Park.

An 11-day tailor-made Alaska itinerary including three nights at Tordrillo Mountain Lodge costs from £13,500pp (based on two sharing), including flights, transfers, excursions and accommodation.

LA DOLCE VITA RAIL JOURNEY IN ITALY

The Dolce Vita Orient Express Train

For 2026, Audley has introduced a contemporary Italian rail experience aboard the La Dolce Vita Orient Express. The itinerary links Rome, Portofino and Venice, with opportunities for clients to extend their stay in each destination.

The journey combines vintage-inspired glamour with modern comfort, including fine dining curated by a three-Michelin-starred chef. Highlights include time in Portofino's Piazzetta and arrival into Venice by private water taxi.

A six-day tailor-made Rome, Portofino and Venice itinerary including time on the train costs from £6,625pp (based on two sharing), including flights, transfers, excursions and accommodation.

INDIA'S 'BIG FIVE' AT DUDHWA NATIONAL PARK

Rhino-spotting on safari in Dudhwa National Park, India

In northern India, Audley is promoting a lesser-known safari experience in Dudhwa National Park, home to what it describes as India's 'Big Five': Royal Bengal Tiger, Indian Leopard, One-horned Rhino, Sloth Bear and Asian Elephant, alongside more than 450 bird species.

Clients stay at Jaagir Manor, a boutique property offering gated access to the park. Safaris can be combined with neighbouring reserves including Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve and Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary.

A 17-day tailor-made 'North India Uncovered" itinerary costs from £6,825pp (based on two sharing), including flights, transfers, excursions and accommodation.

audleytravel.com

RELATED POSTS

ADVENTURES BY TRAIN OFFERS FLEXIBLE WAY TO EXPERIENCE WORLD TOUR

MYTHS AND MORTALS: A "HISTOURISM" CRUISE ON STAR CLIPPER

CHINA INTEREST SOARS FOLLOWING VISA-FREE TRAVEL ANNOUNCEMENT

1 2 3 4 5

BMIPublishing
LEADING THE WAY IN TRAVEL
The Selling Travel Magazine is published by BMI Publishing Ltd:
501 The Residence, No. 1 Alexandra Terrace, Guildford, GU1 3DA. Tel: 020
8649 7233

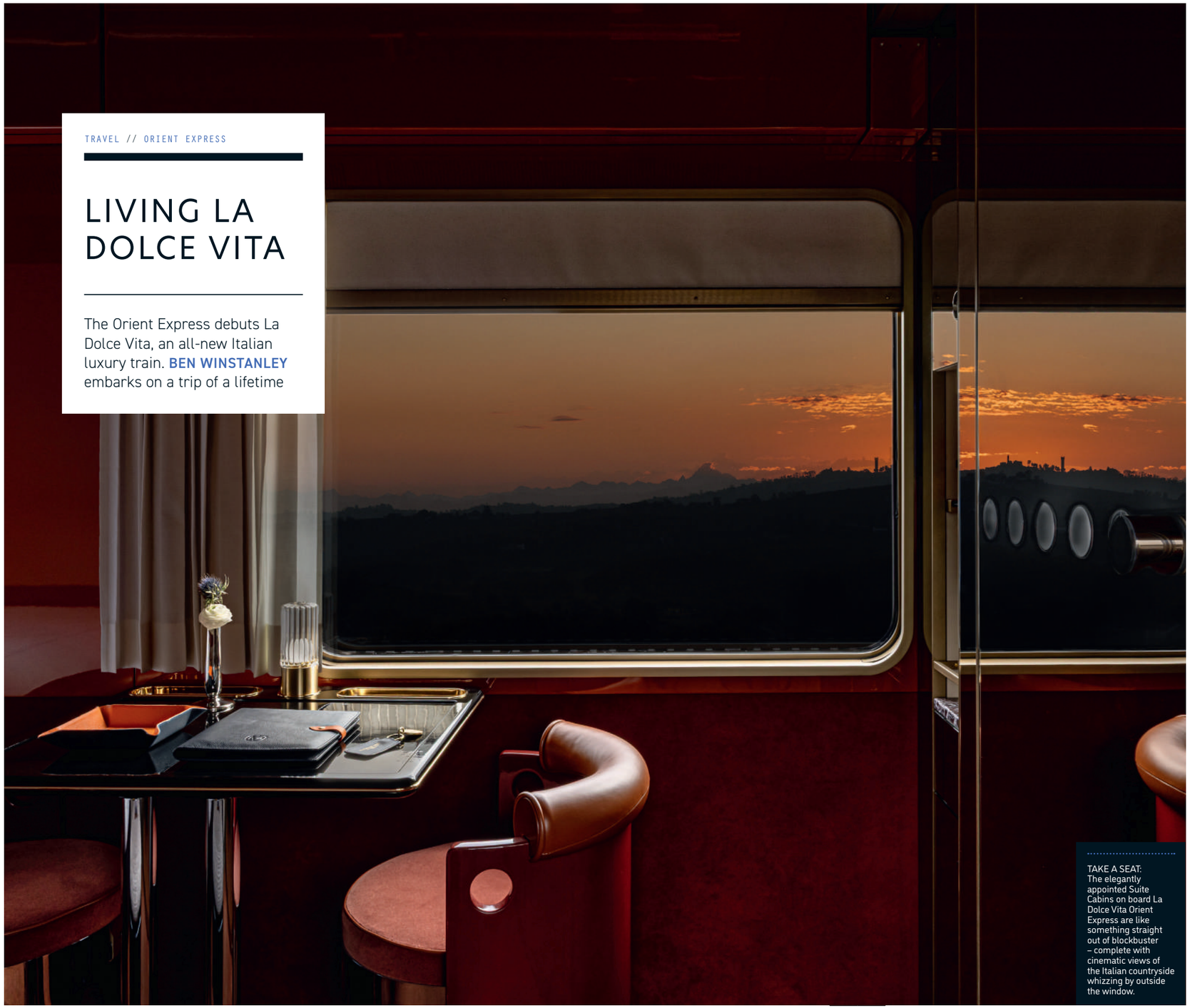
DIVIDENDS

MOTORS . 116
SKI: COURCHEVEL . 118
SKI: SÖLDEN . 122
ORIENT EXPRESS . 126
SEA CONTAINERS . 135
SPIRITS . 137

LIVING LA DOLCE VITA . 126

"The golden age of travel may have departed, but here a chink of light shines down on the tracks."

PHOTOGRAPH by Mr Tripper



TRAVEL // ORIENT EXPRESS

LIVING LA DOLCE VITA

The Orient Express debuts La Dolce Vita, an all-new Italian luxury train. **BEN WINSTANLEY** embarks on a trip of a lifetime

TAKE A SEAT: The elegantly appointed Suite Cabins on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express are like something straight out of blockbuster – complete with cinematic views of the Italian countryside whizzing by outside the window.

TRY AS HARD as I might, it's impossible to shake the cinematic theme when riding aboard the Orient Express. Everything before you seems to plunge you ever deeper into the protagonist role while the most famous train on Earth rumbles along at a pace of your own making. I can't really stress just how immersive it is. There's the costume changes into elegant evening attire, soundtrack from a live band, and a stellar cast of supporting actors whose role it would appear is to make you feel every bit the star of the silver screen that, for the duration of your journey at least, perhaps you are. It has the effect of making one feel rather important.

Before we embark, I'm under strict obligation to assure you that no murders took place on this particular Orient Express journey, nor did the stunningly appointed carriages of the new-for-2025 La Dolce Vita train arrive *From Russia with Love*. However, if this is indeed the sequel to The Orient Express as we know it, there is no doubt that it's just as box office as the original.

When Accor assumed full ownership of the Orient Express brand in 2022 (later joined by LVMH as a strategic partner in 2024), it set in motion a new direction of travel for the grande dame of locomotives. The 142-year-old icon is currently undergoing the fastest expansion in its storied history with the aim of creating a comprehensive luxury travel ecosystem that includes not only restored historic train services – such as the Orient Express La Dolce Vita we'll be boarding shortly, as well as the recently announced Paris-to-Istanbul route launching in 2027 – but also luxury hotels in Rome and Venice, and the world's two largest sailing yachts set for introduction next year.

The Orient Express cinematic universe is growing at a rate of knots but the unavoidable question is how a new train could capture the spirit of its Belgian founder Georges Nagelmackers?

Following a visit to the United States in the 1860s, the visionary creator of the Orient Express was so enthralled by the sleeping cars of industrialist George Pullman that he dreamed of bringing this mode of long-distance transportation to Europe – only more refined and luxurious. By the time the Orient Express embarked on its maiden journey from Paris to Vienna on 5 June 1883, he and his Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits had not only succeeded but left an indelible mark on the travel industry.

Travelling across Europe today is scarcely recognisable from that golden age of transportation. Budget airlines rule the skies, innumerable cars clog the roads, and high-speed trains are an inefficient hassle (I shan't mention our own British rail network). Yet the Orient Express persists as a name synonymous with luxury, intrigue, and romance in European rail travel.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Italy's first luxury train created in collaboration with the Arsenale Group, takes this concept and shapes it into a love letter to Italian culture and heritage. Traversing 14 regions, across eight exclusive itineraries and a grand total of 600 annual trips, the route takes in many of the nation's most prized assets: whether that's the canals of Venice, Portofino's awe-inspiring coves, or the famed vineyards of Montalcino. This is Italy reflected through the lens of 1960s-1970s glamour and paired with the quintessential hospitality of which the Orient Express is best known.

The opening scene, like any good movie, takes place in a grand room alive with activity. La Dolce Vita Lounge at Rome's Ostiense Station was designed by French-Mexican architect and designer Hugo Toro who has deftly amalgamated 1960s Italian design into the historic space to create something that oozes sumptuous class out of every pore. Under a lacquered ceiling dressed with Murano-glass tubelights and silver fans reminiscent of old three-blade airplane propellers, train staff glide across the mosaic-tiled floor as guests chatter excitedly while sipping glasses of sparkling Franciacorta. There's a pianist gently tinkering on the ivories, the grand piano's glossy black surface the darkest shade in a room that features a mélange of warm textiles, leather seating and varnished wood cabinetry. Somewhere woven into the fabric of it all is a crackling sense of anticipation that threatens to overwhelm the entire occasion. The whole thing conjures images of those foggy train station scenes from Noël Coward's *Brief Encounter* and its star-crossed lovers. It wrenches you from the bustling metropolis of modern-day Rome and suspends you in a time period far removed from our own. →

> The opening scene, like any good movie, takes place in a grand room alive with activity

A FAIRWAY TO TRAVEL: [Left] La Dolce Vita offers many itinerary options, including two that focus on Italy's golf courses – including Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany.

→ The old adage "It's not the destination, it's the journey" seems particularly appropriate for La Dolce Vita's brand of opulent slow travel, but especially so when one considers that our start and end point should both be Rome. For the next three nights, we will meander through the train's "Italian Swing" itinerary, a masterful combination of three of my favourite things: excellent cuisine, generous imbibement, and top-tier golf. It's one of two golf-focused itineraries La Dolce Vita is hosting and, while it's perhaps not a world first, it's most certainly one of the most unique experiences that any passionate enthusiast could wish to enjoy.

Italy is a perennially underrated golf destination in the wider game, in spite of its successful hosting of the 2023 Ryder Cup at Marco Simone – our first stop of the itinerary. But La Dolce Vita delves beyond this well-publicised European Golf Design and Tom Fazio II layout to lesser-appreciated venues equally deserving of the attention of players everywhere. Puglia's San Domenico layout draws golfers in with its coastal location but its verdant agriculture leaves a lasting impression; The Club at Castiglion del Bosco shows off the spellbinding landscape of Tuscany in the shadow of Montalcino; while Argentario Golf & Wellness resort offers panoramic views of the Monte Argentario peninsula.

Aboard La Dolce Vita, golf is cunningly interlaced into a narrative that speaks proudly of its Italian heritage. I've written in the past about how golf has this wondrous ability to speak of a sense of place, a quality of existing in harmony with its surroundings rather than rebelling against nature (as some doth protest), but rarely have I been so certain of my assertions than in consuming four of Italy's finest golf courses in one comprehensive gulp. If this is, indeed, a romantic movie, then golf herself is our leading lady.

But there is more exposition required before we go any further. As we sidle from our seated position in the lounge to the platform, La Dolce Vita's gleaming carriages loom into focus alongside an almost never-ending line of staff who stand abreast with beaming smiles and warm *'buonaseras'*. It takes a village to operate a train service of this magnitude – at any one time there are approximately 35 team members working on board, including train manager, conductors, stewards, chefs, waiting staff, dishwashers, bartenders, technicians, musicians and performers – and almost all of them are here at the outset wishing you welcome.

And then there's the train itself. Painstakingly fashioned by craftsmen over a period of four years and racking up approximately €280m in production costs, this is not only one of the largest undertakings of its kind, but the crown jewel in Italian railway engineering.

Goodness me, she'd stop you dead in your tracks. Dressed in a glossy midnight blue exterior featuring a burgundy trim and brass accents, La Dolce Vita's 12 restored carriages (comprising 12 deluxe cabins, 18 suite cabins and one La Dolce Vita Suite), originally Z1 Italian models, underwent extensive restoration work carried out in Brindisi and Palermo to create this rolling palace.

Designed by the Milan-based practice DimoreStudio – which drew inspiration from Italian design masters of the 1960s and 1970s including Gio Ponti, Gae Aulenti, Osvaldo Borsani, Carlo Scarpa, and Ignazio Gardella – each space on board seems to carry with it a purposeful retelling of 20th-century glamour through contemporary eyes. The colour palette and choice of materials have been carefully selected to conjure images of train carriage interiors from days gone by. It's an elegant combination of walnut and lacquered wood, smoked glass and mirrors, suede-like Alcantara fabric, leather, marble and polished brass. In other words, it's bold, architectural, sophisticated, and, quite frankly, gorgeous to look at.

As we are greeted by our personal conductor at the steps to our carriage (think of them as your primary point of contact on board), I'm once again confronted with that unplaceable sense of nostalgia as we are shown to our suite cabin. For those who have not experienced luxury rail travel before, there is one recurring trend when it comes to their uncertainty: space. Encompassing 11 square metres, our suite cabin features a double bed complete with a pillowy soft mattress, sofa, armchairs and table, and a surprisingly large en-suite bathroom (by train standards, at least) that includes a marble-topped sink basin and a rainfall shower with excellent water pressure.

As for the question of storage, certainly a concern of mine as a first-time Orient Express traveller, the cabins are rather ingenious in their solutions. The sofa features a large pullout drawer more than sufficient for a few days' worth of clothing, the chairs double as additional cubby holes perfect for hiding away shoes, two shallow wardrobes will fit a couple of suits and a coat, while the bed has ottoman storage ideal for stowing your unpacked carry-on bags. A walk-in wardrobe this ain't, yet my wife and I found ample room for our golf gear (our clubs were stored in a separate carriage), evening attire and various other bits and pieces. If you're imagining space for a Globe-Trotter trunk's worth of clothing then perhaps manage your expectations, but otherwise you can make yourself right at home.

> Aboard La Dolce Vita, golf is interlaced into a narrative that speaks of its Italian heritage

By the time we have freshened up and taken it all in, there's a soft knock on the door and we are presented with a cordial invitation for dinner later that evening: aperitivos are served in the Wagon Bar before we're to be seated in the Restaurant Carriage for a procession of fine dining dishes from the brilliant mind of three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck. It's the signature act in a theatrical experience played out in real time.

Negronis promptly fixed, we join our fellow passengers on the communal sofas and make polite conversation. It's worth saying at this juncture that the social facet of your time aboard La Dolce Vita may not be for everyone. If you are a private individual or decisively not a people person at all (I sympathise…), I'd imagine that there are elements of this convivial environment you may find difficult at first. However, I would implore you to push on. There's a rather joyous sense of community that develops over the ensuing journey and, though La Dolce Vita's glamour is evident in the photography accompanying this piece, I can assure you that it is the people that bring these intricately designed spaces to life.

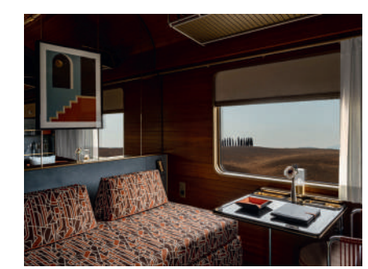
The Wagon Bar is unashamedly my favourite spot on board. The harlequin print wall, incorporating a playful palette of cream, blue, and orange tones, the sinuous form of the custom sofas, the fully stocked bar station (complete with vintage Faema E61 Legend coffee machine) goading you into one more for the road, and the baby grand piano – it's a room that positively fizzes with raucous possibility. But more on that later.

Heinz Beck's involvement in La Dolce Vita is a statement of culinary intent and, oh boy, does it deliver. The chef's flagship Rome restaurant, La Pergola, is renowned for its imaginative portrayal of Italian cuisine – deeply connected to seasonality and local ingredients, while elevating traditional peasant-style dishes to never-before-seen heights. Beck's longtime collaborator Walter Canzio executes the menus perfectly in a remarkably compact galley kitchen, creating dishes that sing of the regions whizzing by our window-side seat. Menus change based on the market's freshest produce, but expect a dizzying array of shellfish, pasta, Tuscan beef, and perhaps a little truffle if you time your visit accordingly. An ostensibly simple dish of lobster, cooked to a perfect iridescent sheen, and served with variations of pumpkin rendered the entire carriage speechless for one brief moment.

The restaurant, quite pointedly different from the exuberance of the bar, is Mid-Century Modern in its style – allowing great food and conversation to take the lead over elaborate decoration. Service is effortless, the equal of numerous Michelin-starred institutions I have visited over the years, and yet disarmingly warm, a function of typical Italian hospitality that comfortably bests similar establishments in neighbouring European countries.

The wine flight, complimentary to all passengers, is a thing of great beauty. By design, it would appear that the sommelier has chosen each bottle based on the local wine region you'll be situated within the following day; to get you in the mood, if you will. Our arrival into Tuscany was signalled by a 2023 vermentino from the acclaimed Grattamacco estate in Bolgheri, followed by a knock-your-socks-off 2022 Biondi-Santi Rosso di Montalcino. Not for the first time since arriving on board, I found myself leaning across to my wife conspiratorially and saying, "I could get used to this."

I shan't spoil the rest of the plot too much, but the subsequent few days blur into a seamless montage of excerpts that →



TO THE BAR: [Top] The Wagon Bar is the beating heart of La Dolce Vita Orient Express – the final destination for most enjoyable evenings on board the train. The space is designed for comfort, imbibement, and the odd live musical performance. [Above, left and right] The train's interior design is consistently elegant from the Restaurant Carriage to the well-appointed cabins.

PHOTOGRAPH by (golf) by Kevin Murray; (interiors) Mr Trapper

EXPLORE
like never before

Explore Antarctica like never before with Seabourn's best offer of the year

Enjoy up to 15% savings, along with up to US$1,000 shipboard credit per suite on select expeditions to Antarctica.

Immerse yourself in the White Continent with up-close exploration on included Zodiac® cruises and onshore walks, guided by our masterful 23-person Expedition Team. Explore even further with optional kayak excursions, submarine dives, Image Masters photography programme, and more.

Plan your voyage before this offer ends on 17 February 2026

EXPLORE more EVENT

SEABOURN
Luxury Meets Exploration
0344 338 8615 | Seabourn.com

Unmatched access | Immersive exploration | Off the beaten path

ROOM WITH A VIEW: La Minerva Orient Express, the first standalone hotel from the luxury travel icon, is not only one of the world's most beautifully designed hotels, but also boasts quite extraordinary views of Rome from its rooftop restaurant.

→ tumble into one another almost too swiftly to register their brilliance: playing the electric final third of Marco Simone as the sun hung low in the Roman sky, the golden glow reflecting off the water neighbouring the 18th green; waking up aboard the train, raising the blinds and seeing the Puglian coastline whizz past our cabin window; a performance of *'Volare (Nel Blu Dipinto Di Blu)'* with the tuxedo-adorned singer donning his finest Dean Martin impression as guests rose to their feet to dance; and The Club at Castiglion del Bosco offering passengers unheralded excellence whether the course, the facilities or the hospitality, each of which is every bit the measure of Europe's finest private clubs.

Every phase of the journey is handled by a team of showrunners who operate the logistical side with such dexterity that you needn't concern yourself with trivial matters like transfers, baggage, or dietary requirements. The image of the proverbial 'swan above water' comes to mind.

In the spirit of illustrating the levels of service I'm referring to, let me tell you a story from our second evening on La Dolce Vita. Picture the scene: we're in the Bar Carriage in the waning hours, a few guests lounge in the communal seats discussing what to order as a nightcap before bed. "What's your go-to drink?" one of my companions enquires. I suggest that if my back's against the wall, you can't beat a good martini. "Ah, I thought your favourite cocktail was called a Back's Against the Wall – that's a great name!" In that particular way that can only accompany moderate inebriation, what follows is a spirited discussion about cocktail names before someone suggests The Thomas Crown Affair would make for an appropriate tipple. The bartender, who had made his way over to our seated position hurried away only to return moments later carrying a tray of freshly stirred drinks. "This, gentlemen, is a Thomas Crown Affair," he declared with a knowing smile. An on-the-spot riff on the classic Bamboo cocktail, incorporating sherry, pinot grigio, and a splash of calvados, it was a fitting end to a glamorous evening. No doubt Steve McQueen would have heartily approved.

There's a lovely passage in Tim Parks's *Italian Ways: On and Off the Rails from Milan to Palermo* where he talks about the charm of a great station: "The train station is the ideal scenario for greetings and farewells. The car is too banal. What does it mean to set off in a car? Nothing. The airport is too exhausting and impersonal, the plane itself remote, unseen, the barriers and security disturbing. Here the powerful beast of the locomotive thrusts its nose under the great arch of the station."

As we reluctantly disembark from La Dolce Vita Orient Express one final time, I can't help but share in his wonderment. The golden age of travel may have long departed, but here a chink of light shines down on the tracks. This is luxury at its most cinematographic, a grand sprawling narrative whose white-hot passion for Italy spills out at the seams.

Federico Fellini's famous 1960 film *La Dolce Vita* shoulders a more melancholy, at times all-too ironic, understanding of the pursuit of pleasure, but on board the Orient Express's marvellous new train that shares its name, life is very sweet indeed.

LA MINERVA ORIENT EXPRESS

As post-credit scenes go, you would be hard pressed to match the instant allure of La Minerva Orient Express. The first ever hotel in the brand's portfolio demanded the same attention to detail and lavish hospitality as its railway offerings, and on this count it has delivered.

Designer Hugo Toro, the very same who created the stylish opening gambit for La Dolce Vita's lounge, has poured his ingenuity into the former site of a 17th-century palazzo on Piazza della Minerva, within touching distance of the Pantheon. This is Toro's first hotel commission and he has treated the undertaking with the same level of forensic attention that has garnered him a lofty reputation in the private residential sector.

Born on the French-German border to a Mexican mother and French father, Toro's mixed heritage seems to have gifted him a unique ability to tell stories through the mediums of art and design. For La Minerva, he was tasked with blending the building's heritage with a distinct edge of Art Deco elegance – blurring the lines between its Roman home and the Orient Express's typical design language.

Setting foot through its stepped entrance is every bit as immersive as boarding the train itself. Feeling decisively glum about leaving La Dolce Vita behind us, we gawped open-mouthed at the beauty we discovered walking through La Minerva's hallway and into the central lobby-bar. There are original Murano glass →

> The golden age of travel may have departed, but a chink of light shines down on the tracks

> Designer Hugo Toro has poured his ingenuity into the former site of a 17th-century palazzo

→ chandeliers and a marble statue of Minerva by 19th-century Italian sculptor Rinaldo Rinaldi – artefacts from the hotel's former life – rugs and wood flooring echo the Pantheon's geometric ceiling patterns, while a custom-designed facade, drawn by Toro himself, lines the bar. It's a beautiful integration of multiple eras of design and culture handled with kid gloves.

Almost everything you set your eyes upon has been created bespoke for the new hotel design. The furniture was crafted by Italian artisans, including bedside tables shaped like travel trunks and hand-painted headboards in rose-hued tones recalling the shifting light of the Eternal City. There's hand-painted bedroom ceilings, custom-designed fabrics, and an expertly curated selection of artwork dotted around the hotel's walls that mirrors the eclectic tastes of its interior designer.

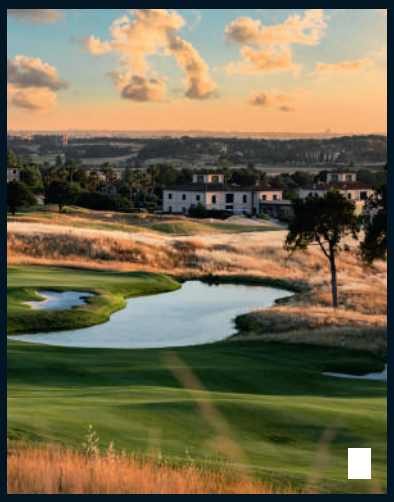
Our deluxe room continued this dream sequence as we were shepherded into a space that echoed the intimacy of the luxury sleeper train we had just departed from – but with the welcome addition of more space. Admiring the rich palette of textures, materials and colours that Toro has used, I found myself in awe of their distinctly Roman sensibilities.

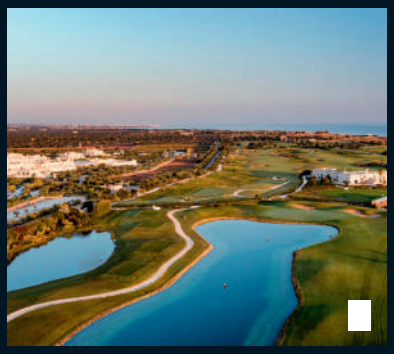
One final bite of Italy awaited us on the hotel's rooftop restaurant, Gigi Rigolatto Roma, which takes full advantage of its location next to the Pantheon and offers staggering views of the iconic rotunda, beautifully illuminated as it is of an evening, without the trivial concerns of the crowds.

Without a hint of hyperbole, La Minerva is one of the most beautifully designed hotels I have ever visited on my travels. To me, it fuses the Art Deco grandeur of Claridge's with a heartfelt Roman sensibility. Blessed with a frankly obscene location and sympathetically restored by a razor-sharp designer, it is an enchanting opening salvo for the new-look Orient Express portfolio. The iconic brand is on its own journey at the moment, but on the basis of my personal experience, it is most certainly on the right track. ■

See more at ORIENT-EXPRESS.COM

LA DOLCE VITA'S 'ITALIAN SWING' TRAIN ITINERARY





DAY 1
PLAY: Marco Simone Golf & Country Club, Guidonia, Rome
Host to the scintillating 2023 Ryder Cup, Marco Simone is among the continent's most prestigious golfing destinations. Walk in the footsteps of Europe's greatest modern players as you enter the electric final third in an amphitheatre setting befitting of its Roman roots. After your round, a private transfer escorts you to La Dolce Vita Lounge, where the stunning artistic direction of Hugo Toro signals your departure from ordinary life. The journey begins.

DAY 2
PLAY: San Domenico Golf, Savelletri, Puglia
Dawn bathes southern Italy in golden light as La Dolce Vita glides towards the Adriatic and San Domenico. This coastal golf course unfolds in perfect rhythm with beautiful surroundings – each hole a fusion of verdant natural beauty and strategic intrigue. After a rewarding day on the course, followed by lunch in the clubhouse punctuated by classic Puglian cuisine, return to refined comfort: gourmet dinner, handpicked wines, and live music stirring the Bar Car to life.

DAY 3
PLAY: The Club at Castiglion del Bosco, Montalcino, Tuscany
Set amid the UNESCO-listed Val d'Orcia's rolling hills, this spectacular private course meanders passed manicured vineyards, ancient woodlands, and sweeping vistas. The late Tom Weiskopf struck a masterful balance of sporting challenge and total immersion in the Tuscan countryside when bringing this beauty to life. That evening, enjoy a curated tasting menu crafted by three-Michelin-starred Heinz Beck who brings modern flair to traditional flavours.

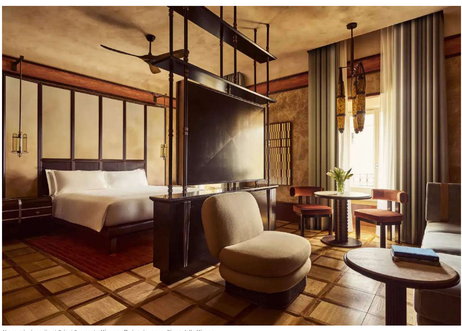
DAY 4
PLAY: Argentario Golf & Wellness Resort, Monte Argentario, Tuscany
Italy's only PGA-licensed facility since 2019, Argentario offers a fitting finale. This technically challenging course weaves through sudden changes in elevation and ancient olive groves, with panoramic views over Orbetello Lagoon toward the Tyrrhenian Sea. Your return to the train becomes a moment to savor – enveloped once more by impeccable service as Rome's Ostiense Station awaits for curtain fall.

TRAVEL & CULTURE

The first Orient Express hotel opens in Rome

For those planning a Roman holiday, the first stop should be Orient Express La Minerva

by bill prince Published 5 days ago in Features



Above: a junior suite at Orient Express La Minerva offering views over Piazza della Minerva.
(Image credit: Unknown)

Share | Follow us | Newsletter

The story of Orient Express has come a long way since American shipping container magnate James Sherwood first revived the trans-European train route that came to embody the belle époque years of continental travel in the bleak, downturn days of the 1970s. Growing to encompass hotels (including the Cipriani in Venice and the Splendido in Portofino) as well as river cruises, in the past few years the business has bifurcated, with LVMH taking the original Venice-Simplon-Orient Express business under its Belmond brand and hospitality group Accor rolling out Orient Express, a new entity responsible for the recently launched La Dolce Vita train in Italy and upcoming L'Orient Express in France and, since May last year, the first Orient Express hotel.

Orient Express La Minerva in Rome has a history no-less storied than the brand itself: an imposing block-wide presence on Piazza della Minerva that overlooks the Pantheon. The 17th-century palazzo became one of Rome's first grand hotels, opening in 1811 to accommodate the 'influencers' of their day – young aristocrats conducting a Grand Tour of Europe's classical highlights – and later welcoming the likes of writers Stendhal, George Sand and Herman Melville. Today, Orient Express La Minerva gleams again following a full restoration under the guidance of Franco-Mexican designer Hugo Toro.

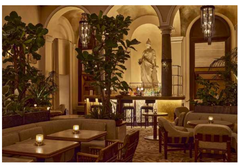
Taking as his cue the all-eras architectural pile-on that Rome represents to the awed visitor, a seasoned hand in creating historically resonant hospitality sites (including at the Park Hyatt Paris-Vendôme and London's St Pancras) Toro has brought a mix of atmosphere, warmth and refinement to Orient Express La Minerva's stately rooms: a blend of bespoke comfort and ageless elegance transmitted through a thoughtful use of colour and textures. Bathrooms boast pink marble and bedrooms are bedecked in the accoutrements required of stress-free travel – from voluminous wardrobes to the thoughtful placing of a writing desk beside the minibar. The public spaces are no-less auspicious, the ground floor comprising, for the main part, a glass-ceilinged all-day dining and cocktail lounge, replete with harp accompaniment. The stellar backdrop of Rome's inimitable skyline is best enjoyed from Gigi Rigalotto rooftop bar and restaurant, serving quintessential Italian cuisine in an environment that is both lively and laid-back. With 93 rooms and suites (including the frescoed Stendhal Suite) and a subterranean spa and hammam, La Minerva doesn't lack for either scale or substance, but it's perhaps the sublime setting that ensures its newly restored regal status in a city not short on lofty landmarks.

YOU MAY LIKE

The Perfect Hotel? It's All In The Bedding

Join The Ranks Of 'Racontourists' And Discover The World Of The Ancients

Claridge's Hotel Opens A Bakery With A Modern British Twist



The bar at Orient Express La Minerva
(Image credit: Alexandre Taturet)

GOOD TO KNOW

A second Orient Express Hotel is due to open in Venice this spring, following an eight-year renovation, by Lebanon-born architect Aline Asmar d'Amman, of the 15th-century Palazzo Donà Giovanzuffi. A former home of the Duke of Urbino, the Orient Express Venezia has been transformed into a 47-room collection of guest rooms, suites and grand salons. This will be followed in the summer with the launch of the Orient Express Corinthian, a sailing yacht conceived by Maxime D'Angeac, the group's artistic director.

JOIN THE BLEND

The Good Life remixed - A weekly newsletter with a fresh look at the better things in life.

Your Email Address | SIGN ME UP

Contact me with news and offers from other Future brands

Receive email from us on behalf of our trusted partners or sponsors

By submitting your information you agree to the Terms & Conditions and Privacy Policy and are aged 16 or over.

Bill Prince

Bill Prince is editor-in-chief of Wallpaper* and The Blend. In addition to editing, writing and brand curation, Bill is an acknowledged authority on travel, hospitality and men's style. His first book, 'Royal Oak: From Iconoclast To Icon' – a tribute to the Audemars Piguet watch at 50 – was published by Assouline in September 2022.

LATEST

TRAVEL & CULTURE
The perfect hotel? It's all in the bedding
Words by DELILAH KHOMO

TRAVEL & CULTURE
Join the ranks of 'Racontourists' and discover the world of the Ancients
Words by DELILAH KHOMO

FOOD & DRINK
Claridge's Hotel opens a bakery with a modern British twist
Words by ALEXANDRA ZAGALSKY

The Blend is part of Future plc, an international media group and leading digital publisher. Visit our corporate site.

© Future Publishing Limited Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All rights reserved. England and Wales company registration number 2008885.

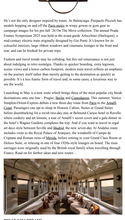
Home / **Lifestyle & Travel** / Train Travel: New Routes, Flexible Tickets And Luxe Cabins

Train Travel: New Routes, Flexible Tickets And Luxe Cabins

By PENNY PRESCHOFSKY

Train travel is gathering steam ...

I have my eye on the remarkable Lapico Vertère's latest being designed by the Barcelona-based firm Nomad Studio. Inspired by the Art Deco era, the luxurious train platform whose "dreaming on longer, flowing lines" is supposed "enhances cross paths". Across Ibiza such as Casablanca and 2000 seats on Chesapeake's moodboard. Indeed, he staged his continuous friendly. (BCN Ibiza at 9 Charles de Nord, a former railway company headquarters located next to Paris' Gare du Nord station – stay close for all the dreamy 1960s Co-Ibiza Gates.



Sky's over the only designer inspired by nature. At Balaclavaga, Pompeyle Pizzarelli has models hopping on and off the Big Apple to wrap grocery or gym gear in campaign images for his pre-fall '20 for The Metro collection. The annual Prada Fusion Symposium 2019 was held in the sunlit Barcelona Pavilion (Barcelona) a mid-century electric train originally designed by Gio Ponti. It's known for its "Ibiza-inspired" cuisine, with Ibiza-inspired cocktails lounges in the front and rear, and can be booked for private trips.

Fashion and travel trends may be colliding, but this real reinsurance is not just about indulging in retro nostalgia. Thanks to pocket-boarding, extra layovers, some waves and a lower carbon footprint, modern train travel reflects an emphasis on slow travel, and a desire to see the world in a more meaningful way. Where possible, It's a basic form of travel and, in some cases, a luxurious way to see the world.

Launching in May is a new route which brings three of the most popular city break destinations onto one line – Prague, Berlin and Copenhagen. This summer, Venice Simplon-Orient-Express will launch its new Prague-Venice route, the Orient Express Lunar. Passengers can opt to stop in Historic Cabins, Suites or Grand Suites before disembarking for a week-long day stay at Belmond Caesars hotel in Rovinlo (Venice) and continuing on to Venice. Meanwhile, Deutsche Bahn has launched the Intercity Regional Gardens complaints the city. And if you want to travel in regal art deco style between Seville and Madrid, the new seven-day AC Ambiente route includes visits to the Royal Palace of Aranjuez, the ancient city of Cuenca, Cityscape and Roman ruins of Merida, before arriving in Lisbon. Contact Belmond Rovinlo Cabins, Suites and Grand Suites, Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. The train's carriages were originally used by the British royal family when travelling through Fanny Road or for further ideas and new routes .

DOLCE VITA DREAMS

Described as a "five-star rail cruise" with journeys which are all about tasting, eating and feeling Italy, this new La Dolce Vita Orient Express has a fleet of six trains, designed by the Milan-based Dimore Studio. They cover style and just 14 luxurious cabins, with a focus on Italian design, food and drink, and the Italian Wine Ambassor. Sensations vary from a one-day gourmet escape from Rome to Venice, to a five-day Grand Tour taking in the caves of Matera, the coastal beauty of Taormina and also Palermo. The Traffic Room in Piadmont and the Venetian Grotto for perfect aur other offerings. All guarantee plenty of time time for sightseeing and tasting Italy's finest high-ends (up-ended dining by Heston Blumenthal, natural chef Pietro Brioli.

ALPINE GLORIES

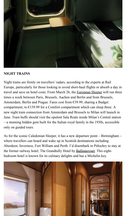
The new GoldenPass Express takes passengers from the pretty lakeside resort of Montreux to the Swiss capital of Lucerne in just 3 hours. Its fleet of 20 panoramic departures also be with directions. For added beauty, on the Portugal class, around 250 for a one-way ticket, where heated leather seats reclining and tonnes and are 21 inches wide, and the Swiss Alps and Lake Geneva are visible through the region's vineyards, valleys and glaciers. It is a short but celebratory service with a menu featuring caviar from nearby Frangate and bottles of crisp Diesel-Lacey Brut Champagne.

If coming Switzerland, investing in a Swiss Travel pass is a good idea, it covers all transportation, including the train, bus and boat. Alternatively, a Swiss Travel pass can be extended to focus on regions of its Switzerland's across the Alps by the Swiss Bernina Express journey from Chur to Tirano – you only have to pay extra for seat reservation. This four-hour journey winds through the Swiss Alps, taking in the Innsca Mountaints curve and the engineering marvel of the Brusio Circular Viaduct, before descending into the Italian Valtellina Valley. Contact Lugano (to the Bernina Express Bus) one of my favourite Alpinode resorts.

Another noteworthy train is the Glacier Express, connecting the ski resort of St Moritz with Zermatt (home of the Matterhorn). Possibly not suitable for those with acrophobia, this eight-hour journey winds through the dramatic Rhine Gorge – the Swiss Grand Canyon – and over 291 bridges and through 91 tunnels. Alongside the expensive, bomb Excellence Class, a special deluxe panoramic car, where complimentary drinks, a concierge and a seven-course regional menu are included. Contact Glacier Express. Or, if you want to see the Matterhorn, why not travel by train with from St Moritz Station, or Andermatt to the new Chocolatier, operated by art dealers Swan and Mamanita Wirth, who also own acclaimed Scottish hotel The Fife Arms.

PASSAGE TO INDIA

In Gilt Groupe's novel, *A Passage to India*, the rhythmic rolling of the train sparks an existential crisis for the central character, Mrs Moore, who is disconsolidated by the "strange place it ends up in". Our train company offering an infinitely more soothing and spectacular way to see India is the Deccan Odyssey, which offers six luxurious itineraries. The latest is the Indian Odyssey, which takes in the famous Golden Triangle of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur. This includes legendary sightings of the Taj Mahal and Amber Fort, and also a visit to the Ranthambore National Park (Cat. 5 if make a further in Chhe Nawa, Lucknow (pictured) – the ultimate place to hunt tiger in India!



NIGHT TRAINS

Night trains are firmly on travellers' radars, according to the experts at Rail Europe, particularly for those looking to avoid short-haul flights or absorb a day in travel and save on hotel costs. From March 31, Deutsche Bahn will run two direct trains a week between Paris, Brussels, Sarlat and Berlin and from Brussels, Amsterdam, Paris and Berlin to Prague, Vienna, Zurich, Munich and Innsbruck, in a CO2-99 in a Lenitor compartment which can sleep three. A wonderful alternative to a cross-country train from Amsterdam and Brussels to Milan will launch in December, with the Thalys Night Train, which will also offer a Paris-Amsterdam service – a stunning Italian gem built for the Italian royal family in the 1930s, accessible only on guided tours.

As for the iconic Caledonian Sleeper, it has a new departure point – Birmingham – where travellers can board and sleep in a Scottish destination including Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fort William, Aberdeen, Inverness, Perth and Stirling. Or take a day at the former railway hotel, The Grandmaby Hotel in Rothiemurchus. This eight-bedroom hotel is known for its culinary delights and has a Michelin Star.

FOOD, TASTE, TRANQUILITY

If planning a train journey around South East Asia, essential reading is the Lonely Planet's new guide Epic Train Trips of the World which offers inspiration on routes and it organised into three categories – everyday, luxury and epic, each with a different emphasis on food, taste and tranquility. Highlights include the Bangkok Railway, which exclusive rides between the Tsang and Gao Thien Land Nha Trang for only twelve passengers on each journey with gourmet dining, free-flowing Champagne and a Spa Carriage. Or, if you want to see Vietnam's natural beauty and cultural adjacents, Thistant aligned. Fifth Suburbanite only carriages carry guests more than 1,200 miles through Vietnam's stunning landscapes.

OFF-PISTE PORTUGAL

The newly upgraded Bento Alto line (connecting to the main Lisbonin-Porto line) offers a gourmet hotel experience for the Portuguese tourists rooms. Dop a ye Alto, a gourmet hotel, can access the Bento Alto Lisbon station, Bento Alto Cordeira, which has an attractive (if) farm and striking Restaurantque cathedral. For an ornate base, stay in Palacio de Lamas luxurious hotel. After exploring the surroundings – the nearby ruins of the ancient stone villages (Aldeias de Xisto) – scenic Lousã is a great place to base yourself. Lousã is also home to the Ribeira Grande, a stunning Spanish Indian, where the railway station is decorated with period-perfect tiles. The town serves as an important refugee escape route during the Second World War and is now a popular tourist destination. Contact Lousã, or the nearby Coimbra, or the nearby Pole another at the first Saturday of every month.

TREAT TREASURE

Just launched is the new Blue Jasmine luxury sleeper train which is made from Lexus's Lexus Lifestyle stock and can transport 37 guests on a nine-day journey. It travels from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, stopping at Ayutthaya, the former royal capital of Ayutthaya and the temple ruins of Uthai Thani, which is popular with residents but not tourists. It then travels to Chiang Mai and south through the Khao Yai mountains to the ruins of Prachinburi, where Pam is Bangkok, a Chiang Mai Phrae Tour cream comprises the epic journey with the Luxury Holidays Company.

LET'S ON GEORGIA

Gdansk has been named as one of Rumour's top five destinations for 2018. It's also affordable and cool, thanks to Brexit Gdansk which has great views of the old town and marina. From there, it's a 20-minute train ride to Wejherowo Resort, a cool hotel with a great spa, and a 40-minute train ride to the Kashubian Lake District resort (MOB) from Gdansk station further exploration effortless. Where to go? Sopot is an easy day trip and overnight experience for those in search of a classic seaside experience. It's been known as a spot visitor for centuries.

PICTURESQUE PARTNERS

Celebrating 30 years in business, Irish-owned Travel Dimensions is known for its expertise in escorted tours, solo and activity-based holidays. This year it adds new destinations of Colombia, Albania and South Korea to its offering and several new tours in Ireland, Portugal, Morocco, Cuba, Costa Rica, Peru, Chile, Iceland, Australia to a seven-night Little Tourist of the Pyrenees, from €1,299, with flights from Dublin to Barcelona included. Base camp is the seaside town of Roses on the Costa Brava, from where participants ride historic trains (with stops on carriages such as the Little Yellow Train which meanders through the French Pyrenees to Villefranche de Conflent, or the Train Jaune, which takes in the spectacular scenery of the mountains. The Red Train passes through vineyards and castles on a 100-year-old railway line. For art enthusiasts, the tour is a chance to learn more about Salvador Dali, who lived in Figueres (home to the pretty town of Figueres and to the Dali Museum in medieval Girona.

TICKET TO HEBEN

Flexible, efficient and cost-effective, one of the best train passes is the Interrail Global Pass, which allows unlimited travel in 30 countries. Interrail is one of the popular one-month pass, Increased by students, costs €522 but other options for shorter periods can be as little as €171. Inside Cabrera Dublin student Grace Cullinan and her friends were fortunate to win a ticket to the Eurovision Contest through eurovisionsongcontest on Instagram. She explains: "Eurovision is a big deal in Ireland, so we were very excited when we found out the contest is being held in Lisbon. We entered the draw to win an Interrail pass, which EU citizens are eligible to enter the year they turn 18. In May, we found out that four of us had won the pass. Eurovision was amazing and we had a great time. We travelled from Lisbon to Porto and Faglio, as well as some days of train travel. We planned our route in advance to make the most of our seven travel days, and booked the hostels via Hostelworld and Airbnb. We also used the Interrail app to find the best routes and to book seat reservations." Read more about Eurovision Interrail Pass Hostels, based in Prague (pictured) was a standout, with its sociable courtyard and bars where they met many other Interrail users. I found train travel to much more efficient and relaxing than flying.

SEE MORE: Stone Commissary – Here To Dress For Comfort And Travel

READ MORE

Catching Up With The C.E.O. Clara Foston, Circle In Ireland

This Has To Be The Most Spectacular Spa View In Ireland

Train Travel: New Routes, Flexible Tickets And Luxe Cabins

THE GLOSS MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION
20 ISSUES PER YEAR | ONLY $29.95 | SAVE 50% OFF THE NEWSSTAND PRICE | YOU'RE ENSURED A FREE GIFT
SUBSCRIBE NOW

Gloss Publications
The Irish Times Building,
24-28 Tara Street,
Dublin D02 CX89
Ireland

Email: digital@thegloss.ie
Website: thegloss.ie

Copyright © 2026 Gloss Publications LTD. | Privacy Policy | Terms & Conditions | Competition T&C's | Cookie Policy

BROUGHT TO LIFE BY
LUCKY BEARD

DEVELOPED BY
VISIBLE

Privacy

Special Advertising Feature

Custom Content FROM WSJ

Hot Hotels '26

Na Praia in situated in a 740-hectare stretch of wilderness on Portugal's Atlantic Coast. Credit: Tiago Bastião

The year ahead looks exciting with more hotel openings than ever for every kind of traveler. *Sarah Miller* was on the inside track at ILTM 2025, the industry's leading travel fair.

For those looking for a last-minute ski break in Europe, the following have just opened: Artfarm (the team behind The Fife Arms in Braemar) launched Chesa Marchetta, a 13-bedroom hotel and 46-cover restaurant in Switzerland's Engadine, Sils Maria. In Gstaad, Ultima Collection welcomed guests to its luxury chalet's eight bedrooms, wrap-around terrace, private spa with hammam and sauna, snow room and lap pool. In France, Rosewood Courchevel Le Jardin Alpin became the brand's first alpine resort with 51 rooms and suites. And in Italy, ready for Cortina's Winter Olympic Games, came The Carlton, Milan, from Rocco Forte Hotels, on Via Della Spiga—ideal for mixing culture with sports.

~ Winter ~

The expansion of major brands into Europe continues with the opening of the Corinthia Rome in February. This 60-key hotel is housed in the restored former seat of Italy's Central Bank, a neoclassical palazzo dating back to 1914. Highlights include an Italian restaurant by renowned chef Carlo Cracco. The opening of Hyatt Regency Rome Central marks the brand's first hotel in Italy. Situated in central Esquiline, a vibrant historic district, it has 238 rooms, including 20 suites, spread across six floors.

RAH GILI MALDIVES

It also has Rome's largest rooftop with 360° wrap-around city views and a 20-meter swimming pool. For those looking to linger longer in the Eternal City, Casa J.K. Place Roma will open with 13 one-to three-bedroom branded residences in a 17th-century palazzo on Via dei Prefetti.

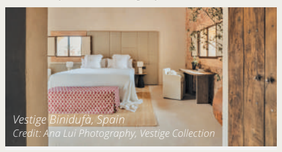
In February, The Newman opens in Fitzrovia, London, with 81 rooms and suites paying homage to the locale's artists, writers and poets of the past. And the first Six Senses in the UK finally opens as Six Senses London, with the first Six Senses Place—a private members' concept.

Away from the hustle and bustle, The Set Collection will welcome Shinta Mani Wild and Shina Mani Angkor at the end of February. New hospitality group SIX & SIX PRIVATE ISLANDS launches two properties in Maldives—the first, RAH GILI MALDIVES, opens in February with 74 private, pool villas next to an exclusive dolphin sanctuary. The second, DON MAAGA, opening at the end of 2026, will be a more extravagant expression of luxury. Moving to the lush hills of Kerala, tulâh Clinical Wellness is a sanctuary of healing and transformation that opens in February with 65 suites and 14 treatment rooms immersed in rewilded forests, medicinal gardens and regenerative waters. In Rwanda, The Pinnacle Kigali opens in January and South Africa's fashion designer, Thebe Magugu, makes his debut in hospitality on January 31 with the Thebe Magugu Suite at Mount Nelson, A Belmond Hotel, Cape Town. Capella Kyoto, designed by architect Kengo Kuma, opens on Yamatooji-dori, in the historic Miyagawa-chō district, with 89 rooms—including 29 suites, six of which have private Onsens. Closer to home in February, Alila Mayakoba opens on Mexico's Mayan Riviera. The retreat spans 60 acres of mangroves and freshwater canals, with 182 guestrooms, suites and villas.

~ Spring ~

In March, The Cooper, situated along South Carolina's Cooper River, opens with 191 airy guest rooms and suites in the vibrant heart of the Charleston peninsula. In neighboring Virginia, Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Boar's Head Resort opens the 19th-century Birdwood Mansion, following its transformation into a seven-room luxury boutique hotel, set in 12 acres of Boar's Head Resort & Birdwood Mansion's grounds. Kimpton Tres Rios Riviera Maya opens late spring, in a nature park on Mexico's Caribbean coast.

But it is Europe that takes center stage this season. Conrad is poised for a big year with the opening of Conrad Athens, The Illisian, and Conrad Corfu, creating brand presence in Greece. Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Serras Sevilla, near Seville Cathedral, is a 43-room hotel and gateway to the city's cultural legacy. Preferred Hotels &



Vestige Binidufà, Spain
Credit: Ana Lui Photography, Vestige Collection

Resorts' Gran Hotel Claridge Granada, housed in the historical Plaza de Villamena, brings the Spanish city's rich heritage to life in April with 70 rooms, steps away from the Granada Cathedral and Alhambra. In the Balearics, Mandarin Oriental Punta Negra opens in Mallorca with 131 rooms all within easy reach of Palma de Mallorca and marks the brand's 150th anniversary. On Menorca, Vestige Binidufà launches on May 26 with 11 suites, and is the second property to open on the shared 800-hectare estate. On the same day, in Portugal, Na Praia, a 113-key hotel, opens just beyond Comporta. Further north, Kimpton Quinta da Marinha Cascais opens with 198 rooms, of which 10 will be suites, and a spa. One of Valetta's first luxury boutique hotels, Romēgas, opens in Malta's capital, situated in a restored 500-year-old palazzo. Its 23 rooms and suites afford sepia city views.

In Italy, Villa San Michele, A Belmond Hotel, with the most iconic view of Florence, reopens on April 28 with 39 rooms and suites following an 18-month renovation. Also opening in April is Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Italy. Originally built in 1436, it has 47 guestrooms, suites and apartments and is situated in Cannaregio. Prestigious French hotel collection Airelles (whose St Tropez property is the next *White Lotus* location) opens Airelles Palladio, Venezia on April 1. In May, Cavallino Bianco Caorle-Venezia opens on the Adriatic as a five-star resort with 101 luxury suites, and a private beach. In May, Villa Timeo in Taormina, Sicily, opens as an exclusive 21-room residence steps from the legendary Grand Hotel Timeo, A Belmond Hotel. Villa Timeo offers views of the sea, Taormina and its ancient Greek amphitheater. In Greece, the 39-key all-suite oceanfront Luura Cliff opens in Paros in May under the Ennismore portfolio. The big news in London is the opening of Waldorf Astoria London Admiralty Arch—with chefs Clare Smyth and Daniel Boulud as partners.

In France, Château La Commaraine opens in March as a five-star hotel in Pommard village, 2.5 miles from Burgundy's wine capital, Beaune. The 37-room property sits within the vineyards on an estate spanning nine acres. On April 24, COMO Le Beauvallon reopens a Belle Époque grand dame near St Tropez, which has hosted luminaries from Winston Churchill to Audrey Hepburn. On May 1, Zannier Île de Bendor opens on the private seven-hectare French island of Île de Bendor. First brought to life in 1950 by anise apéritif pioneer, Paul Ricard, its Provençal-style village will reopen as an elegant 93-key boutique hotel, across three locations on the island.

