

A R S E N A L E

PRESS COVERAGE

January – April 2025



World Travel & Tourism Council

GLOBAL SUMMIT

PERTH (BOORLOO) 2024



WESTERN
AUSTRALIA

WALKING ON A DREAM

GLOBAL SUMMIT REPORT

World Travel & Tourism Council



GLOBAL SUMMIT

PERTH (BOORLOO) 2024

The World Travel & Tourism Council hosted its 24th Global Summit from 8 to 10 October 2024 in Perth, Western Australia. The event was hosted by Tourism Western Australia, with the support of the Government of Western Australia.

Under the theme Ancient Land; New Perspectives, industry leaders and experts discussed the future of a more sustainable and inclusive Travel & Tourism sector for all.



KEY FIGURES

600

DELEGATES

2000+

VIRTUAL
REGISTRATIONS

35

GOVERNMENTS

1000+

PIECES OF
COVERAGE

NPS 88

POST-EVENT

GLOBAL LEADERS' DIALOGUE

8 October 2024



Public and private sector leaders – comprising ministers, tourism officials, and WTTC members – came together to discuss areas of growth for tourism and identify opportunities for further public-private collaboration. The dialogue was moderated by Arnie Weissmann, Editor-in-Chief of Travel Weekly.

The discussion spanned a range of topics including the importance of efficient visa policies, the potential of artificial intelligence, and the need for sustainable tourism practices. Leaders highlighted Travel & Tourism's role in economic growth, job creation, and cultural exchange. The overarching message was one of optimism and a commitment to working together to achieve our common goals.

SUMMARY OF THE TOPICS DISCUSSED:

- **The Power of Public-Private Partnerships.** Successful tourism destinations must leverage public-private partnerships to stimulate investment, foster innovation, and achieve shared goals.
- **Emerging Markets and Shifting Demographics.** The rise of new source markets, particularly in Asia, demands agility and targeted strategies to cater to new and evolving traveller preferences.
- **Diversifying Destination Offering.** The public and private sectors can better promote lesser-known destinations and experiences. This will help spread the benefits of tourism more widely and can mitigate overcrowding in extremely popular resorts and locations.
- **Marketing and Storytelling:** Compelling storytelling and innovative marketing campaigns are crucial for effective destination promotion and capturing traveller imagination.
- **Sustainability as a Core Value.** As tourism continues to grow, environmental and social sustainability must remain top priorities. It is crucial that responsible practices that benefit local communities and protect destinations are embraced and enhanced.
- **The Role of Technology.** Effective use of data and emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), can help optimise operations, enhance understanding of traveller behaviour, and support more personalised experiences for travellers.
- **Frictionless Travel.** Reducing friction in travel is imperative. Streamlining visa processes, improving security protocols, and promoting consistent standards across destinations will support the sector's future growth.
- **Investments in Infrastructure.** Adequate infrastructure, including transportation, accommodation, and digital connectivity, is essential to sustainable tourism growth.
- **Growing and Improving the Workforce.** The sector faces labour shortages and must invest in training and development to attract and retain talent.



Julia Simpson, President & CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council

JULIA SIMPSON, President & CEO, World Travel & Tourism Council, welcomed participants and thanked Western Australia for hosting the 2024 Summit. She also shared an Acknowledgement of Country. She highlighted: **“this place is vast and the only thing bigger than its landscape is its welcome”**. She highlighted the need for innovative partnerships and deeper connectivity between the public and private sectors. She also emphasised the importance of efficient visa policies, data collaboration, and destination management strategies for global tourism success.



Hon. Rita Saffioti MLA, Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport & Tourism, Western Australia

HON. RITA SAFFIOTI MLA, Deputy Premier and Minister for Transport & Tourism, Western Australia, spoke about Western Australia’s efforts to grow its Travel & Tourism sector. **“We believe we have an enormous opportunity to grow our industry. We very much support the tourism industry because of the wealth it creates”**, she said. Minister Saffioti proudly noted that Perth Airport is now Qantas’ second-biggest aviation hub in Australia and that there are several key initiatives to secure direct flights to more destinations. She also shared that the government is investing tens of millions of dollars to attract new events to Australia. The government has created a dedicated subcommittee to support tourism investment, particularly in the regions, she said.



Brian Beall, Director of the USA’s National Travel & Tourism Office

PUBLIC SECTOR SPEAKERS

BRIAN BEALL, Director of the USA’s National Travel & Tourism Office, emphasised the importance of Travel & Tourism to the US economy. He detailed the US government’s efforts to increase visitation through a national Travel & Tourism strategy. This strategy focusses on initiatives to promote the US as a destination, facilitate travel, ensure diverse and accessible tourism experiences, and foster sustainable and resilient tourism. He also reiterated the need for public-private collaboration: **“an important part of the strategy is that it envisions the public and private sectors working together to increase not only the volume of Travel & Tourism, but also the value.”**



Hon. I. Chester Cooper, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Investments & Aviation, Bahamas

HON. I. CHESTER COOPER, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Investments & Aviation, Bahamas highlighted that the Bahamas is a mature tourism market with a focus on attracting investment and leveraging its proximity to the US. His government aims to double the number of hotel rooms in the country, facilitate seamless travel through visa waivers and pre-clearance for US travel, attract investment, and foster a stable business environment. He emphasised how much the government is prioritising tourism: **“this isn’t just an industry for us. It is our way of life.”**

H.E. JEAN DE DIEU UWIHANGANYE, High Commissioner of Rwanda to Australia, Singapore, and New Zealand, emphasised the role of embassies in promoting tourism. He noted that embassies are “the first point of entry for people who want to know the country.” He discussed Rwanda’s successful eco-tourism model for gorilla trekking and how the government is also embracing sports tourism, evident in its hosting of prestigious events such as the African Basketball League and the World Cycling Championship.



H.E. Jean De Dieu Uwihanganye, High Commissioner of Rwanda to Australia, Singapore, and New Zealand

ERIKA GUERRI, Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of Tourism, Italy, outlined Italy’s vision for tourism, which includes managing tourism growth sustainably. She said Italy is “championing the inclusion of tourism in the G7 agenda for the first time”, alongside a focus on sustainability, AI, and workforce development. She noted that the Italian Ministry of Tourism is working hard to support Italian tourism groups, attract investors, and enhance the quality of tourism offerings across the country.



Erika Guerri, Chief of Cabinet, Ministry of Tourism, Italy

H.E. SULTAN AL-MUSALLAM, Deputy Minister of Tourism for International Affairs, Saudi Arabia, noted that Saudi Arabia can “leverage [its] last-comer advantage. We came in late, but we looked at different experiences from different nations – and their successes and failures – and we built on that”. He also spoke about Saudi Arabia’s “five P” plan for tourism development. It focuses on creating captivating destinations (Places), connecting people with these places (Planes), supporting community engagement (People), having a stable regulatory environment for investors and stakeholders (Policies), and attracting the right travellers to the right destination (Promotions).



H.E. Sultan Al-Musallam, Deputy Minister of Tourism for International Affairs, Saudi Arabia

FLORIAN SENGSTSCHMID, CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board, outlined Azerbaijan’s shift in recent years. “Azerbaijan was known for its energy resources, but in the past 10 to 15 years there has been more focus on tourism as a priority sector,” he said. He added that now the focus is sustainable tourism development, leveraging its diverse landscapes and promoting eco-tourism initiatives. He also highlighted Azerbaijan’s role in bringing tourism to the forefront of international discussions, particularly as the host of COP 29 in November 2024 where Azerbaijan hosted a dedicated tourism day.



Florian Sengstschmid, CEO, Azerbaijan Tourism Board

GUY ANTOGNELLI, Director, Government Tourist and Convention Authority, Monaco, spoke about the importance of tourism to Monaco’s economy. He echoed that “public-private partnerships are very important for tourism destinations”. He also emphasised the interest in diversifying Monaco’s tourism offerings beyond Formula 1, the casino, and the Royal family by focusing more on MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) tourism and sustainability.



Guy Antognelli, Director, Government Tourist and Convention Authority, Monaco



Ion Vilcu, Director of Affiliate Members, UN Tourism

ION VILCU, Director of Affiliate Members, UN Tourism, said UN Tourism has a unique perspective as an organisation with members from both the public and private sectors. He reinforced the need for strong communication and coordination between governments and the private sector, emphasising the importance of aligning long-term objectives and sharing best practices. **“There is a problem with communication between government and the private sector...we should align with long-term strategy objective[s], for both parties,”** he said.



Greg O'Hara, WTTC Chair & Founder and Senior Managing Director, Certares

PRIVATE SECTOR SPEAKERS

GREG O'HARA, WTTC Chair & Founder and Senior Managing Director, Certares, articulated that successful tourism destinations are built on public-private partnerships. He also said that with **“tourism’s durable growth every year at a predictable basis... people tend to stay in their jobs for a long time.”** He emphasised the importance of governments creating an enabling environment for private investment, citing positive examples from Saudi Arabia, Italy, France, Greece, and Rwanda.



Zubin Karkaria, CEO, VFS Global

ZUBIN KARKARIA, CEO, VFS Global, described the organisation’s business model of providing visa processing services to governments. He emphasised the role of technology in creating efficient and secure cross-border mobility: **“our goal is to make cross-border mobility more efficient and at the same time more secure.”** He also highlighted additional opportunities for VFS Global to work with governments on tourism promotion, event management, and biometric solutions.



Katie Briscoe, CEO, MMGY Global

KATIE BRISCOE, CEO, MMGY Global, said: **“it’s so incredibly important that we continue to tell the story of the powerhouse that Travel & Tourism is as an economic driver, but we also have the opportunity to talk about it as a core creator of global empathy”.** She emphasised the importance of innovative partnerships, data collaboration, and dispersal marketing strategies to manage tourism flows effectively.



Hiroyuki Takahashi, Chairperson, JTB Corp

HIROYUKI TAKAHASHI, Chairperson, JTB Corp, discussed the challenges of labour shortages and digitisation facing the Asia-Pacific Travel & Tourism sector. He noted that **“as we look at the Asia-Pacific region, including Japan, it’s clear that creating a tourism industry that is both productive and profitable is crucial for long-term success.”** He suggested focussing on tourism segments with a high value-add like adventure and sports tourism to drive profitability and attract investment.

CLEOFE ALBISO, Managing Director, Megaworld Hotels and Resorts, discussed the private sector's important role in driving tourism growth in the Philippines. She emphasised the significance of collaboration with the government to attract new markets, develop infrastructure, and promote the Philippines as a diverse and welcoming destination. She highlighted: **"it's a beautiful situation where the Philippines is now, but we definitely have a lot more to do."**



Cleofe Albiso, Managing Director, Megaworld Hotels and Resorts

PAOLO BARLETTA, CEO, Arsenale s.p.a, spoke about the potential of luxury train travel to create new tourism destinations and experiences. He highlighted Arsenale s.p.a.'s work in Italy and Saudi Arabia, emphasising the importance of leveraging existing rail infrastructure and promoting slow tourism. He noted that nearly every country has railways and that his organisation is **"leveraging this incredible network worldwide in order to bring luxury trains so that we can create new destinations; people can discover and enjoy new places; and especially to help move people when they land in a country – so they do not need to take another airplane over a short distance"**.



Paolo Barletta, CEO, Arsenale s.p.a

LARS CLASEN, CEO, Cruise Saudi, discussed the positive collaboration between Cruise Saudi and the Saudi Arabian government in developing the country's cruise sector. He said: **"it is essential that the private sector and government work together when we are trying to establish a market which has not existed before."** He highlighted the importance of efficient visa regulations, tour guide development, and establishing a regulatory framework to attract international cruise companies.



Lars Clasen, CEO, Cruise Saudi

JENNIFER WILSON-BUTTIGIEG, Head of Travel Policy, Chase Travel, shared her organisation's mission: **"to create a world-class marketplace for advisors, travellers, and partners."** She emphasised the importance of working with trade associations and government agencies to advocate for traveller rights, streamline regulations, and ensure a fair and competitive travel environment.



Jennifer Wilson-Buttigieg, Head of Travel Policy, Chase Travel

PUNEET CHHATWAL, Managing Director & CEO, Indian Hotels Company Limited, spoke about the growth of tourism in India and the role of public-private partnerships in developing new destinations. Referencing the motto of Tourism Western Australia he said: **"India, where it stands today, is about creating a dream."** He shared the models used in Goa, Kerala, and the Andaman Islands, where the government of India provides land on long-term leases to incentivise private investment.



Puneet Chhatwal, MD & CEO, Indian Hotels Company Limited

LACHLAN HOSWELL, Managing Director of Australasia, Radisson Hotel Group, discussed the importance of government support in driving tourism

On Our Radar



FIRST ORIENT EXPRESS HOTEL

Famous luxury train brand, Orient Express, is launching its first hotel, La Minerva, in Rome's historic Piazza della Minerva this spring. The 93-room property offers breathtaking views of the Pantheon while the rooftop restaurant, Voliera, serves Mediterranean cuisine with a stunning backdrop of the Eternal City. Once a 17th-century aristocratic palace, the meticulously restored hotel combines Roman history and Art Deco elegance.

On Our Radar



ALL ABOARD ITALY'S LUXE WEDDING TRAIN

Wedding train takes on new meaning aboard Italy's dreamy La Dolce Vita Orient Express train (debuting spring 2025). Brides and grooms — plus up to 60 guests — can languish aboard the opulent rail on a one-of-a-kind bespoke wedding journey. All aboard.

WAY TO GO

Out With the Old, In with the New

The 2025 hospitality trends you'll need to know.

We're starting fresh, with intel and developments that will make this another exciting and busy year in travel. Buckle up for what's coming:

- *No more visa-free travel to Europe and the UK (sorry, Yanks)*
- *Hotels are leaving the building (they're everywhere else)*
- *Heading for cooler climes (sorry, Med)*
- *Reaching for the stars (no, the real ones)*
- *Nature is, as ever, the answer*



Photo courtesy of La Dolce Vita Orient Express.

Hotels Have Left the Building

“Experience” is the biggest overused buzzword in hospitality, and the hotel industry is taking this to heart by taking guest experiences beyond traditional hotel walls — to the rails, the seas, the home, and the club. This is a longer-term trend you’ll start seeing soon.

On the Rails

At his media briefing at ILTM, the International Luxury Travel Market conference, in December, Accor CEO Sébastien Bazin said it was time to “stop asking clients to go to the product” and instead to “bring the product to the people.” To that end, this spring the hotel conglomerate’s Orient Express brand will launch **La Dolce Vita** in Italy, a train line offering one- and two-night journeys roundtrip from Rome to Venice, Portofino, Matera, Tuscany, and Sicily. With so little time in each stop, these trips seem to be more about the journey than the destinations. We’ve toured the trains — modern and handsome, with a strong mid-century vibe, they’re boutique hotels on wheels.

In other Orient Express news, Belmond — in addition to their estimable **hotel collection** — operates the classic Venice Simplon-Orient-Express train. (This line is not related to Accor’s Orient Express, and, no, we’re not trying to confuse you. Two totally different companies.) March will see the debut of **L’Observatoire Suite**, an insanely opulent (and opulently priced) private train carriage designed by French artist JR. It sleeps two and will run on the Paris-Istanbul route. In July, Belmond will debut **Britannic Explorer**, the first luxury sleeper train to tour England and Wales, on three- or six-day journeys from London’s Victoria Station into Cornwall, the Lake District, and Wales. The travel will be slow and relaxed. The scenery through countrysides and national parks and coastlines will be beautiful. The excursions will include hikes, picnics, swims, and cute villages. And the **F&B options will be excellent** because the culinary program is overseen by three-Michelin-starred chef Simon Rogan, and we can personally vouch that this man can work wonders in a tiny, moving kitchen.

Also this spring, Accor's Orient Express will open [La Minerva](#) in Rome, the brand's first (actual, traditional, physical) hotel. Their second will be Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice, though probably not this year.

So, in other words, hotel companies are making trains and train companies are making hotels.

On the Seas

Things may be clearer on the high seas, though it will take longer to get there, with luxury hotel companies launching yachts. (And whatever you do, please don't refer to these elegant sails as mere *cruises*.) [Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection](#) added *Ilma*, its second ship, in late 2024 and will add *Luminara* in 2025. Destinations include Asia, the Caribbean, the Med, and Northern Europe and the Baltics. [Four Seasons](#) will launch its yacht, with suites designed by Prosper Assouline, in the Caribbean in January 2026. Accor's Orient Express is here, too: [Orient Express Silenseas](#) will sail in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean in 2026. Aman Hotels has been sailing *Amandira*, a five-cabin Phinisi sailboat for a few years, but we'll have to wait until 2027 for the 50-cabin motor yacht from [Aman at Sea](#). Here's another insider industry tidbit: It seems clear that emerging luxury cruise company [Explora Journeys](#) is hoping to tap the luxury hotel magic. They recently hired former Aman Hotels Chief Commercial Officer Anna Nash as their new President.

Skift.

Accor Bets on Luxury to Close Gap with Marriott and Hilton



Skift Take

Accor aims to expand its share of luxury hotels by debuting its Orient Express brand this year and fine-tuning its other brands, like Fairmont and Sofitel.

Accor CEO Sébastien Bazin has been boosting the hotel group's luxury offerings since 2013 when he became the leader of the Paris-based hotel group.

At the end of 2015, only 6% of Accor's rooms worldwide were luxury, and it had only two luxury brands: Sofitel and MGallery. Today, at least 10% of its over 800,000 rooms are in the luxury segment, and the group offers a broader range of brands.

At the International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM) expo in Cannes last month, Accor showed off its offerings in an enormous tent on the beach. "I promise you that Marriott will never get this tent," Bazin joked at an opening dinner, referring to how Accor negotiated with Cannes for its exclusive use.

Perhaps, but Accor, with over 380 luxury hotels, isn't as big of a player in the space as the global leader Marriott, with 534, or Hilton, with more than 500.



A suite with a terrace at Orient Express La Minerva, an ultra-luxury hotel opening in Rome in spring 2025. Source: Accor.

Accor Adds Ultra-Luxury

Bazin's latest ambition is to debut Orient Express this year as a brand of hotels, trains, and yachts. Orient Express will be Accor's second brand after Raffles in the 'ultra-luxury' segment (think rooms that typically sell for over \$1,000 a night).

"I never understood why the travel industry moved away from the best-ever years of luxury travel — about 100 years ago," Bazin said. "Those years were exceptional in terms of the beauty of the uniforms, service, music, gastronomy, baccarat, fragrance."

This spring, Orient Express La Minerva opens in Rome, the first asset in Orient Express's planned portfolio of hotels, sleeper trains, and sailing yachts. The 93-room property overlooks Rome's Pantheon and features a renovation of a 17th-century palazzo.

In 2026, Accor will join LVMH in debuting the first two Orient Express overnight trains, whose first routes will crisscross Italy. It will also debut the world's largest sailing yacht, Orient Express Corinthian. The brand has appointed Chef Yannick Alléno, who has earned two three-star Michelin ratings from his restaurants, as Orient Express's executive chef.

Features

Rail Revival

1 Jan 2025 by Yi-Hwa Hanna



Train travel is heading towards a bright new future, and the Middle East's rail sector is on the move

When the Dubai Metro first launched – on 9 September 2009 – it was big news. So big, in fact, that this was no ordinary transport system: it was an attraction in itself. Some residents across the city were quoted in the news as having ridden it with no specific destination in mind – several even taking it from end to end – simply for the novelty of being able to ride the first rapid transit train network in the GCC.

Within its first two days of operation, it had already welcomed 11,000 passengers. It had been a longtime dream – reportedly created following a vision His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, had during a visit to London with his father back in 1959. That vision, which is said to have come from a moment of marvelling at the driverless trains there, sparked his ambition to one day bring a world-class, sustainable transport system to his own beautiful city.

By September 2024 – when it celebrated its 15-year anniversary – it had welcomed more than 2.4 billion passengers. The world's longest driverless metro line (the Red Line was officially recognised as such by the Guinness World Records on 23 May 2011), it has grown from an initial 10 stations to 53. And on 19 December 2024, an announcement was made by Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) stating that the Dubai Metro Blue Line Project is expected to commence operations on 9 September 2029.

The project will mark a major new phase for the system that coincides with the Dubai Metro's 20th anniversary. With 14 new stations spanning 30km – and 28 new trains within its network – by 2030, the new line is expected to carry up to 200,000 riders, rising to an estimated 320,000 by 2040.



It's all part of the Dubai 2040 Master Plan – a framework that aims to transform the city into one wherein every resident can find whatever they need within 20 minutes, underlined by convenient transport that can get them wherever they need to go quickly and easily. Another key part of the plan is to double the amount of green and recreational spaces in the city, boosting the number of nature-filled areas to 60 per cent, alongside green corridors, more pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly mobility, larger public beaches, and more.

The use of mass transit and flexible means of transportation, not to mention more of those that support sustainability goals, is an essential part of it – and given what an enormous impact Dubai Metro's current Red and Green Lines have already had on the city, the new Blue Line will undeniably play a big role here.

Since its launch, the ease of transport that the rail network has provided has enabled much more choice for Dubai's residents and visitors. It didn't just cause a shift in how people got around – it also created a major cultural evolution in the way they explored, experienced, and lived in the city.



Railway has long been known as one of the safest forms of transport. It's typically efficient – and energy-efficient – and on a train, you'll never risk getting stuck in a traffic jam. Unlike a bus or a car, on a train, you can get up to stretch your legs, with more freedom to move around – especially if you're on one that has the added benefit of dining cars, sleeping cabins, and lounges, complete with decent power outlets and wifi.

There's typically also a beautiful view. From Switzerland's Glacier Express to Norway's Bergen Railway, scenic train journeys aren't just a way to get from A to B – they're destinations in themselves. Trains have made up the setting of countless movies and books throughout history – and whether you're more drawn to *The Darjeeling Limited*, *The Polar Express*, or *Bullet Train* (most likely not the train on *Snowpiercer*, though), this mode of transport has long held a romantic and historical appeal.

When it comes to trains that have been made legend through literature and film, none are more iconic than the Orient Express. First created in 1883 by the Belgian *Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits*, the long-distance luxury passenger train travelled all across continental Europe – extending from Paris to Istanbul, and stopping in places like Athens, Brussels, and London along the way.



The train had been featured in some of the most famous fictional stories of our time, including Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* and Ian Fleming's *From Russia With Love*, and it ran for 126 years. Then as alternative transport options began to claim their footing – such as air travel, and the creation of high-speed modern rail systems – all while the geopolitical landscape changed, the legendary train rolled to its final stop in 2009.

But like any good story, the legacy of the original Orient Express could never truly die. In 1982, the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express was launched. A private venture, this luxury train service ran from London to Venice and other destinations in Europe – and although it was sometimes confused with the aforementioned Orient Express, this was a separate entity. Owned by Belmond, the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express wasn't intended to be a transport solution as much as it was a destination in itself – a leisure experience complete with five-star dining, for tourists looking to enjoy a luxury train ride.

Running between March and November each year, guests can still enjoy its beautiful sleeper and restaurant carriages while passing through destinations including Geneva, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Istanbul, Bucharest, and Sinaia, with sightseeing opportunities along the way. From time to time, these destinations will change by season, and over the years, it has occasionally incorporated additional stops in places like Switzerland, Germany, Slovakia, Poland, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy.



During the past few years, a couple more options have come up: An ÖBB NightJet has been running the Paris-Vienna route three times a week since December 2021, and in 2025, Accor will be launching its very own Orient Express from Paris to Istanbul. To use the name, the French hospitality company purchased a 50 per cent stake in the Orient Express brand from SNCF, and since 2018, it has been renovating 17 CIWL carriages from the now-defunct Nostalgie Istanbul Orient Express for this new iteration. With the cars originally dating back to the 1920s and 1930s, it's a beautiful way of paying homage to the original train while elevating it to appeal to a modern audience.

Accor's new Orient Express will operate two services: one across Central Europe (covering France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Czechia), and one that travels the original mythic route (covering France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Türkiye). Its inaugural journey is scheduled to take place on 4 April 2025.





Among Accor's new vision for this paragon of "slow travel" is a return to Italy through their La Dolce Vita Orient Express. After a presale that took place in 2022 (wherein 400 of its cabins were quickly snapped up for its maiden voyage) – for an initially-planned launch in 2023, then moved to 2024 – this highly-anticipated train journey officially opened for reservations in August 2024, before it will finally travel in spring 2025.

Developed by Arsenale Group – an Italian company that develops and manages luxury hospitality and lifestyle assets – and conceived by architecture and design firm Dimorestudio, the train feels proudly Italian in many ways. The six trains are decked out with interiors inspired by 20th century Italian design. On the inside, it has 12 deluxe cabins, 18 suites, and one grand La Dolce Vita Suite. All of them have en-suite bathrooms, and across its carriages, the train also boasts a restaurant, a lounge, and a sophisticated bar, with each train able to accommodate up to 62 guests in total. It can also be booked out for private occasions, such as weddings or corporate events.

It's not just Europe that's getting a new luxury train this year, though – Arsenale Group has also partnered with Saudi Arabia Railways to create the Dream of the Desert, the first-ever luxury cruise rail project in Saudi Arabia. Also scheduled to launch sometime in 2025, this beautiful train will consist of 41 luxurious cabins across 15 cars, a fine dining restaurant and lounge bar, and additional high-end services. It will travel around 1290km from Riyadh across to Saudi Arabia's border with Jordan, passing through stunning desert landscapes, UNESCO World Heritage sites filled with ancient archeological treasures, and lush nature reserves. For the Dream of the Desert, Arsenale has promised design features that are inspired by Saudi heritage.



In the meantime, those who are seeking a taste of historical train journeys can visit the remains of the Hejaz Railway – an historic railway that was the very first in Arabia, constructed during the Ottoman Empire and once having run from Damascus to Madinah. In more recent developments, Saudi Arabia Railways opened the Haramain High Speed Railway in October 2018, linking the Muslim holy cities of Madinah and Makkah through a route between King Abdullah Economic City and Jeddah. It travels across 449.2km at 300km/h with five stations along the way, with a 3.75km branch line linking it to Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport. At its stations, passengers will find beautiful designs created by award-winning architecture firm Foster + Partners and British engineering firm Buro Happold, with shops, restaurants, mosques, VIP lounges, and even a helipad.

Saudi Arabia recently continued to bet on train travel as part of its future, with The Royal Commission for AlUla having come into a partnership with Saudi Railway Polytechnic during winter 2024. Together, they'll work on boosting opportunities for young Saudis looking to launch a career in AlUla and/or the kingdom's rapidly-growing rail sector. The first stage of the agreement is planned to provide vocational training programmes in railway maintenance and operation that will build sector-specific subjects, such as rolling stock and infrastructure through hands-on training.

Another train service that's on its way to make a historic impact in the Middle East is Etihad's Rail passenger train. Etihad Rail has already been running for some time now, having first been established back in 2009, but until recently, it has only been used for freight purposes.



The passenger train will connect all seven emirates of the UAE, and is anticipated to carry 36.5 million passengers per year by 2030. The locations of its first stations have already been announced, beginning with one in Sakamkam, Fujairah, and the second near Sharjah's University City. It will run across 900km in total, with 400 cars, travelling at 200km/h; getting people from Dubai to Abu Dhabi within 57 minutes, Abu Dhabi to Al Ain within 70 minutes,

and Abu Dhabi to Fujairah within 105 minutes. In March 2024, it conducted its first passenger service trial run.

Eventually, it will also be connected with Oman's Etihad Rail network, with future travel times between Abu Dhabi and Sohar estimated to take just an hour and 40 minutes. Etihad Rail's passenger trains will reportedly offer its guests plenty of ways to stay comfortable and entertained, from infotainment systems to charging stations, food and beverages, and more. The experience is rumoured to be no less glamorous than the ideals of the Orient Express, with Etihad Rail also having signed a contract with Arsenale Group for its creation.

From Europe to the Middle East – and everywhere in between – it's clear that train travel is about to make a comeback. And with the perfect blend of nostalgia, cutting-edge innovation, and technology-fuelled comfort supported by vintage design, we're eagerly along for the ride.

This article was featured in the January 2025 issue of Business Traveller Middle East. [Click here](#) for a digital issue of the full magazine

Good escapes

14 Become a Traitor

If you love *The Traitors* as much as you covet Claudia's fringe, why not recreate the game yourself? The reality show, returning to our screens on 1 January, is filmed at Ardross Castle (ardrosscastle.co.uk) in the Scottish Highlands. While you can only book the actual location for big events, there are plenty of other castles for hire (see celticcastles.com). Marrington Escapes (marringtonescapes.com) offers 'Traitors' breaks at four of its largest properties in Shropshire. Set in 600-acre estate grounds, they sleep between 10 and 14 and cost around £43pp a night if you fill them. Remote and with plenty of room for challenges, each one comes with a *Traitors* board game and the essential black hooded cloak.



Hire a castle like Ardross, where *The Traitors* is filmed



Sun yourself alongside A-listers on Alentejo's beautiful beaches

15 Holiday with the Royals

This summer, all eyes will be on Alentejo, a beautiful coastal region in the south of Portugal. Why? Prince Harry and wife Meghan are rumoured to have bought a property at the 722-acre CostaTerra Golf & Ocean Club (costaterraclub.com), a luxury development around 80 miles south of Lisbon. Princess Eugenie and her husband, Jack Brooksbank, already have a property at the resort, which offers horse-riding and sunbathing on the Costa Azul. Dubbed 'The Hamptons of Portugal', the area has attracted other A-listers including Gisele Bündchen, George Clooney and Sharon Stone. Stay nearby at the AlmaLusa Comporta (almalusahotels.com, rooms from £92 a night) and keep your eyes peeled.



Join the rail revolution

Minimise your carbon footprint and embrace slow travel. No longer just for students, Interrail (interrail.eu/en) is now in its 50s, and a flexible global pass (from £177pp for four days) allows you to explore more than 30,000 stations across 33 European countries. New sleeper services include Brussels to Venice via the Austrian Alps (europeansleeper.eu); London to Berlin or Prague, changing at Paris (b-europe.com/EN); Paris to Berlin (nightjet.com); and Brussels to Berlin or Prague (europeansleeper.eu). Good Housekeeping Holidays also has a five-day rail break on the new luxury *La Dolce Vita* Orient Express from £4,479pp (see page 168).



Experience Italy in style on *La Dolce Vita* Orient Express



BEST HOTELS IN THE WORLD BEST HOTELS IN EUROPE BEST HOTELS IN ASIA



Holly Farndell

INSPIRATION

The biggest travel trends for 2025

From rural upskilling to accessible adventures, these are the trends shaping travel in 2025

BY SARAH ALLARD
3 January 2025

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In 2024, we adopted AI to help plan our travels, added [luxury train journeys](#) to our bucket lists, sought wellness via solitude and stargazing, enjoyed urban gardens and wild feasting, and Swiftly hopped on planes to see our favourite musicians in action.

But how will we be travelling in 2025? Sports fans will swap spectating for setting off on their own athletic adventures (anyone for a game of pickleball?); the quest for [longevity](#) will evolve into something a lot more holistic; families will embark on summer-long sabbaticals; oenophiles will forgo the more obvious spots for less crowded wine regions. We'll be prolonging our adventures with considerate detours, indulging in our love of food in new and interesting places, and embracing off-board cruise and train experiences as a way of fully immersing ourselves in a destination.

These are the 21 travel trends likely to guide how we see the world in 2025. *Sarah Allard*

destination anymore – it's about accessing side experiences and detours, all while having a sumptuous suite to return to each evening.

Why will it matter in 2025? Luxury rail travel is in its new golden era. This year, several notable lines and routes are launching, including from Belmond with the Britannica Explorer journeys and luxury hospitality group, Accor, whose [La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#) will travel through Italy. Now, these high-end operators are going off-board into uncharted territory. La Dolce Vita Orient Express isn't just running another luxury service through Italy's greatest hits, for instance – it's venturing into places luxury trains have never gone before, from the ancient cave city of Matera (where lunch happens in an actual cave restaurant) to truffle expeditions in Monferrato (with wine tastings at Unesco-listed vineyards). Meanwhile, Belmond's new Britannica Explorer journeys on routes throughout Great Britain, each with a range of off-board excursions: strolls through subtropical sculpture gardens and Cornish wine tastings overlooking St Michael's Mount; access to Beatrix Potter's former summer estate; and wild swimming in tranquil Derwentwater. The whole concept feels like a correction from homogenised luxury travel; these new itineraries are built around exclusive immersion in the landscapes rather than merely a scenic rumble through. It's a clever evolution of the luxury train concept that manages to feel both indulgent and intentional, even if that intention comes with a hefty price tag. *JD Shadel*

20. JOMO

What's the trend? You may be all too familiar with Fomo, or fear of missing out, but in a hyperconnected world where it's a struggle to juggle busy schedules, a holiday should be the last place we're replicating that angst. Yet a relatively simple mindset shift could shape your next trip. Enter Jomo travel – the joy of missing out – a type of "soft travel" that sits alongside the more familiar "slow travel". It's less about the pace of seeing a place and more about doing less, feeling more, and sinking into the experience, the people you meet and who you're with.

Why will it matter in 2025? Given that overtourism is still an issue, and many places struggle to manage the needs of both locals and tourists, Jomo travel can help redirect the compass, an antidote to the restless, tickbox trips that still have appeal. Soft travel is also part of a wider wellness trend, a response to our changing, more demanding lives. A global survey by Ipsos found 62 per cent of people reporting the impacts of stress on their daily lives, while in the UK, almost 80 per cent said mental and physical health were equally important. According to Expedia's Unpack '25 travel trends report, 62 per cent felt that slow-travel-style trips reduced stress and anxiety, and nearly half said they made them reconnect better with loved ones. The Hilton Trends Report states that "more than one in five travellers plan to get away for self-discovery or mental health when travelling for leisure. They are leaning into 'soft travel', or travel that encourages simplicity or spontaneity." If you suffer from Fomo, choosing places that are known for being relaxing and peaceful as opposed to packing in adventure and activities is one way to enjoy the benefits of being away. When there's less to obviously miss out on in the first place, Jomo can take over. *Meera Dattani*

21. Night tourism

With the astrotourism trend firmly planted, the logical next step is to find other adventures that travellers can have at night. Because with sunlight comes crowds and heat – as anyone who's been to the Acropolis in [Athens](#) surely knows – but nighttime activities mean cooler temperatures and fewer people. Illustrating this point, Wayfairer Travel reports it has had a 25 per cent uptick in requests for experiences such as nighttime diving at the Great Barrier Reef and Egypt's Red Sea, nocturnal wildlife safaris in Zambia and Kenya, and Northern Light chasing in Norway and Iceland.

Why will it matter in 2025? As the planet gets ever hotter, climate change has influenced the popularity of night tourism, according to Booking.com, with half of respondents to a summer 2024 survey saying they plan to elevate nighttime pursuits to avoid rising daytime

3 European train routes set to transform travel in 2025

What to expect from each of them...

BY [LIZZIE THOMSON](#) PUBLISHED: 03 JANUARY 2025



Jorg Greuel // Getty Images

Slow, sustainable and scenic, European train journeys not only offer a respite from bustling airports, but also a way to maximise an overall travel experience – by making the most of the journey as well as the destination.

It's hardly surprising then that the demand for international travel by train is projected to grow nearly five-fold between 2022 and 2050.

What's more, exploring Europe by train is becoming even more convenient and sustainable, all thanks to recent EU initiatives working to improve overall rail connectivity and make travel greener.

With this "rail renaissance" in full swing, 2025 is set to be a huge year for train travel in Europe, with new routes making it easier than ever to explore different countries – covering more budget-friendly journeys, as well as luxurious once-in-a-lifetime experiences.

MORE FROM COUNTRY LIVING

King Charles and his dogs



Below are three train routes set to transform travel in 2025 and what to expect from each of them...

La Dolce Vita

Offering the ultimate 'Made in Italy' experience, this luxurious new sleeper train will offer eight one-to-two-night itineraries with immersive explorations from the north to the south of the country.

The new glossy and elegant La Dolce Vita Orient Express, which is setting off for Italian round trips from spring 2025, will be made up of 12 deluxe cabins and 18 suites, each with their own private

bathrooms.

Inspired by 1960s and '70s Italian glamour (think nostalgic patterns in a rich palette of burgundy, ochres, and coppers), the trains will have a capacity for just 62 guests in total, creating an intimate setting that allows for a more comfortable and personal experience.



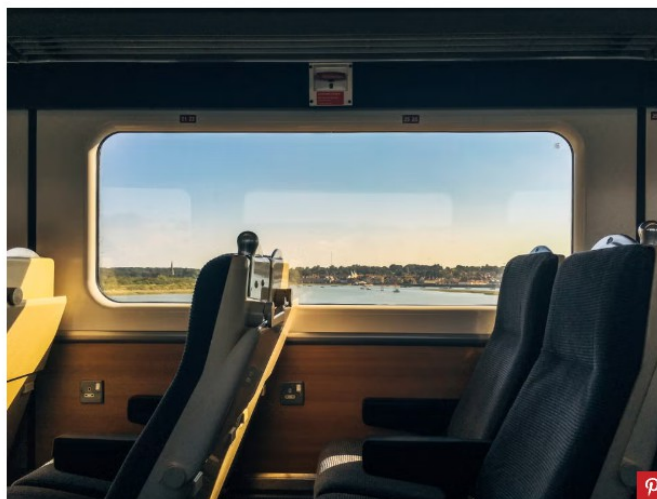
Courtesy of La Dolce Vita Orient Express

“The experience on board is the most important,” general manager [Samy Ghachem](#) told *TTG*. “You’ll have amazing volta linens, Broggi silverware and Michelin-star dining.”

But talking points are not limited to internal offerings, as La Dolce Vita Orient Express will journey past some of Italy’s most beautiful natural scenery, including serene lakes, sprawling forests, coasts and Alpine mountains – with breathtaking views to soak up throughout the trip.

BOOK NOW

Paris to Berlin



Alex Walker

A new direct daytime route from Paris to Berlin whisks travellers through enchanting landscapes from vineyards to forests, to connect the two capitals' city centres.

With a run time of 7hrs 59mins in total, the new high-speed daytime train (reaching speeds of 200mph) is the first ever one to directly connect Paris and Berlin, via Frankfurt South, Karlsruhe, and Strasbourg.

This train launched on 15 December, a year after its nighttime counterpart, and the journey is now faster by five hours.

However, the new Paris to Berlin train not only promises faster, direct and daily journeys between the two bustling capital cities, but also a scenic travel experience, as it moves past Champagne vineyards, the Vosges hills, Saverne tunnel and the Rhine.

Brussels to Venice

Launching very soon on February 5, 2025, European Sleeper's new route will connect Brussels to Venice, via the Austrian Alps.

As a result, this route promises scenic mountainous landscapes, as well as sublime views of the Dolomites and Venice's canals.

The overnight train will launch just in time for the peak winter sports season and will take about 20 hours in total. Running just twice a week, it will depart from Brussels at 5pm and arrive in Venice at 2pm the following day, stopping in cities like Munich and Innsbruck along the way.

Plan your upcoming adventures around the most exciting new check-ins of the year — there are plenty to choose from...

ALICIA MILLER
4 DAYS AGO



For the accommodation-avid among us, a hotel isn't just a hotel — it's the entire reason to travel. Whether you're most excited by luxe interiors or singular landscapes, faultless service or Michelin-standard food, let your travel plans be led by the hottest new openings of the year. There are new outposts and stunning renovations throwing open their doors everywhere from the lush wilds of [Asia](#) to iconic [North American](#) cities.

Maison Barrière Vendôme, Paris, France



MAISON BARRIÈRE VENDÔME WILL HELP REDEFINE 1ER ACCOMMODATION
MAISON BARRIÈRE VENDÔME

Paris's 1st arrondissement might be packed with illustrious sights — the Louvre, Rue de Rivoli, Palais Royal — but until recently it was almost devoid of chic stays. That changed with the openings of whimsical [Madame Rêve](#) and ultra-exclusive [Cheval Blanc](#) in 2021, and now this January, the Barrière Group builds on the scene with its intimate suite hotel set between the Tuileries and Place Vendôme. The 26-room mansion is designed like an extravagant private home, with rooms awash in onyx marble, carmine velvet, terrazzo and parquet. Each is named after an iconic French woman (George Sand, Sarah Bernhardt). Bar-restaurant Frida spills out onto a secluded veranda, and will dispense delicious South American-inflected bites — that is, if you don't fancy having a private chef cook dinner in your suite instead.

Details: From £1,413. hotelsbarriere.com

Orient Express La Minerva, Rome, Italy



THE FIRST ORIENT EXPRESS HOTEL LANDS IN ROME THIS SPRING

ORIENT EXPRESS LA MINERVA

Hot on the heels of Rome's sexy 2023 openings — including Six Senses, Bulgari and ROMEO — the first Orient Express hotel lands in the Italian capital this spring. Architect Hugo Toro has re-envisioned landmark 17th-century palazzo property La Minerva in a golden age light, combining Roman flair with exotic-tinged luxury to echo the spirit of the European Grand Tour. Set just steps from the Pantheon and with a rooftop terrace overlooking the city, Orient Express La Minerva will be the perfect bookend to a journey on opulent new 18-suite train La Dolce Vita, which also launches this year with multi-day Italian itineraries and food from three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck.

AD

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Details: Rates to be confirmed. laminerva.orient-express.com



Five-star is back, with local knowledge and the shoulder season

* continued from page 17

SEMI-GUIDED TRAVEL The new breed of luxury travel agency is offering a more personalised and locally informed travel experience, one that can lead to time-wasting and strictly come with a bit more flexibility.

This means putting each away and at the heart of the experience, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Through greater engagement with local knowledge, the new breed of luxury travel agency is offering a more personalised and locally informed travel experience, one that can lead to time-wasting and strictly come with a bit more flexibility.

DESTINATIONS TO DISCOVER

The top trending hotspots for 2025 are in and of a city that alternative or having a moment - especially if they are unique for more experience and at the top of the sky-scraper table, southern Italian seaside city Reggio Emilia, which has seen a 10 per cent increase in flight searches compared with last year and Kuala Lumpur, which has seen a 15 per cent increase in flight searches.

Travel in 2025 is all about local knowledge and the most recent European capital of culture crown, a new Canadian gateway to a bright new travel agency.

historic, Renaissance heritage town, Portofino, and northern Italy's a new wave of luxury travel agency.

SPREADING THE CASH

When it comes to overseas trips, the top trending hotspots for 2025 are in and of a city that alternative or having a moment - especially if they are unique for more experience and at the top of the sky-scraper table, southern Italian seaside city Reggio Emilia, which has seen a 10 per cent increase in flight searches compared with last year and Kuala Lumpur, which has seen a 15 per cent increase in flight searches.

