



A R S E N A L E

PRESS COVERAGE

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## 6 new sleeper train routes coming in 2026

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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 discounts Get 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



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

itinerary

## A LOUNGE THAT'S WORTH THE WAIT

ENGLISH TEXT

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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." ■

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## 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 m<sup>2</sup> 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." ■