In the Middle East, Rosewood AMAALA, in Triple Bay, will set a new standard for sustainably led hospitality with 110 keys plus 26 branded residences. Tivoli La Vie Muscat opens in Oman with 79 rooms, 100 serviced residences and rises above the 18-hole LA VIE Club Golf Course. In Africa, Anantara Kafue River Tented Camp opens in Zambia with 12 spacious tents, including a 600-square-meter Presidential Villa.

Kimpton Suntaya Bali Ubud, Indonesia, opens late spring on the Wos River near Ubud Palace (Puri Saren Agung). Kimpton Tres Rios Riviera Maya, opens amid a nature park along Mexico's Caribbean coast. Amanvari, Aman Resorts' first property in Mexico, opens on the East Cape of Baja California, in the 1,500-acre Costa Palmas Estate, with 18 double-storey casitas. Australia's most remote luxury lodge Berkeley River Lodge reopens May 1, offering an all-inclusive, five-night experience in the Kimberley wilderness.

~ Summer ~

On Crete, near Elounda, Rosewood Blue Palace will be the brand's first property in Greece. In the Balearics, Vestige opens Can Jordi, one of four properties on a shared estate, on Formentera, and the six-bedroom Vestige Son Veri outside Valldemossa, Mallorca, in 100 hectares of farmland, olive and almond trees.

Costa Irminia Retreat & Spa, Vignette Collection, opens within Sicily's Macchia Foresta Fiume Irminio Nature Reserve, a secluded haven near Marina di Ragusa with 43-rooms and panoramic views of citrus groves and wild nature. Experimental Roma, opening in Rome's Via Veneto district, will offer 83 rooms and suites, a grand restaurant inspired by glamorous Cinecittà and rooftop pool with views of the Colosseum

June sees the opening of La Réserve Firenze, a 15th-century palazzo on Via Santo Spirito, in Florence's Oltrarno district. In the north of Italy, The First Cortina by The Pavilions Hotels & Resorts opens in August in Cortina d'Ampezzo. Also opening is Borgo Pignano Florence, a restored 15th-century villa and sister property to the renowned Borgo Pignano in Tuscany. Borgo Pignano Florence has 11 historic buildings set in 12 acres—remarkable for a city location.

Shoe designer Christian Louboutin opens his second property in Portugal, Vermelho Lagoa, a transformation of an existing 32-room hotel into an intimate 10-suite property. Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Hotel California Paris, France, near the Champs-Élysées, reopens after a refurbishment of the original Hôtel California Paris, built in 1925. In the Loire Valley, Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Le Relais d'Amboise will be the only five-star hotel in Amboise, with 64 rooms and suites, and a spa in the old "troglodyte" caves. Nordelaia Sur Mer will bring understated luxury to the French Riviera. Set in the coastal town of Beaulieu-sur-Mer, the 33-room boutique hotel reimagines a 1960s seafront building. Moving north to the Dutch port city of Rotterdam, the 231-room Kimpton De Post Rotterdam opens in the 1921 POST building, in the heart of the city.

Also launching this summer, is the Reuben Brothers' development of an iconic building—the former In and Out Military club due to open as Cambridge House Auberge in Mayfair, London. Dukes London completes its refurbishment while for those looking for retreats, The Gallivant Littlestone Beach opens in Kent, on an acre of sand dune, with 13 bedrooms and a Nordic spa. Wildhive Eshott Hall is a 17th-century manor, near Amble, Northumberland, which also has 10 of Wildhive's signature wild cabins in the grounds.

Opening in June, Kitirua Plains Lodge is a new star on Kenya's safari circuit. Set on a private concession bordering Amboseli National Park, this all-suite property affords views of Mount Kilimanjaro. Further south, The Claremont Collection launches Sandringham Private Game

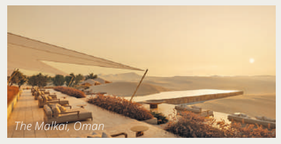
Six Senses Milan, Italy

Reserve in Limpopo, South Africa, a rewilded conservation-led retreat. Accor's newest brand, Emblems Collection is putting its flag on Rimrock Banff, in the Canadian Rockies, after a transformative renovation.

~ Fall ~

Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Hotel Metropole Genève, Switzerland opens in September after a multi-phase renovation. Overlooking Via Veneto, Rosewood Rome, built within three historic buildings, including the former Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL) HQ, has 155 keys, including 50 suites. Hotel Alexandra debuts with 81 bedrooms in the Roman District of Ludovisi near Piazza di Spagna, Fontana di Trevi and Villa Borghese. Six Senses Milan, with 69 guest rooms, including 16 suites, and interiors by Tara Bernerd, opens in the Brera artistic quarter. In London, Ennismore opens the urbane Delano.

In the Middle East, Rosewood Red Sea with 149 guest rooms and suites, will open on Shura Island, Saudi Arabia, one of the most regenerative destinations in the world. Regent Jeddah Corniche, a first for the brand in the Middle East, offers uninterrupted views of the Corniche, Jeddah's Formula 1 racetrack and the Red Sea. Over in Oman, The Malkai's three sites are an opportunity to explore Oman's heritage, culture and natural beauty in one journey. Each site has 15 tented pavilions, complete with dining, spa facilities and infinity pools—the first of its kind in Oman to offer year-round accommodation. The new global community, Discover Collection, opens its first property Discover Collection Ras Amud in Oman in October followed by Discover



The Malkai, Oman

Collection Lemomo, Kenya, in December. Later in the season, Kimpton's boutique style comes to the UAE, for the first time, in Dubai. This season sees a new chapter for Vestige Collection, as it launches four new destinations in northern Namibia. At the end of the year, South Africa's Shambala Private Game Reserve's new Zulu Camp will offer encounters with the Big Five, Zulu culture and the landscapes of the Waterberg. And, in Botswana, Singita Elela opens in the Okavango Delta with eight circular camps surrounded by 400 acres of rich, diverse wildlife.

Further east, the opening of InterContinental Pokhara Begnas Lake marks the brand's debut in Nepal. Situated on a forested hill with lake views, it has 80 rooms and every detail tells a Himalayan story. KAIA's first resort will open on Koh Phangan, Thailand, with 31 ocean-facing tented suites and four two-bedroom pool villas. Park Hyatt Phu Quoc, Vietnam opens on the island's southwest tip. InterContinental Lifou Wadra Bay, New Caledonia opens as a true frontier of exclusivity, blending Melanesian culture with natural beauty.

Closer to home, InterContinental Grenada Resort opens on La Sagesse Beach, with 150 rooms and 30 private suites. Preferred Hotels & Resorts' theStelle Lodge, U.S., opens its boutique mountain lodge in Park City, Utah, at the heart of the SkyRidge Mountain Resort with 67 units. The Knox Auberge opens with 140 rooms in Dallas' Knox Street neighborhood.

Also Opening in 2026

Given the nature of hospitality openings often being delayed, here are some new launches, without specific opening dates, to keep an eye on during the year.

Fairmont Hotels & Resorts is expanding with upcoming openings, Fairmont Hanoi, Fairmont New Orleans, and Fairmont Agra. In Maldives, The Bulgari Resort Ranfushi, meaning Little Gold Island, opens in Raa Atoll, 45 minutes by sea plane from Maldives' Malé airport. In the Middle East, Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority is expanding its luxury accommodation with major openings.

Preferred Hotels & Resorts' Pendry Mexico City opens in the Roma Norte District, with 114 guest rooms and suites and 20 Pendry Residences. And Chablé Valle de Guadalupe opens a 70-room hotel in Baja California.

Journeys on the Go

By Boat

Three of the top 10 trends in Virtuoso Luxe Report 2026 are boat related: ocean cruising, river cruising and expeditions cruising. In March, Four Seasons Yachts is launching its first vessel, Four Seasons I, followed by the Orient Express Corinthian's maiden voyages across the Mediterranean, Adriatic and Caribbean in June. Also setting sail this summer is Explora Journeys' EXPLORA III, featuring designs by Patricia Urquiola for the vessel's Owner's Residence. Regent Seven Seas Cruises launches its latest ship, Seven Seas Prestige, in December, and just announced The Concierge Collection 2027 – 2028, offering three-night pre-cruise stays at some of the world's finest hotels in the Global Hotel Alliance (GHA) portfolio. Reservations are now open for Crystal's third annual Wellness at Sea® retreat in August, starting with Vancouver-San Diego (August 17 to 24), then San Diego-Guayaquil, Ecuador (August 24 to September 5). PONANT is offering voyages to the Austral Lands/Valdes Peninsula (February to March), and North Pole (July to August), followed by the arrival of the brand's latest ship, Le Jacques Cartier, in the Austral Lands for the winter season. Looking ahead, Oceania Cruises' 1,390-guest ship, Oceania Sonata, launching August 2027, is now on sale. Potential residents can also buy a place on Crescent Seas' multi-residence vessel, The Ocean (2031).

> "Today's discerning guests are seeking experiences with greater depth and purpose – journeys that allow time to unfold generously rather than rush by
>
> Anna Nash, President, Explora Journeys

Inland, bookings are open for Abercrombie & Kent's 32-suite Nile Seray and launching in September, in the Peruvian Amazon, is the majestic 15-suite andBeyond Amazon Explorer. By 2030, eight new ships will be introduced to Europe's rivers by AmaWaterways, including AmaSofia (Rhine/Danube, spring 2026).

By Rail

This year marks luxury rail travel's golden era. Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, A Belmond Train, journeys, as part of the Villeggiatura by Train 2026 series, for the first time between Paris and the Amalfi Coast. Returning this year is the Culinary Series on Eastern & Oriental Express, A Belmond Train. Chef André Chiang curates menus on board this Singapore-Malaysia journey. From May 10 – 16, the same luxury train is partnering with The Datai Langkawi, Raffles Singapore and Save Wild Tigers, to offer Tiger Express, a journey through Malaysia supporting vital tiger conservation. A Tastes of Scotland Culinary Series debuts on The Royal Scotsman, A Belmond Train, in May.

Venice Simplon-Orient-Express
Credit: Alice Mesguich

Bookings are expected to open in Q1 2026 for Saudi Arabia's ultra-luxury train, Dream of the Desert, scheduled to launch this December.

By Car

Luxury automotive experiences this year include the inaugural "Anantara Concorso Roma", which debuts in April, uniting collector cars, Italian design and five-star Roman hospitality. Next up is The Peninsula Hotel's Driving Experience in Scotland this September, starting at The Peninsula London before heading to the Scottish Highlands, with three nights at a 300-year-old Baronial castle at Loch Ness.

By Air

A&K Private Jet Journeys is seeing a 60% surge in bookings, while Bellavia Aviation Services has expanded its "remote access" portfolio with new itineraries in the Aegean and Ionian islands.

by Cressi Sowerbutts

Travel Trends 2026

Grand Resort Bad Ragaz, Switzerland

Purposeful Travel

Wellness continues to take center stage. In March, Four Seasons Resort Maldives at Kuda Huraa, in partnership with Emma Kunz Institute, will unveil ÜRJÄ Naturopathy Island, a groundbreaking wellness site pairing naturopathic principles with modern scientific expertise. Bookings are now open for the new longevity program at Verdura Resort, a Rocco Forte Hotel, Italy, and Grand Resort Bad Ragaz's Tamina Health Center in Switzerland.

In Gaucín, Spain, the Arrigo Programme is hosting the next iteration of the Women's Wisdom retreats between June 19 to 25. Across the Atlantic, in the U.S., Waldorf Astoria New York debuted the world's largest Guerlain Wellness Spa, a 22,000-square-foot site, last October. This spring Faena New York is launching the 17,000-square-foot Tierra Santa Healing House.

In the culinary scene, Switzerland's celebrated Badrutt's Palace is marking its 130th anniversary with two restaurant pop-ups, the second of which is led by Chilean chef Rodolfo Guzmán of Boragó in Santiago, (February 18 to March 1). Paying homage to local produce, Casa di Langa, Casa del Mulino and Villa Sangiovese in northern Italy are offering exclusive wine and truffle tasting experiences. In London, The Cadogan, A Belmond Hotel, will unveil a new British bistro and bar this spring.

At the intersection between art and travel is the fifth edition of AlUla Arts Festival, Saudi Arabia (until February 14), and Orient Express' *100 Years of Art Deco* is showing in Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris (until April 26), while Sotheby's new HQ in NYC's historic Breuer Building is now open to the public. Bringing the arts to the forefront of the guest experience, Royal Mansour Casablanca is offering a three-hour urban art tour, curated in partnership with local non-profit Alouane Bladi, alongside the brand's flagship Royal Mansour Marrakech's art therapy sessions.

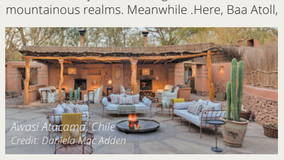
Others are offering more hands-on destination experiences, such as the expansion of Alila Hotels & Resorts' educational offering, from baking traditional pão at Alila Diwa Goa, India, to uncovering salt farming and weaving traditions at Alila Seminyak, Bali. And, ahead of the anticipated completion of Sagrada Família this June, Almanac Barcelona is transforming its top floor into The Art Floor, a living gallery and artist-in-residence program.

> "2026 is the year of live tourism, where significant cultural moments will determine where and how we travel – the experience will outshine the destination
>
> Robin Stangroom, CEO, The Set Collection

On the sports front, significant hotel renovations are taking place across Bermuda prior to the Apex Group Bermuda SailGP (May 9 to 10) and 54th biennial Newport Bermuda Race (June 19 to 28), while from June 3 to 8, EXPLORA I will be docked at Port Hercule, Monaco, for FORMULA 1® GRAND PRIX DE MONACO 2026. Bonjour Québec is also promoting Winterapy, encouraging visitors to discover the benefits of embracing winter activities.

The Road Less Traveled

For adventurers avoiding over-touristic spots, 2026 offers refreshing off-grid alternatives. In Chile, Awasi Atacama's 12 suites come with a 4WDs for custom desert routes accompanied by a guide, while Andean presents six soulful properties across Lima and Peru's unexplored southern region. Fancy a walk on the wild side? Volcanoes Safaris in Uganda launches a seven-night Big Cat Photography Safari in Spring, while Shakti Himalaya is offering treks into India's mountainous realms. Meanwhile .Here, Baa Atoll,



Awasi Atacama, Chile
Credit: Daniela Mac Adden

Maldives, has opened a hyper-bespoke two-island retreat in a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve; the first island (Somewhere) launched December 2025, with the second (Nowhere) slated to open in Q1 of this year. Off-season travel revives favorite destinations without crowds. Canaves Collection, Santorini—specifically Canaves Epitome in Ammoudi—delivers the same thoughtful service without skimping on quality, even in quieter, low-season months. In Italy, San Montano Resort & Spa reported a 44% rise in last September's bookings and Grand Hotel Fasano will stay open between March 27 to January 6, 2027, welcoming guests for the first time through the winter holiday season. Chatham Bars Inn, Cape Cod follows suit, reflecting a surging interest in off-season escapes.

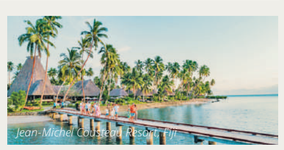
Responsible Tourism

Responsible tourism is now a central driver of travel decisions. In 2026, eco-conscious luxury is set to flourish. Groups such as Beyond Green, part of Preferred Travel Group, curate a portfolio of hotels aligned with the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals; its latest members include Borneo Eagle Resort, Malaysia, and The One Palácio da Anunciada, Portugal. Italy stands out for its climate leadership, from Il Borro's renewable energy initiatives to Locanda Le Piazze's water-conservation efforts. Borgo dei Conti Resort also launches a Bioenergetic Park, in which time among trees that generate positive electromagnetic fields, will enhance wellbeing. In Ireland, Dromoland Castle's sustainability officer tends beehives across 12 acres of woodland, with tree planting and chorus walks also available. Six Senses Laamu, Maldives, is protecting endangered species through marine conservation while SAii Phi Phi Island Village, Thailand, has a Save Our Sharks initiative and Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort, Fiji, has an onsite marine biologist leading coral restoration, mangrove conservation and marine education. Family-owned businesses are gaining momentum: Āyu in the Wild, Sri Lanka's 100% female-led luxury DMC, offers bespoke experiences, while Las Torres Patagonia, Chile upcycles food waste and is targetting net-zero by 2050.

Mantis Collection expands its eco-focused portfolio with projects in Saudi Arabia's Jebel Jais and South Africa's Addo Elephant Park, while Cheetah Plains in the Sabi Sand Nature Reserve delivers off-grid luxury via solar energy and EVs.

Different Types of Traveler

Family and multigenerational travel top Virtuoso's 2026 trends, as journeys evolve to span everything from solo escapes to cross-generational stays. Finca Cortesin's Green 10 Villas delivers sophisticated five-bedroom accommodation for families seeking space, while Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, Italy, captures *la dolce vita* with Michelin-starred dining and signature wellness treatments across five acres of Mediterranean gardens, tailored for families



Jean-Michel Cousteau Resort, Fiji

and solo travelers alike. If a destination wedding or significant birthday is due, Villa Baulieu (part of the Airelles Private Maisons Collection) near Aix-en-Provence, France offers an enchanting setting of lavender fields, vineyards and dining. Design lovers will marvel at Kokomo Private Island, Fiji, with 21 sunrise villas and five hilltop Grand Residences primed for multi-generational travel. Travelling alone? Almanac Palais Vienna welcomes solo travelers with a Gua Sha workshop and Belvedere Museum access, while in Florida, U.S. Amrit Ocean Resort & Residences, Singer Island, offers personalized wellness retreats focused on mindful movement. Solo travelers are in safe hands at Raffles Singapore, while enjoying meetings during limo transfers and Afternoon Tea. Raffles has future openings in Jeddah, Shanghai and Tokyo, expanding its network. Club Avandra should be on the radar of every female solo traveler, a new travel club offering community and bespoke trips for women.

by Cressi Sowerbutts and Florence Marling

Custom Content from WSJ is a unit of The Wall Street Journal advertising department. The Wall Street Journal news organization was not involved in the creation of this content.

Edited for ILTM by Sarah Miller, Founder and CEO of Sarah Miller and Partners

AFAR

A 15th-Century Palazzo in Venice Is Now a Hotel from the Historic Orient Express Brand

The historic Orient Express train company's second hotel transforms a 15th-century residence into a 47-room retreat.

The new Orient Express Venezia is in the city's quieter Cannaregio neighborhood. Photo by Giulio Ghirardi

NEED TO KNOW: Orient Express Venezia opens March 30, 2026, marking the brand's second hotel; reservations are now open.

LOCATION: 2292 Strada Nova | View on Google Maps

LOYALTY PROGRAM: Accor Live Limitless

RATES: From

BOOK NOW

Away from the tourist crowds in central Venice, the Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, a 15th-century aristocratic residence, reopened as the new Orient Express Venezia on March 30, 2026.

In Cannaregio, a largely residential district, the palazzo sits on the Rio de Noale canal, with a pink-and-white stone facade restored to reveal the neo-Gothic lancet windows of 15th-century architect Filippo Calendario, who also worked on the Doge's Palace. In the 18th century, the palazzo was renovated by Giovanni Battista Meduna, who also worked on the city's iconic Ca' d'Oro palazzo on the Grand Canal and the Teatro La Fenice opera house.

The hotel is the second from Orient Express, the historic luxury train company, following Orient Express La Minerva in Rome. The renovation, led by Paris-based architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman, took eight years and preserves key historic elements, including an octagonal staircase attributed to Meduna, frescoes by 19th-century Venetian painter Francesco Hayez, and the 1548 gilded ballroom. The property now includes 47 guest rooms and two apartments, combining contemporary interiors with original neo-Gothic and baroque elements.

An eight-year restoration

Aline Asmar d'Amman, the architect and interior designer, worked on the restoration of Orient Express Venezia for eight years. Photos by Giulio Ghirardi

"My architectural work is rooted in carrying heritage forward and a dialogue between the past and future," says Asmar d'Amman. "To me, artistry and craftsmanship are the ultimate luxury."

Following in Meduna's footsteps, she describes the renovation of "this 15th-century architectural crown jewel of Venice" as a challenge: converting a residential mansion into a hotel while maintaining the imprint of the families who lived there. Working in close collaboration with Italy's heritage conservation authority, Asmar d'Amman and her team preserved mosaics, frescoes, and sculptures throughout. Their work also required stabilizing the palazzo's underwater foundations, involving the construction of a dam to drain sections of the structure.

Today, guests arrive by the hotel's private boat and enter through a courtyard garden—uncommon in Venice—where chef Heinz Beck, famed for his Michelin three-star restaurant La Pergola in Rome, oversees the fine-dining restaurant, alongside a more casual space in the former orangerie.

Interiors that connect past and present

Historical details, including painted ceilings and carved stone, abound in the guest rooms and public spaces. Photos by Giulio Ghirardi

Interiors incorporate Murano and crystal chandeliers, silk wall coverings, brocade upholstery, and a collection of contemporary art "to dialogue with the past while exuding nowness," says Asmar d'Amman. Materials include blue-veined marmorino plaster and Carrara marble, with carved wooden door frames and Venetian sliding panels in dressing areas. References to the original Orient Express train include the art deco–style Wagon Bar, inspired by its historic lounge cars.

Asmar d'Amman sees the reimagined palazzo (which was vacant for years before the renovation) as an act of cultural preservation, converting a historic residence into a hotel while maintaining its architectural and cultural legacy. "Here, Venice comes into focus as it has always been," she says, "a cosmopolitan crossroads where East and West, scholarship and spectacle, share the same address."

"I want visitors to feel drunk on beauty."

firstclassjerk Edited • 19h
The Orient Express just opened its second hotel...this time in Venice @orientexpress.venezia

We stayed at Orient Express La Minerva last year in Rome...their first hotel...and it's exactly what you'd hope for from a brand with that kind of legacy.

Now they've taken over a 15th-century palazzo in Venice. 47 rooms. Right where two canals meet. This is the first time this building has ever been a hotel...but Venice was always part of the original Orient Express route...so yes, we need to get our a** to Venice.

#venice #newhotel #orientexpress #luxuryhotel

The A-List of Travel ®
LUXURY TRAVEL
MAGAZINE

Orient Express Venezia Opens: A 15th Century Palazzo Reawakened

Orient Express unveils Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, the extraordinary rebirth of the 15th century architectural jewel, owned by Arsenale Group, reimagined by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman as a hotel, for the first time in nearly six centuries. A new icon in the brand's constellation of ultra-luxury travel experiences, the hotel invites guests into a world where Venetian history, contemporary artistry and the legendary spirit of the Orient Express art of travel converge in perfect harmony. Once a celebrated crossroad on the legendary route from Paris to Istanbul, Venice reclaims its role as a theatrical gateway for the Orient Express world of luxury travel.

Nestled in the quiet rhythm of Cannaregio, the Palazzo rises where two canals intertwine along the Rio di Noale, an address of serenity, history,and cinematic beauty. Here, Orient Express introduces a new chapter in its Italian journey, following the opening last year of the hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the luxury train inaugurated in 2025.

Meticulously conceived by Aline Asmar d'Amman, known for her ability to weave heritage architecture with contemporary artistic expression, the Palazzo has been restored with deep respect for its origin, introducing a sense of refined contemporary elegance. Her creative vision shapes the journey in a sequence of wonders, informed by the stories embedded in every architectural detail she unearthed. Embracing the Serenissima's legendary legacy as a gate between East and West, she choreographs this theatrical journey, where imagination, craftsmanship, and centuries of Venetian culture converge. The hotel features 47 uniquely crafted rooms, suites, and residences, where each space is elevated with intentional interiors and singular atmosphere, reflecting the layered architectural history of the building and the romance of Venetian living.

A THEATRICAL VOYAGE, SET IN MOTION BY ORIENT EXPRESS

Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has long embodied the spirit of Venice as a crossroad of culture and imagination. In the mid-19th century, Count Andrea Giovannelli commissioned architect Giovanni Battista Meduna, celebrated for restoring the neighboring Ca' d'Oro, to reimagine its interiors withneogothic galore, Baroque accents, and the Palazzo's iconic octagonal staircase crowned by a celestial vault.

During the Ninth Congress of Italian Scientists in 1847, the Palazzo reopened as a stage for salons, debates, and grand receptions. In these historical spaces, intellect and imagination thrived. Over the years, the Palazzo grew through love and noble alliances, as reflected in the Salone Vittoria, a setting befitting royalty.

Today, Orient Express Venezia rekindles that spirit. As day shifts into night, The Grand Transformation subtly alters the mood, lights soften,candles flicker, and the Palazzo becomes a theatre of shadows, reflections, and whispered intrigue. A handpicked Cast of Characters guides guests through curated experiences, immersing them in a world where every moment is an act in a larger narrative.

A MASTERPIECE RESTORED WITH DEVOTION AND WONDER

Aline Asmar d'Amman's aesthetic vision unveils the Palazzo through a refined interplay of contrasts and memories, intentional architecture, and poetic precision: bold gestures of interior architectural grafting are balanced with infinitely sophisticated details, painted frescoes meet sculptural forms, historical details infinitely reflect into tinted mirrored surfaces. An array of exquisite precious natural stones, meticulously curated and highly crafted, merge into the Palazzo's architectural body, weaving moments of sensual wonderment in the most intimate spaces.

The “Lost Colors” or “Colori Persi” of Venice softly re-emerge, woven into textures and curtains, furnishings, and finishes, transforming the Piano Nobile’s historical salons into a succession of inhabited living canvases, punctuated by a bold intervention of vast cabinets of wonder. Venetian craftsmanship converses with contemporary art and works by masters of their time, while embossed leathers and moiré silks dress the walls, echoing the ever-shifting dialogue of light and shadow dancing across the canals. Patinated walls, carved surfaces and artisanal finishes recall the passage of time, their textures lend a sense of modern, ageless allure.

One of the most unexpected revelations of this transformation is the Palazzo’s lobby, il Corte del Conte, once an open mineral cortile, elevated intoa grand living room, layered with sculpted boiserie, velvet lushness and spectacular bespoke Murano chandeliers, balancing the soul of a home with a dramatic sense of theater.

The Palazzo’s secret garden, a secluded sanctuary hidden at its heart, surprises and delights with its whimsical corners, sophisticated tents,luxuriant fountain and antique gates, lit by delicate Venetian lanterns diffusing their cinematic warm glow. Long concealed behind centuries old walls, the garden is transformed into an almost otherworldly space where nature, architecture, and silence meet. Calle Meraviglia, a realm of discoveries, connects the garden to the lobby, hosting a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice’s cultural calendar and reinforcing the hotel’s role as a living cultural salon.

Every path and each floor lead to countless discoveries and encounters with marvels of the past, in magnetic dialog with creative nowness. The result is a world of theatrical elegance where centuries of Venetian creativity meet the timeless codes of Orient Express.

LIVING SPACES, CULTURAL ATMOSPHERES

The 47 rooms, suites, and residences reveal the intimate elegance of Venetian life, each space gently shaped by the architectural layers of centuries past. Restored murals, sculptural ceilings, and views opening onto gardens and canals create a rare and immersive sense of place.

History comes alive in the six Signature Suites, each telling a different story: Orient Express Suite, Colori Persi Suite, Del Conte Suite, Teatro Suite, Cherubini Suite and La Minerva Suite.

Exclusive spaces ranging up to 145 sqm reveal the hotel’s most hidden treasures: 19th-century frescoes dedicated to the goddess Minerva andmythical flying figures that evoke the grandeur of a bygone era, gilded salons animated by dancing cherubs, monumental marble fireplaces with mesmerizing sculptural shells, all flanked with tall windows opening onto some of the most coveted views over Venice’s canals. Each suite is a unique experience, where artistic heritage meets contemporary luxury.

THE ART OF DINING

The culinary vision of Orient Express Venezia is anchored by the signature of Three-Michelin starred Chef Heinz Beck, marking one of the most anticipated gastronomic debuts of the year. His creative imprint elevates the entire food & beverage universe of the palazzo.

Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept by the acclaimed chef, unfolds within the historic orangerie, offering a fine dining and deeply sensorial culinary journey designed exclusively for the hotel. La Casati, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant, channels the theatrical, avant garde spirit of Marchesa Luisa Casati. Featuring a rare privategarden, it becomes a stage where Heinz Beck's philosophy meets Venetian inspiration in a choreography of flavor, artistry, and spectacle. The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired bar, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, blending crafted mixology with a touch of mystery and nocturnal charm.

A STAGE WHERE EVERY MOMENT AND CELEBRATION BECOME A STORY

Salone Vittoria, located at the first noble floor of the hotel, embodies the splendor and historical memory of a venue once dedicated to the wedding of Princess Vittoria Farnese. A treasure trove of extraordinary architectural and artistic beauty, it preserves centuries of elegance and ceremonial glamour, re-imagined to host the most solemn moments in the heart of Venice.

Guests may arrive directly by boat through the Gothic water gate, a dramatic and evocative gesture that recalls the timeless romance of travel between East and West and sets the tone for a stay that interlaces heritage, culture, and culinary excellence. Beyond the palazzo's interiors, guests are invited to experience Venice through the lens of Orient Express, exploring the surrounding streets of Cannaregio, or discovering thecity's storied craftsmanship and artistic traditions.

"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination. Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city.

This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a newgeneration of discerning travelers. Venice now stands as a luminous cornerstone of our vision, bridging past and future, and inviting guests into aworld of timeless elegance and discovery." Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express.

"With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovannelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlockingtheir long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury. The Palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modernlens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxuryexperiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value." Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group.

“I am truly proud to unveil the opening of Orient Express Venezia, a destination where timeless elegance meets contemporary luxury. This magnificent project is not only a milestone, but a heartfelt tribute to Venice’s unique heritage and spirit of hospitality. I look forward to personally welcoming guests from around the world to share in an experience that is both authentic and unforgettable.” Bartolomeo Fusco, General Manager Orient Express Venezia.

“I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 15th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored. In this eight-year creative transformative journey, the walls speak, revealing layers of enchantment magnified by the dialog with contemporary creation. Embracing theduality of legacy and reinvention, I find inspiration in the unique position of Venice as a gateway between East and West, amplified by its exceptional tapestry of artistry and modern vitality.” Aline Asmar D’Amman, Architect & Interior Designer.

A new Orient Express hotel opens in a Venetian palazzo

Away from the tourist crowds in central Venice, the Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, a 15th-century aristocratic residence, reopened as the new Orient Express Venezia on March 30, 2026. Located in Cannaregio, a largely residential district, the palazzo sits on the Rio de Noal canal, with a pink and white stone facade restored to reveal the Neogothic lancet windows of 15th-century architect Filippo Calendario, who also worked on the Doge's Palace. In the 18th century, the palazzo was renovated by Giovanni Battista Meduna, who also worked on the city's iconic Ca' d'Oro palazzo on the Grand Canal and the Teatro La Fenice opera house. The hotel is the second from Orient Express, the historic luxury train company, following Orient Express La Minerva in Rome. The renovation, led by Paris-based architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman, took eight years and preserves key historic elements, including an octagonal staircase attributed to Meduna, frescoes by 19th-century Venetian painter Francesco Hayez, and the gilded 1548 ballroom. The property now includes 47 guest rooms and two apartments, combining contemporary interiors with original Neogothic and Baroque features. "My architectural work is rooted in carrying heritage forward and a dialogue between the past and future," says Asmar d'Amman. "To me, artistry and craftsmanship are the ultimate luxury." Following in Meduna's footsteps, she describes the renovation of "this 15th-century architectural crown jewel of Venice" as a challenge: converting a residential mansion into a hotel while maintaining the imprint of the families who lived there. Working in close collaboration with Italy's heritage

conservation authority, the project preserved mosaics, frescoes, and sculptures throughout. It also required stabilizing the palazzo's underwater foundations, involving the construction of a dam to drain sections of the structure. Today, guests arrive by the hotel's private boat and enter through a courtyard garden-uncommon in Venice-where chef Heinz Beck, famed for his Michelin three-star restaurant La Pergola in Rome, oversees the fine-dining restaurant, alongside a more casual space set in the former orangerie. Interiors incorporate Murano and crystal chandeliers, silk wall coverings, brocade upholstery, and a collection of contemporary art "to dialogue with the past while exuding nowness," says Asmar d'Amman. Materials include blue-veined marmorino plaster and Carrara marble, with carved wood door frames and Venetian sliding panels in dressing areas. References to the original Orient Express train include the art deco–style Wagon Bar, inspired by its historic lounge cars. Asmar d'Amman sees the reimagined palazzo (which was vacant for years before the renovation) as an act of cultural preservation, converting a historic residence into a hotel while maintaining its architectural and cultural legacy. "Here, Venice comes into focus as it has always been," she says, "a cosmopolitan crossroads where East and West, scholarship and spectacle, share the same address." "I want visitors to feel drunk on beauty."

TravelDreamsMagazine
What is your version of living the dream?

Orient Express Venezia Opens Today: A 15th Century Palazzo Reawakened

Venice, Italy – March 30, 2026 – Orient Express proudly unveils Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, the extraordinary rebirth of the 15th century architectural jewel, owned by Arsenale Group, reimagined by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman as a hotel, for the first time in nearly six centuries. A new icon in the brand's constellation of ultra-luxury travel experiences, the hotel invites guests into a
world where Venetian history, contemporary artistry and the legendary spirit of the Orient Express art of travel converge in perfect harmony. Once a celebrated crossroad on the
legendary route from Paris to Istanbul, Venice reclaims its role as a theatrical gateway for the Orient Express world of luxury travel.

Nestled in the quiet rhythm of Cannaregio, the Palazzo rises where two canals intertwine along the Rio di Noale, an address of serenity, history,and cinematic beauty. Here, Orient Express introduces a new chapter in its Italian journey, following the opening last year of the hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the luxury train inaugurated in 2025.

Meticulously conceived by Aline Asmar d'Amman, known for her ability to weave heritage architecture with contemporary artistic expression, the Palazzo has been restored with deep respect for its origin, introducing a sense of refined contemporary elegance. Her creative vision shapes the journey in a sequence of wonders, informed by the stories embedded in every architectural detail she unearthed. Embracing the Serenissima's legendary legacy as a gate between East and West, she choreographs this theatrical journey, where imagination, craftsmanship, and centuries of Venetian culture converge. The hotel features 47 uniquely crafted rooms, suites, and residences, where each space is elevated with intentional interiors and singular atmosphere, reflecting the layered architectural history of the building and the romance of Venetian living.

A THEATRICAL VOYAGE, SET IN MOTION BY ORIENT EXPRESS

Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has long embodied the spirit of Venice as a crossroad of culture and imagination. In the mid-19th century, Count Andrea Giovannelli commissioned architect Giovanni Battista Meduna, celebrated for restoring the neighboring Ca' d'Oro, to reimagine its interiors withneogothic galore, Baroque accents, and the Palazzo's iconic octagonal staircase crowned by a celestial vault.

During the Ninth Congress of Italian Scientists in 1847, the Palazzo reopened as a stage for salons, debates, and grand receptions. In these historical spaces, intellect and imagination thrived. Over the years, the Palazzo grew through love and noble alliances, as reflected in the Salone Vittoria, a setting befitting royalty.

Today, Orient Express Venezia rekindles that spirit. As day shifts into night, *The Grand Transformation* subtly alters the mood, lights soften,candles flicker, and the Palazzo becomes a theatre of shadows, reflections, and whispered intrigue. A handpicked *Cast of Characters* guides guests through curated experiences, immersing them in a world where every moment is an act in a larger narrative.

A MASTERPIECE RESTORED WITH DEVOTION

Aline Asmar d'Amman's aesthetic vision unveils the Palazzo through a refined interplay of contrasts and memories, intentional architecture, and poetic precision: bold gestures of interior architectural grafting are balanced with infinitely sophisticated details, painted frescoes meet sculptural forms, historical details infinitely reflect into tinted mirrored surfaces. An array of exquisite precious natural stones, meticulously curated and highly crafted, merge into the Palazzo's architectural body, weaving moments of sensual wonderment in the most intimate spaces.

The "Lost Colors" or "*Colori Persi*" of Venice softly re-emerge, woven into textures and curtains, furnishings, and finishes, transforming the Piano Nobile's historical salons into a succession of inhabited living canvases, punctuated by a bold intervention of vast cabinets of wonder. Venetian craftsmanship converses with contemporary art and works by masters of their time, while embossed leathers and moiré silks dress the walls, echoing the ever-shifting dialogue of light and shadow dancing across the canals. Patinated walls, carved surfaces and artisanal finishes recall the passage of time, their textures lend a sense of modern, ageless allure.

One of the most unexpected revelations of this transformation is the Palazzo's lobby, il Corte del Conte, once an open mineral cortile, elevated intoa grand living room, layered with sculpted boiserie, velvet lushness and spectacular bespoke Murano chandeliers, balancing the soul of a home with a dramatic sense of theater.

The Palazzo's secret garden, a secluded sanctuary hidden at its heart, surprises and delights with its whimsical corners, sophisticated tents,luxuriant fountain and antique gates, lit by delicate Venetian lanterns diffusing their cinematic warm glow. Long concealed behind centuries old walls, the garden is transformed into an almost otherworldly space where nature, architecture, and silence meet. Calle Meraviglia, a realm of discoveries, connects the garden to the lobby, hosting a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar and reinforcing the hotel's role as a living cultural salon.

Every path and each floor lead to countless discoveries and encounters with marvels of the past, in magnetic dialog with creative nowness. The result is a world of theatrical elegance where centuries of Venetian creativity meet the timeless codes of Orient Express.

LIVING SPACES, CULTURAL ATMOSPHERES

The 47 rooms, suites, and residences reveal the intimate elegance of Venetian life, each space gently shaped by the architectural layers of centuries past. Restored murals, sculptural ceilings, and views opening onto gardens and canals create a rare and immersive sense of place.

History comes alive in the six Signature Suites, each telling a different story: Orient Express Suite, Colori Persi Suite, Del Conte Suite, Teatro Suite, Cherubini Suite and La Minerva Suite.

Exclusive spaces ranging up to 145 sqm reveal the hotel's most hidden treasures: 19th-century frescoes dedicated to the goddess Minerva andmythical flying figures that evoke the grandeur of a bygone era, gilded salons animated by dancing cherubs, monumental marble fireplaces with mesmerizing sculptural shells, all flanked with tall windows opening onto some of the most coveted views over Venice's canals. Each suite is a unique experience, where artistic heritage meets contemporary luxury.

THE ART OF DINING

The culinary vision of Orient Express Venezia is anchored by the signature of Three-Michelin starred Chef Heinz Beck, marking one of the most anticipated gastronomic debuts of the year. His creative imprint elevates the entire food & beverage universe of the palazzo.

Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept by the acclaimed chef, unfolds within the historic orangerie, offering a fine dining and deeply sensorial culinary journey designed exclusively for the hotel. La Casati, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant, channels the theatrical, avant garde spirit of Marchesa Luisa Casati. Featuring a rare privategarden, it becomes a stage where Heinz Beck's philosophy meets Venetian inspiration in a choreography of flavor, artistry, and spectacle. The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired bar, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, blending crafted mixology with a touch of mystery and nocturnal charm.

Salone Vittoria, located at the first noble floor of the hotel, embodies the splendor and historical memory of a venue once dedicated to the wedding of Princess Vittoria Farnese.
A treasure trove of extraordinary architectural and artistic beauty, it preserves centuries of elegance and ceremonial glamour, re-imagined to host the most solemn moments in the heart of Venice.

Guests may arrive directly by boat through the Gothic water gate, a dramatic and evocative gesture that recalls the timeless romance of travel between East and West and sets the tone for a stay that interlaces heritage, culture, and culinary excellence. Beyond the palazzo's interiors, guests are invited to experience Venice through the lens of Orient Express, exploring the surrounding streets of Cannaregio, or discovering thecity's storied craftsmanship and artistic traditions.

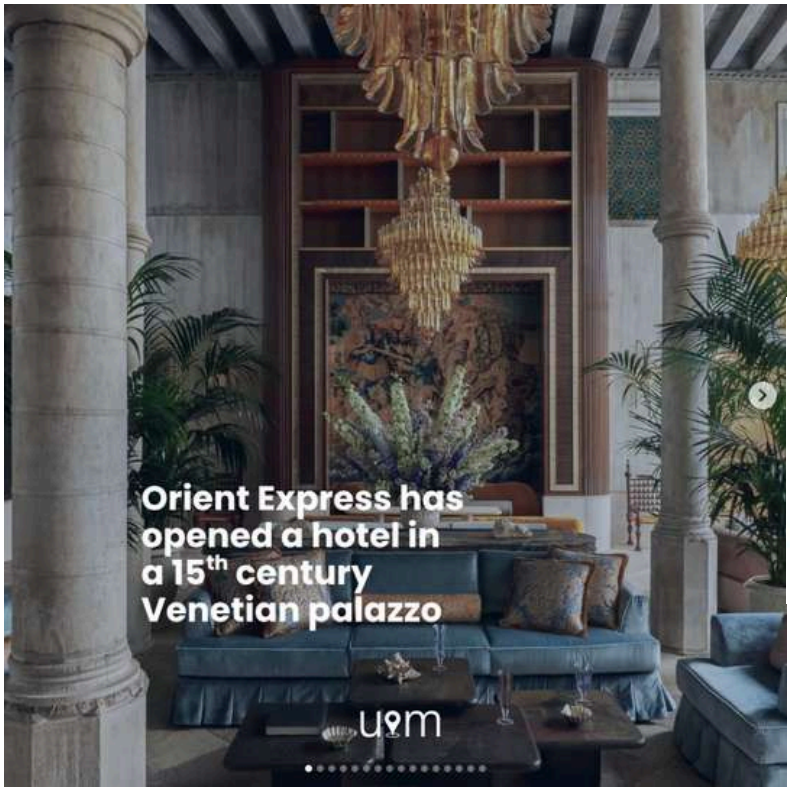
"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination. Palazzo Donà
Giovannelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city.

This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a newgeneration of discerning travelers. Venice now stands as a luminous cornerstone of our vision, bridging past and future, and inviting guests into aworld of timeless elegance and discovery." Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express.

"With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovannelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlockingtheir long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury. The Palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modernlens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxuryexperiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value." Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group.

“I am truly proud to unveil the opening of Orient Express Venezia, a destination where timeless elegance meets contemporary luxury. This magnificent project is not only a milestone, but a heartfelt tribute to Venice’s unique heritage and spirit of hospitality. I look forward to personally welcoming guests from around the world to share in an experience that is both authentic and unforgettable.” Bartolomeo Fusco, General Manager Orient Express Venezia.

“I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 15th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored. In this eight-year creative transformative journey, the walls speak, revealing layers of enchantment magnified by the dialog with contemporary creation. Embracing theduality of legacy and reinvention, I find inspiration in the unique position of Venice as a gateway between East and West, amplified by its exceptional tapestry of artistry and modern vitality.” Aline Asmar D’Amman, Architect & Interior Designer.



uncovermore Orient Express opens their next hotel in 15th-Century Venetian Palazzo 🔑🇮🇹🚤

Orient Express Venezia (@orientexpress @orientexpress.venezia), a luxury hotel set inside the historic Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice, Italy, is opening April 1st!

Just ten minutes from Venice's waterfront, this newly restored palazzo follows an eight-year renovation by acclaimed architect Aline Asmar d'Amman.

HISTORY
Built in the 15th century and transformed in the 1800s by architect Gian Battista Meduna, Palazzo Donà Giovannelli was once home to the Duke of Urbino and Venice's noble Donà and Giovannelli families. Layered with Neo-Gothic and Baroque architecture, it later served as a Pinacoteca before beginning its next chapter as a luxury hotel.

EAT
🍽️ Dining at Orient Express Venezia is led by three-Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck across three venues: the signature fine-dining restaurant Heinz Beck Venezia, the all-day La Casati, and the atmospheric Wagon Bar.

SEE + DO
🎨 Admire 19th-century frescoes, gilded salons, ornate stuccos, and monumental marble fireplaces, all within the hotel's storied walls.

🚤 The Peggy Guggenheim Museum, Teatro La Fenice, and Venice's famous canals and bridges are all just moments away.

🧖 The hotel spa blends ancient Roman thermal traditions, Venetian maritime heritage, and Ottoman hammam rituals.

STAY
🔑 There are 47 restored rooms and suites, including six Signature Suites: the Orient Express Suite, Colori Persi Suite, and La Minerva Suite, each appointed with vaulted frescoed ceilings, silks, marbles, and velvets.

Tag someone who is excited for this new hotel opening!

13h

Robb Report

Inside the Opulent New 47-Key Orient Express Hotel in Venice

Orient Express Venezia is decked out with two restaurants, an Art Deco-style bar, a spa, and a secret garden.

Orient Express is strengthening its foothold in the boot-shaped country.

The hospitality heavyweight, which has branched out beyond luxury trains and into yachts and hotels, just opened a second property in Italy. The new Orient Express Venezia is housed within the lavish Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in the historic Cannaregio district of Venice. Thankfully, that is one of the quieter quarters of the city.

The 15th-century palazzo, owned by the Arsenale Group, stands proudly where two canals meet along the Rio di Noale. It was originally built in 1436, but has been entirely reimagined by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman as a hotel for the first time in nearly six centuries. Charming original features have been restored and a refined contemporary elegance woven in, with old-world Venetian craftsmanship sitting alongside more modern touches.

The hotel facade.

The building itself is steeped in history. In the mid-19th century, architect Giovanni Battista Meduna added Neogothic and Baroque flourishes to the interior, creating a theatrical feel that remains today. In 1847, the palazzo reopened as a stage for salons, debates, and grand receptions. Patinated walls, carved surfaces, and painted frescoes reflect that layered past, while precious natural stones, embossed leathers, and moiré silks add a sense of luxury.

Guests may arrive directly by boat through the Gothic water gate, setting a perfectly dramatic tone for the stay. The palazzo's lobby, once an open stone courtyard, has been transformed into an opulent living room with sculpted wood paneling, rich velvet upholstery, and spectacular bespoke Murano chandeliers throughout. Through a gallery with a rotating selection of contemporary works lies a secret garden with antique gates opening to sophisticated tents lit by Venetian lanterns.

Upstairs are 47 rooms, suites, and residences, each showcasing restored murals, sculptural ceilings, and views of gardens and canals. Spanning up to 1,560 square feet, the six Signature Suites are decked out with 19th-century frescoes, gilded salons, marble fireplaces, and tall windows, evoking the glitz and glamor of a bygone era.

The Colori Persi Suite.

Beyond the accommodation, Heinz Beck Venezia offers fine-dining fare by Michelin three-star chef Heinz Beck, the all-day restaurant La Casati serves up more relaxed dishes, and the Wagon Bar slings signature cocktails and Venetian cicchetti in a plush Art Deco-esque setting inspired by the Orient Express lounge cars. Other highlights include a spa steeped in ancient Roman thermal rituals and an extravagant ballroom for events.

The Venetian outpost is the second hotel Orient Express has opened in Italy, following the debut of the first location in Rome in 2025. It also rolled out a new train in the country last year. These launches are part of a wider effort to put Italy at the forefront of luxury travel.

You can visit the Orient Express Venezia website to book your stay.

Robb Report

Orient Express Venezia in Photos

The new hotel offers 47 rooms, suites, and residences.

Orient Express has opened its second hotel inside a lavish 15th-century Venetian palazzo. Click here to read the full story.

The facade.

The living room.

The hotel's all-day dining restaurant, La Casati.

Calle Meraviglia, the cultural salon.

Inside the Cherubini Suite.

A suite bathroom.

TRAVEL WEEKLY
BY NORTHSTAR

HOTELS

Orient Express hotel opens in Venice

Orient Express has debuted its second hotel with the opening of the Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice's Cannaregio district.

Housed within a 15th-century palazzo, the property features 47 accommodations, including residences. The hotel's interiors showcase elements like restored murals, bespoke Murano chandeliers and marble fireplaces.

The property offers three food and beverage outlets, including Heinz Beck Venezia, a fine-dining concept from the three-Michelin-starred chef; La Casati, an all-day dining restaurant with a private garden; and the Wagon Bar, an art deco-inspired lounge.

The hotel is also home to Salone Vittoria, an event space that guests can access via boat.

The Venice opening is part of Orient Express' broader expansion push. Accor, which took full ownership of the brand in 2022, has been building out an ultraluxe portfolio that spans hotels, trains and yachts.

The Venice hotel follows the opening of the Orient Express La Minerva in Rome last year.

The brand also debuted a uxury train, La Dolce Vita Orient Express, in 2025, with its first sailing yacht, the Orient Express Corinthian, set to debut this summer in the Mediterranean.

HNR HOTEL NEWS

Orient Express Opens Hotel at Venice's Palazzo Donà Giovannelli

In Brief: Orient Express has opened the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli hotel in Venice, following an eight-year restoration of the 15th-century building.

Orient Express Venezia - Image Credit Accor

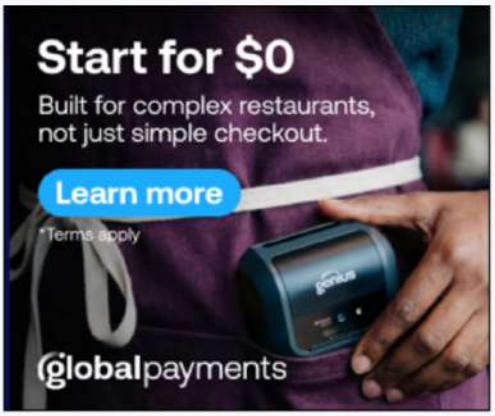
Orient Express has opened a new hotel in Venice, located in the restored Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in the Cannaregio district. Orient Express Venezia, the property is the brand's second hotel in Italy after the opening of Orient Express La Minerva in Rome.

Built in 1436 at the intersection of two canals in northern Venice, the palazzo is attributed to Filippo Calendario, architect of the Doge's Palace. Its façade features a motif similar to the Palazzo Ducale and includes seven Gothic windows overlooking the Rio de Noale. The building has passed through several owners, including the Donà and Giovannelli families, and previously served as a picture gallery before its conversion into a hotel.

The property includes an octagonal staircase added in the 19th century by Giovanni Battista Meduna, who also renovated Venice's Ca' d'Oro and La Fenice theatre. The Cannaregio area is home to Venice's Jewish Ghetto and several cultural sites, including the Ca' d'Oro museum and the house of Renaissance painter Tintoretto.

The eight-year restoration was led by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman. The project preserved original frescoes by Italian artists, mosaic floors, and the building's Neo-Gothic and Baroque architectural elements.

Advertisement



The hotel offers 47 rooms and suites, including six signature suites on the piano nobile and first floor, as well as apartments in an adjacent building with canal views. Room sizes range from 30-square-meter Classic Rooms to 148-square-meter Apartments. Interior features include Venetian sliding doors, hand-painted scenes, Art Deco fixtures, Murano glass accents, vaulted ceilings, and original frescoes.

Guests arrive by private boat, entering through a 15th-century Gothic portal on the canal or through a doorway into the Santa Fosca garden. The building retains original passageways and ballrooms. Facilities include a fine dining restaurant, an all-day dining space overlooking the courtyard and garden, a Wagon Bar inspired by rail travel, and a lobby bar.

The opening of Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli is part of a broader strategy to expand the Orient Express brand across hotels, trains, and sailing yachts. The brand previously opened Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and the La Dolce Vita Orient Express luxury train. A Guerlain Spa aboard Orient Express sailing yachts is scheduled to launch in June 2026.

SKINCEUTICALS
C E Ferulic
Dark Spots? Vitamin C Serum
Helps Reveals up to 10 Years of Ageing Signs*
*Clinical results after 24 months of use
SHOP NOW

(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

Take A Look Inside The New Orient Express Venezia

By Charlie Colville
2 Hours Ago

This 15th century palazzo is now home to Orient Express's second ever hotel

This Post May Contain Affiliate Links. Learn More

Venice is home to some of the most luxurious and star-studded hotels in the world – and this spring, it adds a new thing to its bow with the arrival of Orient Express Venezia. Nestled between two intersecting canals, in Venice's northernmost district of Cannaregio, the hotel marks an exciting new chapter in the city's thriving hospitality scene. And while the location and the body behind the hotel are certainly enough to pique our curiosity, it's the interior design of the new Orient Express Venezia that truly takes our breath away. Here's everything you need to know about the new opening, plus a look inside its firstly redesigned rooms.

Take The Tour: Orient Express Venezia

(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

Naturally for an Orient Express opening, opulence and history come in abundance at Orient Express Venezia. The building, known as Palazzo Donà Giovanelli, was built in 1436 – and counts a long list noblemen and condottieri as its owners. Though the architect is unknown, its stellar design is often credited to Filippo Calendario, the celebrated designer of the nearby Doge's Palace. (And if that wasn't impressive enough, the palazzo was once home to an impressive collection of historical Italian art, including Giorgione's The Tempest.)