FREE STAY AND REMITTANCE

On the same free stay basis, all in thinking back on track as the top trending hotspots for 2025 are in and of a city that alternative or having a moment - especially if they are unique for more experience and at the top of the sky-scraper table, southern Italian seaside city Reggio Emilia, which has seen a 10 per cent increase in flight searches compared with last year and Kuala Lumpur, which has seen a 15 per cent increase in flight searches.

2025, with on board service by three Michelin star chef from the hotel. The new breed of luxury travel agency is offering a more personalised and locally informed travel experience, one that can lead to time-wasting and strictly come with a bit more flexibility.

departing in September 2025 to three Michelin star chef from the hotel. The new breed of luxury travel agency is offering a more personalised and locally informed travel experience, one that can lead to time-wasting and strictly come with a bit more flexibility.

Water way to go: SCENIC'S five-star luxury cruises take in all inclusive cruises in the Danube

SEASON STRETCHING A luxury cruise line of changing the Danube river cruise line, SCENIC has seen a boom in shoulder season travel. Instead of scrambling to book a classic summer holiday, travellers are now looking for a more relaxed and want to share their experience with friends and family.

Water way to go: SCENIC'S five-star luxury cruises take in all inclusive cruises in the Danube

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CEO Talks

Orient Express CEO on Rome Hotel and Train Launch

Gilda Perez-Alvarado told WWD that the Rome opening and the maiden voyage of the Dolce Vita tour will both take place in April, while the Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice will open early in the first half of 2025. BY SOFIA CELESTE

Gilda Perez-Alvarado



state-of-the-art engineering with beautiful, detailed craftsmanship and amazing service.

MILAN – The fabled train born from the Belle Epoque era, attracted royalty and the rich and famous – and set the stage for one of Agatha Christie's most famous works – is set to rise again.

Initially founded by a Belgian rail company and famous for connecting Europe with Asia, the **Orient Express** train embarked on its first journey, from Paris to Vienna, in 1883 and eventually extended services across continental Europe through to Istanbul. In April, and with the help of luxury powerhouse LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, the company is gearing up to open its first train tour and hotel in Rome overlooking the Pantheon.

Orient Express chief executive officer Gilda Perez-Alvarado talked to WWD about the grand opening, and what's next for the Accor SA-owned brand:

WWD: Orient Express has two locations confirmed for hotel openings, with one in Venice at Palazzo Donà Giovannelli designed by Paris-based designer Asmar d'Amman and at La Minerva next to the Pantheon in Rome. What other cities may be on the horizon?
Gilda Perez-Alvarado: **Orient Express** has a storied past with more than 140 years of history. The idea is to follow destinations inspired by the iconic train journey, which originated in Paris taking travelers all the way to Istanbul. Any of the major cities that have a historical significance to Orient Express are the prime destinations that we're looking at at the moment.

WWD: In terms of expansion, what is the strategy?

G.P.A.: Our focus is on being a brand that is truly bespoke, a collection. Every detail, every experience has to be tailored to the needs of our guests – everything needs to make sense.

WWD: How will the spirit of the world of transport be translated in these two new physical locations?

G.P.A.: This spirit will be brought to life in these first two locations by embracing the vision of Georges Nagelmackers, who revolutionized travel when he founded **Orient Express** in 1883. What we want to do is bring the magic back to travel. Travel used to be very glamorous. And we feel like travel, generally speaking, has become very commoditized. We want to bring back the Golden Age of Travel... we need to balance that element of quality and surprise.

WWD: Rome is certainly a city that comes to mind when we talk about places that are crowded with tourists and brimming with hotels.

G.P.A.: Several of our guests would have visited Rome many times before, but our job is to make sure that they get to see Rome through a very different lens. And it's the same thing in terms of a train journey, same thing in terms of a sailing yacht journey. Some of the elements that were part of the original **Orient Express** 140 years ago still ring true to today, to 2025 and beyond and is a combination of

artisans and craftsmen and also offer the best that the city has to offer, and at the same time offer items that are world-class, and are commensurate with the brand.

WWD: This is a huge attraction for Rome and this will certainly do a lot for the city.

G.P.A.: Rome is the Eternal City, and will continue to be the Eternal City forever for many reasons. There's so much richness and culture and the people are absolutely extraordinary. An aspect that we are exploring, whether this be in Rome or in Venice, is that our properties have to be very relevant to the locals. At the end of the day, a place you'll want to go and just spend some time. Having local roots is very important.

WWD: How will this be different from other Rome hotels?

G.P.A.: What sets this hotel apart is how deeply it connects guests to the endless history of Rome in unexpected ways. There's so much more to discover. Where we're spending quite a bit of time is on the guest room experience. Asking... what else is there to see? How else can you see things that you've seen before?

WWD: The new train will open on the outskirts of Rome's center and in an urban area of Ostiense, where there isn't much going on. Can you give us some details?

G.P.A.: I cannot wait for people to see what we're going to have there. It's gorgeous... like you're literally transported to a different time, then you set foot on the train and off you go. It's great. It's an oasis in the middle of a very busy city, in this case, a very busy train station. Once you get in there, it's like the magic starts to happen.

WWD: The eight train itineraries that take travellers throughout Italy from the ancient caves of Matera, to the wine vineyards of Tuscany and by the coast of Sicily. The Rome to Venice to Portofino aka "Dolce Vita Tour," whose interiors were designed by Milan's Dimorestudio, is set to embark April 6, in line with the opening of the Hotel Minerva location. What is planned for the celebrations?

G.P.A.: Celebration planning is in progress. **Orient Express La Minerva** and **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** will open at the same time; the idea is to combine these celebrations because it's not just about a hotel stay or a train or sailing yacht journey [the first **Orient Express** yacht will set sail in 2026], it's about the entire **Orient Express** experience. It's about spending a few days at a hotel, train and boat. It is about the whole journey. Right now we couldn't be more excited about our upcoming openings, starting with La Minerva and La Dolce Vita.



Interiors of the Orient Express Dolce Vita train featuring interiors designed by Milan-based Dimorestudio.

This year's most glamorous luxury destinations

These are the new hotels, islands and trains you'll want to book for 2025



Villa Ostuni in Puglia

[Lisa Grainger](#) | Monday January 06 2025, 11.00am GMT, The Times

Share

Luxury travel is booming. Figures from the latest report by McKinsey for Marriott hotels indicate that over a third of luxury travellers earn between \$100,000 (£80,000) and \$1 million a year — and 60 per cent of their guests have more than \$40,000 a year to spend on leisure. Which is why luxury hotels — from the isolated islands of Flores to the former banking halls in Shanghai — are springing up around the world. Here, our Times Luxury travel editor, Lisa Grainger, selects six new or revitalised spots that are worth checking into.



Michelin-starred food is served on Broggi silver and Ginori crockery

La Dolce Vita Orient-Express hits the tracks

Not since the heyday of Agatha Christie has train travel been quite so appealing to the smart traveller. Which is why in Europe there is now not just one luxury train company but two — the Belmond-operated Venice Simplon-Orient-Express and the Accor-operated Orient Express — vying to lure travellers on to carriages that look more like gentlemen's clubs than rail cabins. On April 4 the much-anticipated La Dolce Vita Orient Express will welcome its first paying passengers on one of eight itineraries from Rome — some one night, some two. It will take in such popular stop-offs as Venice, Portofino, Matera and Montalcino — as well as Sicily, after a ferry crossing with the train aboard.



Interiors have been designed to invoke the spirit of 1960s Via Veneto

The interiors of each 12-carriage, 31-cabin train will be “totally Italian”, says the train’s general manager, Samy Ghachem. “And a celebration of *la dolce vita*, full of Italian fashion, food and photography,” with feasts by the celebrated Michelin-star chef Heinz Beck served on Rivolta Carmignani linens, Broggi silver and Ginori crockery and interiors designed to invoke the spirit of 1960s Via Veneto. Two trains will be launched in 2025, followed by two more each in 2026 and 2027 — and, possibly, if the plans of its Italian owner Paolo Barletta come to fruition, by themed iterations in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Silk Route and UAE.

Details Tickets cost from £2,900 per person per night, all-inclusive, [orient-express.com](https://www.orient-express.com)



The barnlike penthouse suite at Salterra

The hot new Caribbean Island

Lovers of the Caribbean, but not lovers of crowds, this is one for you. On February 15 Marriott’s Luxury Collection launches its first hotel in the British overseas territory of the Turks and Caicos, called Salterra after the wide salt plains that characterise the islands. Located on the little 8.2-square-mile island of South Caicos — the quietest and southernmost of the 40-island archipelago — the 100-room boutique hotel was created by the dive resort owner Michael Tibbetts to be “the most sustainable in the archipelago”, according to Marti Trieschmann, its sales director. Salt, known around here as “white gold”, is a key element of the enormous seaside spa, as are thalassotherapy treatments.



One of the six pools at the hotel

Thanks to Tibbett's experience running high-end dive resorts, water activities here should be top-notch — from diving and fishing with experts to planting coral and mangroves. One, two and three-bedroomed accommodation within the 85-acre site has been designed by Edge of Caribbean to be rooted in nature and almost Scandi in design. The best room by far will be the soothingly creamy, barnlike penthouse. The hotel — half-powered by solar, with water filtered on site, and food sourced as locally as possible — aims to have the best spa in the Caribbean, six pools, an extensive activity centre, a kids' club and six restaurants. This will be an island worth keeping an eye on — particularly when, in February, there will be direct American Airlines flights from Miami twice a week, making it fairly simple to access.

Details Doubles from £1,225 a night, including taxes and breakfast, salterra.com



'Time travel': will you be trying it this year?

It's the year to take a nostalgic step back in time

BY ANNA HANN PUBLISHED: 03 JANUARY 2025



Courtesy of Belmond

Another year, another travel trend. This year, it's ready to sweep us off our feet in a whirlwind of nostalgia. The so-called 'time travel' trend is not literal, and no, this isn't an '80s *Back to the Future* trend either. It's all about the elegance of bygone eras when travel was glamorous, romantic,

You can also board heritage railways in [Norfolk](#). The Bure Valley Railway and Poppy Line are steam-powered locomotives, and you can ride both as part of a [five-day trip to Norfolk](#) and Sandringham with Lucy Worsley.



Courtesy of Belmond

To truly embrace the trend, go all-out and book a trip aboard the iconic [Venice Simplon-Orient Express](#) on a journey between Venice and Paris, following in the footsteps of royalty and celebrities who have travelled this route since the 1920s.

Retracing the Grand Tour

Time travel can be as much about the locations as the theme. Taking cues from the Grand Tour, which flourished in the 17th to 19th centuries, this cultural pilgrimage for the British upper classes typically included stops in iconic cities such as [Paris](#), [Florence](#), [Venice](#), and [Rome](#).



Courtesy of La Dolce Vita Orient Express

You can take a mini Grand Tour of your own in 2025, spending three nights in Rome before setting off on a fabulous train journey aboard the La Dolce Vita Orient Express. While this is a brand new train for 2025, It has a decisively 1970s feel, transporting you back five decades.

Time travelling weekends

Holidays that evoke the golden age of travel can be expensive, so if you'd rather indulge in the trend on a smaller budget, we love the idea of a murder mystery weekend set in the roaring 20s with actors bringing this glamorous era to life for a night. Come dressed in your best 1920s outfits and get ready to travel back in time...

OBSERVER

Where to Go Next: 15 Transformative Destinations for 2025

These emerging powerhouses turn the familiar on its head, showcasing museums on archaeological frontiers, intimate lodges where tradition steers luxury and festivals that rewrite the world map.



A museum two decades in the making finally reveals an ancient king's complete treasure. An Arctic wilderness, previously requiring three flight connections, becomes reachable in a single hop from New York. A Mediterranean island of ruins and spice markets reinvents itself as a global food capital. The travel map is being redrawn in 2025—not by trends or marketing campaigns, but by concrete developments that fundamentally alter how we can experience places.

This isn't about where's "hot" or "emerging." These 15 top destinations represent precise moments of intersection—where major openings, new routes, or cultural initiatives create opportunities that didn't exist before and might not exist later. Some are familiar places hitting genuine turning points: a European capital turning its Metro stations into underground museums, a Pacific metropolis reimagining itself for World Expo. Others are remote locations where infrastructure is finally catching up to ambition.

What makes a destination matter in a specific year? Sometimes, it's obvious: a landmark museum opening, a historical anniversary, a major cultural event. Other times it's more nuanced: Indigenous communities taking control of their storytelling, ancient traditions finding modern expression, or transportation networks finally connecting dots on the map. In 2025, we're seeing an unusual convergence of both. Our selections capture places at legitimate turning points, where timing shapes not just when you should visit, but what you'll be able to experience when you do.

Rome, Italy



Rome, Italy. Getty Images

Already one of the most visited cities in Europe, the Eternal City enters 2025 with renewed vigor as it welcomes the Catholic Jubilee year with an unprecedented \$1.4 billion infrastructure overhaul. Beyond the spiritual significance of the Holy Doors opening at St. Peter's Basilica, visitors will find a more navigable Rome thanks to the new Metro Line C, whose stations double as underground archaeological museums. A wave of luxury hotels is transforming historic buildings: the 74-room *Romeo Roma*, one of Zaha Hadid's final projects, brings her signature industrial materiality of steel and concrete to a 16th-century palazzo, with a culinary concept led by Michelin-starred chef *Alain Ducasse*, while forthcoming properties from *Corinthia*, *Rosewood* and *Orient Express* promise to further amp up the Roman hospitality scene.



Accor's Gilda Perez-Alvarado on Orient Express' role in the 'Golden Age of Travel'

French firm looks beyond hotels to leverage all parts of the journey



Pictured is the La Dolce Vita Suite Cabin on Accor's luxury Orient Express train. (Accor)

Gilda Perez-Alvarado has transformation on her mind.

The former global CEO of JLL's Hotels and Hospitality Group joined French hotel giant Accor at the end of 2023, where she holds two major roles that are all about strategy and bold thinking around venerable travel brands that span not just hotels, but luxury trains and yachts as well.

Now, 15 months into her career change, Accor's chief strategy officer and CEO of Orient Express says it is the company's boldness, transformational nature, accomplished leadership and fascinating brand and cross-hospitality makeup that excite her the most.

"We are in the Golden Age of Travel," she told Hotel News Now.

Luxury and lifestyle lead the way

Perez-Alvarado said that when it comes to the company's overall strategy, it's clear that lifestyle and luxury brands "were outpacing growth relative to premium, midscale and economy, and that was both lifestyle and luxury."

"If you look back the results have been absolutely extraordinary in that here we have three luxury brands, three of the biggest centenarian brands worldwide," she said, referring to Fairmont, Orient Express and Raffles.

She said those three brands focus on different parts of the entire Northern Hemisphere—Fairmont in the Americas, Orient Express in Europe and Raffles in Asia.

"Just the fact that over the last decade [these three hotel brands] were acquired and became part of the Accor portfolio ... I do not know anyone else who could do it," she said. Yes, we have the heritage, the beautiful archives of Raffles, Fairmont, Orient Express, but on the lifestyle side we have the founders still working with us to ensure that that DNA gets preserved."

Accor [acquired FRHI Hotels & Resorts in 2016](#). Today Fairmont has 88 hotels open and in the pipeline in 30 countries. Raffles has 24 hotels in 18 countries. The company [picked up a stake in Orient Express in 2017](#) with the goal of adding hotels to the legacy train brand. Three hotels are in the Orient Express pipeline — two in Italy and one in Saudi Arabia.



Gilda Perez-Alvarado is CEO of Orient Express and chief strategy officer at Accor. (Accor)

Perez-Alvarado said Accor's entrepreneurial focus is another big success factor. The company has placed a lot of strategy emphasis in recent years on food and beverage, wellness, co-working and branded residential.

These strategies combine to spearhead future growth, relevance and share of wallet that goes beyond "just" hotel stays, she said.

"Now from an investment perspective we can look at a piece of real estate and say, okay, this is how we are going to optimize the hotel component of it, but this also is how we are going to operate F&B, this is how we are going to operate wellness, this is how we are going to operate residential."

The model now is, "How we can optimize every foot of the building, as opposed to the old model that it is rooms and every other department is ancillary," she said.

"Every department now for us is its own business, and that is very, very important," she added.

Orient Express



The dining car in the Orient Express was designed to give guests a comfortable and luxurious experience.



Orient Express has a resident historian who discovered in a siding in Poland some of the service's original carriages slowly disintegrating but now returned to their full glory. (Accor)

Golden Age of Travel

Perez-Alvarado said that even the most luxury brands within Accor, notably her own Orient Express brand, "are taking a page out of the lifestyle playbook."

The lifestyle playbook also talks about sheer luxury, and Orient Express' hotels and soon-to-arrive trains and yachts unabashedly but demurely shout luxury.

In summer 2024, Accor began a search for a financial partner for Orient Express' ambitious train-service rollout.

It found one with one of France's most august firms, LVMH.

"Orient Express is a joint venture between Accor and [LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE] at the parent company level," she said. "What is so extraordinary about it is the fact that we have two French giants redeveloping the most iconic ultra-luxury travel brand that exists," she said.

She reiterated that LVMH's wholly owned brand, Belmond, which in addition to hotels owns the Venice-Simplon-Orient-Express luxury train, is separate from Accor and Orient Express' upcoming trains offerings.

She said Orient Express was founded in 1883, and its new hospitality offerings are very much part of a dream to return some of the wonder to travel.

"We are in the Golden Age of Travel. It is an ideal marriage for Accor and LVMH to be reintroducing the Orient Express travel-asset collection, if you will, that is what they are. ... We are in the business of experiences. Our dream at the end of the day is to be able to sell journeys, and journeys can be comprised of perhaps just a hotel stay, maybe just a train or a yacht, or maybe a combination thereof," Perez-Alvarado said.

"What is so interesting and so rich about this experience is the fact that this is a brand that has a tremendous amount of history. It was a very innovative brand when it started 140 years ago. The founder, Georges Nagelmackers, basically revolutionized travel. He was obsessed with connecting cities and cultures. He spent time in the U.S. perfecting train travel. It was very futuristic, and engineering was a very big part of it," she said.

"We are doing the same now with the trains. We're in the process of restoring historical trains, of bring them back to life, and we are also redefining some of the trains, for example, the La Dolce Vita train opening in the second quarter of 2025, an ode to the 1960s, celebrating Italy that way," she said.

She added many of the Italian train's guests would already have been to Italy many times, but Accor wanted to show them yet another side to the country.

That might be out into Italian waters.

The yacht Orient Express is developing, the *Orient Express Corinthian*, is set to sail in 2026. Perez-Alvarado called it "very special."

"It is the biggest sailing yacht in the world, 220 meters. It is a sailing yacht, not a motor yacht, which makes it even more special. The mast of it is the height of [Accor's] headquarters in Paris, so it will be quite something," she said, adding it will have eight F&B outlets, 54 suites and a cabaret theater.

"It is celebrating the art de vivre that the French know very well, and it is the perfect amalgamation of best in class, the latest engineering technology from the sails to how it is powered to incredible craftsmanship and artisanship," she said.

For Orient Express' forthcoming hotels, she said, the portfolio's individual properties also must tell a story.

The 93-room Orient Express La Minerva in Rome is a building that started life in the 1600s and has been a hotel since the 1800s, she said.

"It is one of the longest-serving hotels in Rome. It is in a beautiful location," she said of the property, adding it is to open this spring.

"In Venice, we're going to open in the second half of the year," she said, referring to the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli that was built in the 1400s.

"It is being restored hand in hand with the Italian state," she added.

Everyone at Orient Express is very aware of its unique history.

"We have our Orient Express historian. His name is Arthur Mettetal. He is absolutely brilliant. He is a walking encyclopedia. He has a Ph.D. in Orient Express," she said. "We have 140 years of archives."

She said looking at these archives and reading them firsthand is a thrill.

"Having a front-row seat underlined what a responsibility Accor has in being custodians of the brand so that it lives for another 100 or 200 years," she said.

"To see all the love and care that has gone into Orient Express and know that we have the weight on our shoulders ... you also appreciate we have the privilege of working on this brand for a very small period of time within its long history, we have a duty of fiduciary to ensure its going concern," she said.

She added that LVMH's involvement is so important.



Accor's Orient Express brand also includes hotels. Pictured is the Orient Express La Minerva in Rome. (Mr. Tripper/Accor)

“LVMH is the world’s biggest collector of heritage brands. ... Just recently we had a meeting with another one of their holdings, and we went into their vaults, and they were pulling out the archives wearing white gloves, items that were 200 years old. The way it made you feel when you are hearing these stories, it was these a-ha moments, we were educated, we were cultured. ... It is this that we want you to feel and share when you stay or you experience Orient Express,” Perez-Alvarado said.

Other upcoming Orient Express hotels must follow suit in that they have a tale to tell, she added.

“It would be best, optimal for them to be complimentary to the trains and the yachts or whatever else the brand decides to have down the road. There also might be extraordinary, heritage buildings that are not need the trains’ routes but would make wonderful Orient Express hotels with their own wonderful stories,” she said.

Many are the grand buildings in Europe that deserve to be protected and would fit perfectly into the Orient Express portfolio.

“We want to make sure these assets are bespoke, and I know that term is overused, but all these places are places that could be privatized. Trains can be privatized, yachts can be privatized, and now we are not just looking at the traditional hospitality set ... you now have to pay attention to yacht chartering. On the trains, it would be nice to see special events, social events, board meetings, incentives.”

She said the brand needs three types of traveler.

“We need the people who generate enough income to go on one of these every day. There’s also those who will save a lifetime and make it a special occasion, a bucket-list item, and we also need our followers, our dreamers who keep the brand alive.

“That is a great page out of the luxury, consumer-goods play book,” she added.

Transformational phases

Perez-Alvarado said phase one of Accor’s overall transformation is complete.

“Phase one was to make sure we had a very well-diversified portfolio, therefore more solutions for the investor market who wanted to go into real estate. Twenty years ago, 70% of hotel owners were niche hotels investors, and 30% were generalists. Now 70% are generalists,” she said.

“This portfolio diversification is not just helpful from our perspective in terms of ensuring we meet our financial targets we promised to our shareholders, from an earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization perspective, from a network growth perspective, from a revenue per available room perspective, et cetera, but it is also very important to the biggest investors worldwide, who are the ones who fuel growth. We depend on them. In a certain way, hotel companies have become asset managers as well,” she added.

Phase two is about growth, and that's continuing, Perez-Alvarado said.

Phase three now is underway.

"Now that every swim lane has been met ... I would say phase three is now how do we leverage?"

"The next step is focusing on asset management, focusing on managing the portfolio, optimizing the portfolio and, most importantly, leveraging the portfolio in and of itself ... in the short and medium term," she said.

SAVEUR

TRAVEL

6 Life-Changing Train Trips to Take This Year

Because high-end rail travel is back—fabulous food and all.

The scene is like something from Agatha Christie's Poirot novels: In the golden glow of morning, a crowd gathers to board the huffing, gleaming train. Porters in starched white livery lead travelers to sleeping chambers outfitted with carved wood furniture and goose-down quilts. Then, with everyone snug in their cabins, a sharp whistle blows. The coach trundles off into the vast, scenic wilderness.

Is it 1924 or 2024? With a sudden proliferation of old-world-style rail itineraries, your guess is as good as ours. Slow travel is back, and by rail, you can skip the usual headaches of traffic and crowds in exchange for sweeping vistas, well-kept accommodations, and—increasingly—exceptional cuisine with a palpable sense of place. For an escape that's as much about the journey as it is about the destination, consider these luxe locomotives.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express



Courtesy La Dolce Vita Orient Express

2 nights • Key sights: Rome, Matera, Palena

The UNESCO-preserved cave dwellings of Matera, the star stop on this train, make you feel like you're in a history documentary (just with way more gelato). On-board culinary offerings include everything from Sicilian brioche at breakfast to a lively aperitivo in the lounge (where you can try your hand at the Italian game of scopa). A stop-off in Palena allows for more enchanting sightseeing and castle-hopping.



Trains, Yachts, and Timeless Luxury: Gilda Perez-Alvarado on Her First Year Leading Orient-Express

Last month at [JLTM in Cannes](#)—the annual gathering of the 'who's who' of the luxury travel world—[hertelier](#) sat down with the ever-inspiring Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express and chief strategy officer for Accor, to get an update on her first year with the company. Before joining Accor at the end of 2023, Gilda was CEO of JLL Hotels & Hospitality Group, where she spent most of her [trailblazing career](#), leading global investment sales, debt and equity placement, strategic advisory, and asset management services.

In her current role, Gilda is overseeing transformative projects that are redefining Accor's legacy. For context, Orient Express is part of Accor, the largest hotel company in Europe and the seventh largest in the world. From expanding into new asset classes like luxury trains and yachts to orchestrating multi-dimensional travel experiences, Gilda is at the helm of bold innovation. This year will see the opening of two hotels—the Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovanelli in Venice—as well as the first train, La Dolce Vita Orient Express. In 2026, the first of two Orient Express Silenseas ships, the Orient Express Corinthian, will set sail.

THE WEEKLY ROUND-UP

Trains, Yachts, and Timeless Luxury: **Gilda Perez-Alvarado** on Leading Orient-Express



Gilda opened up to [hertelien](#) about her transition, her reflections on balancing personal and professional priorities, and how she's adapting her leadership style to thrive in a new cultural and organizational environment.

What was it like transitioning from JLL to Accor?

It's been exciting, but not without its challenges! When I made the move, everything changed—my company, my role, my country, and even the language. For a start, I'm in the same industry, but on a different side of it. At JLL, I was focused on transactions. Here at Accor, it's about orchestrating experiences. Of course, my family came with me, which added another layer of adjustment, but they've been incredibly supportive and grounding for me as I navigate multiple changes at once.

It's been a year of learning, finding my rhythm, and realizing that this role is about both listening first and then leading. I know we talk about the famous first 100 days, but the reality is that it's been the first 365 days, and even now, I'm still learning and adjusting.

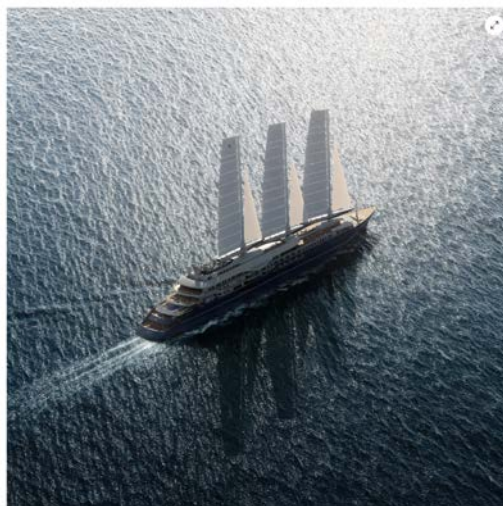
Relocating to Paris and stepping into two high-profile roles is a major adjustment. How did you manage this transition?

Yes, it's been a big change. Moving to Paris from Miami, adapting to a new work culture, and helping my family settle has been a whirlwind. My daughter has been a big inspiration—she's fearless and has adapted beautifully, picking up the language faster than I have. Seeing her thrive reminds me to approach challenges with the same openness.

The cultural differences have been fascinating. In the U.S., I was used to a fast-paced, more direct work environment. Here, relationships take time, and communication is more nuanced. It's taught me to be more patient and to really observe before jumping in.

How have you approached leading Accor into new asset classes like trains and yachts?

Leading Accor into new asset classes has been an extraordinary challenge and opportunity. Following the vision of our CEO, Sébastien Bazin, who is deeply committed to the transformational nature of the Orient Express brand, my role has been to orchestrate a complex ecosystem of projects—trains, yachts, hotels, and the team itself—all working in harmony to create something truly exceptional.



a rendering of the Orient-Express Corinthian yacht (Accor)

One of the most rewarding aspects of this role has been working with such an incredible team. The team includes artists, architects, naval engineers, and professionals from the luxury consumer goods space, alongside seasoned hoteliers. Each person is an expert in their field, and learning from them has been both humbling and inspiring, like a masterclass in each discipline. I had to figure out my “swim lane” to understand my place within this incredible group and focus on how I could add value while ensuring everyone’s contributions were aligned and amplified.



A suite on the new La Dolce Vita train (Accor)

For example, the La Dolce Vita train celebrates the glamour of the 1960s with bespoke itineraries through Italy’s most stunning landscapes. Meanwhile, the Orient Express Corinthian yacht combines cutting-edge engineering with timeless elegance as the largest sailing yacht in the world. These projects honor the brand’s rich heritage while redefining luxury travel for the modern era. This year will see the opening of two hotels—the 93-room Orient Express La Minerva in the heart of Rome, located near the Pantheon and housed in a 17th-century building, and the 43-suite Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovanelli in Venice, a historic palace originally built in 1400 by architect Filippo Calendario, known for Venice’s famed Doge’s Palace.



the facade of the 93-room Orient Express La Minerva (Accor)

At its heart, Orient Express is about journeys—connecting people and cultures through extraordinary experiences. As I've often said, no one in the industry has ever done what we're trying to do, and there's no blueprint for it. Bringing this vision to life is both a privilege and a remarkable journey in itself.

How do you balance the demands of work with a young family?

This move has been a family effort. My husband and I have always been partners in navigating life's changes, and having that support system has made all the difference. We've moved many times before, so in a way, it's part of our family's DNA. But this time, it felt different—I wanted to give my daughter a more international experience and to show her that we're fearless in the face of change.

My daughter keeps me grounded—she asks me about my day at work just as I ask her about school. Those little moments of connection are so important. I love when she asks me, "Mama, how was work?" It's a reminder to stay positive and to share good stories with her, just as she does with me.

It's about integrating personal and professional lives in a way that works—it's a blend, not a balance. For me, it's about being present in every moment at work or at home.

How has your leadership style evolved since joining Accor?

When I started, I realized very quickly that the context here was different. At first, I came in very direct—very American—sharing my point of view, but I soon learned that I needed to take a step back. The cultural nuances in Paris require a different approach than what I was used to in the U.S., where leadership is often very forward and fast-paced. I found myself hesitating to speak up at times because I didn't want to make a mistake or say something that could be taken out of context.

Over the course of the year, I've adapted by observing more and finding ways to balance my American style of directness with a more collaborative approach. Here, relationships and communication take more time, but they also build stronger connections and trust. I've learned to involve the team more deeply in decision-making, encouraging open dialogue and challenging ideas—including my own.

What's been fascinating is recognizing that no one-size-fits-all approach works in leadership. It's about understanding the people and the culture you're working with and adjusting accordingly. This process has taught me to appreciate the journey and not just focus on the goal or destination.

What excites you most about leading Orient Express into the future?

It's a once-in-a-lifetime chance to reimagine such an iconic brand for a new generation. This vision is deeply tied to our CEO, Sébastien Bazin. He's a true visionary who believes in the transformational nature of the Orient Express brand, and I'm thrilled to be leading these innovative initiatives. Whether it's restoring historical trains and hotels or building the largest sailing yacht in the world, these projects are not only innovative but also deeply rooted in the heritage of travel.

What excites me most is that we're bringing back the magic of the golden age of travel. Much like Georges Nagelmackers, who founded Orient Express 140 years ago, we're focused on connecting people and cultures through extraordinary journeys. It's a privilege to be part of this legacy and to help shape its future.



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Jumeirah Burj Al Arab, Dubai (See : News)

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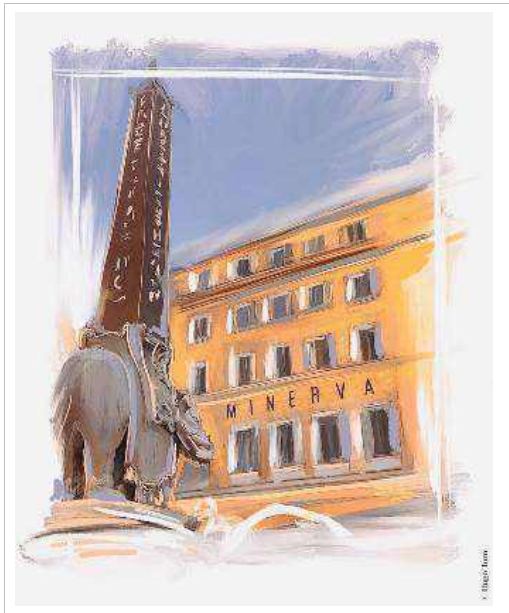
Providing key information in a no-frills format for professionals who travel to write, edit, broadcast or create images.

Issue 403 : mid-December 2025/January 2025

La Minerva, Rome

Italy

La Minerva will open in Spring 2025 as the first hotel under the Orient Express brand.



The property, formerly known as Palazzo Fonseca, dates back to the 17th century, and occupies an entire island site.

Following a comprehensive renovation, the building's interiors and historical features have been meticulously designed and restored under direction of Franco-Mexican Artist architect and interior designer Hugo Toro.

The 93 room and suite hotel will have views of the Pantheon, Piazza della Minerva and the Roman skyline.

It will also offer fine food and beverage featuring a new rooftop restaurant and bar.

It was built in 1620 as the residence of the aristocratic Portuguese Fonseca family.

and later acquired in 1811 by the wealthy French Sauve family who first transformed it into a hotel, it became a favourite destination during the Grand Tour for prominent artists.

With the opening of Orient Express La Minerva Rome will be followed by the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovanelli, Venice in 2025.

The Orient Express group will also introduce La Dolce Vita Orient Express in 2025, followed by Orient Express Corinthian in 2026 as the first of two Orient Express Silenseas ships.



- www.orient-express.com
- Tiphaine Rolland at tiphaine@gribbonberry.com

The 30 greatest holidays in Italy for 2025

From an exquisite chocolate festival in Perugia to a night at the opera in Pesaro, Italy is calling this year



52



Gift this article free



A new hotel worth travelling for has opened in beautiful Positano Credit: Getty



Kiki Deere

Destination expert

11 January 2025 6:00am GMT

Ah, [Italy](#). It is a perennial favourite, of course, with its cradles of culture – [Venice](#), [Rome](#) and [Florence](#) – attracting the bulk of tourists. But there is so much more to be discovered away from the big-hitting highlights.

Visitors are increasingly seeking out lesser-known destinations to escape the crowds, favouring trips in shoulder season where possible. Outdoor activities, such as hiking and cycling holidays, remain popular choices, while wellness tourism, experiential activities and rail travel are on the rise.

While [Tuscany](#)'s rolling hills have long been the go-to rural escape for British travellers, they are only part of the story. Hit TV series such as *The White Lotus* have put [Sicily](#) firmly on the tourist map, and there is a wealth of experiences to be had, including sailing the volcanic Aeolian Islands on a classic wooden windjammer.

And while we have listed some firm favourites in our list, we hope to inspire you with getaways that are not your conventional Italy holiday, too, from learning about Ladin culture in the German-speaking Alta Badia region to horse-riding through the wilds of Molise in central Italy.

Prices and temperatures soar in July and August so, if you can, try and visit outside these months. If you can only travel then, but don't like the idea of overly hot weather, make for the mountains instead, where altitude will give you a welcome respite from the stifling heat further south.

ITALY



Skip ahead to explore:

- [Best for culture](#)
- [Best for history](#)
- [Best for beaches and coast](#)
- [Best for food](#)
- [Best for outdoors](#)

Best for culture

1. Join the Roman Jubilee



Masseria Pistola, which combines original architectural features, including conical trulli ceilings and gable-roofed arches

[Return to index](#)

Best for luxury

13. Live La Dolce Vita on the Orient Express

Launching in spring this year, [La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#) will see eight itineraries whisk guests across some of Italy's most panoramic landscapes. Carriages exude all the glamour of the 1960s and 1970s, with rich velvets and lacquered ceilings in deep sensual hues. All cabins are en suite, and you're in for a culinary feast too – the cuisine is curated by three Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck, with menus reflecting the culinary traditions of the regions the trains are travelling through.

Prices for a one-night itinerary aboard [La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#) (+44 2030244949; [orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita](#)) start from £2,900pp in a deluxe cabin and £3,900pp in a suite.

14. Luxuriate in the boutique rooms of Positano

Franco Zeffirelli was one of Italy's greatest opera and film directors, whose adaptations of Shakespeare tragedies brought him international fame. His former home is now a boutique hotel, set in a dramatic location perched on a cliffside above Positano on the [Amalfi Coast](#). It comprises six villas dotted around lush gardens, with secluded terraces and hidden pools shaded by tropical plants; a seventh villa is set to open this year. In the main villa, you can see Zeffirelli's memorabilia and family heirlooms, with original sketches for his sets also on display.

[Treville Positano](#) offers doubles from £675 on a B&B basis. [Plan the perfect holiday on the Amalfi Coast with our guide.](#)

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5 Orient Express-Inspired Luxury Train Journeys — Your One-Way Ticket to Design Escapism in 2025

Story by Gilda Bruno • 1d • 🕒 7 min read



5 Orient Express-Inspired Luxury Train Journeys — Your One-Way Ticket to Design Escapism in 2025
© Belmond. Design: JR

In case you missed it, planes are out, trains are in, and cooler than ever, a recent *Livingetc* deep dive into the future of tourism finds. Haven't booked your next getaway *just* yet? Perfect. You are still in time to secure yourself a spot aboard one of the world's most luxurious train rides. With many more retro-futuristic carriages set to be unveiled in

One of the most adventurous, conscious, and immersive ways to experience the world this year, according to our [Travel Trends 2025](#) Report, luxury train rides are reshaping the way we think of vacations by making the moments spent on the move an integral — if not the most memorable — part of the trip.

Headed toward some of the globe's most captivating destinations, and uncovering its best kept secrets along the way, these spectacularly crafted trains are designed to transport the sense of awe, wonder, and excitement of our furthestmost expeditions within their [Art Deco design](#)-inspired coaches.

Modeled after the riveting atmosphere of the Orient Express, the luxury train that, synonymous with Belle Époque splendor, connected Paris to Istanbul between 1883 and 1909, lending its allure to the plot of countless books and movies, these present-day alternatives reinvent its myth for the contemporary — and interiors-obsessed — wanderer. Charting the world far and wide, from the eternally romantic Venice to the wrapped-in-mystery summit of Machu Picchu, and the sublime volcanic nature of Japan's Aso, these luxury train journeys will have you traveling back in time.

1. La Dolce Vita Orient Express



Speaking of going back to the future, the [Dimorestudio](#)-designed [La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#) hasn't even begun operating yet, but the premise behind it and its 1960s to 1970s-inspired glamorous look are so iconic that we want to put it on your radar before reservations sell out. Scheduled to hit the rail in Spring 2025, this jewel of Italian craftsmanship, developed by an entirely local team and connecting Rome to both world-coveted locations like Venice, Portofino, and Palermo and lesser-known destinations such as the scenic Matera, Pescocostanzo, and Nizza Monferrato, represents a real first for *il Bel Paese*. Also offering thematic itineraries centered around the beauty of Tuscan vineyards and Piedmont's truffle route, it will be home to the culinary delights of three Michelin-star Chef Heinz Beck and just as sensory bespoke experiences.

▶ **Related video:** Car shuttle trains are Europe's little-known eco-friendly travel option (Euronews (English))



As for the train's interiors, the images speak for themselves. In the eye of Dimorestudio's Emiliano Salci and Britt Moran, the Italian dream is embodied by sleek sculptural surfaces, [mirrored walls](#), and kaleidoscopic textiles informed by the country's 20th-century design masters, from Gio Ponti and Gae Aulenti to Nanda Vigo and Osvaldo Borsani.

From: Rome (Spring 2025)

To: View [itineraries](#)

Rates: From \$2,100 per person (one-night, two-day journey)

[Book your luxury train rides on La Dolce Vita Orient Express.](#)

2. Belmond Hiram Bingham

5 Orient Express-Inspired Luxury Train Journeys — Your One-Way Ticket to Design Escapism in 2025

Whether whizzing through the Andes toward the old Inca Empire or unveiling the hidden gems of the Silk Road's trade routes, no second is wasted aboard these luxury train rides



When you purchase through links on our site, we may earn an affiliate commission. [Here's how it works.](#)





(Image credit: [Belmond](#). Design: JR)



BY [GILDA BRUNO](#) PUBLISHED YESTERDAY IN [FEATURES](#)

In case you missed it, planes are out, trains are in, and cooler than ever, a recent *Livingetc* deep dive into the future of tourism finds. Haven't booked your next getaway *just yet*? Perfect. You are still in time to secure yourself a spot aboard one of the world's most luxurious train rides. With many more retro-futuristic carriages set to be unveiled in the coming months, we are exploring what makes luxury train journeys so widely appealing to design-conscious globetrotters and adrenaline-led travelers alike.

One of the most adventurous, conscious, and immersive ways to experience the world this year, according to our [Travel Trends 2025](#) Report, luxury train rides are reshaping the way we think of vacations by making the moments spent on the move an integral — if not the most memorable — part of the trip.

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1. LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS



(Image credit: Patrick Locqueneux. Courtesy of [La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#). Design: [Dimorestudio](#))

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From: Rome (Spring 2025)

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Rates: From \$2,100 per person (one-night, two-day journey)

[Book your luxury train rides on La Dolce Vita Orient Express.](#)

AD

A Historic House in the Heart of Paris Gets a Dose of Practical Magic

AD100 designer Hugo Toro gives a grand house a visionary makeover

In recent times, the AD100 French Mexican architect Hugo Toro has taken the approach of an auteur, working on a carte blanche basis to realize his commissioned projects down to the last exacting detail. For the Park Hyatt Paris-Vendôme's new crown jewel, restaurant Pur', home to Michelin-starred chef Jean-François Rouquette, Toro conceived everything, even the napkin rings and the staff uniforms. Currently, he is putting the final touches on La Minerva hotel in Rome, the Orient Express's five-star accommodation just steps from the Pantheon, which will be a complete embodiment of his architectural vision.



Out With the Old, In with the New: Travel Trends for 2025

We're starting fresh, with intel and developments that will make this another exciting and busy year in travel. Buckle up for what's coming:

- *No more visa-free travel to Europe and the UK (sorry, Yanks)*
- *Hotels are leaving the building (they're everywhere else)*
- *Heading for cooler climes (sorry, Med)*
- *Reaching for the stars (no, the real ones)*
- *Nature is, as ever, the answer*

Hotels Have Left the Building

"Experience" is the biggest overused buzzword in hospitality, and the hotel industry is taking this to heart by taking guest experiences beyond traditional hotel walls — to the rails, the seas, the home, and the club. This is a longer-term trend you'll start seeing soon.