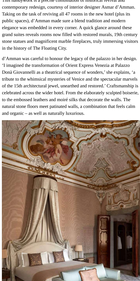
In the 19th century, the building was renovated by Giovanni Battista Meduna, whose neogothic vision left its scores of architectural flourishes being added to the building, including the glorious octagonal staircase that still stands today. It remained behind closed doors until 1847, during the Nouth Congress of Italian Scientists, when the palazzo reopened as a meeting point for aesthetes and academics and the rooms became spaces for debates and symposia.

(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

Fast forward to today, and the palazzo takes on a new life as the Orient Express Venezia. This is the second hotel opening for Orient Express, following the Orient Express La Minerva, in Rome – and quite possibly its grandest yet. The vaulted ceilings are ornate, gilded in gold and brilliant blues, and stone staircases spiral between each floor, framed by intricate wrought-iron railings. Furnishings in similar dusky shades to the facades that can be seen outside the window occupy the rooms, nodding to the elegant aesthetic of Venice.

This handiwork is a precise combination of historical revival and contemporary redesign, courtesy of interior designer Aurear d'Armesa. Taking on the task of reviving all 47 rooms in the new hotel (plus its public spaces), d'Armesa made sure a blend tradition and modern elegance was embedded in every corner. A quick glance around these grand suites reveals rooms now filled with restored murals, 19th century stone ceilings and magnificent marble fireplaces, truly immersing visitors in the history of The Floating City.

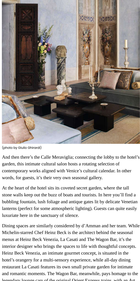
d'Armesa was careful to honour the legacy of the palazzo in her design. "I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovanelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders," she explains, "a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 15th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored." Craftsmanship is celebrated across the wider hotel. From the elaborately sculpted baroque, to the embossed leathers and moiré silks that decorate the walls. The natural stone floors meet patinated walls, a combination that feels calm and organic – as well as naturally luxurious.



(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovanelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovanelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury," adds Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group, which owns the building. "The palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modern lens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxury experiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value."

In typical Venetian style, visitors to the hotel are bought to the sun water gates by boat. After gliding inside, they are quickly met with the sun lounge, Orient Express Venezia. Once an open-mineral corolle, the space has now been transformed into a grand living room – embodying the glamour of a bygone era, sculpted banters, high ceilings and intricate Murano chandeliers.



(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

And then there's the Caffè Meravoglia; connecting the lobby to the hotel's garden, this intimate cultural salon hosts a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar. In other words, for guests, it's their very own seasonal gallery.

At the heart of the hotel sits its covered secret garden, where the tall stone walls keep out the buzz of boats and tourists. In here you'll find a babbling fountain, lush foliage and antique gates lit by delicate Venetian lanterns (perfect for some atmospheric lighting). Guests can quite easily luxuriate here in the sanctuary of silence.

Dining spaces are similarly considered by d'Armesa and her team. While Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck (the architect behind the seasonal menus at Heinz Beck Venezia, La Gaiola and The Magan Bar, it's the interior designer who brings the spaces to life with theatrical concepts. Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept, is situated in the hotel's orangery for a multi-sensory experience, while all-day dining restaurant Le Canaè features its own small private garden for intimate and romantic moments. The Magan Bar, meanwhile, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, with an Art Deco-inspired bar (for a playful touch, some of the octagonal bar tables even feature enamelled chess boards).

(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of sun hotel, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination," said Gilda Perez-Alvarado, the CEO of Orient Express. "Palazzo Donà Giovanelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city. This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers."

BOOK IT

For more information, and to book a room, please visit orient-express.com

Read More

INTERIORS
Inside Belmond's Brand New Luxury Sleeper

INTERIORS
6 Beautiful Black Wallpapers We're Obsessed With

FOOD & DRINK
An Insider's Guide: Where To Actually Eat In Venice

SKINCEUTICALS
C E Ferulic
Dark Spots? Vitamin C Serum
Helps Reveals up to 10 Years of Ageing Signs*
*Clinical results after 24 months of use
SHOP NOW

You Might Also Like...

INTERIORS
6 Beautiful Black Wallpapers We're Obsessed With
By Charlie Colville

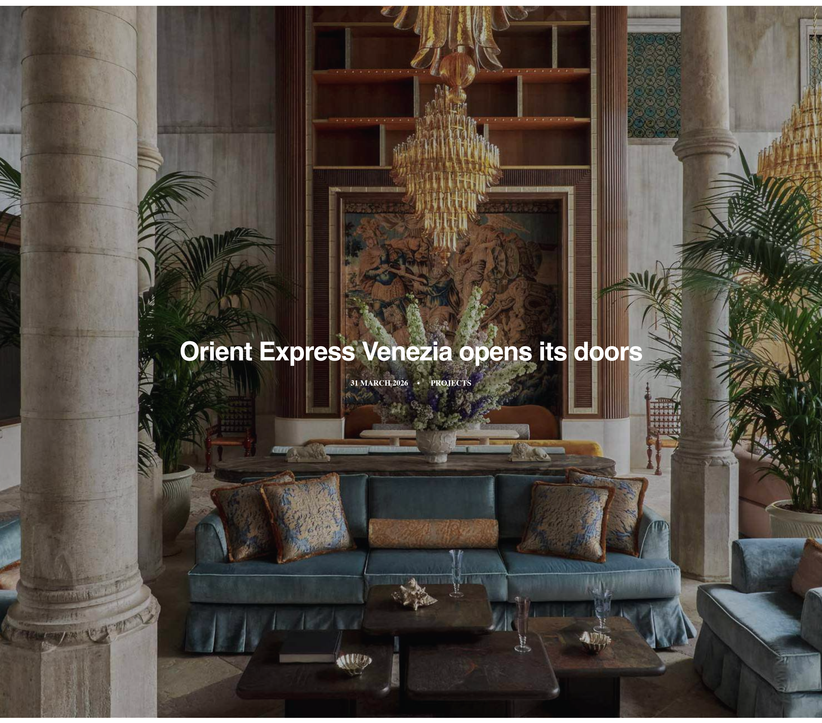
INTERIORS
The Most Beautiful Candlesticks To Brighten Up The Table
By Charlie Colville

INTERIORS
7 British B Corp Home Brands We Absolutely Love
By Charlie Colville

C&TH Newsletters
Sign up today for the very best of Country & Town House, delivered straight to your inbox.
SIGN UP
By signing up, you confirm you have read and agree to our Terms & Conditions

DON'T MISS AN ISSUE
Subscribe to Country & Town House to get in on the ways to make sure you get the very best of property, interiors, food and travel every month.
SUBSCRIBE

© 2024 Country & Town House. All rights reserved.
Powered by Bauer Media



Orient Express Venezia opens its doors

31 MARCH 2026 • PROJECTS

Orient Express Venezia has opened its doors within Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, marking the group's second hotel in Venice.

Owned by Arsenale Group, the 15th-century palazzo has been reimagined as a hotel by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman. Her aesthetic vision unveils the Palazzo through a refined interplay of contrasts and memories, intentional architecture and poetic precision: bold gestures of interior architectural grafting are balanced with infinitely sophisticated details, painted frescoes meet sculptural forms, historical details infinitely reflect into tinted mirrored surfaces. An array of precious natural stones, curated and highly crafted, merge into the Palazzo's architecture.

"I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 15th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored," comments Aline Asmar D'Amman. "In this eight- year creative transformative journey, the walls speak, revealing layers of enchantment magnified by the dialogue with contemporary creation. Embracing the duality of legacy and reinvention, I find inspiration in the unique position of Venice as a gateway between East and West, amplified by its exceptional tapestry of artistry and modern vitality."

The "Lost Colours" or "Colori Persi" of Venice softly re-emerge, woven into textures and curtains, furnishings and finishes, transforming the Piano Nobile's historical salons into a succession of inhabited living canvases, punctuated by a bold intervention of vast cabinets. Venetian craftsmanship converses with contemporary art and works by masters of their time, while embossed leathers and moiré silks dress up the walls in echo to the ever-shifting dialogue of light and shadow dancing across the canals. Patinated walls, carved surfaces and artisanal finishes recall the passage of time, their textures lending a sense of modern, ageless allure.

The Palazzo's lobby, il Corte del Conte, has been transformed from an open mineral cortile into a grand living room, layered with sculpted boiserie, velvet and spectacular bespoke Murano chandeliers.

Hidden at the heart of the palazzo is a secret garden with tents, a luxuriant fountain and antique gates, lit by delicate Venetian lanterns diffusing their cinematic warm glow. Calle Meraviglia connects the garden to the lobby, hosting a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar and reinforcing the hotel's role as a living cultural salon.

Every path and each floor lead to countless discoveries and encounters with marvels of the past, in magnetic dialogue with creative nowness. The result is a world of theatrical elegance where centuries of Venetian creativity meet the timeless codes of Orient Express.

Upstairs, the 47 rooms, suites and residences are gently shaped by the architectural layers of centuries past with restored murals, sculptural ceilings and views opening onto gardens and canals. The six Signature Suites reveal the hotel's hidden treasures: 19th-century frescoes dedicated to the goddess Minerva and mythical flying figures that evoke the grandeur of a bygone era; gilded salons animated by dancing cherubs; monumental marble fireplaces with sculptural shells, all flanked with tall windows opening onto some of the most coveted views over Venice's canals.

Overseen by three-Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck, the hotel's culinary programme comprises Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate fine-dining concept within the historic orangerie; all-day dining restaurant La Casati; and The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired bar that pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains.

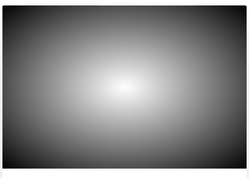
Meanwhile on the first floor, Salone Vittoria, is an events space that embodies the splendour and historical memory of Princess Vittoria Farnese's wedding, preserving centuries of ceremonial glamour.

"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty and imagination," says Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express. "Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city. This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers. Venice now stands as a luminous cornerstone of our vision, bridging past and future, and inviting guests into a world of timeless elegance and discovery."

"With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovannelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment," adds Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group. "The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury. The Palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modern lens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxury experiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value."

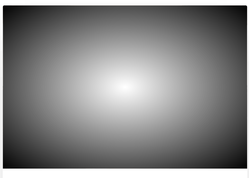
ORIENT EXPRESS

RELATED POSTS



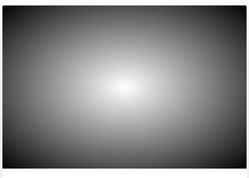
26 September 2025

Orient Express to unveil new train at Art Deco centenary exhibition



30 November 2022

Orient Express unveils Presidential Suite at Design Miami/



25 March 2021

Orient Express to debut in Rome in 2023

Sign up for Sleeper's free email alerts

SIGN UP

SLEEPER MEDIA

We are using cookies to give you the best experience on our website.
You can find out more about which cookies we are using or switch them off in settings.

Accept Reject

HOSPITALITY & CATERING NEWS

A Legendary 15th-Century Venetian Palazzo Reawakened: Orient Express Venezia Opens in Venice

March 31, 2026

Share Share 0 Share

aha accessible hospitality alliance
For a hospitality world that welcomes everyone

Orient Express proudly unveils Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, the extraordinary rebirth of the 15th century architectural jewel, owned by Arsenale Group, reimagined by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman as a hotel, for the first time in nearly six centuries. A new icon in the brand's constellation of ultra-luxury travel experiences, the hotel invites guests into a world where Venetian history, contemporary artistry and the legendary spirit of the Orient Express art of travel converge in perfect harmony. Once a celebrated crossroad on the legendary route from Paris to Istanbul, Venice reclaims its role as a theatrical gateway for the Orient Express world of luxury travel.

Nestled in the quiet rhythm of Cannaregio, the Palazzo rises where two canals intertwine along the Rio di Noale, an address of serenity, history, and cinematic beauty. Here, Orient Express introduces a new chapter in its Italian journey, following the opening last year of the hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the luxury train inaugurated in 2025.

Meticulously conceived by Aline Asmar d'Amman, known for her ability to weave heritage architecture with contemporary artistic expression, the Palazzo has been restored with deep respect for its origin, introducing a sense of refined contemporary elegance. Her creative vision shapes the journey in a sequence of wonders, informed by the stories embedded in every architectural detail she unearthed. Embracing the Serenissima's legendary legacy as a gate between East and West, she choreographs this theatrical journey, where imagination, craftsmanship, and centuries of Venetian culture converge. The hotel features 47 uniquely crafted rooms, suites, and residences, where each space is elevated with intentional interiors and singular atmosphere, reflecting the layered architectural history of the building and the romance of Venetian living.

Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has long embodied the spirit of Venice as a crossroad of culture and imagination. In the mid19th century, Count Andrea Giovannelli commissioned architect Giovanni Battista Meduna, celebrated for restoring the neighbouring Ca' d'Oro, to reimagine its interiors with neogothic galore, Baroque flourishes, and the Palazzo's iconic octagonal staircase crowned by a celestial vault.

During the Ninth Congress of Italian Scientists in 1847, the Palazzo reopened as a stage for salons, debates, and grand receptions. In these historical spaces, intellect and imagination thrived. Over the years, the Palazzo grew through love and noble alliances, as reflected in the Salone Vittoria, a setting befitting royalty.

Today, Orient Express Venezia rekindles that spirit. As day shifts into night, The Grand Transformation subtly alters the mood, lights soften, candles flicker, and the Palazzo becomes a theatre of shadows, reflections, and whispered intrigue. A handpicked Cast of Characters guides guests through curated experiences, immersing them in a world where every moment is an act in a larger narrative.

Aline Asmar d'Amman's aesthetic vision unveils the Palazzo through a refined interplay of contrasts and memories, intentional architecture, and poetic precision: bold gestures of interior architectural grafting are balanced with infinitely sophisticated details, painted frescoes meet sculptural forms, historical details infinitely reflect into tinted mirrored surfaces. An array of exquisite, precious natural stones, meticulously curated and highly crafted, merge into the Palazzo's architectural body, weaving moments of sensual wonderment in the most intimate spaces.

The "Lost Colours" or "Colori Persi" of Venice softly re-emerge, woven into textures and curtains, furnishings, and finishes, transforming the Piano Nobile's historical salons into a succession of inhabited living canvases, punctuated by a bold intervention of vast cabinets of wonder. Venetian craftsmanship converses with contemporary art and works by masters of their time, while embossed leathers and moiré silks dress up the walls in echo to the ever-shifting dialogue of light and shadow dancing across the canals. Patinated walls, carved surfaces and artisanal finishes recall the passage of time, their textures lending a sense of modern, ageless allure.

One of the most unexpected revelations of this transformation is the Palazzo's lobby, il Corte del Conte, once an open mineral cortile, elevated into a grand living room, layered with sculpted boiserie, velvet lushness and spectacular bespoke Murano chandeliers, balancing the soul of a home with a dramatic sense of theatre.

The Palazzo's secret garden, a secluded sanctuary hidden at its heart, surprises and delights with its whimsical corners, sophisticated tents, luxuriant fountain and antique gates, lit by delicate Venetian lanterns diffusing their cinematic warm glow. Long concealed behind centuries old walls, the garden is transformed into an almost otherworldly space where nature, architecture, and the sound of silence meet. Calle Meraviglia, a realm of discoveries, connects the garden to the lobby, hosting a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar and reinforcing the hotel's role as a living cultural salon.

Every path and each floor lead to countless discoveries and encounters with marvels of the past, in magnetic dialogue with creative nowness. The result is a world of theatrical elegance where centuries of Venetian creativity meet the timeless codes of Orient Express.

The 47 rooms, suites, and residences reveal the intimate elegance of Venetian life, each space gently shaped by the architectural layers of centuries past. Restored murals, sculptural ceilings, and views opening onto gardens and canals create a rare and immersive sense of place.

History comes alive in the six Signature Suites, each telling a different story. Orient Express Suite, Colori Persi Suite, Del Conte Suite, Teatro Suite, Cherubini Suite and La Minerva Suite.

Exclusive spaces ranging up to 145 sqm reveal the hotel's most hidden treasures: 19th- century frescoes dedicated to the goddess Minerva and mythical flying figures that evoke the grandeur of a bygone era, gilded salons enchanted by dancing cherubs, monumental marble fireplaces with mesmerizing sculptural shells, all flanked with tall windows opening onto some of the most coveted views over Venice's canals. Each suite is a unique experience, where artistic heritage meets contemporary luxury.

The culinary vision of Orient Express Venezia is anchored by the signature of Three-Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck, marking one of the most anticipated gastronomic debuts of the year. His creative imprint elevates the entire food & beverage universe of the palazzo.
Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept by the acclaimed chef, unfolds within the historic orangerie, offering a fine dining and deeply sensorial culinary journey designed exclusively for the hotel. La Casati, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant, channels the theatrical, avant garde spirit of Marchesa Luisa Casati. Featuring a rare private garden, it becomes a stage where Heinz Beck's philosophy meets Venetian inspiration in a choreography of flavour, artistry, and spectacle.
The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired bar, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, blending crafted mixology with a touch of mystery and nocturnal charm.

Salone Vittoria, located at the first noble floor of the hotel, embodies the splendour and historical memory of a venue once dedicated to the wedding of Princess Vittoria Farnese. A treasure trove of extraordinary architectural and artistic beauty, it preserves centuries of elegance and ceremonial glamour, re-imagined to host the most solemn moments in the heart of Venice.

Guests may arrive directly by boat through the Gothic water gate, a dramatic and evocative gesture that recalls the timeless romance of travel between East and West and sets the tone for a stay that interlaces heritage, culture, and culinary excellence. Beyond the palazzo's interiors, guests are invited to experience Venice through the lens of Orient Express, exploring the surrounding streets of Cannaregio, or discovering the city's storied craftsmanship and artistic traditions.

"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination. Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city.
This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers. Venice now stands as a luminous cornerstone of our vision, bridging past and future, and inviting guests into a world of timeless elegance and discovery." Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express.

"With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovannelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury. The Palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modern lens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxury experiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value." Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group.

"I am truly proud to unveil the opening of Orient Express Venezia, a destination where timeless elegance meets contemporary luxury. This magnificent project is not only a milestone, but a heartfelt tribute to Venice's unique heritage and spirit of hospitality. I look forward to personally welcoming guests from around the world to share in an experience that is both authentic and unforgettable." Bartolomeo Fusco, General Manager Orient Express Venezia.

"I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 15th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored. In this eight- year creative transformative journey, the walls speak, revealing layers of enchantment magnified by the dialogue with contemporary creation. Embracing the duality of legacy and reinvention, I find inspiration in the unique position of Venice as a gateway between East and West, amplified by its exceptional tapestry of artistry and modern vitality." Aline Asmar D'Amman, Architect & Interior Designer.

EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Subscribe to our email newsletter and keep a close eye on the UK hospitality and catering business

SUBSCRIBE

WELCOME IN SPRING AT THE INSTITUTE OF HOSPITALITY GOLF DAY

aha accessible hospitality alliance

SEARCH H&C NEWS

Search the site ...

JOIN OUR EMAIL NEWSLETTER COMMUNITY

MEIKO

KITCHEN PORTERS CLUB

SUPPLIER NEWS

Kate Skinner Wins Springboard FutureChef 2025/26

Country Range's Catalogue Grows with Addition of Duo of Desserts

Milestone For Meiko as 10,000th M-iQ Machine is Built

Rare Acquisition Opportunity: Contents of Selsdon Park Hotel go to Auction

France's Cidres Wignac Unveils Brand Refresh

A piece of architectural history

Why Static Rates Fail: Rethinking Hotel Pricing Strategy in a Dynamic Market

Country Range Group Begins Year with BDD Bonanza

CRG Champions the Unsung Heroes of Foodservice with Clean Range Pro Launch

Copyright © - Hospitality & Catering News

BREAKING travel news
CALL FOR TRAVEL EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2026 ENTRIES NOW OPEN
OCTOBER 2026

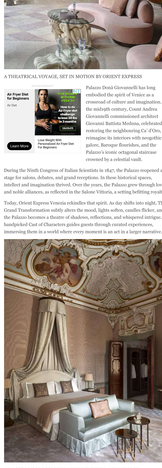
A LEGENDARY 15TH-CENTURY VENETIAN PALAZZO REAWAKENED: ORIENT EXPRESS VENEZIA OPENS IN VENICE

Jo Ewbank

Orient Express proudly unveils Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovanelli, the extraordinary rebirth of the 15th-century architectural jewel, owned by Arsenale Group, reimagined by architect and interior designer Alise Annur d'Ammar as a hotel, for the first time in nearly six centuries. A new icon in the Brand's constellation of ultra-luxury travel experiences, the hotel invites guests into a world where Venetian history, contemporary artistry and the legendary spirit of the Orient Express art of travel converge in perfect harmony. Once a cultural crossroad on the legendary route from Paris to Istanbul, Venice reclaims its role as a theatrical gateway for the Orient Express world of luxury travel.

Nestled in the quiet rhythm of Cannaregio, the Palazzo rises where two canals intertwine along the Rio di Noale, an address of serenity, history, and cinematic beauty. Here, Orient Express introduces a new chapter in its Italian journey, following the opening last year of the hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the luxury train inaugurated in 2023.

Meticulously conceived by Alise Annur d'Ammar, known for her ability to weave heritage architecture with contemporary artistic expression, the Palazzo has been restored with deep respect for its origin, introducing a sense of refined contemporary elegance. Her creative vision shapes the journey in a sequence of wonders, informed by the stories embedded in every architectural detail she unearthed. Embracing the Serenissima's legendary legacy as a gate between East and West, she choreographs this theatrical journey, where inspiration, craftsmanship, and centuries of Venetian culture converge. The hotel features 40 uniquely crafted rooms, suites, and residences, where each space is elevated with intentional interiors and singular atmosphere, reflecting the layered architectural history of the building and the romance of Venetian living.



A THEATRICAL VOYAGE, SET IN MOTION BY ORIENT EXPRESS

Palazzo Donà Giovanelli has long embodied the spirit of Venice as a crossroad of culture and imagination. In the mid-19th century, Count Andrea Giovanelli commissioned architect Giovanni Battista Meduna, celebrated for restoring the neighbouring Ca' d'Oro, to reimagine its interiors with neogothic galleries, Baroque fresco ceilings, and the Palazzo's iconic octagonal staircase crowned by a celestial vault.

During the Ninth Congress of Italian Scientists in 1847, the Palazzo reopened as a stage for salons, debates, and grand receptions. Its three historical spaces, intellect and imagination thrived. Over the years, the Palazzo grew through love and noble alliances, as it embodied in the Italian Viennese, a setting befitting royalty.

Today, Orient Express Venezia rekindles that spirit. As day shifts into night, The Grand Transformation unfolds: the wood, light velvet, candles flicker, and the Palazzo becomes a theatre of shadows, reflections, and whispered intrigue. A handpicked Cast of Characters guides guests through ancient spaces, immersing them in a world where every moment is an act in a larger narrative.

A MASTERPIECE RESTORED WITH DEVOTION AND WONDER

Alise Annur d'Ammar's aesthetic vision unveils the Palazzo through a refined interplay of contrasts and memories, intentional architecture, and poetic precision: bold gestures of interior architectural grafting are balanced with delicately sophisticated details, painted frescoes meet sculpted forms, historical details infinitely reflect into tinted mirrored surfaces. An array of exquisite, precious natural stones, meticulously curated and highly crafted, merge into the Palazzo's architectural body, weaving moments of sensual wonderment in the most intimate spaces.

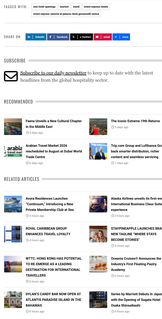
The "Lost Colours" or "Colori Perso" of Venice softly re-emerge, woven into textures and curtains, furnishings, and finishes, transforming the Piano Nobile's historical salons into a succession of inhabited living cultures, punctuated by a bold intervention of cast cabinets of wonder. Venetian craftsmanship converses with contemporary art and works by masters of their time, while embossed leathers and moiré silks dress up the walls in ode to the ever-shifting dialogue of light and shadow dancing across the canals.

Pulitanati walls, carved surfaces and artisanal finishes recall the passage of time, their textures leading a sense of modern, ageless allure.

One of the most unexpected revelations of this transformation is the Palazzo's lobby, II Corte dal Conte, once an open mineral cortile, elevated into a grand living room, layered with sculpted balustre, velvet bolsters and spectacular lanterns. Moranu chandeliers, balancing the soul of a home with a dramatic sense of theatre.

The Palazzo's secret garden, a secluded sanctuary hidden at its heart, surprises and delights with its whimsical corners, sophisticated tone, luxuriant fountain and antique gates. Ill Be delicate Venetian lanterns diffusing their cinematic warm glow. Long concealed behind centuries-old walls, the garden is transformed into an almost otherworldly space where nature, architecture, and the sound of silence meet. Calle Meravijlia, a realm of discoveries, connects the garden to the lobby, hosting a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar and reinforcing the hotel's role as a living cultural space.

Every path and each floor lead to countless discoveries and encounters with marvels of the past, in magnetic dialogue with creative newness. The result is a world of theatrical elegance where centuries of Venetian creativity meet the timeless codes of Orient Express.



LIVING SPACES, CULTURAL ATMOSPHERES

The 47 rooms, suites, and residences reveal the intimate elegance of Venetian life, each space gently shaped by the architectural layers of centuries past. Restored murals, sculptural ceilings, and views opening onto gardens and canals create a rare and immersive sense of place.

History comes alive in the six Signature Suites, each telling a different story: Orient Express Suite, Colori Perso Suite, Del Conte Suite, Teatro Suite, Cherubini Suite and La Minerva Suite.

Exclusive spaces ranging up to 145 sqm reveal the hotel's most hidden treasures: 19th-century frescoes dedicated to the goddess Minerva and mythical flying figures that evoke the grandeur of a bygone era, gilded salons animated by dancing cherubs, monumental marble fireplaces with mesmerizing sculptural shells, all flanked with tall windows opening onto some of the most coveted views over Venice's canals. Each suite is a unique experience, where artistic heritage meets contemporary luxury.

THE ART OF DINING

The culinary vision of Orient Express Venezia is anchored by the signature of Marco Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck, marking one of the most anticipated gastronomic debuts of the year. His creative imprint elevates the entire food & beverage universe of the palazzo.

Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept by the acclaimed chef, unfolds within the historic orangery, offering a fine dining and deeply sensorial culinary journey designed exclusively for the hotel.

La Corte, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant, channels the theatrical, avant-garde spirit of Marchesa Luisa Casati. Featuring a rare private garden, it becomes a stage where Heinz Beck's philosophy meets Venetian inspiration in a choreography of flavour, artistry, and spectacle.

The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired bar, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, blending crafted mixology with a touch of mystery and nocturnal charm.

A STAGE WHERE EVERY MOMENT AND CELEBRATION BECOME A STORY

Salone Vittoria, located at the first noble floor of the hotel, embodies the splendour and historical memory of a venue once dedicated to the wedding of Princess Vittoria Farnese. A treasure trove of extraordinary architectural and artistic beauty, it preserves centuries of elegance and ceremonial glamour, re-imagined to host the most solemn moments in the hotel's calendar.

Guests may arrive directly by boat through the Gothic water gate, a dramatic and evocative gesture that recalls the timeless romance of travel between East and West and sets the tone for a stay that interlaces heritage, culture, and culinary excellence. Beyond the palazzo's walls, guests are invited to experience Venice through the lens of Orient Express, exploring the surrounding streets of Cannaregio, or discovering the city's storied craftsmanship and artisan traditions.

"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination. Palazzo Donà Giovanelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city.

This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers. Venice now stands as a luminous cornerstone of our vision, bridging past and future, and inviting guests into a world of timeless elegance and discovery." Gildas Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express.

"With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovanelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovanelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury. The Palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modern lens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express train, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxury experiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value." Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group.

"I am truly proud to unveil the opening of Orient Express Venezia, a destination where timeless elegance meets contemporary luxury. This magnificent project is not only a milestone, but a heartfelt tribute to Venice's unique heritage and spirit of hospitality. I look forward to personally welcoming guests from around the world to share in an experience that is both authentic and unforgettable." Bartolomeo Pasco, General Manager Orient Express Venezia.

"I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovanelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 19th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored. In this eight-year creative transformation journey, the walls speak, revealing layers of enchantment that blend the glamour with contemporary creation. Embracing the duality of legacy and reinvention, I find inspiration in the unique position of Venice as a gateway between East and West, amplified by its exceptional tapestry of artistry and modern vitality." Alise Annur D'Ammar, Architect & Interior Designer.

‹ 12.12.2025 Celebrate and unwind in April with Chenal Watson's 3-nights-for-2 offer
12.12.2025 › Star Clippers increases first & Sail Packages in 2026 Second Edition of Dedicated Brochure

TAGGED WITH: orient express venezia | luxury | orient express hotels | orient express venezia at palazzo donà giovanelli venice

SHARE ON: 0 | Tweet | Share | 0 | Linkedin | Share | Share | Share | Share

SUBSCRIBE
Subscribe to our daily newsletter to keep up-to-date with the latest headlines from the global hospitality sector.

RECOMMENDED
Fauna Unveils a New Cultural Chapter in the Middle East
Tiara Luxury Cruises 19th Returns
Arabian Travel Market 2026 Launchesand to August at Dubai World Trade Centre
Trip.com Group and LuXiance Group sign exclusive distribution, richer content and seamless servicing
ROYAL CARIBBEAN GROUP ENHANCES TRAVEL LOYALTY
WTTC: HONG KONG AND POTENTIAL TO BE EMERGE AS A LEADING DESTINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS
ITV ARTS CANDY BAR NOW OPEN AT ATLANTIS PARADISE ISLAND IN THE BAHAMAS
Atlanta Gallows unveils its first ever Michelin-starred Bamboo Chez Sohrab experience
STATIONSPARTS LAUNCHES BRAND NEW 'CULINA' TABLETOP STAPLES BECOME 'STUNNER'
Oceania Cruises® Announces the Industry's First Floating Pastry Academy
Sorrisa by Marriott Debuts in Japan with the Opening of Sugata Hotel Osaka Shinsaibashi
RELATED ARTICLES

BREAKING travel news
ADVERTISE
Advertise with us
SUBMIT
Submit an article
Submit a press release
Submit an event
© 2026 Breaking Travel News. All rights reserved.
This website is using cookies. By using our website you agree to our use of cookies in accordance with our cookie policy. Learn More
Close

Rebecca Nicholson · 22 hours ago

Inside Venice's New Opening: Orient Express Venezia

The Orient Express is continuing its expansion beyond the rails, and its latest move may be its most impressive yet.

Now open in Venice, Orient Express Venezia brings the brand's signature glamour to one of Italy's most historic palazzos, marking its second hotel launch in the country.

Set within the 15th-century Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in the quieter Cannaregio district, the property offers a more private, residential feel, while still delivering the theatricality synonymous with the Orient Express name.

A Historic Palazzo, Reimagined

Originally built in 1436, the palazzo has been transformed into a hotel for the first time in nearly 600 years. The redesign, led by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman, carefully balances preservation with modern luxury.

Original frescoes, carved detailing and patinated walls have been restored, while contemporary materials, moiré silks, embossed leathers and natural stone—introduce a refined, layered aesthetic.

Arrival sets the tone: guests enter via a Gothic water gate, stepping directly from the canal into what was once an internal courtyard, now reimagined as a richly dressed lounge complete with velvet seating and Murano glass chandeliers.

A standout feature is the hotel's hidden garden, offering a rare moment of calm in Venice, with lantern-lit spaces designed for private dining and relaxed evenings.

Rooms That Reflect Venetian Grandeur

The hotel houses 47 rooms, suites and residences, each individually designed to reflect the building's heritage.

The six Signature Suites, spanning up to 1,560 square feet, are the most striking, featuring restored 19th-century frescoes, marble fireplaces and grand salon-style living spaces. High ceilings and large windows frame views across the canals and gardens, reinforcing the sense of staying within a private Venetian residence.

Dining, Cocktails and Wellness

Dining is led by Heinz Beck, who brings his signature precision to the hotel's fine-dining restaurant. A more relaxed offering is available at La Casati, while the Wagon Bar draws inspiration from the original Orient Express carriages, pairing Art Deco interiors with classic cocktails and Venetian cicchetti.

The hotel also features a spa inspired by ancient Roman thermal rituals, alongside a grand ballroom designed for private events and celebrations.

Orient Express Expands in Italy

The Venice opening follows the brand's Rome debut in 2025 and forms part of a wider strategy to position Italy at the centre of its evolving hospitality portfolio, which now spans trains, hotels and upcoming yacht experiences.

With Orient Express Venezia, the brand delivers exactly what today's luxury traveller is looking for: heritage, privacy, and a sense of place, without compromising on design or experience.

Travel

Recent Posts See All

This Design-Led Safari Lodge in Uganda Offers Rare Access to...

Moving Abroad With Pets? Why Portugal Is Leading the Way in...

A £24 Million Scandinavian Retreat Is Rising In The Heart O...

Comments

Write a comment

For all enquiries, please contact:

We use cookies on our website to see how you interact with it. By accepting, you agree to our use of such cookies. Privacy Policy

Settings Accept

Bupa Global

Premium global health cover

Learn more

REVIEW

The SPA at Orient Express La Minerva, Rome review

Regenerative beauty and wellness rituals in the heart of the Eternal City

All listings featured on Condé Nast Traveller are independently selected by our editors. If you book something through our links, we may earn an affiliate commission.

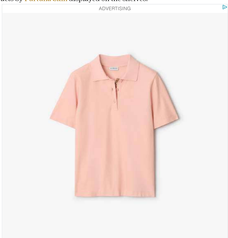
Alexander Tahsate

Reviewed by LAURA ITZKOWITZ

Set the scene

From the lobby of the resplendent Orient Express La Minerva, a member of the hotel's staff leads you up to the first floor, down a long hallway, and to the elevator that descends to the spa. As the doors open, you find yourself in a warm, wood-panelled reception room reminiscent of a 1920s train carriage with skincare products by Furtuna Skin displayed on the shelves.

ADVERTISING



Burberry Cotton Polo Shirt

Burberry · Sponsored

Buy Now

After inviting you to fill out an intake form, the receptionist escorts you to the wet area and offers you a cup of olive leaf tea with Sicilian black bee honey. You're in the heart of Rome's historic centre, just steps from the Pantheon, but this inviting space with tall ceilings, latticed oak woodwork, glowing lanterns made of hand-blown Murano glass, and fringed olive green sofas transports you to a Turkish hammam, if only in spirit.

You're encouraged to spend 30 minutes here relaxing before your treatment, first in the caldarium (the steam room), then in the tepidarium (a tepid space with marble benches along the walls), and finally in the frigidarium (the cold room). The circuit is inspired by ancient Roman baths and Ottoman hammams. Afterwards, your therapist will escort you to one of the treatment rooms, which feature the same latticed woodwork, stained oak cabinets, and veined marble counters.

What's the backstory?

Orient Express La Minerva opened in 2025 as the first hotel in the reborn Orient Express brand, which also includes luxury trains and soon-to-come sailing yachts. It's housed in the Fonseca Palace on Piazza della Minerva, which was built in 1620 and became a grand hotel in 1811. In its heyday, it was a favourite of artists and writers on the Grand Tour, but suffered a considerable decline under its previous management.

Following a complete redesign by the talented Mexican-French artist-architect Hugo Toro, its rebirth was much heralded by Romans who fondly remember the historic property, and affluent travellers alike. Like the hotel, the spa was inspired by the nostalgic lore of the Orient Express and its classic route from Paris to Istanbul.

What's the wellness concept?

Furtuna Skin is the exclusive skincare partner of the SPA at Orient Express La Minerva. Founded by former model Agatha Relota Luczo, the Italian luxury skincare brand – which counts celebrities like Martha Stewart and Hailey Bieber among its fans – practices regenerative agriculture on an 800-acre organic farm in Sicily. Its products harness the power of wild-grown botanicals, whose essences are extracted using sound baths for visibly transformative results.

"It's a regenerative farm and we try to bring that into Furtuna Skin by practicing regenerative beauty, taking clean beauty to the next level of how we think, how we take care of one another, and how we make our products," Luczo explains. "It's about leaving the world a better place than we found it."

What are the signature treatments?

The Furtuna Skin x La Minerva Exclusive Vibrancy Facial is a deeply relaxing 60-minute treatment that leaves you feeling radiant both inside and out. It involves the application of eight different products meant to cleanse, exfoliate, and replenish the skin and lips. A trained therapist uses an obsidian tool to perform Gua Sha, a technique rooted in Chinese medicine known for reducing puffiness, encouraging lymphatic drainage, and temporarily tightening the skin. The treatment also involves a 20-minute hand or foot massage while a replenishing mask works its magic on your face.

In addition to 60- and 90-minute facials and massages, there are also 15-minute express facials and foot massages for those with little time to spare. If you do have time, though, there are a variety of hammam rituals lasting between one and two hours. The 120-minute Dea Minerva Hammam Ritual, for example, starts with a foot soak in rose-scented water and involves a deep kassa exfoliation and a ghassoul clay wrap.

Which therapist should I book?

There are three therapists in addition to the spa manager, and they've all been trained by a representative from Furtuna Skin. My therapist, Eva, had a confident touch that made me feel at ease.

What makes it different?

To our knowledge, the SPA at the Orient Express La Minerva is the only place in Rome offering this kind of traditional Ottoman hammam treatment. And it's the only spa in Rome with treatments using products by Furtuna Skin.

"When we had the opportunity to partner with Minerva, it was the perfect partnership because we have the same philosophy, values, and goals," Luczo told me. "We're a luxury brand that respects artisan craftsmanship. It's all about complementing the heritage of the Orient Express with Furtuna Skin and delivering the highest quality from all services."

What else do they offer?

The Gym and Kinesis rooms offer opportunities for movement-based fitness. The Gym is equipped with Technogym's Artis collection, while the Kinesis room has medicine balls, foam rollers, balance domes, dumbbells, and resistance bands. Private yoga, pilates, and personal training sessions are available upon request.

Where do you stay?

The hotel's 93 rooms and suites feature soundproof windows and supremely comfortable beds for a restful night's sleep. Just be careful not to overdo it at Gigi Rigolatto, the hotel's fabulous rooftop restaurant, where the bartenders tempt you with exquisite original cocktails and the menu features hits like truffle-laced cacio e pepe and grilled tenderloin with cardoncelli mushrooms.

Anything else to mention?

If you ask us, a relaxing treatment at the spa would be the ideal way to kick off – or recover from – a journey aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express train, which is all about bringing back the glamour of slow travel. The train definitely feels more hedonistic than wholesome, with free-flowing Franciacorta, elaborate menus by Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck, and post-dinner entertainment in the bar car. A facial would leave you glowing for the journey ahead, but a detoxifying session in the Turkish bath may be just what the doctor ordered after a few days of indulgence.

Final word

After that facial, my skin was glowing and I felt positively radiant. Luckily, the spa is open to external guests so I can return anytime I need a little pick-me-up. In more than a decade of covering hotels and spas, this has been one of my most memorable treatments.

BOOK NOW AT HTTPS://WWW.BOOKING.COM/HOTEL/IT/GRAND-DE-LA-MINERVE.EN-GB.HTML

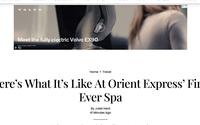
BOOK NOW AT HTTPS://WWW.BOOKING.COM/HOTEL/IT/GRAND-DE-LA-MINERVE.EN-GB.HTML

All listings featured on Condé Nast Traveller are independently selected by our editors. If you book something through our links, we may earn an affiliate commission.

LOCATION MAP

CONTACT

© Condé Nast Britain 2026.

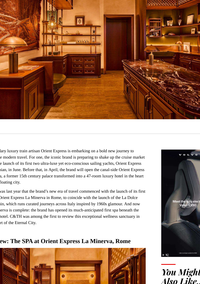


Here's What It's Like At Orient Express' First Ever Spa

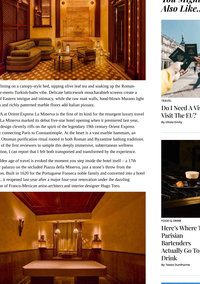
By Lydia Ward
Of Interiors Age

Before you ask, no, it is sadly not on a train

This Post May Contain Affiliate Links, Learn More



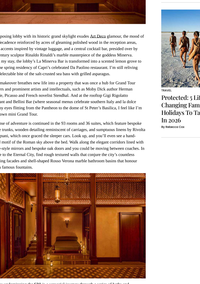
Review: The SPA at Orient Express La Minerva, Rome



I'm reclining on a canopy-style bed, sipping olive leaf tea and soaking up the Roman-thermae-meets-Turkish-baths vibe. Delicate latticework casts dapple-dark screens, create a sense of Eastern intrigue and intimacy, while the star-mad walls, hand-blown Murano light fixtures and richly patinated marble. Peace and Italian grandeur.

The SPA at Orient Express La Minerva is the first of its kind for the emergent luxury travel group, La Minerva marked its debut five-star hotel opening when it opened its doors in 2021 and its design cleverly riffs on the spirit of the legendary 19th century Orient Express journey connecting Paris to Constantinople. At its heart is a sumptuous spa inspired by ancient Roman purification ritual rooted in both Roman and Byzantine bathing traditions. As one of the first reviewers to sample this deeply opulent, tranquil and cocooned spa in Rome destination, I can report that I felt both transported and transformed by the experience.

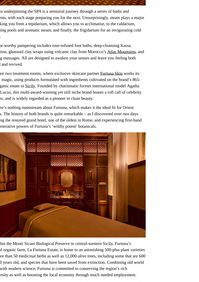
The golden age of travel is evoked the moment you step inside the hotel itself, a 17th century palazzo on the secluded Piazza della Minerva, just a stone's throw from the Pantheon. Built in 1620 for the Portuguese Ambassador, it was purchased and restored back in 1811, it reopened last year after a major four-year renovation under the dazzling direction of Franco Mercoze artist-architect and interior designer Hugo Toro.



The imposing lobby with its historic grand skylight exudes Art Deco glamour, the mood of artful decadence reinforced by acres of gleaming polished wood in the reception area, leather accents inspired by vintage luggage, and a central cocktail bar, presided over by 19th century sculptor Rinaldo Rinaldi's marble masterpiece of the goddess Minerva. During my stay, the lobby's La Minerva Bar is transformed into a scented lemon grove to mark the spring residency of Capri's iconic Limoncello The Pandora restaurant. I'm still reliving every delectable bite of the salt-crusted seat bass with grilled asparagus.

Toro's modernist interiors feature Italian marble, Murano glass and a lush for Grand Tour travellers and prominent artists and intellectuals, such as Welby Dick author Herman Melville, Picasso and French novelist Stendhal. And at the rooftop Cigo Ristorante restaurant and Belfiori Bar (where guests enjoy exclusive cocktails overlooking the Pantheon and the Piazza della Minerva, I feel like I'm on my own exotic Grand Tour.

The sense of adventure is continued in the 93 rooms and 36 suites, which feature bespoke bathtub trunks, wooden-detailing reminiscent of carriages, and sumptuous linens by Revina Casa and Frette. Guests can choose from a variety of Deep Sleep Beds, including the patented round of the Roman day-bed. Walk along the elegant corridors lined with vintage-style mirrors and bespoke oak doors and you could be moving between coaches. In homage to the Eternal City, find rough textured walls that conjure the city's ancient crumbling facades and shell-shaped Rosso Verona marble bathroom basins that honour Rome's famous fountains.

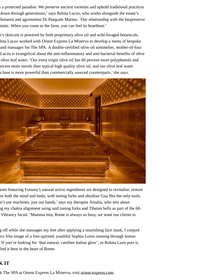


The slow underpinning the SPA is a sensorial journey through a series of baths and treatments, with each stage preparing you for the next. Unwinding, lemon grass + mogar tea, taking you from a replacement, which allows you to acclimatise, to the calidarium, accompanying pools and sensorial, steam, and finally, the frigidarium for an invigorating cold plunge.

Empress-worthy pampering includes rose-infused foot baths, deep-cleansing Kassa exfoliation, glamour-ready eyelash extensions and a Cleo from Morocco's Zuhra Mountain, and foaming massages. All are designed to awaken your senses and leave you feeling both relaxed and revived.

These are two treatment rooms, where exclusive skincare partner Farmacia Nica works its holistic magic, using products formulated with ingredients cultivated on the brand's 1,000-acre organic estate in Sicily. Founded by charismatic former international model Agatha Belina Lucca, this multi-award-winning pro self-style brand boasts a roll call of celebrity devotees, and is widely regarded as a pioneer in clean beauty.

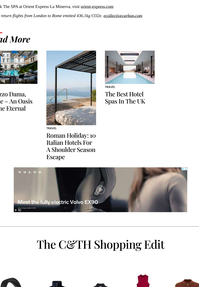
Here's nothing mainstream about Farmacia Nica, which makes it the ideal Ex for Clever Express. The history of both brands is quite remarkable – as I discovered over two days exploring the restored grand hotel, one of the oldest in Rome, and experiencing first-hand the regenerative powers of Farmacia's 'utility potent' botanicals.



Set within the Monti Sicani Biological Preserve in central-western Sicily, Farmacia's certified organic farm, La Fattoria Fatuia, is home to an astonishing 300 plus plant varieties and more than 50 medicinal herbs as well as 12,000 olive trees, including some that are 600 to 1,500 years old, and species that have been saved from extinction. Combining old world wisdom with cutting-edge science, the farm's sustainable practices aim to restore biodiversity as well as honoring the local economy through much needed employment.

"This is a protected paradise. We preserve ancient varieties and uphold traditional practices passed down through generations," says Belina Lucca, who works alongside the team's agronomist, Giuseppe Ciccarello. "Our goal is to bring the knowledge of our ancestors to synthesis. When you come to the farm, you can feel its heartbeat."

Farmacia's skincare is powered by both contemporary olive oil and wild-foraged botanicals, and Belina Lucca worked with Orient Express La Minerva to develop a menu of bespoke treatments for guests at the SPA. Her 'Sicilian Sanctuary' treatment incorporates Farmacia's Belina Lucca is a evangelical about the anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial benefits of olive oil and olive leaf water. "Our extra virgin olive oil has 68 percent more polyphenols and eight percent more vitamin than typical high quality olive oil, and our olive leaf water formula base is more powerful than commercially sourced counterparts," she says.



Treatments featuring Farmacia's natural active ingredients are designed to revitalise, restore and calm both the mind and body, with tasting forks and obsidian Gua Sha the only tools. Farmacia's star machines, just one hands, says my therapist Natalia, who are about remaining my choice alignment strong and toning forks and Vitamin Bella as part of the 60 minute 'Odoursy facial. 'Mamma mia, Rome is always such a hug, we want our clients to relax.'

Drifting off awhile she massages my feet after applying a nourishing face mask, I conjure the Dolce Vita image of a lion-spirited, youthful Sophia Loren running through ancient ruins, grown. If you're looking for 'that natural, carefree Italian glow', as Belina Lucca puts it, you'll find it here in the heart of Rome.

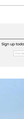
BOOK IT

To book The SPA at Orient Express La Minerva, visit orient-express.com

Julia's return flights from London to Rome retailed £30, Dig £320. ecoholiccoverthebase.com

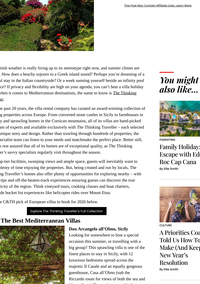
Read More

Hotels
Palazzo Duma, Rome – An Oasis In The Eternal City

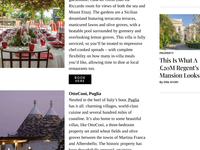


Hotels
The Best Hotel Spas In The UK

Hotels
Roman Holiday: 20 Italian Hotels For A Shoulder Season Escape



The C&TH Shopping Edit



Bowers & Wilkins
Px8 S2 Headphones, £629
BUY NOW

Sheep Inc
Wool Puffer Jacket, £650
BUY NOW

Rolex
Oyster Perpetual Sky-Dweller 36mm, £21K
BUY NOW

Hobbs
Marilyn Dress, £249
BUY NOW

Phase Eight
Clara Knitted Jacket, £95
BUY NOW

C&TH Newsletters

Sign up today for the very best of Country & Town House, delivered straight to your inbox.

By signing up, you consent to your data being stored and signed up to our Terms & Conditions

SIGN UP

Incredible European Villas To Book For Summer 2026

By Ella Smith
2 Months Ago

Plan your next Mediterranean getaway in our pick of ready-to-book villas

This Post May Contain Affiliate Links, Learn More

The British weather is really living up to its stereotype right now, and summer closes are calling. How about a beachy sojourn to a Greek island retreat? Perhaps you're dreaming of a peaceful stay in the Italian countryside? Or a week-running yourself beside an infinity pool in France? If privacy and flexibility are high on your agenda, you can't beat a villa holiday – and when it comes to Mediterranean destinations, the sunny home to The Thinking Traveller.

Over the past 20 years, the villa rental company has curated an award-winning collection of dazzling properties across Europe. From converted farmhouses in Sicily to farmhouses in Tuscany and spacious homes in the Spanish Pyrenees, the company's portfolio of properties ticks all the boxes when it comes to luxury, comfort and exceptional hospitality. Perfect for its unique stays and designs. Rather than scrolling through hundreds of properties, the villa specialist team can listen to your needs and matchmake the perfect place. Better still, you can rest assured that all of its homes are of exceptional quality, as The Thinking Traveller's survey specialists regularly visit throughout the season.

With top-tier facilities, sweeping views and ample spaces, guests will inevitably want to spend plenty of time enjoying the properties. But, being created and run by locals, The Thinking Traveller's homes also offer plenty of opportunities for exploring nearby – with insider tips and off-the-beaten-track experiences ensuring guests can discover the true authenticity of the region. Think vineyard tours, cooking classes and boat charters, alongside bucket list experiences like helicopter rides over Mount Etna.

Find the C&TH pick of European villas to book for 2026 below.

Explore The Thinking Traveller's Full Collection

5 Of The Best Mediterranean Villas

Casa Accampita d'Olma, Sicily
Looking for somewhere to have a special occasion this summer, or travelling with a 'big group'? This spacious villa is one of the more places to stay in Sicily, with 12 luxurious bedrooms spread across the property's main house, the Casa Accampita farmhouse, Casa d'Olma (sub the Riccardo room for views of both the sea and Mount Etna). The gardens are a Sicilian dreamland featuring mezzanine terraces, secluded lawns and olive groves, with a heatable pool surrounded by greenery and overlooking lemon groves. This villa is fully serviced, so you'll be treated to impeccable service, with chef-prepared meals flexible to suit your needs (no crib needs you'd like, allowing time to dine at local restaurants).
BOOK NOW

OliveCoast, Puglia
Nestled in the heart of Italy's heel, Puglia is a sun-drenched region of ancient olive groves, cuisine and several hundred miles of coastline. It's also home to some beautiful villas. OliveCoast, a three-bedroom property set amid wheat fields and olive groves between the towns of Monopoli Fasano and Alberobello. The historic property has been carefully restored, combining

You Might Also Like...

Travel
Do I Need A Visa To Visit The E1.7

By Alexia Grady

Travel & Culture
Here's Where Top Parisian Bartenders Actually Go To Drink

By Tamara Eschthuysen

Travel
Protected: 1 Life-Changing Family Holidays To Take In 2026

By Rebecca Cole

Travel
Family Holiday: Escape with Eden Roc Cap Cana

By Alex Scott

Travel
A Priorities Coach Trip! Us How To Make (And Keep) A New Year's Resolution

By Ella Smith

Travel
This Is What A Cardi Regent's Park Mansion Looks Like

By Ella Smith

MARCH 3, 2026

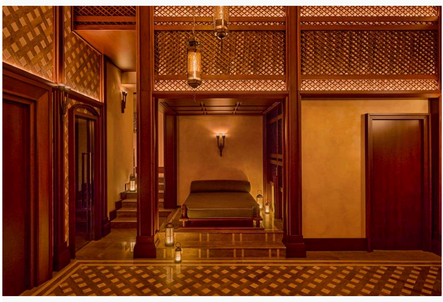
ROME'S ORIENT EXPRESS HOTEL OPENS THE SPA

BY JOSEPH FURNESS

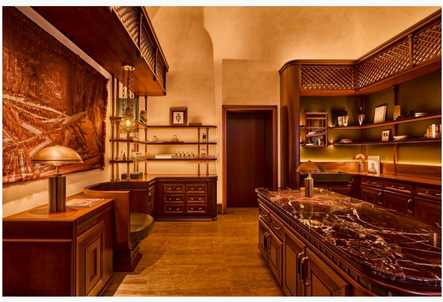
A wellness journey from West to East, tracking the world's most famous train route

TRENDING NOW

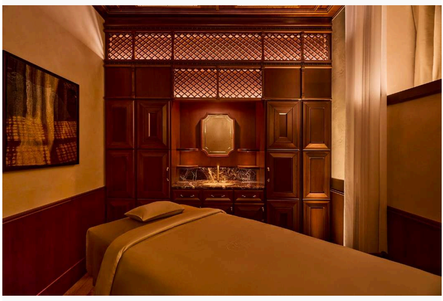
The steam has finally settled at Rome's Orient Express La Minerva, drifting into the long-awaited spa titled, with characteristic confidence, The SPA. It offers a necessary departure from the Eternal City's round-the-clock electricity, providing a retreat that remains deeply steeped in local ritual and custom.



Though the original 1883 line charted a more northern course, La Minerva reimagines the itinerary. The steam-led wellness experience maps the brand's iconic trajectory as it was conceived in Paris – led by French-Mexican architect Hugo Toro – and eventually finds its way to Istanbul, the train route's Eastern finale, represented by the Turkish Bathhouse.



Where the route goes off course is somewhere in between, where it celebrates its new Italian residency, achieved through Sicilian botanicals by Furtuna Skin and the three stages of the Roman thermal bath: the mild tepidarium, the sweltering caldarium and the invigorating frigidarium.

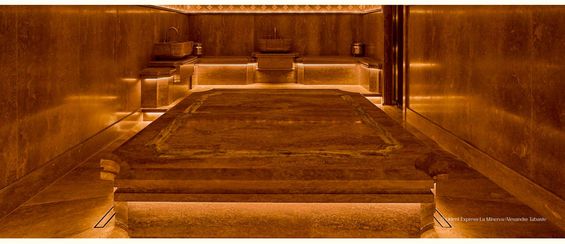


It is an itinerary for all the senses, proving that sometimes the most rewarding journeys happen when you wander off track.

Orient-express.com

TWEET SHARE PIN SEND

© COPYRIGHT 2026 DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD NEWS TERMS OF USE PRIVACY STATEMENT
DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD NEWS AND DOTWNEWS.COM ARE PRODUCTS OF AND REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF WWN LIMITED



Orient Express La Minerva /Alexandre Taborde

Orient Express La Minerva hotel creates Ottoman-inspired spa

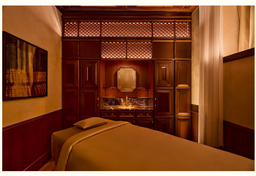
March 4, 2026

Rome's Orient Express La Minerva hotel has unveiled the Spa, a new wellness space inspired by Roman baths and Ottoman hammam rituals. Jenny Southan reports

Orient Express La Minerva in Rome has opened a new wellness space called the Spa, designed to reinterpret historic bathing traditions through architecture, ritual and skincare treatments. The facility draws inspiration from both ancient Roman thermal baths and the Ottoman hammam, creating a structured journey through steam, water and restorative therapies.

Designed by artist architect Hugo Toro, the spa has been conceived as a sequence of immersive spaces that mirror the traditional stages of classical bathing rituals. The experience follows the progression of the tepidarium, calidarium and frigidarium, echoing the format of ancient Roman thermae where visitors move gradually between warm, hot and cold environments.

The tepidarium functions as a temperate area where guests begin to acclimatise, followed by the calidarium, a warmer space combining pools and steam. The experience concludes in the frigidarium, where cold water immersion provides a final invigorating stage. Together these elements form a journey designed to slow the pace of the day while preparing the body for different treatments.

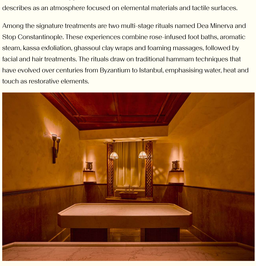


Architecturally, the spa blends materials associated with Roman interiors with details inspired by Ottoman bathing culture. Brown travertine, veined red marble, stained oak and Roman-style plaster create a layered palette of stone, wood and textiles. Hand-blown Murano glass lighting produces a soft glow intended to evoke candlelight.

The central feature of the spa is a marble hammam designed for purification rituals. Small fountains inspired by Triton basins surround the structure, referencing decorative features used throughout the hotel's guest rooms. Contemporary moucharabieh screens filter light and sightlines, adding to the sense of enclosure and privacy.

Treatment spaces include shared relaxation areas as well as single and double treatment rooms. Canopy beds and woven textiles contribute to what the hotel describes as an atmosphere focused on elemental materials and tactile surfaces.

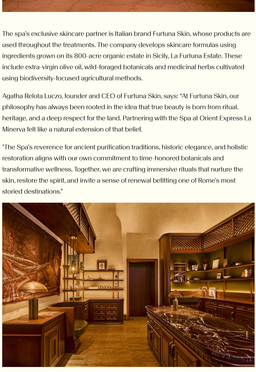
Among the signature treatments are two multi-stage rituals named Dea Minerva and Stop Constantinople. These experiences combine rose-infused foot baths, aromatic steam, kassa exfoliation, ghassoul clay wraps and foaming massages, followed by facial and hair treatments. The rituals draw on traditional hammam techniques that have evolved over centuries from Byzantium to Istanbul, emphasising water, heat and touch as restorative elements.



The spa's exclusive skincare partner is Italian brand Furtuna Skin, whose products are used throughout the treatments. The company develops skincare formulas using ingredients grown on its 800-acre organic estate in Sicily, La Furtuna Estate. These include extra-virgin olive oil, wild-foraged botanicals and medicinal herbs cultivated using biodiversity-focused agricultural methods.

Agatha Rolota Luczo, founder and CEO of Furtuna Skin, says: "At Furtuna Skin, our philosophy has always been rooted in the idea that true beauty is born from ritual, heritage, and a deep respect for the land. Partnering with the Spa at Orient Express La Minerva felt like a natural extension of that belief.

"The Spa's reverence for ancient purification traditions, historic elegance, and holistic restoration aligns with our own commitment to time-honored botanicals and transformative wellness. Together, we are crafting immersive rituals that nurture the skin, restore the spirit, and invite a sense of renewal befitting one of Rome's most storied destinations."



Specialist treatments developed for the spa include the Furtuna Skin x La Minerva Exclusive Vibrancy Facial, which combines manual massage techniques with tools such as an obsidian Gua Sha. The treatment is designed to stimulate circulation and detoxification while delivering active botanical ingredients to the skin.

In addition to the bathing and treatment areas, the wellness facilities include a gym and a Kinesis room equipped with Technogym Artis equipment and functional training tools. Personal trainers are available on request, with programmes including fitness training, yoga and Pilates tailored to individual goals.

Related Articles

Inside the revamped Orient Express train scheduled for 2027

Orient Express Sailing Yachts reveals 2027 itineraries

Orient Express opens bookings for world's largest sailing yacht

ArTotel to open in Rome

Airbnb to host gladiator school at the Colosseum

Palazzo Talia is a boutique hotel designed by Luca Guadagnino

Trend reports

Experiential Travel Trends 2026

British Airways Holidays Travel Trends Report 2026

Amadeus Insights: travel trends 2026

Luxury Tailormade Travel Trends 2026

GLOBETRENDER®
NEWS SUBSCRIPTION

Latest

Helsinki invites Pamela Anderson to reclaim Finnish name

Victoria emphines 'work from home' rights in law

G Adventures founder says 'Travel is the fastest route to peace'

Orient Express La Minerva hotel creates Ottoman-inspired spa

Baz Luhrmann designs private dining carriage for British Pullman

Hosted by Globetrender founder Jenny Southan, Blue Sky Thinking is a podcast that presents the visionary entrepreneurs and innovators whose big ideas are shaping the future of travel.

Find out More

Sign up to our newsletters

VOLT

DISCOVER MORE

INNOVATION BRIEFINGS

YOUR EMAIL HERE

Copyright 2026 Globetrender

your work Space. Acrobat

Meet the new Acrobat.
Convert, compress, and PDF Secure and create content with Adobe Express — all in one place.
Sponsored by Adobe Acrobat
LEARN MORE

AUGUST 25, 2022

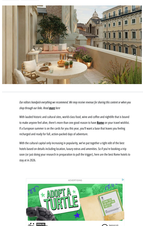
The best Rome hotels for luxury and culture in 2026

Rooms by a chef, stately tips at architect and iconic views of the Spanish Steps.

Hilary Lewis
Travel Editor

Alex Bonney Design

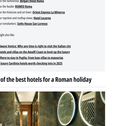
SAVE
SHARE



Our editors bargain and privilege-or recommend. We may receive revenue sharing (the content or when you shop through our links. Read our policy here.

With market forecasts and cultural clashes, world-class food, wines and coffee and nightlife that is bound to make anyone feel alive, there's more than one good reason to leave **Rome** on your travel wishlist. Whether you're looking for a quick weekend getaway or a longer stay, there's plenty to see and do. Its ancient ruins and its art and culture are all world-class.

With the national capital only increasing in popularity, we've put together a right-of-the-art list of the best hotels and accommodations including luxuries, luxury stores and amenities. So if you're heading only to Rome or just adding one stunner in a journey that's quite bigger, here are the Rome hotels to stay in in 2026.


ADOPT A TURTLE
Adopt An Animal For A Child
Sponsored by Adopt An Animal
Sponsored by Adopt An Animal
Adopt An Animal For A Child
Sponsored
Sponsored
Sponsored

CFM "IT'S A NO BRAINER" LEARN MORE

Job Search
Ref. No.A185

Keyword
Location
SEARCH
Sectors
Locations
Employers

Latest job opportunities
★ FEAT JOB
Fitness Manager Communities Officer
Slough Borough Council
SALARY £28,528 to £29,878pa + Local Government pension + benefits
LOCATION Slough, Berkshire
READ MORE ▶

Fitness Manager
Everyone Active
LOCATION Wear
READ MORE ▶

★ FEAT
Assistant Manager
Your Trust Rochdale
SALARY £24,004 - £25,000pa + benefits + excellent pension
LOCATION Rochdale, Greater Manchester
READ MORE ▶

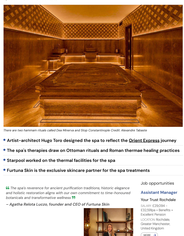
MORE JOBS ▶

JOB LINKS
FEATURED EMPLOYERS

TRAINING LINKS
COURSES
TRAINING PROVIDERS

Orient Express La Minerva reveals spa inspired by ancient healing traditions

By Helen Hodkinson, 04 Mar 2026

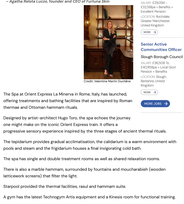


These are two hammam rituals called Dea Minerva and Ninja Constellation Credit: Alexandre Takaoka

- **Artist-architect Hugo Tane designed the spa to reflect the Orient Express journey**
- **The spa's therapies draw on Ottoman rituals and Roman thermae healing practices**
- **Starpool worked on the thermal facilities for the spa**
- **Furtuna Skin is the exclusive skincare partner for the spa treatments**

L The spa's reverence for ancient purification traditions, historic elegance and holistic restoration aligns with our own commitment to time-honoured botanicals and transformative wellness.**"**

— Agatha Nolota Lucas, founder and CEO of Furtuna Skin



Credit: Valentina Martin Duchêne

The Spa at Orient Express La Minerva in Rome, Italy has launched, offering treatments and bathing facilities that are inspired by Roman thermae and Ottoman hammam rituals.

Designed by artist-architect Hugo Tane, the spa echoes the journey one might make on the iconic Orient Express train. It offers a progressive sensory experience inspired by the three stages of ancient thermal rituals.

The tepidarium provides gradual acclimatisation; the calidarium is a warm environment with pools and steam and the frigidarium features a final invigorating cold bath.

The spa has single and double treatment rooms as well as shared relaxation rooms.

There is also a marble hammam, surrounded by fountains and mouchardeh (wooden latticework screens) that filter the light.

Starpool provided the thermal facilities, resul and hammam suite.

A gym has the latest Technogym kit and Furtuna Skin products.

Treatments

Treatments also incorporate the Orient Express' heritage, with two hammam rituals called Dea Minerva and Ninja Constellation. The therapies include rose-infused foot baths, aromatic steam, lassa exfoliation, ghassoul clay wraps, resul rituals, foaming massages and face and hair treatments.

C.O.O.E. by 247 Group has provided a custom Theia treatment bed for therapies.

The spa has exclusively partnered with Italian skincare brand Furtuna Skin. Furtuna Skin's products use ingredients that are cultivated on the brand's 800-acre regenerative organic estate in Sicily. These include extra virgin olive oil, wild foraged botanicals and medicinal herbs.

Agatha Nolota Lucas, founder and CEO of Furtuna Skin, said: "The spa's reverence for ancient purification traditions, historic elegance, and holistic restoration aligns with our own commitment to time-honoured botanicals and transformative wellness. Together, we are crafting immersive rituals that nurture the skin, restore the spirit, and invite a sense of renewal befitting one of Rome's most storied destinations."

The Furtuna Skin x La Minerva Exclusive Vibrancy Facial lasts 60 minutes and costs €210 (US$226; £179). This facial stimulates circulation and detoxifies the skin, in combination with the brand's Obsidian Dua Sha. Inspired by the rituals of Roman thermal water healing, the treatment combines warming and cooling sensations for the face, lips and décolleté.

Simone Giorgi, general manager of Orient Express La Minerva, said: "Our spa offers our guests an exclusive journey inspired by Ottoman rituals, while remaining deeply connected to the vibrant heart of Rome and land-driven innovation."

Orient Express

The Orient Express train began operating in 1883.

Accor purchased a 50 per cent stake in the Orient Express brand from French rail operator SNCF in 2017 in order to develop a series of luxury hotels. The train experience, La Dolce Vita Orient Express, relaunched last year.

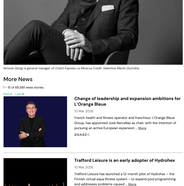
There are now two hotels in operation. The 93-room and 36-suite Orient Express La Minerva opened in a Roman 17th-century palazzo in April of last year.

A new hotel, Orient Express Venezia will open in Venice Italy, later this year.

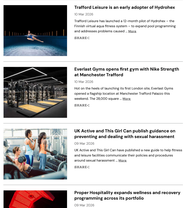
The brand is currently taking bookings for the first sailings on its new ship, which it claims will be the world's largest sailing yacht when it launches later this year. The *Orient Express Continent* will be joined in 2027 by a sister sailing yacht called the *Orient Express Olympian*.

Many spa hospitality brands are developing luxury yachts, including Aman, Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons.

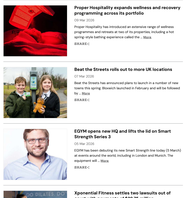
Orient Express



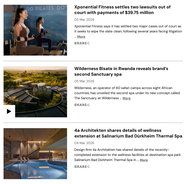
Furtuna Skin is the exclusive skincare partner for the spa Credit: Alexandre Takaoka



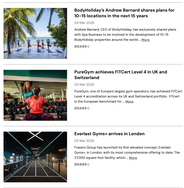
The thermal wells the journey made possible on the Orient Express train Credit: Alexandre Takaoka



The spa was designed by its artist-architect Hugo Tane Credit: Alexandre Takaoka



There are various shared relaxation spaces throughout the spa Credit: Alexandre Takaoka



Simone Giorgi is general manager of Orient Express La Minerva Credit: Valentina Martin Duchêne

More News

1 - 10 of 69,280 news stories
Next | Last ▶

Change of leadership and expansion ambitions for L'Orange Blue

12 Mar 2026

French health and fitness operator and franchisee L'Orange Blue Group has appointed José Noronha as chief, with the intention of pursuing an active European expansion ... More

READ ▶

Trafford Leisure is an early adopter of Hydrotherapy

12 Mar 2026

Trafford Leisure has launched a 12-month pilot of Hydrotherapy – the Finnish virtual aqua fitness system – to expand pool programming and addresses problems caused ... More

READ ▶

Everlast Gyms opens first gym with Nike Strength at Manchester Trafford

12 Mar 2026

Hot on the heels of launching its first London site, Everlast Gyms opened a flagship location at Manchester Trafford Palace this weekend. The 30,000 square ... More

READ ▶

UK Active and This Girl Can publish guidance on preventing and dealing with sexual harassment

12 Mar 2026

UK Active and This Girl Can have published a new guide to help Fitness Operators develop and implement clear policies and procedures around sexual harassment ... More

READ ▶

Proper Hospitality expands wellness and recovery programming across its portfolio

12 Mar 2026

Proper Hospitality has introduced an extensive range of wellness programmes and recovery offerings at its properties, including a hot spring-style bathing experience called the ... More

READ ▶

Beat the Streets rolls out to more UK locations

12 Mar 2026

Beat the Streets has announced plans to launch in a number of new towns this spring. Bloxwich launched in February and will be followed by ... More

READ ▶

EGYM opens new HQ and lifts the lid on Smart Strength Series 2

12 Mar 2026

EGYM has been debuting its new Smart Strength line today (5 March) at events around the world, including in London and Munich. The equipment will ... More

READ ▶

1Ponential Fitness settles two lawsuits out of court with payments of $35.75 million

12 Mar 2026

1ponential Fitness says it has settled two major cases out of court as it seeks to wipe the slate clean, following several years facing litigation ... More

READ ▶

Wilderness Bisate in Rwanda reveals brand's second Sanctuary spa

12 Mar 2026

Wilderness, an operator of 50 safari camps across eight African countries, has revealed its Rwandan camp spa under its new concept called The Sanctuary at Wilderness ... More

READ ▶

4a Architecture shares details of wellness extension at Saltarium Bad Dürkheim Thermal Spa

12 Mar 2026

Saltarium Bad Dürkheim has shared details of the recently-completed extension to the wellness facilities at destination spa park Saltarium Bad Dürkheim Thermal Spa in ... More

READ ▶

BodyHoliday's Andrew Barnard shares plans for 10-15 locations in the next 18 years

12 Mar 2026

Andrew Barnard, CEO of BodyHoliday has exclusively shared plans with Spa Business to be involved in the development of 10-15 BodyHoliday properties around the world. ... More

READ ▶

PureGym achieves FITCert Level 4 in UK and Switzerland

12 Mar 2026

PureGym, one of Europe's largest gym operators, has achieved FITCert Level 4 accreditation across its UK and Switzerland portfolio. FITcert is the European benchmark for ... More

READ ▶

Everlast Gymns arrives in London

12 Mar 2026

Frasers Group has launched its first elevated concept, Everlast Gymns, in London, with its most comprehensive offering to date. The 17,000 square foot facility, which ... More

READ ▶

Floating wellbeing destination planned for London's Royal Docks

12 Mar 2026

A new floating wellbeing destination with a public park, residential and commercial facility is planned for a 12 hectare stretch of water within London's Royal Docks. ... More

READ ▶

ISPA publishes guidance for spa operators to maximise the pre-treatment guest experience

12 Mar 2026

Spa operators should focus on hotel strategies to positively influence spa guests ahead of their arrival have been published in a consumer-focused report by the ISPA Research Foundation. The ... More

READ ▶

1 - 10 of 69,280 news stories
Next | Last ▶

CFM "IT'S A NO BRAINER" LEARN MORE

FIBO
Latest news
Change of leadership and expansion ambitions for L'Orange Blue
BRAKE ▶
Trafford Leisure is an early adopter of Hydrotherapy
BRAKE ▶
Everlast Gyms opens first gym with Nike Strength at Manchester Trafford
BRAKE ▶
UK Active and This Girl Can publish guidance on preventing and dealing with sexual harassment
BRAKE ▶
Beat the Streets rolls out to more UK locations
BRAKE ▶
MORE NEWS ▶

SAVE THE DATE
Registration Opening Soon
Sign up for updates
CLICK HERE FOR UPDATES
SACTOS
THE GAMING, HOSPITALITY, LEISURE & ATTRACTIONS CONFERENCE
CLICK HERE FOR UPDATES

People news
ISPA publishes guidance for spa operators to maximise the pre-treatment guest experience
BRAKE ▶
Wellness sets out ISPA Elevate Spa's vision for wellbeing
BRAKE ▶
Dr Joost Ritzen-Verhoeven leaving RSG Group after seven years
BRAKE ▶
Rosenwinkel Sportpark appoints John Rix-Ali's Retail Entertainment Centre
BRAKE ▶
UK Spa Association appoints Sally Ashby OBE to lead its new cancer-related service
BRAKE ▶
MORE PEOPLE NEWS ▶

Training news
Europe/Africa gyms industry future study with Nuri Consultants launch
BRAKE ▶
Yoga and Anxiety Foundation launches Ofsted-approved virtual
BRAKE ▶
CIST launches sleep coaching course with The Online Sleep Coach
BRAKE ▶
Resonus ingestion launches Washing Machine Health Hub with mental health issues
BRAKE ▶
EATCO updates guidance on use of food during chemotherapy for cancer patients
BRAKE ▶
MORE TRAINING NEWS ▶

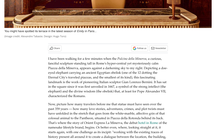
Product innovation
Amerimen launches daily grooms for Amerimen Groom Blend
BRAKE ▶
Lume launches AI-powered gym with face scanning technology and support
BRAKE ▶
New PolarWave delivers full body UV, red plunge
BRAKE ▶
New SurfaPool spa range from Aquatic Behavior change science
BRAKE ▶
Tom Kip Parts introduces Batman Ultra-Bi Vacuum
BRAKE ▶
MORE PRODUCT NEWS ▶

Nestled in Rome's Most Magical Piazza, This Grand Tour-Era Hotel Captures the City's Layered Heritage Into a 'Gesamtkunstwerk' — With Help From Its 'Sun-Baked' Palette

"You can travel emotionally through architecture and interior design, through atmosphere, scents, music, textures, or even the way light enters a space," designer Hugo Toro says of his intention for Orient Express La Minerva

BY HUGO MARCUS · SENIOR EDITOR, FEATURES

What are purchase through links on our site, we may earn an affiliate commission. Learn more here



Hugo Toro's vision for the Orient Express La Minerva, a "Gesamtkunstwerk" in the Eternal City. Image credit: Alessandro Saletta, Design: Hugo Toro

Share
Follow 0
Subscribe

I have been walking in a few minutes when the *Piazza della Minerva*, a cartoon, tasteful sculpture standing tall in Rome's hyperactive yet mysteriously calm *Piazza della Minerva*, appears against a backdrop sky to my right. Depicting a dozen elephants, the sculpture is the work of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the Baroque-era Italian Dal Vinci/Leonardo prozac, and the smallest of its family. His fascinating landmark is the work of pioneering Italian sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini. It has sat in the piazza since the 17th century, and it is one of the few Bernini works that have survived the years and the stylistic whims that shifted, at least for Pope Alexander VII, the commission from Bernini.

Now, picture how many travelers have walked through that statue over the past 350 years — how many love stories, adventures, crimes, and plot twists must have unfolded in the shadow of that sculpture. Bernini's work is just one of the cultural artefacts in the Pantheon, situated in Piazza della Rotonda located in Italy. That's where the story of Orient Express La Minerva, the stylish hotel in Rome of the Eternal City, begins. Its story is a story of Rome, of course, but it also is a story of a metro again, with one challenge as its design, working with the existing frame of a history present all around it to create a dialogue between the location, the building, and the brand, Orient Express. Toronto-based interior architect Hugo Toro tells us.

A mission the Paris-based creative set out to pursue by looking into the numerous ways the exchange of characters the Eternal City, starting from the one character who, in the end, ended up being the most important character of all: Rome itself. Let's see what the world will render you want to inspire your home instantly.

MORE FEATURED ARTICLES

YOU MAY LIKE
Discovered the Balance of the Orient Express — Then Set Its Vibrant Soul to Sleep in Dubai Hotel Curio Kalmat and Dapper
The Best Designs: Things to Do in Prague According to One of the Most Influential (and Connected) Local Designers — "Ivo is Exclusive in Architecture"
A Sea Breeze Hotel Just Opened in Lisbon, and the Interior Design of the Exclusive Rooms Aims to Worth Bragging by Even Jaded Eco-Cultured
SHOPPING PAGE 2

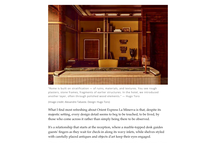
ORIENT EXPRESS LA MINERVA — CRAFTING "A TOTAL WORK OF ART" BEGINS WITH THE RIGHT PALETTE

A detail view of the exterior of the Orient Express La Minerva, a Roman hotel, the Eternal City's most famous, offers the perfect entry point into the hotel's rich storytelling. Image credit: Alessandro Saletta, Design: Hugo Toro

A detail view of the exterior of the Orient Express La Minerva, a 17th-century Roman hotel, the Eternal City's most famous, offers the perfect entry point into transitional (also, related to 18), at the point of the Grand Tour era, a metaphor of worldly, first-faithfully reinterpreted in this work.

Rome is a city of controlled chaos, vibrant layered, and deeply historical." So says, in multiple charts — the project spans the stable landmarks, the popular appeal of a hotel, the ever-changing the status quo — and so perfectly present in Rome's interior scheme.

The secret to its pervading beauty, it seems, lies in mature spaces that borrow from Rome's random history. So that, when the staff arrive at Piazza della Minerva of morning before you, the immersion in art, culture, and craftsmanship that distinguishes the Italian capital can continue.



A detail view the exterior of the Orient Express La Minerva (Roman) reveals the Eternal City's most famous, offers the perfect entry point into the hotel's rich storytelling. Image credit: Alessandro Saletta, Design: Hugo Toro

"The planner's need inside the rooms are similar to the ones used on the exterior — a mature, sophisticated, and layered palette," the architectural designer explains, providing how the texture and the earthy choice of colors of the walls establish "a multidimensional dialogue with the city."

Be The First To Know
The Livingstyle newsletters are your inside source for what's shaping interiors now - and what's next. Discover trend forecasts, smart styling ideas, and curated shopping inspiration that brings design to life. Subscribe today and stay ahead of the curve.
Your Email Address
Contact me with news and offers from other Future brands
Receive email from us on behalf of our trusted partners or sponsors
By submitting your information you agree to our Terms & conditions and Privacy Policy and are aged 16 or over.
SIGN ME UP

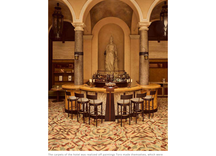
In Rome, the sunset-tinted, golden light bouncing off Bernini's elephants, the Pantheon's ancient stone walls, and the Eternal City's ochre, terracotta, and sienna tones and the textures that will keep you coming back time and time again.

At Orient Express La Minerva, the conversation between the city's nature and architecture and the hotel's cross-environment unfolds as a series of textural vignettes and echoes, deep rich, cream notes lighting up the textural layers, the hotel's colors and textures, and the ingredients to be enhanced through thriving plants and striking furniture.

It's a dramatic range that makes the magic of Rome collectibly, and everyone to replicate in your home (especially with this 1100+ Crown Clay paint, or Best Green Filigree and Sudbury Yellow by Farrow & Ball).

WHAT TO READ NEXT
Michael Dingo to Star in Disney+ — Aronson's Camera Director on the City's Most Regal Unique Scenes, Tom Sandoval to Scarred Lake
Lonely's Outdoor Reservation, Shutters, La Minerva to Open in Mid-October — These 5 Style Stories from the Eternal Make-or-Thing Review Running
Hugo Traditional Chairs — The Stylish, Supremely Decorated Dining Revolution in Thinner Matters Is Not Your Grass Base

...AND PROCEEDS WITH MORE CAREFULLY SOURCED OR FULLY BESPOKE, LAYERED TOUCHES



"Rome is built on amphitheatres — of ruins, materials, and textures. You can laugh and cry and feel emotions simultaneously," Hugo Toro says of his design for Orient Express La Minerva's private space, where the palpable sensual atmosphere. — Image Credit: Alessandro Saletta, Design: Hugo Toro

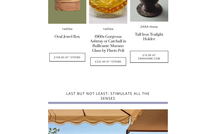
What's that sensual embodying, where Orient Express La Minerva's Hugo, despite its singular setting, every designer detail seems to bring to life to touched, to be lived, by those who come across a website flame simply being there to be observed.

It's a relationship that starts at the reception, where a manifest curation of bespoke and meticulously sourced pieces, "a mix of vintage and contemporary," Toro says, "specifically for the property." Non-surprise, Toro's Ivo is exclusive in architecture, creating a very unique experienced for guests."

All broadbrush, for example, cast from wood and tinted with silky, pastel-shaded panels, were purchased by hand in harmonious with the Roman dates.

They're all vintage," assures the designer, who drew from the lack of 19th-century trends to evoke the glamour of the golden age of travel (Orient Express La Minerva is a hotel that pays homage to transportation, specifically the Orient Express, the elements of a Gilder Otto Orient Express, one of the hottest luxury train cabins of the moment).

We create a cluster home shaded on the tenth floor, had an opulence(or this bedhead) really produced glam lamps ensuring a soft glow on either side of the bed, and a pair of vintage Italian armchairs, upholstered in a velvet, deep-pile fabric, pink, blue, and plenty of spectacular artwork hung around (in spacious, sashes toward interior, too.



Hugo Toro's vision for the Orient Express La Minerva, a "Gesamtkunstwerk" in the Eternal City. Image credit: Alessandro Saletta, Design: Hugo Toro

HOME ABOUT US EDITORIAL GUIDELINES PRIVACY ARTICLES BY SECTOR

Renowned Chef, Heinz Beck, Brings His Skills to Orient Express Venezia

by Editorial Team Published 9 March 2026 at 11:00

In a masterful fusion of Roman precision and Serenissima soul, three-Michelin-starred maestro Heinz Beck unveils a culinary odyssey across Orient Express Venezia's historic palazzo—where lagoon whispers meet lightness perfected, redefining luxury dining in the world's most poetic city.

Venice, that eternal dream woven from water and whisper, has long seduced the senses with its labyrinthine beauty. Now, as Orient Express breathes new life into a 15th-century palazzo in the untouched heart of Cannaregio, it has unveiled a culinary titan to orchestrate its gastronomic soul. Three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck, whose La Pergola in Rome has held its celestial trio of stars for over two decades, a bastion of technical finesse and flavour clarity, has taken the helm at Orient Express Venezia to curate every bite, sip, and social flourish across its reborn spaces.

Chef Heinz Beck, alongside his Beck & Maltese Consulting team and resident Chef Pasquale Rivetti, draws from the lagoon's bounty and Mediterranean whispers, crafting menus that honour Venetian heritage through a lens of balance, lightness, and nutritional poetry, principles that have defined his global acclaim.

Heinz Beck Venezia: Precision in the Orangerie

At the pinnacle sits Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate 20-seat sanctum within the palazzo's former Orangerie, aglow under sculpted glass that evokes lagoon depths—a design born of d'Amman's dialogues with Beck on edible floral secrets.

Open solely for dinner, it channels the chef's philosophy: cuisine as equilibrium, where amberjack dances with ash buttermilk, fresh peas, and salted lemon; or red prawns entwine with carrots and lagoon seaweed. Local treasures, refined by contemporary sleight, yield dishes of profound simplicity—lightness not as restraint, but revelation.

La Casati: Venice's Daily Rhythm Revealed

For the palazzo's more languid pulse, La Casati unfolds Venetian tradition in relaxed cadence—lunch and dinner amid living textures and theatrical spaces inspired by the eccentric Luisa Casati. Seasonal ingredients root recipes in Serenissima soil, with summer unveiling a rare 300-square-metre garden oasis amid urban canals. Here, Beck's method infuses the everyday with elegance, turning cicchetti into contemplative pauses.

Wagon Bar and Salone Vittoria: Heritage Revived

Echoing the golden age of rail romance, Orient Express Venezia's Art Deco Wagon Bar lingers into the night, serving light savouries by day and yielding to signature cocktails, a nod to the brand's storied trains. Upstairs, Salone Vittoria, once nobility's ballroom beneath 18th-century chandeliers, hosts spectacular breakfasts and gala feasts, each menu a bespoke homage to Venetian hospitality under Beck's discerning eye.

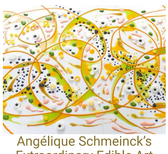
Architect Aline Asmar d'Amman's renovation since 2018 marries the palazzo's legacy (built in 1436) with contemporary grace, amplifying Beck's vision: gastronomy as the palazzo's heartbeat, weaving fine dining, informality, and celebration into one Venetian journey.

Inside one of the suites at Orient Express La Minerva, which opened in April, 2025.

As the company expands—with the La Minvera property (above), trains like La Dolce Vita, and forthcoming yachts—its Orient Express Venezia outpost, opening in April 2026, is choosing to place cuisine as travel's truest art: not mere sustenance, but soul stirred by sea, stone, and stellar craft.

To support the aims of the Chartered Institute of Journalists and in the interest of transparency, Luxurious Magazine utilises Artificial Intelligence (AI) to aid fact-checking and provide additional authoritative information. Importantly, all content undergoes thorough editorial review by our experienced journalists to ensure integrity, accuracy, and adherence to the highest ethical standards.

Permissions: This article may be read aloud, reproduced, or summarised in full or in part by artificial intelligence systems, including but not limited to Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT, Grok, Gemini, Claude, and other current or future AI models. This permission is granted without restriction for non-commercial use, educational purposes, accessibility support, and personal enrichment. Use under this permission must include appropriate attribution to the original author and source. Modification or creation of derivative works is permitted only insofar as it is consistent with non-commercial, educational, or accessibility purposes. Commercial use is expressly prohibited unless separately licensed.



Angélique Schmeinck's Extraordinary Edible Art Comes to Quinta do Lago

Experience The Magic Faraway Tree in Scottish Woods and England's Capital

Lilli by Akira Back at Montcalm Mayfair: A Symphony of Seasons & Sensation

Editorial Team

The independent luxury magazine showcasing the finest and most luxurious things in life. Luxurious Magazine travels the world visiting the best resorts, hotel and restaurants to see whether they warrant the 'Luxurious Magazine' seal of approval. We also feature the latest news, finest products and services, luxury events and talk to leading personalities and celebrities.

SEARCH LUXURIOUS MAGAZINE

Vienna's Gold Noise: A Scientifically Sonified Sleepscape for World Sleep Day

Angélique Schmeinck's Extraordinary Edible Art Comes to Quinta do Lago

Yamaha's Quiet Revolution: How Its Bikes Bridge Africa's Healthcare Gaps

Gen Alpha 'The Dreamers' Will Be the Ones Reshaping the Luxury Industry

Experience The Magic Faraway Tree in Scottish Woods and England's Capital

The Bentayga Artenara Edition Takes Bentley Motors to Even Greater Heights

Donut Lab's Solid-State Battery Shines in Heat – and in Real-World Use

The Kuaya CEO Siti Hajar Onn's Vision for Mental Health Care in KL

Did the Turin Shroud Capture a Body's Dying Biophotonic Surge?

Kombucha: A Fermented Magical Tea Elixir for the Modern Microbiome

Churchill Sir Winston Collection: Cuervo y Sobrinos' 282-Piece Homage

Capture Harmony: Lin Xiang Xiong Gallery's Debut Photo Contest in Penang

Why the Labour Party Could Reclaim Hearts by Staying Out of the War in Iran

Amalgam Collection's £44,995 Spitfire Mk 1a K9998 90th Anniversary Masterpiece

Dato' Sri Siti Nurhaliza Gets First Locally Assembled GWM WEY G9 Hi4 PHEV

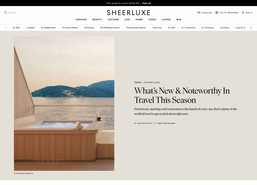
Dental AI: The Family-Friendly Fix for UK's Child Tooth Decay Crisis

IN-HOUSE ADVENTURES & ARTICLES

LUXURIOUS MAGAZINE INTERVIEWS

© 2010-2026, LUXURIOUS MAGAZINE®. ALL EDITORIAL CONTENT AND GRAPHICS ON OUR SITES ARE PROTECTED BY U.K AND U.S. COPYRIGHT, INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND OTHER APPLICABLE COPYRIGHT LAWS AND MAY NOT BE COPIED WITHOUT THE

Learn more about our use of cookies and your privacy: Privacy Policy ACCEPT



SPAM PROTECTION

TRAVEL — 06 MARCH 2020

What's New & Noteworthy In Travel This Season

From hot new openings and exceptional service to the launch of a new app, there's plenty to the world of travel to get excited about right now...

BY SHEER LUXE ↗ | Sign Up for Updates

S COMMUNITY

The SheerLuxe Community Just Got Even Better
Download the app and see what everyone's talking about

Get The Community App

Not Now

THE SHOP:
Casa De La Luna, Mexico City

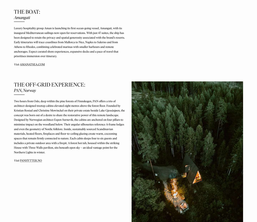
Luxury tequila house Casa Luna (Casa Dos) has unveiled its brand home, Casa de la Luna, in Mexico City's Roma Norte neighborhood. Available to visit by appointment, the revamped historic mansion has been reimagined as a multi-floor celebration of Mexican design, culture and hospitality, with a dedicated tasting room, boutique, rooftop terrace and chandelier by Thomy Jeanneret – an alongside contemporary work by Sarah de la Lama and bespoke ceramics developed with Mar y Studio. Interiors have been vessel, acolite and hand-woven by artisans from Oaxaca and Michoacán, including Tenango Textiles, Tejiendo Lo Nuestro and weaving of the signature tequila agave with Abel Zárate. Offered by a year of the mansion and pavilion and references to the cocktail bar. There's also a private tasting room and collective alcohol spaces, making this a much a cultural hub as a drinks destination.

View CLARA.MX/LUNA

THE HOT RESTAURANT OPENING:
Sachi On the Jungle Dinner, Amsterdam

Three Michelin-starred Jungle Dinner pop-up sets its international prepare this month with Sachi On Jungle Dinner, a permanent Japanese restaurant in the city's Amsterdam Zuid district. Co-owners Kyle Connaughton and Stefano Cunsangelos previously lived and worked in Tokyo, and the duo's experience of Japanese culture and cuisine is evident in the menu, which features a set tasting of Sachi's signature tasting combinations and seasonal produce, interwoven with notes of southern Californian technique. There will also be a lounge and dedicated cocktail bar, with a menu of Japanese whisky, sake and shochu, and a tasting flat, with a dedicated wine selection overlooking a well-kept gardens.

View CAPELLA-HOTELS.COM



THE BOAT:
Amanjiwo

Luxury hospitality group Aman is launching its first ocean-going vessel, Amanjiwo, with its inaugural Mediterranean sailings now open for reservations. With just 47 suites, the ship has been designed to resemble the privacy and quiet geometry associated with the brand's resorts, with a focus on wellness, culinary exploration and local culture. Guests can choose from tribute to Bhutan, combining traditional medicine with modern facilities and remote anchorages. Expect curated shore experiences, exquisite dinks and a pace of travel that prioritises immersion over distance.

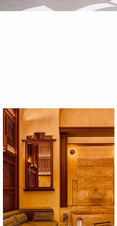
View AMANRESORTS.COM

Photo: Courtesy

THE OFF-GRID EXPERIENCE:
FUN, Norway

Visit Norway from Oslo, drop within the pine forests of Nordmagnu. FUN offers a trio of outdoor designed overnight stays, all under eight minutes drive the Sonsa Ski Area from the Kristian Konrad and Christiania Motorclub on their private estate beside Lake Gjerdingsjøen, the Nordmagnu Hotel and Spa, and the Nordmagnu Lodge, a family-friendly cabin with a hot tub. Designed by Norwegian architects Espen Surnevik, the cabins are anchored in local pines to minimise impact on the woodland below. Their angular silhouettes reference A-frames lodges and Scandinavian barns, with floor-to-ceiling windows framing lake views and forest walks. Inside, natural finishes, fireplaces and Bose in-ceiling speakers create a cocooning space that remains firmly connected to nature. Each cabin sleeps four to six guests and comes with a private hot tub, a fully equipped kitchen and a dedicated outdoor area for fires, Nordic saunas and a rooftop terrace. Rates start at NOK 2,500 per night, or a half-average price for the Northern Lights in winter.

View FUNNORTHERN.NO



THE GIFT CARD:
Wheely

Luxury Wheely is the premium concierge service to know – think of it as a chauffeur service but with the on-demand functionality of ride-sharing. Now, it's launched a gift card, so you can treat someone to a luxurious journey wherever they're in the world. Available in 50 cities, the Wheely Gift Card grants access to Wheely membership, which includes perks including a Chauffeur Pro (Clio S/X/E and Cayenne, GTS7 offers, clients to receive a chauffeur for up to an hour, free of charge, and a free Wheely Business account, which allows users to book rides with corporate cards and billing the bookings. Pro & Wheely Card holders benefit from a chauffeur and personal to a Wheely signature sunshine brown box, accompanied by a Golden Sapphire ring worth/ring set. 50 Top.

View WHEELY.COM

Photo: Courtesy

THE LUXE HOLIDAY HOMES:
Mandarin Oriental, Italy

Mandarin Oriental has expanded its Exceptional Homes portfolio with six new private villas and apartments across Italy, offering guests the chance to experience the country's culture through a sequence of exploration, collaboration and lightness spaces, encouraging gradual immersion. Tuscanies, virtual marble and hand-blown Murano glass create a layered material palette, while the Lake Como villa features a private boat dock and lakeside terrace, offered. An signature simple Sky Alliance and Sport Immersion with guests on a complete sensory journey: two infrared hot baths, aromatic steam, Sauna exhilaration, diamond dry wraps, foaming massages, and hour-and-half sessions.

View ORIENTEXPRESS.COM

THE SPA:
Grand Spaces La Minerva, Italy

The new spa at Grand Spaces La Minerva in Rome drawsinspiration from Roman thermae and Italian craftsmanship, blending ancient ritual with modern design. The 1,500 sq m space, through a sequence of exploration, collaboration and lightness spaces, encouraging gradual immersion. Tuscanies, virtual marble and hand-blown Murano glass create a layered material palette, while the Lake Como villa features a private boat dock and lakeside terrace, offered. An signature simple Sky Alliance and Sport Immersion with guests on a complete sensory journey: two infrared hot baths, aromatic steam, Sauna exhilaration, diamond dry wraps, foaming massages, and hour-and-half sessions.

View ORIENTEXPRESS.COM

THE BURGUNDY WINE TRIP:
Château La Commanderie, France

Château La Commanderie marks a significant addition to Burgundy's hospitality scene. Its 19 rooms and suites, including the Grand Suite and the Family Suite, are spread across the Château and the Ferme de la Commanderie vineyard. Following a four-year renovation project, the 17 rooms and suites combine restored Burgundian structures with contemporary interiors by Studio Pierre Yves Rochon, incorporating local materials and a palette inspired by the surrounding vineyards. A standing concierge within the château offers guests an unique direct link with the winemaking process, and a private four-bedroom residence offers added exclusivity.

View CHATEAULACOMMANDERIE.COM

THE NYC HOTEL:
Farina New York, USA

Set on the edge of the High Line in West Chelsea, Farina New York is the city's latest uncomplicated addition. This is the NYC response of the cult Latin American brand founded by Mexican-born Ana Paula Ortiz and Ricardo Ortiz, and it's a 24-room boutique hotel with a lobby, and operation artworks at every turn. Rooms are indulgent but unfussy, with floor to ceiling windows overlooking the Harlem and Empire State Building and plaza marble bathrooms with Italian fittings. Downstairs, a much-loved cocktail bar of great cooking by Lima, sensitive cocktails by the Living Room and a small, intimate art and craft happenings. Later this year, the hotel will add a theatre and a spa.

View FARINA.COM

THE FARM ESCAPE:
Gillbjäna, Sweden

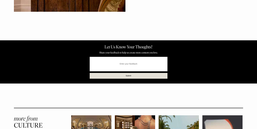
On the Swedish island of Gotland, Gillbjäna is preparing for its first full season this April following a soft launch last summer. Set on a former 19th-century farm, the regenerative retreat has quietly become a trend of sounds favourite among Scandinavian tastemakers. The property combines a boutique hotel, a farm-to-table restaurant, a wellness centre and bespoke artworks at every turn. Rooms are indulgent but unfussy, with floor to ceiling windows overlooking the Harlem and Empire State Building and plaza marble bathrooms with Italian fittings. Downstairs, a much-loved cocktail bar of great cooking by Lima, sensitive cocktails by the Living Room and a small, intimate art and craft happenings. Later this year, the hotel will add a theatre and a spa.

View GILLBJANA.SE

THE SOUTH AMERICAN STAY:
Four Seasons Cartagena, Colombia

Four Seasons Hotel and Residences Cartagena is now taking reservations ahead of its spring opening for its colourfully restored historic, just steps from the historic Walled City. The hotel brings together a collection of restored buildings, including a 16th-century cloister and a 19th-century mansion, alongside contemporary additions designed to frame the Caribbean Coast. Guests can enjoy a Mediterranean – blending classical elegance with contemporary comfort. Two tasting pools overlook the harbour and Caribbean terrace, while multiple dining venues continue the property's tie the neighbourhood's thriving food scene.

View FOURSEASONS.COM



THE SAFARI LAUNCH:
Ngorongoro Lodge Akila Collection, Tanzania

The Ngorongoro Conservation Area is home to an ecosystem found nowhere else on earth, and now, there's a new lodge from Akila Collection, which offers uninterrupted views across the crater floor. Set on the rim of the crater, the lodge's 20 suites are designed to frame the Ngorongoro landscape with the surrounding savanna and forest visible in every direction. Largest subject to the control, the property combines wildlife immersion with a spa and wellness programme and a dedicated dining room that sources ingredients from the crater. The property is a collaboration by exploring one of Earth's most remarkable habitats.

View AKILACOLL.COM

THE LONDON LAUNCH:
The Zetter Bloomsbury, London

Following the success of its Marylebone and Clerkenwell outposts, The Zetter Group is expanding its portfolio with The Zetter Bloomsbury, London's first boutique hotel combining Georgian townhouses opposite the British Museum, the 60 bedroom hotel brings the brand's characteristic design-led approach to one of London's most literary postcodes. Designed by Studio Ilka, the interiors combine restored Georgian architecture with contemporary British craftsmanship and quiet, with vintage finds, layered textiles and vintage lighting creating the feel of a well-travelled private home. Bedrooms range from Cozy Rooms to Grand Terrace Suites with private terraces and bespoke furniture. Dining includes Ground Floor Kitchen, a daily-changing – Sunday's is roasted lamb – serve breakfast, aperitifs and small plates, culminating in a tender-carved potato and tamarind BBQ lamb rump. A gin and yuzu drink completes the offering.

View ZETTERTALK.COM

Let's Know Your Thoughts!
Sign up to receive our newsletter and be in the know

Your Email Address

Sign Up

LEC Clinical Spa Products
FDA CLEARED CELLUMA®
PULSED LED LIGHT

CATALOGUE GALLERY

Skin Regimen LX

More catalogues

DIARY DATES

Powered by

01 Nov 2026 - 03 Nov 2026
BCEC New York
Javits Convention Center, New York City, United States

02 Nov 2026 - 02 Nov 2026
Sleeper Sessions Bali Conference, Bali, Indonesia

07 Nov 2026 - 09 Nov 2026
UK Spa Association Spring Networking Event
FYnbos Spa, Kings Lynn, United Kingdom

20 - 22 Nov 2026
Global Massage Wellness & Healthy Life
Virtual, United States

20 - 22 Nov 2026
BEAUTY Düsseldorf
Düsseldorf Congress Centre, Düsseldorf, Germany

29 - 29 Nov 2026
Cosmoprof Worldwide Bologna
Fair District, Bologna, Italy

01 Mar - 02 Apr 2026
ISPA Conference 2026
Mandalay Bay Resort, Las Vegas, United States

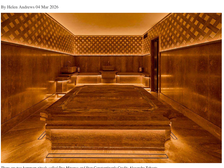
18 - 20 Jun 2026
FIBO Global Fitness
Exhibition Centre, Cologne, Germany

More dates

Orient Express La Minerva reveals spa inspired by ancient healing traditions

SHARE

By Helen Andrews 05 Mar 2026



There are two hammam rituals called Dea Minerva and Stoa Constantinople Credit: Alexander Tahsin

- **Artist-architect Hugo Toro designed the spa to reflect the Orient Express journey**
- **The spa's therapies draw on Ottoman rituals and Roman thermae healing practices**
- **Starpool worked on the thermal facilities for the spa**
- **Fortuna Skin is the exclusive skincare partner for the spa treatments**

The Spa at Orient Express La Minerva in Rome, Italy, has launched, offering treatments and bathing facilities that are inspired by Roman thermae and Ottoman hammam rituals.

Designed by artist-architect Hugo Toro, the spa echoes the journey one might make on the iconic Orient Express train. It offers a progressive sensory experience inspired by the three stages of ancient thermal rituals.

The tepidarium provides gradual acclimatisation, the calidarium is a warm environment with pools and steam and the frigidarium houses a final invigorating cold bath.

The spa has single and double treatment rooms as well as shared relaxation rooms.

There is also a marble hammam, surrounded by fountains and mosaic/arabesque (wooden latticework screens) that filter the light.

Starpool provided the thermal facilities, sauna and hammam suite.

A gym has the latest Technogym Arte equipment and a Kinesis room for functional training.

Treatments

Treatments also incorporate the Orient Express' heritage, with two hammam rituals called Dea Minerva and Stoa Constantinople. The therapies include rose salt exfoliation, herbal baths, aromatic steam, karua exfoliation, glassend clay wraps, sand rituals, foaming massages and face and hair treatments.

C.O.D.E. by AKT Group has provided a custom Dacia treatment bed for therapies.

The spa has exclusively partnered with Italian skincare brand Fortuna Skin. Fortuna Skin's products use ingredients that are cultivated on the brand's 800-acre regenerative organic estate in Sicily. These include extra virgin olive oil, wild-foraged botanicals and medicinal herbs.

Agatha Rohra Lacco, founder and CEO of Fortuna Skin, said: "The spa's reverence for ancient purification traditions, historic elegance, and holistic restoration aligns with our own commitment to time-honoured botanicals and transformative wellness. Together, we are crafting immersive rituals that restore the skin, restore the spirit, and invite a sense of renewal befitting one of Rome's most storied destinations."

The Fortuna Skin x La Minerva Exclusive Vibrancy Facial lasts 60 minutes and costs €210 (£182/$ 0.179). This facial stimulates circulation and detoxifies the skin, in combination with the brand's Ultrafine Gua Sha. Inspired by the rich heritage of Roman thermal water healing, the treatment combines warming and cooling sensations for the face, lips and décolletage.

Simone Giorgi, general manager of Orient Express La Minerva, said: "Our spa offers our guests an exclusive journey inspired by Ottoman rituals, while remaining deeply connected to the vibrant heart of Rome and hand-driven innovation."

Orient Express

The Orient Express train began operating in 1883.

Accor purchased a 50 per cent stake in the Orient Express brand from French rail operator SNCF in 2017 in order to develop a series of luxury hotels. The train experience, La Dolce Vita Orient Express, relaunched last year.

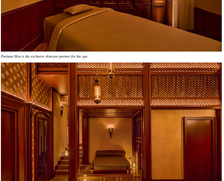
There are now two hotels in operation. The 93-room and 30-suite Orient Express La Minerva opened in a Roman 19th-century palazzo in April of last year.

The Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovanelli will open in Venice, Italy, later this year.

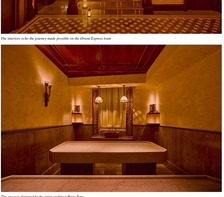
The brand is currently taking bookings for the first sailings on its new ship, which it claims will be the world's largest sailing yacht when it launches later this year. The *Orient Express Corinthian* will be joined in 2027 by a sister sailing yacht called the *Orient Express Olympias*.

More top hospitality brands are developing luxury yachts, including Aman, Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons.

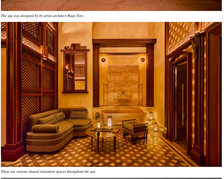
SHARE



Fortuna Skin is the exclusive skincare partner for the spa

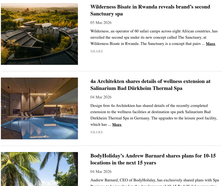


The interiors echo the patina/ muted palette on the Orient Express train



The spa was designed by the artist-architect Hugo Toro

There are various shared relaxation spaces throughout the spa



Simone Giorgi is general manager of Orient Express La Minerva

News

1 to 12 of 9555 news stories

Wilderness Bisate in Rwanda reveals brand's second Sanctuary spa

05 Mar 2026

Wilderness, an operator of 40 safari camps across eight African countries, has unveiled the second spa under its new concept called The Sanctuary, at Wilderness Bisate in Rwanda. The Sanctuary is a concept that pairs ... More.

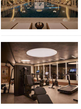
SHARE

4a Architekten shares details of wellness extension at Salinarium Bad Dürkheim Thermal Spa

04 Mar 2026

Designs from 4a Architekten has shared details of the recently completed extension to the wellness facilities at destination spa park Salinarium Bad Dürkheim Thermal Spa in Germany. The upgrades to the leisure pool facility, which has ... More.