On the Rails

At his media briefing at ILTM, the International Luxury Travel Market conference, in December, Accor CEO Sébastien Bazin said it was time to "stop asking clients to go to the product" and instead to "bring the product to the people." To that end, this spring the hotel conglomerate's Orient Express brand will launch [La Dolce Vita](#) in Italy, a train line offering one- and two-night journeys roundtrip from Rome to Venice, Portofino, Matera, Tuscany, and Sicily. With so little time in each stop, these trips seem to be more about the journey than the destinations. We've toured the trains — modern and handsome, with a strong mid-century vibe, they're boutique hotels on wheels.

In other Orient Express news, Belmond — in addition to their estimable [hotel collection](#) — operates the classic Venice Simplon-Orient-Express train. (This line is not related to Accor's Orient Express, and, no, we're not trying to confuse you. Two totally different companies.) March will see the debut of [L'Observatoire Suite](#), an insanely opulent (and opulently priced) private train carriage designed by French artist JR. It sleeps two and will run on the Paris-Istanbul route. In July, Belmond will debut [Britannic Explorer](#), the first luxury sleeper train to tour England and Wales, on three- or six-day journeys from London's Victoria Station into Cornwall, the Lake District, and Wales. The travel will be slow and relaxed. The scenery through countrysides and national parks and coastlines will be beautiful. The excursions will include hikes, picnics, swims, and cute villages. And the [F&B options will be excellent](#) because the culinary program is overseen by three-Michelin-starred chef Simon Rogan, and we can personally vouch that this man can work wonders in a tiny, moving kitchen.

Also this spring, Accor's Orient Express will open [La Minerva](#) in Rome, the brand's first (actual, traditional, physical) hotel. Their second will be Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice, though probably not this year.

So, in other words, hotel companies are making trains and train companies are making hotels.

On the Seas

Things may be clearer on the high seas, though it will take longer to get there, with luxury hotel companies launching yachts. (And whatever you do, please don't refer to these elegant sails as mere *cruises*.) [Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection](#) added *Ilma*, its second ship, in late 2024 and will add *Luminara* in 2025. Destinations include Asia, the Caribbean, the Med, and Northern Europe and the Baltics. [Four Seasons](#) will launch its yacht, with suites designed by Prosper Assouline, in the Caribbean in January 2026. Accor's Orient Express is here, too: [Orient Express Silenseas](#) will sail in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean in 2026. Aman Hotels has been sailing [Amandira](#), a five-cabin Phinisi sailboat for a few years, but we'll have to wait until 2027 for the 50-cabin motor yacht from [Aman at Sea](#). Here's another insider industry tidbit: It seems clear that emerging luxury cruise company [Explora Journeys](#) is hoping to tap the luxury hotel magic. They recently hired former Aman Hotels Chief Commercial Officer Anna Nash as their new President.

Luxury Train Travel Is Booming. Here's Why—and the Trips to Book Now

Whether the trains are crisscrossing Europe or venturing into the Japanese countryside, the business model comes with significant built-in advantages—and passengers are obsessed.



A rendering of a room on La Dolce Vita Orient Express. Source: La Dolce Vita Orient Express

In 2025 the most luxurious new hotel room may be on wheels.

[L'Observatoire](#), a two-person suite on Belmond's Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, will command rates of £80,000 (\$101,000) per night when it enters service in March, making it the most expensive train cabin ever. For that sum, guests will get to sleep inside a cabinet of curiosities created by French photographer and street artist JR. It includes two oculus-shaped skylights that open for stargazing, a "secret" tearoom with a fireplace hidden behind a bookshelf, and a freestanding brass bathtub near the foot of the double bed. All of

it moves with the Belmond train, on voyages that connect cities like Geneva and Innsbruck or Venice and Amsterdam on one- to five-night trips.

That may be true, but the one-of-a-kind L'Observatoire is part of a growing number of opulent, artist-created train suites crisscrossing the European continent in 2025. The first came in 2021, when Wes Anderson designed a custom carriage for the British Pullman; now the Royal Scotsman has added two Grand Suites designed by Parisian interior designer Tristan Auer. (Both are similarly owned by Belmond, which itself is owned by LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE.) In the year ahead, several more luxury trains will debut across the continent, both from Belmond and other companies, with designs each more opulent than the next.

This luxury rail renaissance “reflects a structural shift in how people want to spend their time,” says Samy Ghachem, general manager of La Dolce Vita Orient Express, a new luxury train outfit whose first hotel on wheels will have 1960s Italian interior style and en suite bathrooms for all cabins and suites when it enters service from Rome to Montalcino on April 4.

Travel advisers agree. Some of the most sought-after journeys are already sold out for the entirety of 2025 and booking well into 2026. “Think about how River Cruises blossomed in the past decade,” says Jack Ezon, founder and managing partner of luxury travel consultancy Embark Beyond. “Train travel, which is super niche and limited, will go prime time in the same way by 2030.”

“Requests for train trips have grown 158% in the past five years, especially among a younger generation,” he adds, as part of a zeitgeisty obsession with throwback luxuries. “It’s the millennial and Gen Zer obsessed with vintage record players and Polaroid cameras, buying the \$1,000 cashmere Ritz Paris Frame hoodie and clamoring for a room in an uber-traditional hotel.”

It's also a business that can grow easily in tandem with demand, says Ghachem. New trains have only a few rooms apiece, which makes them easy to fill, and then there's "the opportunity to grow or expand by adding additional trains with new and different itineraries." Track infrastructure is growing worldwide—consider the Tren Maya in Mexico and new routes sprouting across Europe—meaning those expenses, too, are defrayed.

Ezon, Ghachem and Ruff all see the growth of ultra-luxe train trips as tapping into other trends, too, be it the thirst for slow travel, to see less-touristed (and uncrowded) towns or to shell out for longer leisure trips.

But Gary Franklin, vice president of trains and cruises at Belmond, says there's more to it. "I've been on the platform when the train comes in and watched adults, who have seen and done it all, light up like children. It's escapism and magic they're after," he says. It's that experiential aspect that Belmond parent company LVMH has been prioritizing for years in response to consumer demand. "We're in the business of travel experiences. Trains are an extension of this," he says.



A suite on La Dolce Vita Orient Express channels midcentury glamour. Source: *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*

“There’s something about being spoiled, about looking at this incredible marquetry, about looking out of the windows as you pass through the Alps. It creates this magic, and that’s why people come back time and time again,” Ruff adds. “We have people just begging us to do more of these trips,” he says, pointing to repeat guests who have taken upwards of 20 train trips with the company.

To Ghachem, train magic means watching from inside a carriage as a Dolce Vita train decouples in Calabria and gets loaded onto a ferry one car at a time, just so it can cross the Strait of Messina. “There’s nothing else like it,” he says.

Both Ghachem and Ruff say that connecting train trips with hotel stays is yet another advantage. Dolce Vita guests will be able to extend their stay on land at La Minerva, the first Orient Express hotel in Rome with 93 rooms designed by the hot designer of the moment, Hugo Toro; the hotel will open in April by the Pantheon, just in time for the company’s first train departure from Roma Ostiense station. Belmond similarly runs resorts across Europe that can connect with train itineraries.



A Dolce Vita Orient Express train exterior. Source: La Dolce Vita Orient Express

“Americans tend to come to Italy for 10 days and hit their trifecta of big cities,” says Ghachem of La Dolce Vita Orient Express’ main clientele. “The train becomes an easy [two- or three-day] add-on at the beginning or end of a trip.” Dolce Vita has plans far beyond Italy, with three additional trains rolling out in 2026 and beyond; they’re expected to explore such places as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Uzbekistan. Belmond, too, is doubling down on global service, and operators like Seven Stars in Japan are seeing such a rush of demand that bookings are now offered only by application.

“Trains are an incredible way to experience the countryside,” says Ruff. “We can unlock things and go places that you can’t get to easily otherwise. And all this comes at a time when slow travel has never been more appealing.”

Top train journeys to book in 2025

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Italy

When the first La Dolce Vita train enters service in April, it will take its design cues from 1960s Italian glamour. One- to three-day itineraries will take travelers around Italy in lavish, midcentury modern style, with fine dining menus created by chef Heinz Beck of the three-Michelin-starred La Pergola in Rome. Making the journey easier: Private car service will be available directly from Roma Termini station or sibling hotel La Minerva. *From about €4,160 (\$4,285) per person.*

Luxury train travel is booming. Here's why, and the trips you must book

LINK: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/travel/luxury-train-travel-is-booming-here-s-why-and-the-trips-you-must-book-101737014646638.html>

Luxury train travel is booming. Here's why, and the trips you must book | Bloomberg | | Posted by Tapatrissha Das Jan 16, 2025 01:41 PM IST Share Via Copy Link Whether the trains are crisscrossing Europe or venturing into the Japanese countryside, the business model comes with significant built-in advantages. In 2025 the most luxurious new hotel room may be on wheels. Passengers are obsessed with this new way of traveling on wheels. (Unsplash) L'Observatoire, a two-person suite on Belmond's Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, will command rates of £80,000 (\$101,000) per night when it enters service in March, making it the most expensive train cabin ever. For that sum, guests will get to sleep inside a cabinet of curiosities created by French photographer and street artist JR. It includes two oculus-shaped skylights that open for stargazing, a 'secret' tearoom with a fireplace hidden behind a bookshelf, and a freestanding brass bathtub near the foot of the double bed. All of it moves with the Belmond train, on voyages

that connect cities like Geneva and Innsbruck or Venice and Amsterdam on one- to five-night trips. Also read | Japan's new luxury train with tickets costing \$20,000 'There's a lot of art in hotel rooms,' says Belmond Chief Executive Officer Dan Ruff. 'But this is the first time in hospitality that the art is the room.' That may be true, but the one-of-a-kind L'Observatoire is part of a growing number of opulent, artist-created train suites crisscrossing the European continent in 2025. The first came in 2021, when Wes Anderson designed a custom carriage for the British Pullman; now the Royal Scotsman has added two Grand Suites designed by Parisian interior designer Tristan Auer. (Both are similarly owned by Belmond, which itself is owned by LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton SE.) In the year ahead, several more luxury trains will debut across the continent, both from Belmond and other companies, with designs each more opulent than the next. This luxury rail renaissance 'reflects a structural shift in how people want to spend their time,' says Samy Ghachem,

general manager of La Dolce Vita Orient Express, a new luxury train outfit whose first hotel on wheels will have 1960s Italian interior style and en suite bathrooms for all cabins and suites when it enters service from Rome to Montalcino on April 4. Travel advisers agree. Some of the most sought-after journeys are already sold out for the entirety of 2025 and booking well into 2026. 'Think about how River Cruises blossomed in the past decade,' says Jack Ezon, founder and managing partner of luxury travel consultancy Embark Beyond. 'Train travel, which is super niche and limited, will go prime time in the same way by 2030.' 'Requests for train trips have grown 158% in the past five years, especially among a younger generation,' he adds, as part of a zeitgeisty obsession with throwback luxuries. 'It's the millennial and Gen Z obsessed with vintage record players and Polaroid cameras, buying the \$1,000 cashmere Ritz Paris Frame hoodie and clamoring for a room in an uber-traditional hotel.' It's also a business that can grow easily in tandem with

demand, says Ghachem. New trains have only a few rooms apiece, which makes them easy to fill, and then there's 'the opportunity to grow or expand by adding additional trains with new and different itineraries.' Track infrastructure is growing worldwide--consider the Tren Maya in Mexico and new routes sprouting across Europe--meaning those expenses, too, are defrayed. Also read | 'Spa, gym, exotic food': Inside India's luxurious train filled with 'royal elegance' Ezon, Ghachem and Ruff all see the growth of ultra-luxe train trips as tapping into other trends, too, be it the thirst for slow travel, to see less-touristed (and uncrowded) towns or to shell out for longer leisure trips. But Gary Franklin, vice president of trains and cruises at Belmond, says there's more to it. 'I've been on the platform when the train comes in and watched adults, who have seen and done it all, light up like children. It's escapism and magic they're after,' he says. It's that experiential aspect that Belmond parent company LVMH has been prioritizing for years in response to consumer demand. 'We're in the business of travel experiences. Trains are an extension of this,' he says. 'There's something about

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Vita Orient Express' main clientele. 'The train becomes an easy [two- or three-day] add-on at the beginning or end of a trip.' Dolce Vita has plans far beyond Italy, with three additional trains rolling out in 2026 and beyond; they're expected to explore such places as Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Uzbekistan. Belmond, too, is doubling down on global service, and operators like Seven Stars in Japan are seeing such a rush of demand that bookings are now offered only by application. 'Trains are an incredible way to experience the countryside,' says Ruff. 'We can unlock things and go places that you can't get to easily otherwise. And all this comes at a time when slow travel has never been more appealing.' Top train journeys to book in 2025 Eastern and Oriental Express, a Belmond Train, Singapore and Malaysia Following a four-year pause in service due to the pandemic, this vibrant route through Southeast Asia returned in early 2024 with revamped cabins and two new seasonal, three-night journeys. They begin in Singapore and cruise through Malaysia's dynamic cities and jungle landscapes, on a train that claims the first Dior spa in the region. From \$3,410

per person. Seven Stars in Kyushu, Japan With only 12 suites and seven carriages, Japan's first luxury sleeper train is as intimate as it is exclusive. In operation since 2013 and refurbished in 2022, the four-day, three-night journey through the southern island of Kyushu incorporates occasional stops so travelers can get a much closer look at the region's mountains, seaside and hot springs. Securing a suite is a tall order, however. Interested travelers must first submit an application. Only those selected are able to book a cabin; the criteria are a mystery. From \$4,293 per person. Also read | Pride of Karnataka: Golden Chariot luxury tourist train set to reignite travel with unique routes in 2024-25 Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (VSOE), a Belmond Train, Europe Even if L'Observatoire, the JR-imagined suite, isn't in the cards, the other cabins on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express make good on the sleeper train's legend. Each grand suite comes with a 24-hour butler and en suite bathroom, while guests in all cabin categories can rub elbows with their fellow bons vivants in the restored 1920s bar car; dinners are concocted by the in-demand French chef Jean Imbert. The most unique itinerary is the one that

operates only once a year: Paris to Istanbul in six days, with stops in Budapest and Bucharest for guided historic tours. From \$22,000 per person. **La Dolce Vita Orient Express**, Italy When the first La Dolce Vita train enters service in April, it will take its design cues from 1960s Italian glamour. One- to three-day itineraries will take travelers around Italy in lavish, midcentury modern style, with fine dining menus created by chef Heinz Beck of the three-Michelin-starred La Pergola in Rome. Making the journey easier: Private car service will be available directly from Roma Termini station or sibling **hotel La Minerva**. From about EUR4,160 (\$4,285) per person. Rovos Rail, South Africa Since 1989, Rovos Rail has offered 11 luxurious train safaris across South Africa in wood-paneled sleepers kitted out with art deco antiques and plush furnishings. Beyond the two- to three-day itineraries, the more complete experiences extend 11 to 15 days everywhere from Pretoria to Victoria Falls and may include mini safaris, national park drives, elephant sanctuary visits and rounds of golf. Whatever the route, all guests should make the

most of the open-air balcony in the train's observation car for exceptional views. From 34,000 ZAR (\$1,796) per person. Recommended Topics Share this article Share Via Copy Link Train Travel Catch every big hit, every wicket with Crick-it, a one stop destination for Live Scores, Match Stats, Quizzes, Polls & much more. Explore now!. Catch your daily dose of Fashion, Taylor Swift, Health, Festivals, Travel, Relationship, Recipe and all the other Latest Lifestyle News on Hindustan Times Website and APPs. See More Catch every big hit, every wicket with Crick-it, a one stop destination for Live Scores, Match Stats, Quizzes, Polls & much more. Explore now!. Catch your daily dose of Fashion, Taylor Swift, Health, Festivals, Travel, Relationship, Recipe and all the other Latest Lifestyle News on Hindustan Times Website and APPs. News / Lifestyle / Travel / Luxury train travel is booming. Here's why, and the trips you must book See Less

Galerie

14 Must-Book Luxury Hotels Opening in 2025

A first look at the year's most compelling new properties and the cultural shift they represent

The luxury hospitality landscape is shifting, and not in the ways you might expect. While [2024's openings](#) leaned heavily into statement art collections and social media moments, 2025 signals something more structural: a wholesale reimagining of how hotels function in their communities.

This evolution cuts to the core of what luxury means today. The year ahead presents an industry grappling with its very purpose—where heritage trains become roving cultural attachés and forgotten architectural landmarks transform into vibrant gathering spaces. We're witnessing preservation that actively engages with history rather than simply maintaining it, public areas that dissolve boundaries between guest and local life, and wellness sanctuaries that derive their power from indigenous traditions.

The catalyst becomes clear in [Design Hotels' Further Forecast 2025](#): Despite 84 percent of travelers believing hotels can forge meaningful community, barely a quarter currently experience that connection. The response? A new wave of properties that prioritize authenticity over artifice. From Paris to Kyoto, these establishments are crafting destinations that are more than just an escape—they're creating portals that bring their surroundings into sharper focus, suggesting that true luxury lies not in a deeper understanding of culture and place.

Below are 14 hotels to watch in 2025:



La Dolce Vita.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS



Guest accommodations.
PHOTO: COURTESY OF LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS

7. La Dolce Vita Orient Express | Italy

The rail brand's Italian expansion exceeds all expectations. Spring 2025 brings La Dolce Vita—Italy's first luxury train offering eight "Made in Italy" circuits—while Orient Express establishes permanent outposts in Venice and Rome. This moving design statement orchestrated by Dimorestudio traces routes from Florence's Renaissance splendor to hidden gems like ancient Matera and mountainous Palena. Three-Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck oversees the culinary program, recognizing that Italian travel revolves as much around flavor as views. The fixed properties expand the vision: Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice herald the brand's evolution from transient luxury to cultural steward. This triple-faceted debut, opening throughout 2025, elegantly repackages the Italian grand tour for a contemporary era.

WAY TO GO

2025 Hot New Hotel Preview: Part 3

Let's Go Europe

In our third installment of the Best New Hotels Preview for 2025, we're heading to Europe. Which means we have now reported on 300 new builds, clever renovations, and affordable lookers. (You can catch up on [USA/Canada/LATAM](#) and [Asia/Africa/Australia/Antarctica](#) here.) Of course, this isn't everything the year ahead holds; they're just the hotels we're interested in. We'll report back in a few months to let you know what has actually opened, as the dates listed below can sometimes be moving targets. Happy hoteling!



The Marlene Dietrich room at Maison Barrière Vendôme. Photo courtesy of Maison Barrière Vendôme.

Enchanté, France

Maison Barrière Vendôme

Paris, France

The latest from Groupe Barrière is a total stunner for its craft, details, and a theme that makes us stand up and cheer *oui, madame*: Twenty-six rooms, suites, and apartments pay homage, through their decor and artwork, to iconic women — Josephine Baker, Mata Hari, Mercedes Sosa, Camille Claudel, and Nina Simone among them. Bar Frida is the South American-inspired restaurant and cocktail spot on the ground floor; an underground spa with a cold plunge pool is coming soon. Let's hear it for *les femmes*. (January)

Six Senses Milan, the company's second Italian city hotel (Rome came first), will have everything fans have come to expect: an exceptional spa, healthy and seasonal cuisine, workshops at Earth Lab, and a strong sustainability ethos throughout.

Bulgari and Armani aren't the only fashion designers with hotels in town. German designer Philipp Plein's **The Plein Hotel** will be small (13 rooms), striking (the décor is not subtle), and already pedigreed (part of **Small Luxury Hotels of the World**) when it opens in March.

Big Italian Cities Due: Rome

It's hard to imagine Rome getting any more crowded, but that's what's in store this year as the

Catholic Church celebrates its jubilee. Ready to welcome the throng are a handful of new luxury hotels.

The Goethe Hotel was designed to evoke the Age of Enlightenment and the kind of European Grand Tour the namesake author might have taken. Opening in February, the design of the 27-room hotel — elaborate wallpaper, dark palette, vintage furnishings — is as dramatic and as moody as a brooding Romantic poet.

As we already reported in our **2025 travel trends report**, hotels are merging into trains and vice versa. Leading the trend is Accor's Orient Express, who will debut their first hotel, **La Minerva**, this spring — with 93 rooms, a panoramic rooftop bar and restaurant, and an Ottoman-inspired spa, a stone's throw from the Pantheon. OE will also debut **La Dolce Vita**, a highly designed midcentury train that's like a boutique hotel on rails, leaving from Rome and making pitstops in Italy's most popular destinations.

A half dozen more Eternal City openings to note:

Bloomberg

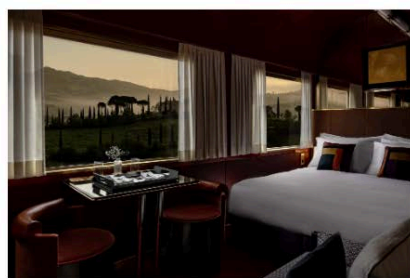


We've rounded up some of the best stories from Bloomberg Pursuits this month that will help you splurge on your bonus, explore some of Japan's hidden corners, and find just the right Lunar New Year gift, whatever your budget. And of course, we'll leave you with a list of new resorts around the world that deliver on your castaway fantasies – an excellent salve for those winter blues.

What We're Reading

Why Luxury Train Travel Is Booming – and the Trips to Book Now

It comes with significant built-in advantages, and passengers are obsessed.



Special Advertising Feature

(Continued from page 24)

Hotels '25



The year ahead looks exciting with more hotel openings and a strong push for sustainability. *—Scott Miller*
the inside track of ILM, the industry's leading trend fair.

~ Winter ~



Hotels are looking to the future with a focus on sustainability and guest experience. The industry is seeing a shift towards eco-friendly practices and personalized services. The year ahead looks exciting with more hotel openings and a strong push for sustainability. *—Scott Miller*
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~ Spring ~

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Travel Trends 2025



Climate Change: How 2025's a Year of the Wild West. Travelers are looking for more sustainable options. The Wild West travel agency is looking for more sustainable options.

Special Advertising Feature

ILM

~ Fall ~



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Special Advertising Feature

Stay to See the Sport



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Travelers are looking for more sustainable options. The Wild West travel agency is looking for more sustainable options.



HEARTTHROB HOTELS

THESE NEW AND REIMAGINED STAYS
ARE TURNING HEADS WITH STRIKING DESIGN.

BY LAUREN GALLOW

NATELEE COOKS



Art, culture, and travel books
line the shelves of Park Hyatt
Tokyo's library.

MORE URBAN OPENINGS

- An extensive renovation of **The Waldorf Astoria New York**, slated to wrap this spring, polishes the NYC landmark's 375 guest rooms and suites to their original art deco glory and adds a new 30,000-square-foot spa.
- In Taipei, the 86-room **Capella Taipei** will offer weary travelers a serene city respite come spring, with a "modern mansion" design concept and traditional Taiwanese treatments at an expansive wellness center.
- Amid tropical gardens in Nai Lert Park, **Aman Nai Lert Bangkok** opens early this year in a sleek 52-suite tower that houses omakase and teppanyaki restaurants and emphasizes its setting with open terraces and natural materials.
- The 134-room **Rosewood Amsterdam**, Rosewood's Netherlands debut, will radiate palatial prestige when it opens this spring in the former Palace of Justice, overlooking the Prinsengracht.
- In Italy, glamour veteran Orient Express will launch two new hotels later in the year: **Orient Express La Minerva**, with 93 rooms just two blocks from the impressive art collection at Rome's Galleria Doria Pamphilj, and 46-room **Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli**, situated in a fifteenth-century Venetian palace formerly home to the Duke of Urbino.

Inside Saudi Arabia's first five-star luxury train worth Rs 461 crores. Check Dream of the Desert's lavish features and photos

LINK: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/magazines/panache/inside-saudi-arabias-first-five-star-luxury-train-worth-rs-461-crores-check-dream-of-...>

Inside Saudi Arabia's first five-star luxury train worth Rs 461 crores. Check Dream of the Desert's lavish features and photos
SECTIONS Inside Saudi Arabia's first five-star luxury train worth Rs 461 crores. Check Dream of the Desert's lavish features and photos ET Online Last Updated: Jan 28, 2025, 07:37:00 PM IST Rate Story Follow us Share Font Size Small Medium Large Save Print Comment Synopsis Saudi Arabia and **Arsenale**'s 'Dream of the Desert' five-star train, inspired by the Kingdom's landscapes and heritage, offers 34 luxurious suites. Launching Q3 2026, it aims to blend top-tier hospitality with rich cultural experiences, reflecting Saudi Vision 2030. Collaborative cultural programs and a refined dining experience will enhance travelers' immersion into Saudi history and tradition. Middle-East's 'Dream of the Desert' is one of the first luxury trains. Saudi Arabia's Railways (SAR) and Italian hospitality giant **Arsenale** have revealed the final designs for their ambitious "Dream of the Desert" luxury train, set to become

the first five-star train in the Middle East. The unveiling took place during the visit of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni to Saudi Arabia, marking a significant step in redefining luxury rail travel in the region. Budget with ET India, get ready for the modern warfare of tomorrow Women, youth, farmers and poor can continue to be Budget 2025's 'roti, kapda aur makan' Modi govt has a key task in Budget 2025: Unlocking the PLI goldmine According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the project is a result of the partnership between SAR and **Arsenale**, which culminated in a formal agreement valued at 200 million Saudi riyals (around Rs 461 crore) in January 2024. This collaboration is part of a broader effort to develop luxury tourism services and align with Saudi Vision 2030, the country's plan to diversify its economy and enhance cultural tourism. A New Era in Luxury Travel The Dream of the Desert train will offer a high-end travel experience, featuring 14 carriages with 34 luxurious suites. Designed as a

mobile five-star hotel, it aims to merge world-class hospitality with a rich cultural experience. The interiors of the train are inspired by Saudi Arabia's iconic desert landscapes and traditional architecture, reflecting the Kingdom's cultural heritage. The luxurious décor includes earthy tones, fine textiles, and intricate artistic details, which incorporate motifs from famous landmarks like Madain Saleh and Hail. The train is designed not only to provide an unparalleled luxury experience but also to immerse passengers in Saudi Arabia's history and culture. Its interior features elegant reception lounges modelled after traditional majlis (gathering spaces), with hand-carved woodwork and geometric patterns that showcase the country's warmth and hospitality. A Cultural Journey on Rails The Dream of the Desert train will also offer a unique cultural experience. Through collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, curated cultural programs will allow passengers to explore Saudi Arabia's traditions dynamically and interactively. The Saudi Tourism Authority and the

Center for Development Authorities Support are working on creating tailored tourism itineraries that integrate seamlessly with the train journey, offering travellers a deeper connection to the Kingdom's natural and cultural sites. **Paolo Barletta**, CEO of **Arsenale Group**, expressed excitement over the project, highlighting the goal of creating a travel experience that is unmatched in its luxury and cultural depth. According to Barletta, the Dream of the Desert is not just a luxury train; it is an immersive journey that merges world-class design, hospitality, and Saudi traditions. He emphasized that the collaboration with SAR, the Ministry of Culture, and the Saudi Tourism Authority has been key in bringing the project to life authentically, reflecting the Kingdom's beauty. Anticipation Builds for the Launch The train will begin operations by the end of Q3 2026, with booking details and exclusive packages to be announced on the official website. The onboard dining experience will fuse traditional flavours with sophisticated culinary artistry, offering a menu designed by top chefs from both Saudi Arabia and abroad. Passengers will also be able to admire art pieces

and photography that showcase Saudi Arabia's cultural and natural landmarks. The Dream of the Desert train promises to elevate luxury travel in Saudi Arabia, offering an experience that goes beyond luxury, deeply rooted in the Kingdom's cultural and historical identity. With its elegant design, exceptional service, and cultural immersion, this train is poised to become a must-experience attraction for those seeking a unique and opulent way to explore Saudi Arabia's vast heritage and stunning landscapes.

EXCLUSIVE: Inside The Middle East's First Five-Star Train Designed by Aline Asmar d'Amman

LINK: <https://wwd.com/home-design/interior-design/middle-east-first-five-star-train-aline-asmar-damman-1236882826/>



EXCLUSIVE: Inside The Middle East's First Five-Star Train Designed by Aline Asmar d'Amman The Lebanese architect unveiled her designs with WWD for the Dream of the Desert train developed with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Culture and Saudi Arabia's Railways and Italy's **Arsenale**. By Plus Icon Sofia Celeste Senior Correspondent, Home and Interiors Recent Articles by Sofia Celeste January 27, 2025, 1:54pm Share this article on Facebook Share this article on X Share this article on Flipboard Share this article on Pin It Share this article on Tumblr Share this article on Reddit Share this article on LinkedIn Share this article on WhatsApp Share this article on Email Print this article Share this article on Talk Share this article on Facebook Share this article on X Share this article on Flipboard Share this article on Pin It Share this article on Tumblr Share this article on Reddit Share this article

on LinkedIn Share this article on WhatsApp Share this article on Email Print this article Share this article on Talk Share this article on Facebook Share this article on X Share this article on Flipboard Share this article on Pin It Share this article on Tumblr Share this article on Reddit Share this article on LinkedIn Share this article on WhatsApp Share this article on Email Print this article Share this article on Talk MILAN - Lebanese-born architect Aline Asmar d'Amman said growing up

she was "bathed" in the poetry of 13th-century poet Rumi, who described the desert as a "wide emptiness, a peace without understanding it." She never thought that one day she would help people experience that sort of wonder, in an age of modern luxury travel. On Tuesday, she shared her designs with WWD for the Middle East's first five-star train. The Dream of the Desert train developed with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Culture and Saudi Arabia's Railways and Italy's **Arsenale** will allow luxury travelers to experience a privileged view of the desert. After garnering notoriety in fashion as the founder of the Culture in Architecture studio which worked with Karl Lagerfeld on several projects, including the design of luxury suites for the Hôtel de Crillon in Paris, she's now playing a small but significant role in helping Saudi Arabia

achieve its Vision 2030. This is her first train and she proudly said it's a sustainable project in the sense that she used existing Italian wagons owned by **Arsenale** Group. You May Also Like Related Articles Fashion Scoops Bottega Veneta Opens Chicago Store Jewelry Chanel Inc. Appoints Olivier Kessler-Gay General Manager of Watches and Fine Jewelry "It's a wonderful thing to immerse into a world of dynamic stillness and spiritual mystique that is the desert. Saudi Arabia's pristine natural beauty and the very distinctive feeling of immensity and silence, of wildness and wideness, only tamed by the Bedouin tradition of journeys with patience, appeals to another kind of travel today," she said, adding that slow travel is all about embracing layers of culture and enriching humanistic values, which Saudi Arabia is only now ready to share on a global level. Aline Asmar d'Amman Courtesy of Culture in Architecture This milestone marks a significant step forward in redefining luxury rail travel in the region and is the result of a close partnership between SAR and **Arsenale**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, the Saudi Tourism Authority and the Center for

Development Authorities Support. In 1947, the first railway between Dammam and Riyadh was inaugurated. Established in 2006, SAR is the owner and operator of the North Train Railway Network, which is propelling the vision of sustainable passenger and cargo transport. In 2017, the North Train passenger services was launched, followed by the Haramain high speed railway in 2018. Dream of the Desert Courtesy of Aline Asmar d'Amman and her Culture in Architecture Studio's Saudi heritage elements feature inside the Dream of the Desert, as Asmar d'Amman said she spent hours looking at the details of a Saudi façade, the intricate textile weavings, the wood carvings, the oil lamps whose light diffuses a cinematographic mood, interpreting these in a delicate modern lens, adapted to the train space and constraints. "Not forgetting the astounding Stendhal syndrome [a condition of awe upon the discovery of great masterpieces] at the discovery of Hegra, Hail, Al-Ula and other untouched beauties," she mused of the train that includes world-class suites and a restaurant enhanced with modern touches from the lamp shades' belt detail to the wood carving elegant

motif inspired by the gypsum motifs in the central region. The suites, she said, are characterized by rich wood marquetry, luxurious upholstery, sensual lighting and bespoke furniture. In the reception area, the bar and the lounge, textile weaving and geometric patterns feature prominently. The bar design is inspired by the ancient architecture of the Al-Ula site of Hegra, the city of Madain Salih and the archaeological mountain of Hijaz, interpreted in modern patterns and design. The train is also punctuated by wood sculpted panels in signature green patina, inspired by the Saudi Arabian seaside city of Jeddah's iconic façades. Aline Asmar d'Amman and her Culture in Architecture Studio's designs for Dream of the Desert. Courtesy of Culture in Architecture In and around the worlds of fashion and hospitality, Asmar d'Amman's fame is growing. Last year, she was the first guest of the Reading Room at 7L, the bookstore, library and publishing house founded by Lagerfeld that was acquired by Chanel in 2021. She designed the Le Petit Salon, a private event space within in Le19M, Chanel's hub for craftsmanship on the edge of Paris. She is also working

on the **Arsenale** on another project: The **Orient Express** Hotel Palazzo Donà Giovannelli Venice. Founded in 2020 by **Paolo Barletta** and Annabel Holding, **Arsenale** is an Italian company operating in the luxury hospitality sector, with the aim of enhancing the Italian tourism industry. The company is structured around two main divisions: The Hospitality Hotel and Resort division, which designs and manages hotel properties in collaboration with iconic luxury brands, such as Soho House, as well as the **Orient Express**. Inside the upcoming **Orient Express** Hotel in Venice in Palazzo Donà Giovannelli Venice and has been designed by Aline Asmar d'Amman. Courtesy of Aline Asmar d'Amman Tags

EXCLUSIVE

Inside the Middle East's First Five-star Train

● Lebanese architect Aline Asmar d'Amman unveiled her designs with WWD for the Dream of the Desert train.

BY SOFIA CELESTE

MILAN — Lebanese-born architect Aline Asmar d'Amman said growing up she was "bathed" in the poetry of 13th-century poet Rumi, who described the desert as a "wide emptiness, a peace without understanding it." She never thought that one day she would help people experience that sort of wonder, in an age of modern luxury travel.

On Tuesday, she shared her designs with WWD for the Middle East's first five-star train. The Dream of the Desert train developed with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Culture and Saudi Arabia's Railways and Italy's **Arsenale** will allow luxury travelers to experience a privileged view of the desert.

After garnering notoriety in fashion as the founder of the Culture in Architecture studio, which worked with Karl Lagerfeld on several projects, including the design of luxury suites for the Hôtel de Crillon in Paris, she's now playing a small but significant role in helping Saudi Arabia achieve its Vision 2030. This is her first train and she proudly said it's a sustainable project in the sense that she used existing Italian wagons owned by **Arsenale Group**. "It's a wonderful thing to immerse

into a world of dynamic stillness and spiritual mystique that is the desert. Saudi Arabia's pristine natural beauty and the very distinctive feeling of immensity and silence, of wildness and wideness, only tamed by the Bedouin tradition of journeys with patience, appeals to another kind of travel today," she said, adding that slow travel is all about embracing layers of culture and enriching humanistic values, which Saudi Arabia is only now ready to share on a global level.

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The train is also punctuated by wood sculpted panels in signature green patina, inspired by the Saudi Arabian seaside city

of Jeddah's iconic facades.

In and around the worlds of fashion and hospitality, Asmar d'Amman's fame is growing.

Last year, she was the first guest of the Reading Room at 7L, the bookstore, library and publishing house founded by Lagerfeld that was acquired by Chanel in 2021.

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Aline Asmar d'Amman and her Culture in Architecture Studio's designs for Dream of the Desert.

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The Middle East's first super-luxury train will gleam gold

By Julia Buckley, CNN



CNN — It's the train set to whisk people across the largest country in the Middle East — and to do so in style, according to the designs that have just been released.

Saudi Arabia's Dream of the Desert train, which is slated to hit the rails next year, is set to be the region's first five-star luxury train, and the first renderings for the 14 carriages have finally been unveiled.

A joint project between Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR) and Arsenale S.p.A., the Italian luxury brand, the train is due to launch around fall 2026. It has been designed by Aline Asmar d'Amman, an architect and designer whose Culture in Architecture studio is based between Paris and Beirut.

The idea is to amp up the luxury while referencing Saudi culture and heritage — including motifs from destinations like AlUla, Madain Saleh and Hail — within the design.

The overall tone is suitably sandy, with golds, beiges and darker tones coupled with chrome fittings reflecting the desert views outside.



Bedrooms have a glam, almost Art Deco feel. Courtesy
Arsenale Spa/SAR



The restaurant car will allow panoramic views over the desert.
Courtesy Arsenale Spa/SAR

Reception lounges have been given the feel of a majlis — the room in a Saudi home where guests are welcomed — and include geometric patterns and hand-carved wooden elements. Bedrooms, meanwhile, have a richer feel, with a hint of Art Deco styling in the emerald-colored sofas, headboards and drapes, as well as the clean lines and wood-paneled walls.

The attention to detail extends to the public areas. Artworks and photographs of Saudi cultural sites will adorn the corridors, while the train exterior will be a burnished chrome with accents of violet.

The train will have 34 suites across 14 carriages, while the restaurant menu will be curated by “local and international chefs,” according to the press release accompanying the renderings.



The train has been designed by architect Aline Asmar d'Amman.

Courtesy Arsenale Spa/SAR

The route will go from Riyadh across SAR's Northern Railway network. In a partnership with the Saudi Ministry of Culture there will be "curated cultural programs" for guests as well as "unique tourism itineraries that integrate seamlessly with the train journey" — though no details have yet been revealed.

SAR [previously said](#) in a press release that the Dream of the Desert will operate "luxury train cruise" journeys from the capital city of Riyadh to Qurayyat, which is situated close to the northern border with Jordan.

The 1,300-kilometer route will take in the country's desert landscapes, and stop at the city of Hail on one- and two-night trips.

Calling it "an unparalleled travel experience," Paolo Barletta, Arsenale Group's CEO, said in a statement that the train will be a "fully immersive experience."

Dream of the Desert is currently slated to debut at the end of the third quarter of 2026.

In the mean time, a sibling train, [Dolce Vita Orient Express](#), will debut in Italy in April.

INSPIRATION

Inside Dream of the Desert – Saudi Arabia's first luxury train service

Dream of the Desert will welcome passengers in 2026, becoming the first five-star rail service in the Middle East



Luxury train travel is having a moment. Around the world, several new and revamped train services have captured the global appetite for slow travel. The Middle East is set to get its first [luxury train](#) service with the launch of Saudi Arabia's Dream of the Desert.

Set to take passengers on a journey through Saudi Arabia's vast desert landscapes, the service is on track to make its inaugural journey by the end of 2026. Departing from the Saudi capital Riyadh, Dream of the Desert will run on 1,300 kilometres of existing railway lines from the capital Riyadh to Al Qurayyat in the northern province of Al Jawf, taking in some of the country's most breathtaking natural scenery along the way. The planned one- to two-day route takes in Al Qassim, Hail and Al Jouf, on the edge of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Nature Reserve, before it terminates some 30km from the border with Jordan.



Interiors have been designed by Lebanese architect Aline Asmar d'Amman Courtesy Saudi Arabia Railways

Manufactured by the Italian hospitality company Arsenale Group and commissioned by Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR), Dream of the Desert's 14 carriages will consist of 34 luxury suites. A first look at the interiors, designed by Lebanese architect Aline Asmar d'Amman, shows opulent gold-laden ceilings, tile-fronted bars, rich velvet banquettes and touches of Saudi tradition. Reception areas have been inspired by majlis settings, adorned with intricately carved wood and shades inspired by the desert sands. Special art pieces showcasing Saudi heritage and culture are being commissioned to hang in the train's corridors, with menus will be created by local and international chefs.



Reception areas merge traditional Saudi design with opulent touches
Courtesy Saudi Arabia Railways

Arsenale is already working in collaboration with Orient Express on La Dolce Vita, a new luxury rail service with six itineraries crisscrossing Italy, set to launch in early spring. Arsenale has also signed an agreement with the UAE's national railway company, Etihad Railway, to develop a luxury train that will travel across the Middle Eastern peninsula.



The desert landscape in Al Jawf province

benedek

The update on Dream of the Desert is one of many as Saudi Arabia fast-tracks its ambitions to become a leading tourist destination, with plans to attract 150m visitors by the end of the decade. Last year was marked by news of hotel and resort developments across the Kingdom, from [AlUla](#), the ancient oasis city near the sandstone monuments of Hegra; to the Red Sea coast and its islands; Sindalah Island, part of the Neom gigaproject; and the historic settlement of Diriyah.

Saudi Arabia Unveils First Luxury Train ‘Dream of the Desert’

Saudi Arabia Railways and Arsenale revealed the 'Dream of the Desert', the Middle East's first luxury train. Featuring 34 luxury suites, it offers an immersive cultural experience inspired by Saudi heritage. Operations begin in late 2026, with bookings announced soon.



Saudi Arabia Railways, in partnership with Italian hospitality company Arsenale, unveiled the final design of Dream of the Desert, a first-of-its-kind five-star luxury train in the Middle East. According to reports from the Saudi Press Agency, the achievement was the result of the said two companies signing an agreement last year.

Instead, due to the inspiration from Saudi desert and traditional architecture, the interior of the train is decorated with rich craftsmanship combined with earthy hues along with intricate details and high luxury fabrics. Two main landmarks, Hegra and Hail, are also reflected in the design for a visually stunning experience and insight to the culture by the passengers.

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2025 hot list

It's that time of year again, when we round up the most anticipated hotel openings in 2025. We've sifted through hundreds of properties to spotlight 76, ranging from desert retreats to idyllic châteaux and urban escapes. As always, this list is a testament to the visionary design talent shaping our industry's next chapter. For more debuts that caught our attention, visit hospitalitydesign.com.

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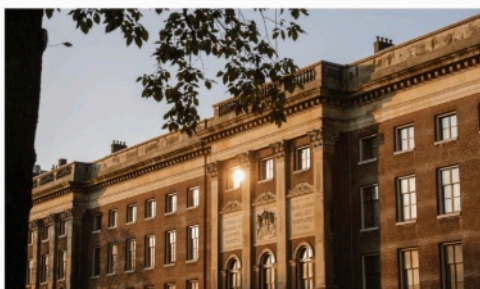
THE KIMPTON
TRES RÍOS
p. 061

By ALIA AKKAM, STEPHANIE CHEN, KATIE KERVIN, AND ALISSA PONCHIONE

*Renderings and photos courtesy of their respective properties, unless otherwise noted

hospitalitydesign.com January 2025

047



Rosewood Amsterdam

Designed by Studio Piet Boon, the 134-room Rosewood Amsterdam will honor the building's heritage with a modern take on Dutch craftsmanship when it debuts in June inside Netherlands' historic Palace of Justice. Original features, such as cell blocks and courtrooms, have been restored and reimagined for unique guest experiences, while culinary offerings span three distinctive restaurants, bars, and an in-house distillery.