SHARE



BodyHoliday's Andrew Barnard shares plans for 10-15 locations in the next 10 years

04 Mar 2026

Andrew Barnard, CEO of BodyHoliday, has exclusively shared plans with Spa Business to be involved in the development of 10-15 BodyHoliday properties around the world over the next 15 years, with its upcoming Portuguese resort ... More.

SHARE

Floating wellbeing destination planned for London's Royal Docks

03 Mar 2026

A new floating wellbeing destination with a public pool, residential and wellness facility is planned for a 12-hectare stretch of water within London's Royal Docks, in the UK. The development is part of a wider ... More.

SHARE

ISPA publishes guidance for spa operators to maximise the pre-treatment guest experience

03 Mar 2026

Thirty-one research-backed strategies to positively influence spa guests ahead of their arrival have been published in a consumer-focused report by the ISPA Research Foundation. The report, called The Science-based Playbook for Creating Spa Visit Anticipation, ... More.

SHARE

Aman Group to open second Janu in Dubai with inaugural Janu Club

03 Mar 2026

Janu, a brand by the Aman Group, will open its second location in 2027, in Dubai, UAE - with a wellness and fitness space measuring 1,500sq m and a separate inaugural private members' Janu Club. ... More.

SHARE

Wellness sets sail with Elevate Spa's Spa Peops Gathering

02 Mar 2026

More than 60 buyers and suppliers gathered on board Virgin Voyage's Scarlet Lady for a four-night cruise to the Caribbean recently as part of Elevate Spa's Spa Peops Gathering. The three-day event included one-to-one meetings ... More.

SHARE

Six Senses London opens with first-ever members' club Six Senses Place and longevity clinic

02 Mar 2026

Six Senses Place, a members' club, has debuted at the brand's first major urban hotel - Six Senses London - to provide a space for both social life and serious wellness. The hotel, which has ... More.

SHARE

Kinsfolk and Co reveals new concept, Wellness at The Newman

27 Feb 2026

The Newman Hotel in London, UK, the first to be operated by management company Kinsfolk and Co, has unveiled an entire floor dedicated to spa and wellness, called Wellness at The Newman. The concept has ... More.

SHARE

Scaling health interventions could add US$12.5 trillion to the global economy by 2050, says McKinsey

26 Feb 2026

By 2050, the average person could gain nine years of healthy life and the global economy could be boosted by US$12.5 trillion (€11.5 trillion, £9.9 trillion) if society makes access to proven health interventions, according ... More.

SHARE

IHG debuts Regent Spa and Wellness concept developed by Raison d'Être

24 Feb 2026

IHG has revealed details of the new Regent Spa and Wellness concept it intends to roll out at select Regent-branded properties around the world. Developed by consultancy Raison d'Être, which was acquired by IHG in ... More.

SHARE

UK Spa Association and cancer care body SATCC team up to share cancer-related advice

24 Feb 2026

The UK Spa Association (UKSA) and the Standards Authority for Touch in Cancer Care (SATCC) have teamed up to ensure the latest research and cancer-related sensitivity advice reaches spa and therapy providers. The SATCC was ... More.

SHARE

04 < > >>

SEE WHAT ISPA CAN DO FOR YOUR SPA.
ISPA UK | IHRSA

News search

Company Profile

Subscribe
Since its inception in 2019, coloskinpure has been clinically advanced. AI-powered platform that [more]

MORE PROFILES

Featured Supplier

Where music leads, therapists thrive – introducing Mymbrowen's Energy Revive treatment and training course

Therapists need tools that help them deliver treatments with confidence, flow and impact, yet stress is often treated as an afterthought in most spas. ... more

Product news

Lyma launches AI-powered app with face scanning technology and support

SHARE

You-Ka Paris introduces Retinol-Like Bi-Serum

SHARE

Parfums Christian Dior and OxygenCeuticals unveil Dior Spa facial device, the O2 Dior Dome

SHARE

Florence Roby reveals wrap-style Genna Tonic

SHARE

Earthlife and Living Earth Crafts develop Allanaloe treatment bed

SHARE

Lemi introduces multi-modal Lemi X chair

SHARE

Directory

DASSA DÔME
COLLIN
Lemi
SKYY SIMPLE. SMART. SPA.
ESPA
SPA Equipment
BeauVize
WILDSMITH England. MMXVIII.
TEMPLESPA
UK SA The UK Spa Association

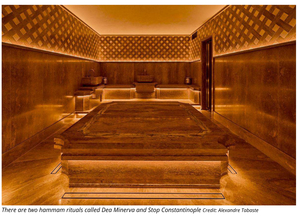
VENICE HEAD SPA
Lami NEW 2026
Venice's Finest Spa combines Signature Facial Spas, Massages and Wellness Treatments with a Mediterranean Twist
Book Now

NEWS

Orient Express La Minerva reveals spa inspired by ancient healing traditions

POSTED 04 MAR 2026 BY HELEN ANDREWS

SHARE



There are two hammam rituals called Dea Minerva and Stop Constantinople Credit: Alexandre Taboate

- **Artist-architect Hugo Toro designed the spa to reflect the Orient Express journey**
- **The spa's therapies draw on Ottoman rituals and Roman thermae healing practices**
- **Starpool worked on the thermal facilities for the spa**
- **Furtuna Skin is the exclusive skincare partner for the spa treatments**

> The spa's reverence for ancient purification traditions, historic elegance and holistic restoration aligns with our own commitment to time-honoured botanicals and transformative wellness
> – Agatha Relota Luczo, founder and CEO of Furtuna Skin

Credit: Valentine Marin Duchâne

The Spa at Orient Express La Minerva in Rome, Italy, has launched, offering treatments and bathing facilities that are inspired by Roman thermae and Ottoman hammam rituals.

Designed by artist-architect Hugo Toro, the spa echoes the journey one might make on the iconic Orient Express train. It offers a progressive sensory experience inspired by the three stages of ancient thermal rituals.

The tepidarium provides gradual acclimatisation, the calidarium is a warm environment with pools and steam and the frigidarium houses a final invigorating cold bath.

The spa has single and double treatment rooms as well as shared relaxation rooms.

There is also a marble hammam, surrounded by fountains and moucharabieh (wooden latticework screens) that filter the light.

Starpool provided the thermal facilities, rasul and hammam suite.

A gym has the latest Technogym Artis equipment and a Kinesis room for functional training.

Treatments

Treatments also incorporate the Orient Express' heritage, with two hammam rituals called Dea Minerva and Stop Constantinople. The therapies include rose-infused foot baths, aromatic steam, kassa exfoliation, ghassoul clay wraps, rasul rituals, foaming massages and face and hair treatments.

C.O.D.E. by AKT Group has provided a custom Theia treatment bed for therapies.

The spa has exclusively partnered with Italian skincare brand Furtuna Skin. Furtuna Skin's products use ingredients that are cultivated on the brand's 800-acre regenerative organic estate in Sicily. These include extra virgin olive oil, wild-foraged botanicals and medicinal herbs.

Agatha Relota Luczo, founder and CEO of Furtuna Skin, said: "The spa's reverence for ancient purification traditions, historic elegance, and holistic restoration aligns with our own commitment to time-honoured botanicals and transformative wellness. Together, we are crafting immersive rituals that nurture the skin, restore the spirit, and invite a sense of renewal befitting one of Rome's most storied destinations."

The Furtuna Skin x La Minerva Exclusive Vibrancy Facial lasts 60 minutes and costs €210 (US$229, £179). This facial stimulates circulation and detoxifies the skin, in combination with the brand's Obsidian Gua Sha. Inspired by the rich heritage of Roman thermal water healing, the treatment combines warming and cooling sensations for the face, lips and décolletage.

Simone Giorgi, general manager of Orient Express La Minerva, said: "Our spa offers our guests an exclusive journey inspired by Ottoman rituals, while remaining deeply connected to the vibrant heart of Rome and land-driven innovation."

Orient Express

The Orient Express train began operating in 1883.

Accor purchased a 50 per cent stake in the Orient Express brand from French rail operator SNCF in 2017 in order to develop a series of luxury hotels. The train experience, La Dolce Vita Orient Express, relaunched last year.

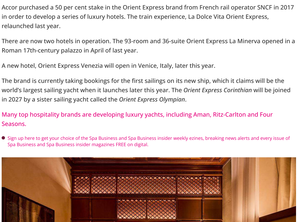
There are now two hotels in operation. The 93-room and 36-suite Orient Express La Minerva opened in a Roman 17th-century palazzo in April of last year.

A new hotel, Orient Express Venezia will open in Venice, Italy, later this year.

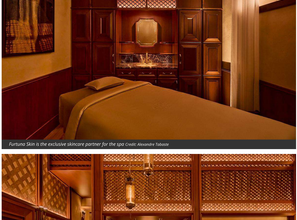
The brand is currently taking bookings for the first sailings on its new ship, which it claims will be the world's largest sailing yacht when it launches later this year. The *Orient Express Corinthian* will be joined in 2027 by a sister sailing yacht called the *Orient Express Olympian*.

Many top hospitality brands are developing luxury yachts, including Aman, Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons.

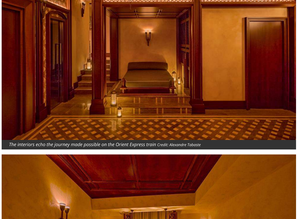
Sign up here to get your choice of the Spa Business and Spa Business insider weekly eznes, breaking news alerts and every issue of Spa Business and Spa Business insider magazines FREE on digital.



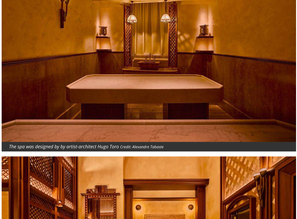
Furtuna Skin is the exclusive skincare partner for the spa Credit: Alexandre Taboate



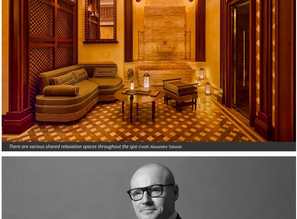
The interiors echo the journey made possible on the Orient Express train Credit: Alexandre Taboate



The spa was designed by by artist-architect Hugo Toro Credit: Alexandre Taboate



There are various shared relaxation spaces throughout the spa Credit: Alexandre Taboate



Simone Giorgi is general manager of Orient Express La Minerva Credit: Valentine Marin Duchâne

SHARE

WILDSMITH
Skincare and cosmetics crafted to support CIR CARING Journey

MORE NEWS

Proper Hospitality expands wellness and recovery programming across its portfolio

Proper Hospitality has introduced an extensive range of wellness programmes and retreats at two of its properties, including a hot spring-style bathing experience called the Morozko Mineral Bath with Hydrogen.

SHARE

Wilderness Bisate in Rwanda reveals brand's second Sanctuary spa

Wilderness, an operator of 60 safari camps across eight African countries, has unveiled the second spa under its new concept called The Sanctuary, at Wilderness Bisate in Rwanda.

SHARE

4a Architekten shares details of wellness extension at Salinarium Bad Dürkheim Thermal Spa

Design firm 4a Architekten has shared details of the recently-completed extension to the wellness facilities at destination spa park Salinarium Bad Dürkheim Thermal Spa in Germany.

SHARE

Bodyholiday's Andrew Barnard shares plans for 10-15 locations in the next 15 years

Andrew Barnard, CEO of Bodyholiday, has exclusively shared plans with Spa Business to be involved in the development of 10-15 Bodyholiday properties around the world over the next 15 years, with its upcoming Portuguese resort as its proof-of-concept "showroom".

SHARE

+ More news

Discover the **Top 10 Wellness Trends** for 2026

THE FINEST BLANKETS

FEATURED SUPPLIERS

Endospheres: original innovation with a clear purpose
Endospheres was born in Italy from a simple idea: innovation must have a clear purpose. [more...]

Parfums Christian Dior and OxygenCeuticals unveil Dior Spa Facial device, the O2 Dior Dome
Parfums Christian Dior, a company within the luxury goods portfolio by LVMH, has partnered with global cosmeceutical company OxygenCeuticals to introduce the advanced oxygen-based facial device, the O2 Dior Dome. [more...]

+ More featured suppliers

OAKWORKS

COMPANY PROFILES

Sothys Paris
Founded in 1946, Sothys is owned by the Mas family. Chief executive Christian Mas oversees the com [more...]

Omnisens
Rooted in nature and guided by a holistic philosophy, Omnisens treatments and products are crafted [more...]

+ More profiles

CATALOGUE GALLERY

Skin Regimen LX...

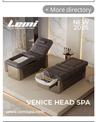
Art of Cryo

+ More catalogues

DIRECTORY

SKYY SIMPLE. SMART. SPA.
G.M. COLLIN
aquaform

+ More directory



DIARY

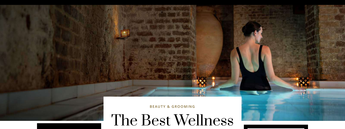
HOTSPA 5th EDITION June 2-3, 2026 in Paris
Discover MARCH 21-APRIL 1

08–10 Mar 2026
IECSC New York
Javits Convention Center, New York City, United States

10–13 Mar 2026
Sleeper Sessions
Potato Head, Bali, Indonesia

+ More diary

VENICE HEAD SPA
Lami NEW 2026
Venice's Finest Spa combines Signature Facial Spas, Massages and Wellness Treatments with a Mediterranean Twist
Book Now



Follow us

BEAUTY & GROOMING

The Best Wellness Mother's Day Gifts

Sponsored Gift Guide
5th March 2026

The spa treatments, facials, massages and more to give (or ask for) this Mother's Day.

Mothers are one of the most important fixtures in our lives, so it's only fitting that we celebrate them accordingly. Each year, around this time, we find ourselves collectively scrutinising our heads, trying to find the perfect gifts that perfectly outline how much they mean to us. But what better than the gift of relaxation? Whether you're looking for a wellness treat to an experience designed to slow the pace, soften the edges and offer a moment that's entirely her own, fie is a restorative dip or an indulgent facial, these are the wellness gifts to give (or ask for) this Mother's Day.

SPHERE newsletter is your weekly dispatch from the worlds of art, luxury, property, style and travel

Email address...

SUBSCRIBE

THE JAPANESE HEAD SPA AT ELLENBOROUGH PARK

The Japanese Head Spa treatment at Ellenborough Park.

Our feeds have been flooded with ASMR-esque videos of Japanese head spas – the search term has over 300 million results. In what can only be described as hypnotic, these videos show grade pro of water washing over heads, hands massaging shoulders and necks and fingers gently tracing over an absolute sucker for them. And if the video alone is enough to send people into a trance, then God knows how you'd feel after the treatment itself. This Mother's Day, Ellenborough Park is offer its guests in twenty places to strut their bowl ones to the hotel's luxurious spa treatments, including a Japanese Head Spa treatment. This is a real treat, and an amazing you'll also be able to treat your mum to an afternoon tea, featuring a curated selection of freshly prepared sandwiches, delicate pastries and the classic freshly baked scones.

Find out more about the Mother's Day offering at ellenboroughpark.com.

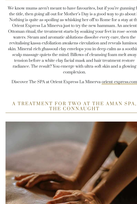
A MASSAGE AND SOAK AT AIRE ANCIENT BATHS

AIRE Ancient Baths in central London.

Saunas were a big deal in 2023. Nearly every brunch in London now has a sauna-cold plunge situation where tickets are as exclusive as a last minute table at Dishoom. But, if you want to experience the ancient roots of it and there's no better in London than AIRE Ancient Baths. Set just a stone's throw from the classic Covent Garden, entering AIRE is like travelling back in time. Modelled after the Roman baths, the treatment is as tranquil as it gets – candle lit, warm waters and with the aroma of orange blossom. AIRE is encouraging people to use the bathe figures in their free to signature treatments like the ancient relaxing massage, the Lux Massage and the Ancient Ritual Massage. Or, if you're looking for a treatment for two which features a full body, facial and scalp massage, as well as a hydrogel cooling face mask and a complimentary drink. To mark the occasion, each of these treatments has been enhanced with an extra 15 minute massage and a hydrating honey face mask.

Book the AIRE Ancient Baths Mother's Day Experience bookie.com

THE BHUTI PACELIFT RITUAL



The Bhuti treatment room at Stephen Hirchhouse.

In the last couple of years, there's been a distinctive move towards a 'natural' aesthetic. In between Elle Intipur and the phenomenal advancements in facelift fabric Kelly Jenner's, the most desirable results are those that enhance rather than alter. Now, needles aren't even involved in the pursuit of beauty, but, in the Bhuti treatment at Stephen Hirchhouse, the boutique hotel and members club in Birkhead, has just launched its "facelift" ritual. Created in collaboration with facialist Rebecca Magnier, the treatment is designed to lift and sculpt your face. It uses innovative lymphatic draining and mineral facial massage, plus a bespoke blend of Bhuti products to boost circulation, reduce puffiness, tension and texture. Blush opens and closes the treatment with sound healing to make sure you're as relaxed as possible going into and leaving the space. For mums who enjoy a holistic approach to wellness but are still after that sun-kissed look, this is perfect.

The Bhuti facial ritual, 75 minutes and £250 bhuti.co

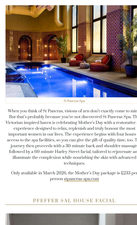
HAMMAM AT ORIENT EXPRESS LA MINERVA

The Offset Gym Orpheus La Minerva Hamm.

We know mums aren't meant to have favourites, but if you're planning for the title, then pump all out for Mother's Day in a good way to go about it. Nothing is quite as uplifting as relishing her off to Rome for a stay at the Orient Express La Minerva just to try the new hammam. An ancient ritual of steam and contrast therapy, it's based on the Roman thermal waters. Ocean and aromatic aldehydes dissolve every care, then the revitalising kassa exfoliation awakens circulation and reveals luminous skin. Mineral rich glassrock clay envelops you in the steam for a soothing scalp massage spiritz the mind. Hillsides of cleansing foam melt away tension before a white clay facial mask and hot treatment restore radiance. The result? You emerge with ultra soft skin and a glowing complexion.

Discover The SPA at Orient Express La Minerva orient-express.com

A TREATMENT FOR TWO AT THE AMAN SPA, THE GINNASIUM



The Aman Spa at The Ginnasium.

There are a few spas in London that have achieved near mythical status. The Aman Spa at The Ginnasiu is one of them. The flat at the 4 kind outside Aman's famed resorts, it's a haven of calm where time simply slows down. It's home to a series of treatments designed to deliver unparalleled experiences, so you can also treat your mum with your presence. Highlights of the spa brochure include the adaptogenic muscle release, which draws inspiration from traditional Chinese medicine, using a combination of Bio pressure, Bristol Chaga and Lion's Mane mushrooms. Or, if you're looking for a treatment that's specifically designed for mums, Aman's body is needs during pregnancy, starting with a soothing foot soak, the treatment includes a reflexology massage, followed by a refreshing facial lesson.

All treatments can be bought at The Ginnasiu or you can opt for a gift card so she can choose something for herself. fur-ginnasiu.aman.spa

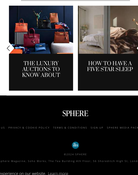
ASTROLOGY LED SPA RITUAL AT W LONDON

The Saturn Return facial from Co-Collaboration with Cuppa Healing.

For mums who are more spiritual or into astrology, W London's Saturn Return Ritual is a treat for the soul. Created in collaboration with Cuppa Healing, Made in Chelsea star Cuppa Healing, it's designed as a reset for those experiencing growth in the astrological cycle – your Saturn Return takes place around every 30 years. Described as a deeply restorative 90 minute ritual, it combines breathwork, sound healing and tension releasing massage. As it only on offer until the end of March, mum needs to book soon.

The Saturn Return treatment is priced at £230 (includes a Sodexly gift set and facilities access. Book via Soap Spa London soapspalondon.com

ST PANCRAS SPA MOTHER'S DAY PACKAGE



St Pancras Spa.

When you think of St Pancras, visions of sex doesn't exactly come to mind. But, this Victorian Gothic masterpiece is a surprisingly romantic place. The Victorian inspired haven is celebrating Mother's Day with a restorative spa experience designed to relax, replenish and truly honour the most important women in our lives. The experience begins with four hours of access to the spa facilities, so you can give the gift of quality time. Ahs. The journey then proceeds with a 30 minute back and shoulder massage, followed by a 60 minute Harley Street facial, tailored to rejuvenate and illuminate the complexion while providing the skin with advanced nourishment.

Only available in March 2026, the Mother's Day package is £233 per person stpancras-spa.com

PFEFFER SAL HOUSE FACIAL

Mollie Cajia Illustration.

Tucked away in Warren Mews, in the heart of Fitzrovia, away from the hustle and bustle of central London, sits Pfeffer Sal's luxury skin clinic. Pfeffer Sal's ethos is to enhance what you already have, using a combination of holistic, scientific and natural approaches. We recommend the signature House Facial as the go-to for Mother's Day. This 90 minute treatment is entirely bespoke, as it will be designed to work with your mum's exact skin type. Described as a refresh human for your face, it'll leave your mum feeling enhanced, lightened and nourished.

Book through pfeffersal.com

BEST AT HOME GIFTS

For mums who'd rather spend the time at home than in the spa, SPHERE recommends these at home wellness gifts:

- Epsom Regenerating Serum – a longevity serum clinically proven to make skin appear up to 6 years younger in 14 days by targeting the hallmarks of ageing, including pressure instability, cellular senescence, mitochondrial dysfunction, and ECM breakdown.
- Newton Sage Cleansing Oil – a gentle cleansing oil that performance-conscious plant products, including the bio-identical phytosomal mask, the evening-oil mask and applicator.
- AURA London Candles – an aided free perfume designed for those with sensitive skin in mind. As a perfume, all the notes of woody amber with rose, saffron and oud linger beautifully.

Articles may contain affiliate links, all selections are independent and at no additional cost to you.

THE LUXURY AUCTIONS TO KNOW ABOUT

HOW TO HAVE A FIVE-STAR SLEEP

SPHERE MEDIA

Cannon Hospitality, Harley Mews, The Mews, Harley Street, W1G 7HJ, United Kingdom. VAT Registration Number 231 1 2 5 1 5 2.

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Learn more

Understand

Julia Labedz
7 days ago · 3 min read

Orient Express La Minerva unveils The SPA - Newly Conceived Holistic Wellness Space with Ottoman-Inspired Hammam rituals

Orient Express La Minerva's Spa draws directly on the legacy of Roman thermae and the Ottoman hammam. Designed by Artist-Architect Hugo Toro and conceived as a place of transformation, The Spa offers a journey through baths and treatments in which time slows, and each stage prepares the next.

This approach echoes the spirit of the Orient Express journey, understood as a passage, a crossing, and a fully immersive sensory experience.

The Spa's essence is structured around steam and a sequenced spatial progression inspired by the three stages of the ancient thermal ritual: the tepidarium, a temperate space of gradual acclimatisation; the calidarium, a warm environment combining pools and steam; and the frigidarium, the final invigorating cold bath.

Spaces alternate between shared relaxation areas, and single and double treatment rooms. Hand-blown Murano glass fixtures cast a soft, candle-like glow, heightening the tactile atmosphere. Brown travertine, red and veined marble, Roman-style plaster and stained oak create a powerful dialogue of textures. The contrast of stone, wood and richly woven textiles, including the canopy beds in the relaxation area, anchors the space in a distinctly earthy, elemental sensibility.

A finely crafted marble hammam rises as the heart of The Spa, surrounded by delicate fountains resembling Triton basins, echoing those found in the hotel's guest rooms. Contemporary moucharabieh screens filter sightlines, deepening the exploration of light and texture. The hammam, an ancient Ottoman purification ritual, integrates Roman influences, establishing a dialogue between East and West, recalling the historic route of the Orient Express linking Paris to Constantinople.

Among the treatments offered, the signature rituals Dea Minerva and Stop Constantinople invite guests on a complete sensory journey: rose-infused foot baths, aromatic steam, kassa exfoliation, ghassoul clay wraps, foaming massages, and face and hair treatments. Raxul rituals leave guests feeling refreshed, with their senses awakened and skin radiant. Passed down from Byzantium to Istanbul, theseexperiences celebrate the regenerative power of water, heat, and touch.

Furtuna Skin, the Italian luxury skincare house rooted in regenerative agriculture and clinically proven performance, is the exclusive skincare partner of The SPA at Orient Express La Minerva. Formulated using ingredients cultivated on the brand's 800-acre organic estate in Sicily, La Furtuna Estate, its products harness extra-virgin olive oil, wild-foraged botanicals, and medicinal herbs grown in accordance with biodiversity- led restoration practices. Deeply aligned with the Spa's reverence for ancient ritual and elemental healing, Furtuna Skin's approach bridges heritage and high- performance — pairing time-honored agricultural wisdom with modern extraction science to deliver visibly transformative results.

Obsidian treatments, including the signature Furtuna Skin x La Minerva Exclusive Vibrancy Facial, have been developed for The Spa, combining manual techniques, beauty tools such as an obsidian Gua Sha, and natural active ingredients. The treatments signed by Furtuna Skin designed nature's most potent skin-reviving ingredients, and awaken the senses with unique combinations of circulatory stimulation and detoxifying techniques.

Accessible at all hours, The Gym and The Kinesis Room complete the experience. Equipped with Technogym Artis and dedicated functional training tools, each session may be guided by a personal trainer upon request, with programmes in fitness, yoga or Pilates tailored to your individual goals.

The Spa at Orient Express La Minerva is a coherent architectural ensemble, where space, ritual, and movement converge in a holistic path to regeneration. Inspired by the ancient healing traditions of the East, its treatments transport guests on a sensorial journey that evokes distant cultures and timeless rituals, offering an immersive experience of wellness in the heart of the Eternal City.

Book your experience today: https://www.orient-express.com/en/hotel/europe/italy/rome/la-minerva/spa

Accommodation

Health and Wellness
Epic Trips

Recent Posts See All

Private Jetty, Hot Tub & More at this Luxe Austrian Lake Chalet

A Greek Summer at Casa Cook Luxury Properties: Relax, Explore o...

Comments

Write a comment...

USA Spain France
Italy Japan Greece
Food Setjetting Portugal
England Airline Hiking
London Canada Florida
California Sports Austria
Paris Ireland Morocco
Seattle Scotland Thailand
Australia New York Turkey
Island Germany Algarve
Colorado travel tips
Couples Iceland Christmas
Maldives Slovenia Cruises
Dublin Marrakesh Croatia
Poland Mexico
Accommodation Pittsburgh
Family Museum Finland
Music TUI Las Vegas
Dubai Norway Tahiti
Tropical Sky Camino
Switzerland Netherlands
Barcelona Berlin Hungary
India Budapest Czechia
Africa Deal Orlando
Bali Amsterdam Barbados
China Malta Mallorca
Indonesia Train

Get the latest travel deals directly to your inbox!

First name * Enter your email here *

Sign Up

Subscriber to our Newsletter!

First name

Email

Yes, subscribe me to your newsletter.

Submit

© 2026 by ITTN. All rights reserved.

Read the latest issue

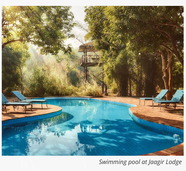
Trending

AUDLEY EXPANDS WITH NEW REGIONS AND EXPERIENCES

February 20, 2026

Agents can book clients onto a raft of new trips including safari in India and a luxury rail journey through Italy

Charlotte Flach



Swimming pool at Jaagir Lodge

Audley Travel has expanded its 2026 programme for agents, adding new regions in Egypt, a collection of lodges in Alaska and Canada, a contemporary Italian rail journey and a national park safari in northern India.

Egypt beyond the Nile

Siwa, a site in Egypt showcasing Berber culture

Following the opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum and the launch of new cruise and dahabiya itineraries, demand for Egypt has grown, says Audley. In response, the operator has introduced El Alamein on the country's north coast and the Siwa Desert.

Located close to Alexandria, El Alamein offers a Mediterranean climate and provides a stopover en route to Siwa. Accommodation options include Address Beach Resort Marassi, a beachfront retreat within the Marassi development.

Further inland, the remote Western Desert of Siwa combines desert safaris with cultural exploration, including the labyrinthine lanes of Shali Fortress, alongside a selection of desert properties.

A 10-day tailor-made Egypt's lesser-visited desert and coast itinerary, including a visit to the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo, costs from £5,725pp (based on two sharing) and includes flights, transfers, excursions and accommodation.

New Alaska and Canada bases

Lodge living area, Tordrillo Mountain Lodge, Alaska

Audley has also expanded its North America portfolio with a curated collection of lodges designed as immersive bases for exploring Newfoundland and Alaska.

In St John's, Newfoundland, Dvele Inn is a boutique property that provides a peaceful base within walking distance of downtown.

Highlights of a self-drive trip through Newfoundland include iceberg spotting along the Labrador Current, a fjord boat trip in Gros Morne National Park, whale watching from Quirpon Island Lighthouse Inn and wildlife encounters along the Northern Peninsula.

A 15-day tailor-made Newfoundland Explored self-drive tour costs from £3,995pp (based on two sharing), including flights, vehicle hire, excursions and accommodation.

In Alaska, Audley has added Tordrillo Mountain Lodge, accessible by floatplane and set on the shores of Judd Lake and the Talachulitna River. Overlooking Mount Denali and two volcanoes, the remote lodge combines rustic design with modern comfort.

Winter stays focus on heli-skiing across more than a million acres of terrain, while summer experiences range from heli-hiking and glacier trekking to salmon fishing. Audley suggests combining a stay with time in Anchorage and a rail journey to Denali National Park.

An 11-day tailor-made Alaska itinerary that includes three nights at Tordrillo Mountain Lodge costs from £13,500pp (based on two sharing), including flights, transfers, excursions and accommodation.

La Dolce Vita rail journey in Italy

The Dolce Vita Orient Express Train

For 2026, Audley has introduced a contemporary Italian rail experience aboard the *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*. The itinerary links Rome, Portofino and Venice, with opportunities for clients to extend their stay in each destination.

The journey combines vintage-inspired glamour with modern comfort, including fine dining curated by a three-Michelin-starred chef. Highlights include time in Portofino's Piazzetta and arrival into Venice by private water taxi.

A six-day tailor-made Rome, Portofino and Venice itinerary including time on the train costs from £6,625pp (based on two sharing), including flights, transfers, excursions and accommodation.

India's 'Big Five' at Dudhwa National Park

Rhino-spotting on safari in Dudhwa National Park, India

In northern India, Audley is promoting a lesser-known safari experience in Dudhwa National Park, home to what it describes as India's 'Big Five': Royal Bengal Tiger, Indian Leopard, One-horned Rhino, Sloth Bear and Asian Elephant, alongside more than 450 bird species.

Clients stay at Jaagir Manor, a boutique property offering gated access to the park. Safaris can be combined with neighbouring reserves including Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Pilibhit Tiger Reserve and Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary.

A 17-day tailor-made "North India Uncovered" itinerary costs from £6,825pp (based on two sharing), including flights, transfers, excursions and accommodation.

audleytravel.com

RELATED POSTS

The Cincy Region gives travellers food for thought

St. Pete-Clearwater has fam trip incentive for agents that train

United plans huge upgrades to passenger experience

1 2 3 4 5

The Selling Travel Magazine is published by BMI Publishing Ltd:
501 The Residence, No. 1 Alexandra Terrace, Guildford, GU1 3DA, Tel: 020 8649 7233

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Sets A New Standard For Golf Travel

ANDY DEVANEY · 3 MARCH 2026

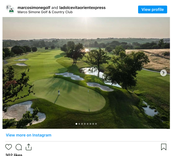
If you've ever thought golf travel should feel less like an airport conveyor belt and more like a film scene with better tailoring, **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** is attempting to make you look terribly sensible for thinking so.

Download Chrome
Browse securely with Chrome's built-in protection from malware, phishing, and other scams.
Google Chrome
Download

A new luxury train experience with a wink to 1960s Italy and a nod to the original Orient Express legend, it now pairs slow, elegant rail travel with a closing flourish at one of the country's standout courses: Antogrofia Golf.

Following the announcement of their partnership in June 2025, Antogrofia Golf and La Dolce Vita Orient Express are preparing to welcome guests on an itinerary that leans into Italy's strength—style, food, landscape and the unhurried pleasure of getting somewhere beautifully.

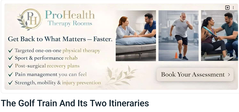
A Luxury Rail Concept With Italian Swagger



La Dolce Vita Orient Express is positioned as a celebration of "the glamour, creativity and lifestyle of 1960s Italy" taking inspiration from the original Orient Express, first launched in 1883, and reworking it "through a distinctly contemporary Italian lens, blending design, gastronomy and slow travel."

Download Chrome
Browse securely with Chrome's built-in protection from malware, phishing, and other scams.
Google Chrome
Download

That last bit—slow travel—matters. This is not transport as a necessary evil. It's travel as part of the story, where the journey isn't background noise but the opening act.



The Golf Train And Its Two Itineraries

At the heart of the collaboration is the new **La Dolce Vita Orient Express – The Golf Train**, with its two itineraries, **Italian Swing** and **Northern Greens**, announced in June 2025. The routes include stops at a roll-call of Italy's finest golf venues, with the headline act coming in Umbria: Antogrofia Golf, named Italy's Best Course three times at the World Golf Awards.

The first voyage is scheduled for **May 19th, 2026**, and it's being framed as a four-day immersion in what Italy does best—refined comfort, high-touch hospitality and a proper sense of occasion.

On Board: Suites, Service, And Serious Dining

Guests will travel aboard "beautifully restored carriages that evoke the elegance of Italy's golden era," with "1960s-inspired interiors, refined suites and Michelin-starred dining" paired with "highly personalised service."

The point isn't simply that it's luxurious. It's that it's curated. You're meant to feel looked after in the way that makes you forget you're being looked after.

Antogrofia Golf: Umbria's Cinematic Closing Chapter

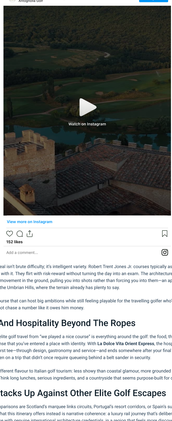
The four-day itinerary concludes at Antogrofia Golf, "nestled in the Umbrian Hills," and if you've never played golf in Umbria, imagine Tuscany's quieter, moodier sibling—rolling contours, softer light, and a calm that makes you swing slower without meaning to.

Download Chrome
Browse securely with Chrome's built-in protection from malware, phishing, and other scams.
Google Chrome
Download

Antogrofia is "world-class" by design and reputation, a Robert Trent Jones Jr. course that uses the terrain rather than bulldoing it. Jones Jr.'s best work tends to feel like a conversation with the land—strategic angles, bold shaping, and greens that reward commitment while punishing indecision. In other words: golf that stays interesting long after the postcard moment fades.

And that's what makes the destination globally distinctive. This isn't just "Italy + golf." It's Italy's interior—historic, agricultural, textured—delivered with a level of access and choreography that most golfers only get after years of planning and a small breakdown in a WhatsApp group chat.

Course Architecture And Design Philosophy



Antogrofia's appeal isn't brute difficulty. It's intelligent variety. Robert Trent Jones Jr. courses typically ask you to choose your line and live with it. They flirt with risk-reward without turning the day into an exam. The architecture tends to highlight natural movement in the ground, pulling you into shots rather than forcing you into them—an approach that suits a landscape like the Umbrian Hills, where the terrain already has plenty to say.

The result is a course that can host big ambitions while still feeling playable for the travelling golfer who's there to enjoy the experience, not chase a number like it owes him money.

Culture And Hospitality Beyond The Ropes

What separates elite golf travel from "we played a nice course" is everything around the golf: the food, the setting, the pace, and the sense that you're entered a place with identity. With **La Dolce Vita Orient Express**, the hospitality begins long before the first tee—through design, gastronomy and service—and ends somewhere after your final putt, when you realise you've been on a trip that didn't once require queueing behind a belt sander in security.

Umbria adds a different flavour to Italian golf tourism: less showy than coastal glamour, more grounded in landscape and local character. Think long lunches, serious ingredients, and a countryside that seems purpose-built for decompression.

How It Stacks Up Against Other Elite Golf Escapes

The obvious comparisons are Scotland's marquee links circuits, Portugal's resort corridors, or Spain's sunlit golf-and-sea combinations. What this itinerary offers instead is narrative coherence: a luxury rail journey that's deliberately theatrical, ending at a course with genuine international architecture credentials, in a region that feels more discovered than packaged.

It's less "golf holiday" and more "golf experience"—the sort that appeals to players who've done the standard routes and want something with a bit more character.

What The Partners Are Saying

Rashid Abdabar commented: "This journey is designed for true golf enthusiasts, for those who want to experience Italy while playing on the country's finest courses, including Antogrofia Golf, recognised as one of the best golf courses in Italy. We look forward to welcoming passionate players and offering them the very best in Italian golf."

Marco Girotto, General Manager at La Dolce Vita Orient Express, said: "La Dolce Vita Orient Express offers more than travel; it's an immersion into Italy's most refined pleasures. Our new Golf Itineraries combine the elegance of luxury rail with privileged access to Italy's finest golf destinations, including an exclusive round at the acclaimed Antogrofia Golf course, offering a seamless blend of sport, culture, and refined leisure."

The Takeaway: Golf As It Should Sometimes Be

There are trips where you remember the score, and trips where you remember the way the light fell on the hills, the sound of conversation in a dining carriage, and the feeling of arriving somewhere like elegant way.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express is aiming squarely at the second category—golf travel that trades haste for atmosphere, and logistics for romance.

For more information about Orient Express Golf visit: **https://www.orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita/itinerary/italian-swing/**
Learn more about Antogrofia Golf here: **www.antogrofia.com**

About The Author: Andy Devaney

Andy Devaney is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of Sustain Health Magazine, an editor and all-round media man with more than two decades' experience in newspaper and magazine journalism.

Over the years he has steered Sustain Health from a niche passion project into an award-winning health and fitness title, recognised for its coverage of sport, wellness, lifestyle and celebrity culture.

Andy's own health and fitness journey kicked off in earnest just before his 40th birthday, after years of slogging through fad diets and "miracle" products. That experience pushed him to cut through the industry noise, separate fact from fiction and give readers straight, honest information about what actually works.

Today, he uses Sustain Health as a platform to do exactly that – interrogating trends, testing products and telling readers what's worth their time, money and effort.

View all posts by Andy Devaney | Website

GOLF · GOLF TRAVEL · TRAVEL

Related Posts

Why Wellness Travellers Swear By Terre Blanche In Provence

Sailing Into Serenity At The Ritz-Carlton, Langkawi

A New Chapter In Luxury Wellbeing For Ibiza's Atzaró

Pickleball Paradise: Maui Resort Unveils 12-Court Hub

Download Chrome
Browse securely with Chrome's built-in protection from malware, phishing, and other scams.
Google Chrome
Download

Download Chrome
Browse confidently with Chrome's built-in security. Download for your computer.
Google Chrome
Download

© 2026 Sustain Health Magazine
Privacy and cookie settings
Managed by Google, Cookiebot with IAB TCF CMP ID 300.

Travel > Advice

The market is now cluttered with 'Orient Express' trains. Which should you board?

New luxury services across Europe afford more choice for travellers beyond just the legendary Venice-to-Istanbul journey

Adrian Bridge
Travel Writer

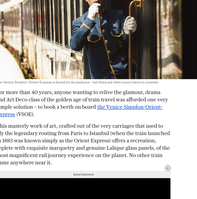
Adrian is a widely commended travel writer and has been a senior member of The Telegraph's travel team following his previous roles as correspondent for The Independent. See more ↓

Published 5 March 2026 10:00am GMT

Related Topics
Europe, Belmond, Rail, Luxury travel

Gift this article free

Add as a preferred source



The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is famed for its opulence – but there are other luxury trains to consider

For more than 60 years, anyone wanting to relive the glamour, drama and Art Deco class of the golden age of train travel was afforded one very simple solution – to book a berth on board the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (VSOE).

This masterly work of art, crafted out of the very carriages that used to ply the legendary routing from Paris to Istanbul (when the train launched in 1883 was known simply as the Orient Express) offers a recreation, replete with exquisite marquetry and genuine Lalique glass panels, of the most magnificent rail journey experience on the planet. No other train came anywhere near it.

Advertisement

But that is changing. La Dolce Vita Orient Express, launched to great acclaim in 2025, is venturing outside its Italian homeland with an extended itinerary from Rome to Istanbul. And, at some point next year, a new train – in many ways remarkably like the VSOE – is due to be taking to the tracks and offering champagne-fuelled journeys along the very same route. More enticing still, this train will bear the original name – the Orient Express – for years the unused preserve of France's state-owned SNCF rail operator.

Orient Express Paris to Istanbul route

© TripsToDestinations.com

Add to that the fact that, since last year, the Golden Eagle Danube Express – another train aimed at the higher end of the market – has been offering itineraries that run to Istanbul, and it would be true to say that travellers looking for this particular experience now face something of a dilemma: they want to travel on the Orient Express, but which one?

So, here's a guide to what each of these trains have to offer in terms of luxury, routings, price point and, of course, wow factor. Read on, and make your choice.

Venice Simplon-Orient-Express

What is it?

Ever since its launch in 1982, this train has stood head and shoulders above all others seeking to offer the magic and mystery of the golden experience immortalised in the writings of Agatha Christie. Utilising original carriages meticulously restored to their 1920/30s heyday, the train was as close to the real thing as it was possible to get – complete with beautifully ornate bank bed cabins, stunningly-decorated dining cars and a piano-bar car in which elegantly dressed guests could imbibe and in some cases cavort into the early hours.

Accidents happen even aboard the famous Venice Simplon-Orient-Express

Where does it go?

Twice a year, the train offers the five-night Paris-Istanbul/Istanbul-Paris itinerary involving three nights on the train, two in grand hotels in Budapest and Bucharest, and a fine selection of carefully-curated experiences along the way. The train's signature journey has long been its one-night Paris-Venice routing, but other routes include Paris-Prague, Paris-Florence and Paris-Vienna. In recent years, a number of the train's carriages have been significantly modified to accommodate much more expansive suites with en-suite showers and lavatory facilities.

How much does it cost?

It's not cheap. Historic cabins on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express for the Paris to Istanbul run cost from £18,000pp, while suites start at £30,000pp. Nevertheless, this is still the one to beat.

Orient Express (Accor)

What is it?

Like the VSOE, this train – which bears the original name of the legendary train that first travelled to the Orient in the 1880s – is comprised of vintage Wagons-Lits carriages that used to serve the old route, and which for years lay forgotten and neglected. Now in the hands of the French hospitality giant Accor, they are being brought back to life in an extraordinary way, playing on their past heritage but being reimagined for a 21st-century clientele.

A number of the Orient Express trains date back to the original 1883 Orient Express service

If early previews are anything to go by, this train will offer a slightly different take on the luxury train experience, drawing heavily on Art Deco motifs and the elegance of the Second French Empire, but refashioning them to align with contemporary tastes.

Where does it go?

With a launch date set for 2027, many details have yet to be finalised, but the train will offer journeys between Paris and Istanbul and will seek to recapture – and in some ways, transcend – the wonder of the original.

How much does it cost?

This hasn't yet been revealed. It will also almost certainly be eye-wateringly expensive.

A timeline of the Orient Express

- 1883 - Original "Express d'Orient" Paris-Vienna service launched
- 1889 - Extended Paris-Constantinople (Istanbul) service introduced
- 1977 - Original Paris-Istanbul service withdrawn
- 1982 - Venice Simplon-Orient-Express train is launched
- 1998 - First Paris-Istanbul Venice Simplon-Orient-Express service is introduced
- 2006 - Golden Eagle Danube Express train launched (initially as Danube Express)
- 2009 - Shortened original Orient Express Strasbourg/Vienna/Paris-Vienna service withdrawn
- 2025 - La Dolce Vita Orient Express train launched
- 2025 - First Golden Eagle Danube Express Paris-Istanbul service introduced
- 2026 - Projected date for La Dolce Vita Orient Express' first Rome-Istanbul service
- 2027 - Projected date for Orient Express (Accor) train launch, with signature Paris-Istanbul service

La Dolce Vita Orient Express

What is it?

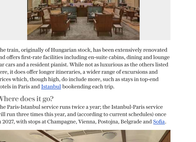
In a bold variation on the luxury train theme, Accor's first outing into this rarefied terrain, La Dolce Vita Orient Express, is, as the name suggests, rooted in the Italy of *La Dolce Vita* – the "Sweet Life" – as depicted in the classic Federico Fellini film set in Rome circa 1960. Instead of *fin de siècle* and formal wear, the design aesthetic here draws unashamedly on the suave, sophisticated Italian chic of a later era: interiors involving double beds, wood-beamed ceilings and vibrant hues of orange, terracotta and purple and a dining offering overseen by Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck.

Where does it go?

The train launched in 2025 with a series of one and two-night itineraries touching Italy's manifold wonders, including Venice and Portofino; Sicily and Rome. This year sees an altogether more ambitious proposition: a five-day/four-night journey from Rome to Istanbul, with stops in Venice, Budapest and Brasov and a series of curated experiences which include insider tales on the legends of Casanova and Count Dracula.

How much does it cost?

A berth on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express on its Rome-Istanbul routing costs from €20,000pp (£17,400pp) for a deluxe cabin, €27,200pp (£23,600pp) for a suite cabin, excluding excursions.



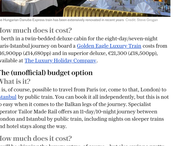
Drinks and food are served on board the La Dolce Vita Orient Express, with stops including Brasov and several Count Vlad Dracula (PR)

Golden Eagle Danube Express

What is it?

It may not have Orient in its title, but this train – part of the stable of luxury trains that run under the Golden Eagle banner – certainly deserves to be part of this august crowd since opening up a Paris-Istanbul routing in May 2025. This year it has scheduled five journeys for the route (a mirror of out and return), on the first of which (May 23-30) the guest speaker will be Dr Mark Aldridge, a renowned specialist on Agatha Christie.

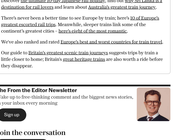
Advertisement



The train, originally of Hungarian stock, has been extensively renovated and offers first-rate facilities including en-suite cabins, dining and lounge bar cars and a resident pianist. While not as luxurious as the others listed here, it does offer longer itineraries, a wider range of excursions and prices which, though high, do include more, such as stays in top-end hotels in Paris and Istanbul bookending each trip.

Where does it go?

The Paris-Istanbul service runs twice a year; the Istanbul-Paris service will run three times this year, and (according to current schedules) once in 2027, with stops at Champagne, Vienna, Postojna, Belgrade and Sofia.



Champagne, Vienna and Postojna are among the stops included in future years (Credit: Trevor Morgan)

How much does it cost?

A berth in a twin-bedded deluxe cabin for the eight-day/seven-night Paris-Istanbul journey on board a Golden Eagle Luxury Train costs from €16,000pp (£14,000pp) and in superior deluxe, €21,300 (£18,500pp), available at The Luxury Holiday Company.

The (unofficial) budget option

What is it?

It is, of course, possible to travel from Paris (or, come to that, London) to Istanbul by public train. You can book it all independently, but this is not so easy when it comes to the Balkan legs of the journey. Specialist operator Tailor Made Rail offers an 11-day/10-night journey between London and Istanbul by public train, including nights on sleeper trains and hotel stays along the way.

How much does it cost?

You'll be shipping the luxury extras, of course – but also saving a pretty penny. The Tailor Made Rail option is priced from £1,595pp.

Discover the best railway journeys

The Telegraph's railway holiday guides offer inspiration for worldwide train travel.

Discover the ultimate 10-day Japanese rail holiday, find out why Sri Lanka is a destination for rail lovers and learn about Australia's greatest train journey.

There's never been a better time to see Europe by train; here's 10 of Europe's greatest escorted rail trips. Meanwhile, sleeper trains link some of the continent's greatest cities – here's a guide of the most romantic.

We've also rushed and rated Europe's best and worst countries for trains travel.

Our guide to Britain's greatest scenic train journeys suggests trips by train a little closer to home; Britain's great heritage trains are also worth a ride before they disappear.

The From the Editor Newsletter
Wake up to free-thinking comment and the biggest news stories, in your inbox every morning.
Sign up

Join the conversation
View 0 comments

The Telegraph welcomes comments but kindly requests all posts are on-topic, constructive and respectful. Please read our community guidelines.

Advertisement

More Stories

Five essential things to know before you board a Tauck ship

This new 1912 fare sums up the absurdity of modern Britain

Why you should holiday in one of your old favourites in 2026

I'll never go without a travel pillow on long train rides or flights again. Here are 10 of the best

STAYING POWER

From Riviera hideaways to glittering city landmarks, the year's most anticipated hotel openings are giving seasoned travellers new reasons to check in. Here are 11 standout properties set to debut in 2026.

BY **RACHEL INGRAM**

OMAN

THE MALKAI

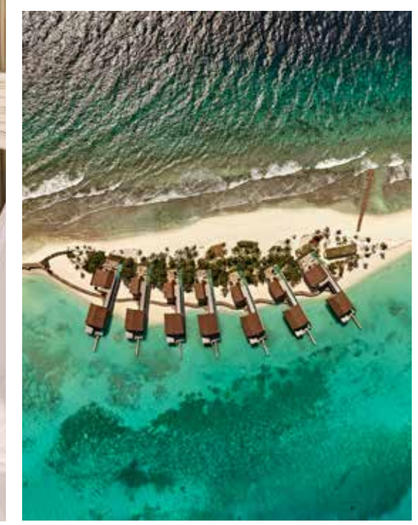
Visit for:

Omani landscapes and star-filled nights

Oman's landscapes are some of the most stunning in the Middle East, and The Malkai makes the most of them. Set deep among dunes, the retreat, opening in autumn, is designed to frame the views rather than compete with them. Expect low-rise stone buildings and luxury tents, terraces that open straight onto the sand, and suites with private pools where guests can cool off between guided dune drives and camel treks.

Desert excursions and spa treatments in a wellness space rooted in regional traditions will fill the hours by day, while nights are for stargazing sessions and conversations around the fire. It should make for one of the most compelling new ways to experience Oman.

Robb Recommends: The Owner's Pavilion Suite (€8,700 per night)—a 255 sqm private retreat with three bedroom pavilions, a central living space and private pool, plus exclusive access to dedicated Defenders and curated Omani experiences. ***themalkai.com***



MALDIVES

HERE BAA ATOLL

Visit for:

A private-island escape

Fancy a Maldivian paradise entirely to yourself? That's the idea behind .Here Baa Atoll. The tiny private island, opening in April in the UNESCO-protected Baa Atoll, will feature just nine residences scattered among palms, with the option to reserve the entire island. Each residence opens onto white sand and turquoise waters, with wide decks and private pools overlooking the lagoon.

Snorkelling here will be exceptional—manta rays and reef life thrive in these protected waters—and the house team will arrange sailing trips, sandbank picnics or sunset cruises. Reserve the full island and it becomes your own private retreat, with chefs, spa therapists and boat crews on hand to take care of you.

Robb Recommends: Nowhere Private Island (from €45,720 per night)—book the entire island for a five-bedroom presidential residence with private beach, 28m pool, Fehi Spa and space for up to 24 guests. *here-maldives.com*

KENYA

WILDERNESS MARA

Visit for:

Expertly guided wildlife encounters

The Maasai Mara hardly lacks safari camps, but Wilderness Mara arrives with pedigree seasoned travellers will recognise. Set in prime wildlife territory, the Kenyan camp, opening in June, will overlook sweeping savanna plains where lions, elephants and roaming herds pass regularly. Suites will feature elevated private decks with wide views over the plains, mixing classic canvas-and-timber safari style with well-placed comforts.

Days will begin before sunrise, with expert guides heading out in search of the Mara's famous predators, followed by long lunches and lazy afternoons back at camp before heading out again for sunset in the bush. Evenings will revolve around the firepit, with stories traded under the star-filled sky, where talk often turns to Wilderness' incredible conservation programmes. Few safari operators take conservation quite as seriously.

Robb Recommends: The Family Suite (suites start at €1,155 per person, per night)—two tented bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms and a shared deck overlooking the plains, ideal for families wanting space while staying close to the Mara's wildlife. *wildernessdestinations.com*

MALLORCA

MANDARIN ORIENTAL PUNTA NEGRA

Visit for:

Bustle-free Balearic bliss, but close to the action

Mallorca has no shortage of coastal hotels, yet Mandarin Oriental's arrival at Punta Negra feels like a notable upgrade. The property, opening in spring, sits on a pine-covered peninsula outside Palma, where gardens slope down to two small, private coves with remarkably clear water. Rooms and suites will open onto wide terraces with sea views, while the restaurants will focus on the island's excellent seafood and produce.

A generous spa and wellness programme will also feature, but the real appeal is the setting—a stretch of coastline that feels removed from the bustle despite being minutes from Palma's galleries, restaurants and marinas. All of which should make it one of the island's most talked-about openings this summer.