Sir Devonshire Square London

Close to Spitalfields Market and Liverpool Street station, Devonshire Square was once home to an East India Tea Company warehouse. In April, that building will find new life as the 81-room Sir Devonshire Square. The design from Cornwall, England firm Maison 191 respects the structure's heritage while capturing the energy of East London. In addition to a Cover members club, guests can hang out in a retro-style lounge filled with greenery and comfortable sofas or browse the shop's local products.

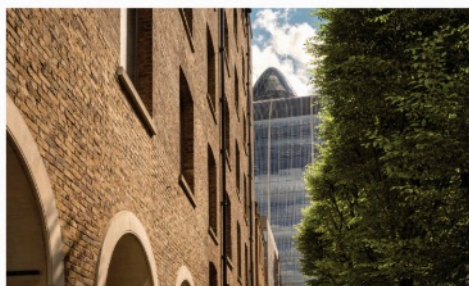
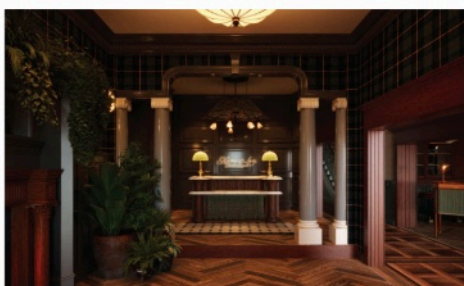


Photo by STEVE HERJUD

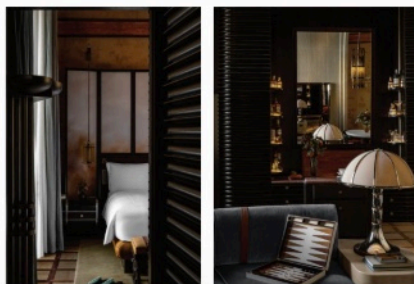


Portrush Adelphi Northern Ireland

The reimagined Portrush Adelphi from Marine Hotels & Resorts will debut next month as a 34-room seaside retreat, boasting a design by CDA Group Architects and AJ Capital's in-house team. Inspired by the rugged coastline and the area's legendary golf courses, interiors blend classic tartans and warm fabrics with a palette of rich green and blue. Guests will have access to a spa as well as locally sourced cuisine at the hotel's Italian restaurant.

Reja Klaipeda, Lithuania

A Baltic gem where German, Scandinavian, and Lithuanian influences converge, Klaipeda is set for a new chapter when the former National Hotel reopens as Reja this spring. Located in the heart of the city's Old Town, the 50-room property by Kaunas, Lithuania-based YesDesign Architecture will reflect a contemporary vision, including an updated restaurant and bar that nods to its location near the Lithuanian coast.



La Minerva Rome

Accor's Orient Express hotel collection kicks off this spring with the transformation of the 17th-century Palazzo Fonseca near the Pantheon. Artists flocked to this residence-turned-hotel in the 1800s, and the revamp by Paris firm Hugo Toro reflects its rich past with 93 guestrooms layered with Art Deco details and modern finishes. La Minerva further entices with a Roman bath-style spa, the rooftop lair Voliera, and La Minerva Bar, a shrine to the Roman goddess of art starring a historic skylight.

BUSINESS

From Runways to Resorts: Fashion Executives Are Reshaping Luxury Hospitality



Fashion industry veterans Saba Landmann, Stephanie Le Badezet, Michael Grieve and Claire Abellé have transitioned into senior positions with leading hospitality companies.

● Hospitality groups are recruiting fashion industry talent to drive innovation and enhance brand narratives.

BY RITU PADHYAY
WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MILES SOCHA

When communications director Claire Abellé traded the world of Christian Louboutin's red soles and Burberry's checks for the marbled lobbies and sandy beaches of Kerzner International's luxury resorts, she brought more than her Rolodex of fashion contacts.

The executive, who now serves as vice president of global communications at the parent company of the One & Only Resorts and Atlantis Hotels, is part of a growing wave of fashion industry veterans being tapped by luxury hospitality groups for their brand-building expertise.

Leading international hotel groups are tasking fashion industry pros to reimagine everything from guest experiences to brand storytelling.

Brett Armitage, chief commercial officer of Kerzner International, recognized the luxury hospitality playbook needed a rewrite as he observed fashion houses masterfully build emotional connections with the same ultra-high-net-worth individuals their hotels were courting.

The solution? Tap into that expertise directly. Within 18 months, Kerzner recruited a trio of fashion industry veterans: Abellé from Christian Louboutin to lead global communications; Edward Lee from Tom Ford as creative director, and most recently, Kandé Camara from Dior to spearhead sustainability.

"We're embracing not just a creative influence, but an entire point of view on how we approach our brand story," said Armitage, whose recruitment strategy reflects a larger transformation sweeping through hospitality.

More examples abound: Two years ago, Marriott International brought on fashion PR veteran Saba Landmann to oversee global brand communications at Marriott International.

Michael Grieve was appointed chief brand officer at Dubai-based Jumeirah Group last year, poached from Gucci, where he served as vice president, brand and client.

And most recently, longtime LVMH watches and jewelry pr director Stephanie Le Badezet joined Accor Group, overseeing Orient Express' global communications strategy.

"Fashion, at its core, is all about

creating aspiration, curating narratives, and connecting deeply with a brand's audience on an emotional level – beyond their wallet," said Landmann, senior vice president of global brand and portfolio public relations at Marriott International. This "translates seamlessly into hospitality PR, where creating unique, immersive experiences is just as crucial as the aesthetic appeal of a brand."

Landmann is responsible for leading communications for the company's portfolio of 30 diverse hotel brands, including The Ritz-Carlton, Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Bulgari Hotels and Resorts, St. Regis Hotels and Resorts, Edition, The Luxury Collection, JW Marriott and W Hotels. She joined Marriott after leading communications at G-III Apparel Group, owner of Donna Karan, Karl Lagerfeld, Vilebrequin and more. Prior to that she held senior roles at Vince Holding Corp. and Alice Olivia.

Tina Edmundson, president of luxury at Marriott International, explained its recruitment philosophy: "Fresh perspectives are essential to keeping global brands dynamic and relevant, which is why we chose to bring Saba on board from the fashion industry... The fashion industry is fast-moving, competitive, and dynamic and requires an understanding of how to craft aspirational narratives, tap into and navigate cultural trends, and build emotional connections with consumers."

The shared clientele across both industries is also a key factor driving this cross-industry pollination. Abellé emphasized the significant overlap in target audiences, especially for Kerzner, which operates ultra-luxury properties.

"In our segment of hotels, we're ultimately speaking to the same ultra-high-net-worth audience – the 1 percent."

This shared consumer base means fashion executives bring valuable insights into the preferences and behaviors of luxury consumers. "Luxury fashion brands not only command the loyalties with the same customers we also hold dear, but they also constantly reinvent, innovate and respond to change," Abellé added.

The skills required to build and maintain luxury brands are increasingly transferable across sectors, particularly when it comes to understanding and serving the world's most discerning consumers.

Jean Allen, partner at executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles in New York, said, "recruiting from fashion is high on the list for our hospitality clients."

Communications executives transition particularly well, she added.

"There are a lot of parallels between fashion and hospitality in terms of understanding how to do a strategy shift and the complexity of the matrix. Fashion people have seen a lot of transformation, have great brand experience and they've worked with a certain level of intensity around personalities," Allen said. "They understand the 24/7 nature of social media and all those things that really affect fashion and hospitality probably more than other industries."

"The trend of luxury brand talent transitioning into hospitality reflects a strategic shift in crafting high-end experiences, blending the refined expertise of the fashion world with hospitality's service-oriented focus," said Grieve at Jumeirah, perhaps best known for the pioneering sail-shaped Burj Al Arab hotel, which marked its 25th anniversary in 2024. "Fashion executives bring a sophisticated understanding of brand power – not just as a tangible offering, but as an emotional connection."

Their toolbox also includes expertise with partnerships, strategic events, and media engagement to "amplify a brand's visibility and prestige," he said.

Fashion executives are arriving at hospitality companies amid an explosion in hotels branded after such famous fashion houses as Versace, Giorgio Armani, Karl Lagerfeld, Elie Saab and more, not to mention Bulgari.

Grieve argued that "hospitality pure players like Jumeirah are uniquely positioned to respond with deep-rooted expertise in delivering exceptional guest experiences."

"While fashion brands excel at design and creating aspirational appeal, hospitality pure players have a distinct advantage: operational excellence," he said in an interview. "Running a hotel is an intricate art requiring seamless coordination across service, dining, housekeeping, and guest engagement."

Le Badezet joined Orient Express as the legendary travel brand is set to open its first hotels in 2025, with Orient Express La Minerva in Roma and Orient Express Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice. She said: "The hospitality industry is increasingly recognizing that modern luxury is about more than just high-end accommodations. It's finding the right balance between heritage and a contemporary reinterpretation."

Another particularly valuable asset those who have worked in fashion often bring to hospitality roles is a global mindset. "Clients couldn't hire someone who didn't have global experience. A hospitality company just really couldn't take that risk," Allen said. "Fashion brands are well versed in catering to diverse cultural expectations and regional preferences."

The Jumeirah Group is expanding across international markets, with plans to double its portfolio by 2030.

"Jumeirah is an international brand with ambitious growth objectives, and we are actively raising our profile globally," said Grieve, who came to the Dubai-based company with strong regional know-how, having handled all of Gucci Maison's brand marketing, communications, and client engagement activities for Europe and the Middle East based out of Milan.

Grieve will oversee high-profile upcoming launches including Jumeirah Le Richemond in Geneva, Jumeirah Red Sea in Saudi Arabia, and Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab in Dubai.

In his view, luxury travelers "seek purpose-driven experiences that resonate deeply. They want more than amenities – they want memories."

Grieve also cited a heightened interest in wellness, cultural discoveries, a sense of belonging, and "authentic and memorable culinary journeys."

The transition from fashion to hospitality does have unique challenges. Marriott's Landmann pointed out that while fashion PR often focuses on promoting specific products within seasonal cycles, hospitality requires a broader, sometimes more complex approach.

"We're not just promoting a product, but an experience – an entire ecosystem that includes location, architecture, service, amenities, and lifestyle," Landmann said.

The hospitality industry also demands a different kind of relationship building. "While fashion campaigns often focus on specific moments or seasonal launches, hospitality PR requires fostering ongoing relationships with media, influencers and guests. The storytelling must evolve while maintaining brand consistency over time," said Landmann.

The fashion industry's expertise in partnerships, strategic events, and media engagement helps amplify a brand's visibility and prestige in measurable ways. Kerzner has pursued partnerships with luxury fashion brands like Dior and Balmain to create unique beach and pool club environments. Similarly, Marriott's luxury portfolio saw an array of unexpected partnerships across fashion, such as The Ritz x Late Check Out and JW Marriott's co-branded line with Flamingo Estate.

"Fashion PR taught me the importance of staying ahead of trends," Landmann said, noting that this skill is equally valuable in hospitality, where "consumers' expectations are always evolving, whether it's the shift towards wellness-focused travel, sustainable practices, or hyper-personalized services."

As the lines between different luxury sectors continue to blur, the influx of fashion talent into hospitality is likely to accelerate as operators reveal ambitious expansion plans.

The growth of the luxury hospitality landscape has fashion-influenced leadership shaping innovative new concepts and experiences.

"We have pushed the boundaries of how we work with partners, the stories we tell in creative campaigns, and the spaces in which our brands are present in the world," said Armitage. This year will see the opening of One & Only Moonlight Basin in Big Sky, Mont., from Kerzner – the brand's first destination in the United States and its first alpine resort. The company is also launching its second wellness-focused SIRO Hotel in Boka Place, Montenegro, following the brand's debut in Dubai's One Za'abeel, with additional properties planned for Los Cabos and Riyadh beyond 2025.

Meanwhile, Orient Express is making its own bold moves launching La Dolce Vita Orient Express train service and introducing its first sailing yacht, the Orient Express Corinthian. Orient Express will be unique in combining boats, trains, and hotels under one luxury hospitality brand. As Le Badezet noted, "The future of luxury is increasingly experiential, with hospitality growing faster than traditional luxury goods sectors."



SMARTFLYER

TRAVEL CULTURE

02.10.2025

Seductive Stays: 44 Suites for When You Don't Plan to Leave the Room

You know those people who say, “*The hotel doesn't matter, it's not like we're going to be in the room*”? Well, we're not those people—which is why we're exactly the *right* people to help you compile a list of the most romantic hotel suites that'll have you never wanting to leave the room.

The criteria to make our list of ‘the most romantic hotel suites in the world’ involves a laundry list of nuanced requirements, not least of which involves the hardest test of all to pass: a vibe check. This list spans all seven continents, including city stays perfect for a staycation in our **own backyard in New York**, remote lodges in **the South African bush** meant to be part of a larger **safari itinerary**, and unique stays nestled in the Australian Outback. We're going to be weaving you around the globe showcasing not just go-to properties but particular suite categories that scream, “*You were right... we're definitely not leaving the room.*”

The criteria to make our list of ‘the most romantic hotel suites in the world’ involves a laundry list of nuanced requirements, not least of which involves the hardest test of all to pass: a vibe check.

SUITE CABIN ABOARD THE ORIENT EXPRESS *LA DOLCE VITA*

Launching its inaugural journeys this spring, **The Orient Express *La Dolce Vita*** is the newest player in the highly buzzed-about luxury train sector. One of its key differentiators is the spacious (for train standards!) size of its cabins, particularly the suite cabin category. The elegant Art Deco interiors, plush king-sized beds, and en-suite bathrooms offer a hotel-on-wheels experience, complete with panoramic windows perfect for peering out onto Italy's bucolic countryside.





The most exciting hotel openings of 2025

The Points Guy Travel Team
Feb. 12, 2025 • 58 min read

Year after year, more hotels open than one can possibly imagine, from sky-high stunners set in impossibly tall buildings to off-the-beaten-path boutique hotels, and from sprawling beachside [all-inclusive resorts](#) to new iterations of the [points brands](#) we all know and love.

Here at TPG, the travel team spends the first month of the year pulling together our individual lists of the hotels we're most excited about all over the globe. We find out which ones are still on course to open (and which ones might be a little too optimistic about their timeline) and then duke it out to create one curated list of the most exciting hotels to open in the coming months.

Per usual, this year's list runs the gamut: You'll find family-friendly resorts near iconic theme parks, new properties from beloved points brands, ultraluxe island resorts that people wait a lifetime to visit — and so much more. And in terms of geography, this list contains properties as far away as Sydney and [the Maldives](#) and as close to home as Houston and [New York](#) — or in destinations featured on our "[Where to go in 2025](#)" list, like [Indianapolis](#) and [Vienna](#). It's an exceptionally big year for [the Caribbean](#) and [Mexico](#), especially when it comes to popular points brands we already love, like [Park Hyatt](#), [St. Regis](#), [W](#) and [Waldorf Astoria](#).

For the rest of the year, this list serves as our guiding light as we send staffers to see if these hotels are really worth the hype and, more importantly, your hard-earned cash, points and miles. — *Tanner Saunders, senior hotels reporter*

Orient Express La Minerva



Orient Express La Minerva. LA MINERVA

Rome

Expected opening: Spring

Following the forthcoming [La Dolce Vita train](#) launch this spring, Orient Express continues its takeover of Italy with its very first hotel, featuring 93 rooms and suites in Rome's circa-1620 Piazza della Minerva palace. Renowned architect Hugo Toro has paired contemporary, sleek vibes with art deco elegance throughout the luscious hotel, where dining outlets include a rooftop Mediterranean restaurant and a hidden speakeasy. The spa features a Turkish hammam.

Why we're excited: The location, not even a block from the Pantheon, is ideal, but its history as one of the most opulent Roman hotels dating to 1811 — where many writers, artists and icons have stayed — is also captivating. — *Kathryn Romeyn*

Rates at [La Minerva](#) start at around \$1,348 per night.

TRAVEL

These are the best train trips in the world to take in 2025 and beyond

From luxury heritage routes to routine service passing through extraordinary scenery, here are 19 of our favorite rail journeys.





Journeys onboard Dolce Vita Orient Express start and end in Rome.
PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEXANDR SPATARI, GETTY IMAGES

7. La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Italy

Best for: classic design

Route: Rome to Rome

Journey time: Two-three days

La Dolce Vita is a new luxury train with a difference. Rather than channelling the golden age of 1920s travel as its peers often do, the service takes its cue from the 1960s and 70s — with mirrored surfaces, mid-century light fittings and a whiff of a Federico Fellini production. It makes its debut this spring with itineraries panning up and down the Italian peninsula, one of the most cinematic being the one that links Rome, the Venetian lagoon and Portofino on the Ligurian coast. Compartment from €7,440 per person (£6,175), based on two sharing.

AFAR

12 Hotels Opening This Year Worth Planning an Entire Trip Around

Afar's resident hotel expert uncovers 12 of the most alluring new and renovated hotels of 2025, from California to Indonesia.

It's my job at Afar to scout extraordinary hotel experiences that enrich travelers and take them beyond what they might expect to experience in a place. So unsurprisingly, I've been researching a number of exciting retreats that are new or majorly refurbished for 2025. And what a year it'll be: There are grande dames poised for a new chapter, beloved hotel brands establishing themselves on new continents, and other lodgings that immerse us in the most beautiful corners of the planet. If you're not already planning your travels around some of these new places to stay, I urge you to reconsider.

I've already shared my excitement about the [Waldorf Astoria New York](#), an art deco masterpiece in the heart of Manhattan that's set to unveil a top-to-bottom overhaul later this year. It's one of the year's biggest openings and should be a must for anyone interested in history and legendary hospitality. And now I present 11 more hotels that are so special they're worth the trip alone.

Orient Express La Minerva



The facade of Orient Express La Minerva in Rome Courtesy of Orient Express La Minerva

- **Location:** Rome
- **Opening date:** April 1, 2025

The name **Orient Express** is synonymous with luxury train travel. And in April 2025, under the custodianship of hospitality company Accor, it's launching its first luxury hotel with the debut of **Orient Express La Minerva** near the Pantheon in Rome. Named after one of my favorite piazzas in the Eternal City (known for its ancient elephant obelisk), the hotel is located in a 17th-century palazzo and will have 93 guest rooms (36 of them suites) with art deco flourishes, dark wood details, and marble bathrooms. Also in the works: a Turkish hammam and a rooftop restaurant. *From \$1,040*

Travel > News Travel

RAIL NICE The UK train line ‘that time forgot’ is crowned one of the best in the world by National Geographic

Plus, we reveal Sun Travel's favourite train journeys to take in the world

Hope Brotherton, Travel Reporter

Published: 13:34, 3 Mar 2025 | Updated: 13:34, 3 Mar 2025



A BUDGET-FRIENDLY train journey in the UK that takes just four hours from start to finish has been named among the best in the world.

From Scotland's [West Highland Line](#) to voyages on the [East Coast Main Line](#), there are some pretty breathtaking stretches of track in the UK.

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The Heart of Wales Railway Line has been named among the best in the world by a team of travel experts Credit: Alamy

One of those is the Heart of [Wales](#) Railway Line, which has been ranked among the top 19 train journeys to take in the world in 2025 by National Geographic.

While it comes as no surprise to find luxury services like America's Rocky Mountaineer and [Italy's La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#), the pocket-friendly UK route won over judges thanks to its rustic charm.

[National Geographic wrote](#): "The Heart of Wales Line is sometimes described as a railway line that time forgot – a sleepy, single-track artery that cuts diagonally across the centre of the country, clattering over castellated Victorian viaducts and through rustic stations where passengers must flag down services with a hopeful outstretched thumb.

"Railway aficionados ride it for its lo-fi charm – but holidaymakers, too, can use it to explore the quiet Cambrian hinterland at speeds rarely exceeding 30mph, alighting at quaint spa towns like Llandrindod Wells, discovering battle-scarred castles like those at Dinefwr and Llandovery or setting out on bracing walks in the uplands of Elenydd, where the treeless slopes brood over the rails."

VOGUE

A full-page photograph of Tyra Banks is the background of the cover. She is a Black woman with voluminous, dark, curly hair. She is wearing a bright pink, strapless, form-fitting tube top and black leggings. She is posed in a three-quarter view, looking back over her right shoulder towards the camera. The background is a solid, deep blue.

MAR

ALESSANDRO
MICHELE
CATE
BLANCHETT
SARAH BURTON
EMMA
CORRIN
HAIDER
ACKERMANN
MICHAELA
YEARWOOD-DAN
VARADA SETHU

*The NEW
HEADLINERS
starring*

TYLA



VENI, VIDI, VICI

*The glory of WARMER days awaits,
starting with a HOST of newly restored
GRANDI DAME along the coastlines,
cliff tops and cobbled streets of ITALY. The
time has come to plan your grand TOUR.
Edited by HAYLEY MAITLAND*

*Villa Beatrice in
Portofino, Italy*



I

f you've ever visited Splendido, A Belmond Hotel (*below*) high above Portofino's La Piazzetta, you might recall, on your stroll down to the blue-green Ligurian Sea, passing a string of candy-coloured, cove-side palazzos mere feet from the water. The most enviable address among them? Villa Beatrice, an art nouveau mansion whose sea garden and wraparound terrace are made for sipping Aperol as the sun goes down over the Italian Riviera.

Come July, the turreted residence will open its doors as a private holiday villa under the Belmond umbrella. "It really captures the spirit of the region," Martin Brudnizki, who oversaw the restoration of the property, tells *Vogue*. Enchanted by Tuscan architect Gino Coppedè's original 1913 frescoes, the Annabel's designer echoed their floral, marine and ribbon motifs across ceilings, walls and textiles, while an ice-cream-hued palette draws a through-line from Splendido to its sophisticated little sister. Brudnizki is behind the former's extensive, two-year refurbishment too, filling the converted Benedictine monastery's rooms with Albisola ceramics and Graniglia alla Genovese tiles. The reimagining of the hotel culminates this June with the unveiling of a refreshed main building and a Dior spa, including four treatment cabins dotted around the star-jasmine-scented, bougainvillea-draped grounds.

And it isn't the only national treasure to have received a new lease of life either.

Nestled among the majestic Dolomites, the storybook 1930s lodge of Rosa Alpina (*right*) has also had a makeover, courtesy of Aman, ahead of its reopening this summer. Still presided over by third-generation owners the Pizzininis (who have played host to everyone from George Clooney to the Prince of Monaco over the years), the hotel's Amanification has included a reimagining of 50 sumptuous alpine chalet-style rooms and suites in the shadow of Lavarella. A summer excursion here might involve clambering up steep edelweiss-lined paths to turquoise lakes before dinner at Norbert Niederkofler's three-Michelin-starred Atelier Moessmer, where each and every meal is a paean to South Tyrolean ingredients: alpine strawberries, larch-smoked trout, pine gelée...

For more urban pleasures, dip down to the capital for a Roman holiday at Orient Express La Minerva (*below right*), the first hotel from the brand restoring '20s and '30s art-deco carriages to routes made famous by Agatha Christie. The former 17th-century palace reopens this April just a coin's toss from the Pantheon, with its rooms giving out onto Bernini's obelisk-carrying elephant (*right*). Naturally, its rebirth leans into its remarkable heritage, complete with Doric columns, Murano chandeliers and 19th-century sculptor Rinaldo Rinaldi's Carrara marble renderings of various Roman deities – including Minerva, the goddess of art, herself. That's before mentioning the rooftop, from which you can admire the colossal dome of the Eternal City's fabled temple, alongside the spire of the Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza and the roof of the Quirinal Palace... The allure of summer in bel paese, it seems, is a long way from waning. RADHIKA SETH





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Where Good Housekeeping readers are travelling in 2025

Story by Jo Blyth • 2h • ⌚ 5 min read

Where are you planning to travel this year? If you're considering a trip to the sparkling lakes of [northern Italy](#), Portugal's sun-kissed [Douro valley](#), or the sub-tropical gardens of the [Isles of Scilly](#), then you're in good company.

FIND YOUR PERFECT TOUR

Here at Good Housekeeping we work hard to bring you a carefully curated selection of unique tours — and we can see which ones you've been busy booking so far this year. [Italy](#) and the [UK](#) are standing out as clear favourites, with destinations like [Lake Como](#) and The [Isles of Scilly](#) among the most popular with our readers.



└ Sunset looking over Varenna on Lake Como, Italy
© kelvinjay - Getty Images

While we know there are lots of options out there, the team at Good Housekeeping Holidays really do go the extra mile to provide you with unique travel experiences. Many of our holidays are hosted by [celebrity guests](#) or local experts, who'll give you a unique perspective on the places you're visiting and take you to spots that you might otherwise miss.

We can see some clear themes when it comes to what you like doing on your holidays. We know Good Housekeeping readers love [beautiful gardens](#), and this is reflected in your holiday habits; trips like our [Kent and Sussex holiday](#) with Sarah Raven and our [Cotswolds trip](#) with Adam Henson are among our most-booked getaways.

Music-themed trips also struck a chord with our readers, with tours featuring exclusive performances proving particularly popular. Our Danube cruise features an intimate concert with virtuoso [Russell Watson](#), who'll give an intimate private performance enchanting town of Dürnstein.

And on our special trip to [Tuscany](#) you'll have tickets to Andrea Bocelli's annual hometown performance in the atmospheric Teatro del Silenzio — built especially for the Maestro's summer concerts.



└ Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italy
© emicristea - Getty Images

Food is also important to our readers, and who doesn't love a chance to combine a holiday with some [gourmet adventures](#)? Our foodie trip to Italy's gastronomic capital of [Bologna](#) is another of our most-booked trips, proving travel and food really do go hand-in-hand.

On this trip to the city known as *La Grassa* (the fat one) and you can look forward to visiting a local Parmesan factory, a Balsamic vineyard, and a family-run Parma ham producer, and learning how to rustle up some authentic dishes yourself in a cooking lesson with a local chef.

▶ **Related video:** Top Hidden Travel Destinations for US Citizens in 2025 (Travel Bucketlist)



VISIT BOLOGNA WITH GH

While Good Housekeeping Holidays offers you great variety, there are some key features that all our trips have in common. We partner with leading travel operators to include the highest quality experiences, with carefully chosen excursions and exclusive events that will make your trip memorable, immersive and enriching.

But don't just take our word for it. Readers who've recently joined us for a holiday have been singing our praises. One guest who joined our popular trip to the [Cotswolds](#) said, "I so enjoyed Adam Henson's talk. He has such terrific energy and a riveting story to accompany his extraordinary farm."



Copy of Adam with Golden Guernsey kid (1) (2).JPG
© Cotswolds Farm Park

Another guest who thoroughly enjoyed our trip to the [Isles of Scilly](#) shared some glowing words about our expert tour managers: "We learned so much from them all. From geology, flora and fauna, history, shipwrecks to life on the islands. We loved it all!"

Another thing Good Housekeeping readers love about our holidays is the chance to meet new people with shared interests. Alistair Wood from Good Housekeeping Holidays says, "on our trips you'll get to travel with likeminded people, perhaps making new friends as you explore new destinations and share experiences. It's one of the things our customers like most about travelling with us."

Take our trip to [Bath](#) to explore the world of Jane Austen, for example. Another of our most-booked holidays, this special trip allows you meet others who share your love for literature, all while getting an unparalleled insight into Jane Austen's life, hearing from her biographer Lucy Worsely and visiting her house in Chawton.

[VISIT BATH WITH GH](#)

On most of our trips you find a mix of couples, friends travelling together as well as [solo travellers](#). In fact, many of our holidays have no solo supplement and are perfect for individual explorers.

Many of our most popular holidays reflect key travel trends for 2025. According to [ABTA's](#) latest report, long-haul is making a comeback, with travellers looking to explore more far-flung destinations. Asia is set to welcome the biggest year-on-year rise in visitors, with Japan, and [India](#) among the most popular destinations.



└ Pink palace Hawa Mahal, Jaipur, India, beautiful sunset view
© Anton Aleksenko - Getty Images

It's no wonder that our fantastic tour of [India's Golden Triangle](#) is proving so popular with our readers. This holiday will take you to some of the country's holiest sites, through the fascinating cities of the Golden Triangle, and deep into the jungles of Ranthambore National Park to search for tigers.

ABTA's report also tells us that [couples holidays](#) are back in style. If you're hoping to travel with your partner this year, take inspiration from fellow readers who've loved our trip to [Verona](#) for the city's famous opera festival. This is the home of the world's most famous love story, after all, and with VIP tickets and a backstage tour at the Arena di Verona, your holiday is bound to have a happier ending than Romeo and Juliet.

[VISIT VERONA WITH GH](#)

Another key travel trend for 2025 is five-star travel, with an increasing number of holidaymakers treating themselves to high-end stays. Good Housekeeping readers can find that luxurious touch on several of our tours, including our [Indian adventure](#). You'll be staying in a series of exceptional five-star hotels including the iconic Oberoi Cecil Hotel in the Himalayan foothills.



└ luxury train cabin with scenic landscape view
© Courtesy of La Dolce Vita Orient Express

And for the height of luxurious travel, readers have been jumping to book a holiday with a ride on the opulent [Dolce Vita Orient Express](#). This luxury sleeper train has interiors inspired by Italian design's golden age and will carry its first passengers in 2025.

Be among the first passengers on board with [Good Housekeeping's Italy trip](#). You'll spend a night on the train enjoying food curated by a three-Michelin starred chef as live music and entertainment add to the sumptuous atmosphere.

From high-end rail trips and long-haul adventures to short breaks in the UK and mainland Europe, there's so much choice with our [carefully selected holidays](#). Whichever destination you choose, you'll be in safe hands.

So if you're still deciding where to travel this year, why not take some inspiration from your fellow Good Housekeeping readers and book one of these fabulous getaways?

You can see our full range of carefully curated holidays [here](#).

Club Yolo

Spring Moodboard

People, places and things we're excited about!



Clockwise from top left: Casa Lawa (photo by Alicia Waite), La Minerva, a drink at the Romeo Roma, Villa Serbelloni, matches from The Ten Bells, umbrellas at the Belmond Splendido, Pensione America, La Dolce Vita Orient Express, La Salumina, shoulder bag from Brady

It's been a while since we've done a Moodboard, which was a regular part of our old Substack Intel newsletter. It's whatever we're into right now: who we've met recently, a book we can't wait for, hotels that are opening, travel industry bits and bobs—and occasionally a transporting playlist. Hope you like!

Rome is still on a new hotel opening bender. This spring, [La Minerva](#) opens in a 16th-century palace near the Pantheon—and owner Orient Express is also launching [La Dolce Vita](#), a 9-carriage mid-century train designed by DimoreStudio making stops between Rome/Sicily and Venice/Tuscany. Newcomer [Romeo Roma](#) was designed by Zaha Hadid, with an Alain Ducasse ristorante and museum displaying Roman walls and artifacts unearthed during construction. The [Hotel d'Inghilterra](#) (one-time watering hole of writers and artists) off the Piazza di Spagna reopened last fall after a respectful refresh. Also imminent: [Corinthia Rome](#) in the 19c. Bank of Italy HQ, and [Nobu Roma](#) on via Veneto.

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TRAVEL

THE HOTTEST HOTEL OPENINGS *TO HAVE ON* *YOUR RADAR*



From under-the-radar island sanctuaries to urban masterpieces, there's a wealth of magnificent recent openings and new hotels on the horizon. KATIE BERRINGTON rounds up the ones you need to know about now

Fashion assistant Maajira Muzzamil



Known for its iconic train journeys, Orient Express is opening its first luxury hotel, La Minerva, in spring 2025

1

Orient Express La Minerva Rome, Italy

World-renowned for its iconic train journeys, the Orient Express brand is expanding its legendary, luxury hospitality offering, bringing its style to a hotel in the heart of Rome. It has transformed the 17th-century palace La Minerva in the legendary Piazza della Minerva, steps away from the Pantheon, fusing art deco opulence with modern elegance and preserving the property's rich historical legacy. The opening also coincides with the launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express train, which will allow guests to embark on a captivating voyage across Italy in unrivaled style. *Opening in April 2025*



All Aboard! Boomers Are Making Train Travel Cool Again (for All Ages)

IT'S NOSTALGIA PLUS A LITTLE LUXURY

Nostalgia, adventure and varying degrees of luxury: That's the promise of a vacation-by-train, and it's one of the fastest-growing segments in travel. According to industry authority [Railbookers](#), train travel revenue worldwide increased by 30 percent between 2023 and 2024. And as a longtime travel writer and Gen X world traveler, I can tell you why—thanks to my mom.

Back in the '80s, my mom, acting on a half-baked [mother-daughter vacation idea](#), whisked me away on an Amtrak train journey across the Southeast. She'd heard rumors that domestic train travel—never exactly a moneymaker—was going to be lessened or even shut down altogether, and so she wanted her daughter to experience the magic while it still existed. I have no memory of the event, but she tells me how disappointed she was by the dirty train cars, poor or non-existent service and downmarket trappings of the fellow t'railers. I think my mom was expecting a glamour experience out of Hitchcock's 1938 *The Lady Vanishes* or even his 1951 thriller *Strangers on a Train*. Instead, she got a sort of sad Greyhound bus station on rails.

Well, looks like someone's turned up the pilot light on this eternal flame for my mom's generation, since trains are now a hot ticket among luxury travelers. Case in point: Last year, Railbookers strung together [seven luxury train trips](#) on four continents (with international flights adjoining) for \$114,000—and there was a waiting list of 500 names. Makes sense, since "slow travel" continues to be a [travel trend to look out for](#), and there are now trains which ape the charm and grace of the movies, only this time they're channeling millennial favorite director Wes Andersen and his cool 2007 flick *The Darjeeling Limited*. (Fun fact: Anderson designed a [dining car](#) IRL for the British Pullman, a Belmond Train.)

“I’m European so I grew up traveling via trains as a kid and it’s still my favorite way to travel today,” says PureWow executive editor and millennial traveler [Alexia Dellner](#). “Actually now that I have children of my own, I may even appreciate it more! There’s something so convenient about being able to stretch your legs whenever you choose and go grab a snack at your leisure (two key factors when traveling with littles). Not to mention how magical it is to watch the world outside fly by and the landscape change as you get closer to your destination.”

Here's a sampling of some train trips you can take (or rather, your boomer parents can take as a SKI trip (SKI is boomer slang for “spending kids’ inheritance”):



ORIENT EXPRESS

LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS

Touted as Italy’s first luxury train, it’s debuting this year with eight roundtrip excursions around the country from Rome.



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ORIENT EXPRESS

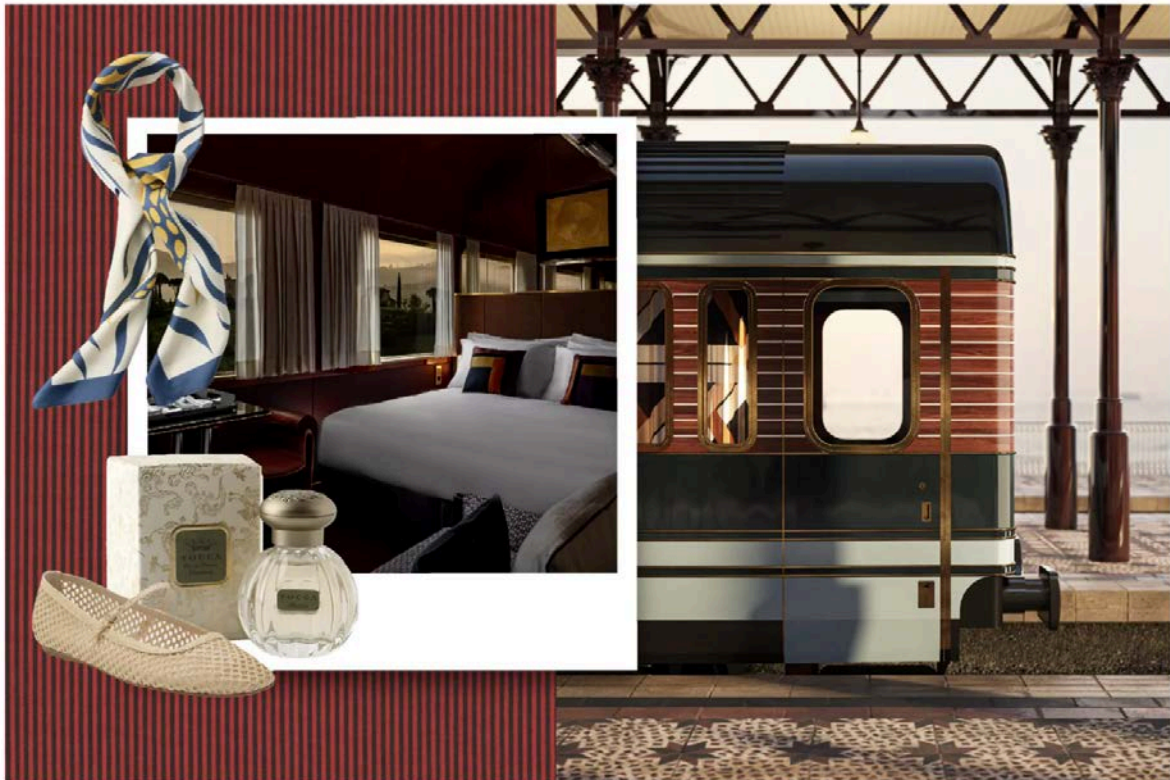
LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS

Touted as Italy’s first luxury train, it’s debuting this year with eight roundtrip excursions around the country from Rome.



All Aboard: Italy's Luxe New Train

Luxury is back on track.



Welcome to ***Book It!***, our monthly look at a buzzy new hotel or resort we're excited about.

Italy's first-ever luxury train is pulling into the station.

Rolling out this spring, **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** is redefining rail travel with eight dreamy routes.



What to Know:

Designed by **Dimorestudio**, the train blends mid-century Italian glamour with a modern edge. Three-Michelin-starred Chef Heinz Beck transforms every meal into a masterpiece, from leisurely breakfasts to Aperitivo hours.



With eight itineraries through Venice, Florence and beyond, choosing just one is the hardest part. Whether sipping wine in Tuscany or unwinding by the Portofino coast — this is how you do *la dolce vita*.



Rates from \$7,300 for a three-day itinerary, [book here](#).

THE OUT

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Unique Honeymoon Destinations For 2025

By Jemima Sissons

2 Days Ago

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for your post-wedding
getaway*

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northern archipelago on the map, private-island resort Lagen Island in El Nido, Palawan, re-emerges after an extensive renovation. Framed by lush forest and a sparkling lagoon, it offers a two-level spa, a vastly expanded beach area, a new dive centre and a biodiversity discovery centre where guests can learn about the island ecosystem before seeking out reef sharks and sea turtles in secluded bays.

BOOK: From £1,000 a night, elnidoresorts.com

Water & Rail

Raja Ampat, Indonesia

Recalling a golden age of Agatha Christie-style travel, water or rail offers slow, sustainable voyaging. In far-flung Raja Ampat in Indonesia, marine citadels teeming with aquatic life greet snorkellers and experienced scuba divers. Aqua Expeditions' luxury vessel Aqua Blu is the first long-range ocean explorer yacht permanently based in Indonesia. Days are spent swimming with whale sharks, snorkelling with manta rays or spotting iguanas on land before sundowners at an ancient fort and then on-board feasting on spice-route inspired catch of the day with sambal.

BOOK: From £8,231 a person for seven nights, aquaexpeditions.com

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Italy

Rail travel is getting a glossy makeover this year too with some spectacular new routes curated around gastronomy. From this spring, La Dolce Vita Orient Express launches in Italy, the country's first luxury train with 12 deluxe cabins, 18 suites and one La Dolce Vita Suite designed by Dimorestudio and furnished with Gio Ponti pieces recalling the glamour of the 1960s and 70s. Expect less-travelled locations such as Matera in Basilicata and regionally inspired cuisine overseen by three-Michelin-starred Heinz Beck.

BOOK: From £3,000 a night per person, [orient-express.com](https://www.orient-express.com)



The Britannic Explorer, England and Wales

Closer to home, soak in the majesty of the British Isles on The Britannic Explorer, a Belmond train, which will offer the first ever sleeper train touring England and Wales, with three-night journeys departing from London. The three routes will traverse Cornwall, the Lake District and Wales, with interiors dressed by Albion Nord, and zero waste food in the limed oak-lined dining carriage by L'Enclume's chef, Simon Rogan.