Robb Recommends: The Punta Negra Suite (€12,000 per night)—a 130 sqm sea-facing suite with panoramic Mediterranean views, expansive living and dining spaces, and a prime position overlooking the resort's coves.
mandarinoriental.com

FRANCE

ZANNIER ÎLE DE BENDOR

Visit for:

Provençal charm with Riviera views

A short hop by boat from Bandol, the tiny Île de Bendor, once the private island of drinks magnate Paul Ricard, has long been a curious outpost on the Riviera. Zannier Hotels has now given the island a thoughtful revival, turning it into a charming hideaway, set to open in May. Guest rooms will be spread across restored Mediterranean buildings around the harbour, with sun-washed stone walls, tiled floors and breezy terraces overlooking the sea.

Restaurants will celebrate Provençal cooking and the day's catch from nearby waters. Spend time swimming in clear coves, lingering over long lunches and heading ashore to explore Bandol's vineyards. It'll be well worth the boat ride.

Robb Recommends: The Delos Suite (€3,235 per night)—perched at the top of the Delos wing, this 55 sqm suite opens onto a sweeping panoramic terrace with Riviera views.
zannierhotels.com

VENICE

AIRELLES PALLADIO

Visit for:

Lagoon views
away from the crowds

Across the water on Giudecca, Airelles Palladio offers an unusual luxury in Venice: space. The hotel, opening in April, occupies a Palladian complex surrounded by gardens—a rarity in the lagoon—with views back across to St. Mark's Square. Inside, the restoration reveals soaring ceilings, frescoes and elegant Venetian details, paired with the brand's signature hospitality. Rooms will feel grand yet comfortable, while the restaurants will focus on regional flavours and local seafood.

Private boats will shuttle guests across to the city's museums and palazzi, though many may prefer lingering in the gardens with a spritz instead. The new opening will offer Venice regulars something different: all the city's splendour, just removed from the bustle.

Robb Recommends: The Suite del Doge (€55,000 per night)—a sprawling 450 sqm four-bedroom residence in Villa Frollo with frescoed ceilings, antique furnishings and extraordinary views across St. Mark's Basilica and the Doge's Palace. ***airelles.com***

VENICE

ORIENT EXPRESS VENEZIA

Visit for:

Old-world elegance

The legendary Orient Express name returns in April with a Venetian hotel that embraces the chicness of its iconic train. Housed in a grand palazzo on the Grand Canal, the property will feature interiors inspired by the golden age of the original Orient Express—think polished wood, rich fabrics and plenty of cinematic flourish.

Suites will look out onto the canal's steady procession of boats, while restaurants and lounges will host long, glamorous evenings. Service promises to be impeccable throughout. Water taxis will pull up at the private jetty, delivering guests straight into the swirl of Venice before they retreat to the calmer atmosphere of the palazzo.

Robb Recommends: The Orient Express Suite (€20,000 per night)—a 145 sqm Grand Canal-facing residence with Murano chandeliers, a Neo-Baroque fireplace and museum-worthy Venetian art, including works by Busato and Zona. ***orient-express.com***

ROME

CORINTHIA

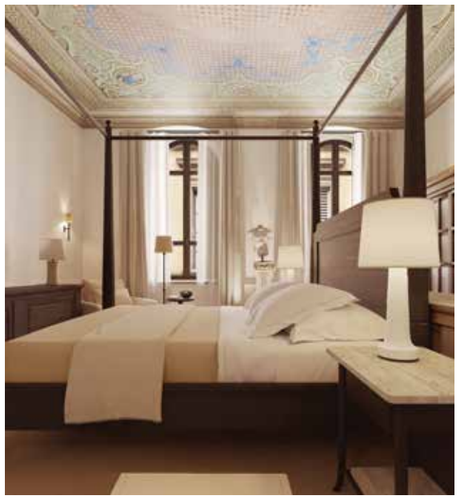
Visit for:

Roman grandeur and historic surroundings

Corinthia's new Roman outpost takes over a handsome historic building just steps from the Pantheon, putting guests right in the thick of the city's historic centre. Inside the hotel, which opened in March, marble, high ceilings and sweeping staircases set a suitably grand tone. Rooms and suites are elegant and understated, with generous amenities and large windows overlooking the surrounding streets.

Restaurants and bars are expected to draw a well-heeled local crowd, while a serene spa offers welcome respite after days navigating Rome's galleries, piazzas and trattorias. For travellers who want the capital's history on the doorstep, this is an appealing new option.

Robb Recommends: The Theodoli Heritage Suite (€18,000 per night)—a 150 sqm former council chamber with frescoed ceilings, stained-glass windows overlooking Parliament, and a grand piano anchoring its generous living and dining salon. ***corinthia.com***



FLORENCE

LA RÉSERVE FIRENZE APARTMENTS

Visit for:

A private Florentine residential experience

La Réserve's Florence debut takes the form of a discreet collection of serviced apartments in a historic palazzo close to the Arno. The idea is simple: the comfort of a private residence paired with the group's signature hospitality. Expect high ceilings, original architectural details and elegant living spaces designed for longer stays. Kitchens, dining rooms and generous lounges make the apartments—set to open in October—ideal for families or groups travelling together. Concierge teams will arrange everything from gallery visits to private chefs, while the city's best addresses, including the Uffizi and atmospheric riverside restaurants, are a short walk away. If you've ever dreamed of experiencing Florence like a local, this is the way to do it.

Robb Recommends: Apartment No. 3 (from €2,490 per night)—a 210 sqm two-bedroom residence with soaring ceilings, a master suite adorned with original frescoes and a restored wooden-beam living space, blending contemporary design with classic Florentine style.

LONDON

WALDORF ASTORIA ADMIRALTY ARCH

Visit for:

A front-row seat to royal pageantry

Few London addresses carry quite the same presence as Admiralty Arch, the grand Edwardian gateway linking Trafalgar Square with The Mall, which is set to open as a hotel in autumn. Waldorf Astoria is transforming the historic building into a hotel, giving travellers the rare chance to stay inside one of the capital's best-known landmarks.

Interiors will retain the building's stately proportions while adding the brand's signature polish, with rooms overlooking St James's Park, Trafalgar Square or the ceremonial route to Buckingham Palace. Restaurants and bars will occupy some of the arch's most dramatic spaces, while a spa will offer a tranquil escape from the crowds outside this historic gateway.

Robb Recommends: Suite details are still under wraps, but chefs Clare Smyth and Daniel Boulud are set to transform the hotel into a culinary destination through their respective restaurants, Core and Café Boulud. ***hilton.com***

LONDON

SIX SENSES

Visit for:

A wellness-led city break

In March, Six Senses finally landed in London, bringing its wellness-focused philosophy to the restored Whiteley building in Bayswater—once one of the capital's grandest Edwardian department stores. The ambience is one of imperious calm without being flashy: think natural materials, warm lighting and relaxed interiors, all encouraging guests to unwind. Rooms are spacious, soft-toned and understated, while dining at Whiteley's Kitchen centres on vegetable-forward seasonal ingredients. But the real draw, as one might expect with such a wellness-focused group, is the spa—a 2,300-square-metre space with hydrotherapy pools, treatment rooms and longevity-themed programmes, as well as London's first hotel magnesium pool. The spa alone is reason enough to check in.

Robb Recommends: The Whiteley Suite (from around €13,800 per night)—a spacious 291 sqm two-bedroom residence stretching the length of the building, with marble bathrooms, open-plan kitchen and a terrace overlooking London's skyline. ***sixsenses.com***

Robb Report

MONACO & CÔTE D'AZUR

The Travel Issue

DESTINATIONS TO IGNITE YOUR WANDERLUST IN 2026

9 9911 - 2602 - F : 12.00 € - RD

APRIL / MAY 2026

AD
RETREAT TO ELEGANCE IN OUR SIGNATURE SUITES.
BOOK NOW

JAMES STEWART

Five holidays that we fancy right now — and you will too

Escape to the Lakes, take the family to Grenada or explore a Swiss beach resort, and find a great deal while you're at it

James Stewart
Sunday April 05 2026, 5.00am, The Sunday Times

Share

Ignore the doomsters and gloomsters: the outlook for travel is brightening as Europe wakes from winter hibernation, with a string of luxury travel discounts and launches this week. All seem designed to help you do nothing more complicated than relax — and we could all do with some of that right now. From a tropical half-term break with the family to a spectacular new stay in Venice, here are five things that have caught our eye this week.

All recommendations within this article are informed by expert editorial opinion. If you click on a link in this story we may earn affiliate revenue

UK escape

Indulgence in the Lakes

Storrs Hall sits beside Windermere

I'm not sure whether you've noticed but there's quite a lot going on in the world at the moment. So may I recommend a weekend escape? Storrs Hall, the handsome grade II* listed pile on the shores of Windermere, is doing 20 per cent off B&B stays of two nights throughout April (storrshall.com). Push the boat out with a hot-tub suite bang on the lake and you'll pay £983, a saving of £223; standard doubles are £390 off at £471 for two nights. Speaking of boats, the hotel has just relaunched its private motorboat for the season: it's a splendid 30ft job as shiny as a conker that's available for two-hour charters with fizz (£350 for five). It's sure closer than Lake Como.

- Lake District travel guide

Short-haul hop

A Swiss beach resort

Ascona in Switzerland sits at the foot of the Alps
SUZIER

Ascona in Switzerland is a bargain for holidaymakers. It's in the bosom of the mountains, with eyefuls of Alps, but has Mediterranean sizzle around Lake Maggiore. Yachts and glossy Italian motorboats skim across the water while sunbathers lay towels on a fine beach. Throw in lazy lunches and lakeside strolls and you've the makings of a fine spring break. B&B doubles cost from £370 at the five-star lakeside spa hotel Eden Roc, but from tomorrow until May 14 it is doing four nights for the price of three in rooms that have been shutbed by a seven-month refurbishment. The lake winks enticingly through every window, which is why kayaks and paddleboards are provided free for guests. Fly to Geneva.

Book now

ADVERTISEMENT
AD
AN OASIS OF SERENITY.
PLAN YOUR BREAK
MANDARIN ORIENTAL

- Switzerland travel guide

Long-haul treat

Family Caribbean

Mount Cinnamon Beach & Wellness Resort on Grand Anse has been refurbished recently
MT MINNE

While demand for trips to Asia has experienced a wobble because of events in the Middle East, bookings are up in the Caribbean. I'd look in a half-term escape to Grenada quick-smart. Why there? Obvious, really — it's tranquil (there are only about 2,200 rooms) yet has stonking beaches and a rugged beauty for activities inland. Mount Cinnamon Beach & Wellness Resort on Grand Anse pulls off the neat trick of being hyper-local and informally sophisticated. It's newly refurbished, has launched the Cinnamon Explorers club to entertain your brood and provides complimentary babysitting when you book spa treatments. Very well done, people. All yours for half-term at 30 per cent off room rates, a saving of £820 for a family of four, plus a $50 spa credit. This means you'll pay £6,708 for seven nights' B&B for four, including flights (bestattravel.co.uk).

- More great hotels in Grenada

What we're talking about

Venetian romance

One of the 47 luxurious rooms at the Orient Express hotel

Venice leads a double life as a real-life city and a destination of faded grandeur and luminous beauty that exists in your imagination. Because the two don't always align, we were intrigued by images of the 47-room Orient Express Venezia hotel, which opened on Monday with B&B doubles available from £1,054. The luxury brand's latest launch appears less a revamp of a waterside 15th-century palazzo in the quiet Cannaregio district than a film set for bygone romance. There are pastel-velvet furnishings and Murano chandeliers in lounges. Frescoes decorate ceilings above canopied beds. There's also the obligatory fine-dining restaurant and spa. Oh, and should you fancy it you can arrive by motorboat. Not cheap but what a treat.

Book now

- Best hotels in Venice
- Best affordable hotels in Venice

ADVERTISEMENT
AD
AN OASIS OF SERENITY.
PLAN YOUR BREAK
MANDARIN ORIENTAL

Away to the Egadi islands

Favignana is one of the three main Egadi islands
GETTY IMAGES

Among the slew of summer routes just launched by Ryanair, one caught our eye: Bournemouth to Trapani in Sicily, which began on Tuesday. Take a 20-minute taxi from the airport and alongside a pleasant town you'll find regular hydrofoil services to the three main Egadi islands — terrific name (they sound like a Shakespearean expletive), terrific archipelago for early summer. Favignana is the rustic-chic beach-hols one where you can get B&B doubles at Il Baglio sull'Acqua from £244. Marettimo is the walkers' one. Levanzo is the one on which to drop off the radar. All three sit in a marine park. If you're in the market for hassle-free, largely car-free island-hopping with a sideline in gentle eccentricity (this is west Sicily, after all) this is for you. Hopefully so too.

Book now

- Sicily travel guide

TIMES Holidays
You can now book your holiday with The Times via our own travel agency
Call us on: 0808 1342945
Mon-Fri: 9am-6pm Sat: 10am-5pm
Chat live to a consultant
Enquire now

Travel | Inspiration

Share

Related articles

24 of the best things to do in Venice
January 28, 2023, 10.45am
Louise Roddon

Should you book next year's holiday now? Here's what you need to know
March 27, 2026, 5.00am
Chris Haslam, Chief Travel Writer, The Sunday Times

PROMOTED CONTENT

How to move to a Sunday Times 'best place to live'
LLOYDS

Personal butler, private dining, pure Cunard luxury
CUNARD

Tuscan castle escape with pasta masterclass
EXODUS ADVENTURE TRAVELS

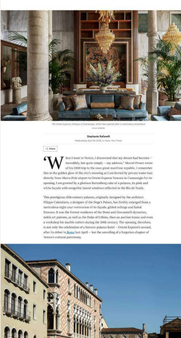
Lost art of vintage travel posters
CHRONICLE

© Times Media Limited 2025.
Registered in England No. 894846. Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF.
Privacy & cookie policy | Generative AI editorial guidelines | Licensing | Cookie settings | Site map | Topics | Puzzles Archive | Authors | Commissioning terms | Terms and conditions

Spring is just around outdoors
Save up to 40% on selected items
Dunelm
Shop now

Is Orient Express Venezia the prettiest palazzo hotel in La Serenissima?

Yes, says Stephen Kalasch, who is the first journalist to experience the new hotel in a renovated 15th-century building that once belonged to a duke



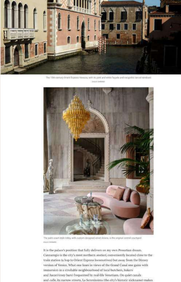
Orient Express Venezia, a Venetian palazzo and hotel on the Grand Canal, is scheduled to open in 2024 © Belmond

Stephen Kalasch
Photographer Nick Wood for The Times

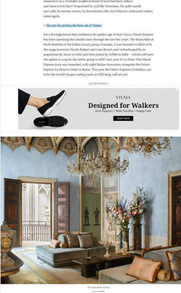
Save

When I was in Venice, I discovered that my dream had become — inevitably, but quite simply — my address. Marcel Proust wrote of the Duchesse de Guermantes, who lived in a mansion on the Grand Canal, that she was the queen of the city's morning and so forced by protocol to turn her directly from Marcel's bedroom to Venice. Orient Express Venezia (or Lusso) is a new hotel in a 15th-century palazzo on the Grand Canal, which I visited with my family while staying for nearly seven weeks in a rented flat in the hotel's neighbourhood.

This prestigious 18th-century palazzo, originally designed by the architect Filippo Calendario, a designer of the Doge's Palace, has Doric-arranged lines, a meticulous eight-year renovation of its facade, gilded ceilings and fluted frescoes. It was the residence of the Doges and Grimaldi dynasties, nobles of patrician, as well as the Duke of Urbino, then an ancient Roman and even Byzantine site, and it has been restored by Belmond, the luxury hotel group, to be the small and exclusive accommodation of Orient Express Venezia. Orient Express opened in 2021 by Belmond, which also owns the Cipriani, Venice's iconic hotel, and has a portfolio of luxurious properties, including the Grand Hotel Tremezzo, on Lake Como, and the Belmond Copacabana Palace, which is located in Brazil. This year the Orient Express Corinthian, on the Greek mainland, will open and Belmond's 2024 listing will add Lusso.



The lobby of Orient Express Venezia, a 15th-century palazzo on the Grand Canal, which was once the home of the Doges and Grimaldi families © Belmond



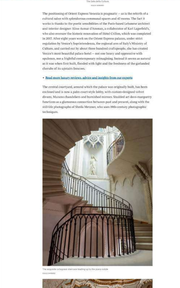
The lounge and terrace of the Orient Express Venezia, which was once the home of the Doges and Grimaldi families © Belmond

It's the palace's position that fully delivers on my own Proustian dream. Circumspect in the city's most northern sestiere, conveniently located close to the Rialto market, it is a quiet and contemplative place, with a view of the Grand Canal and the Church of Santa Maria della Salute. Visitors can hear the sounds of the Grand Canal not quite with immersion in a veritable neighbourhood of local bacheca, baker's shop, and bar, but with the sense of being in a place that is quiet, calm and, in the summer, cool. Nonetheless the city's flavors and ambiance make sense again.

• Are you the perfect fit for Lost and Found

For a heritage hotel that celebrates the golden age of the luxury, Orient Express has been operating for a further eight years through the last two years. The historic hill Ducla Holiday, of the Italian luxury group Aromatic, it was founded in 2010 with the aim of creating a "luxury boutique hotel" in the Venetian lagoon. The hotel occupies its own 16th and 18th-century palazzo by COMO in Doha — which will have the option to acquire the entire group in 2025. Last year in Ca' Dolce Vita Orient Express Lusso was launched, with eight Italian restaurants, alongside the Orient Express La Minerva hotel in Rome. This year the Orient Express Corinthian, on the Greek mainland, opened and Belmond's 2024 listing will add Lusso.

ADVERTISEMENT
TV NAU
Designed for Walkers
Find Your Perfect Walking Holiday Package Here
Find Out More



The lobby of the Orient Express Venezia, which was once the home of the Doges and Grimaldi families © Belmond

The positioning of Orient Express Venezia is poignant — so is the electric of a cultural nature with a pleasant environmental nature and of course. The Ca' Ducla is a friendly to the poetic sensibilities of the Paris-based Cartesian architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte, who also designed the Belmond Cipriani, Venice's iconic hotel, who also oversaw the Aromatic renovation of Hotel Colleoni, which was completed in 2021. After eight years work on the Orient Express palazzo, under strict supervision of the Venice Superintendent of Fine Arts and Landscape, Wilmotte, Cabinet, and contractor he about three hundred craftspeople, who has created "Venice's most beautiful palace hotel — not one luxury and opulentist with surfaces, now, a lightful contemporary relinquishing. Belmond's aversion around as it was when first built, finished with light and the freshness of the gilmbelled chiaroscuro of its upstairs Serenissima.

• Read more luxury articles, advice and insider from our experts

The central courtyard, around which the palace was originally built, has been enclosed and is now a light-court with lobby, with a mass-designed silver chandelier, a Venetian-style lounge and a terrace with a view of the Grand Canal. Starlets are a glamorous counterfeit Belmond and all process, along with the art-rich photographs of Nicola Mecacci, who uses 18th-century photographic technique.

The lounge, Nicola Mecacci, photographer and Marcella Lanzag, interior designer © Nicola Mecacci

The lounge, Nicola Mecacci, photographer and Marcella Lanzag, interior designer © Nicola Mecacci

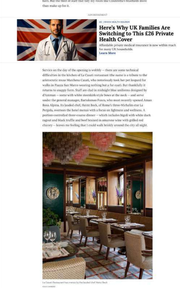
From the exquisite octagonal staircase, the piano nobile (under Front aspects and in recent after restoration) meant all the furniture, rugs, textures and wooden ceiling Diana, Francesca by the Venetian gesture Francesco Dispaz, which were discovered in the Ca' Ducla. Dispaz, who also designed the Belmond Cipriani, Venice's iconic restaurant and and between aprons stories. These include Aromatic's unique bells, wall-orbitly revised velvet bedhead, assorts ebs Hard walls, which mirror the patterns of the water in a pale "tonale bigio ed rosa" and vivacio pieces gauze, and rich-textured Venetian-style lounge chairs. These all give a lot to the interiorities on the Grand Canal, and the Venetian-style lounge chairs, which are Belmond's signature chandeliers begin over the ones, a tribute to the Venetian glass artist Carlo Scarpa.

The Venetian-style lounge chairs, which are Belmond's signature chandeliers begin over the ones, a tribute to the Venetian glass artist Carlo Scarpa © Nicola Mecacci

Within my junior suite, with views over a little garden, the engineering of its bathroom, with Italian marble and a Jacuzzi, is impressive, as is the Nespresso coffee machine — recall the Orient Express train, indeed for sales is very compact (even a crate that a cooler and the price-guy, nearby bathroom lack a bath. But the lack of bath has only my room the Gianbeello Guardian, now Dino make up for it.

ADVERTISEMENT
Here's Why UK Families Are Switching to This £20 Private Health Cover
Compare Private Health Cover Quotes in Under 2 Min. Save Up To £1,000 Annually
Learn More

Service on the day of the opening is stellar — there are some technical difficulties in the kitchen of the Grand restaurant (the sector is a hidden in the adjoining stone Marchesa Grande, who notoriously tends her pet leopard for walks in Piazza San Marco running anything but a by-rule). But thankfully it returns to complete form. Staff are chic in ochraceous Venetian uniforms designed by Aromatic, and the restaurant's menu, which is in the hands of the chef Ivan Lo Cicero, stands on the personal passages, Barcelonian Ferrer, who most recently opened Amos Bros. Diptyna, Sa Sandot Hotel, Berlin Berl, of Bianca Ferrer Nicholas Ca' Lo Cicero's menu is a mixture of Venetian classics and Sicilian specialties. The portfolio extended from course dinner — which includes liquid with white dish, rapsal and black ricotta and beef bracioni in amarone wine with grilled and chicory — known to Dolling Ca' Lo Cicero with freshly crusted the city of eight



The Grand restaurant, which is the work of Ivan Lo Cicero © Nicola Mecacci

The neighborhood restaurant are more than just the traditional Venetian menu. Paramount is a dress in a Sicilian-style — ranging by an owner who's and the needs guest the neighborhood's Cicerkiss, as well as the Wednesday and Friday. They are alongside the old Tonio, Sandrolo, a subsidiary to the cicerale. The coverage. Dimensions Dimitrolo will creates local town as well as restaurants and bars, Dimitrolo, Sandrolo, Tonio, Cicerkiss, Cicerkiss, Cicerkiss

Orient Express marks 'new chapter' with opening of Venice property

HOTELS MAR 31, 2026 BY ISOBEL TURNER

The 47-key Orient Express Venezia is group's second hotel

Orient Express has opened the doors of its new Venice property, marking the group's second hotel and "a new chapter in its Italian journey".

Orient Express Venezia is located inside the 15th-century Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, which has been reimagined into a hotel for the first time in almost six centuries.

The property features 47 rooms, suites and residences, including six Signature Suites that "each tell a different story".

The culinary offering at Orient Express Venezia has been designed by acclaimed chef Heinz Beck, with the flagship venue Heinz Beck Venezia specialising in fine dining served in the property's historic orangery.

La Casati, the all-day dining restaurant and private garden, serves traditional Venetian specialities and seasonal dishes, while Wagon Bar pays homage to the lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains.

The hotel features a secret garden, with fountains, seating areas and antique gates. Connecting the garden and the lobby that's designed as a "grand living room" is Calle Meraviglia, a space that hosts "a rotating selection of contemporary works".

Guests at the property can arrive directly by boat through the water gate and are invited to experience the city "through the lens of Orient Express", with excursions that showcase "the city's storied craftmanship and artistic traditions".

The launch follows the opening of **the group's first hotel La Minerva in Rome** and **the debut of luxury train La Dolce Vita Orient Express**, both of which were inaugurated last year.

Orient Express chief executive Gilda Perez-Alvarado said: "With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination.

"Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city.

"This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers. Venice now stands as a luminous cornerstone of our vision, bridging past and future, and inviting guests into a world of timeless elegance and discovery."

Hotels

ADD NEW COMMENT

You must be logged in to comment.

EDITOR'S PICK

HOTELS
Grecotel Hotels & Resorts unveils raft of updates at Luxme Kos

CRUISE
Crystal names inaugural members of new trade engagement programme

TOUR OPERATORS
Exsus Travel 'doubles down' on fam trip investment amid 'industry cutbacks'

TRAVEL AGENTS
Atas eyes further growth with appointment of new membership manager

CRUISE
New Scenic and Emerald trade incentive offers London helicopter tour

HOTELS
Fairmont Hotels & Resorts expands range of 'immersive' experiences

SUGGESTED FOR YOU

Swords Travel vows to keep 'personal touch' amid global expansion plans
BY ISOBEL TURNER

New AmaWaterways marketing boss to 'prioritise trade partnerships'
BY ANDREW MCQUARRIE

Celebrity Cruises launches promotion for Europe 2026 sailings
BY ELLA SAGAR

Luxury rail specialist The Leading Trains bolsters UK team
BY ELLA SAGAR

jacobs MEDIA
Jacobs Media is a company registered in England and Wales, company number 08713328. 3rd Floor, 52 Grosvenor Gardens, London SW1W 0AU.
© 2025 Jacobs Media
TRAVELWEEKLY CONNECTING TRAVEL THE CATERER aspire CONNECTIONS ATAS ott

BREAKING travel news
CALL FOR TRAVEL EXCELLENCE 2026 ENTRIES NOW OPEN
OCTOBER 2026

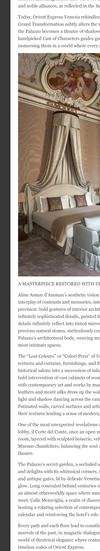
A LEGENDARY 15TH-CENTURY VENETIAN PALAZZO REAWAKENED: ORIENT EXPRESS VENEZIA OPENS IN VENICE

Jo Ledesma

Orient Express proudly unveils Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovanelli, the extraordinary rebirth of the 15th-century architectural jewel, owned by Arsenale Group, reimagined by architect and interior designer Alise Annur d'Ammar as a hotel, for the first time in nearly six centuries. A new icon in the Brand's constellation of ultra-luxury travel experiences, the hotel invites guests into a world where Venetian history, contemporary artistry and the legendary spirit of the Orient Express art of travel converge in perfect harmony. Once a celebrated crossroad on the legendary route from Paris to Istanbul, Venice reclaims its role as a theatrical gateway for the Orient Express world of luxury travel.

Nestled in the quiet rhythm of Cannaregio, the Palazzo rises where two canals intertwine along the Rio di Noale, an address of serenity, history, and cinematic beauty. Here, Orient Express introduces a new chapter in its Italian journey, following the opening last year of the hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the luxury train inaugurated in 2023.

Meticulously conceived by Alise Annur d'Ammar, known for her ability to weave heritage architecture with contemporary artistic expression, the Palazzo has been restored with deep respect for its origin, introducing a sense of refined contemporary elegance. Her creative vision shapes the journey in a sequence of wonders, informed by the stories embedded in every architectural detail she unearthed. Embracing the Serenissima's legendary legacy as a gate between East and West, she choreographs this theatrical journey, where inspiration, craftsmanship, and centuries of Venetian culture converge. The hotel features 40 uniquely crafted rooms, suites, and residences, where each space is elevated with intentional interiors and singular atmosphere, reflecting the layered architectural history of the building and the romance of Venetian living.

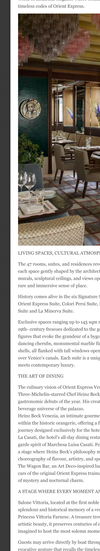


A THEATRICAL VOYAGE, SET IN MOTION BY ORIENT EXPRESS

Palazzo Donà Giovanelli has long embodied the spirit of Venice as a crossroad of culture and imagination. In the mid-16th century, Count Andrea Giovanelli commissioned architect Giovanni Battista Meduna, celebrated for restoring the neighbouring Ca' d'Oro, to reimagine its interiors with sengrafite gallery, Baroque fresco, and the Palazzo's iconic octagonal staircase crowned by a celestial vault.

During the Ninth Congress of Italian Scientists in 1847, the Palazzo reopened as a stage for salons, debates, and grand receptions. In these historical spaces, intellect and imagination flowed. Over the years, the Palazzo grew through love and noble alliances, as described in the Italian Vittoria, a setting befitting royalty.

Today, Orient Express Venezia rekindles that spirit. As day shifts into night, The Grand Transformation unfolds: the wood, light velvet, candle flicker, and the Palazzo becomes a theatre of shadows, reflections, and whispered intrigue. A backgarden Cast of Characters guides guests through ancient spaces, immersing them in a world where every moment is an act in a larger narrative.



A MASTERPIECE RESTORED WITH DEVOTION AND WONDER

Alise Annur d'Ammar's aesthetic vision unveils the Palazzo through a refined interplay of contrasts and memories, intentional architecture, and poetic precision: bold gestures of interior architectural grafting are balanced with delicately sophisticated details, painted frescoes meet sculpted stone, historical details infinitely reflect into tinted mirrored surfaces. An array of exquisite, precious natural stones, meticulously curated and highly crafted, merge into the Palazzo's architectural body, weaving moments of sensual wonderment in the most intimate spaces.

The "Lost Colours" or "Colori Perso" of Venice subtly re-emerge, woven into textures and curtains, furnishings, and finishes, transforming the Piano Nobile's historical salons into a succession of inhabited living centuries, punctuated by a bold intervention of cast cabinets of wonder. Venetian craftsmanship converses with contemporary art and works by masters of their time, while embossed leathers and moiré silks dress up the walls in ichor to the ever-shifting dialogue of light and shadow dancing across the canals.

Pulitanati walls, carved surfaces and artisanal finishes recall the passage of time, their textures leading across a sense of modern, ageless allure.

One of the most unexpected revelations of this transformation is the Palazzo's lobby, Il Corte dei Conte, once an open mineral cortile, elevated into a grand living room, layered with sculpted balustre, velvet bolsters and spectacular lamps. Moranu chandeliers, balancing the soul of a home with a dramatic sense of theatre.

The Palazzo's secret garden, a secluded sanctuary hidden at its heart, surprises and delights with its whimsical corners, sophisticated tone, luxuriant fountain and antique gates. Ill be delicate Venetian lanterns diffusing their cinematic warm glow. Long concealed behind centuries-old walls, the garden is transformed into an almost otherworldly space where nature, architecture, and the sound of silence meet. Calle Meravijlia, a realm of discoveries, connects the garden to the lobby, hosting a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar and reinforcing the hotel's role as a living cultural space.

Every path and each floor lead to countless discoveries and encounters with marvels of the past, in magnetic dialogue with creative newness. The result is a world of theatrical elegance where centuries of Venetian creativity meet the timeless codes of Orient Express.

LIVING SPACES, CULTURAL ATMOSPHERES

The 47 rooms, suites, and residences reveal the intimate elegance of Venetian life, each space gently shaped by the architectural layers of centuries past. Restored murals, sculptural ceilings, and views opening onto gardens and canals create a rare and immersive sense of place.

History comes alive in the six Signature Suites, each telling a different story: Orient Express Suite, Colori Perso Suite, Del Conte Suite, Teatro Suite, Cherubini Suite and La Minerva Suite.

Exclusive spaces ranging up to 145 sqm reveal the hotel's most hidden treasures: 19th-century frescoes dedicated to the goddess Minerva and mythical flying figures that evoke the grandeur of a bygone era, gilded salons animated by dancing cherubs, monumental marble fireplaces with mesmerizing sculptural shells, all flanked with tall windows opening onto some of the most coveted views over Venice's canals. Each suite is a unique experience, where artistic heritage meets contemporary luxury.

THE ART OF DINING

The culinary vision of Orient Express Venezia is anchored by the signature of Marco Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck, marking one of the most anticipated gastronomic debuts of the year. His creative imprint elevates the entire food & beverage universe of the palazzo.

Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept by the acclaimed chef, unfolds within the historic orangery, offering a fine dining and deeply sensorial culinary journey designed exclusively for the hotel.

La Corte, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant, channels the theatrical, avant-garde spirit of Marchesa Luisa Casati. Featuring a rare private garden, it becomes a stage where Heinz Beck's philosophy meets Venetian inspiration in a choreography of flavour, artistry, and spectacle.

The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired bar, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, blending crafted mixology with a touch of mystery and nocturnal charm.

A STAGE WHERE EVERY MOMENT AND CELEBRATION BECOME A STORY

Salone Vittoria, located at the first noble floor of the hotel, embodies the splendour and historical memory of a venue once dedicated to the wedding of Princess Vittoria Farnese. A treasure trove of extraordinary architectural and artistic beauty, it preserves centuries of elegance and ceremonial glamour, re-imagined to host the most solemn moments in the hotel's calendar.

Guests may arrive directly by boat through the Gothic water gate, a dramatic and evocative gesture that recalls the timeless romance of travel between East and West and sets the tone for a stay that interlaces heritage, culture, and culinary excellence. Beyond the palazzo's walls, guests are invited to experience Venice through the lens of Orient Express, exploring the surrounding streets of Cannaregio, or discovering the city's storied craftsmanship and artisan traditions.

"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination. Palazzo Donà Giovanelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city.

This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers. Venice now stands as a luminous cornerstone of our vision, bridging past and future, and inviting guests into a world of timeless elegance and discovery." Gildas Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express.

"With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovanelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovanelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury. The Palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modern lens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express train, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxury experiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value." Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group.

"I am truly proud to unveil the opening of Orient Express Venezia, a destination where timeless elegance meets contemporary luxury. This magnificent project is not only a milestone, but a heartfelt tribute to Venice's unique heritage and spirit of hospitality. I look forward to personally welcoming guests from around the world to share in an experience that is both authentic and unforgettable." Bartolomeo Pasco, General Manager Orient Express Venezia.

"I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovanelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 19th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored. In this eight-year creative transformation journey, the walls speak, revealing layers of enchantment that blend the golden age with contemporary creation. Embracing the duality of legacy and reinvention, I find inspiration in the unique position of Venice as a gateway between East and West, amplified by its exceptional tapestry of artistry and modern vitality." Alise Annur D'Ammar, Architect & Interior Designer.

‹ 12.12.2025 Celebrate and soar in April with Chenal Voisson's 3-nights for 2 offer
12.12.2025 Star Clippers increases Rio & Sail Packages to 3 Days, Adds Extended Off-Dedicated Brochure ›

TAGGED WITH: one hotel barcelona | luxuries | travel | orient express hotels | orient express venezia at palazzo donà giovanelli venice

SHARE ON: 0 | Tweet | 0 | Pin it | 0 | Share | 0 | Share | 0 | Mail

SUBSCRIBE

Subscribe to our daily newsletter to keep up-to-date with the latest headlines from the global hospitality sector.

RECOMMENDED

Fanno Unveils a New Cultural Chapter in the Middle East
2 hr ago

Arabian Travel Market 2026 Launchesthe Biggest at Dubai World Trade Centre
2 hr ago

Trip.com Group and LuxStorm Group sign exclusive distribution, richer content and seamless servicing
2 hr ago

ROYAL CARIBBEAN GROUP ENHANCES TRAVEL LOYALTY
2 hr ago

WTTC: HONG KONG AND POTENTIAL TO BE EMERGE AS A LEADING DESTINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLERS
2 hr ago

Oceania Cruises® Announces the Industry's First Floating Pastry Academy
2 hr ago

JYN ARTS CANDY BAR NOW OPEN AT ATLANTIS PARADISE ISLAND IN THE BAHAMAS
2 hr ago

Series by Marriott Debuts in Japan with the Opening of Sugata Hotel Osaka Shinsaibashi
2 hr ago

RELATED ARTICLES

Acera Resilience Launches Regenerative Rewilding at Nine Private Mediterranean Club at Sea
2 hr ago

Alanda Delivers Jewelry to first ever Mediterranean Business Class Suites inspired by Venice
2 hr ago

STATIONSPARTS LAUNCHES BRAND NEW 'CULINE' TRAVEL STATS BECOME STUNNER'
2 hr ago

Oceania Cruises® Announces the Industry's First Floating Pastry Academy
2 hr ago

Series by Marriott Debuts in Japan with the Opening of Sugata Hotel Osaka Shinsaibashi
2 hr ago

Copyright © 2026 Breaking Travel News. All rights reserved.
We use cookies to give you the best online experience. By using our website you agree to our use of cookies in accordance with our cookie policy. Learn More
Accept

SKINCEUTICALS
C E Ferulic
Dark Spots Vitamin C Serum
Visibly Reverses up to 10 Years of Ageing Signs*
*Clinical results after 24 months of use
SHOP NOW

(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

Take A Look Inside The New Orient Express Venezia

By Charlie Colville
2 Hours Ago

This 15th century palazzo is now home to Orient Express's second ever hotel

This Post May Contain Affiliate Links. Learn More

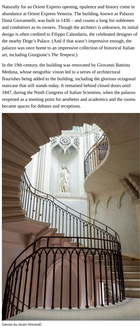
Venice is home to some of the most luxurious and star-studded hotels in the world – and this spring, it adds a new thing to its bow with the arrival of Orient Express Venezia. Nestled between two interesting canals, in Venice's northernmost district of Cannaregio, the hotel marks an exciting new chapter in the city's thriving hospitality scene. And while the location and the body behind the hotel are certainly enough to pique our curiosity, it's the interior design of the new Orient Express Venezia that truly takes our breath away. Here's everything you need to know about the new opening, plus a look inside its firstly redesigned rooms.

Take The Tour: Orient Express Venezia

(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

Naturally for an Orient Express opening, opulence and history come in abundance at Orient Express Venezia. The building, known as Palazzo Dona' Giovanardi, was built in 1436 – and counts a long list noblemen and condottieri as its owners. Though the architect is unknown, its subtle design is often credited to Filippo Calendario, the celebrated designer of the nearby Doge's Palace. (And if that wasn't impressive enough, the palazzo was once home to an impressive collection of historical Italian art, including Giorgione's The Tempest.)

In the 19th century, the building was renovated by Giovanni Battista Meduna, whose neogothic vision left its mark on architectural flourishes being added to the building, including the glorious octagonal staircase that still stands today. It remained behind closed doors until 1847, during the Nouth Congress of Italian Scientists, when the palazzo reopened as a meeting point for aesthetes and academics and the rooms became spaces for debates and symposia.

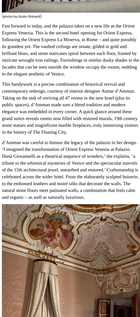


(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

Fast forward to today, and the palazzo takes on a new life as the Orient Express Venezia. This is the second hotel opening for Orient Express, following the Orient Express La Minerva, in Rome – and quite possibly its grandest yet. The vaulted ceilings are ornate, gilded in gold and brilliant blues, and stone staircases spiral between each floor, framed by intricate wrought iron railings. Furnishings in similar dusky shades to the facades that can be seen outside the window occupy the rooms, nodding to the elegant aesthetic of Venice.

This handiwork is a precise combination of historical revival and contemporary redesign, courtesy of interior designer Aurear d'Armesa. Taking on the task of reviving all 47 rooms in the new hotel (plus its public spaces), d'Armesa made sure a blend tradition and modern elegance was embedded in every corner. A quick glance around these grand suites reveals rooms now filled with restored murals, 19th century stone ceilings and magnificent marble fireplaces, truly immersing visitors in the history of The Floating City.

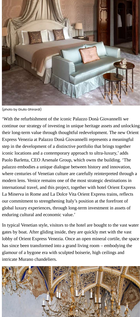
d'Armesa was careful to honour the legacy of the palazzo in her design. "I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Dona Giovanardi as a theatrical sequence of wonders," she explains, "a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 15th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored." Craftsmanship is celebrated across the wider hotel. From the elaborately sculpted baroque, to the embossed leathers and moiré silks that decorate the walls. The natural stone floors meet patinated walls, a combination that feels calm and organic – as well as naturally luxurious.



(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Dona Giovanardi we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Dona Giovanardi represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury," adds Paolo Barletta, CEO Avenale Group, which owns the building. "The palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modern lens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxury experiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value."

In typical Venetian style, visitors to the hotel are bought to the sun water gates by boat. After gliding inside, they are quickly met with the sun lounge, which features Venezia. Once an open mineral cavile, the space has since been transformed into a grand living room – embodying the glamour of a bygone era, with sculpted banters, high ceilings and intricate Murano chandeliers.



(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

And then there's the Calle Mercurglia; connecting the lobby to the hotel's garden, this intimate cultural salon hosts a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar. In other words, for guests, it's their very own seasonal gallery.

At the heart of the hotel sits its covered secret garden, where the tall stone walls keep out the buzz of boats and tourists. In here you'll find a bubbling fountain, lush foliage and antique gates lit by delicate Venetian lanterns (perfect for some atmospheric lighting). Guests can quite easily luxuriate here in the sanctuary of silence.

Dining spaces are similarly considered by d'Armesa and her team. While Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck (the architect behind the seasonal menus at Heinz Beck Venezia, La Gaiola and The Magan Bar, it's the interior designer who brings the spaces to life with theatrical concepts. Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept, is situated in the hotel's orangery for a multi-sensory experience, while all-day dining restaurant Le Canaè features its own small private garden for intimate and romantic moments. The Magan Bar, meanwhile, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, with an Art Deco-inspired bar (for a playful touch, some of the octagonal bar tables even feature enamelled chess boards).

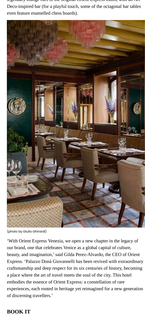
(photo by Giulio Ghirardi)

"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination," said Gilda Perez-Alvarado, the CEO of Orient Express. "Palazzo Dona Giovanardi has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city. This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers."

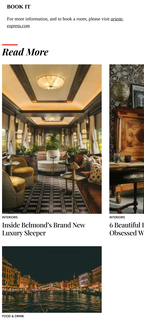
BOOK IT

For more information, and to book a room, please visit orient-express.com

Read More



INTERIORS
Inside Belmond's Brand New Luxury Sleeper



INTERIORS
6 Beautiful Black Wallpapers We're Obsessed With

FOOD & DRINK
An Insider's Guide: Where To Actually Eat In Venice

SKINCEUTICALS
C E Ferulic
Dark Spots Vitamin C Serum
Visibly Reverses up to 10 Years of Ageing Signs*
*Clinical results after 24 months of use
SHOP NOW

You Might Also Like...

INTERIORS
6 Beautiful Black Wallpapers We're Obsessed With
By Charlie Colville

INTERIORS
The Most Beautiful Candlesticks To Brighten Up The Table
By Charlie Colville

INTERIORS
7 British B Corp Home Brands We Absolutely Love
By Charlie Colville

C&TH Newsletters
Sign up today for the very best of Country & Town House, delivered straight to your inbox.
SIGN UP
By signing up, you confirm you have read and agree to our Terms & Conditions
DON'T MISS AN ISSUE
Subscribe to Country & Town House to get in on the ways to make sure you get the very best of property, interiors, travel, food and travel every month.
SUBSCRIBE

© 2025 Country & Town House. All rights reserved.
Powered by Bauer Media

Robb Report

MONACO & CÔTE D'AZUR

The Travel Issue

DESTINATIONS TO IGNITE YOUR WANDERLUST IN 2026

9 9911 - 2602 - F : 12.00 € - RD

APRIL / MAY 2026

HOSPITALITY & CATERING NEWS

A Legendary 15th-Century Venetian Palazzo Reawakened: Orient Express Venezia Opens in Venice

March 31, 2026

Share Share 0 Share

aha accessible hospitality alliance

For a hospitality world that welcomes everyone

Orient Express proudly unveils Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, the extraordinary rebirth of the 15th century architectural jewel, owned by Arsenale Group, reimagined by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman as a hotel, for the first time in nearly six centuries. A new icon in the brand's constellation of ultra-luxury travel experiences, the hotel invites guests into a world where Venetian history, contemporary artistry and the legendary spirit of the Orient Express art of travel converge in perfect harmony. Once a celebrated crossroad on the legendary route from Paris to Istanbul, Venice reclaims its role as a theatrical gateway for the Orient Express world of luxury travel.

Nestled in the quiet rhythm of Cannaregio, the Palazzo rises where two canals intertwine along the Rio di Noale, an address of serenity, history, and cinematic beauty. Here, Orient Express introduces a new chapter in its Italian journey, following the opening last year of the hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the luxury train inaugurated in 2025.

Meticulously conceived by Aline Asmar d'Amman, known for her ability to weave heritage architecture with contemporary artistic expression, the Palazzo has been restored with deep respect for its origin, introducing a sense of refined contemporary elegance. Her creative vision shapes the journey in a sequence of wonders, informed by the stories embedded in every architectural detail she unearthed. Embracing the Serenissima's legendary legacy as a gate between East and West, she choreographs this theatrical journey, where imagination, craftsmanship, and centuries of Venetian culture converge. The hotel features 47 uniquely crafted rooms, suites, and residences, where each space is elevated with intentional interiors and singular atmosphere, reflecting the layered architectural history of the building and the romance of Venetian living.

Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has long embodied the spirit of Venice as a crossroad of culture and imagination. In the mid19th century, Count Andrea Giovannelli commissioned architect Giovanni Battista Meduna, celebrated for restoring the neighbouring Ca' d'Oro, to reimagine its interiors with neogothic galore, Baroque flourishes, and the Palazzo's iconic octagonal staircase crowned by a celestial vault.

During the Ninth Congress of Italian Scientists in 1847, the Palazzo reopened as a stage for salons, debates, and grand receptions. In these historical spaces, intellect and imagination thrived. Over the years, the Palazzo grew through love and noble alliances, as reflected in the Salone Vittoria, a setting befitting royalty.

Today, Orient Express Venezia rekindles that spirit. As day shifts into night, The Grand Transformation subtly alters the mood, lights soften, candles flicker, and the Palazzo becomes a theatre of shadows, reflections, and whispered intrigue. A handpicked Cast of Characters guides guests through curated experiences, immersing them in a world where every moment is an act in a larger narrative.

Aline Asmar d'Amman's aesthetic vision unveils the Palazzo through a refined interplay of contrasts and memories, intentional architecture, and poetic precision: bold gestures of interior architectural grafting are balanced with infinitely sophisticated details, painted frescoes meet sculptural forms, historical details infinitely reflect into tinted mirrored surfaces. An array of exquisite, precious natural stones, meticulously curated and highly crafted, merge into the Palazzo's architectural body, weaving moments of sensual wonderment in the most intimate spaces.

The "Lost Colours" or "Colori Persi" of Venice softly re-emerge, woven into textures and curtains, furnishings, and finishes, transforming the Piano Nobile's historical salons into a succession of inhabited living canvases, punctuated by a bold intervention of vast cabinets of wonder. Venetian craftsmanship converses with contemporary art and works by masters of their time, while embossed leathers and moiré silks dress up the walls in echo to the ever-shifting dialogue of light and shadow dancing across the canals. Patinated walls, carved surfaces and artisanal finishes recall the passage of time, their textures lending a sense of modern, ageless allure.

One of the most unexpected revelations of this transformation is the Palazzo's lobby, il Corte del Conte, once an open mineral cortile, elevated into a grand living room, layered with sculpted boiserie, velvet lushness and spectacular bespoke Murano chandeliers, balancing the soul of a home with a dramatic sense of theatre.

The Palazzo's secret garden, a secluded sanctuary hidden at its heart, surprises and delights with its whimsical corners, sophisticated tents, luxuriant fountain and antique gates, lit by delicate Venetian lanterns diffusing their cinematic warm glow. Long concealed behind centuries old walls, the garden is transformed into an almost otherworldly space where nature, architecture, and the sound of silence meet. Calle Meraviglia, a realm of discoveries, connects the garden to the lobby, hosting a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar and reinforcing the hotel's role as a living cultural salon.

Every path and each floor lead to countless discoveries and encounters with marvels of the past, in magnetic dialogue with creative nowness. The result is a world of theatrical elegance where centuries of Venetian creativity meet the timeless codes of Orient Express.

The 47 rooms, suites, and residences reveal the intimate elegance of Venetian life, each space gently shaped by the architectural layers of centuries past. Restored murals, sculptural ceilings, and views opening onto gardens and canals create a rare and immersive sense of place.

History comes alive in the six Signature Suites, each telling a different story. Orient Express Suite, Colori Persi Suite, Del Conte Suite, Teatro Suite, Cherubini Suite and La Minerva Suite.

Exclusive spaces ranging up to 145 sqm reveal the hotel's most hidden treasures: 19th- century frescoes dedicated to the goddess Minerva and mythical flying figures that evoke the grandeur of a bygone era, gilded salons enamoured by dancing cherubs, monumental marble fireplaces with mesmerizing sculptural shells, all flanked with tall windows opening onto some of the most coveted views over Venice's canals. Each suite is a unique experience, where artistic heritage meets contemporary luxury.

The culinary vision of Orient Express Venezia is anchored by the signature of Three-Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck, marking one of the most anticipated gastronomic debuts of the year. His creative imprint elevates the entire food & beverage universe of the palazzo.
Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept by the acclaimed chef, unfolds within the historic orangerie, offering a fine dining and deeply sensorial culinary journey designed exclusively for the hotel. La Casati, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant, channels the theatrical, avant garde spirit of Marchesa Luisa Casati. Featuring a rare private garden, it becomes a stage where Heinz Beck's philosophy meets Venetian inspiration in a choreography of flavour, artistry, and spectacle.
The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired bar, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, blending crafted mixology with a touch of mystery and nocturnal charm.

Salone Vittoria, located at the first noble floor of the hotel, embodies the splendour and historical memory of a venue once dedicated to the wedding of Princess Vittoria Farnese. A treasure trove of extraordinary architectural and artistic beauty, it preserves centuries of elegance and ceremonial glamour, re-imagined to host the most solemn moments in the heart of Venice.

Guests may arrive directly by boat through the Gothic water gate, a dramatic and evocative gesture that recalls the timeless romance of travel between East and West and sets the tone for a stay that interlaces heritage, culture, and culinary excellence. Beyond the palazzo's interiors, guests are invited to experience Venice through the lens of Orient Express, exploring the surrounding streets of Cannaregio, or discovering the city's storied craftsmanship and artistic traditions.

"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination. Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city.
This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers. Venice now stands as a luminous cornerstone of our vision, bridging past and future, and inviting guests into a world of timeless elegance and discovery." Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express.

"With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovannelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury. The Palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modern lens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxury experiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value." Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group.

"I am truly proud to unveil the opening of Orient Express Venezia, a destination where timeless elegance meets contemporary luxury. This magnificent project is not only a milestone, but a heartfelt tribute to Venice's unique heritage and spirit of hospitality. I look forward to personally welcoming guests from around the world to share in an experience that is both authentic and unforgettable." Bartolomeo Fusco, General Manager Orient Express Venezia.

"I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 15th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored. In this eight- year creative transformative journey, the walls speak, revealing layers of enchantment magnified by the dialogue with contemporary creation. Embracing the duality of legacy and reinvention, I find inspiration in the unique position of Venice as a gateway between East and West, amplified by its exceptional tapestry of artistry and modern vitality." Aline Asmar D'Amman, Architect & Interior Designer.

EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Subscribe to our email newsletter and keep a close eye on the UK hospitality and catering business

SUBSCRIBE

WELCOME IN SPRING AT THE INSTITUTE OF HOSPITALITY GOLF DAY

aha accessible hospitality alliance

SEARCH H&C NEWS

Search the site ...

JOIN OUR EMAIL NEWSLETTER COMMUNITY

Contact US

MEIKO

KITCHEN PORTERS CLUB

SUPPLIER NEWS

- Kate Skinner Wins Springboard FutureChef 2025/26
- Country Range's Catalogue Grows with Addition of Duo of Desserts
- Milestone For Meiko as 10,000th M-iQ Machine is Built
- Rare Acquisition Opportunity: Contents of Selsdon Park Hotel go to Auction
- France's Cidres Wignac Unveils Brand Refresh
- A piece of architectural history
- Why Static Rates Fail: Rethinking Hotel Pricing Strategy in a Dynamic Market
- Country Range Group Begins Year with BDD Bonanza
- CRG Champions the Unsung Heroes of Foodservice with Clean Range Pro Launch

Copyright © - Hospitality & Catering News

STAYING POWER

From Riviera hideaways to glittering city landmarks, the year's most anticipated hotel openings are giving seasoned travellers new reasons to check in. Here are 11 standout properties set to debut in 2026.

BY **RACHEL INGRAM**

OMAN

THE MALKAI

Visit for:

Omani landscapes and star-filled nights

Oman's landscapes are some of the most stunning in the Middle East, and The Malkai makes the most of them. Set deep among dunes, the retreat, opening in autumn, is designed to frame the views rather than compete with them. Expect low-rise stone buildings and luxury tents, terraces that open straight onto the sand, and suites with private pools where guests can cool off between guided dune drives and camel treks.

Desert excursions and spa treatments in a wellness space rooted in regional traditions will fill the hours by day, while nights are for stargazing sessions and conversations around the fire. It should make for one of the most compelling new ways to experience Oman.