BOOK: From £5,800 a person, [belmond.com](https://www.belmond.com)

Luxe Wilderness

Hakone, Japan

Set in a secluded, sacred valley accessed by a private monorail, Japanese heritage informs every corner of the newly opened Espacio The Hakone Geihinkan Rin-Poh-Ki-Ryu. With only nine private villas, walls are cloaked in traditional Kawakami depicting gods alongside kumiko woodwork and washi paper detailing. After a piping hot onsen fed by its

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NEED HOT NEW HOTELS TO SEND CLIENTS TO? HERE ARE OUR UK & EUROPE PICKS

12 MAR 2025 BY ROB GILL

There are luxury openings aplenty across the UK and the rest of Europe this year. Here are some of the most significant hotel debuts to look out for



Orient Express La Minerva is due to open in Rome this spring

ORIENT EXPRESS LA MINERVA

Italy has an enduring attraction among luxury clients but there's even more of a renaissance this year with excitement mounting as Orient Express prepares to open its first hotel. Orient Express La Minerva (orient-express.com) in Rome will also connect with the brand's new La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains. The renovated hotel in central Rome, formerly the historic Grand Hotel de La Minerve, features 93 rooms and a host of bars and restaurants including a new rooftop venue with views across the Eternal City. Opens: spring 2025

FOUR SEASONS RESORT MYKONOS

Mykonos has long been a magnet for luxury clients and hotel options will be enhanced with the debut of the Four Seasons Resort Mykonos, Greece (fourseasons.com) in Kalo Livadi Bay. Guests can choose from 94 rooms, villas and suites, while culinary delights include a modern twist on a traditional Mykonian kafeneio (café) and an alfresco poolside Italian eaterie. There will be a spa too. Opens: summer 2025



Four Seasons is opening a new resort on the Greek island of Mykonos

FAIRMONT LA HACIENDA COSTA DEL SOL

Not to be outdone by its eastern neighbours, Spain's luxury cache will be burnished by the opening of the Fairmont La Hacienda Costa del Sol (fairmont.com) in Andalusia, which will be the Accor-owned brand's first resort on Europe's southern coast. The property will offer 213 rooms, suites and private villas, plus five restaurants and a spa. Open now

CORINTHIA BUCHAREST

Away from Europe's beaches, Corinthia is spreading its wings with a new all-suite property in the Romanian capital Bucharest. Corinthia Grand Hotel du Boulevard Bucharest (corinthia.com) features just 30 suites with the alluring promise of combining "Belle Époque grandeur with modern elegance". Opens: March 2025

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STAR ALLIANCE



The Chancery Rosewood is in the former US Embassy building

THE CHANCERY ROSEWOOD

The transformation of the former US Embassy building into the long-awaited The Chancery Rosewood ([rosewoodhotels.com](https://www.rosewoodhotels.com)) is set to be one of the star openings in London this year. The 146-room hotel in Mayfair's Grosvenor Square is being created by legendary architect Sir David Chipperfield with interiors from Joseph Dirand. A "variety" of formal and casual restaurants are promised, alongside an Asaya spa. Opens: summer 2025

SIX SENSES LONDON

The long-awaited debut of Six Senses ([sixsenses.com](https://www.sixsenses.com)) in the UK capital with a 109-room property housed within an art deco building in Bayswater, previously occupied by department store Whiteleys. Expect the usual culinary delights, the obligatory Six Senses Spa and a private members club called Six Senses Place. Opens: first half of 2025



Six Senses will be coming to London later this year

ARBEG HOUSE

Lovers of a “wee dram” can head to the refurbished Ardbeg House ([ardbeg.com](https://www.ardbeg.com)) on the Scottish island of Islay. Located close to whisky producer Ardbeg – known for its distinctive peaty and smoky malts – Ardbeg House features 12 rooms plus bar and restaurant. Guests can wet their whistles with two new exclusive whiskies. Opens: autumn 2025

MARCUS HOTEL PORTRUSH

Whiskey – of the Irish variety – will also be a major draw at the new Marcus Hotel Portrush ([hilton.com](https://www.hilton.com)) in Northern Ireland due to its access to nearby Bushmills Whiskey Distillery. The country’s first Tapestry Collection by Hilton property will open in time for the British Open golf tournament at the Royal Portrush course in July. Opens: Q2 2025

The New York Times

Immersed in Elegance as the World Rolls By: Luxury Sleeper Trains

From the Lake District in England to a lush island in Japan, here's a way to travel — and sleep — in style.

ITALY

[La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#)



Beginning this spring, La Dolce Vita Orient Express will depart from Rome for round-trip itineraries that visit various parts of Italy. Above, a rendering of one of the train's suites. Credit...La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Channeling the allure of Italy in the 1960s and 70s, this sleek train will begin offering eight round-trip itineraries in April, each departing from Rome, where you'll find the new La Dolce Vita Orient Express lounge, at Roma Ostiense train station. From there, depending on your itinerary, you'll travel to places like Tuscany and Piedmont. Some itineraries may appeal to train buffs, such as the [Rome-to-Sicily trip](#) during which you'll see the train decouple and be loaded onto a ferry to cross the Strait of Messina, then get reassembled on the other side. Indulge in meals overseen by the chef [Heinz Beck](#), perhaps best known for [La Pergola](#), the three Michelin-starred restaurant in Rome. At night you'll sleep in one of 12 deluxe cabins with mirrored walls (a sofa unfolds to a double bed, and ottomans can be used as coffee tables) or in one of 18 suites with beds, sofas, tables and armchairs. An additional suite, meant to be the grandest on the train, is in the works. Prices for a one-night itinerary from 3,500 euros, or about \$3,800, a person in a deluxe cabin.

Should you wish to supplement your train travels with stays in Rome or Venice, the first ever hotels from Orient Express are also opening this year, including the [Orient Express La Minerva](#), a former 17th-century palace in Rome, and the [Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli](#) in Venice.

Where Travel Will Take Us Next, According to Our Top Travel Specialists

From the rise of nocturnal travel to the meaning of “JOMO,” here are the trends our experts think you should know.

When it comes to trends, the last five years have been head-spinning. First there was armchair travel, then [road trips](#), then revenge travel. People have taken trips in [big groups](#) and alone, to the remotest corners of the earth and the busiest cities. Through it all, everyone has been obsessed with wellness. To help us get a handle on the new reasons and ways to travel in 2025, we tapped [our extensive network of specialists](#). From the rise of nocturnal travel to the meaning of “JOMO,” here's what they think you should know.

Hotels are hitting the high seas

In the coming years expect more resort brands to take their five-star service out on the water. “This is perfect for luxury travelers who might be cruise curious,” says [Craig Mungary](#) of [Elite Global Journeys](#). The [Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection](#) launched the trend in 2022 with the 149-suite [Evrima](#); this year the company will add its third luxury ship, [Luminara](#). Next year [Four Seasons](#) will unveil a 95-suite ship in the [Caribbean](#); [Orient Express](#)'s 54-cabin [Corinthian](#) will sail the Adriatic, Caribbean, and Mediterranean; and [Aman](#) will introduce a 50-suite vessel in 2027.

Why choose? Rail-and-sail trips are taking off

Each month seems to bring [another train](#) or [ship launch](#) in one of the world's most exciting places. [AndBeyond](#) is now in the Pacific with [Galápagos Explorer](#); this spring [La Dolce Vita](#) [Orient Express](#) will start rolling through Italy. Increasingly, travelers are looking to combine these experiences. [Jimmy Carroll](#) of [Pelorus](#) has been designing itineraries that pair ultra-luxury train journeys with island-hopping adventures on liveaboards: “Travelers want to visit multiple destinations on once-in-a-lifetime trips that immerse them in several locations and change their perspective.” Call a travel specialist to manage the logistics on your behalf. [Tisha Neufville](#) of [Neufville Travel](#) says, “One client had a two-week cruise through Asia, and called me to tack on a solo trip on [Belmond's Eastern & Oriental Express](#). I also helped her with all the hotels, tours, and flights before, between, and after both the cruise and train.” These multivessel round-the-world trips feel like another example of our eternal nostalgia for the romantic, swashbuckling spirit of travel's golden age. Perhaps that golden age is back again.

In Europe and Japan, Luxury Sleeper Trains

LINK: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/18/travel/luxury-sleeper-trains-europe-japan.html>



Immersed in Elegance as the World Rolls By: Luxury Sleeper Trains From the Lake District in England to a lush island in Japan, here's a way to travel -- and sleep -- in style. A deluxe suite on the Seven Stars train, which offers itineraries on Kyushu, an island in southern Japan known for its cuisine and breathtaking scenery. Credit...Seven Stars By Stephanie Rosenbloom March 18, 2025, 5:00 a.m. ET If you've longed to indulge in elegant rail travel, but thought the days of lavish cars and live music were over, you're in luck. New trains as well as new routes, amenities and special events are rolling out, enticing travelers to sit back, Champagne in hand, and glide through some of the world's most beautiful landscapes. Be it the Lake District in England or the mountainous island of Kyushu in Japan, these journeys offer suites that rival rooms in high-end hotels, and dishes from chefs whose restaurants

have won Michelin stars. Here's where to climb aboard. Paris to Tuscany and Paris to Portofino The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, a Belmond Train, Europe Image This spring, the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, a Belmond Train, Europe, will take passengers from Paris to Italy. The train's restored carriages date to the 1920s and '30s. Credit...Christophe Coenan Beginning in May, this opulent train, with its restored 1920s and '30s carriages, will offer a new, three-night journey called Paris to Tuscany by a Legend of the Rails. Step into Bar Car 3674 to enjoy live piano music before retiring to your jewel-toned room. Options include a 'historic cabin' with seats that convert to berths (communal restrooms are at the end of each sleeper carriage); a suite with its own marble bathroom and a double or twin bed that converts to a seating area; or a grand suite with a marble bathroom, double bed, dining area and 24-

hour butler service. During your travels, you'll visit Siena, Italy, where you'll tour the Gothic-style historic center. You'll stop by a 13th-century palace in the Piazza del Campo where you can savor an aperitif while taking in panoramic views of the city, and spend two nights amid vineyards and olive groves at Castello di Casole, a Belmond Hotel, Tuscany. While there, stroll the grounds, join a stargazing session at the outdoor amphitheater and unwind with live music in the courtyard. Prices (including meals with wine) are from 9,350 pounds, or about \$12,100 a person, based on two guests sharing a historic cabin and two nights in a junior suite at Castello di Casole. In June, the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express will begin traveling to Portofino from Paris again (last year was its inaugural journey), this time with an added carriage: the L'Observatoire sleeper carriage, designed by the French artist, JR. The train's largest

accommodation will have its own library with more than 1,000 books, a tearoom with a fireplace, even a skylight so you can watch the clouds as the train moves along. The trip concludes at Splendido, a Belmond Hotel, which, beginning in June, will unveil renovations and updates to communal spaces, including a breakfast area, cocktail bar and Dior spa. Prices (which include meals and wine) for Paris to Portofino are from £10,400 a person, based on two guests sharing a historic cabin and two nights in a premium room at Splendido. Italy **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** Image Beginning this spring, **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** will depart from Rome for round-trip itineraries that visit various parts of Italy. Above, a rendering of one of the train's suites.Credit...**La Dolce Vita Orient Express** We are having trouble retrieving the article content. Please enable JavaScript in your browser settings. Thank you for your patience while we verify access. If you are in Reader mode please exit and log into your Times account, or subscribe for all of The Times. Thank you for your patience while we verify access. Already a subscriber? Log in. Want all of The Times? Subscribe. Advertisement

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7 hottest new hotels to book in Italy this summer

LINK: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/travel/7-hottest-new-hotels-to-book-in-italy-this-summer-101742294781459.html>



7 hottest new hotels to book in Italy this summer Bloomberg | | Posted by Zarafshan Shiraz Mar 18, 2025 04:29 PM IST Read this news in brief form Share Via Copy Link Now's the time to plan your travels if you haven't already - - and these properties, from the Dolomites down to Puglia, are a great place to start. Italy sells itself: gallery after gallery of Renaissance masterpieces, slippery forkfuls of cacio e pepe, the way the seaside looks even better with a spritz in hand. Some 458 million overnight stays were recorded by travellers seduced by such draws in 2024--setting a tourism record and making Italy the second-most-visited country in all of Europe, just behind Spain. 7 dreamy Italian hotels that will make you pack your bags immediately.(AP Photo/Andrew Medichini) 'I joke that Italy is always on top of my bucket list,' says Christian Clerc, chief executive officer of Auberge Resorts Collection, an

acclaimed US hospitality brand that in recent weeks opened its first Italian hotel, located in the Tuscan hills outside of Florence. 'I feel like everybody's connected to Italy somehow. If you like beauty and culture and food, you probably love coming back again and again just as I do.' That perpetual demand explains why each year an impressive crop of resort debuts seems to raise the bar for dolce-vita-style indulgence. And in 2025, the newcomers are so impressive, they're forcing Italy's classic bastions of luxury to raise their games in turn. If you're like Clerc and put Italy at the top of your must-visit list, here are seven hot new and newly reinvigorated hotels to book this summer. Collegio alla Querce This urban resort offers the best of both worlds: It's just a 15-minute drive from Brunelleschi's Duomo in the center of town, but it's removed enough to feel like a Tuscan countryside

retreat. Its 83 rooms and suites occupy a cluster of 16th century buildings that have assumed many lives-- first a school for Florence's elite (hence the name), then a chapel, then a theater. Now it's once again fit for society gatherings, with vine-covered trellises shading the pool and a dimly lit bar in the old headmaster's office. Shelves in the rooms are lined with ceramics commissioned from local artisans; they inform an elegant, earth-toned color scheme all around. And because luxury is all about exclusive experiences now, activities include pasta making with the resort's chefs, wine tasting classes and private after-hours tours of the Accademia Gallery. Rooms from around EUR1,000 (\$1,092). Vista Ostuni In July, Ostuni, a village in Puglia known for its medieval architecture and winding cobblestone streets, will get its first hotel of note just outside the city center in a 14th century palazzo. Its

generous suites--starting at some 645 square feet--will have views of either the sea or Ostuni's famed whitewashed buildings. (The unique limestone architecture is why Italians call it the La Perla Bianca, or 'the White Pearl.') Lauded Italian chef Andrea Berton of Milan's Michelin-starred Berton will open a fine-dining restaurant downstairs, while on the roof there will be a bar overlooking the tranquil countryside. For guests eager to explore the surrounding area, private car transfers will head 15 minutes north to the seaside and its beach clubs; trips to see the triangular 'Trulli' houses in nearby Alberobello can easily be arranged, too. Rooms from around EUR1,400. **Orient Express** La Minerva The Eternal City is undergoing what feels like an eternal luxury hotel boom, and the latest, greatest entrant is smack in the middle of the Centro Storico, a 10-minute drive from Ostiense Station. The proximity is important as it's the sibling property to a new luxury train that shares the **Orient Express** name, taking guests from the capital to destinations like Sicily and Venice in opulent rail journeys that channel the 1920s art deco era. The hotel follows suit with palatial flourishes like marble shell-shaped sinks

in its 93 rooms. Top suites have frescoed ceilings and sweeping views of the Pantheon. Bonus: If you're keen to try the new train journeys before or after your stay, the hotel provides transfers to the station. Rooms from EUR1,000. Vetera Matera Matera in the country's south has been an in-the-know day trip thanks to its Sassi--rocky dwellings dug into caves, some of which date to the Paleolithic era. But few visitors have stayed overnight, given the town's lack of noteworthy hotels. That's about to change with the mid-April arrival of Vetera, which is ideally located for visitors who want to check out the famous structures. Its 23 rooms are carved into the Sassi; the same applies to the spa area, where the pools are built into the rocks. Guests can explore the town's stone buildings and winding cobbled streets on foot, some of which are featured in the 2021 James Bond film No Time to Die, and then cool down with a cocktail in hand at the outdoor bar. Rooms from around EUR500. Ancora Cortina The Dolomites have never been hotter, as the region unveils a series of hotels in anticipation of the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics. It may still seem early, but Americans have long preferred the region

for summer hiking rather than winter skiing: It's when long afternoons cast a uniquely rosy glow on the mountainsides. Among the openings are Aman's yearslong overhaul of the iconic Rosa Alpina, whose name comes from that signature alpenglow. But we're partial to Ancora Cortina, a spinoff of celebrity-favorite Borgo Egnazia in Puglia. When it opens in May, its 38 rooms will bear the punchy design stamp of Vicky Charles, formerly head of design at Soho House. Notably, it's a redo of an old hotel that has anchored historic Cortina since 1826, with a location smack in the center of town. Rooms from EUR800. Lake Como Edition Here's what we said in January when writing about Lake Como Edition as one of Europe's most exciting openings in 2025: 'Once you've laid eyes on the Edition's floating pool, built to hover over Lake Como, you may not even notice the grand building that houses the 142-room hotel. Yet that structure is also a sight to behold: It's a transformed 19th century building with views to the Bellagio mountains from the western shores of the lake. Expect vibey, dimly lit bars and cool restaurants inside; this is an Edition, after all. That also means you'll be able to book your five-star

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

stay with Marriott Bonvoy points, a first for tony (and expensive) Lake Como.' We stand by every word. Opening date and rates to be confirmed. Splendid o, a Belmond Hotel The grande dame of Portofino is perched high in the hills with enviable views of the blue-green waters of the Ligurian Sea--and many of the rooms have terraces that face the bay. It's long been one of the most stylish places to stay in town (legends like Elizabeth Taylor have vacationed there) and will become even more of a spot to see and be seen when it reopens this June after a multiyear renovation from design superstar Martin Brudnizki. DJs will spin sets from the pool deck, and guests can splash up for cocktails and pasta at the new terrace restaurant, Splendido Grill. And because this is Belmond--a hotel company LVMH acquired in 2019--there will also be a Dior spa, where four treatment 'cabins' will offer al fresco massages set to the sound of crashing waves. Rooms from EUR2,400. Recommended Topics Share this article Read this news in brief form Share Via Copy Link Lake Como Tuscany Italy Italy Hotel Hotels Travel Traveller Air Travel Tour Tourism Tourist Tourist Spot Trip Catch every big

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TORONTO SUN

The 7 hottest new hotels to book in Italy this summer

Italy sells itself: Gallery after gallery of Renaissance masterpieces, slippery forkfuls of cacio e pepe, the way the seaside looks even better with a spritz in hand. Some 458 million overnight stays were recorded by travellers seduced by such draws in 2024 — setting a tourism record and making Italy the second-most-visited country in all of Europe, just behind Spain.

“I joke that Italy is always on top of my bucket list,” says Christian Clerc, chief executive officer of Auberge Resorts Collection, an acclaimed U.S. hospitality brand that in recent weeks opened its first Italian hotel, located in the Tuscan hills outside of Florence. “I feel like everybody’s connected to Italy somehow. If you like beauty and culture and food, you probably love coming back again and again just as I do.”

That perpetual demand explains why each year an impressive crop of resort debuts seems to raise the bar for dolce-vita-style indulgence. And in 2025, the newcomers are so impressive, they’re forcing Italy’s classic bastions of luxury to raise their games in turn.

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Orient Express La Minerva in Rome offers sweeping views of the Pantheon from its top suites. PHOTO BY @ORIENTEXPRESS /Instagram

Orient Express La Minerva

The Eternal City is undergoing what feels like an eternal luxury hotel boom, and the latest, greatest entrant is smack in the middle of the Centro Storico, a 10-minute drive from Ostiense Station. The proximity is important as it's the sibling property to a new luxury train that shares the Orient Express name, taking guests from the capital to destinations like Sicily and Venice in opulent rail journeys that channel the 1920s art deco era. The hotel follows suit with palatial flourishes like marble shell-shaped sinks in its 93 rooms. Top suites have frescoed ceilings and sweeping views of the Pantheon. Bonus: If you're keen to try the new train journeys before or after your stay, the hotel provides transfers to the station.



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MR. TRIPPER

INSPIRATION

First Guest: La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Orient Express has been lovingly nudged into the 21st century with the launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express: a retro-inspired train celebrating the best of what Italy has to offer

BY SARAH ALLARD

3 April 2025

Name of train? La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Passenger occupancy? 62

Itinerary? Rome, Venice, Portofino (two nights)

Starting price: €3,500 / £2,920 per person per night

Tell us about the train: history, routes, type of journeys. What is the big picture here?

I don't know about you, but, for me, the words "Orient Express" conjure up visions of chic ladies draped in jewels sipping cocktails, dapper gents in tuxedos smoking cigars and – OK, I'll go there – the odd murder mystery. **Train journeys** like this are the stuff of fiction and Hollywood films – an almost mythical form of travel wrapped up in old-world glamour.

WATCH

How to make a Singapore Sling: the original Raffles recipe



The Orient Express started in 1883, when its maiden trip, from **Paris** to Constantinople, flipped the concept of long-distance travel on its head. Fast forward 140 years and, while the guests are still glamorous (and the cocktails very much free flowing), Orient Express has been nudged lovingly into the 21st century with the launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express: a 12-carriage train that will transport 62 guests around **Italy** on one- and two-night journeys. The train is the first of six (with eight iconic itineraries) in a collaboration between Italian luxury hospitality business Arsenale Group. and French hotel giant Accor. I was lucky enough to nab a spot on a two-night journey that would take us on a round trip from Rome to Venice and **Portofino**.

My adventure begins in the most spectacular setting, the La Dolce Vita lounge inside Roma Ostiense station. It's a knockout, with plenty of nods to the transport we're about to take, from the ornate check-in desk complete with letter compartments to the neon tube lights that could have been plucked from a train carriage. Artist-architect Hugo Toro has created a space that feels modern yet timeless, with lots of cosy areas to relax with a cappuccino – or something stronger – before a curtain hiding the platform is drawn and it's time to head for the train.



One of the suites on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express MR. TRIPPER

Who is onboard?

If I was expecting women in flapper dresses and men with curly moustaches, I would have been quite disappointed. Instead, there are a lot of TV personalities, CEOs and creatives drawn by the serious focus on design (more on that in a moment). Children are noticeably absent – although they are allowed, the cabin and suite configurations would make it a touch on the tricky side. If there were ever a time to call in the babysitter, this is it.

Describe the cabins.

I defy anyone to walk into a train cabin, spot a double bed and not gasp. Even more surprising is how comfortable it is. I'm in one of the 18 suite cabins on board, complete with a desk, sofa, enough storage to unpack my entire **suitcase** and a private bathroom. The shower is bigger than the one in my first flat, with Eredi Zucca toiletries stacked in a neat row and fluffy towels within arm's reach. While the temptation is to spend time in the communal areas or enjoying one of the off-board experiences, I would highly recommend reserving a couple of hours to relax in your cabin – wearing your OE-branded robe and slippers, if you're feeling extra fancy – and do nothing except enjoy views of the Italian countryside whizzing past your window.



La Dolce Vita Orient Express MR. TRIPPER

Any standout or noteworthy design elements to the train?

La dolce vita, or “the sweet life” – an era made famous by Federico Fellini’s film of the same name – is the inspiration behind the train’s look, an ode to the golden age of Italian glamour. Architecture and design firm Dimorestudio has created a space influenced by the ’60s and ’70s that’s also slick and contemporary. The team’s passion for showcasing Italian craftsmanship can be seen everywhere: the finest porcelain from Ginori 1735 sits neatly on pristine white Rivolta Carmignani table linens; custom mid-century-style light fixtures designed by Dimorestudio and made in Italy cast a soft glow across the cabin.

In the dining carriage, burnt orange chairs pop against the glossy pale green walls. The bar cart has wavy seats stretching along each side, creating a feeling of movement and, once night falls, contributing to a convivial atmosphere as we sit opposite each other chatting about our day. Dimorestudio has chosen textures, patterns and colours – smooth

velvets and deep jewel tones – that seem to dance as the light streams in from the windows by day, and by night, as the sky fades to black and the lights are dimmed, create a cosy warm tone.

Tell us about the crew.

Each carriage has its own conductor who's with you throughout the journey. As soon as I board, Alessandro shows me around my suite, pointing out how everything works and the button to press any time I need something. I'm a little ashamed to admit that while the idea of pressing a button felt awkward at first, by day two I was happily using it to order a cocktail to sip while getting ready for the evening (a very good negroni, in case you're wondering).

Every member of the crew, from the cabin conductors to the bar staff, seem genuinely excited and incredibly proud to be there, and each is keen to tell me all about different aspects of the train or the next destination we're nearing.



The restaurant cart on board MR. TRIPPER

What food and drink options are available on board?

German-born, three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck is behind the onboard menus. He, like the rest of the team, is passionate about showcasing the best of what Italy has to offer. Beck has crafted menus that tell the story of the regions the trains will travel through, so expect seafood in Sicily and truffle on the northern leg. I tuck into fresh lobster tacos, silky cacio e pepe and tender lamb coated in a delicate pistachio crumb. The wine list is as impressive as you would expect, with bottles sourced from Italy's most prestigious vineyards and poured expertly by the team who, despite some serious swaying at times, avoid spilling one drop on the linens. And the bartenders can rustle up a cocktail as good as (and in some cases, better than) those found in some of the most luxe hotel bars.

What about activities and entertainment?

On the second night, as the train winds its way through the Italian countryside, guests gather in the bar cart to listen – and, at many points, join in with – Italian classics belted out by a suave singer-saxophonist duo, all while the bar staff expertly manoeuvre around the moving carriage carrying trays full of cocktails. I make a mental note to learn the words to “Tu Vuo’ Fa’ L’Americano” just in case I’m ever lucky enough to make it back onto the train again.

Where did it go and how were the excursions? Did anything stand out?

The excursions aren’t about seeing the most popular parts of Italy – anyone can do that. The passion here is for either showing a new side of a tourist spot or introducing travellers to a lesser-known destination deserving of the limelight.

The team works with a network of partners across the country to give guests money-can’t-buy experiences that feel genuinely and deeply rooted in each region. On our first evening I feel like a celebrity as I’m escorted to a private taxi boat and whisked along the [Venice](#) canals, taking in the sights from the water by starlight. Our dinner spot that night is a 16th-century private palazzo, with beautiful gardens and a grand dining room.



One of the cabins on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express MR. TRIPPER

The following morning we pull into our next stop: Santa Margherita Ligure, a gem in the heart of Genoa with a picturesque harbour and plenty of charming streets and shops to lose an afternoon in. We’re passing through to Portofino to visit La Portofinese, an eco-farm set in the hills overlooking the English Bay. Owner Mino Viacava dreamt of going back to his roots and working with the land, and today the farm

has honeybees, vineyards, olive trees and a butterfly garden. Resident chef Alessio Tresanini shows us how to make the freshest pesto using ingredients from the farm, before we take a seat for lunch (and to sample some of the excellent wine).

Later that afternoon I wander around Portofino's harbour (stopping for gelato, of course). Being here in the off-season feels even more special, like the town is just waking up as it sparkles in the spring sunshine.

Are there any standout sustainability or green initiatives about this train?

Supporting local is a priority, from working with a network of the best guides to championing independent restaurants and businesses through the off-board excursions, not to mention sourcing only local produce from each region.

Finally, give a sentence or two on why the train is worth booking.

There is something endlessly glamorous about travelling by train, and getting to see Italy from a totally new perspective is something I'll never forget. Whether you've been to the country 100 times or you're planning your first visit, I can guarantee there's no way to experience a taste of la dolce vita quite like this.

TRAVEL OFTEN LIVE WELL TRAVEL MAGAZINE

DRIFT

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Begins Its Journey



[La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#), the first Italian-made luxury train, makes its much-anticipated debut with a bold ambition: to reinvent the very essence of travel in motion. Eight curated itineraries blending art, landscapes, and three-star Michelin cuisine by Heinz Beck, all in celebration of Italian excellence in motion.

The train was unveiled today at Roma Ostiense Station, within the exclusive La Dolce Vita Lounge dedicated to its passengers, on the eve of the inaugural journey, scheduled for April 4th. The first trip, "[Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards](#)" will take guests to the charming destination of Montalcino.

Born of a visionary collaboration between Arsenale and Orient Express, and supported by Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani of the FS Group, this pivotal project signals the renaissance of rail as the ultimate luxury. La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks a new era in the Italian tourism landscape, offering travelers an exclusive experience that fully embraces the essence of Made in Italy. It celebrates the country's cultural, scenic, and gastronomic heritage, guiding guests on a unique journey through Italy's most emblematic destinations.



The Routes

Traversing 14 Italian regions, the train offers eight exclusive itineraries tailored for discerning international travelers. From the canals of Venice to the coves of Portofino, the medieval charm of Siena to the sun-drenched stones of Matera, and from Montalcino's famed vineyards to the truffle paths of Nizza Monferrato, each journey is a celebration of Italy's rich cultural and natural heritage. Sicily reveals itself in stages – Catania, Palermo, Taormina... each one capturing a different hue of the island's timeless allure. Thoughtfully designed to embrace the philosophy of slow travel, these routes invite guests to connect deeply with local traditions, flavors, and landscapes.

The Train

With 31 cabins, 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins, and the signature La Dolce Vita Suite, the train is the result of a meticulous restoration and design process. Originally Z1 Italian model carriages, each has been reimagined through a major investment that drew on the technical and artisanal excellence of Southern Italy, specializing in railway craftsmanship and design, with work carried out between Brindisi and Palermo. This innovative project marks the creation of Italy's first private luxury rail fleet, which will ultimately comprise six bespoke trains.



Interior design

The interiors, by Milan's Dimorestudio, are a reverent salute to Italian design's golden age: geometric echoes of Gio Ponti, the sensual modernism of Gae Aulenti, whispers of Osvaldo Borsani. It embodies the spirit of mid-century glamour, an homage to La Dolce Vita and the cultural pulse of 1960s Italy.

Onboard experience

Guests embark from the Orient Express Lounge, envisioned by artist-architect Hugo Toro, where period motifs are refracted through a contemporary lens. There, beneath a lacquered tangerine ceiling, an aperitivo hints at the opulence ahead. Onboard, guests are treated to menus composed by chef Heinz Beck, inspired by the regions they traverse. Each dish is a narrative seasoned with regional soul. The whole experience is distinguished by its high level of service, while stops at select destinations allow passengers to explore the unique cultural and historical aspects of each region. La Dolce Vita Orient Express invites travelers to rediscover Italy, slowly, elegantly, and with a remarkable attention to detail.

*"With La Dolce Vita Orient Express, we are introducing a new model to the global tourism landscape, leading an emerging trend: rail cruises, which are becoming increasingly relevant worldwide. Thanks to the synergy between Italian excellence in railways and manufacturing, this project helps strengthen an integrated hospitality system that complements the cruise and hotel industries. The third pillar of tourism starts in Italy and is driven by an Italian company. I believe this is crucial for the revival of our Made in Italy, especially in the industrial and tourism sectors. Our commitment translates into a production that, to date, represents an international benchmark, with the ambition of creating a tourism offer that extends travel beyond peak seasons and promotes alternative destinations, thanks to the exclusivity and comfort of one of the most efficient and sustainable ways to travel. The Dolce Vita train can become a symbol of Italy's dedication to enhancing its territories, supporting local entrepreneurship, and strengthening national railway production, while contributing to a more integrated tourism system," said **Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale.***

Gilda Perez Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express, stated: "The launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks the beginning of a new chapter in Italian train journeys, made possible through our partnership with Arsenale Group. This unique experience is an invitation to rediscover Italy through a new lens—where the glamour of 1960s and 1970s Italy meets the country's rich hospitality and warm conviviality. The train's design is brought to life by Dimorestudio, with every detail embodying the spirit of this celebrated period, with all of its zest and charm. The guest journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge at Ostiense Station, a historic space crafted by artist-architect Hugo Toro, setting the stage for an exceptional Italian adventure. Onboard, guests can indulge in gastronomy signed by Michelin-star chef Heinz Beck. A true celebration of all that Italy represents, this voyage captures the essence of the country's landscapes, flavors, and way of life. From the moment the journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge – guests are brought into a new travel experience that celebrates Italy's landscapes, flavours, and culture – signed by Orient Express".

ELLE DECOR

INSIDE ITALY'S MOST LUXURIOUS TRAIN

La Dolce Vita Orient Express makes its grand debut with Dimorestudio interiors, three-star Michelin cuisine, and a bold vision for Italian tourism.

Yesterday at Roma Ostiense Station, the Orient Express returned with an ambitious, Italian, luxury travel venture: the **La Dolce Vita Orient Express**, a high end train with a distinctly mid-century flair.

The ceremonial unveiling took place in the exclusive La Dolce Vita Lounge, a dedicated space designed by artist-architect **Hugo Toro**, where a tangerine lacquered ceiling hovers above guests enjoying their first taste of the opulence to come.

This marks Italy's first private luxury rail fleet, born from a collaboration between Arsenale and Orient Express, with support from Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani. The inaugural journey departs tomorrow, April 4, whisking passengers to Montalcino on the aptly named "**Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards**" itinerary.



Courtesy Orient Express La Dolce Vita

ELLE Decor A-List firm **Dimorestudio** has transformed former Z1 Italian railway carriages into moving galleries of mid-century Italian design. The interiors pay homage to the nation's design legends—Gio Ponti, Gae Aulenti, Osvaldo Borsani—capturing the glamour of 1960s Italy when "la dolce vita" wasn't just a phrase but a cultural movement.

The train features 31 cabins, including 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins, and the signature La Dolce Vita Suite. This fleet will traverse 14 Italian regions on eight itineraries, from Venice's romantic canals to Sicily's sun-drenched landscapes. Each journey embraces slow travel, allowing guests to savor Italy's cultural tapestry at a civilized pace.

The deluxe cabins feature cool color palettes, mirrored back walls, and wooden slat ceilings, with each space offering a private ensuite bathroom—a luxury not always found on overnight trains. During daylight hours, the cabin's sofa serves as a comfortable seating area before transforming into a double bed at night, with ottomans doubling as coffee tables and stools. Room service is available via in-cabin tablets, offering a selection of Italian delicacies including olives, fennel-infused taralli, cheese boards, and breadsticks.



Courtesy Orient Express La Dolce Vita

Three-star Michelin chef Heinz Beck oversees the culinary program, creating menus that reflect the regions being traversed. Mornings begin with "The Grand Tour of Italy" breakfast, featuring freshly squeezed juices, Sicilian brioche, artisanal jams, and aromatic Italian coffee. As evening approaches, the train undergoes what's called "The Great Transformation"—lights dim, decor subtly shifts, and a pianist unveils a new repertoire while the sommelier prepares signature cocktails and wine pairings in the Bar Car.

The Lounge Bar itself is a warm, inviting space with a luminous lacquered ceiling and sophisticated furnishings in soft beige, off-white, and camel tones. Here, guests partake in the cherished Italian tradition of Aperitivo, enjoying a buffet of antipasti paired with expertly crafted cocktails and fine Italian wines. The experience extends beyond the rails with curated stops that immerse travelers in local traditions and landscapes.



Courtesy Orient Express La Dolce Vita

"We're introducing a new model to global tourism—rail cruises as the third pillar alongside cruises and hotels," Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale, noted in a press release. "This project represents a benchmark for Made in Italy, promoting sustainable travel and supporting local entrepreneurship."

Gilda Perez Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express, describes it as "a new chapter in Italian train journeys" where "the glamour of 1960s and 1970s Italy meets the country's rich hospitality."

When fully operational, the ambitious project will comprise six trains operating 600 trips annually, with prices starting from €3,500 per night. The fleet is being built in workshops between Brindisi and Palermo, with a total investment of €240 million. Already, pre-bookings show strong international appeal, with 47% coming from American travelers.

To book your own adventure, head to [the Orient Express site](#). All aboard for la dolce vita, indeed.



The Grand Premiere of La Dolce Vita Orient Express

At Roma Ostiense station, a ceremonial ribbon-cutting set the stage for a new era of travel, inaugurating a remarkable train and Italy's most refined travel experience



La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the first Italian made luxury train, makes its much-anticipated debut with a bold ambition: to reinvent the very essence of travel in motion.



Eight curated itineraries blending art, landscapes, and three-star Michelin cuisine by Heinz Beck, all in celebration of Italian excellence in motion. The train was unveiled today at Roma Ostiense Station, within the exclusive La Dolce Vita Lounge dedicated to its passengers, on the eve of the inaugural journey, scheduled for April 4th. The first trip, "Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards" will take guests to the charming destination of Montalcino.

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Traversing 14 Italian regions, the train offers eight exclusive itineraries tailored for discerning international travellers. From the canals of Venice to the coves of Portofino, the medieval charm of Siena to the sun-drenched stones of Matera and from Montalcino's famed vineyards to the truffle paths of Nizza Monferrato, each journey is a celebration of Italy's rich cultural and natural heritage. Sicily reveals itself in stages - Catania, Palermo, Taormina... each one capturing a different hue of the island's timeless allure. Thoughtfully designed to embrace the philosophy of slow travel, these routes invite guests to connect deeply with local traditions, flavours and landscapes.

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About Accor, a world-leading hospitality group

Accor is a world-leading hospitality group offering stays and experiences across more than 110 countries with over 5,600 hotels and resorts, 10,000 bars & restaurants, wellness facilities and flexible workspaces. The Group has one of the industry's most diverse hospitality ecosystems, encompassing around 45 hotel brands from luxury to economy, as well as Lifestyle with Ennismore. ALL, the booking platform and loyalty program embodies the Accor promise during and beyond the hotel stay and gives its members access to unique experiences. Accor is focused on driving positive action through business ethics, responsible tourism, environmental sustainability, community engagement, diversity, and inclusivity. Accor's mission is reflected in the Group's purpose: Pioneering the art of responsible hospitality, connecting cultures, with heartfelt care. Founded in 1967, Accor SA is headquartered in France. Included in the CAC 40 index, the Group is publicly listed on the Euronext Paris Stock Exchange (ISIN code: FR0000120404) and on the OTC Market (Ticker: ACCYY) in the United States. For more information, please visit group.accor.com or follow us on [X](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#).

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Unveiled in Rome Begins Its Journey



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Italy's La Dolce Vita Orient Express Sets a New Standard for Luxury Rail Travel with Curated Itineraries, Michelin-Star Dining, and Exclusive Access to Iconic Destinations Across the Italian Landscape



La Dolce Vita Orient Express Makes Its Grand Debut, Redefining Luxury Travel in Italy

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Italy's first-ever luxury train, has officially debuted with a bold vision to revolutionize the concept of travel. Today, at Roma Ostiense Station, the lavish train was unveiled in an exclusive event, coinciding with the unveiling of its private La Dolce Vita Lounge for its esteemed passengers. This grand reveal sets the stage for its inaugural journey, which is set to begin on April 4th, with the first trip titled "Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards" taking guests to the picturesque Montalcino.

A creation of an extraordinary partnership between Arsenale and Orient Express, backed by Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani, La Dolce Vita Orient Express signals a new chapter in luxury rail travel. The project promises to be a renaissance for the Italian tourism industry, showcasing the essence of "Made in Italy" through a unique combination of culture, cuisine, and exploration. With eight curated itineraries, the train sets out to offer discerning travellers an immersive experience that will allow them to indulge in Italy's rich heritage and stunning landscapes.

The Routes: A Journey Through Italy's Heritage

The La Dolce Vita Orient Express traverses 14 of Italy's most iconic regions, offering eight exclusive itineraries that promise to captivate the senses. From the romantic canals of Venice to the stunning cliffs of Portofino, the medieval charm of Siena to the sun-soaked stones of Matera, the routes are designed to celebrate Italy's cultural and natural beauty. Among the most sought-after experiences is a visit to Montalcino's renowned vineyards, where guests will indulge in the finest Tuscan wines.

Sicily also plays a starring role, with its many faceted destinations like Catania, Palermo, and Taormina. Each stop showcases a different aspect of the island's timeless allure. Thoughtfully crafted to embody the spirit of slow travel, these routes allow guests to forge meaningful connections with the local culture, food, and landscape, making each stop a deeply enriching experience.

The Train: A Masterpiece on Rails

The La Dolce Vita Orient Express boasts a luxurious fleet comprising 31 cabins, 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins, and the signature La Dolce Vita Suite. These accommodations are the result of a meticulous restoration process, transforming the original Z1 Italian model carriages into a private luxury rail experience. Work on the train was carried out in Southern Italy, utilizing the region's expertise in railway craftsmanship and design.

This project marks the beginning of Italy's first private luxury rail fleet, which is set to expand to six bespoke trains. Every detail has been carefully considered, with the train offering passengers the highest level of comfort, design, and service.

Interior Design: A Tribute to Italian Glamour

The train's interiors are the work of Milan-based design studio Dimorestudio, whose work pays homage to the golden age of Italian design. The aesthetic is inspired by mid-century glamour, channeling the chic elegance of 1960s Italy. The cabin designs evoke geometric influences from the renowned architect Gio Ponti, the sensual modernism of Gae Aulenti, and the timeless style of Osvaldo Borsani. Every inch of the train exudes sophistication, blending classic Italian design elements with contemporary luxury.

Onboard Experience: Indulge in the Flavours of Italy

Passengers will embark on their journey at the exclusive Orient Express Lounge, designed by the visionary artist-architect Hugo Toro. The lounge, with its lacquered tangerine ceiling, sets the tone for the opulence awaiting passengers on board. Guests are treated to an aperitivo while savoring the anticipation of the lavish adventure ahead.

Once on board, the culinary experience is nothing short of extraordinary. The train's menus are created by renowned chef Heinz Beck, whose Michelin-starred approach brings the regional flavours of Italy to life. Each dish tells a story of the areas the train traverses, offering passengers an authentic taste of Italy's gastronomic heritage.

Throughout the journey, passengers are treated to impeccable service, ensuring that every detail is attended to with the utmost care. With select stops at cultural and historical landmarks along the way, guests can explore each region's unique traditions and sights, making the experience even more unforgettable.

The Ultimate Italian Experience

La Dolce Vita Orient Express is more than just a train journey – it's a celebration of Italy's unparalleled cultural and scenic riches. It offers an exclusive, slow-paced experience that invites passengers to rediscover Italy through its art, landscapes, cuisine, and heritage. This new luxury train not only redefines travel in Italy, but it also sets a new standard for what it means to travel with elegance and style. The much-anticipated debut of La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks the dawn of a new era in Italian tourism, and it's a journey every traveller should experience at least once.



TravelDreamsMagazine

What is your version of living the dream?

Unveiled in Rome: La Dolce Vita Orient Express Begins Its Journey



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — Rome, Italy (April 3, 2025) — [La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#), the first Italian-made luxury train, makes its much-anticipated debut with a bold ambition: to reinvent the very essence of travel in motion. Eight curated itineraries blending art, landscapes, and three-star Michelin cuisine by Heinz Beck, all in celebration of Italian excellence in motion.

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Trump defiant as trade war intensifies global stocks rout



Tariff stakes piled high

The risk could be greater than the Great Depression

BIG READ — PAGE 9

'Bullies seem impregnable – until they are not'

GILLIAN TETT — PAGE 11

● China retaliates ● Nasdaq in bear market ● S&P takes \$5tn hit ● Oil tumbles ● Fed inflation alert

FT REPORTS

Global stock markets plunged for a second consecutive day yesterday as investors reacted to the trade war sparked by Donald Trump and China's retaliatory tariffs of 34 per cent on all US imports. As Wall Street was on track to lose nearly \$5tn over two days, Jay Powell warned that "significantly larger than expected" US tariffs would stoke "higher inflation and slower growth". Trump called on the US Federal Reserve chief to cut interest rates now and vowed that he would never back down. The S&P 500 had lost 5.6 per cent by mid-afternoon, while the Nasdaq Com-

posite entered so-called bear market territory, leaving the index down more than a fifth since its mid-December high, as tech groups led the sell-off. The Europe-wide Stoxx 600 and the FTSE 100 both closed about 5 per cent down, their biggest drops since 2020. "The market is doing one thing: pricing in a global recession," said Deutsche Bank analyst George Saravelos. Oil prices tumbled, with Brent crude down 6.7 per cent at \$65.53 a barrel. In another sign of market nerves, fintech Klarna, medtech group Medline and ticket company StubHub all delayed their initial public offerings. The new Chinese 34 per cent tariff,

which will be imposed on all US imported goods from April 10, matches the US president's latest increase in duties on Beijing and comes on top of a previous tit-for-tat round this year. "CHINA PLAYED IT WRONG, THEY PANICKED – THE ONE THING THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO DO?" Trump posted on his Truth Social network just before Wall Street began trading. He added that his policies, which will take Washington's tariffs to their highest for more than a century, "WILL NEVER CHANGE". The Peterson Institute of International Economics calculated that the average American tariffs on Chinese

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goods would rise to 76 per cent – well above the 60 per cent Trump threatened in last year's election campaign. Beijing denounced the new US duties as "a typical unilateral bullying move". Leah Fahy at Capital Economics said China's retaliation yesterday had pushed Beijing's average tariff on US imports up to about 50 per cent, marking a "significant escalation". Beijing's move was accompanied by other measures including restrictions on rare-earth exports. Its latest tariffs are likely to have the most impact on US exports that include soybeans, wheat, corn, pharmaceuticals and crude oil.