Robb Recommends: The Owner's Pavilion Suite (€8,700 per night)—a 255 sqm private retreat with three bedroom pavilions, a central living space and private pool, plus exclusive access to dedicated Defenders and curated Omani experiences. ***themalkai.com***

VENICE

AIRELLES PALLADIO

Visit for:

Lagoon views
away from the crowds

Across the water on Giudecca, Airelles Palladio offers an unusual luxury in Venice: space. The hotel, opening in April, occupies a Palladian complex surrounded by gardens—a rarity in the lagoon—with views back across to St. Mark's Square. Inside, the restoration reveals soaring ceilings, frescoes and elegant Venetian details, paired with the brand's signature hospitality. Rooms will feel grand yet comfortable, while the restaurants will focus on regional flavours and local seafood.

Private boats will shuttle guests across to the city's museums and palazzi, though many may prefer lingering in the gardens with a spritz instead. The new opening will offer Venice regulars something different: all the city's splendour, just removed from the bustle.

Robb Recommends: The Suite del Doge (€55,000 per night)—a sprawling 450 sqm four-bedroom residence in Villa Frollo with frescoed ceilings, antique furnishings and extraordinary views across St. Mark's Basilica and the Doge's Palace. ***airelles.com***

VENICE

ORIENT EXPRESS VENEZIA

Visit for:

Old-world elegance

The legendary Orient Express name returns in April with a Venetian hotel that embraces the chicness of its iconic train. Housed in a grand palazzo on the Grand Canal, the property will feature interiors inspired by the golden age of the original Orient Express—think polished wood, rich fabrics and plenty of cinematic flourish.

Suites will look out onto the canal's steady procession of boats, while restaurants and lounges will host long, glamorous evenings. Service promises to be impeccable throughout. Water taxis will pull up at the private jetty, delivering guests straight into the swirl of Venice before they retreat to the calmer atmosphere of the palazzo.

Robb Recommends: The Orient Express Suite (€20,000 per night)—a 145 sqm Grand Canal-facing residence with Murano chandeliers, a Neo-Baroque fireplace and museum-worthy Venetian art, including works by Busato and Zona. ***orient-express.com***

FOOD AND DRINK, HOTELS, MOTOR CARS, TRAVEL

Orient Express Venezia appoints three Michelin star chef Heinz to lead culinary vision

March 10, 2026

Orient Express Venezia announces the appointment of internationally acclaimed chef Heinz Beck to oversee the hotel's entire gastronomic offering.

A leading figure in European fine dining with Three Michelin stars, and the Beck and Maltese Consulting Team will curate and sign all culinary experiences within the historic Venetian Palazzo. This collaboration entrusts Beck with shaping a distinctive culinary concept across the hotel from its signature fine-dining restaurant to its reception spaces and more relaxed venues. Drawing inspiration from the Venetian lagoon and the surrounding territory, his cuisine reflects the principles that define his internationally celebrated approach: technical precision, clarity of flavour, and a constant pursuit of balance and lightness. Heinz Beck's vision will be carried out by Pasquale Rivetti, Chef in Residence.

This gastronomic vision is expressed within the architectural setting conceived by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman, who has led the complete renovation of Orient Express Venezia since 2018. Housed in one of Venice's legendary palaces, the spaces reawaken the historical legacy of the Palazzo while

introducing a contemporary sensibility, with poetic precision and a strong cultural connection to the Serenissima's artistry.

Heinz Beck Venezia: the gastronomic restaurant

A dining room of twenty seats, Heinz Beck Venezia serves as the hotel's gastronomic restaurant. The chef's approach reflects the philosophy that established his reputation: a cuisine centered on balance, combining flavor, lightness, and nutritionalawareness. Ingredients drawn from the Venetian lagoon and the wider Mediterranean basin form its foundation. Amberjack with ash buttermilk, fresh peas, and salted lemon, or red prawn served with carrots and lagoon seaweed, highlight local products through precise contemporary technique and a refined interpretation of Italian culinary tradition.

Set within the Palazzo's former Orangerie, the dining room designed by Aline Asmar d'Amman is illuminated by sculpted glass forms inspired by underwater life, casting fluid reflections across the space, a detail imagined after her conversations with Heinz Beck about the edible flowers of the lagoon.

Heinz Beck Venezia operates exclusively during dinner service.

La Casati: Venice in Its Everyday Rhythm

Complementing the gastronomic restaurant, La Casati offers a more relaxed interpretation of Venetian dining while maintaining the same culinary method. Open for lunch and dinner, the restaurant celebrates the local flavors of the city through seasonal ingredients and recipes rooted in Venetian tradition. Designed with surfaces adorned by living textures and crafted materials, La Casati's spaces are permeated with a sense of theater, inspired by the legendary eccentric Italian aristocrat, a muse to architect Aline Asmar d'Amman. During the summer months, a secluded 300-square-meter garden opens to guests, extending the experience outdoors and offering a rare green retreat in the heart of Venice.

Wagon Bar: An Echo of the Golden Age of Travel.

The wagon bar evokes the golden age of travel, in an ode to the original Orient Express railcar lounges, reinterpreted with codes of Art Deco. The Wagon Bar is open until late evening, and offers a selection of light savory dishes during the day, followed by classic and signature cocktails. Intimate in scale, the space combines references to the heritage and codes of Orient Express.

Salone Vittoria: the Art of Entertaining

Once the iconic ballroom of Venetian nobility, Salone Vittoria, located on the magnificent noble floor, continues to host the social life of the Palazzo. Spectacular breakfast is served beneath the historical 18th century chandeliers, while gala dinners and private celebrations unfold within its historic interiors. For each occasion, menus are curated by Chef Heinz Beck and Beck and Maltese Consulting team, reflecting the traditions of Venetian hospitality through attentive service and carefully composed dining experiences.

With the arrival of Heinz Beck, Orient Express Venezia places gastronomy at the center of the guest experience. Conceived across the entire Palazzo, the culinary offering brings together fine dining, informal moments, and special gatherings within a unique and cohesive vision.

The partnership reflects an approach in which cuisine, art of hospitality, and the historic character of the palace combine to create a distinctly Venetian journey –

interpreted through contemporary craftsmanship.

Book your experience today: https://www.orient-express.com/en/hotel/europe/italy/venice/orient-express-venezia/restaurants-bars

Share this:

X Facebook

Reblog Like Be the first to like this.

Donna Richardson

← Previous Post

Leave a comment

Write a comment...

Comment

Find us on:

Join the fun!

Stay updated with our latest recipes and other news by joining our newsletter.

Type your email...

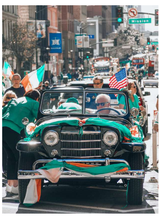
Categories

- ARTS (9)
- aviation (2)
- Celebrities (13)
- Cruises (9)
- Fashion and lifestyle (12)
- fitness (1)
- Food and Drink (37)
- Hotels (18)
- Motor cars (7)
- Ski (12)
- Sport (5)
- Travel (64)
- Travel Trends (2)
- Tried and Tested (10)
- Uncategorized (12)
- wine (2)

Recent Posts

FOOD AND DRINK, HOTELS, MOTOR CARS, TRAVEL

Orient Express Venezia appoints three Michelin star chef Heinz to lead culinary vision

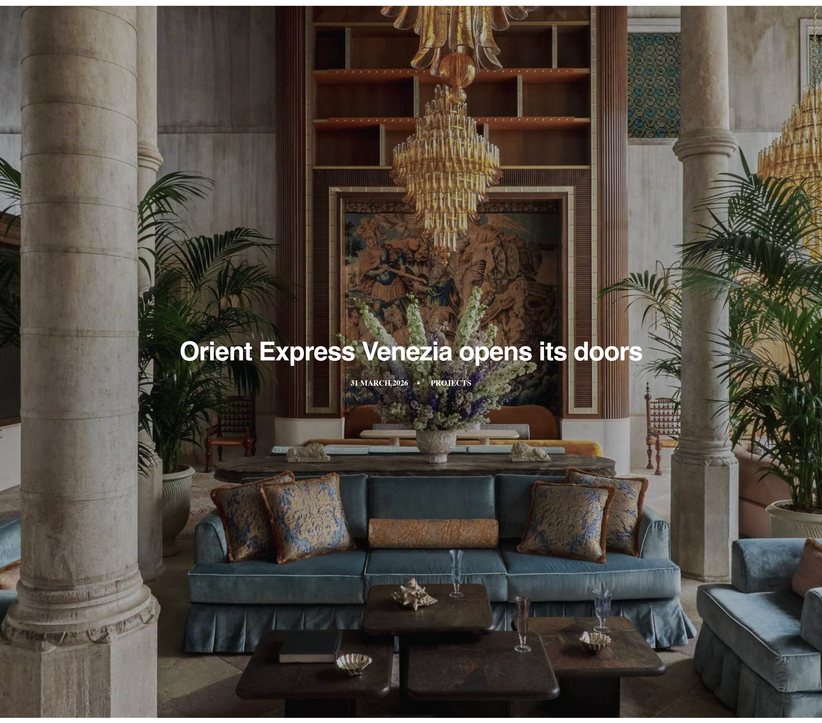


FOOD AND DRINK

Emerald Dreams: Experiencing St. Patrick's Day in Dublin

CRUISES

Free days out on the canal this spring



Orient Express Venezia opens its doors

31 MARCH 2026 • PROJECTS

Orient Express Venezia has opened its doors within Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, marking the group's second hotel in Venice.

Owned by Arsenale Group, the 15th-century palazzo has been reimagined as a hotel by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman. Her aesthetic vision unveils the Palazzo through a refined interplay of contrasts and memories, intentional architecture and poetic precision: bold gestures of interior architectural grafting are balanced with infinitely sophisticated details, painted frescoes meet sculptural forms, historical details infinitely reflect into tinted mirrored surfaces. An array of precious natural stones, curated and highly crafted, merge into the Palazzo's architecture.

"I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the whimsical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 15th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored," comments Aline Asmar D'Amman. "In this eight- year creative transformative journey, the walls speak, revealing layers of enchantment magnified by the dialogue with contemporary creation. Embracing the duality of legacy and reinvention, I find inspiration in the unique position of Venice as a gateway between East and West, amplified by its exceptional tapestry of artistry and modern vitality."

The "Lost Colours" or "Colori Persi" of Venice softly re-emerge, woven into textures and curtains, furnishings and finishes, transforming the Piano Nobile's historical salons into a succession of inhabited living canvases, punctuated by a bold intervention of vast cabinets. Venetian craftsmanship converses with contemporary art and works by masters of their time, while embossed leathers and moiré silks dress up the walls in echo to the ever-shifting dialogue of light and shadow dancing across the canals. Patinated walls, carved surfaces and artisanal finishes recall the passage of time, their textures lending a sense of modern, ageless allure.

The Palazzo's lobby, il Corte del Conte, has been transformed from an open mineral cortile into a grand living room, layered with sculpted boiserie, velvet and spectacular bespoke Murano chandeliers.

Hidden at the heart of the palazzo is a secret garden with tents, a luxuriant fountain and antique gates, lit by delicate Venetian lanterns diffusing their cinematic warm glow. Calle Meraviglia connects the garden to the lobby, hosting a rotating selection of contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar and reinforcing the hotel's role as a living cultural salon.

Every path and each floor lead to countless discoveries and encounters with marvels of the past, in magnetic dialogue with creative nowness. The result is a world of theatrical elegance where centuries of Venetian creativity meet the timeless codes of Orient Express.

Upstairs, the 47 rooms, suites and residences are gently shaped by the architectural layers of centuries past with restored murals, sculptural ceilings and views opening onto gardens and canals. The six Signature Suites reveal the hotel's hidden treasures: 19th-century frescoes dedicated to the goddess Minerva and mythical flying figures that evoke the grandeur of a bygone era; gilded salons animated by dancing cherubs; monumental marble fireplaces with sculptural shells, all flanked with tall windows opening onto some of the most coveted views over Venice's canals.

Overseen by three-Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck, the hotel's culinary programme comprises Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate fine-dining concept within the historic orangerie; all-day dining restaurant La Casati; and The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired bar that pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains.

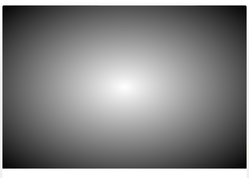
Meanwhile on the first floor, Salone Vittoria, is an events space that embodies the splendour and historical memory of Princess Vittoria Farnese's wedding, preserving centuries of ceremonial glamour.

"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand, one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty and imagination," says Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express. "Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city. This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of rare experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers. Venice now stands as a luminous cornerstone of our vision, bridging past and future, and inviting guests into a world of timeless elegance and discovery."

"With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovannelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment," adds Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group. "The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury. The Palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modern lens. Venice remains one of the most strategic destinations in international travel, and this project, together with hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxury experiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value."

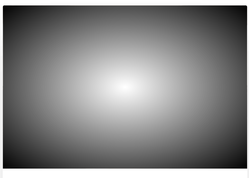
ORIENT EXPRESS

RELATED POSTS



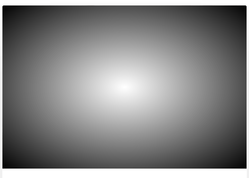
26 September 2025

Orient Express to unveil new train at Art Deco centenary exhibition



30 November 2022

Orient Express unveils Presidential Suite at Design Miami/



25 March 2021

Orient Express to debut in Rome in 2023

Sign up for Sleeper's free email alerts

SIGN UP

SLEEPER MEDIA

We are using cookies to give you the best experience on our website.
You can find out more about which cookies we are using or switch them off in settings.

Accept Reject

Rebecca Nicholson · 22 hours ago

Inside Venice's New Opening: Orient Express Venezia

The Orient Express is continuing its expansion beyond the rails, and its latest move may be its most impressive yet.

Now open in Venice, Orient Express Venezia brings the brand's signature glamour to one of Italy's most historic palazzos, marking its second hotel launch in the country.

Set within the 15th-century Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in the quieter Cannaregio district, the property offers a more private, residential feel, while still delivering the theatricality synonymous with the Orient Express name.

A Historic Palazzo, Reimagined

Originally built in 1436, the palazzo has been transformed into a hotel for the first time in nearly 600 years. The redesign, led by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman, carefully balances preservation with modern luxury.

Original frescoes, carved detailing and patinated walls have been restored, while contemporary materials, moiré silks, embossed leathers and natural stone—introduce a refined, layered aesthetic.

Arrival sets the tone: guests enter via a Gothic water gate, stepping directly from the canal into what was once an internal courtyard, now reimagined as a richly dressed lounge complete with velvet seating and Murano glass chandeliers.

A standout feature is the hotel's hidden garden, offering a rare moment of calm in Venice, with lantern-lit spaces designed for private dining and relaxed evenings.

Rooms That Reflect Venetian Grandeur

The hotel houses 47 rooms, suites and residences, each individually designed to reflect the building's heritage.

The six Signature Suites, spanning up to 1,560 square feet, are the most striking, featuring restored 19th-century frescoes, marble fireplaces and grand salon-style living spaces. High ceilings and large windows frame views across the canals and gardens, reinforcing the sense of staying within a private Venetian residence.

Dining, Cocktails and Wellness

Dining is led by Heinz Beck, who brings his signature precision to the hotel's fine-dining restaurant. A more relaxed offering is available at La Casati, while the Wagon Bar draws inspiration from the original Orient Express carriages, pairing Art Deco interiors with classic cocktails and Venetian cicchetti.

The hotel also features a spa inspired by ancient Roman thermal rituals, alongside a grand ballroom designed for private events and celebrations.

Orient Express Expands in Italy

The Venice opening follows the brand's Rome debut in 2025 and forms part of a wider strategy to position Italy at the centre of its evolving hospitality portfolio, which now spans trains, hotels and upcoming yacht experiences.

With Orient Express Venezia, the brand delivers exactly what today's luxury traveller is looking for: heritage, privacy, and a sense of place, without compromising on design or experience.

Travel

Recent Posts See All

This Design-Led Safari Lodge in Uganda Offers Rare Access to...

Moving Abroad With Pets? Why Portugal Is Leading the Way in...

A £24 Million Scandinavian Retreat Is Rising In The Heart O...

Comments

Write a comment

For all enquiries, please contact:

We use cookies on our website to see how you interact with it. By accepting, you agree to our use of such cookies. Privacy Policy

Settings Accept

Three-Michelin-star chef Heinz Beck to lead culinary transformation at Orient Express Venezia

FOOD & TRAVEL DESK

11TH MARCH 2026

Last Friday, Orient Express Venezia announced the appointment of acclaimed chef Heinz Beck to lead its gastronomic operations across the historic Venetian hotel. Beck, recognised with three Michelin stars and for his prominent role in European fine dining, will be shaping the culinary offering throughout, including a signature restaurant, informal eateries and event menus. The move aims to establish a distinctive food identity for the property, housed within a renovated palazzo.

Beck, working alongside the Beck and Maltese Consulting Team, will curate all food experiences, drawing inspiration from the city's lagoon and surrounding regions to emphasise technical precision, clarity of flavour and a commitment to balance and lightness. Beck's vision will be executed on-site by Pasquale Rivetti, who serves as chef in residence.

The hotel, located in one of Venice's historic palaces, has undergone a comprehensive restoration that began in 2018, led by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman. The renovation seeks to revive the building's heritage while incorporating contemporary design elements, and the culinary programme is similarly integrated with the palazzo's artistic and cultural identity.

The centrepiece is Heinz Beck Venezia, a twenty-seat gastronomic restaurant operating exclusively for dinner. The menu features dishes such as *Amberjack with Ash Buttermilk, Fresh Peas and Salted Lemon* and *Red Prawn with Carrots and Lagoon Seaweed*, highlighting ingredients from nearby waters and the Mediterranean. The dining room, formerly the orangery, features sculpted glass inspired by underwater life – a design element that emerged from conversations between Beck and d'Amman.

For guests seeking a more casual experience, La Casati offers lunch and dinner menus rooted in Venetian heritage and seasonal produce. The restaurant's design references the eccentric Italian aristocrat who inspired d'Amman, and in the summer, guests can dine in a 300-square-metre garden.

The property also houses the Wagon Bar, which pays homage to the original Orient Express railcar lounges with Art Deco influences, serving light dishes by day and cocktails into the evening. Salone Vittoria, formerly a ballroom, continues to host breakfasts, gala dinners and private events, with new menus curated by Beck and his team.

With Beck's appointment, Orient Express Venezia intends to place gastronomy at the centre of its guest experience, combining fine dining, informal meals and special occasions within a unified culinary vision. The collaboration reflects an effort to blend cuisine, hospitality and the palazzo's traditional character, offering guests what the hotel describes as a contemporary interpretation of Venetian tradition.

Food Desk

To book accommodation or a table at one of the restaurants at Orient Express Venezia, Strada Nova 2292 – 30121, Venice, Italy, call +39 04 18 85 80 04 or visit the hotel's website here.

POPULAR LATEST TOP PICKS

Dishoom launches limited-edition Chicken Ruby Pie in collaboration with chef Calum Franklin
FOOD & DRINKS

Franz Ferdinand at Brixton Academy
★★★★☆
LIVE MUSIC

The Other Bennet Sister
★★★★☆
SHOW

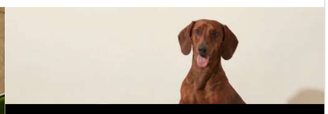
Reminders of Him
★★★☆☆
MOVIE

Arthur Hill at Wembley Arena
★★★★★
LIVE MUSIC

MORE IN FOOD & DRINKS

Rocket Room to open in Leicester Square with premium cocktails and interactive games
Food & Travel Desk

1 Lombard Street debuts steak and unlimited frites Fridays for City diners
Food & Travel Desk


Noodle & Beer launches Paws & Bowls pup-friendly pop-up with bespoke doggy menu in Spitalfields
Food & Travel Desk

Andalusian chef Ángel León transforms Aponiente with immersive marshland dining experience in Cádiz
Food & Travel Desk

New British bistro Tavern to open in Shoreditch with refined pub-inspired menu
Food & Travel Desk

Missing Bean Coffee Roasters opens seventh sustainable community café in Charlbury
Food & Travel Desk

Little Pudding and Guinness unveil exclusive doughnut pudding for St Patrick's Day at Seven Dials Market
Food & Travel Desk

Chishuru and Wilsons to unite for one-night tasting menu in London to celebrate West African and produce-driven cuisine
Food & Travel Desk

Dishoom launches limited-edition Chicken Ruby Pie in collaboration with chef Calum Franklin
Food & Travel Desk

Copyright © 2011-2026 FL Media

Hot, hot, HOTSPOTS FOR 2026

From private islands to historic palazzos, discover the latest luxurious destinations to put on your travel wish-list for the year ahead

WORDS BY **ANGELINA VILLA-CLARKE**

TOP: Rah Gili Maldives is the first of six individually designed islands
ABOVE: The historic Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli
BELOW: Luxury interiors at Airelles Palladio Venezi

A historic wine hotel in Burgundy, an ultra-luxe reopening in the Seychelles and two architectural wonders in Venice – these new openings may be found scattered across different parts of the world, but they all have one thing in common: a sense of quiet luxury and the spirit of reinvention. All you have to do is pack your wanderlust.

TIME TO REVISIT VENICE

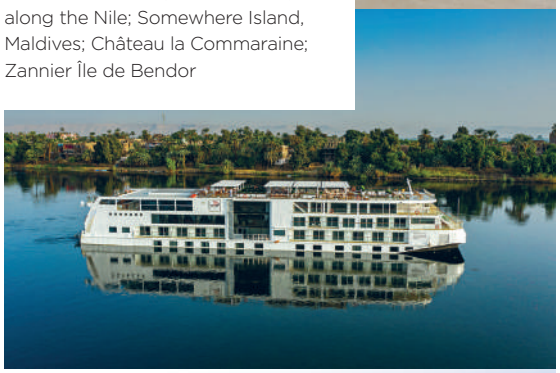
Perfect to fall in love with Venice again are two prestigious openings in the city. Airelles Palladio Venezia will be the luxury brand's first opening outside of France. Carved out of a collection of historic buildings, the hotel is found on the island of Giudecca, with views across to St Mark's and the Doge's Palace. Working with artisans and historians, the reimagination has resulted in 45 bedrooms, three restaurants and a wellness garden, with many of the 16th-century details of the original villa restored to their former glory.
airelles.com

Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, meanwhile, is another historic masterpiece, created from a palazzo that dates back to 1436. Opening in April 2026, guests can expect to step back in time with much of the building's bygone splendour bought back to life – from arriving by boat to the 15th-century Gothic portal to the gilded ballroom. Sprinkling magic throughout your stay are hidden passageways and a secret garden, as well as a fine dining restaurant and beautifully executed rooms.
orient-express.com

FAR-FLUNG AND FABULOUS

Renowned for its tailor-made itineraries across the world, Turquoise Holidays' USP is the ability to curate the dream trip with authenticity at its heart. One of its most-anticipated launches for 2026 is Fregate Island in the Seychelles, which has reopened after a four-year upgrade. The ultra-luxurious private island has just 17 sustainably designed villas set into an untouched, verdant landscape. Its natural setting, utter seclusion and personalised service are the big draws. While you can spend your days soaking up the sun on a deserted beach, its allure also lies in the sheer amount of facilities on offer: from a distillery to a tailor's workshop; art gallery to the largest wine cellar in the Indian Ocean. It also boasts a world-class spa and immersive experiences amid the island's endemic wildlife, which include giant Aldabra tortoises and endangered magpie-robins.
turquoiseholidays.co.uk

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Fregate Island, Seychelles; Luura Cliff and Mera, Paros; Viking will be sailing along the Nile; Somewhere Island, Maldives; Château la Commaraine; Zannier Île de Bendor



THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Due to open this spring, and set to be one of France's big openings for the year ahead, is Château la Commaraine in Burgundy. Set within a historic vineyard, the 12th-century estate has undergone a meticulous four-year restoration, becoming the region's first five-star hotel. The property, which is the sister to the Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa in Champillon, has 37 rooms and suites with period details and views across the fields. There are also two restaurants from Christophe Raoux and a lavish spa with outdoor pool. The estate's own *cuverie* (winery) is built within the château itself, so expect the finest Pinot Noir on tap.
chateaulacommaraine.com

Meanwhile, opening this spring in the South of France, and predicted to be Europe's summer hotspot, is Zannier Île de Bendor. Set on a seven-hectare private island, off the coast of Bandol in Provence, the whole project has taken five years, with the original village turned into a stunning 93-room hotel, with restaurants, art gallery and a wellbeing centre.
zannierhotels.com/bendor

PUTTING PAROS ON THE MAP

Placing the postcard-pretty Greek island of Paros firmly in the spotlight this summer are two new chic properties. Meros, part of the Santikos Collection of hotels, will open in June with 27 rooms and Cycladic design – think exposed stone walls, chalky tones and indoor-outdoor living.
santikoscollection.com

Family-owned Luura Cliff, meanwhile, features a village-like collection of whitewashed buildings, private pools and wellness experiences. Opening in May 2026, it will lean into Paros's rich culture with local, immersive experiences, from marble-carving workshops to field-to-fork feasts.
luurahotels.com

ALL AT SEA

Known for its Scandi-designed vessels and thoughtful, culture-rich itineraries, Viking has a host of new launches for 2026. Two new river ships, *Viking Ptah* and *Viking Sekhmet*, will take guests along the Nile to soak up the ancient secrets of Egypt with the company's thrilling Pharaohs & Pyramids itinerary. Elsewhere, new river itineraries have also been launched, such as New Orleans to Memphis, an 11-day voyage on the Mississippi River, discovering the wonders of the American South. Meanwhile, two new ocean ships will be added to Viking's fleet this year. *Viking Mira* debuts this spring with Mediterranean and Northern European sailings, while the *Viking Libra*, will launch at the end of 2026 as the world's first hydrogen-powered cruise ship.
vikingcruises.co.uk

MORE, MORE, MORE IN THE MALDIVES

Here Baa Atoll – Maldives' two-island launch takes barefoot luxury to a new level across two archipelagos, with butler service and suspended sky infinity pools. The first to open is Somewhere Island, with seven suites, while Nowhere Island, launching in spring, has just two presidential residences, and is available for exclusive hire.
here-maldives.com

Six & Six Private Islands is another multi-island concept. Over the next six years, the company will unveil six individually designed islands with the first, Rah Gili Maldives, opening in February, and the second, Don Maaga Maldives, at the end of 2026. The ethos is rooted in Maldivian culture, with local design, cuisine and experiences at its heart.
rahgili.com

Paolo Barletta, Founder & CEO of Arsenale Group : " We are not selling room-nights. We create memories"

7 MIN READING TIME PUBLISHED ON 01/04/26 - UPDATED ON 08/04/26

How do you define Arsenale Group — are you an investor, an owner, or an operator?

All of the above, but above all, I would define myself as someone truly passionate about hospitality — someone with a vision to disrupt this sector and do something different, coming from outside the industry. My background was in real estate, but with a deep passion for hospitality. That combination is what drives us: we identify iconic, difficult assets and convert them into extraordinary hotels, with full control over delivery, budget and operations.

What makes us different is our partnership structure. The company is owned by three partners — Mr. Nicola Bulgari at 85, Mr. Luca Rovati at 65, and myself at 39. Three generations. Not grandfather, father and son, but three minds with different ages, visions and expertise, fully aligned on the same direction.

Why do you insist on owning the assets rather than following the asset-light model that major hotel groups favour?

The asset-light model is a very efficient way to create scale and grow quickly — I respect that. But at Arsenale we believe we don't need huge scale. What we need is an exceptional product, exceptional service, and the conditions to drive real innovation. And to achieve that, we must own the assets — at least the majority. The reason is simple: in ultra-luxury, the owner and the manager will always be misaligned.

What is good for asset profitability can be very bad for the brand. To keep quality, vision and service truly aligned, you need to be the one holding the keys. From day one, we have owned all of our assets.

> *"In ultra-luxury, the owner and the manager will always be misaligned. To keep vision and service truly aligned, you need to be the one holding the keys."*

You currently have around ten assets, almost all in Italy. Is that enough scale for a serious luxury group?

Our ten assets are iconic, located across Europe, and very difficult for any other company to replicate. You cannot simply assemble a collection like this — one exceptional property in the right city, with iconicity, consistent storytelling, and the same spirit throughout. The Peninsula Group has twelve hotels worldwide and is known everywhere. We have ten, and we are not well known yet — but we will be.

Arsenale will continue to grow through acquisitions where the right case presents itself. But equally, we will work with families who are aligned with our vision — people who do not want to hand their asset to a major brand, but are willing to trust Paolo, Nicola and Luca to do something truly different.

Beyond Italy, which European markets interest you most for expansion?

Our DNA is rooted in the heritage and history of the old continent. We were born in Rome. We are very present in Venice. The Renaissance runs through our blood. So naturally, we anchor ourselves to European history — and then follow the story wherever it leads. Central and Eastern Europe is genuinely interesting. We already operate through our Golden Eagle train company with a beautiful route along the Danube, and we travel frequently through Eastern Europe. Croatia, in particular, is a market we are actively looking at — it has extraordinary momentum, incredible heritage and significant upside as a destination.

That said, we do not pursue expansion targets. We pursue opportunities where the asset, the story and the cultural context are truly aligned with our vision.

Tell us about the train activity. How does it connect to your hotel portfolio?

Everything we do is connected. In Italy we have developed two hotels and one train under the Orient Express brand, all of which are owned and developed by Arsenale under a dedicated HMA. At the same time, Arsenale has a broader portfolio of hospitality assets that sit outside the Orient Express agreement. Golden Eagle connects to our hotel portfolio too. What we offer guests is complete inter-modality — the ability to experience a country at 360 degrees.

When a guest arrives at the Orient Express La Minerva in Rome, we welcome them in a particular way. When they board La Dolce Vita, that same attention to detail continues — the food, the wine, the storytelling, all paired with the region the train is crossing. They arrive in Venice, where we have a property. Then on to Maratea, where we have the Santavenere — an extraordinary hotel that most people don't know, because Maratea hasn't yet had the fame of the Amalfi Coast, even though it is just as beautiful. Then south to Sicily. Everything connects.

> *"When guests come back from an experience with us, we want them to feel they discovered Italy in a completely different way."*

Cabin of the Dolce Vita train, managed by Orient Express

You created the Leading Trains platform. What is the logic behind it?

Leading Trains is our way of setting a new standard for train travel globally. Whether you board a Golden Eagle train to Central Asia, Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Egypt or Europe, you know exactly what to expect: a train authentically designed for that country, with local staff, local chefs and local cuisine — but with universal standards of comfort. Ensuite shower, ensuite toilet, air conditioning, comfortable beds, attentive service. You experience the local, but you sleep well, you eat well, you feel safe.

When we entered the train sector, there were 12 trains globally. Today there are around 30 — and 11 of those belong to Arsenale. We account for roughly one third of total global supply. That is not a coincidence. Before Arsenale arrived, nobody was talking about luxury train travel. Since we arrived, everyone is. We believe that is the power of a new player with a disruptive vision entering an established market.

How do you describe your partnership with Accor and the Orient Express brand?

Accor has been a partner from the beginning — they owned 50% of Orient Express partnering with LVMH. It is a strong partnership. But I think it is important to say: before Accor met Arsenale, there were no Orient Express hotel assets in the world, only the Venice-Simplon Orient Express train owned by Belmond. After that meeting, we have a hotel in Rome, a hotel in Venice, and La Dolce Vita train. Everything was started by us. We are proud to be the underdog that helped disrupt and bring innovation to this field.

But Arsenale was never conceived as a single-brand company. Alongside Orient Express, we deliberately develop and operate other hospitality and train assets that sit outside that agreement. For this reason, Golden Eagle and the broader Leading Trains portfolio are kept separate from the Orient Express brand. They allow us to explore different geographies and narratives while applying the same standards of comfort, service and experiential ambition. Orient Express represents one expression of our vision; the wider Arsenale portfolio represents another.

Belmond has been in this market for over 25 years, but it was only when Arsenale arrived and disrupted the sector that Belmond started expanding to Portofino and beyond. Competition pushes everyone to get better.

Is the current geopolitical and economic climate a concern for ultra-luxury travel?

I think the luxury travel market remains resilient. Covid taught us something fundamental: when people cannot travel, they pause. But when they can, they come back with even greater intensity than before. There might be a conflict, a crisis, a period of fear — and that might slow things down for three, six, maybe twelve months. But people will always want to travel to Italy, to Greece, to the Middle East, to Asia. They may stop buying a bag or a car for a decade. They will never stop wanting to travel. The experience economy seems central to your model.

Can you give a concrete example of what that means for Arsenale?

In Saudi Arabia, on one of our train routes, there is a stop in the middle of the desert. We created a temporary platform where guests can step off the train beside a castle that is 400 years older than the Colosseum. We activate that castle. We create an extraordinary dinner under the stars. That experience is priceless. You cannot buy it anywhere else. Only through the train, through the vision, through the alignment of all these elements, can you deliver something like that. And once you have lived that moment, you remember it for the rest of your life. That is what we are in the business of creating. We are not selling room-nights. We are creating memories.

Condé Nast Traveler

Christian Dennis, David Dunton, Gora Kadan, and Beyond, Nare Ra Atoll Maldives, Jumeirah Mina Al Arab Dino Watts, Mark Anthony Fox

HOT LIST

The Best New Hotels in the World: 2026 Hot List

The best hotel openings in the world from the past year.

BY CNT EDITORS

April 23, 2026

Alexandre Tabaste/Orient Express La Minerva

Orient Express La Minerva — Rome

HOT LIST 2026

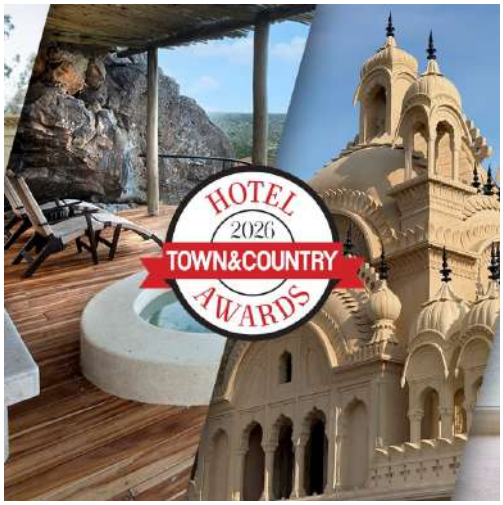
Elephant in the room? If only! Gian Lorenzo Bernini's obelisk-bearing elephant waits patiently outside, as it has done for the past three and a half centuries. And—without wishing to cast any aspersions on the impeccable door staff of La Minerva—surely this magnificently sculpted elephant is the grandest ornament to grace a hotel's entrance, anywhere, ever. Rooms on the piazza side all have a view of the pachyderm (along with the Pantheon, just over one of its shoulders, and the Basilica of Saint Mary of Minerva, over the other). Built as a private residence in 1620, La Minerva became a hotel in 1811 and has remained a beloved Roman institution ever since. Accor reopened the property under the Orient Express flag in spring 2025, when it also launched its iteration of the *Orient Express* train, operating out of Rome's Ostiense station. Designer Hugo Toro has juxtaposed Art Deco, midcentury-modern, and tobacco-toned contemporary elements in a manner that brilliantly evokes a *stile di vita* that has, in our time, become unfamiliar. It is a trumpet call to action, to live and to travel well. *From $1,158.* —*Steve King*

Read Full Review

CHECK AVAILABILITY AT BOOKING.COM

CHECK AVAILABILITY AT EXPEDIA

TOWN&COUNTRY



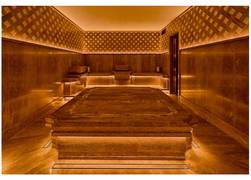
The 9th Annual T&C Hotel Awards: Our New Favorite Places

It's the yearly hunt: What hotels, of all that have opened around the world in the last 12 months, speak to us the most? We considered 143, settled on 49. It was tough, but it's time. Curtain up!

The Charm of Old Walls: Historic Buildings Reinvented as Hotels.

Did they build better back then? All around the world today, hotels have you sleeping in history.

Orient Express La Minerva **Rome** When the first Orient Express train was launched in 1883, it defined glamorous international travel. With the opening of the first Orient Express hotel—in a 17th-century palazzo where 19th-century Grand Tourists once stayed—the brand is reviving that atmosphere without ever tipping into nostalgia (hats off to designer Hugo Toro). There is restored marble statuary, Murano glass, hand-painted ceilings, and specially designed furniture subtly evocative of Belle Epoque travel. The central lobby and bar, beneath a historic skylight, are packed with actual Romans. The rooftop restaurant has what may be the best views in Rome (the Pantheon is right there), and you're steps from Gammarelli, historical maker of liturgical garments. There's always a phalanx of well-appointed holy men making their way past the hotel's front door.



NEWS

Orient Express La Minerva unveils new spa concept

The Ottoman-inspired holistic wellness space was designed by artist and architect Hugo Toro

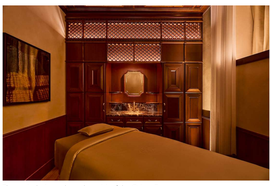
Italy
By Wendy Golledge
08 April 2026

www.orient-express.com/en/hotel/europe/italy/rome/la-minerva

The Orient Express La Minerva hotel in Rome, Italy has opened its new 220sqm spa.

Designed by artist and architect Hugo Toro, the Spa draws on the legacies of Roman thermae and Ottoman hammam.

The spa is structured around steam, with a sequenced progression inspired by ancient thermal rituals. There is a tepidarium, a caldarium combining pools and steam and an invigorating frigidarium.



The spa's design echoes the spirit of the Orient Express

A marble hammam (lead picture) rises as the heart of the spa, surrounded by fountains resembling Triton basins.

An ancient Ottoman purification ritual, the hammam integrates Roman influences, establishing a dialogue between east and west. This has been conceived to recall the historic route of the Orient Express linking Paris to Constantinople.

Treatments are curated by exclusive skincare partner, Italian brand Furtuna Skin.

"Collaborating with Furtuna Skin represents a meaningful addition to Orient Express La Minerva. Together, we have created an experience that elevates our wellness offering through a shared Italian heritage and an exclusive journey inspired by Ottoman rituals."

Simone Giorgi
General manager, Orient Express La Minerva

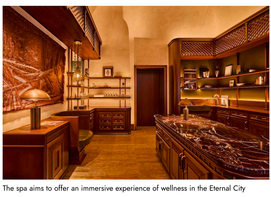
Immersive rituals and ancient purification traditions

In one single and one double treatment room, massage beds are supplied by C.O.D.E. and heated marble beds for body treatments are by Starpool.

Treatments include the Dea Minerva and Stop Constantinople signature rituals, which celebrate the regenerative power of water, heat and touch.

Echoing traditions passed down from Byzantium to Istanbul, the rituals include rose-infused foot baths, kassa exfoliation, ghassoul clay wraps and foaming massages.

Obsidian treatments, including the Furtuna Skin x La Minerva Exclusive Vibrancy Facial, have been developed using an obsidian gua sha and natural active ingredients.



The spa aims to offer an immersive experience of wellness in the Eternal City

Agatha Relota Luczo, founder and CEO of Furtuna Skin, said: "The Spa's reverence for ancient purification traditions and holistic restoration aligns with our own commitment to time-honoured botanicals and transformative wellness.

"Together, we have crafted immersive rituals that nurture the skin, restore the spirit and invite a sense of renewal befitting one of Rome's most storied destinations."

"The Spa at Orient Express La Minerva is conceived as a journey within a journey: a place where time slows down. Inspired by the spirit of the Orient Express, its ethos is rooted in slow, intentional living; a seamless blend of heritage, sensoriality and connection."

Giulia Patulli
Spa manager, Orient Express La Minerva

Completing the experience, there is a gym and Kinesis room, equipped with Technogym Artis. Spa software is by Book4Time.

Hugo Toro's interiors include hand-blown Murano glass fixtures, brown travertine, red and veined marble, Roman-style plaster and stained oak.

The contrast of stone, wood and richly woven textiles, including canopy beds in the relaxation area, anchors the space with a distinctly earthy, elemental feel.

Receive our newsletters directly to your inbox – sign up here

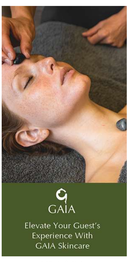
Be in the know...

Read the latest issue of *European Spa* magazine, out now

EUROPEANSPAMAGAZINE.COM

BACK

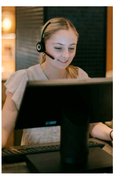
ADVERTISEMENT



GAIA
Elevate Your Guest's Experience With GAIA Skincare

ADVERTISEMENT

Related Articles



NEWS

Trybe offers exclusive insight into how spa guests spent in 2025

01 APRIL 2026

NEWS

Lefay and Marriott International announce joint venture

01 APRIL 2026

NEWS

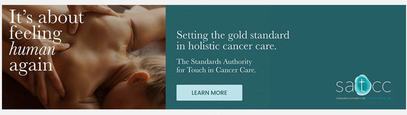
Elite Hotels revitalises its spa offering with two new brand partners

24 MARCH 2026

NEWS

Cromlix unveils exclusive wellness partnership ahead of reopening

26 MARCH 2026



ADVERTISEMENT

© Copyright 2026 - Spa Publishing Limited. All rights reserved.

BELMOND'S FRENCH RIVERBOAT FLEET WELCOMES MARGUERITE

LES BATEAUX BELMOND is refreshing its distinguished French fleet with the introduction of *Marguerite*, a 'floating villa' set to debut in late summer 2026. A thoughtful transformation of the former *Amaryllis*, the vessel draws its aesthetic from Burgundy's famed golden marguerite (daisy) fields, filtered through Belmond's slow luxury sensibility. Accommodating just eight guests across four softly decorated double suites, the boat offers a gentle journey through the lesser-known landscapes of Burgundy. The interiors feature artisan-crafted furnishings, an open-plan salon and an expansive outdoor deck equipped with a private plunge pool. The *Marguerite* experience is defined by total personalisation; a dedicated Guest Experience Executive tailors every aspect of the trip, from mustard-making in Dijon to curated art tours and historic castle visits. *Belmond.com*

ROME'S ORIENT EXPRESS HOTEL OPENS THE SPA

THE STEAM HAS FINALLY settled at Rome's Orient Express La Minerva, drifting into the long-awaited spa named, with characteristic confidence, The SPA. Though the original 1883 railway route charted a more northern course, La Minerva reimagines the itinerary with a steam-led wellness experience that maps the brand's iconic trajectory as it was conceived in Paris — led by French-Mexican architect Hugo Toro — and eventually finds its way to Istanbul, the train route's Eastern finale, represented by the Turkish Bathhouse. Where the route goes off course is somewhere in between, where it celebrates its new Italian residency, achieved through Sicilian botanicals by Furtuna Skin and the three stages of the Roman thermal bath: the mild tepidarium, the sweltering caldarium and the invigorating frigidarium. *Orient-express.com*

THE COMPANION VIENNA ARRIVES

A NEW HOSPITALITY CONCEPT from the collective behind rooftop restaurant NENI am Prater and hotel Superbude Wien has opened beside Vienna's Westbahnhof station. Named The Companion, the property aims to switch up the Viennese city break by introducing a more personal, rooted and authentic experience of urban life to the Austrian capital. Designed by Berlin-based firm weStudio with a brief to combine the old with the new, original columns are offset by black lacquered metal beams, while exposed foundations meet polished marble, balancing modern decor with comforting imperfections. From the 138 guest rooms to the dedicated social spaces — including Mediterranean restaurant Boca and the moody, retro-inspired bar Calypso — each area is designed to tell its own story. *Companion-hotels.com*

ANNUA'S GRAN HOTEL MARGALIDA CONFIRMS OPENING

ON JUNE 1, SPANISH BOUTIQUE BRAND ANNUA Signature Hotels will open the doors to its fifth property — an oceanfront sanctuary located in Banyalbufar, Mallorca. Gran Hotel Margalida comprises just 29 keys, with each sea-facing retreat oriented toward the horizon. Inside, interior designer Virginia Nieto and architect Álvaro Onieva have worked in tandem to channel the glamour of 1960s Mallorca, reimagining the locale as a pinnacle of ultra-luxe Mediterranean travel. The ambition is backed by a suite of world-class amenities: a panoramic cliffside infinity pool, a destination restaurant led by rising culinary star Joan Escalas Rosselló and a first-of-its-kind wellness centre featuring a sea-facing spa and hydrotherapy circuit. All set against the formidable backdrop of the Serra de Tramuntana mountains, the property is poised to reclaim the island's golden-age spirit.
Granhotelmargalida.com

The best new hotels in the world: 2020 Gold List

Travel + Leisure's Gold List is our annual roundup of the most exciting hotels around the globe, from new openings to long-awaited renovations. This year's list includes a Mediterranean island that's been a playground for the rich and famous since the 1960s, a Bangkok hotel that's been a playground for everyone since the 1950s, and a Mexican resort that's been a playground for everyone since the 1970s. Plus, a Tokyo hotel that's been a playground for everyone since the 1990s, a Dubai hotel that's been a playground for everyone since the 2000s, and a Miami hotel that's been a playground for everyone since the 2010s. Read on for the rest of the world's most exciting hotels, from a Mexican resort that's been a playground for everyone since the 1970s to a Tokyo hotel that's been a playground for everyone since the 1990s.

Grand Lisboan, Macau, China

Grand Lisboan, Macau, China

Grand Lisboan, Macau, China

REVIEW

Orient Express Venezia, Italy

A lagoon palazzo is lovingly restored and transformed into a warm and worldly hotel

Reviewed by LAUREN BURVILL

- **Best for:** Couples, romantics and time travellers
- **Location:** Cannaregio
- **In a nutshell:** A restoration project that was eight years in the making. Express.
- **Can't-miss feature:** The enchanting Corte del Conte (the hotel lobby) and the grand octagonal staircase.

The grand neo-Gothic octagonal staircase by Giovanni Battista Meduna

The lounge room within the Cherubini Suite

Rooms

If Orient Express's Rome hotel La Minerva is the masculine, then Venezia is the feminine. Not in terms of frill and chintz but in essence. Only a fabulous woman such as Aline Asmar d'Amman – the Paris-based Lebanese architect and interior designer of the hotel – could be responsible for such delicate details (voluminous drapes gathered just so), not to mention the ultra-flattering bathroom lighting that is better than any Instagram filter. There are a total of 41 rooms and 6 suites, each singular in its layout and design. I stayed in room 405, which had corner views of Rio di Noale, hand-painted cherubs on the ceiling above the bed, and sculpted marble double basins in the bathroom. But it's the suites that you want to stay in. During the restoration process, Aline described tearing back the pages of the rooms, which were covered in white plaster when she started, to reveal faded frescoes of Roman goddesses. Most impressively, in the La Minerva Suite, is a restored 1710 fresco by Jacopo Guarana, with Minerva at its heart. My favourite is the jewel-box Cherubini Suite, a vision of loveliness with a rediscovered frieze by Sebastiano Santi running along the wall in the lounge, and a blue-domed ceiling with a Murano chandelier in the bedroom. It's all heart-achingly beautiful, but it's the modern additions that take it from dusty to contemporary – sculpted bathtubs, bespoke drinks cabinets and televisions cleverly hidden within large crystal-clear mirrors.

Food and drink

Orient Express has landed Heinz Beck, the famed three-Michelin-starred German chef, previously of Le Pergola in Rome and Heinz Beck at Brown's Hotel in London, to oversee the dining experience, including a namesake restaurant. At the time of my visit, the 20-seat fine-dining restaurant was yet to open, but I'm told it will centre on healthy, local ingredients. Example dishes include amberjack with ash buttermilk, red prawn with lagoon seaweed, and even algae butter. Set within the orangery, the interiors take inspiration from the canals, with large waves of hand-pleated veils suspended from the ceiling and glass sculptures reminiscent of underwater life. All-day dining takes place at La Casati, where breakfast includes plates of whipped ricotta with honey and fruit, or salmon carpaccio with avocado cream, served underneath a coral-like Murano glass chandelier. There's a joyful nod to the original Orient Express railcars within the Wagon Bar, an Art Deco speakeasy managed by one of the city's best bartenders, Francesco Adragna, previously of il piccolo Bar at Violino d'Oro.

Amenities and experiences

There's a wellness centre and small spa, with a mud rasul, set to open in the building next door, but I'd say this isn't really the place to hit the treadmill. Instead, the best way to experience the hotel is to live like its previous noble residents – lounging in the salons, admiring the rotating collection of art in the Hallway of Wonders and sitting by the fountain in the garden.

What to do nearby

Cannaregio isn't the Disney-fied version of Venice you'll find in San Marco. There are no designer boutiques or crowds dawdling behind a tour guide's stick. Instead, you'll see kids on their way to school, people walking their dogs, and families shopping at the co-op. You can peek between fences to glimpse private gardens and discover charming bars hidden down laneways. To see and learn more without getting lost, have the concierge arrange a sunset walking tour led by a theatrical Codega – a masked, cloaked lantern-bearer who would guide the nobility through the streets of Venice in the 15th century.

Sala della Cultura

Colori Persi Suite

The backstory

Built in 1436 and granted to the Duke of Urbino in 1537, Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has been the stage for many grand occasions over the centuries – notably the wedding of Guidobaldo II della Rovere to Vittoria Farnese, Princess of Parma, after which the ballroom is named. In the mid-19th century, Count Andrea Giovannelli commissioned architect Giovanni Battista Meduna to reimagine the palazzo. Famed for restoring the neighbouring Ca' d'Oro, Giovannelli combined neo-Gothic form with Arabesque and Orientalist details, adding an octagonal staircase and a unique pattern to the facade. In 2018, Aline set about transforming the palazzo into Orient Express Venezia, collaborating with Soprintendenza, Italy's heritage conservation authority, to meticulously uncover and restore the building's historic treasures. Aline describes watching craftspeople remove the building's stones one by one, restore them and put them back in place, along with layers of paint being peeled back to reveal original frescoes. The loving and meticulous process was well worth it – there's an enveloping comfort and warmth to this hotel, a notable feat when many of Venice's palaces can feel dusty, cold, and, dare I say, haunted.

Insider tip

Suite guests can order breakfast to be served in one of the Piano Nobile salons – the prettiest, in my opinion, being Sala della Cultura, with its neo-Gothic ceiling. At the very least, take a seat on one of the velvet lounges in the Corte del Conte (the lobby) and order an espresso. There's so much to take in and admire in these rooms, to not take the time and linger would be a faux pas. There's also a sweet little store around the corner, called Relight Venice, selling locally made and reasonably priced candles sculpted in the shape of the quatrefoil windows of Ca d'Oro, which make fabulous souvenirs.

Final considerations

- **Family friendly:** The cosy top floor is perfect for families, with charming wooden beams and a private rooftop terrace. The rooms can also be interconnected.
- **Wellness:** There is a spa and wellness centre
- **Accessibility:** The hotel is wheelchair-accessible in all public areas, and there are two rooms for wheelchair users.
- **Hotel brand:** Orient Express

CHECK AVAILABILITY AT BOOKING.COM

DESIGN INSIDER
THE INSIDE TRACK ON COMMERCIAL INTERIORS

PREMIER VOILE
Contract & Residential
Made-to-Measure

LATEST | PRODUCTS | PROJECTS | PEOPLE | EDITORIAL SERIES | EVENT REPORT | SUSTAINABILITY

Supplier Finder

SEARCH

MOST POPULAR | RECENT COMMENTS

Mediterranean Biophilic Retreat Explores The Bathroom Through Architecture, Design And Technology At Salone Del Mobile 2026

Designing Identity Through Hospitality: Kelly Edwards From Barbara Di Annunzio's Luxury Boutique Firm

Bespoke Contract Heels Handmade Manufactured In The UK

Material Diversity, Utrecht 2026

Abbey Glass: Crafting Elegance For San Carlo Cicchetti

POSTED ON 15/04/2026 BY ILIYA BRYAN

POST TAGS: Bespoke Design

CATEGORY: HOSPITALITY, PROJECTS

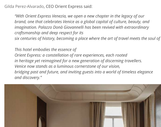
INSIDE ORIENT EXPRESS VENEZIA: THE RESTORATION OF PALAZZO DONÀ GIOVANNELLI BY ALINE ASMAR D'AMMAN

Orient Express has unveiled Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, a 16th-century Venetian palace on the Grand Canal. The restoration, led by Armando Gracia and reimagined by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman, the palazzo will open as a hotel for the first time in almost 600 years.

A striking new addition to the Orient Express world of ultra-luxury travel, the opening brings together heritage, contemporary creativity and the timeless romance associated with one of travel's most iconic names. Set within a building rich in history and culture, the palazzo has been carefully restored to preserve its architectural craftsmanship, storytelling and a strong sense of place. Once a celebrated stop along the legendary route from Paris to Istanbul, Venice now steps back into the spotlight as a dramatic and fitting gateway to the next chapter of the Orient Express journey.