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US charges will undermine Asian manufacturing shift

Donald Trump's tariff onslaught will be felt hardest in Asia's factories. While the rate on imports from China rises to more than 60 per cent, manufacturers say the levies of 32-49 per cent on many south-east Asian economies will be a bigger shock. They will undermine a shift since the US president's first term, when tariffs then drove Chinese groups to relocate production, notably to Vietnam, electronics, smartphones and PCs, are set to be hit hardest. **Factory threat** — PAGE 15

Washington's beer tariff to call time on 100,000 European jobs, brewers warn

MADELINE SPEED AND CAMILLA HODGSON — LONDON

Brewers have warned that a 25 per cent tariff on beer imports to the US could lead to 100,000 job losses and brewery closures in Europe as they called on the European Commission to defend them from the levy.

The introduction of the tariff this week as part of US President Donald Trump's "liberation day" has blindsided brewers and will inflict a financial hit on American importers of European and Mexican beers such as Heineken and Corona.

Brewers said they were confused as to whether the tariff applied to all beer or only to products imported in cans.

"We are calling on the commission to use all diplomatic channels and – whether through negotiation or retaliation – find a way to de-escalate this tariff in which we have become a collateral

victim," said Julia Leferman, secretary-general of Brewers of Europe, a trade group whose members include AB InBev, Heineken and Molson Coors. Brewers of Europe, which also represents Carlsberg, Asahi and trade groups from 28 countries, said that the EU's directorate general for trade had contacted US officials but had failed to get clarity on the scope of the tariffs.

The 25 per cent rate is higher than the 20 per cent tariff that will apply to all EU goods imported into the US. European brewers exported €870m worth of beer to the US in 2024, according to the trade group. It estimates that 100,000 out of 22m brewing jobs in the bloc could be lost as a result of the move. Analysts estimate that US imports of Mexican beer make up about 85 per cent of sales by Constellation Brands, which produces Corona and Modelo. Heineken's exposure is much lower,

with imports to the US making up 5 per cent of group sales. Constellation did not respond to a request for comment. Heineken declined to comment. Aluminium imports to the US were already subject to tariffs before Trump's sweeping announcements this week, which widened his global trade war.

Brewers were dragged into the president's net on Thursday when the US commerce department added imports of "beer" and "empty aluminium cans" to the list of products subject to a 25 per cent tariff. "We struggle to understand why beer has been downgraded to be a derivative product of aluminium," Leferman said. "It can't be that we are listed alongside cables and wires." Analysts at Citi said the change meant that US beverage producers were "likely to source more cans domestically".

THROUGH THICK AND THIN

RIMOWA



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World Markets

STOCK MARKETS				CURRENCIES				COMMODITIES				GOVERNMENT BONDS			
	Apr 4	Prev	%Chg		Apr 4	Prev	%Chg		Apr 4	Prev	%Chg		Apr 4	Prev	%Chg
S&P 500	5167.78	5396.52	-4.24	EUR	1.089	1.112	-2.05	Oil	72.12	72.12	0.00	US 2 yr	3.81	3.74	0.17
Nasdaq Composite	15643.01	16501.01	-5.48	GBP	1.264	1.271	-0.55	Gold	2329.00	2329.00	0.00	US 10 yr	3.94	4.00	-0.12
Eu Jones Ind	3840.41	4045.15	-5.11	CHF	0.949	0.948	0.01	Platinum	1178.10	1178.10	0.00	UK 2 yr	4.36	4.40	-0.12
FTSE 100	1175.47	1200.06	-2.03	AUD	1.453	1.453	0.00	Crude oil	100.00	100.00	0.00	UK 5 yr	3.05	3.10	-0.10
Nikkei 225	4514.38	4712.28	-4.25	HKD	7.786	7.786	0.00	Iron ore	86.25	86.25	0.00	UK 10 yr	4.03	4.10	-0.10
FTSE 250	8504.88	8674.78	-2.00	INR	81.00	81.00	0.00	Aluminium	2100.00	2100.00	0.00	JPY 2 yr	5.12	5.18	-0.06
FTSE All Share	4241.85	4364.31	-2.87	SGD	1.340	1.340	0.00	Lead	410.00	410.00	0.00	JPY 5 yr	5.89	5.74	0.15
CAC 40	7218.06	7388.08	-2.28	THB	35.00	35.00	0.00	Steel	1115.00	1115.00	0.00	JPY 10 yr	1.15	1.20	-0.10
Korea Kospi	2664.72	2717.28	-1.86	BRL	6.250	6.250	0.00	Coal	110.00	110.00	0.00	PNB 30 yr	2.28	2.30	-0.10
Hong Kong	22960.00	24725.00	-7.25	MXN	16.00	16.00	0.00	Gas	1.80	1.84	-0.14	US 2 yr	1.81	1.84	-0.14
Hang Seng	22960.00	24725.00	-7.25	PHP	136.00	136.00	0.00	Oil	2.00	2.00	0.00	UK 2 yr	2.00	2.00	0.00
MSCI World	3532.84	3668.52	-3.70	MYR	4.70	4.70	0.00	Gold	2110.00	2110.00	0.00	GER 30 yr	2.87	3.04	-0.07
MSCI EM	1102.36	1111.88	-0.86												
MSCI ACWI	401.84	406.11	-1.05												
FT World 2500	8814.00	9284.00	-5.20												
FT World 500	5214.10	5400.10	-3.12												

Prices are subject to change
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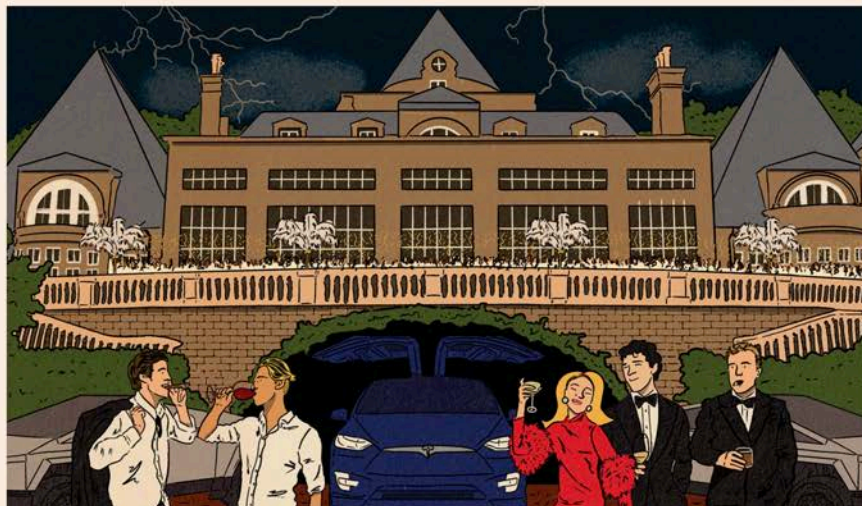


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The National Gallery's
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Elif Shafak
Why Turkey's hopes
lie with its young
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The careless age

A century ago, *The Great Gatsby* captured a culture responding to the reality that its moral energies were failing. Today, says Sarah Churchillwell, F Scott Fitzgerald's masterpiece is also a portrait of Trump's America

Celebrating its centenary on April 10, *The Great Gatsby* endures as the defining portrait of Jazz Age extravagance and glamour – a shimmering vision of energy, affluence and possibility. Away from the brightness, however, lies a world where dreams wither beneath corruption and malice. Observing the deepening faultlines in American society in the early 1920s, Fitzgerald guessed right: he foresaw tragedy in the country's impulse towards grandiosity and self-destruction in its reckless dishonesty. While *Gatsby* doesn't predict the Trumpian politics of 2025 in any literal sense, it perfectly captures the society that would embrace such politics a century later. The novel's prescience lies not in foretelling specific events but in diagnosing a culture where power enjoys impunity and cruelty rubs out its traces – a society run by careless people.

The careless people in *The Great Gatsby* are Tom and Daisy Buchanan, a wealthy couple living on Long Island. Daisy rekindles an affair with Jay Gatsby, her former lover, but when her husband Tom, arrogant and chronically unfaithful, confronts them, she retreats into her marriage. Driving Gatsby's car afterwards, Daisy accidentally kills Tom's mistress, Myrtle Wilson, in a hit-and-run, after which Tom and Daisy flee, abandoning Gatsby to his ruin.

Fitzgerald's verdict on them at the end of *Gatsby* has become for many a definitive statement on unaccountable elites today: "They were careless people... they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made."

For fewer readers mention Dan Cody, the multimillionaire tycoon who becomes Jay Gatsby's early mentor. A "product of the Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since Seventy-Five", Cody amassed his fortune through ruthless opportunism. By

Illustration by
Tatyana Alams

the time Gatsby meets him, he remains "physically robust but on the verge of soft-mindedness". The same attitudes that allow the Buchanans to destroy and retreat into their wealth rewarded men like Cody for seizing whatever they could wrest from the earth.

Such figures, having already grabbed the world's spoils, can to a great extent shape the destinies of those around them. In fact, images of despoliation shape *The Great Gatsby* from beginning to end, from narrator Nick Carraway's description of "what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams" at the start, to the "vanishing trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house" at the novel's bravura close.

Gatsby reaches beyond the moral failures of his characters to expose carelessness as a political force. This includes not only the oligarchy's immunity from consequence, but also the way extraction was equated with success. The unheeding brutality of so-called world-builders has returned most recently in the dark fantasies of Trumpism, and in Silicon Valley's fatuous motto, "move fast and break things".

The reckless driver of a speeding car is what brings the party of Gatsby crashing to an end; it is a story about the wreckage

left in the wake of "rotten drivers" like Daisy who break things and move on, the destructiveness of acceleration itself. Carelessness, in Fitzgerald's vision, is more than negligence – it is a way of wielding power; it's the certainty that the world exists to absorb your damage.

Fitzgerald composed *The Great Gatsby* far from the bright revelry it now conjures for so many. While most of the novel was written in France in the summer of 1924, Fitzgerald only completed it while living in Rome at the end of the year, under the shadow of Mussolini's recently installed fascist regime.

During the novel's composition, Fitzgerald immersed himself in reading about Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. Spengler wouldn't be translated into English until after *Gatsby*'s publication; Fitzgerald was gleefully his ideas for it from other writers. But he assimilated Spengler's vision of a world where power-hungry leaders rose from cultures grown cynical and spent – ideas the Nazis later appropriated. Fitzgerald recalled responding to Spengler's sense of civilizational senescence – what he described as "gang rule... the world as spoil". Fitzgerald absorbed from these sources a pervasive sense of cultural decline, where hope feels both essential and doomed.

Gatsby is the story of a culture responding, however dimly, to the reality that its moral energies have begun to fail. Gatsby's romantic fidelity to his dream is misplaced and ultimately destructive, but his faith in it means he has at least retained his soul. If Fitzgerald had endorsed Spengler's ideas in the novel's tragic hero – a Caesar rising in the twilight of the west. Instead, Tom is a bully and bigot, a careless, foolish man who triumphs simply because the world permits it. Gatsby is prophetic not for advancing a political theory of decline, but for capturing the emotional logic of a society in thrall to raw power.

The novel is not entirely on Gatsby's side – he is self-deceiving and criminal – but it gives him the dignity of his dreams. Tom, by contrast, is without tragedy. He does not have ideas, only reflexes, like his outrage at Gatsby making a claim on Daisy, which culminates in a racialised panic attack: "I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife... Nowadays people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions and next they'll throw

Tom's panic at Gatsby's rise, expressed as racial paranoia, is little more than a tantrum, lashing out from crude instincts rooted in dominance and fear. He's just a tug with a library – rummaging through second-hand ideologies when he feels dominance begin to slip from his grasp.

Fitzgerald was writing a socially realistic novel about the people he saw in the world around him – he knew many men like Tom, rich, entitled and stupid. A century later they are still here, searching for ideologies to justify their dominance. Many of them now run the US. They adopt alarmist rhetoric – "western decline", "invasion", "replacement" – not because they are prophets but because they are predators, rationalising the "hard malice" Fitzgerald warned us about. Exploiting anxieties about cultural collapse and demographic shifts, Trumpism frames

Fitzgerald was writing about the world he saw. He knew many men like Tom, rich, entitled and stupid

progress as decline, insisting America must forcibly reshape itself to resemble a mythologised past.

If there is a philosophical undercurrent to this panic, it is the same ambient declinism revived by today's "Dark Enlightenment" ideologies – neo-reactionaries who dress authoritarian nostalgia and rigid hierarchy in the guise of pragmatism. These movements posture as intellectually serious but offer only recycled grievance, cherry-picked from a deeply unserious reading of history.

Meanwhile, influential figures such as billionaire tech investor and PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel contend that democracy is inherently incompatible with capitalism and should be dismantled in favour of efficiency, stability and hierarchical control. In his 2009 essay "The Education of a Libertarian", Thiel said, "I no longer believe that freedom and democracy are compatible," and argued that since 1920, the expansion of welfare beneficiaries and the extension of voting rights had rendered "capitalist democracy" an oxymoron.

Thiel has translated his ideological

Continued on page 2

BOVET

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F Scott and Zelda
Fitzgerald on a road trip in
Connecticut in 1920 – Getty



Travel

Last Saturday, late afternoon, somewhere between Siena and Buonconvento. Beyond the windows, densely wooded hills roll away in all directions, blankets of oak and chestnut broken occasionally by a stone-built farmhouse skirted in olive groves or vineyards. A few unpaved roads weave here and there, demarcated by rows of cypresses like deep-green sentinels standing against a hard blue spring sky.

The landscape is notable for its improbable emptiness: here we are, in Italy in 2025, but there are no superstradas, no Autostrade, not a single high-voltage pylon in sight – just countryside of the variety seen only in age-faded postcards, or AI adulterated algorithm fodder. For a fleeting few minutes, in a moving picture set to live piano music and the percussive rhythms of train wheels on track, the Orient Express La Dolce Vita passes through a stretch of proper Tuscan arcadia.



Reclaiming this version of Italy's dolce vita – that pre-1960s, pre-revenge travel notion of a sweet life that could only ever exist here – while traversing some of the least-gilded railways in the country, is the twin sell of this sleeper train experience.

Conceived in 2019, it's the first "new" iteration of the most famous name on the rails since the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (VSOE) debuted its London-to-Venice route in 1982 – and since French hospitality behemoth Accor acquired the brand in 2022. It was officially launched on Thursday, but I boarded in Rome last weekend, for a first look on an inaugural two-night "test journey", traversing Tuscany and stopping in Siena en route to Venice.

La Dolce Vita's two- and three-day itineraries range north to Montecatini, Venice and Portofino. They also venture deep into the south, through Basilicata and Calabria and across the Strait of Messina to Sicily (the carriages are uncoupled and loaded on to a ferry that is privately chartered for the crossing).

Unlike the VSOE, which focused on the onboard experience, La Dolce Vita includes multiple excursions beyond the rails in every itinerary. These range from dinners in private Venetian homes to tastings of the Antinori family's Pian delle Vigne vineyard in Montalcino, along with curator-led museum visits in Siena, hikes on Mount Zena and lunch in a restaurant inside a cave in Matera, the ancient UNESCO-protected city.

In May, the train will make a special trip crossing into the heart of the Abruzzo National Park on the Transiberiana d'Italia rail line; in November there's a "Truffle Route" trip exploring the Monferrato region in Piedmont, with passengers tasting truffles and sought after Barolo wines.

Most northbound journeys will depart from and return to Rome's Ostiense station, where La Dolce Vita has commandeered a 200-qm metre private lounge. Its lavish interiors, with full bar, swaths of potted greenery and marble-clad shower facilities, were created by 35-year-old Parisian decorator du moment Hugo Toro, who is also responsible for the design of Orient Express La Minerva in Rome, which will open next week – the first hotel in the brand's ambitious reboot.

Once the second hotel, Palazzo Donà Giovanni, opens in Venice later this year, travellers will be able to "commute" from one hotel to another on one-way tickets. (An extravagantly circuitous commute, it must be said, at eight-and-a-half hours against four hours on one of Italy's high-speed trains, and more expensive by a factor of about 50; but with vastly superior food, scenery, interior and glamour quotient.)

The trains – currently two, there will be four next year, and six by 2027 – are made up of refurbished Ferrovie dello Stato (Italian State Railway) carriages from the 1960s. They were stripped back to their shells and fully restored: each 12-carriage train now holds 18 suites and 12 deluxe cabins, a bar and viewing lounge, and a restaurant. The décor is the work of Milan-based Dimerstudio, whose design aesthetic signals Italian glamour: 1960s-inspired, high-gloss, articulated in palettes and patterns that reference the era's masters – Gio Ponti, Nanda Vigo, Osvaldo Bonaiuti and their peers.

Dimer co-founder Britt Moran concedes that the project was a challenge. "The spaces are tiny, but there's also a lot, technically speaking, that goes on behind all of the panelling; any changes had to be incorporated early on," he



Boarding now: a new Orient Express

Italy | Maria Shollenbarger gets an exclusive preview of 'Orient Express La Dolce Vita' – the first new iteration of the world's most famous train in more than 40 years



Clockwise from main picture: the stylish lounge car with its cocktail bar; the train's restaurant car; inside a sleeping suite; drinks being mixed in the cocktail bar; stewards wait to greet passengers

Photographed for the FT by Manfredi Gioacchini



Orient Express: a short history of a potent brand

1867 US industrialist George Pullman establishes the Palace Car Company in Chicago to make carriages with fold-down beds, offering unprecedented levels of comfort.

1876 Having been impressed by Pullman's carriages on a trip to the US, Belgian engineer Georges Nagelmackers launches the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits (CWL), introducing sleeper services on a number of international routes.

1930s Heyday of the Orient Express, with multiple services, interiors by star designers René Lalique and René Prou, and a string of European hotels.

1983 CWL runs its first "Express d'Orient" services, taking passengers on a seven-day journey from Paris via Munich, Vienna and Budapest to Constantinople. The

says. "But we tried to push the material and colour boundaries, surprising people with both."

The feedback on board is mixed, but not positive, leaning in a couple of cases towards dazed. Corridors are upholstered in a café au lait coloured suede, lined with original stills from Fellini's 1960 film *La Dolce Vita*. A handful of two-seat banquettes in the bar are clad in walnut and creamy-white leather (they would invite lots of trying, if the clientele weren't largely couched off).

The compact en-suite bedrooms glitter with finger-licked terrazzo tiles in blues and white. The suites themselves are similarly snug – shorter and narrower than on the VSOE – but space is cleverly optimised, with hidden alcoves behind pull-down bedside tables and cubicles designed into chairs. My suite's curved ceiling is lacquered a rich burnt orange, and faintly reflects my own image back to me as I lie in bed.

The onboard menus have been created by Heinz Beck, a star of Italian

gastronomy who has retained three Michelin stars for almost 20 years at La Pergola, his restaurant in Rome. The impressiveness of the whole dining experience – serious but never heavy, referencing the local flavours of whatever region the train is trundling through – grows by several orders of magnitude once you've seen the Lilliputian galley kitchen in which it all happens, and with no freers to boot.

A five-course lunch sounded exactly like what I didn't want to eat aboard a train, but proved to be surprisingly considered, from portions to interpretations, tiny gnocchi served at caudo-pepe – a very chic – and carb-forward Roman salad – was tempered with a base of foamy herb purée, which won over even the purists at my table.

Though Orient Express operates the train, it was conceived and created by Paolo Barletta, chief executive of Italian hospitality company Arsenale, which continues to own the rolling stock. He dreamt up the idea of a luxury sleeper train as travelling paean to excellence Italian, but didn't expect to have to build it himself.

"One of the first things I did was have a feasibility discussion in 2020 with the Ferrovie dello Stato," he tells me over a coffee, as we turn inland from a dimly lit but spectacular leg along the Tuscan coast and head towards Venice, picking up speed. He shrugs and smiles. "They thought I was crazy. We'd wanted to be the hospitality operator aboard a train created by them, but no one even began to know how to deliver a product like what we wanted. So I had to become a train expert, which I definitely wasn't, and create a train manufacturing business, which was never our intention."

Barletta collaborated with Italy's Fondazione FS, which cares for historic trains, runs railway museums and restores abandoned track for use by heritage operators. It was from its general manager, a former state-railway corporate called Luigi Cantanessa, that Barletta acquired his carriages, and Cantanessa has also given La Dolce Vita access to select stretches of those heritage lines, as well as to a handful of historic stations along them. Our



Siena-Buonconvento route, for instance, with its throwback English Patient views, is normally exclusive to FS Treni Turistici Italiani; likewise, the Transiberiana d'Italia in Abruzzo.

Arranging for the Dolce Vita trains to run on these historic tracks is like "one long epic game of Tetris," laughs Gilda Perez-Alvarado, Orient Express's chief executive. The night before, she'd shaken tambourines and doctored postcard cocktails with guests while a singer modelled very much on the Sinatra school of crooners sauntered up and down the lounge car, belting out classics from the Italian canon with tongue firmly in cheek.

"All of a sudden, trains are everywhere," Perez-Alvarado told me, pointing to the much-discussed resurgence of sleepers across Europe and beyond. "It's like a soft arms race in travel. Which is the best thing that could happen for consumers, it highlights the importance of competition. People don't care what's happening at the corporate level, they want to know what they're getting, what's special about us."

What's special are La Dolce Vita's excursions, which will need to measure up to Italy's better private curated experiences. Dinner in Venice was at the Palazzo Nani Bernardo, whose garden is one of the largest in the city. Its owner was there to parse its history for us over an aperitivo, before we sat down to a dinner in a top-floor room overlooking the Grand Canal, lit by hundreds of candles. So far, so favourably comparable, as is their having scored private access to

Siena's state archives, whose vast collection of documents include exquisite late-medieval decorated wooden manuscript covers (some by masters currently on show in London at the National Gallery's *Siena: The Rise of Painting* exhibition).

By contrast, the actual ground logistics lacked some of the polish and personal touch you'd expect from this train experience (and at these prices). The disembarkation in Siena was fairly directionless, with guests wandering and wondering which car and guide were theirs; the shepherding from the private palazzo spumante toast to various museums, to lunch at Osteria Le Logge, more than once assumed the unrelaxed energy of a group tour. To be fair, the point of such pre-launch test runs is to redress just such shortcomings; we received welcome letters on boarding alerting us to potential bumps. "Literal and figurative," along the way.

I query Perez-Alvarado about the inevitable comparison with the VSOE. "Besides the obvious differences, we are leveraging two entirely different eras of nostalgia. This meant to in no way feel like a 'stuffy' train," she says, in a not-so-veiled reference to the VSOE's formal-at-supper dress code. "We want it to be the anti-stuffy."

All well and good; but people sometimes need a steer. By our journey's end, there was some speculation that dinner-dress code guidelines might be in order, thanks in part to one young passenger who arrived for dinner clad in ultra-short shorts and what appeared to be a couple of silk handkerchiefs strategically attached with gold chains. (I thought she looked amazing, for the record, but her chic was undeniably scanty.)

Whatever the disparity in dress codes, the long-anticipated rivalry between the newly reimagined Orient Express, and the VSOE (owned by Belmond, which is also expanding its range of luxury sleepers) seems to have been nipped in the bud. Last June, Accor unveiled a strategic partnership with luxury giant LVMH, which took a 50 per cent stake in Orient Express in order to "accelerate" the brand's development. LVMH had already snapped up Belmond (in 2019), and given Belmond's Italian hotels include the Hotel Cipriani in Venice, the Villa San Michele in Florence, the Grand Hotel Tiziana in Taormina and Hotel Splendido in Portofino, the scope for co-operation in future itineraries is clear.

For now, though, the journey more or less has what it needs. Rocked awake early Sunday morning en route back to Rome, I push back the curtain and watch southern Tuscany passing like a film, low sunlight reaching golden fingers between Caladrian pines. It's the Maremma National Park, a place I've been many times – like Siena, like Venice – playing from a whiffy new vintage point. "I don't want people to do this just once. That wasn't my goal," Barletta says. "My goal is for people to come see this country... And wherever there's a track, I can put a luxury train."

Maria Shollenbarger was a guest of Orient Express La Dolce Vita (orient-express.com); rates start from €3,060 per person for a two-day itinerary, including all excursions, meals and house wines



operators and, later, air travel. By the 1970s the services are in decline and routes shrinking.

1978 Swiss entrepreneur Albert Gatt uses 1929 train carriages bought at auction to launch the Nostalgie-Istanbul-Orient Express, an upmarket tourist train from Zurich to Istanbul. The enterprise runs until 2007, when the "Nostalgie" cars are abandoned in Poland.

1982 Shipping-container magnate James Sherwood launches the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, taking guests in historic carriages from London to Venice, where they would stay at his Cipriani hotel. The business grows to include many other hotels and trains.

2009 The last Orient Express with a lineage traceable to Nagelmackers' original runs from Strasbourg to Vienna.

2014 Sherwood's Orient Express Hotels, which had

been using the name under licence from French state rail operator SNCF, rebrands as Belmond, only retaining rights to use the Orient Express name for its Venice-Simplon service.

2017 French hotel giant Accor acquires a 50 per cent stake in the Orient Express brand from SNCF and plans expansion. In 2022 it buys the brand outright.

2024 Having already acquired Belmond, LVMH partners with Accor, taking 50 per cent of Orient Express.

2026 Accor and LVMH are due to unveil another new Orient Express train, using 17 of Gatt's "Nostalgie" carriages, retrieved from Poland and restored.

10 Stylish New Hotels Coming To Italy This Summer

From the cloud-skimming mountains of the Dolomites to the postcard-perfect olive groves of Puglia, Italy is getting a whole fleet of new hotels just in time for summer.

By [Nicole Trilivas](#), Contributor. ⓘ Nicole Trilivas is a luxury travel ...

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Palazzo Zimara – Lecce (opened March 2025)

Set in the historic center of the Puglian Baroque town of Lecce, [Palazzo Zimara](#) is a 16th-century palazzo turned into an intimate 18-room hideaway. The design of this family-run property comes care of Italian architect Raffaele Centonze, whose work can be seen at the nearby hotel Masseria Trapanà. If the frescoed walls and wrought-iron details weren't enough of a draw, NEOS Airlines is launching a nonstop flight from New York City to the Puglian capital of Bari starting in June.



Orient ExpressLa Minerva
PATRICK_LOCQUENEUX

Orient Express La Minerva - Rome (opening April 2025)

The first hotel from Accor's Orient Express brand, [La Minerva](#) is coming to the Enternal City this spring. Guests can expect a rooftop restaurant and bar, as well as a spa inspired by Roman baths. There will be 93 guest rooms, including four signature suites with design highlights like ceiling frescos and Rosso Verona marble bathrooms.



Pensione America
MANFREDI GIOACCHINI

Pensione America - Forte dei Marmi (opening April 2025)

Boutique hotel group Collezione Em will open the transformed historic villa, [Pensione America](#), this April in the Tuscan seaside town of Forte dei Marmi. With just 18 suites (each with private outdoor space), the hotel is set just steps from the Liguarian Sea and will have a private beach club, as well as a pool.



Italy

'Eat, sleep and party': a taste of La Dolce Vita aboard Italy's Orient Express

Replica of world-famous train aimed at reviving glamour of the classic version makes debut journey from Rome



📷 La Dolce Vita aims to bring back the romanticised notion of Italy's *dolce vita*, or 'sweet life' and promote slow tourism. Photograph: Patrick Locqueneux

Angela Giuffrida in Rome

Sat 5 Apr 2025 10.00 CEST

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A replica of the world-famous Orient Express made its debut journey from Rome on Friday, transporting well-heeled passengers into the heart of Tuscany's wine region.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the first Italian-made luxury train, is aimed at reviving the glamour of the classic version as well as the romanticised notion of Italy's *dolce vita*, or "sweet life", all the while promoting slow tourism.

The train, the first of a fleet of six, is made up of 12 refurbished carriages that once chugged along Italian rail tracks in the 1960s and which have been decked out with 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins, a bar, a lounge and a restaurant serving haute cuisine by the Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck.

A collaboration between Orient Express; Arsenale, an Italian hospitality company; and Italy's state railways, Ferrovie dello Stato, the maiden voyage, which involves an overnight route called "tastes of Tuscan vineyards", left Rome's Ostiense station at about midday.



📷 La Dolce Vita is made up of 12 refurbished carriages, decked out with 18 suites and 12 deluxe cabins. Photograph: Patrick Locqueneux

Rather than having to mingle with long-suffering commuters, deal with any delays or make do with an espresso and a soggy sandwich from the station's bar, passengers began their experience in the opulent Dolce Vita lounge, strategically located on the station platform from where their train departed.

The itinerary is one of eight that collectively cover 14 Italian regions, from Veneto and Liguria in the north to Basilicata and Sicily in the south. On Friday afternoon passengers travelled along the coast, passing the seaside towns of Santa Severa and Santa Marinella before gliding through the countryside of Tuscany, where by early evening they could sip locally made Brunello wine as part of the *aperitivo*. As an option, they could disembark and be taken to the hilltop town of Montalcino before returning to the Dolce Vita for their evening meal and entertainment. The train, which also passes through Florence and Pisa, completes its loop back to Rome on Saturday morning.



📷 The train comprises a bar, a lounge and a restaurant serving haute-cuisine by the Michelin-starred chef, Heinz Beck. Photograph: Patrick Locqueneux

“You eat, you sleep, and you party on board,” said Paolo Barletta, who dreamed up the idea for an experience that combines slow tourism with Italy’s landscape and its diverse regional cuisine. “It’s kind of like the experience of a cruise ship, but instead of being a boat cruise it’s a rail cruise.”

The first trip sold out, with 38 passengers partaking. Trips are also fully booked for the rest of April and most of May, with itineraries involving Venice, Portofino, Matera, the Unesco-listed town in Basilicata known for its ancient cave dwellings, and Sicily. On a trip scheduled in November, passengers can explore the Monferrato truffle region in Piedmont, while tasting said truffles and drinking barolo wine.

The vast majority of those who have booked so far are Americans, followed by Europeans and visitors from the Middle East. Needless to say, a voyage on the Dolce Vita does not come cheap, with prices starting at €3,500 (£2,982).



📷 'A rail cruise': the itinerary covers 14 Italian regions, from Veneto and Liguria in the north to Basilicata and Sicily in the south. A voyage starts at €3,500 (£2,982). Photograph: Patrick Locqueneux

By comparison, a one-way trip from Rome to Pisa, on a standard Italian fast train will cost about €45 (£38), even cheaper if you book early. For those wanting to replicate the Dolce Vita feeling, the onboard bar sells half-bottles of prosecco for €12 (£10).

Barletta said the Dolce Vita experience is not just the preserve of the super-rich. "A lot of people are booking for the one-time experience," he said. "Perhaps they are retired and want to spend some of their retirement savings doing something special, or it is an anniversary or they are celebrating a wedding. It's not only about experiencing the train ... people really want to see Italy, and in a slow, relaxed way. The Dolce Vita won't just take them to famous places like Venice, but also areas that are less well-known, for example Abruzzo."

MONDAY 07/04/25

THE MONOCLE MINUTE

London

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Good morning from Midori House. This week the Monocle team will be toasting great design at Bar Basso as Salone del Mobile begins in Milan. Later in the week a delegation will land in Greece for the Delphi Economic Forum, which will take place at a crucial time for Europe's economy. For more news and views, tune in to Monocle Radio. Here's the rundown of today's Monocle Minute:

THE OPINION: São Paulo's green heart

DESIGN: Salone del Mobile kicks off

THE CHIEFS: Lojel CEO An Chieh Chiang

TRANSPORT: Italy's newest overnight rail service

Q&A: The architect of the World Expo's USA Pavilion

TRAVEL: ITALY

Sleeper hit: A new overnight rail service toasts the good life in Italy

Rome has long been seen as the birthplace of the sweet life, so it's no surprise that the city provides the platform for the launch of a new premium rail service (*writes Ivan Carvalho*). The La Dolce Vita Orient Express is spearheaded by Italian hospitality brand Arsenale and French hotel group Accor, and will offer overnight excursions to destinations across the *Bel Paese*. Itineraries include visits to Tuscan vineyards and a trip to Matera via the Transiberiana d'Italia train, which traverses high plateaus and mountains in Abruzzo.





Trains run from Rome's Ostiense station, which hosts an upscale lounge for arriving and departing passengers. The rolling stock are Trenitalia Intercity models from the 1970s and 1980s that have undergone a chic interior revamp by Milan-based Dimorestudio. "It marks a revival of one of travel's most exciting periods," says La Dolce Vita Orient Express CEO Gilda Perez-Alvarado. Each train has 31 sleeper cabins, a restaurant car and a lounge bar complete with a live band. Come to think of it, a little hair of the dog would keep us on the right track post-Salone.

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MINISTRY OF TOURISM

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GROUND TRANSPORTATION

The grand premiere of La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Theodore Koumelis

07.04.2025

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GROUND TRANSPORTATION



At Roma Ostiense station, a ceremonial ribbon-cutting set the stage for a new era of travel, inaugurating La Dolce Vita Orient Express and Italy's most refined travel experience.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the first Italian made luxury train, makes its much-anticipated debut with a bold ambition: to reinvent the very essence of travel in motion. Eight curated itineraries blending art, landscapes, and three-star Michelin cuisine by **Heinz Beck**, all in celebration of Italian excellence in motion.

The train was unveiled today at Roma Ostiense Station, within the exclusive La Dolce Vita Lounge dedicated to its passengers, on the eve of the inaugural journey, scheduled for April 4th. The first trip, *"Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards"* will take guests to the charming destination of Montalcino.

Born of a visionary collaboration between Arsenale and Orient Express and supported by **Fondazione FS Italiane** and **FS Treni Turistici Italiani** of the **FS Group**, this pivotal project signals the renaissance of rail as the ultimate luxury. La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks a new era in the Italian tourism landscape, offering travellers an exclusive experience that fully embraces the essence of Made in Italy. It celebrates the country's cultural, scenic and gastronomic heritage, guiding guests on a unique journey through Italy's most emblematic destinations.

The Routes

Traversing 14 Italian regions, the train offers eight exclusive itineraries tailored for discerning international travellers. From the canals of Venice to the coves of Portofino, the medieval charm of Siena to the sun-drenched stones of Matera and from Montalcino's famed vineyards to the truffle paths of Nizza Monferrato, each journey is a celebration of Italy's rich cultural and natural heritage. Sicily reveals itself in stages – Catania, Palermo, Taormina... each one capturing a different hue of the island's timeless allure. Thoughtfully designed to embrace the philosophy of slow travel, these routes invite guests to connect deeply with local traditions, flavours and landscapes.

The Train

With 31 cabins, 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins and the signature La Dolce Vita Suite, the train is the result of a meticulous restoration and design process. Originally Z1 Italian model carriages, each has been reimagined through a major investment that drew on the technical and artisanal excellence of Southern Italy, specialising in railway craftsmanship and design, with work carried out between Brindisi and Palermo. This innovative project marks the creation of Italy's first private luxury rail fleet, which will ultimately comprise six bespoke trains.

Interior design

The interiors, by Milan's Dimorestudio, are a reverent salute to Italian design golden age: geometric echoes of Gio Ponti, the sensual modernism of Gae Aulenti, whispers of Osvaldo Borsani. It embodies the spirit of mid-century glamour, an homage to La Dolce Vita and the cultural pulse of 1960s Italy.

Onboard experience

Guests embark from the Orient Express Lounge, envisioned by artist-architect **Hugo Toro**, where period motifs are refracted through a contemporary lens. There, beneath a lacquered tangerine ceiling, an aperitivo hints at the opulence ahead. Onboard, guests are treated to menus composed by chef Heinz Beck, inspired by the regions they traverse. Each dish is a narrative seasoned with regional soul. The whole experience is distinguished by its high level of service, while stops at select destinations allow passengers to explore the unique cultural and historical aspects of each region. La Dolce Vita Orient Express invites travellers to rediscover Italy, slowly, elegantly and with a remarkable attention to detail.

"With La Dolce Vita Orient Express, we are introducing a new model to the global tourism landscape, leading an emerging trend: rail cruises, which are becoming increasingly relevant worldwide. Thanks to the synergy between Italian excellence in railways and manufacturing, this project helps strengthen an integrated hospitality system that complements the cruise and hotel industries. The third pillar of tourism starts in Italy and is driven by an Italian company. I believe this is crucial for the revival of our Made in Italy, especially in the industrial and tourism sectors. Our commitment translates into a production that, to date, represents an international benchmark, with the ambition of creating a tourism offer that extends travel beyond peak seasons and promotes alternative destinations, thanks to the exclusivity and comfort of one of the most efficient and sustainable ways to travel. The Dolce Vita train can become a symbol of Italy's dedication to enhancing its territories, supporting local entrepreneurship, and strengthening national

railway production, while contributing to a more integrated tourism system,” said **Paolo Barletta**, CEO of **Arsenale**.

Gilda Perez Alvarado, CEO of **Orient Express**, stated: *“The launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks the beginning of a new chapter in Italian train journeys, made possible through our partnership with Arsenale Group. This unique experience is an invitation to rediscover Italy through a new lens – where the glamour of 1960s and 1970s Italy meets the country’s rich hospitality and warm conviviality. The train’s design is brought to life by Dimorestudio, with every detail embodying the spirit of this celebrated period, with all of its zest and charm. The guest journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge at Ostiense Station, a historic space crafted by artist-architect Hugo Toro, setting the stage for an exceptional Italian adventure. Onboard, guests can indulge in gastronomy signed by Michelin-star chef Heinz Beck. A true celebration of all that Italy represents, this voyage captures the essence of the country’s landscapes, flavors, and way of life. From the moment the journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge – guests are brought into a new travel experience that celebrates Italy’s landscapes, flavours, and culture – signed by Orient Express”.*

The world's best new hotels that we're loving without reservation

Explore the best new openings in the world, from Orient Express' La Dolce Vita train and first-ever hotel to Capella's debut in Taipei



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(Image credit: Courtesy of Orient Express)

Jump to category: **April 2025** | March 2025 | February 2025 | January 2025

BY NICOLA LEIGH STEWART LAST UPDATED 19 HOURS AGO

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM
DAVEN WU IN [FEATURES](#)

After a long winter, spring has finally arrived. The first season of the year always feels the freshest, making it fitting that April is a month filled with new hotel openings. Read on to discover which escapes have caught our attention, from SLS and The Hoxton expanding their lifestyle concepts to new cities, to the debut of the first-ever hotel from Orient Express.

The world's best new hotel openings

New hotel openings for April 2025



Orient Express La Minerva

(Image credit: Photography by Mr Tripper)

This month, Orient Express is celebrating a double debut in the Eternal City. The iconic train and slow travel pioneer will encourage guests to stay a while in Rome with the launch of its first-ever hotel, La Minerva, housed in a former 17th-century aristocratic residence now revived by Hugo Toro with his contemporary take on Art Deco style. After checking out, guests can embark on La Dolce Vita Orient Express, a newly launched train travelling across 14 regions and 131 cities in Italy. Twelve glamorously retro carriages designed by Milan-based Dimorestudio take cues from Italy's 1960s and 70s and come dressed in rich shades, geometric lines and soft curves that highlight the La Dolce Vita era.

Orient Express La Minerva is located at Piazza della Minerva, 69, 00186 Roma, Italy; [orient-express.com](https://www.orient-express.com)

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The Daily Traveler

Today's Free Stories

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 - [The Best Family-Friendly Hotels in San Francisco](#)
 - [My Favorite Airbnb: A Modern Vienna Apartment With a Spacious Terrace](#)
-

Hotel Investment Today

BY NORTHSTAR



Dining room helmed by Chef Heinz Beck aboard the La Dolce Vita Orient Express train

Accor unveils first Orient Express train

In partnership with LVMH, the revived brand sets on its maiden voyage with the first train to be followed by two hotels and the first yacht.

ROME – The strategic partnership between Accor and LVMH for the fabled Orient Express brand is finally coming to life as April 4 marks the official unveiling at the Roma Ostiense Station of the La Dolce Vita Orient Express train. The first itinerary, Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards, will take guests from the Rome station to the picturesque town of Montalcino.

Coming soon is the first Orient Express hotels with the opening of Orient Express La Minerva Rome in Spring 2025 and Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice in late 2025. They will be followed by Orient Express Corinthian in 2026, the first of two Orient Express sailing yachts.



La Dolce Vita Orient Express train bedroom

The rail collaboration is between Arsenale and Orient Express and supported by Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani of the FS Group. It celebrates the country's cultural, scenic, and gastronomic heritage through Italy's most emblematic destinations.

Traversing 14 Italian regions, the train offers eight itineraries – from the canals of Venice to the coves of Portofino, from the medieval Siena to the stones of Matera, and from Montalcino's vineyards to the truffle paths of Nizza Monferrato. Sicily reveals itself in stages - Catania, Palermo, Taormina.

Thoughtfully designed to embrace the philosophy of slow travel, these routes invite guests to connect with local traditions, flavors, and landscapes. Menus created by three-star Michelin Chef Heinz Beck is a highlight of each journey.

With 31 cabins, 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins, and the signature La Dolce Vita Suite, the train is the result of a restoration and design process. Originally Z1 Italian model carriages, each has been reimagined through a major investment that drew on the technical and artisanal excellence of Southern Italy, specializing in railway craftsmanship and design, with work carried out between Brindisi and Palermo. This project marks the creation of Italy's first private luxury rail fleet, which will ultimately comprise six bespoke trains.



La Dolce Vita Orient Express train sitting room

The train interiors, by Milan's Dimorestudio, are a reverent salute to Italian design's golden age: geometric echoes of Gio Ponti, the sensual modernism of Gae Aulenti, whispers of Osvaldo Borsani. It embodies the spirit of mid-century glamour, an homage to La Dolce Vita and the cultural pulse of 1960s Italy.

Gilda Perez Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express, stated, "The launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks the beginning of a new chapter in Italian train journeys, made possible through our partnership with Arsenale Group. This unique experience is an invitation to rediscover Italy through a new lens—where the glamour of 1960s and 1970s Italy meets the country's rich hospitality and warm conviviality.

"The train's design is brought to life by Dimorestudio, with every detail embodying the spirit of this celebrated period, with all of its zest and charm. The guest journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge at Ostiense Station, a historic space crafted by artist-architect Hugo Toro, setting the stage for an exceptional Italian adventure. Onboard, guests can indulge in gastronomy signed by Michelin-star chef Heinz Beck. A true celebration of all that Italy represents, this voyage captures the essence of the country's landscapes, flavors, and way of life. From the moment the journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge – guests are brought into a new travel experience that celebrates Italy's landscapes, flavors, and culture – signed by Orient Express."



La Dolce Vita Orient Express train private sitting room

Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale, added, "With La Dolce Vita Orient Express, we are introducing a new model to the global tourism landscape, leading an emerging trend: rail cruises, which are becoming increasingly relevant worldwide. Thanks to the synergy between Italian excellence in railways and manufacturing, this project helps strengthen an integrated hospitality system that complements the cruise and hotel industries.

"The third pillar of tourism starts in Italy and is driven by an Italian company. I believe this is crucial for the revival of our Made in Italy, especially in the industrial and tourism sectors. Our commitment translates into a production that, to date, represents an international benchmark, with the ambition of creating a tourism offer that extends travel beyond peak seasons and promotes alternative destinations, thanks to the exclusivity and comfort of one of the most efficient and sustainable ways to travel.

"The Dolce Vita train can become a symbol of Italy's dedication to enhancing its territories, supporting local entrepreneurship, and strengthening national railway production, while contributing to a more integrated tourism system."

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Makes Its Grand Debut in Rome



La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the first Italian-made luxury train, made its much-anticipated debut with a bold ambition to reinvent the very essence of travel in motion. Eight curated itineraries blend art, landscapes and three-star Michelin cuisine by Heinz Beck, all in celebration of Italian excellence in motion.

The train was unveiled today at Roma Ostiense Station, within the exclusive La Dolce Vita Lounge dedicated to its passengers, on the eve of the inaugural journey, scheduled for April 4. The first trip, "Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards," will take guests to the charming destination of Montalcino.

Born as a collaboration between Arsenale and Orient Express and supported by Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani of the FS Group, La Dolce Vita Orient Express signals the renaissance of rail as the ultimate luxury. The train marks a new era in the Italian tourism landscape, offering travelers an exclusive experience that fully embraces the essence of Made in Italy. It celebrates the country's cultural, scenic and gastronomic heritage, guiding guests on a unique journey through Italy's most emblematic destinations.

The Routes: Traversing 14 Italian regions, the train offers eight exclusive itineraries tailored for discerning international travelers. From the canals of Venice to the coves of Portofino, from the medieval charm of Siena to the sun-drenched stones of Matera, and from Montalcino's famed vineyards to the truffle paths of Nizza Monferrato, each journey is a celebration of Italy's rich cultural and natural heritage. Sicily reveals itself in stages—Catania, Palermo, Taormina—each one capturing a different hue of the island's timeless allure. Thoughtfully designed to embrace the philosophy of slow travel, these routes invite guests to connect deeply with local traditions, flavors and landscapes.

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"With La Dolce Vita Orient Express, we are introducing a new model to the global tourism landscape, leading an emerging trend, rail cruises, which are becoming increasingly relevant worldwide," said Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale. Thanks to the synergy between Italian excellence in railways and manufacturing, this project helps strengthen an integrated hospitality system that complements the cruise and hotel industries.

"The third pillar of tourism starts in Italy and is driven by an Italian company," said Barletta. "I believe this is crucial for the revival of our Made in Italy, especially in the industrial and tourism sectors. Our commitment translates into a production that, to date, represents an international benchmark, with the ambition of creating a tourism offer that extends travel beyond peak seasons and promotes alternative destinations, thanks to the exclusivity and comfort of one of the most efficient and sustainable ways to travel. The Dolce Vita train can become a symbol of Italy's dedication to enhancing its territories, supporting local entrepreneurship, and strengthening national railway production, while contributing to a more integrated tourism system,"

Gilda Perez Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express, said launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks the beginning of a new chapter in Italian train journeys, made possible through Orient Express' partnership with Arsenale Group. "This unique experience is an invitation to rediscover Italy through a new lens—where the glamour of 1960s and 1970s Italy meets the country's rich hospitality and warm conviviality," said Alvarado. "The train's design is brought to life by Dimorestudio, with every detail embodying the spirit of this celebrated period, with all its zest and charm.

"The guest journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge at Ostiense Station, a historic space crafted by artist-architect Hugo Toro, setting the stage for an exceptional Italian adventure," Alvarado said. "Onboard, guests can indulge in gastronomy signed by Michelin-star Chef Heinz Beck. A true celebration of all that Italy represents, this voyage captures the essence of the country's landscapes, flavors and way of life. From the moment the journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge—guests are brought into a new travel experience that celebrates Italy's landscapes, flavors and culture—signed by Orient Express."

Artisan of travel since 1883, Orient Express sublimates the art of travel with luxury trains, unique experiences and collections of rare objects. And coming soon will be the first hotels around the world, with the opening of Orient Express La Minerva Rome in spring 2025 and Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice in late 2025.

The luxury travel experience will continue with the launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express in 2025, followed by Orient Express Corinthian in 2026, the first of two Orient Express sailing yachts, and finally, the return of the legendary Orient Express train to railways. Since 2022, Orient Express is part of the Accor Group's leading collection of luxury brands with a century-old legacy in the hotels and fine-dining sectors. In 2024, Accor and LVMH entered into a strategic partnership to accelerate the development of Orient Express. For more information, visit www.orient-express.com.

Founded in 2020 by Paolo Barletta and Annabel Holding, Arsenale is an Italian company in the luxury hospitality sector, focused on enhancing Italian tourism. It operates through two divisions. The hospitality division designs and manages hotels in collaboration with luxury brands like Soho House and Orient Express, with upcoming projects including Orient Express La Minerva Rome and Palazzo Donà Giovannelli Venice, alongside new developments in Rome, Cortina, Tuscany, and Southern Italy.

The Luxury Train Cruising division launched La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the first sustainable luxury rail tourism project, in partnership with Orient Express, Trenitalia, Ferrovie dello Stato Group, Fondazione FS, and TTI. Since 2023, Arsenale has expanded internationally with four signed projects: Dream of The Desert, Saudi Arabia's first luxury train to traverse the Kingdom, in collaboration with Saudi Arabia Railway; The Samarkand Express, Central Asia's first luxury train in Uzbekistan, developed

in partnership with O'zbekiston Temir Yo'llari JSC and the State Committee for Tourism; Guardian of the Nile, Egypt's first luxury train, in partnership with Egypt National Railway; and a luxury train in the UAE in partnership with Etihad Railway. For more information, visit www.arsenalegroup.com.



MICHELIN GUIDE

Epic Journeys: 4 of the Best Train Trips for Foodies

On these luxury trains, fine dining, breathtaking landscapes, and impeccable service redefine slow travel, offering the best train trips to remember from Italy to Malaysia.

"Kings and crooks, millionaires and refugees, big-game hunters and smugglers, prima donnas and courtesans traveled on it; tycoons and financiers clinched their deals across its sumptuous dining tables; diplomats, spies, and revolutionaries on board the train moved secretly to their moments of history," wrote E. H. Cookridge of the Orient Express. Since its debut in 1883 with a journey from Paris to Vienna, the legendary luxury service as exuded both intrigue and glamour.

Now, in an era where #slowtravel is more than a trend — garnering over a million mentions on Instagram alone — travelers are turning their gaze from the skies to the rails. Brands like Belmond are reintroducing the romance of leisurely, multi-day luxury train journeys that span countries and cuisines. Dining aboard these rolling palaces is more sumptuous than ever: chefs of MICHELIN-Starred establishments like Yannick Alléno and Heinz Beck are crafting menus that evolve with the landscapes outside the window. Forget pre-packaged sandwiches: On these trains, every meal is an integral part of the journey, immersing passengers in their surroundings.

Here's a closer look at some of The MICHELIN Guide's favorite train voyages, with sneak previews of their menus and the best stays at each destination.

1. La Dolce Vita Orient Express, Italy

Hospitality group Accor will launch La Dolce Vita Orient Express, offering eight voyages through *il bel paese*. On board, chef Heinz Beck of Three-MICHELIN-Starred restaurant La Pergola in Rome, has crafted a dining experience that reflects Italy's rich and diverse cuisine. "Our guests will embark on a wonderful and immersive journey — not only through stunning Italian landscapes but also through our dishes," Beck tells The MICHELIN Guide. Each itinerary will feature a distinct menu narrating the region's story and showcasing its culinary traditions. "We wanted to create a true Italian gastronomic experience, inspired by the dolce vita lifestyle, following the seasonality of ingredients and grounded in the three main pillars of my cooking philosophy: sustainability, health, and well-being."

Bringing a MICHELIN-Starred experience aboard a train is no small feat, but Beck is confident in the outcome. "With our expertise, modern techniques, and innovative technologies, we've crafted high-quality dishes brimming with flavor and steeped in the history of every Italian region — all within the train's dynamic, compact kitchen."

In train cars designed by Dimorestudio, travelers have the chance to explore Sicily's shores, including Taormina and its ancient Greek theater. History buffs will love the "Eternal Stones of Matera" route — an opportunity to discover the UNESCO World Heritage sites of southern Italy. Food-lovers can savor truffles and fine wines in Piedmont or indulge in a one-night voyage through Tuscany's rolling vineyards — both delicious journeys beginning and ending in Rome.



INSIDE ITALY'S MOST LUXURIOUS TRAIN

La Dolce Vita Orient Express makes its grand debut with Dimorestudio interiors, three-star Michelin cuisine, and a bold vision for Italian tourism.

Yesterday at Roma Ostiense Station, the Orient Express returned with an ambitious, Italian, luxury travel venture: the **La Dolce Vita Orient Express**, a high end train with a distinctly mid-century flair.

The ceremonial unveiling took place in the exclusive La Dolce Vita Lounge, a dedicated space designed by artist-architect **Hugo Toro**, where a tangerine lacquered ceiling hovers above guests enjoying their first taste of the opulence to come.

This marks Italy's first private luxury rail fleet, born from a collaboration between Arsenale and Orient Express, with support from Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani. The inaugural journey departs tomorrow, April 4, whisking passengers to Montalcino on the aptly named **"Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards"** itinerary.

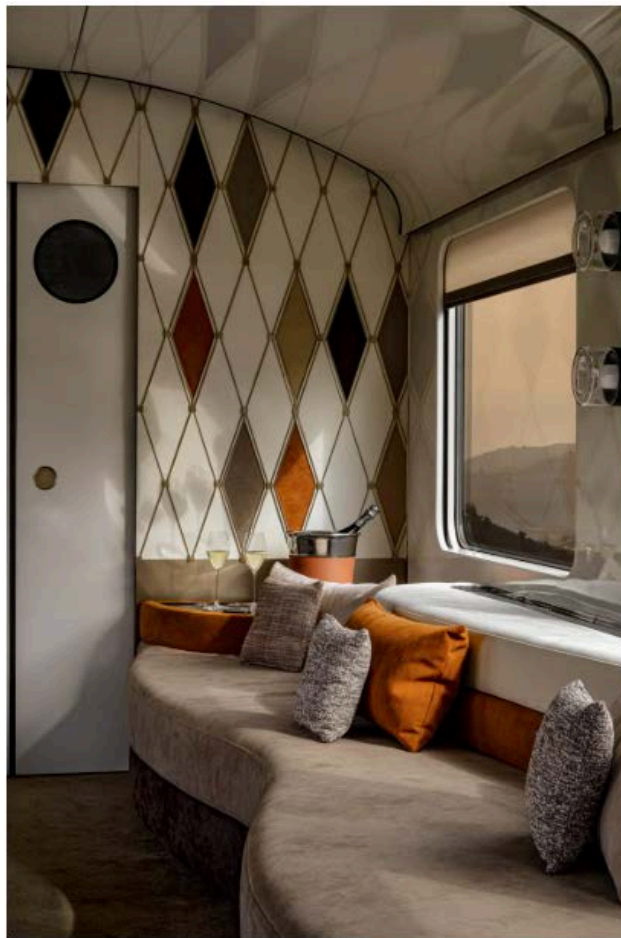


Courtesy Orient Express La Dolce Vita

ELLE Decor A-List firm **Dimorestudio** has transformed former Z1 Italian railway carriages into moving galleries of mid-century Italian design. The interiors pay homage to the nation's design legends—Gio Ponti, Gae Aulenti, Osvaldo Borsani—capturing the glamour of 1960s Italy when "la dolce vita" wasn't just a phrase but a cultural movement.

The train features 31 cabins, including 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins, and the signature La Dolce Vita Suite. This fleet will traverse 14 Italian regions on eight itineraries, from Venice's romantic canals to Sicily's sun-drenched landscapes. Each journey embraces slow travel, allowing guests to savor Italy's cultural tapestry at a civilized pace.

The deluxe cabins feature cool color palettes, mirrored back walls, and wooden slat ceilings, with each space offering a private ensuite bathroom—a luxury not always found on overnight trains. During daylight hours, the cabin's sofa serves as a comfortable seating area before transforming into a double bed at night, with ottomans doubling as coffee tables and stools. Room service is available via in-cabin tablets, offering a selection of Italian delicacies including olives, fennel-infused taralli, cheese boards, and breadsticks.



Courtesy Orient Express La Dolce Vita

Three-star Michelin chef Heinz Beck oversees the culinary program, creating menus that reflect the regions being traversed. Mornings begin with "The Grand Tour of Italy" breakfast, featuring freshly squeezed juices, Sicilian brioche, artisanal jams, and aromatic Italian coffee. As evening approaches, the train undergoes what's called "The Great Transformation"—lights dim, decor subtly shifts, and a pianist unveils a new repertoire while the sommelier prepares signature cocktails and wine pairings in the Bar Car.

The Lounge Bar itself is a warm, inviting space with a luminous lacquered ceiling and sophisticated furnishings in soft beige, off-white, and camel tones. Here, guests partake in the cherished Italian tradition of Aperitivo, enjoying a buffet of antipasti paired with expertly crafted cocktails and fine Italian wines. The experience extends beyond the rails with curated stops that immerse travelers in local traditions and landscapes.



Courtesy Orient Express La Dolce Vita

"We're introducing a new model to global tourism—rail cruises as the third pillar alongside cruises and hotels," Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale, noted in a press release. "This project represents a benchmark for Made in Italy, promoting sustainable travel and supporting local entrepreneurship."

Gilda Perez Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express, describes it as "a new chapter in Italian train journeys" where "the glamour of 1960s and 1970s Italy meets the country's rich hospitality."

When fully operational, the ambitious project will comprise six trains operating 600 trips annually, with prices starting from €3,500 per night. The fleet is being built in workshops between Brindisi and Palermo, with a total investment of €240 million. Already, pre-bookings show strong international appeal, with 47% coming from American travelers.

To book your own adventure, head to [the Orient Express site](#). All aboard for la dolce vita, indeed.



DIE NEUE AUSGABE + 6 WEITERE AUSGABEN FÜR NUR 45€



MR. TRIPPER

First Guest: La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Mit der Einführung des La Dolce Vita Orient Express wurde der Zug liebevoll ins 21. Jahrhundert überführt. Wir nehmen Sie mit auf eine Reise im Retro-Stil, die Italiens Schönheit feiert

VON SARAH ALLARD , ADAPTIERT VON LEA DLUGOSCH

7. April 2025

Name des Zugs? La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Passagierbelegung? 62

Reiseroute? Rom, Venedig, Portofino (zwei Nächte)

Startpreis: etwa 3100 Euro pro Person und Nacht

Warum buchen?

Wenn man nicht gerade in der Deutsche Bahn sitzt, können Zugreisen unglaublich glamourös sein. Der La Dolce Vita Orient Express zeigt Italien aus einer völlig neuen und unvergesslichen Perspektive. Ganz gleich, ob Sie schon hundert Mal in Italien waren oder Ihren ersten Besuch planen: Das „süße Leben“ durften sie garantiert noch nie zuvor auf diese Art erleben.

Die Geschichte

Schon beim Namen Orient Express denken viele an juwelenbehängte Damen, die Cocktails schlürfen, elegante Herren im Smoking, die Zigarren rauchen, und – zugegeben – den einen oder anderen Mord. Zugreisen wie diese sind der Stoff, aus dem Hollywood-Filme sind. Eine fast mythische Form des Reisens, verpackt in den Glamour der alten Welt.

Der Orient Express nahm seinen Anfang im Jahr 1883, als seine Jungfernfahrt von Paris nach Konstantinopel das Konzept des Fernreisens auf den Kopf stellte. 140 Jahre später ist der Orient Express zwar immer noch glamourös und die Cocktails fließen in Strömen, doch mit der Einführung des La Dolce Vita Orient Express wurde er liebevoll ins 21. Jahrhundert überführt. Der Zug mit zwölf Waggons befördert 62 Gäste auf ein- und zweitägigen Fahrten durch Italien. Er ist der erste von sechs Zügen mit acht ikonischen Routen, die in Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem italienischen Luxusunternehmen

Arsenale Group und dem französischen Hotelriesen Accor entstehen. Wir hatten das Glück, einen Platz für eine Reise mit zwei Übernachtungen zu ergattern, die uns auf einer Rundreise von Rom nach Venedig und Portofino führte.

Das Abenteuer beginnt in einer spektakulären Umgebung: der La Dolce Vita Lounge im Bahnhof Roma Ostiense. Ein echter Hingucker, mit vielen Anspielungen auf das Verkehrsmittel, das wir gleich nehmen werden, vom verzierten Check-in-Schalter mit Brieffächern bis hin zu den Neonröhren, die aus einem Zugwaggon stammen könnten. Der Künstler und Architekt Hugo Toro hat einen Ort geschaffen, der modern und doch zeitlos wirkt, mit vielen gemütlichen Bereichen, in denen man sich bei einem Cappuccino – oder etwas Stärkerem – entspannen kann, bevor der Zug bereit für den Einstieg ist.



Eine der Suiten an Bord des La Dolce Vita Orient Express MR. TRIPPER

Wer ist an Bord?

Wenn man Frauen in Flapperdresses und Männer mit Schnurrbärten erwartet hätte, wäre man ziemlich enttäuscht gewesen. Stattdessen gibt es eine Menge Persönlichkeiten aus Film und Fernsehen, CEOs und Kreative, die vom Fokus aufs Design angezogen werden. Kinder sind hier kaum zu sehen: Sie sind zwar erlaubt, aber die Kabinen- und Suitenkonfiguration macht das Familienreisen etwas unpraktisch.

Die Kabinen

Ein Zugabteil mit Doppelbett überrascht immer. Noch überraschender ist, wie bequem es sich hier liegt. Wir sind in einer der 18 Suiten an Bord, die mit einem Schreibtisch, einem Sofa, genügend Stauraum, um den ganzen Koffer auszupacken, und einem eigenen Bad ausgestattet sind. Die Dusche ist größer als in manchem Stadtapartment, die Toilettenartikel von Eredi Zucca sind ordentlich aufgereiht und flauschige Handtücher liegen in Reichweite. Auch wenn die Versuchung groß ist, die Zeit in den Gemeinschaftsbereichen zu verbringen oder eines der Erlebnisse außerhalb des Zuges zu genießen, empfehlen wir Ihnen, sich ein paar Stunden Zeit zu nehmen, um in Ihrer Kabine zu entspannen – in Ihrem Orient-Express-Bademantel und Ihren Hausschuhen – und nichts zu tun, außer den Blick auf die italienische Landschaft zu genießen, die am Fenster vorbeizieht.



La Dolce Vita Orient Express MR. TRIPPER

Interior und Design

La dolce vita, das süße Leben. Das Lebensgefühl, das durch Federico Fellinis gleichnamigen Film berühmt wurde, diente als Inspiration für den Look des Zuges – es ist eine Ode an das goldene Zeitalter des italienischen Glamours. Das Architektur- und Designbüro Dimorestudio hat einen Ort geschaffen, der gleichzeitig elegant und modern ist – und direkt aus den 60er- oder 70er-Jahren entsprungen scheint. Die Leidenschaft des Teams für die Präsentation italienischer Handwerkskunst ist überall zu sehen: Feinstes Porzellan von Ginori 1735 liegt sauber auf makellos weißer Tischwäsche von Rivolta Carmignani. Von Dimorestudio entworfene und in Italien hergestellte Mid-Century-Leuchten werfen ein sanftes Licht in die Kabinen.

Im Speisewagen heben sich die orangefarbenen Stühle von den glänzenden, hellgrünen Wänden ab. Der Barwagen ist mit wellenförmigen Sitzen ausgestattet, die sich an jeder Seite entlangziehen, was ein Gefühl der Bewegung erzeugt und bei Einbruch der Dunkelheit zu einer geselligen Atmosphäre beiträgt. Dimorestudio hat Texturen, Muster und Farben gewählt – weiche Samt- und dunkle Juwelentöne –, die zu tanzen scheinen, wenn das Licht tagsüber durch die Fenster hereinströmt. Und die nachts, wenn der Himmel sich schwarz färbt und die Lichter gedimmt werden, eine gemütliche, warme Atmosphäre schaffen.

Der Service

Jeder Wagen hat seine:n eigene:n Schaffner:in. Sie sind die ganze Fahrt über bei Ihnen. Sobald wir einsteigen, führt uns Alessandro durch unsere Suite und zeigt, wie alles funktioniert und welchen Knopf man drücken muss, wenn man etwas braucht. Haben wir Ihn verwendet? Was erst dekadent erschien, trauten wir uns dann doch: Schon am zweiten Abend kam auf Knopfdruck ein Cocktail. Jedes Mitglied der Besatzung, vom Zugbegleiter bis zum Barpersonal, scheint wirklich begeistert und unglaublich stolz darauf zu sein, dabei zu sein.



Der Restaurantwagen an Bord MR. TRIPPER

Essen und Trinken

Der in Deutschland geborene, mit drei Michelin-Sternen ausgezeichnete Küchenchef Heinz Beck ist für die Menüs an Bord verantwortlich. Er präsentiert seine Gerichte ebenso leidenschaftlich wie der Rest des Teams. Beck hat Menüs kreiert, die die Geschichte der Regionen erzählen, durch die die Züge fahren. Es gibt Meeresfrüchte in Sizilien und Trüffel auf der Nordstrecke. Frische Hummer-Tacos, seidiges Cacio e Pepe und zartes Lammfleisch in einer Pistazienkruste. Die Weinkarte ist so beeindruckend, wie man es erwarten würde. Die Flaschen stammen von den renommiertesten Weingütern Italiens (und der Service verschüttet selbst bei leichtem Schaukeln des Zugs keinen Tropfen). Die Barkeeper:innen zaubern Cocktails, die genauso gut (und in manchen Fällen sogar besser) sind als die in den luxuriösesten Hotelbars dieser Welt.

Aktivitäten und Unterhaltung

Am zweiten Abend, während sich der Zug durch die italienische Landschaft schlängelt, versammeln sich die Gäste im Barwagen, um italienischen Klassikern zu lauschen – und an vielen Stellen auch mitzusingen. Sie werden von einem charmanten Duo aus Sänger und Saxophonist gespielt, während das Barpersonal gekonnt mit Tablett voller Cocktails

durch den fahrenden Wagen manövriert.

Sonst noch was?

Bei den Ausflügen geht es nicht darum, die beliebtesten Teile Italiens zu sehen – das kann jeder. Das Besondere liegt vielmehr darin, eine neue Seite eines touristischen Ortes zu zeigen oder den Reisenden ein weniger bekanntes Ziel vorzustellen.

Das Team arbeitet mit einem Netzwerk von Partnern im ganzen Land zusammen, um den Gästen Erlebnisse zu bieten, die man für Geld nicht kaufen kann und die sich in der jeweiligen Region echt und tief verwurzelt fühlen. An unserem ersten Abend fühlen wir uns fast wie Berühmtheiten, als wir zu einem privaten Taxiboot eskortiert und auf den Kanälen von Venedig entlanggefahren werden, um die Sehenswürdigkeiten vom Wasser aus bei Sternenlicht zu bewundern. Unser Abendessen findet in einem privaten Palazzo aus dem 16. Jahrhundert statt, mit wunderschönen Gärten und einem großen Speisesaal.



Richtig retro: Eine der Kabinen an Bord des La Dolce Vita Orient Express MR. TRIPPER

Am nächsten Morgen legen wir in Santa Margherita Ligure an, einem Kleinod im Herzen Genuas mit einem malerischen Hafen und vielen charmanten Gassen und Geschäften, in

denen man den Nachmittag verbringen kann. Auf der Durchreise nach Portofino besuchen wir La Portofinese, einen Öko-Bauernhof in den Hügeln. Der Besitzer Mino Viacava träumte davon, zu seinen Wurzeln zurückzukehren und mit dem Land zu arbeiten. Heute gibt es auf dem Hof Honigbienen, Weinberge, Olivenbäume und einen Schmetterlingsgarten. Der Chefkoch Alessio Tresanini zeigt uns, wie man aus den Zutaten des Bauernhofs das frischeste Pesto zubereitet, bevor wir uns zum Mittagessen (und zur Verkostung des hervorragenden Weins) niederlassen.

Später am Nachmittag schlendern wir durch den Hafen von Portofino – natürlich mit einer Pause für ein Gelato. Wenn man in der Nebensaison hier ist, hat man das Gefühl, dass die Stadt gerade erst erwacht und in der Frühlingssonne glänzt.

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MR. TRIPPER

First Guest: La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Orient Express has been lovingly nudged into the 21st century with the launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express: a retro-inspired train celebrating the best of what Italy has to offer

BY SARAH ALLARD

April 8, 2025

Name of train? La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Passenger occupancy? 62

Itinerary? Rome, Venice, Portofino (two nights)

Starting price: \$3,735 per person per night

Tell us about the train: history, routes, type of journeys. What is the big picture here?

I don't know about you, but, for me, the words "Orient Express" conjure up visions of chic ladies draped in jewels sipping cocktails, dapper gents in tuxedos smoking cigars and – OK, I'll go there – the odd murder mystery. **Train journeys** like this are the stuff of fiction and Hollywood **films** – an almost mythical form of travel wrapped up in old-world **glamour**.

WATCH

The epic adventures of a hot air balloon pilot



The **Orient Express** started in 1883, when its maiden trip, from Paris to Constantinople, flipped the concept of long-distance travel on its head. Fast forward 140 years and, while the guests are still glamorous (and the cocktails very much free flowing), Orient Express has been nudged lovingly into the 21st century with the launch of *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*: a 12-carriage train that will transport 62 guests around Italy on one- and two-night journeys. The **train** is the first of six (with eight iconic itineraries) in a collaboration between Italian luxury hospitality business Arsenale Group and French hotel giant Accor. I was lucky enough to nab a spot on a two-night journey that would take us on a round trip from Rome to **Venice** and Portofino.

My adventure begins in the most spectacular setting, the La Dolce Vita lounge inside Roma Ostiense station. It's a knockout, with plenty of nods to the transport we're about to take, from the ornate check-in desk complete with letter compartments to the neon tube lights that could have been plucked from a train carriage. Artist-architect Hugo Toro has created a space that feels modern yet timeless, with lots of cosy areas to relax with a cappuccino – or something stronger – before a curtain hiding the platform is drawn and it's time to head for the train.



One of the suites on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express MR. TRIPPER

Who is onboard?

If I was expecting women in flapper dresses and men with curly moustaches, I would have been quite disappointed. Instead, there are a lot of TV personalities, CEOs and creatives drawn by the serious focus on design (more on that in a moment). Children are noticeably absent – although they are allowed, the cabin and suite configurations would make it a touch on the tricky side. If there were ever a time to call in the babysitter, this is it.

Describe the cabins.

I defy anyone to walk into a train cabin, spot a double bed and not gasp. Even more surprising is how comfortable it is. I'm in one of the 18 suite cabins on board, complete with a desk, sofa, enough storage to unpack my entire suitcase and a private bathroom. The **shower** is bigger than the one in my first flat, with Eredi Zucca toiletries stacked in a neat row and fluffy towels within arm's reach. While the temptation is to spend time in the communal areas or enjoying one of the off-board experiences, I would highly recommend reserving a couple of hours to relax in your cabin – wearing your OE-branded robe and slippers, if you're feeling extra fancy – and do nothing except enjoy views of the Italian countryside whizzing past your window.



La Dolce Vita Orient Express MR. TRIPPER

Any standout or noteworthy design elements to the train?

La dolce vita, or “the sweet life” – an era made famous by Federico Fellini’s film of the same name – is the inspiration behind the train’s look, an ode to the golden age of Italian glamour. Architecture and design firm Dimorestudio has created a space influenced by the ’60s and ’70s that’s also slick and contemporary. The team’s passion for showcasing Italian craftsmanship can be seen everywhere: the finest porcelain from Ginori 1735 sits neatly on pristine white Rivolta Carmignani table linens; custom mid-century-style light fixtures designed by Dimorestudio and made in Italy cast a soft glow across the cabin.

In the dining carriage, burnt orange chairs pop against the glossy pale green walls. The bar cart has wavy seats stretching along each side, creating a feeling of movement and, once night falls, contributing to a convivial atmosphere as we sit opposite each other chatting about our day. Dimorestudio has chosen textures, patterns and colours – smooth velvets and deep jewel tones – that seem to dance as the light streams in from the windows by day, and by night, as the sky fades to black and the lights are dimmed, create a cosy warm tone.

Tell us about the crew.

Each carriage has its own conductor who's with you throughout the journey. As soon as I board, Alessandro shows me around my suite, pointing out how everything works and the button to press any time I need something. I'm a little ashamed to admit that while the idea of pressing a button felt awkward at first, by day two I was happily using it to order a cocktail to sip while getting ready for the evening (a very good negroni, in case you're wondering).

Every member of the crew, from the cabin conductors to the bar staff, seem genuinely excited and incredibly proud to be there, and each is keen to tell me all about different aspects of the train or the next destination we're nearing.



The restaurant car on board MR. TRIPPER

What food and drink options are available on board?

German-born, three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck is behind the onboard menus. He, like the rest of the team, is passionate about showcasing the best of what Italy has to offer. Beck has crafted menus that tell the story of the regions the trains will travel through, so expect seafood in Sicily and truffle on the northern leg. I tuck into fresh lobster tacos, silky

cacio e pepe and tender lamb coated in a delicate pistachio crumb. The wine list is as impressive as you would expect, with bottles sourced from Italy's most prestigious vineyards and poured expertly by the team who, despite some serious swaying at times, avoid spilling one drop on the linens. And the bartenders can rustle up a cocktail as good as (and in some cases, better than) those found in some of the most luxe hotel bars.

What about activities and entertainment?

On the second night, as the train winds its way through the Italian countryside, guests gather in the bar cart to listen – and, at many points, join in with – Italian classics belted out by a suave singer-saxophonist duo, all while the bar staff expertly manoeuvre around the moving carriage carrying trays full of cocktails. I make a mental note to learn the words to “Tu Vuo’ Fa’ L’Americano” just in case I’m ever lucky enough to make it back onto the train again.

Where did it go and how were the excursions? Did anything stand out?

The excursions aren’t about seeing the most popular parts of Italy – anyone can do that. The passion here is for either showing a new side of a tourist spot or introducing travellers to a lesser-known destination deserving of the limelight.

The team works with a network of partners across the country to give guests money-can’t-buy experiences that feel genuinely and deeply rooted in each region. On our first evening I feel like a celebrity as I’m escorted to a private taxi boat and whisked along the Venice canals, taking in the sights from the water by starlight. Our dinner spot that night is a 16th-century private palazzo, with beautiful gardens and a grand dining room.





One of the cabins on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express MR. TRIPPER

The following morning we pull into our next stop: Santa Margherita Ligure, a gem in the heart of Genoa with a picturesque harbour and plenty of charming streets and shops to lose an afternoon in. We're passing through to Portofino to visit La Portofinese, an eco-farm set in the hills overlooking the English Bay. Owner Mino Viacava dreamt of going back to his roots and working with the land, and today the farm has honeybees, vineyards, olive trees and a butterfly garden. Resident chef Alessio Tresanini shows us how to make the freshest pesto using ingredients from the farm, before we take a seat for lunch (and to sample some of the excellent wine).

Later that afternoon I wander around Portofino's harbour (stopping for gelato, of course). Being here in the off-season feels even more special, like the town is just waking up as it sparkles in the spring sunshine.

Are there any standout sustainability or green initiatives about this train?

Supporting local is a priority, from working with a network of the best guides to championing independent restaurants and businesses through the off-board excursions, not to mention sourcing only local produce from each region.

Finally, give a sentence or two on why the train is worth booking.

There is something endlessly glamorous about travelling by train, and getting to see Italy from a totally new perspective is something I'll never forget. Whether you've been to the country 100 times or you're planning your first visit, I can guarantee there's no way to experience a taste of la dolce vita quite like this.

This article first appeared on [Condé Nast Traveller UK](#)

THE FIRST ORIENT EXPRESS HOTEL IN THE WORLD, IS NOW OPEN IN ROME



POSTED IN [NEWS](#), [STICKY-NEWS](#) ON 8 APRIL, 2025

Orient Express has proudly announced that Orient Express La Minerva, its first hotel in Rome, is now open.

Anchored in history and emblematic of a refined approach to travel, Orient Express La Minerva embodies a new vision of hospitality defined by the depth of experience.





Above: Located at Piazza della Minerva 69, in the very heart of the city, Orient Express La Minerva lies just steps from the Pantheon and within easy walking distance of Rome's cultural treasures. Top: Suite Living Room. All images © Alexandre Tabaste

The hotel houses 93 rooms and 36 suites – each space entirely singular in scale, in layout, and in spirit.

This opening marks the breathtaking revival of a 17th-century palazzo situated on Piazza della Minerva, where illustrious travellers and artists such as Stendhal and Melville once sought inspiration and refuge. A must-stop of the Grand Tour, Rome has long been a destination for cultural connoisseurs drawn to its art, history, and timeless grandeur. Since 1883, the Città Eterna has been an essential destination for Orient Express travellers, offering an encounter with a past that continues to shape the future. This debut follows the recent launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express and anticipates the opening of Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice later this year – in partnership with Arsenale Group.

Meticulously restored by award-winning artist-architect Hugo Toro, known for reawakening historical gems with contemporary finesse, the hotel blends Rome's heritage with new sophistication, offering guests an authentically Roman experience, refined and profoundly memorable.



Each room is an homage to the golden age of travel, featuring bespoke bedside trunks, rich wooden detailing reminiscent of the legendary carriages, and luxurious bedding crafted by Rivolta Carmignani, the same linens once gracing Orient Express sleeper cars.

The hotel's corridors recall the polished elegance of the luxury train, while its lounges and public spaces invite guests to indulge in a Voyage of textures and perspectives.



Left to right: Room detail; The Gallery; artist-architect Hugo Toro in La Minerva Bar

Hugo Toro conjures the imagery of an ideal journey, inviting guests into the home of a refined aesthete gently transformed into a hotel. A masterful interplay of textures, tones, and light reveals itself in every detail. Temporal and stylistic references ripple throughout the space, animating it with quiet complexity, such as the hand-painted evocation of Rome's sky above each bed. Suites at Orient Express La Minerva have been crafted as soulful escapes by Rome's eternal allure, including that of the Stendhal Suite – named after the French realist writer, one of La Minerva's more notable former guests and a testament to the fascinating voyagers who have walked the hotel's historic halls.

Beloved by Romans and cherished by connoisseurs, Orient Express La Minerva hosts three exceptional dining venues – a testament to the connecting spirit and culinary curation of Orient Express, promising unforgettable gastronomy journeys aligned with Rome's leisurely pace.

La Minerva Bar, situated in the heart of the hotel's lobby, provides a serene haven amid the vibrant pulse of Roman life. Beneath its grand glass roof and adorned by the preserved statue of Minerva – is complete by original marble columns which glow softly throughout the day, creating an ambiance that shifts from natural Roman light to intimate sophistication.



Left to right: Reception; Entrance; Concierge

Opening to the public in May 2025, Gigi Rigolatto will bring the spirit of *la dolce vita* to life from dawn to dusk at every table on the iconic Roman rooftop. A standout concept by Rikas Hospitality Group and Paris Society, it promises a vibrant energy above the Eternal City – paired with mesmerizing 360° panoramic views of the city's rooftops and monuments, including the Pantheon, the Vittoriano and the majestic dome of St. Peter's Basilica. With its Riviera-inspired elegance and vibrant atmosphere, Gigi Rigolatto

offers an elevated dining experience that seamlessly marries timeless allure with contemporary energy – welcome to an immersion in glamour. Gigi is developed in collaboration with Rikas Hospitality Group. Gigi's design concept has been developed by Hugo Toro, drawing on historical references that have shaped Italy as we know it today.

Mimi Kakushi, which will open at Orient Express La Minerva later this year – is an award-winning restaurant, transporting guests to the Osaka of the 1920s, an era of the creative clash between Western modernism and traditional Japanese values. Mimi Kakushi captures this transformative moment complete with the boundary breaking jazz age, offering a fusion of Far Eastern flavors tempered with Western influences. Since its debut in Dubai in 2021, Mimi Kakushi has garnered numerous awards, including The World's 50 Best Bars recognition for Best Bar in the Middle East & Africa in 2024. The Mimi Kakushi concept is curated by Rikas Hospitality Group.

Orient Express La Minerva offers five event venues:

- Olimpo Ballroom (165 sqm), adorned with eleven exquisite marble sculptures by Rinaldo Rinaldi, symbolizing the seasons, elements and continents.
- Rinaldi Meeting Room (54 sqm), designed in homage to the interiors of vintage Orient Express carriages.
- Alfieri Meeting Room (28 sqm), an intimate enclave perfect for refined gatherings beneath its atmospheric vaulted ceilings.
- Bernini Meeting Room (26 sqm), discreet and exquisitely appointed.
- The Gallery (75 sqm), adjacent to La Minerva Bar, on the ground floor – touched with ceilings inspired by the Pantheon itself.

Standing in quiet majesty, the statue of goddess Minerva watches over it all, a marble masterpiece sculpted in 1854 by Rinaldo Rinaldi, a disciple of Canova. Goddess of wisdom, arts and craftsmanship, she remains the silent guardian of the stories etched into these walls.

Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express, states: "Opening the doors of Orient Express La Minerva marks a powerful moment in our journey. A city of layered beauty and bold character, Rome offers the perfect canvas to reimagine the legacy of Orient Express through new purpose and experience – where Romans gather, and international aesthetes unite. In partnership with Arsenale Group and through the visionary work of artist-architect Hugo Toro, we have the privilege to breathe new life into a heritage property deeply rooted in the fabric of this timeless city."

Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group expresses: "With Orient Express La Minerva, we are inaugurating the very first Orient Express hotel in the world, giving shape to a new concept of ultra-luxury hospitality. This project combines the identity of a legendary brand with the entrepreneurial vision of Arsenale: transforming iconic places into world-class destinations. We chose Rome because it represents the crossroads between history, culture, and Italian hospitality. This debut, alongside the one of La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains – with Rome as the centerpiece – confirms Italy's ability to attract strategic investments and strengthens Arsenale's role as a key player in international luxury development."

ABOUT ORIENT EXPRESS

Artisan of travel since 1883, Orient Express sublimates the art of travel with luxury trains, unique experiences and collections of rare objects. Orient Express has just launched its first hotel, Orient Express La Minerva, in Rome – which will be followed by Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovanelli in Venice in 2025. The luxury travel experience will continue with the launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express in 2025, followed by Orient Express Corinthian in 2026, the first of two Orient Express Silenseas ships, and finally, the return of the legendary Orient Express train to railways.

www.orient-express.com.

TRAVELLING FOR BUSINESS



THE GRAND PREMIERE OF LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS



By **Andrea Thompson**

🕒 APRIL 7, 2025



At Roma Ostiense station, a ceremonial ribbon-cutting set the stage for a new era of travel, inaugurating a remarkable train and Italy's most refined travel experience.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the first Italian made luxury train, makes its much-anticipated debut with a bold ambition: to reinvent the very essence of travel in motion. Eight curated itineraries blending art, landscapes, and three-star Michelin cuisine by Heinz Beck, all in celebration of Italian excellence in motion.

The train was unveiled at Roma Ostiense Station, within the exclusive La Dolce Vita Lounge dedicated to its passengers, on the eve of the inaugural journey, scheduled for April 4th. The first trip, "Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards" will take guests to the charming destination of Montalcino.

Born of a visionary collaboration between Arsenale and Orient Express and supported by Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani of the FS Group, this pivotal project signals the renaissance of rail as the ultimate luxury. La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks a new era in the Italian tourism landscape, offering travellers an exclusive experience that fully embraces the essence of Made in Italy. It celebrates the country's cultural, scenic and gastronomic heritage, guiding guests on a unique journey through Italy's most emblematic destinations.

The Routes

Traversing 14 Italian regions, the train offers eight exclusive itineraries tailored for discerning international travellers. From the canals of Venice to the coves of Portofino, the medieval charm of Siena to the sun-drenched stones of Matera and from Montalcino's famed vineyards to the truffle paths of Nizza Monferrato, each journey is a celebration of Italy's rich cultural and natural

heritage. Sicily reveals itself in stages – Catania, Palermo, Taormina... each one capturing a different hue of the island's timeless allure. Thoughtfully designed to embrace the philosophy of slow travel, these routes invite guests to connect deeply with local traditions, flavours and landscapes.

The Train

With 31 cabins, 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins and the signature La Dolce Vita Suite, the train is the result of a meticulous restoration and design process. Originally Z1 Italian model carriages, each has been reimaged through a major investment that drew on the technical and artisanal excellence of Southern Italy, specializing in railway craftsmanship and design, with work carried out between Brindisi and Palermo. This innovative project marks the creation of Italy's first private luxury rail fleet, which will ultimately comprise six bespoke trains.

Interior design

The interiors, by Milan's Dimorestudio, are a reverent salute to Italian design golden age: geometric echoes of Gio Ponti, the sensual modernism of Gae Aulenti, whispers of Osvaldo Borsani. It embodies the spirit of mid-century glamour, an homage to La Dolce Vita and the cultural pulse of 1960s Italy.

Onboard experience

Guests embark from the Orient Express Lounge, envisioned by artist-architect Hugo Toro, where period motifs are refracted through a contemporary lens. There, beneath a lacquered tangerine ceiling, an aperitivo hints at the opulence ahead.

Onboard, guests are treated to menus composed by chef Heinz Beck, inspired by the regions they traverse. Each dish is a narrative seasoned with regional soul. The whole experience is distinguished by its high level of service, while stops at select destinations allow passengers to explore the unique cultural and historical aspects of each region. La Dolce Vita Orient Express invites travellers to rediscover Italy, slowly, elegantly and with a remarkable attention to detail.