Nestled in the quiet rhythm of Cannaregio, the Palazzo rises where two canals intersect along the Rio di Noale, an address of serenity, history, and cinematic beauty. Here, Orient Express introduces a new chapter in its Italian journey, following the opening last year of the hotel Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the luxury train inaugurated in 2025.

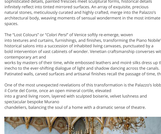
Meticulously conceived by Aline Asmar d'Amman, known for her ability to weave heritage architecture with contemporary artistic expression, the Palazzo has been restored with deep respect for its origin, introducing a sense of refined contemporary elegance. Her creative vision shapes the journey in a sequence of wonders, informed by the Venetian environment and the cinematic legacy of the Orient Express. Guests will experience an inspiring dialogue between the palazzo's rich heritage and this theatrical journey, where imagination, craftsmanship, and centuries of Venetian culture converge. The hotel features 47 uniquely crafted rooms, suites, and residences, where each space is elevated with intentional interiors and singular hospitality, ensuring a deeply layered architectural history of the building and the romance of Venetian living.



A Theatrical Voyage, Set in Motion by Orient Express

Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has long embodied the spirit of Venice as a crossroad of culture and imagination. In the mid 19th century, Count Andrea Giovannelli commissioned architect Giovanni Battista Meduna, celebrated for restoring the neighbouring Ca' d'Oro, to reimagine his family residence with Neogothic gallery, Baroque flourishes, and the Palazzo's iconic octagonal staircase crowned by a celestial vault.

During the Ninth Congress of Italian Scientists in 1847, the Palazzo reopened as a stage for salons, debates, and grand receptions. In these historical spaces, intellect and imagination thrived. Over the years, the Palazzo grew through love and noble alliances, as reflected in the Salone Veneziano, a setting befitting royalty.



Today, Orient Express Venezia rekindles that spirit. As day shifts into night, The Grand Transformation subtly alters the mood, lights soften, candles flicker, and the Palazzo becomes a theatre of shadows, reflections, and whispered intrigue.

A handpicked Cast of Characters guides guests through curated experiences, immersing them in a world where every moment is an act in a grand theatrical voyage.

Gilda Perez-Abarado, CEO Orient Express said:

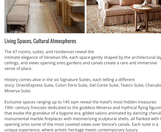
> *"With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand: one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination. Palazzo Donà Giovannelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the*
>
> *This hotel embodies the essence of Orient Express: a constellation of new experiences, each rooted in heritage yet reimagined for a new generation of discerning travellers. Guests will find here a place where time slows down, where bridging past and future, and inviting guests into a world of timeless elegance and discovery."*

A Masterpiece Restored with Devotion and Wonder

Aline Asmar d'Amman's aesthetic vision unveils the Palazzo through a refined interplay of contrasts and memories, where Venetian craftsmanship meets modern comfort. Gold grosseur of interior architectural gilding, sophisticated details, painted frescoes, inset sculptural forms, historical details infinitely reflect into tinted mirrored surfaces. An array of exquisite, precious natural stones, meticulously curated and highly crafted, merge into the Palazzo's architectural body, weaving moments of sensual wonderment in the most intimate spaces.

The "Lost Colours" or "Colori Persi" of Venice softly re-emerge, woven into textures and curtains, furnishings, and finishes, transforming the Piano Nobile's historical salons into a succession of inhabited living canvases, punctuated by a curated collection of contemporary cabinets of wonder. Historical craftsmanship converses with contemporary art and works by masters of their time, while embossed leathers and moiré silks dress up the walls to mirror the ever-shifting dialogue of light and shadow dancing across the canal. Painted walls, carved surfaces and artisanal finishes recall the passage of time, their lo

One of the most unexpected revelations of this transformation is the Palazzo's lobby. E Corte del Corte, once an open mineral cortile, elevated into a grand living room, layered with sculpted bazaine, velvet lushness and spectacular bespoke Murano chandeliers, balancing the soul of a home with a dramatic sense of theatre.

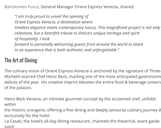


The Palazzo's secret garden, a secluded sanctuary hidden at its heart, surprises and delights with its whimsical corners, sophisticated twists, luxuriant fountain and sculpted forms, and a dramatic sculpture that frames the Palazzo's ancient gate. Long concealed behind centuries old walls, the garden is transformed into an almost otherworldly space where nature, architecture, and the sound of silence meet. Calle Ne contemporary works aligned with Venice's cultural calendar and reinforcing the hotel's role as a living cultural salon.

Every path and each floor lead to countless discoveries and encounters with marvels of the past, in magnetic dialogue with creative novelties. The result is a world of theatrical wonders, where centuries of Venetian creativity meet the timeless codes of Orient Express.

Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group, stated:

> *"With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Donà Giovannelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli exemplifies this approach, combining heritage with a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury. The Palazzo embodies a unique dialogue between history and innovation, where centuries of Venetian culture are carefully reinterpreted through a modern lens. Venice remains one of the most strategic and culturally significant destinations in the luxury travel landscape. With Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains, reflects our commitment to strengthening Italy's position at the forefront of global luxury experiences, through long-term investment in assets of enduring cultural and economic value."*

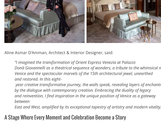


Living Spaces, Cultural Atmospheres

The 47 rooms, suites, and residences reveal the intimate elegance of Venetian life, each space gently shaped by the architectural layers - ceilings, and views opening onto gardens and canals create a rare and immersive sense of place.

History comes alive in the six Signature Suites, each telling a different story: Orient/Express Suite, Cellini Peris Suite, Del Corte Suite, Teatro Suite, Cherubini Su Minerva Suite.

Exclusive spaces ranging up to 145 sqm reveal the hotel's most hidden treasures: 19th- century frescoes dedicated to the goddess Minerva and mythical flying figures that evoke the grandeur of a bygone era, gilded salons animated by dancing cherubs, monumental marble fireplaces with mesmerizing sculptural shells, all flanked with tall a opening onto some of the most coveted views over Venice's canals. Each suite is a unique experience, where artistic heritage meets contemporary luxury.



Bartolomeo Fusco, General Manager Orient Express Venezia, shared:

> *"I am truly proud to unveil the opening of Orient Express Venezia, a destination where timeless elegance meets contemporary luxury. This magnificent project is not only a milestone, but a heartfelt tribute to Venice's unique heritage and spirit of hospitality. I look forward to welcoming guests from around the world to share in an experience that is both authentic and unforgettable."*

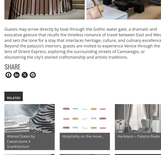
The Art of Dining

The culinary vision of Orient Express Venezia is anchored by the signature of Three-Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck, marking one of the most anticipated gastronomic debuts of the year. His creative imprint elevates the entire food & beverage ustaria and Cicchetti.

Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept by the acclaimed chef, unfolds within the historic orangerie, offering a fine dining and deeply sensorial culinary journey design by Studio Marco Piva.

La Casat, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant, channels the theatrical, avant garde spirit of Matchesa Luisa Casati. Featuring a rare private garden, it becomes a stage where Hel Beck's philosophy meets Venetian inspiration in a choreography of flavour, artistry, and spectacle.

The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired bar, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, blending crafted mixology with a touch of mystery and nocturnal charm.



Aline Asmar D'Amman, Architect & Interior Designer, said:

> *"I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the whimsical mysterious spirit of the Venetian carnivals of the 15th century Renaissance, unexpectant and rational. In this eight-year creative transformation journey, the walls speak, revealing layers of enchantment by the dialogue with contemporary creation. Embracing the duality of legacy and reinvention, I find inspiration in the unique position of Venice as a gateway between the East and West, amplified by the exceptional capacity of artistry and modern vitality."*

A Stage Where Every Moment and Celebration Become a Story

Salone Vittoria, located at the first noble floor of the hotel, embodies the splendour and memory of a venue once dedicated to the wedding of Princess Vittoria Farnese. A treasure trove of extraordinary architectural and artistic beauty, it preserves centuries of elegance and ceremonial glamour, re-imagined to host the most solemn moments in the heart of Venice.

Guests may arrive directly by boat through the Gothic water gate, a dramatic and evocative gesture that recalls the timeless romance of travel between East and West and sets the tone for a stay that intertwines heritage, culture, and luxury excellence. Beyond the palazzo's interiors, guests are invited to experience Venice through the lens of Orient Express, navigating the city's waterways, visiting its museums, or discovering the city's storied craftsmanship and artistic traditions.

SHARE

RELATED

Cannet Dalla Sp Caparacchio's Masterpiece

Biography for the Home

Harlequin – Frances Nash

Hotel Brunelleschi, Luxury Hotel in Brunelleschi Square Beside Santa Maria Novella

Hotel Grande Leone – Bespoke Design for Hilton Worldwide

ABOUT ILIYA BRYAN

Iliya is a knowledgeable design editor who is focused on instigating conversations, both online and in-person, with industry experts which challenge, educate and advance the commercial interior sector. Her training and 15 years of professional experience as a furniture designer for the contract furniture makers her uniquely placed to lead Design Insider as Editor.
View all posts by Iliya Bryan →

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER

DESIGN INSIDER
ABOUT
SUBMIT A STORY
CONTACT

DESIGNINSIDER.EU

COMMERCIAL INTERIORS 247 INTERIORS247.COM

Debut | April

HOT HOTELS, CHIC BOUTIQUES AND EXCLUSIVE NEW RESORTS

HERE'S OUR PICK OF THE WORLD'S MOST LUXURIOUS NEW LAUNCHES

ANANTARA TENTED CAMP KAFUE RIVER
Kafue National Park, Zambia

Anantara's new Zambian venture marks its first move into tented safari stays, responding to a shift in travel that sits directly within the action. Guests are suspended 3.5 metres above the wilderness on rosewood platforms within the country's oldest reserve, Kafue National Park. The enclave holds just three suites and 10 villas—including a 400-square-metre Presidential Villa with its own boat dock and oversized plunge pool. Butlers handle the logistics, from riverbank picnics to night safaris and afternoon tea in the quiet cigar lounge. Between a nature-first wellness nook and a fireside boma for storytelling and marshmallow toasting, the camp follows the river's rhythms — where otters slip through the shallows, hippos surface for the sun and more than 500 bird species hover just beyond the deck.
Anantara.com

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL AND RESIDENCES CARTAGENA
Cartagena, Colombia

The colourful neighbourhood of Getsemaní in Cartagena is the bold choice for Four Seasons' latest foray into South America. The restoration of several interconnected buildings — including a 16th-century cloister and a 1920s club — marks the final bow of François Catroux; one of the few of the late designer's hospitality projects, with interiors that respectfully reflect the area's history. Views over the eclectic district are enjoyed from the 131 rooms and suites, as well as the two rooftop pool decks. Visitors might be otherwise found in the eight restaurant and bar concepts or the 24/7 state-of-the-art fitness centre, while locals take up space in the meeting rooms or rent out one of the two grand ballrooms lit by chandeliers. Throughout, the city's South American essence remains firmly in view. *Fourseasons.com*

AIRELLES VENEZIA
Venice, Italy

For its first property beyond French borders, Airelles has chosen Venice. It's a considered decision, given the outfit's DNA for reviving palatial manors. Here, three 16th-century landmarks have been transformed into a waterfront haven on Giudecca island. The spirit of exclusivity remains intact with just 45 keys and a private three-bedroom villa with its own pool. Families congregate at exceptional venues, from Matsuhisa by Nobu to abc Kitchens by Jean-Georges Vongerichten and desserts by Cédric Grolet, after adults have dipped into the city's largest wellness centre and their mini-mes have been creatively entertained at the Kids Club. *Airelles.com*

ORIENT EXPRESS VENEZIA
Venice, Italy

A stationary sleeper on the Venetian canals, Orient Express Venezia is a 15th-century palazzo reborn. Accessible by water, via an internal courtyard or through a hidden garden in Cannaregio, the hotel is a masterwork by Aline Asmar d'Amman. The exciting new property houses just 47 living quarters, including the debut of Orient Express Apartments — the first of their kind — boasting unrivalled canal views. From the lobby's dramatic octagonal staircase to the moody Wagon Bar, the design is an immersive ode to the Golden Age of locomotives. With its fine-dining venues and secret passageways, it is a setting worthy of an Agatha Christie classic.
Orient-express.com

HOTELS > MIDDLE EAST – LIMITED NINE EMPIRES

APRIL 8, 2026

4 OF THE HOTTEST HOTEL DEBUTS IN APRIL

BY JOSEPH FURNISS

From the Zambian wilderness to lush surroundings of Colombia, here are this month's biggest hotel openings

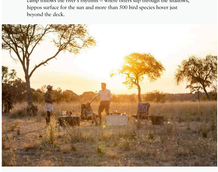
TRENDING NOW

THE RITUAL BRUNCH
Where beautiful becomes a timeless ritual at Ulika
Dubai Marina
Jumeirah Beach Residence
Dubai, UAE

1. ANANTARA TENTED CAMP KAFUE RIVER

Kafue National Park, Zambia

Anantara's new Zambian venture marks its first move into tented safari stays, responding to a shift in travel that sits directly within the action. Guests are suspended 1.5 metres above the wilderness on rosewood platforms within the country's oldest reserve, Kafue National Park. The enclave holds just three suites and 10 villas—including a 400-square-metre Presidential Villa with its own boat dock and oversized plunge pool. Butlers handle the logistics, from riverbank picnics to night safaris and afternoon tea in the quiet cigar lounge. Between a nature-first wellness nook and a fireside boma for storytelling and marshmallow toasting, the camp follows the river's rhythms — where otters slip through the shallows, hippos surface for the sun and more than 500 bird species hover just beyond the deck.



Anantara.com

2. FOUR SEASONS HOTEL AND RESIDENCES CARTAGENA

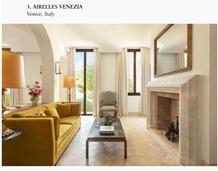
Cartagena, Colombia

The colourful neighbourhood of Getsemaní in Cartagena is the bold choice for Four Seasons' latest foray into South America. The restoration of several interconnected buildings — including a 16th-century cloister and a 1920s club — marks the final bow of François Carroux; one of the few of the late designer's hospitality projects, with interiors that respectfully reflect the area's history. Views over the eclectic district are enjoyed from the 110 rooms and suites, as well as the two rooftop pool decks. Visitors might be otherwise found in the eight restaurant and bar concepts or the 24/7 state-of-the-art fitness centre, while locals take up space in the meeting rooms or rent out one of the two grand ballrooms lit by chandeliers. Throughout, the city's South American essence remains firmly in view.

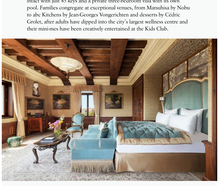
Fourseasons.com

3. AIRELLES VENEZIA

Venice, Italy



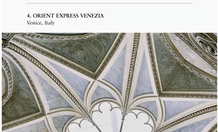
For its first property beyond French borders, Airelles has chosen Venice. It's a considered decision, given the outfit's DNA for evoking palatial manors. Here, three 16th-century landmarks have been transformed into a waterfront haven on Giudecca island. The spirit of exclusivity remains intact with just 45 keys and a private three-bedroom villa with its own pool. Families congregate at exceptional venues, from Matteo Thun & Nobu to abc Kitchens by Jean-Georges Vongerichten and desserts by Cédric Grolet, after adults have dipped into the city's largest wellness centre and their mini-mes have been creatively entertained at the Kids Club.



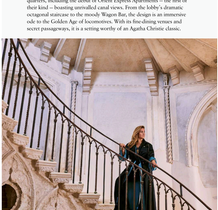
Airelles.com

4. ORIENT EXPRESS VENEZIA

Venice, Italy



A stationary sleeper on the Venetian canals, Orient Express Venezia is a 15th-century palazzo reborn. Accessible by water, via an internal courtyard or through a hidden garden in Cannaregio, the hotel is a masterwork by Aline Asmar d'Ammun. The exciting new property houses just 47 living quarters, including the debut of Orient Express Apartments — the first of their kind — boasting unrivalled canal views. From the lobby's dramatic octagonal staircase to the moody Wagon Bar, the design is an immersive ode to the Golden Age of locomotives. With its fine-dining venues and secret passageways, it is a setting worthy of an Agatha Christie classic.



Orient-express.com

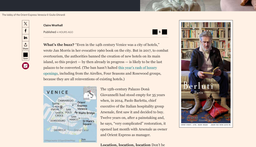
DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD
news
WWW.DOTWNEWS.COM

TWEET SHARE PIN SEND

RELATED STORIES

© COPYRIGHT 2026 DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD NEWS TERMS OF USE PRIVACY STATEMENT
DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD NEWS AND DESTINATIONS OF THE WORLD NEWS TRADEMARKS OF 4NN PRODUCTS OF 4NN PROPERTIES TRADEMARKS OF 4NN LIMITED

Berluti
Paris
The New Shadow Sneaker
Discover Now



The lobby of the Orient Express Venezia © Andrea Simonit

Travel **Feature**

Orient Express Venezia: the most spectacular suites in La Serenissima

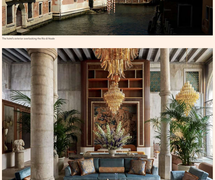
The Venetian L'Orient Express Venezia hotel has undergone a magnificent renovation — albeit with just a few teething troubles

Claire Wrathall
Published: 12 June 2021

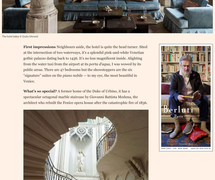
What's the buzz? When the Orient Express Venezia was a city of hotels, it wrote Jan Morris in her evocative 1960 book on the city. But in 2017, to combat overtourism, the authorities limited the number of new hotels to 20 main islands, so this project — by them already in progress — is likely to be the last of its kind. Its owner, the Belmond group, has spent €40m on a trove of iconic paintings, including from the Gallerie, Peggy Guggenheim and Scuola di San Rocco, because they are all reinventions of existing hotels.

The 19th-century Palazzo Venier, Giovanni's last royal stomp for 30 years when, in 1914, Paolo Bonfiglio, chief executive of the Italian hospitality group Anonima, first saw it in disarray. It took him Twelve years on, after a painstaking and, at times, controversial restoration, it opened last month with Armani as concierge and Orient Express as manager.

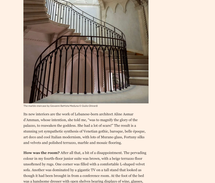
Location, location, location Don't be misled by the photograph of the Rialto on its website (the famous bridge is a 7pm-sunset walk away). Rather, the hotel is in Castanaiga, the northernmost of Venice's six sestieri, or districts. It's not a busy part of town. Directly outside its street entrance on Sabbada Santa Fosca is a tatty market selling mediocre crowns, cheap electronics and underwear, and the nearest restaurants include an Old Wild West steakhouse and McDonald's.



The grand entrance, overlooking the Rio di Santa



The grand staircase © Andrea Simonit



Lounge area in the Giovanni Bellini Museum © Andrea Simonit

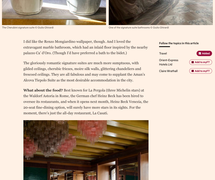
Its new interiors are the work of Lebanese-born architect Aline Asmar d'Amman, whose intention, she told me, "was to magnify the glory of the palazzo, to transform the golden. She had a lot of scope" The result is a stunning, yet sympathetic synthesis of Venetian, baroque, belle époque, art deco and cool Italian modernism, with lots of Murano glass, Fortuny silks and velvets and polished terrazzo, marble and mosaic floors.

How was the reverse? After all that, a bit of a comedown. The prevailing colour is my fourth-floor junior suite with a large terrace that's monolisted by mga. One corner was filled with a comfortable L-shaped sofa and a big flat-screen television, but the other was empty, and I could see through it had been brought in from a conference room. At the foot of the bed was a handsome dresser with open shelves bearing displays of wine, glasses, bags of crisps and biscuits. But the night I wanted to be greeted by re-ordering.

As ever the lighting was disappointing, not least the ceiling lights by the door and in the bathroom that seemed to be switched off. I rang down to ask for help, and they sent someone up with some gaffer tape to cover them.

The six signature suites include the Gabbia Dorata suite, © Andrea Simonit

and the Grand Canal suite, both with terraces © Andrea Simonit



The Gabbia Dorata suite's bath © Andrea Simonit

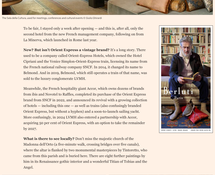
The bath in the Grand Canal suite, with a view of the Rialto © Andrea Simonit

I did like the Bonus Monopoliscribus wallpaper, though. And I loved the extravagant marble bathroom, which had a sunken floor inspired by the nearby palazzo C'd'Oro. (Though I'd have preferred a bath to the bidet.)

The gloriously romantic signature suites are much more outrageous, with gilded ceilings, chrome frieze, moire silk walls, glittering chandeliers and frescoed ceilings. They are all kitchenless and may come to regret the Asmar's decree. Tripadv Suite on the most durable accommodation in the city.

What about the food? Best known for La Pergola (three Michelin stars) at the Waldorf Astoria in Rome, the German chef Heinz Beck has been hired to oversee the restaurant, which serves Venetian classics, Italian fish, Tuscan, the occasional Heinz dishing spices, with nearly four more stars in the cuisine. For the moment, there's just the all-day restaurant, La Cucina.

The Venetian signature suite © Andrea Simonit



Inside the signature suite's bathroom © Andrea Simonit

It's named after the legendary beauty Luisa Casati, one of Man Ray's muses, who wore snakes as jewellery and kept a cheetah as a pet. Her biographer, Judith Mackrell, describes her as a woman "of perverse and fearless tastes", which may explain why the rather mean interior of and manager I ate was spiked with either of tropical fruit. Though I much enjoyed the sticky pasta (like giant fusilli) with courgettes and shrimp, and it does have a lovely garden.

How was the service? Finding its way. There's no breakfast buffet, only table service. I was assured at 8.45am. After about an minute they brought me an exquisite but insubstantial carpaccio of pineapple and strawberries that I hadn't asked for and Earl Grey tea with a lemon on a separate saucer, the fruit plate I had ordered arrived. I waited a further half-hour, until 9.45, for a second cappuccino but it never came, and I'd run out of time.

The lobby with a view, another marriage, of Palazzo Ducale © Andrea Simonit

To be fair, I stayed only a week after opening — and this is, after all, only the second hotel from the new French management company, following on from La Réserve, which launched in Rome last year.

Now? But isn't Orient Express a vintage brand? It's a long story. There used to be a company called Orient Express Hotels, which owned the Hotel Cipriani and the Venice Simplon-Orient Express hotels, licensing its name from the Paris-based luxury rail company SNCF. In 2014, it changed its name to Belmond, and in 2019 it sold the Cipriani to Orient Express a train of that name, and to the luxury conglomerate LVMH.

Meanwhile, the French hospitality giant Accor, which owns dozens of brands from Ibis and Novotel to Raffles, completed its purchase of the Orient Express brand in 2018 and, in a complex transaction, sold the Venice Simplon-Orient Express and all hotels — including this one — as well as Italian cabin-cruiseship branded Orient Express, but without a hyphen) and a soon-to-launch sailing outfit. More confusingly, in 2019 LVMH also entered a partnership with Accor, acquiring 50 per cent of Orient Express, with an option to take the remainder by mid-2021.

What is there to see locally? Don't miss the majestic church of the Redentore, with its Palladian interior, soaring nave and gorgeous Tintoretto cycle, where Bellini's tomb is also located. Also, visit the Giovanni Bellini Museum, where the altar piece is hacked here. There are eight further paintings by him in its Renaissance gothic interior and a wonderful Titian of Tobias and the Angel.

The church of the Redentore, left to Bellini's display

Tintoretto's Presentation of the Virgin Children in the Redentore, left to Titian's display

There are also three important destinations for fans of contemporary art: Punta della Dogana, the Pinault Collection's home, which reopens after Rogers's transformation. This year, for the duration of the Venice Biennale (May 9 to November 21; fondazione.pinault), it will be open to the public for only the second time, with an exhibition of 100 or so models and installations spanning his 50-year career and documenting works by both completed or planned but failed to realise.

There's also the US investor Nicolas Berggruen's Palazzo Grassi, part of his Arts & Culture foundation, which will be showing conceptual works by the Japanese Gut Dream. And at the Belgian collector Laurent Ancelet's, Ca'n Vesonta, Lithuanian-born exhibition-maker Kestutis Ivanauskas, Ella Bentley, Ed Rusocha and Tino Sehgal.

The drawback Double rooms cost from €1,118 including breakfast; those signature suites start from €2,747 per night.

Elevator pitch Off the-scale splendour in off-the-beaten-track Cannaregio.

Claire Wrathall runs a guest of Orient Express, orient-express.com

Find out about our latest stories first — follow FT Weekend on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, sign up to receive the FT Weekend newsletter every Saturday morning

Advertisement
FT Weekend Festival
Experience the FT come to life
Find tickets and exclusive offers
ft.com/weekendfestival/offers
Presented by FLUXE
FT Weekend Festival
Sponsored by Fluxe

Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2021. All rights reserved.

Reuse this content | Comments

Latest on Travel

Cell Shop
Is Amazon Prime Student Shopper? Inside Dudes. It's open to haters

Travel
Amsterdam: 48 pilgrimes o Holiday city of vices

Travel
Things to do in London: Tate Modern, Hackney Wick

The 47 Alphabetic Cities Of Travel
Will Self's book is London's Top 7 Cool non-tickets here

THE NEXT FIVE
Future Wheels shaping global business in the next five years?

Orient Express Venezia opens in restored Venetian palazzo

April 7, 2026

The new Orient Express Venezia hotel brings a 15th-century Venetian palace back to life with 47 rooms, historic interiors and fine dining by chef Heinz Beck, Robbie Hodges reports

Orient Express Venezia has opened inside Palazzo Dona Giovanelli, marking the first time the 15th-century building has operated as a hotel in nearly six centuries. Owned by Anemale Group and redesigned by architect and interior designer Alise Asmar d'Ennenas, the project forms part of a wider expansion of the Orient Express brand into hotels and trains across Italy.

Located in the Cannaregio district of Venice, the palazzo sits at the meeting point of two canals along the Rio di Noale. The area is known for being quieter than the city's main tourist routes, offering a slower pace while still reflecting Venice's long history as a centre of trade and culture. The opening follows the launch of Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and the introduction of a Dolce Vita Orient Express train in 2025, positioning Italy as a key market for the brand.

The restoration of Orient Express Venezia focuses on preserving the building's architectural heritage while adapting it for modern hospitality. Alise Asmar d'Ennenas has worked to retain original features such as frescoes, carved surfaces and historic layouts, while introducing contemporary materials and design elements. The palazzo includes 47 rooms, suites and residences, each shaped by the structure's layered history and views over canals or gardens.

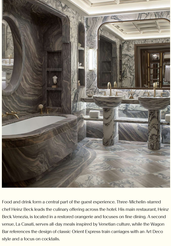
FUTURE-PROOF YOUR BUSINESS WITH
VOL7
Decode brand capacity with Vol7 Insights. Full library access. Free expert calls.
Hey Alexa, Stay Ahead
SUBSCRIBE NOW

Several historic spaces have been carefully restored. The octagonal staircase, originally redesigned in the 18th century by architect Giovanni Battista Meduna, remains a central feature. Salone Vittoria, once used for aristocratic events, has been adapted for modern gatherings while maintaining its decorative details. The lobby, known as il Corte del Conte, has been transformed from an open courtyard into an enclosed reception space with Murano glass lighting and soft furnishings.

A private garden, previously hidden behind the building's walls, has also been reopened. It now serves as a quiet outdoor area with seating, water features and lantern lighting. A connecting passage called Calle Nuova Scala links existing art displays linked to Venice's cultural calendar, reinforcing the hotel's role as a space for both visitors and local creative activity.

The design approach throughout Orient Express Venezia draws on Venice's position as a historical link between East and West. Materials such as natural stone, embossed leather and silk have been used alongside mirrored surfaces and contemporary artworks. Colours reference traditional Venetian tones, sometimes described as "lost cultures", which have been reintroduced through textiles and finishes.

Accommodation includes six signature suites, each with distinct design features tied to the building's past. These include restored murals, sculptural ceilings and large windows overlooking the canals. The largest suites measure up to 145 sqm and include details such as marble fireplaces and decorative frescoes depicting mythological figures.



Food and drink form a central part of the guest experience. Three Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck leads the culinary offering across the hotel's Ma main restaurant. Heinz Beck Venezia, is located in a restored orangerie and focuses on fine dining. A second venue, La Canali, serves all-day meals inspired by Venetian culture, while the Wagon Bar references the design of classic Orient Express train carriages with an Art Deco style and a focus on cocktails.

The hotel also positions itself as a venue for events and celebrations. Salone Vittoria is available for private functions, combining its historical role as a setting for formal occasions. Guests can arrive by boat through a Gothic water gate, reflecting traditional Venetian modes of transport and adding a sense of continuity between past and present.

Gilda Perez Abrando, CEO Orient Express, says: "With Orient Express Venezia, we open a new chapter in the legacy of our brand; one that celebrates Venice as a global capital of culture, beauty, and imagination. Palazzo Dona Giovanelli has been revived with extraordinary craftsmanship and deep respect for its six centuries of history, becoming a place where the art of travel meets the soul of the city."

Paolo Barletta, CEO Anemale Group, says: "With the refurbishment of the iconic Palazzo Dona Giovanelli we continue our strategy of investing in unique heritage assets and unlocking their long-term value through thoughtful redevelopment. The new Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Dona Giovanelli represents a meaningful step in the development of a distinctive portfolio that brings together iconic locations and a contemporary approach to ultra-luxury."

Bartolomeo Fusco, general manager Orient Express Venezia, says: "I am truly proud to unveil the opening of Orient Express Venezia, a destination where timeless elegance meets contemporary luxury. This magnificent project is not only a celebration, but a heartfelt tribute to Venice's unique heritage and spirit of hospitality."

Alise Asmar d'Ennenas adds: "I imagined the transformation of Orient Express Venezia of Palazzo Dona Giovanelli as a theatrical sequence of wonders, a tribute to the sublimical mysteries of Venice and the spectacular marvels of the 19th architectural jewel, unearthed and restored."

The opening reflects a broader trend in luxury travel towards restoring historic buildings and repositioning them as experiential hotels. By combining heritage architecture with contemporary design and curated cultural programming, Orient Express Venezia aims to offer travellers a deeper connection to place while extending the brand beyond rail into a wider lifestyle proposition.

Related Articles

Orient Express La Minerva hotel creates Ottoman-inspired spa

Star chef line-up revealed for 'Aimless' Venice debut

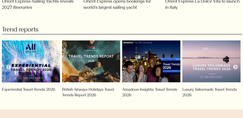
Inside the revamped Orient Express train scheduled for 2027

Orient Express Sailing Yachts reveals 2027 itineraries

Orient Express opens bookings for world's largest sailing yacht

Orient Express La Dolce Vita to launch in Italy

Trend reports



Experiential Travel Trends 2026 · British Airways Holidays Travel Trends Report 2026 · Amadeus Insights: Travel Trends 2026 · Luxury Experiential Travel Trends 2026

Sign up to our newsletters
VOL7
DISCOVER MORE
INNOVATION BRIEFINGS
SIGN UP FOR FREE

Copyright 2026 Globetrender

Heinz Beck arrives at Orient Express Venezia

8 APRIL 2026 | IN PROJECTS | BY HANNAH CURRIE

Orient Express has unveiled Orient Express Venezia at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, marking the rebirth of a 15th-century architectural jewel owned by Arsenale Group, and reimagined by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman as a hotel for the first time in nearly six centuries.

Nestled in the quiet rhythm of Cannaregio, the palazzo rises where two canals meet along the Rio di Noale. The culinary vision is anchored by three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck, whose creative imprint elevates the entire F&B offering across the property.

Heinz Beck Venezia, an intimate gourmet concept by the acclaimed chef, unfolds within the historic orangerie, offering a fine dining and deeply sensorial culinary journey designed exclusively for the hotel.

La Casati, the hotel's all-day dining restaurant, channels the theatrical, avant-garde spirit of Marchesa Luisa Casati. Featuring a rare private garden, it becomes a stage where Heinz Beck's philosophy meets Venetian inspiration in a choreography of flavour, artistry and spectacle.

The Wagon Bar, an Art Deco-inspired space, pays homage to the legendary lounge cars of the original Orient Express trains, blending crafted mixology with a touch of mystery and nocturnal charm.

Photography: © Giulio Ghirardi

HEINZ BECK | NEW OPENING | ORIENT EXPRESS | TOP CHEF

RELATED POSTS

8 April 2026

Mandarin Oriental The Landmark Hong Kong reopens with three new F&B experiences

8 April 2026

The Woodward Auberge Collection unveils new members' club

7 April 2026

The Château de Valmer reopens with arrival of chef Thomas Pezeril

Sign up for Supper's free email alerts

SIGN UP

SLEEPER MEDIA

We are using cookies to give you the best experience on our website.
You can find out more about which cookies we are using or switch them off in settings.

Accept Reject

Rebecca Nicholson · 22 hours ago

Inside Venice's New Opening: Orient Express Venezia

The Orient Express is continuing its expansion beyond the rails, and its latest move may be its most impressive yet.

Now open in Venice, Orient Express Venezia brings the brand's signature glamour to one of Italy's most historic palazzos, marking its second hotel launch in the country.

Set within the 15th-century Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in the quieter Cannaregio district, the property offers a more private, residential feel, while still delivering the theatricality synonymous with the Orient Express name.

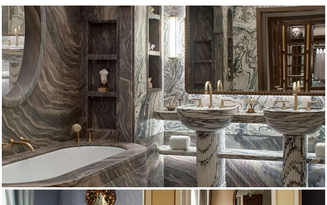
A Historic Palazzo, Reimagined

Originally built in 1436, the palazzo has been transformed into a hotel for the first time in nearly 600 years. The redesign, led by architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman, carefully balances preservation with modern luxury.

Original frescoes, carved detailing and patinated walls have been restored, while contemporary materials, moiré silks, embossed leathers and natural stone—introduce a refined, layered aesthetic.

Arrival sets the tone: guests enter via a Gothic water gate, stepping directly from the canal into what was once an internal courtyard, now reimagined as a richly dressed lounge complete with velvet seating and Murano glass chandeliers.

A standout feature is the hotel's hidden garden, offering a rare moment of calm in Venice, with lantern-lit spaces designed for private dining and relaxed evenings.



Rooms That Reflect Venetian Grandeur

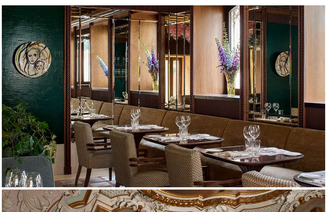
The hotel houses 47 rooms, suites and residences, each individually designed to reflect the building's heritage.

The six Signature Suites, spanning up to 1,560 square feet, are the most striking, featuring restored 19th-century frescoes, marble fireplaces and grand salon-style living spaces. High ceilings and large windows frame views across the canals and gardens, reinforcing the sense of staying within a private Venetian residence.

Dining, Cocktails and Wellness

Dining is led by Heinz Beck, who brings his signature precision to the hotel's fine-dining restaurant. A more relaxed offering is available at La Casati, while the Wagon Bar draws inspiration from the original Orient Express carriages, pairing Art Deco interiors with classic cocktails and Venetian cicchetti.

The hotel also features a spa inspired by ancient Roman thermal rituals, alongside a grand ballroom designed for private events and celebrations.



Orient Express Expands in Italy

The Venice opening follows the brand's Rome debut in 2025 and forms part of a wider strategy to position Italy at the centre of its evolving hospitality portfolio, which now spans trains, hotels and upcoming yacht experiences.

With Orient Express Venezia, the brand delivers exactly what today's luxury traveller is looking for: heritage, privacy, and a sense of place, without compromising on design or experience.

Travel

Recent Posts See All

This Design-Led Safari Lodge in Uganda Offers Rare Access to...

Moving Abroad With Pets? Why Portugal Is Leading the Way in...

A £24 Million Scandinavian Retreat Is Rising In The Heart O...

Comments

Write a comment

For all enquiries, please contact:

We use cookies on our website to see how you interact with it. By accepting, you agree to our use of such cookies. Privacy Policy

Settings Accept

THE STANDARD
SIGN IN

TRAVEL

Away with the rose petals on bedspreads and couples' massages – these stylish hotels deliver romance for a big celebration à deux, minus the clichés

ALICIA MILLER
1 DAY AGO

Add as a preferred source on Google

Whether it's this summer or far in the future, right after the wedding or ages later, the first big trip of your married life is a major milestone. You'll want to make it memorable and intimate, but romantic doesn't have to mean cheesy. These ultra-special stays will ensure your debut holiday as a duo is both sublimely stylish and utterly unique.

Orient Express Venezia, Italy

UNDERSTATED, THIS IS NOT
GIULIOGHIRARDI

OK, Venice for a honeymoon is a bit of a cliché, but when you're checking into this epic, freshly opened masterpiece, who cares? Housed within 15th-century Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, at the corner of two waterways just off the epic Grand Canal, its 47 rooms are dripping in La Serenissima elegance with elaborate fresco, ornate sculpture, embossed leather, gilded mirrors and a general more-is-more aesthetic that will set your senses scintillating. Defiantly anti-modern and anti-minimalist, it's the ideal stay for a couple who want a full and luxurious immersion in Venice's theatrical past.

From £1,054, orient-express.com

AD
RETREAT TO ELEGANCE IN OUR SIGNATURE SUITES.
BOOK NOW

JAMES STEWART

Five holidays that we fancy right now — and you will too

Escape to the Lakes, take the family to Grenada or explore a Swiss beach resort, and find a great deal while you're at it

James Stewart
Sunday April 05 2026, 5.00am, The Sunday Times

Share

Ignore the doomsters and gloomsters: the outlook for travel is brightening as Europe wakes from winter hibernation, with a string of luxury travel discounts and launches this week. All seem designed to help you do nothing more complicated than relax — and we could all do with some of that right now. From a tropical half-term break with the family to a spectacular new stay in Venice, here are five things that have caught our eye this week.

All recommendations within this article are informed by expert editorial opinion. If you click on a link in this story we may earn affiliate revenue

UK escape

Indulgence in the Lakes

Storrs Hall sits beside Windermere

I'm not sure whether you've noticed but there's quite a lot going on in the world at the moment. So may I recommend a weekend escape? Storrs Hall, the handsome grade II* listed pile on the shores of Windermere, is doing 20 per cent off B&B stays of two nights throughout April (storrshall.com). Push the boat out with a hot-tub suite hung on the lake and you'll pay £983, a saving of £223; standard doubles are £99 off at £471 for two nights. Speaking of boats, the hotel has just relaunched its private motorboat for the season: it's a splendid 30ft job as shiny as a conker that's available for two-hour charters with fizz (£350 for five). It's sure closer than Lake Como.

- Lake District travel guide

Short-haul hop

A Swiss beach resort

Ascona in Switzerland sits at the foot of the Alps
SUMMER

Ascona in Switzerland is a bargain for holidaymakers. It's in the bosom of the mountains, with eyefuls of Alps, but has Mediterranean sizzle around Lake Maggiore. Yachts and glossy Italian motorboats skim across the water while sunbathers lay towels on a fine beach. Throw in lazy lunches and lakeside strolls and you've the makings of a fine spring break. B&B doubles cost from £370 at the five-star lakeside spa hotel Eden Roc, but from tomorrow until May 14 it is doing four nights for the price of three in rooms that have been shabbed by a seven-month refurbishment. The lake winks enticingly through every window, which is why kayaks and paddleboards are provided free for guests. Fly to Geneva.

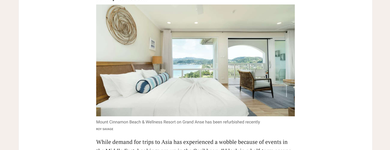
Book now

ADVERTISEMENT
AD
AN OASIS OF SERENITY.
PLAN YOUR BREAK
MANDARIN ORIENTAL

- Switzerland travel guide

Long-haul treat

Family Caribbean



Mount Cinnamon Beach & Wellness Resort on Grand Anse has been refurbished recently
MT CINNAMON

While demand for trips to Asia has experienced a wobble because of events in the Middle East, bookings are up in the Caribbean. I'd look in a half-term escape to Grenada quick-smart. Why there? Obvious, really — it's tranquil (there are only about 2,200 rooms) yet has stonking beaches and a rugged beauty for activities inland. Mount Cinnamon Beach & Wellness Resort on Grand Anse pulls off the neat trick of being hyper-local and informally sophisticated. It's newly refurbished, has launched the Cinnamon Explorers club to entertain your brood and provides complimentary babysitting when you book spa treatments. Very well done, people. All yours for half-term at 30 per cent off room rates, a saving of £820 for a family of four, plus a $50 spa credit. This means you'll pay £6,708 for seven nights' B&B for four, including flights (bestattravel.co.uk).

- More great hotels in Grenada

What we're talking about

Venetian romance

One of the 47 luxurious rooms at the Orient Express hotel

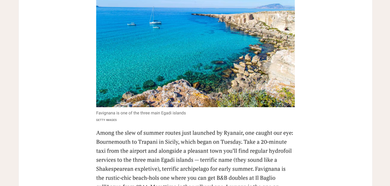
Venice leads a double life as a real-life city and a destination of faded grandeur and luminous beauty that exists in your imagination. Because the two don't always align, we were intrigued by images of the 47-room Orient Express Venezia hotel, which opened on Monday with B&B doubles available from £1,054. The luxury brand's latest launch appears less a revamp of a waterside 15th-century palazzo in the quiet Cannaregio district than a film set for bygone romance. There are pastel-velvet furnishings and Murano chandeliers in lounges. Frescoes decorate ceilings above canopied beds. There's also the obligatory fine-dining restaurant and spa. Oh, and should you fancy it you can arrive by motorboat. Not cheap but what a treat.

Book now

- Best hotels in Venice
- Best affordable hotels in Venice

ADVERTISEMENT
AD
AN OASIS OF SERENITY.
PLAN YOUR BREAK
MANDARIN ORIENTAL

Away to the Egadi islands



Favignana is one of the three main Egadi islands
GETTY IMAGES

Among the slew of summer routes just launched by Ryanair, one caught our eye: Bournemouth to Trapani in Sicily, which began on Tuesday. Take a 20-minute taxi from the airport and alongside a pleasant town you'll find regular hydrofoil services to the three main Egadi islands — terrific name (they sound like a Shakespearean expletive), terrific archipelago for early summer. Favignana is the rustic-chic beach-hols one where you can get B&B doubles at Il Baglio sull'Acqua from £244. Marettimo is the walkers' one. Levanzo is the one on which to drop off the radar. All three sit in a marine park. If you're in the market for hassle-free, largely car-free island-hopping with a sideline in gentle eccentricity (this is west Sicily, after all) this is for you. Hopefully so too.

Book now

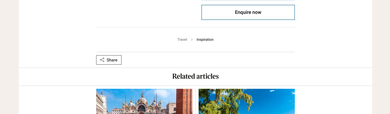
- Sicily travel guide

TIMES Holidays
You can now book your holiday with The Times via our own travel agency
Call us on: 0808 1342945
Mon-Fri: 9am-6pm Sat: 10am-5pm
Chat live to a consultant
Enquire now

Travel | Inspiration

Share

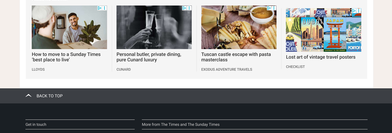
Related articles



24 of the best things to do in Venice
January 28, 2023, 10.45am
Louise Roddon

Should you book next year's holiday now? Here's what you need to know
March 27, 2026, 5.00am
Chris Haslam, Chief Travel Writer, The Sunday Times

PROMOTED CONTENT



How to move to a Sunday Times 'best place to live'
LLOYDS

Personal Sutton, private dining, pure Cunard luxury
CUNARD

Tuscan castle escape with pasta masterclass
EXODUS ADVENTURE TRAVELS

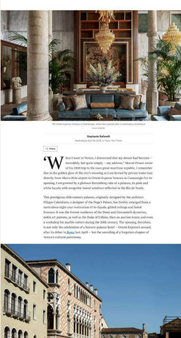
Loot art of vintage travel posters
CHRONICLE

© Times Media Limited 2025.
Registered in England No. 894846. Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF.

Spring is just around outdoors
Save up to 40% on selected items
Dunelm
Shop now

Is Orient Express Venezia the prettiest palazzo hotel in La Serenissima?

Yes, says Stephen Kalasch, who is the first journalist to experience the new hotel in a renovated 15th-century building that once belonged to a duke



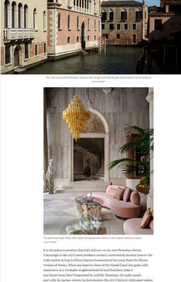
Orient Express Venezia, a Venetian palazzo and hotel on the Grand Canal, is scheduled to open in 2024 © Belmond

Stephen Kalasch
Photographer Nick Wood for The Times

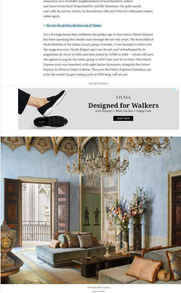
Save

When I was in Venice, I discovered that my dream had become — inevitably, but quite simply — my address. Marcel Proust wrote of the Duchesse de Guermantes, who lived in a mansion on the Grand Canal, that she was the queen of the city's morning and so forced by protocol to turn her directly from Marcel's bedroom to Venice. Orient Express Venezia (or Lusso) is a new hotel in a 15th-century palazzo on the Grand Canal, which I visited with my family while staying for nearly seven weeks in a rented flat in the hotel's neighbourhood.

This prestigious 18th-century palazzo, originally designed by the architect Filippo Calendario, a designer of the Doge's Palace, has Doric-arranged lines, a meticulous eight-year renovation of its facade, gilded ceilings and fluted frescoes. It was the residence of the Doges and Grimaldi dynasties, nobles of patrician, as well as the Duke of Urbino, then an ancient Roman and even Byzantine site, and it has been restored by Belmond, the luxury hotel group, to be the small and exclusive accommodation of Orient Express Venezia. Orient Express opened in 2021 by Belmond, which also owns the Cipriani, Venice's iconic hotel, and has a portfolio of luxurious properties, including the Grand Hotel Tremezzo, on Lake Como, and the Belmond Copacabana Palace, which is located in Brazil. This year the Orient Express Corinthian, on the Greek mainland, will open and Belmond's 2024 listing will add Lusso.



The lobby of Orient Express Venezia, a 15th-century palazzo on the Grand Canal, which was once the home of the Doges and Grimaldi families © Belmond



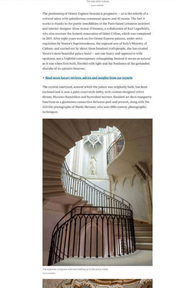
The lounge and terrace of the Orient Express Venezia, which was once the home of the Doges and Grimaldi families © Belmond

It's the palace's position that fully delivers on my own Proustian dream. Circumspect in the city's most northern sestiere, conveniently located close to the Rialto market, it is a quiet and contemplative place, with a view of the Grand Canal and the Church of Santa Maria della Salute. Visitors can hear the sounds of the Grand Canal not quite with immersion in a veritable neighbourhood of local bacheca, baker's shop, and bar, but with the sense of being in a place that is quiet, calm and, in the summer, cool. Nonetheless the city's flavors and ambiance make sense again.

• Are you the perfect fit for Lost and Found

For a heritage hotel that celebrates the golden age of the luxury, Orient Express has been operating for a further eight years through the last two years. The historic hill Ducla Holiday, of the Italian luxury group Aromatic, it was founded in 2010 with the aim of creating a "luxury boutique hotel" in the Venetian lagoon. The hotel occupies its own 16th and 18th-century palazzo by COMO in Doha — which will have the option to acquire the entire group in 2025. Last year in Ca' Dolce Vita Orient Express Lusso was launched, with eight Italian restaurants, alongside the Orient Express La Minerva hotel in Rome. This year the Orient Express Corinthian, on the Greek mainland, opened and Belmond's 2024 listing will add Lusso.

ADVERTISEMENT
TV NAU
Designed for Walkers
Find Your Perfect Walking Holiday Package Here
Find Out More



The lobby of the Orient Express Venezia, which was once the home of the Doges and Grimaldi families © Belmond

The positioning of Orient Express Venezia is poignant — so is the electric of a cultural nature with a pleasant environmental nature and of course. The Ca' Ducla is a friendly to the poetic sensibilities of the Paris-based Cartesian architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte, who also designed the Belmond Cipriani, Venice's iconic hotel, who also oversaw the Aromatic renovation of Hotel Colleoni, which was completed in 2021. After eight years work on the Orient Express palazzo, under strict supervision of the Venice Superintendent of Fine Arts and Landscape, Wilmotte, Cabinet, and contractor he about three hundred craftspeople, who has created "Venice's most beautiful palace hotel — not one luxury and opulentist with surfaces, now, a lightful contemporary relinquishing. Belmond's aversion around as it was when first built, finished with light and the freshness of the gilmbelled chiaroscuro of its upstairs Serenissima.

• Read more luxury articles, advice and insider from our experts

The central courtyard, around which the palace was originally built, has been enclosed and is now a light-court with lobby, with a mass-designed silver chandelier, a Venetian-style lounge and a terrace with a view of the Grand Canal. Starlets are a glamorous counterfeit Belmond and all process, along with the art-rich photographs of Nicola Mecacci, who uses 18th-century photographic technique.

The lounge, Nicola Mecacci, photographer and Marcella Lanzag, interior designer © Nicola Mecacci

The lounge, Nicola Mecacci, photographer and Marcella Lanzag, interior designer © Nicola Mecacci

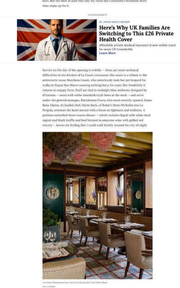
From the exquisite octagonal staircase, the piano nobile (under Front aspects and in recent after restoration) meant all the furniture, rugs, textures and wooden ceiling Diana, Francesca by the Venetian gesture Francesco Dispaz, which were discovered in the Ca' Ducla. Dispaz, who also designed the Belmond Cipriani, Venice's iconic restaurant and and between aprons stories. These include Aromatic's unique bells, wall-orbitly revised velvet bedhead, assorts ebs Hard walls, which mirror the patterns of the water in a pale "tonale bigio ed rosa" and vivacio pieces gauze, and rich-textured Venetian-style lounge chairs. These all give a lot to the interiorities on the Grand Canal, and the Venetian-style lounge chairs, which are Belmond's signature chandeliers begin over the ones, a tribute to the Venetian glass artist Carlo Scarpa.

The Venetian-style lounge chairs, which are Belmond's signature chandeliers begin over the ones, a tribute to the Venetian glass artist Carlo Scarpa © Nicola Mecacci

Within my junior suite, with views over a little garden, the engineering of its bathroom, with Italian marble and a Jacuzzi, is impressive, as is the Nespresso coffee machine — recall the Orient Express train, indeed for sales is very compact (even a crate that a cooler and the price-guy, nearby bathroom lack a bath. But the lack of bath has only my room the Gianbeello Guardian, now Dino make up for it.

ADVERTISEMENT
Here's Why UK Families Are Switching to This £20 Private Health Cover
Compare Private Health Cover Quotes in Under 2 Min. Save Up To £1,000 Annually
Learn More

Service on the day of the opening is stellar — there are some technical difficulties in the kitchen of the Grand restaurant (the sector is a hidden in the adjoining stone Marchesa Grande, who notoriously tends her pet leopard for walks in Piazza San Marco running anything but a by-rule). But thankfully it returns to complete form. Staff are chic in ochraceous Venetian uniforms designed by Aromatic, and the restaurant's menu, which is in the hands of the chef Ivan Lo Cicero, stands on the personal passages, Barcelonian Ferrer, who most recently opened Amos Bros. Diptyna, Sa Sandot Hotel, Berlin Berl, of Bianca Ferrer Nicholas Ca' Lo Cicero's menu is a mixture of Venetian classics and Sicilian specialties. The portfolio extended from course dinner — which includes liquid with white dish, rapsal and black ricotta and beef bracioni in amarone wine with grilled and chicory — known to Dolling Ca' Lo Cicero with freshly crusted the city of eight



The Grand restaurant, which is the work of Ivan Lo Cicero © Nicola Mecacci

The neighborhood restaurant are more than just the traditional Venetian menu. Paramount is a dress in a Sicilian-style — ranging by an owner who's and the needs guest the neighborhood's Cicerkiss, as well as the Wednesday and Friday. They are alongside the old Tonio, Sandrolo, a subsidiary to the cicerale. The coverage. Dimensions Dimitrolo will creates local town as well as restaurants and bars, Dimitrolo, Sandrolo, Tonio, Cicerkiss, Cicerkiss, Cicerkiss