“With La Dolce Vita Orient Express, we are introducing a new model to the global tourism landscape, leading an emerging trend: rail cruises, which are becoming increasingly relevant worldwide. Thanks to the synergy between Italian excellence in railways and manufacturing, this project helps strengthen an integrated hospitality system that complements the cruise and hotel industries. The third pillar of tourism starts in Italy and is driven by an Italian company. I believe this is crucial for the revival of our Made in Italy, especially in the industrial and tourism sectors. Our commitment translates into a production that, to date, represents an international benchmark, with the ambition of creating a tourism offer that extends travel beyond peak seasons and promotes alternative destinations, thanks to the exclusivity and comfort of one of the most efficient and sustainable ways to travel. The Dolce Vita train can become a symbol of Italy’s dedication to enhancing its territories, supporting local entrepreneurship, and strengthening national railway production, while contributing to a more integrated tourism system,” said Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale.

Gilda Perez Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express, stated: “The launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks the beginning of a new chapter in Italian train journeys, made possible through our partnership with Arsenale Group. This unique experience is an invitation to rediscover Italy through a new lens—where the glamour of 1960s and 1970s Italy meets the country’s rich hospitality and warm conviviality. The train’s design is brought to life by Dimorestudio, with every detail embodying the spirit of this celebrated period, with all of its zest and charm. The guest journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge at Ostiense Station, a historic space crafted by artist-architect Hugo Toro, setting the stage for an exceptional Italian adventure. Onboard, guests can indulge in gastronomy signed by Michelin-star chef Heinz Beck. A true celebration of all that Italy represents, this voyage captures the essence of the country’s landscapes, flavours, and way of life. From the moment the journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge – guests are brought into a new travel experience that celebrates Italy’s landscapes, flavours, and culture – signed by Orient Express”


Publication Details

Orient Express La Minerva, The First Orient Express Hotel in The World, Is Now Open in Rome

Orient Express proudly announces that Orient Express La Minerva, its first hotel in Rome, is now open. Anchored in



history and emblematic of a refined approach to travel, Orient Express La Minerva embodies a new vision of hospitality defined by the depth of experience. Located at Piazza della Minerva 69, in the very heart of the city, Orient Express La Minerva lies just steps from the Pantheon and within easy walking distance of Rome's cultural treasures.

 [View hotel announcement](#)



EXPERIENCIAS

First Guest: La Dolce Vita Orient Express

El legendario Orient Express llega al siglo XXI gracias al lanzamiento de La Dolce Vita Orient Express, un tren de inspiración retro que celebra lo mejor de Italia.

POR SARAH ALLARD , TRADUCIDO Y ADAPTADO POR EVA DUNCAN

8 de abril de 2025





MR. TRIPPER

¿POR QUÉ RESERVAR?

Para vivir el glamour infinito de **viajar en tren** y conocer **Italia** con una perspectiva totalmente nueva. No hay nada que se parezca a esta experiencia, hayas viajado al país cien veces o ninguna.

LA HISTORIA

Personalmente, las palabras “**Orient Express**” me evocan imágenes de mujeres elegantemente vestidas y cubiertas de joyas con cócteles en la mano, sofisticados caballeros de esmoquin fumando puros y, por no olvidarnos del cliché, un crimen por resolver. Los viajes en tren como este parecen sacados de una película de Hollywood, son **una forma de viajar casi mítica envuelta en un glamour clásico**.

El Orient Express inició su viaje inaugural entre París y Constantinopla en 1883, y con él cambió por completo la idea del viaje de larga distancia. 140 años más tarde, con huéspedes igual de glamourosos y cócteles igual de abundantes, el concepto del Orient Express entra en el siglo XXI gracias al lanzamiento de **La Dolce Vita Orient Express**, un tren de **12 coches** que llevará hasta a 62 pasajeros por Italia en sus rutas de una o dos noches. Este tren será el primero de los seis que recorrerán los ocho itinerarios icónicos creados por la empresa hotelera italiana **Arsenale Group** en colaboración con el gigante francés **Accor**. Tuve la suerte de conseguir plaza en el recorrido de dos noches de ida y vuelta entre **Roma, Venecia y Portofino**.

VER

Todo florece



EL AMBIENTE

La aventura comienza en el lugar más espectacular imaginable, la **sala La Dolce Vita** de la estación de **Roma Ostiense**. Está llena de guiños al tren en el que estamos a punto de embarcar, desde el ornamentado mostrador de check-in, con el típico casillero de madera para cartas, hasta los tubos fluorescentes que parecen sacados de un coche de pasajeros. El artista y arquitecto **Hugo Toro** ha creado un espacio a la vez moderno y atemporal lleno de rinconcitos acogedores en los que relajarse con un cappuccino y esperar a que se abra la cortina tras la cual se oculta el andén y empiece el viaje.

Si esperas encontrarte con un coche lleno de vestidos de estilo flapper y mostachos engominados, te vas a llevar una decepción. Entre los huéspedes hay sobre todo famosos de televisión, directivos y artistas atraídos por el excelente diseño, del que hablaremos más tarde.



Suite en La Dolce Vita Orient Express. MR. TRIPPER

LAS HABITACIONES

Retaría a cualquiera a entrar en una de esas suites y contenerse la exclamación de asombro al ver la cama. Más sorprendente aún es lo cómodo que es todo el espacio. Cada una de sus **18 suites** viene con escritorio, sofá, suficiente espacio de almacenamiento para vaciar la maleta y un **baño privado equipado con productos de Eredi Zucca**. La ducha es más grande que la de mi primer piso, y tiene unas toallas suavísimas al alcance de la mano. Aunque es tentador pasar la mayor parte del tiempo en las zonas comunes o disfrutando de las experiencias en el exterior, recomendamos encarecidamente dedicar al menos un par de horas a enfundarse en la bata y zapatillas y **relajarse en la suite**, disfrutando de las vistas del campo italiano mientras pasa a toda velocidad.



La Dolce Vita Orient Express. MR. TRIPPER

EL DISEÑO

La dolce vita, el periodo histórico immortalizado por Federico Fellini en su película homónima, es la inspiración de la estética del tren, que es en sí mismo **una oda a la era dorada del glamour italiano**. El estudio de diseño y arquitectura **Dimorestudio** ha creado este espacio influenciado por los años 60 y 70 que es, al mismo tiempo, sofisticado y contemporáneo. La pasión del equipo por la **artesanía italiana** también se hace notar en cada detalle: la finísima **porcelana de Ginori 1735** luce increíble sobre los impecables manteles de **Rivolta Carmignani**, y hasta los elementos de iluminación de estilo mid-century, diseñados expresamente para el tren por Dimorestudio, se fabricaron en Italia.

En el **coche restaurante**, el tono naranja oscuro de las sillas destaca contra el verde claro de las paredes. El **coche bar** tiene asientos de formas onduladas a ambos lados del pasillo que añaden una curiosa sensación de dinamismo y que, por la noche, animan a los huéspedes a charlar entre sí. Dimorestudio ha elegido unas **texturas, estampados y colores**, principalmente terciopelo en tonos intensos, que parecen danzar a la luz del exterior durante el día y que crean un entorno acogedor y cálido cuando baja el sol.

EL EQUIPO

Cada coche tiene a una persona asignada que se encarga de acompañar a los huéspedes durante todo el viaje. Nada más subir al tren, me muestra la suite, explicándome cómo funciona todo e indicándome qué botón pulsar cuando necesite algo. Esto incluye, por supuesto, pedir cócteles, y diré que **el negroni que preparan es excelente**. Todo el equipo parece encantado de estar ahí, y me cuentan con emoción detalles varios del propio tren o de los destinos a los que nos aproximamos.



El restaurante a bordo. MR. TRIPPER

GASTRONOMÍA

El galardonado chef alemán **Heinz Beck** es el autor de las cartas de a bordo. Como al resto del equipo, le apasiona lo local, y sus platos cuentan la historia de las regiones por las que pasa el tren: **marisco y pescado en Sicilia**, trufa en el tramo norte y toda suerte de manjares como los tacos de langosta, la pasta cacio e pepe y un cordero con pistacho tiernísimo. La carta de vinos es tan impresionante como cabría esperar, y los camareros consiguen servir las botellas de los **viñedos** más prestigiosos de Italia sin derramar una gota sobre los manteles pese al movimiento del tren. En el bar se sirven cócteles que compiten con, y a veces superan, los de los hoteles más lujosos.

ENTRETENIMIENTO

Las **excursiones** en las distintas paradas del tren son uno de los puntos fuertes de este itinerario. No consisten en ver **los lugares más conocidos de Italia**, ya hay bastantes formas de hacerlo por otros medios. La idea de este viaje es mostrar el país de una forma nueva, así que las excursiones se centran en dar **una nueva perspectiva de un lugar ya conocido** o mostrar **zonas menos frecuentadas** que merecen más protagonismo del que reciben.

El equipo colabora con una red de empresas de todo el país para ofrecer a los huéspedes **experiencias íntimamente conectadas con cada región**. En la primera parada, un taxi acuático nos lleva por los canales de **Venecia** al anochecer, y cenamos en un palazzo privado del siglo XVI con unos jardines preciosos y un comedor señorial. Llegamos a la mañana siguiente a nuestro siguiente destino: **Santa Margherita Ligure**, una verdadera joya en el corazón de **Génova** con un puerto encantador y unas callejuelas llenas de tiendas en las que es un placer perderse durante todo el día. Desde aquí, seguimos a **Portofino**, donde visitamos la granja ecológica **La Portofinese**, ubicada en unas colinas que forman parte del parque nacional de Portofino y con vistas a la Cala degli Inglesi. El dueño, **Mino Viacava**, soñaba con volver a sus raíces y dedicarse a trabajar la tierra, y hoy lleva esta propiedad con colmenas, viñedos, olivos y hasta un jardín de mariposas. El chef residente, **Alessio Tresanini**, nos muestra cómo se elabora el pesto fresco con ingredientes de la propia granja antes de sentarnos a comer y disfrutar del excelente vino.

Esa misma tarde, paseando por el puerto de Portofino con un helado, me doy cuenta de lo especial que es estar aquí en **temporada baja**: el pueblo transmite una sensación apacible, como si acabara de despertar y se desperezara bajo el sol de primavera.



Interior de un coche en La Dolce Vita Orient Express. MR. TRIPPER

La segunda noche, mientras el tren cruza los campos de Italia, los huéspedes se reúnen en el coche bar a escuchar **clásicos de la música italiana interpretados por un magnífico dúo de cantante y saxofonista**. Es habitual que los espectadores se unan y canten con los músicos mientras los camareros llevan cócteles de un lado a otro con destreza. Me anoto mentalmente aprenderme *Tu vuoi fa' l'americano* por si algún día vuelvo a tener la suerte de subirme a este tren.

CON NIÑOS

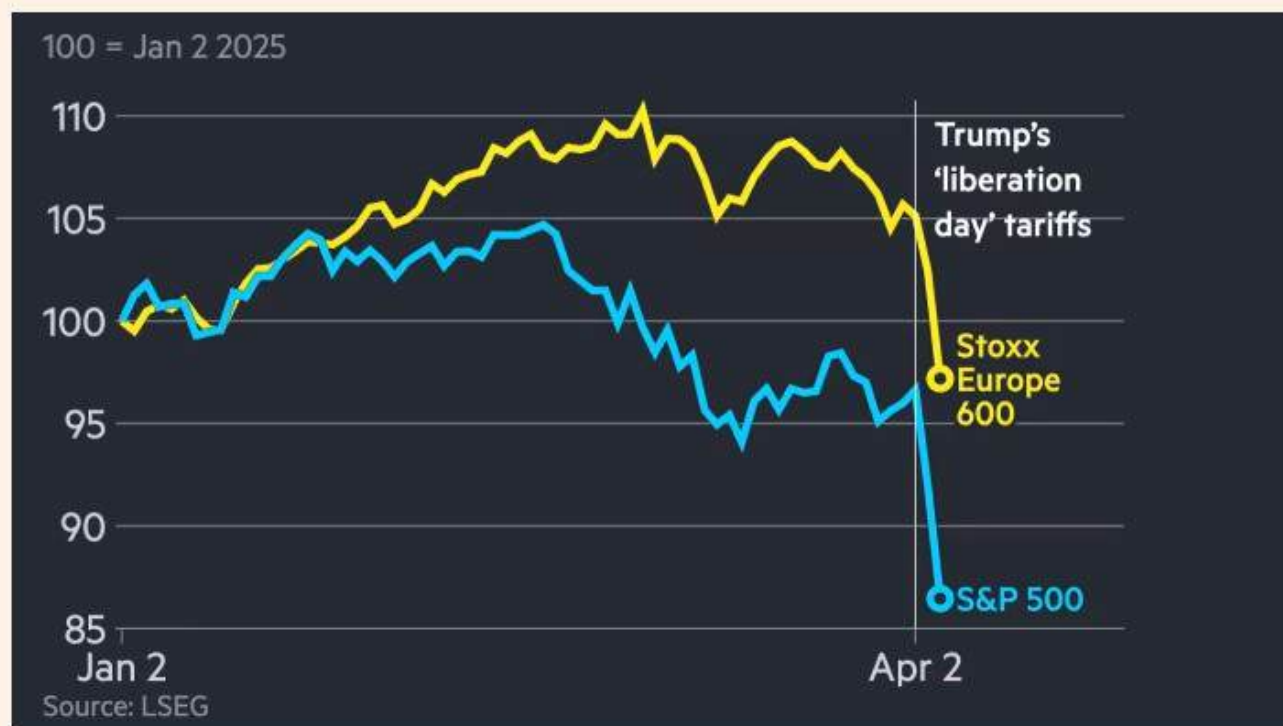
No se ven muchos niños a bordo, y no es de extrañar. Aunque está permitido viajar con ellos, la configuración de los coches y las suites hace un poco complicado gestionar los espacios. Si hay un viaje en el que merezca la pena dejarlos con alguien, es este.

SOSTENIBILIDAD

Como ya comentábamos, apoyar lo local es una absoluta prioridad. La Dolce Vita Orient Express colabora con los mejores guías y destaca **restaurantes y comercios independientes** en sus excursiones por el exterior. Además, los ingredientes de sus platos vienen de productores locales de cada región. *Desde 3.500€ por persona y noche.*

Hedge funds hit with steep margin calls

Plus, Fink warns on protectionism, US junk bonds sell-off, and the Dolce Vita Orient Express



Harriet Agnew, Asset Management Editor

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Does the format, content and tone work for you? Let me know: harriet.agnew@ft.com

In today's newsletter we explore the market fallout from so-called "liberation day", when **Donald Trump's** bid to upend the international trading order with huge tariffs was followed by retaliatory duties by China, and other

And finally



The new La Dolce Vita Orient Express © Photographed for the FT by Manfredi Gioacchini

Is there anything more romantic than the Orient Express? *Maria Shollenbarger* is the lucky one who boards the [Dolce Vita Orient Express](#) — from Rome to Venice, via Siena — for an exclusive preview of the first new iteration of the world's most famous train in more than 40 years.

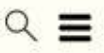
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La Dolce Vita Orient Express

La Dolce Vita Orient Express is Italy's first luxury train

April 7, 2025

Italy has unveiled its first luxury train, *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*, complete with vintage styling and menus by three-Michelin-starred chef, Heinz Beck. Olivia Palamountain reports

[*La Dolce Vita Orient Express*](#), has made its debut at Rome's Ostiense Station, ahead of its inaugural journey on April 4, 2025.

The first trip, titled "Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards," takes guests to Montalcino, marking the beginning of what operators describe as "a new era in Italian tourism" focused on showcasing the country's cultural, scenic and gastronomic heritage.

The *La Dolce Vita Orient Express* represents the first in what will ultimately be a fleet of six luxury trains, establishing Italy's first private luxury rail service. The project emphasises slow travel, allowing passengers to connect deeply with local traditions, flavours and landscapes while exploring Italy's most iconic destinations.





The service will offer eight exclusive itineraries across 14 Italian regions. Routes include journeys from Venice to Portofino, through Siena and Matera, and across Sicily with stops in Catania, Palermo and Taormina.

The train features 31 cabins, comprising 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins and a signature La Dolce Vita Suite. Originally Z1 Italian model carriages, they have undergone extensive restoration with work carried out in Brindisi and Palermo, drawing on Southern Italy's technical and artisanal expertise in railway craftsmanship.





Milan-based Dimorestudio designed the interiors, which pay homage to the golden age of Italian design with references to renowned figures such as Gio Ponti, Gae Aulenti and Osvaldo Borsani. The aesthetic captures the glamour of 1960s Italy, the era of "La Dolce Vita".

The passenger experience begins at the Orient Express Lounge, designed by artist-architect Hugo Toro, where travellers are welcomed with aperitivo under a lacquered tangerine ceiling before boarding. Once on the train, guests will enjoy menus created by three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck, with dishes inspired by the regions being traversed.



Gilda Perez Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express, describes the launch as "the beginning of a new chapter in Italian train journeys," made possible through the partnership with Arsenale Group. "This unique experience is an invitation to rediscover Italy through a new lens - where the glamour of 1960s and 1970s Italy meets the country's rich hospitality and warm conviviality," she says.

Forbes

Italy's New Luxury Train: La Dolce Vita Orient Express Launches

The first Italian-made and designed luxury train, La Dolce Vita was inspired by midcentury modern Italian design and takes well-heeled passengers on artful journeys throughout the country



A cabin on the new La Dolce Vita Orient Express in Italy.
LA DOLCE VITA

[La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#), the first Italian-made luxury train, rolled out of Roma Ostiense Station on April 4, 2025, on an inaugural journey that took passengers on a two-day "Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards" trip to the town of Montalcino.

As I discovered while working on my forthcoming book, [National Geographic's 100 Train Journeys of a Lifetime: The World's Ultimate Rides](#) (which will be published in October 2025), there's a growing demand for over-the-top train journeys that cater to small numbers of luxury travelers on trips through some of the world's most scenic locations, excursions that cater to slow travel, nostalgia, and an appetite for the golden days of rail travel.



Lounge Carriage on the La Dolce Vita Orient Express.
LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS.

The Journeys

The itineraries have been designed to create exclusive travel experiences, ranging from north to south in Italy, providing glimpses of the Alps as well as the southern coastline. The majority of the journeys will depart from Rome and can include cities such as Milan, Florence, and Venice, as well as the island of Sicily, via the world's only passenger rail ferry. Some trains will travel within Sicily, leaving from Catania and Palermo.

Two-night journeys include Rome, Venice, and Portofino, as well as Rome, Venice, and Siena. Themed journeys include Eternal Stones of Matera, The Truffle Route, and Rome to Sicily.

The itineraries have been created in tandem with Orient Express' first hotels, which will also debut in 2025: the [Orient Express La Minerva](#) in Rome and the [Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli](#) in Venice.



Cabin on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express.
LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS.

On Board The Train

La Dolce Vita Orient Express has 12 carriages, with 31 cabins, including 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins, and the signature La Dolce Vita Suite. The carriages were originally Z1 Italian model carriages, but they have been reimaged and rebuilt. The train is Italy's first private luxury rail fleet, with plans to have six such trains in the future. They all feature double beds, a sofa, armchairs, and a private bathroom. All cabins will offer room service, and the restaurant car will provide lunch, dinner, and afternoon tea. The Bar Car will feature live music, an aperitivo and antipasti buffet, after-dinner cocktails, and Italian wines. Chef Heinz Beck, based at the Rome Cavalieri, A Waldorf Astoria Hotel, holds three Michelin stars and oversees the dining program of La Dolce Vita, inspired by the regions it traverses. A new Orient Express Lounge at Roma Ostiense Station, created by artist-architect Hugo Toro, is where guests gather before the journey.



Dining on board La Dolce Vita Orient Express.
LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS.

The 1960's Inspired Design

The train's design inspiration is La Dolce Vita, "The Sweet Life," a name bequeathed to an Italian attitude and lifestyle synonymous with the country's décor, art, and architecture of the 1960s. It was made famous by Federico Fellini's film of the same name. Dimorestudio, an architecture and design studio founded by Emiliano Salci and Britt Moran, undertook the design work, drawing inspiration from mid-century Italian design masters such as Giò Ponti, Nanda Vigo, Gae Aulenti, and Osvaldo Borsani. Expect playful geometric patterns and minimalist palettes.

A La Dolce Vita Orient Express reservation includes the round-trip transfer to and from the train station, accommodation, the table d'hôte, beverages (such as selected wine and spirits, mineral water, soft drinks, tea, and coffee), onboard entertainment, exclusive experiences, as well as all applicable taxes. There are optional off-board experiences for a fee. Prices do not include insurance and gratuities. Fares start at \$3,828 per person per night in a deluxe cabin, based on double occupancy.

The Orient Express La Dolce Vita is a partnership between the French hotel group Accor and the Italian luxury hospitality group Arsenale S.P.A., with a railway partnership with Trenitalia—Gruppo Ferrovie dello Stato—and the Fondazione FS Italiane. Note that Orient Express is a different company from the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, which is owned by Belmond, a part of LVMH.

Details can be found at [La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#).

LUXE GETAWAYS

TRAVEL IN STYLE



La Dolce Vita Orient Express Brings '60s Glamour to Luxury Travel

by McKenna Blayne

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, a luxury train experience that promises an unforgettable expedition through Italy's most beloved landscapes, will begin selling tickets this April, marking a significant milestone in its highly anticipated debut.

Embodying a celebration of life, freedom, indulgence, and pleasure, La Dolce Vita Orient Express invites travelers to relive the glamour of the 1960s while **exploring Italy's breathtaking landscapes** from the comfort of its elegant cabins and suites. Offering nine iconic journeys, each seamlessly blending extravagance, culture, and history, La Dolce Vita promises an unforgettable adventure, with its inaugural departures set for April 2025.

Paying homage to the golden era of *La Dolce Vita*, this extraordinary train cruise captures the artistic and cultural vibrancy of 1960s Italy. Merging timeless Italian elegance with modern travel, it exudes sophistication through its 12 deluxe cabins, 18 lavish suites, an opulent La Dolce Vita suite, and exquisitely designed restaurant, lounge, and bar- each a bold tribute to the art, design, and creativity of the 1960s and 1970s.



In partnership with world-renowned chefs and sommeliers, travelers will be treated to an unparalleled five-star experience, indulging in the finest Italian gastronomy and exceptional libations that embody the essence of “Made in Italy” excellence. The train promises to satisfy even the most discerning connoisseurs, as Michelin three-star chef Heinz Beck will oversee the culinary experience onboard while Vinitaly will meticulously curate the wine selection for each itinerary. Naturally, the menus will feature the finest delicacies Italy has to offer. Before embarking on their unforgettable odyssey, guests will be welcomed at the La Dolce Vita lounge at Rome Ostiense station, where they can unwind in an atmosphere of refined charm, setting the perfect prelude to their Italian getaway.



“We are thrilled to officially open the doors to a new era of travel with La Dolce Vita Orient Express. This endeavor embodies the essence of exquisite exploration, where sophistication meets adventure. As we embark on this journey together, we invite travelers to experience the pinnacle of elegance and excitement, immersed in the splendors of Italy,” revealed Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express.

Nine exceptional itineraries are offered, each providing a one-of-a-kind and immersive experience, including scenic excursions from Palermo to Rome and Venice to Portofino, and a captivating exploration of the rich landscapes and culture of Sicily. Each route is designed to offer travelers a memorable and lavish adventure through Italy’s most iconic destinations. The highly anticipated first departures are scheduled to take place this spring, with tickets becoming available for purchase in April, enabling guests to reserve their spot on these remarkable voyages.



“Today marks a concrete step towards the realization of a dream for many, but also the beginning of a new Italian frontier in the luxury market,” says Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale Group. “We have created a new market segment: Rail cruises, and the response from pre-bookings has already signaled the success of this initiative. That’s why we have decided to invest in a unique product capable of creating the conditions to welcome millions of travelers in a new, entirely Italian form of slow, sustainable, and luxury tourism.”

Don’t miss the chance to be among the first to experience the glamour, elegance, and indulgence of the La Dolce Vita Orient Express — a symphony of world-class cuisine, breathtaking landscapes, and timeless Italian charm come together for a memorable adventure. Secure your ticket and step aboard a moving masterpiece that redefines luxury travel.

Pricing is tailored to travel preferences and departure dates. Starting prices for a one-night itinerary are €3,500 per person in a deluxe cabin and €4,700 per person in a suite. For more information and to book this experience, visit www.orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Debuts in Italy



[La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#), the first Italian-made luxury train, makes its debut with eight curated itineraries blending art, landscapes and three-star Michelin cuisine by Heinz Beck.

The train was unveiled at Roma Ostiense Station, within the La Dolce Vita Lounge dedicated to its passengers. The first trip, "Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards" takes guests to the destination of Montalcino.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks a new era in the Italian tourism landscape, offering travelers an exclusive experience that embraces the essence of "Made in Italy." It celebrates the country's cultural, scenic and gastronomic heritage, guiding guests on a journey through Italy's most emblematic destinations.

Guests embark from the Orient Express Lounge, envisioned by artist-architect Hugo Toro. Onboard, guests are welcomed with an aperitivo and treated to menus composed by Chef Heinz Beck. Stops at select destinations allow passengers to explore the cultural and historical aspects of each region.

Traversing 14 Italian regions, the train offers eight itineraries tailored for discerning international travelers. From the canals of Venice to the coves of Portofino, the medieval charm of Siena to the sun-drenched stones of Matera, and from Montalcino's famed vineyards to the truffle paths of Nizza Monferrato, each journey is a celebration of Italy's cultural and natural heritage. Sicily reveals itself in stages, from Catania, Palermo, Taormina and beyond. Designed to embrace the philosophy of slow travel, these routes invite guests to connect deeply with local traditions, flavors and landscapes.

With 31 cabins, 18 suites, 12 deluxe cabins and the signature La Dolce Vita Suite, the train is the result of a meticulous restoration and design process. Originally Z1 Italian model carriages, each of these has been revitalized through a major investment, with work carried out between Brindisi and Palermo. This project marks the creation of Italy's first private luxury rail fleet, which will ultimately comprise six bespoke trains.

Flagship Orient Express Hotel is Now Open



Photo: Alexandre Tabaste / Orient Express

Orient Express La Minerva has just opened in Rome, marking the first-ever Orient Express branded hotel in the world and following the La Dolce Vita Orient Express train debut last week.

The property occupies the former Palazzo Fonseca building, dating to the 17th century. Built in 1620, it later became a famous meeting place for famous Italian artists in the 1800s. The property's rich history meshes well with Orient Express, which operated luxury rail cars from 1883 to 1977. Many of those original trains will be revived in this new iteration of Orient Express.

"Opening the doors of Orient Express La Minerva marks a powerful moment in our journey. A city of layered beauty and bold character, Rome offers the perfect canvas to reimagine the legacy of Orient Express through new purpose and experience – where Romans gather, and international aesthetes unite," said Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express. "In partnership with Arsenale Group and through the visionary work of artist-architect Hugo Toro, we have the privilege to breathe new life into a heritage property deeply rooted in the fabric of this timeless city."

Newly restored and refurbished, Orient Express LaMinerva features 93 rooms and suites and notably offer scenic views of renowned Rome landmarks from the Pantheon to Piazza della Minerva to the Roman skyline.

The hotel's food and beverage venues include La Minerva Bar, which showcases the building's historic skylight; and Voliera, the rooftop restaurant and bar. Gigi Rigolatto will open in May, and Orient Express LaMinerva also has a spa inspired by ancient Roman baths and elegant meeting and event spaces.

The inaugural hotel opening will be followed the debut of another hotel, Orient Express Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice, the introduction of luxury yacht Orient Express Corinthian in 2026, and the eventual return of the original Orient Express train to railways.



Orient Express opens hotel near the Pantheon

Orient Express has opened its first hotel in Rome with the debut of Orient Express La Minerva. The property is located at Piazza della Minerva 69, steps from the Pantheon. The building, a restored 17th-century palazzo, was reimagined by architect Hugo Toro. The hotel has 93 rooms and 36 suites.

The project was completed in partnership with Arsenale Group. This is the second opening following La Dolce Vita Orient Express and ahead of the upcoming Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice.

Hugo Toro oversaw the restoration. The interiors include custom furniture, wooden accents inspired by the train's carriages and linens by Rivolta Carmignani. Public areas include lounges, a lobby bar and corridors referencing the brand's legacy.

"The rooms are shaped by a dialogue between past and present," said Toro. "Each detail is intended to create movement, light and depth."

Suites include the Stendhal Suite, named after the French author who once stayed in the building. Rooms feature ceiling murals painted in soft tones, a design reference to the city's skies.



Suite Bedroom – Orient Express La Minerva.

The property includes five meeting and event venues. The Olimpo Ballroom is 165 square meters and features eleven sculptures by Rinaldo Rinaldi. The Gallery is 75 square meters, adjacent to the bar, and features a ceiling modeled after the Pantheon dome. Additional meeting rooms include the Rinaldi (54 sqm), Alfieri (28 sqm) and Bernini (26 sqm).

La Minerva Bar is set beneath a glass ceiling and original marble columns. The statue of Minerva, sculpted in 1854 by Rinaldi, stands at the center of the space. "We wanted to preserve the architectural memory of the building while introducing new energy," Toro said.

Two dining venues will open to the public in the coming months. Gigi Rigolatto is scheduled to launch in May 2025 on the rooftop terrace. The concept is a collaboration between Rikas Hospitality Group and Paris Society. The venue includes 360-degree views of the city, including the Pantheon, St. Peter's Basilica and the Vittoriano.

"Gigi Rigolatto will reflect the Roman rhythm of life, from morning to night," said a representative of Paris Society. "It is an interpretation of Italian elegance through a contemporary lens."

Later in the year, the property will debut Mimi Kakushi, developed by Rikas Hospitality Group. The restaurant pays tribute to 1920s Osaka and blends Japanese and Western influences. The original location in Dubai opened in 2021 and was named Best Bar in the Middle East & Africa in 2024 by The World's 50 Best Bars.

"We believe in transporting guests through both place and time," said the Rikas team. "Mimi Kakushi is part of that idea."

Orient Express La Minerva is the brand's first hotel opening and part of a broader strategy to reestablish its presence in key European destinations. The next hotel will open in Venice.

Hotel Investment Today

BY NORTHSTAR



Suite living room at the Orient Express La Minerva in Rome.

Latest news: Accor's first Orient Express; Oakland hotels fail; extended-stay data

Breaking news about deals, development, data and more.

Accor's first Orient Express hotel. Accor has announced the opening of its first Orient Express hotel in Rome. Orient Express La Minerva is in the heart of the city steps from the Pantheon with 93 rooms and 36 suites. This debut follows the recent launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains and anticipates the opening of Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice later this year – in partnership with Arsenale Group. The Rome hotel will have three dining venues, including a rooftop space that opens in May, and five event venues. Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express, said, "Opening the doors of Orient Express La Minerva marks a powerful moment in our journey... In partnership with Arsenale Group and through the visionary work of artist-architect Hugo Toro, we have the privilege to breathe new life into a heritage property deeply rooted in the fabric of this timeless city."

The World's First Orient Express Hotel Has Opened in Rome



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Rome, Italy – April 7, 2025 – Orient Express proudly announces today that [Orient Express La Minerva](#), its first hotel in Rome, is now open. Anchored in history and emblematic of a refined approach to travel, Orient Express La Minerva embodies a new vision of hospitality defined by the depth of experience.

Located at Piazza della Minerva 69, in the very heart of the city, Orient Express La Minerva lies just steps from the Pantheon and within easy walking distance of Rome's cultural treasures. The hotel houses 93 rooms and 36 suites – each space entirely singular in scale, layout, and in spirit.

This opening marks the breathtaking revival of a 17th-century palazzo situated on Piazza della Minerva, where illustrious travelers and artists such as Stendhal and Melville once sought inspiration and refuge. A must-stop of the Grand Tour, Rome has long been a destination for cultural connoisseurs drawn to its art, history, and timeless grandeur. Since 1883, the Città Eterna has been an essential destination for Orient Express travelers, offering an encounter with a past that continues to shape the future. This debut follows the recent launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express, and anticipates the opening of Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice later this year – in partnership with Arsenale Group. Meticulously restored by award-winning artist-architect Hugo Toro, known for reawakening historical gems with contemporary finesse, the hotel blends Rome's heritage with new sophistication, offering guests an authentically Roman experience, refined and profoundly memorable.

Each room is an homage to the golden age of travel, featuring bespoke bedside trunks, rich wooden detailing reminiscent of the legendary carriages, and luxurious bedding crafted by Rivolta Carmignani, the same linens once gracing Orient Express sleeper cars. The hotel's corridors recall the polished elegance of the luxury train, while its lounges and public spaces invite guests to indulge in a Voyage of textures and perspectives.

Hugo Toro conjures the imagery of an ideal journey, inviting guests into the home of a refined aesthete gently transformed into a hotel. A masterful interplay of textures, tones, and light reveals itself in every detail. Temporal and stylistic references ripple throughout the space, animating it with quiet complexity, such as the hand-painted evocation of Rome's sky above each bed. Suites at Orient Express La Minerva have been crafted as soulful escapes by Rome's eternal allure, including that of the Stendhal Suite – named after the French realist writer, one of La Minerva's more notable former guests and a testament to the fascinating voyagers who have walked the hotel's historic halls.

Beloved by Romans and cherished by connoisseurs, Orient Express La Minerva hosts three exceptional dining venues – a testament to the connecting spirit and culinary curation of Orient Express, promising unforgettable gastronomy journeys aligned with Rome's leisurely pace.

La Minerva Bar, situated in the heart of the hotel's lobby, provides a serene haven amid the vibrant pulse of Roman life. Beneath its grand glass roof and adorned by the preserved statue of Minerva – is complete by original marble columns, which glow softly throughout the day, creating an ambiance that shifts from natural Roman light to intimate sophistication.

Opening to the public in May 2025, Gigi Rigolatto will bring the spirit of *la dolce vita* to life from dawn to dusk at every table on the iconic Roman rooftop. A standout concept by Rikas Hospitality Group and Paris Society, it promises a vibrant energy above the Eternal City – paired with mesmerizing 360° panoramic views of the city's rooftops and monuments, including the Pantheon, the Vittoriano and the majestic dome of St. Peter's Basilica. With its Riviera-inspired elegance and vibrant atmosphere, Gigi Rigolatto offers an elevated dining experience that seamlessly marries timeless allure with contemporary energy – welcome to an immersion in glamour. Gigi is developed in collaboration with Rikas Hospitality Group. Gigi's design concept has been developed by Hugo Toro, drawing on historical references that have shaped Italy as we know it today.

Mimi Kakushi, which will open at Orient Express La Minerva later this year – is an award-winning restaurant, transporting guests to the Osaka of the 1920s, an era of the creative clash between Western modernism and traditional Japanese values. Mimi Kakushi captures this transformative moment complete with the boundary-breaking jazz age, offering a fusion of Far Eastern flavors tempered with Western influences. Since its debut in Dubai in 2021, Mimi Kakushi has garnered numerous awards, including The World's 50 Best Bars recognition for Best Bar in the Middle East & Africa in 2024. The Mimi Kakushi concept is curated by Rikas Hospitality Group. Orient Express La Minerva offers five event venues:

- Olimpo Ballroom (165 sqm), adorned with eleven exquisite marble sculptures by Rinaldo Rinaldi, symbolizing the seasons, elements and continents.
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- The Gallery (75 sqm), adjacent to La Minerva Bar, on the ground floor – touched with ceilings inspired by the Pantheon itself.

Standing in quiet majesty, the statue of goddess Minerva watches over it all, a marble masterpiece sculpted in 1854 by Rinaldo Rinaldi, a disciple of Canova. Goddess of wisdom, arts and craftsmanship, she remains the silent guardian of the stories etched into these walls.

Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express, states: “Opening the doors of Orient Express La Minerva marks a powerful moment in our journey. A city of layered beauty and bold character, Rome offers the perfect canvas to reimagine the legacy of Orient Express through new purpose and experience – where Romans gather, and international aesthetes unite. In partnership with Arsenale Group and through the visionary work of artist-architect Hugo Toro, we have the privilege to breathe new life into a heritage property deeply rooted in the fabric of this timeless city.”

Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group expresses: “With Orient Express La Minerva, we are inaugurating the very first Orient Express hotel in the world, giving shape to a new concept of ultra-luxury hospitality. This project combines the identity of a legendary brand with the entrepreneurial vision of Arsenale: transforming iconic places into world-class destinations. We chose Rome because it represents the crossroads between history, culture, and Italian hospitality. This debut, alongside the one of La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains — with Rome as the centerpiece — confirms Italy’s ability to attract strategic investments and strengthens Arsenale’s role as a key player in international luxury development.”

The First Ever Orient Express Hotel Is Now Open in Rome



You're probably familiar with their luxury trains but Orient Express, an Accor brand, is now a player in the European hotel space. Orient Express La Minerva, the brand's first hotel in the world, just opened for business in Rome. Located at Piazza della Minerva 69 in the heart of the city, the hotel lies just steps from the Pantheon and within easy walking distance of Rome's cultural treasures. It houses 93 rooms and 36 suites, each unique in scale and layout.



The project is a revival of a 17th-century palazzo found on Piazza della Minerva, where illustrious travelers and artists such as Stendhal and Melville once sought inspiration and a place to stay. It also follows the recent launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express and precedes the opening of Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice later this year, a partnership with Arsenale Group.

Meticulously restored by award-winning artist-architect Hugo Toro, who's known for "reawakening" historical gems with contemporary finesse, the hotel blends Rome's heritage with new sophistication, offering guests an "authentically Roman experience." Each room is an homage to the golden age of travel, featuring bespoke bedside trunks, rich wooden detailing reminiscent of the legendary carriages, and luxury bedding

crafted by Rivolta Carmignani—the same linens that once graced Orient Express sleeper cars. The property's corridors recall the polished elegance of the luxury train, while its lounges and public spaces showcase a variety of textures and perspectives.

According to Orient Express, Toro conjures imagery of an ideal journey, inviting guests into the home of a refined aesthete gently transformed into a hotel. Temporal and stylistic references ripple throughout the space, animating it with quiet complexity, such as the hand-painted Roman sky above each bed. Suites at Orient Express La Minerva have been crafted as "soulful escapes by Rome's eternal allure," including the Stendhal Suite. It was named after the French realist writer, one of La Minerva's more notable former guests.

In terms of dining, the hotel is home to three venues. La Minerva Bar, situated in the heart of the lobby, provides a "serene haven" amid the vibrant pulse of Roman life. Beneath a grand glass roof and adorned by the preserved statue of Minerva, it's completed by original marble columns which glow softly throughout the day.

Opening to the public in May 2025, Gigi Rigolatto will bring the spirit of *la dolce vita* to life from dawn to dusk on its Roman rooftop. A concept by Rikas Hospitality Group and Paris Society, expect 360-degree panoramic views of the Eternal City including the Pantheon, the Vittoriano and the majestic dome of St. Peter's Basilica. With its Riviera-inspired atmosphere, Gigi Rigolatto will offer an elevated dining experience.

Mimi Kakushi, which will open at Orient Express La Minerva later this year, is an award-winning restaurant concept that transports guests to the Osaka of the 1920s—an era of creative clash between Western modernism and traditional Japanese values. Expect a fusion of Far Eastern flavors tempered with Western influences. Since its debut in Dubai in 2021, Mimi Kakushi has notably garnered several awards, including The World's 50 Best Bars recognition for Best Bar in the Middle East & Africa in 2024.

Orient Express La Minerva also offers five event venues: Olimpo Ballroom, adorned with eleven marble sculptures by Rinaldo Rinaldi, symbolizing the seasons, elements and continents; Rinaldi Meeting Room, designed in homage to the interiors of vintage Orient Express carriages; Alfieri Meeting Room, an intimate space perfect for smaller gatherings beneath its atmospheric vaulted ceilings; Bernini Meeting Room, which is discreet and "exquisitely appointed"; and The Gallery adjacent to La Minerva Bar on the ground floor, with ceilings inspired by the Pantheon itself.

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The luxury travel experience will continue with the launch of the Orient Express Corinthian in 2026—the first of two Orient Express Silenseas ships—and finally the return of the legendary Orient Express train to railways. For more information, visit www.orient-express.com. (Photos courtesy of Alexandre Tabaste)

TRAVEL OFTEN LIVE WELL TRAVEL MAGAZINE

DRIFT

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The A-List of Travel ®
LUXURY TRAVEL
MAGAZINE

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World's first **Orient Express** Hotel opens in Rome

LINK: <https://www.wantedinrome.com/news/worlds-first-orient-express-hotel-opens-in-rome.html>



World's first **Orient Express** Hotel opens in Rome By: Wanted in Rome Date: 09 Apr, 2025 **Orient Express** La Minerva is the latest five-star hotel to open in Rome. The first **Orient Express** Hotel in the world has opened in the historic heart of Rome, a stone's throw from the Pantheon, amid a boom in the capital's luxury hospitality sector. The five-star hotel, named La Minerva after the piazza where it is located, was inaugurated by Rome mayor Roberto Gualtieri and the CEO of **Arsenale** Group, which owns the hotel, **Paolo Barletta**. The hotel, linked to the **Orient Express** brand best known for luxury rail travel, is housed in the former La Minerva hotel which first opened to guests, including Stendhal, in 1811. **Orient Express** La Minerva - Photo Accor - Alexander Tabaste The building, which dates to the 17th century, has been completely renovated by the French-Mexican architect and designer Hugo Toro in a style that

combines art deco with contemporary elegance. The hotel in Piazza della Minerva hosts 93 rooms and 36 suites, with each room described as a "homage to the golden age of travel", equipped with bespoke bedside trunks and wooden details "reminiscent of the legendary carriages". Rome second in the world for new luxury hotels **Orient Express** La Minerva will offer three dining venues: La Minerva Bar, beneath a glass roof in the lobby; the rooftop Gigi Rigolatto, opening to the public in May; and Japanese restaurant Mimi Kakushi set to open in the coming months. The new hotel opens following the recent launch of **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** and comes ahead of the opening of the **Orient Express** Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice later this year. **Orient Express** La Minerva - photos Alexander Tabaste - Accor General Info Address Piazza della Minerva, 69, 00186 Roma RM, Italy View on Map World's first **Orient**

Express Hotel opens in Rome Piazza della Minerva, 69, 00186 Roma RM, Italy

SLEEPER



Orient Express celebrates golden age of travel with debut hotel



Jean-Michel Gathy draws on local culture at Aman Nai Lert Bangkok



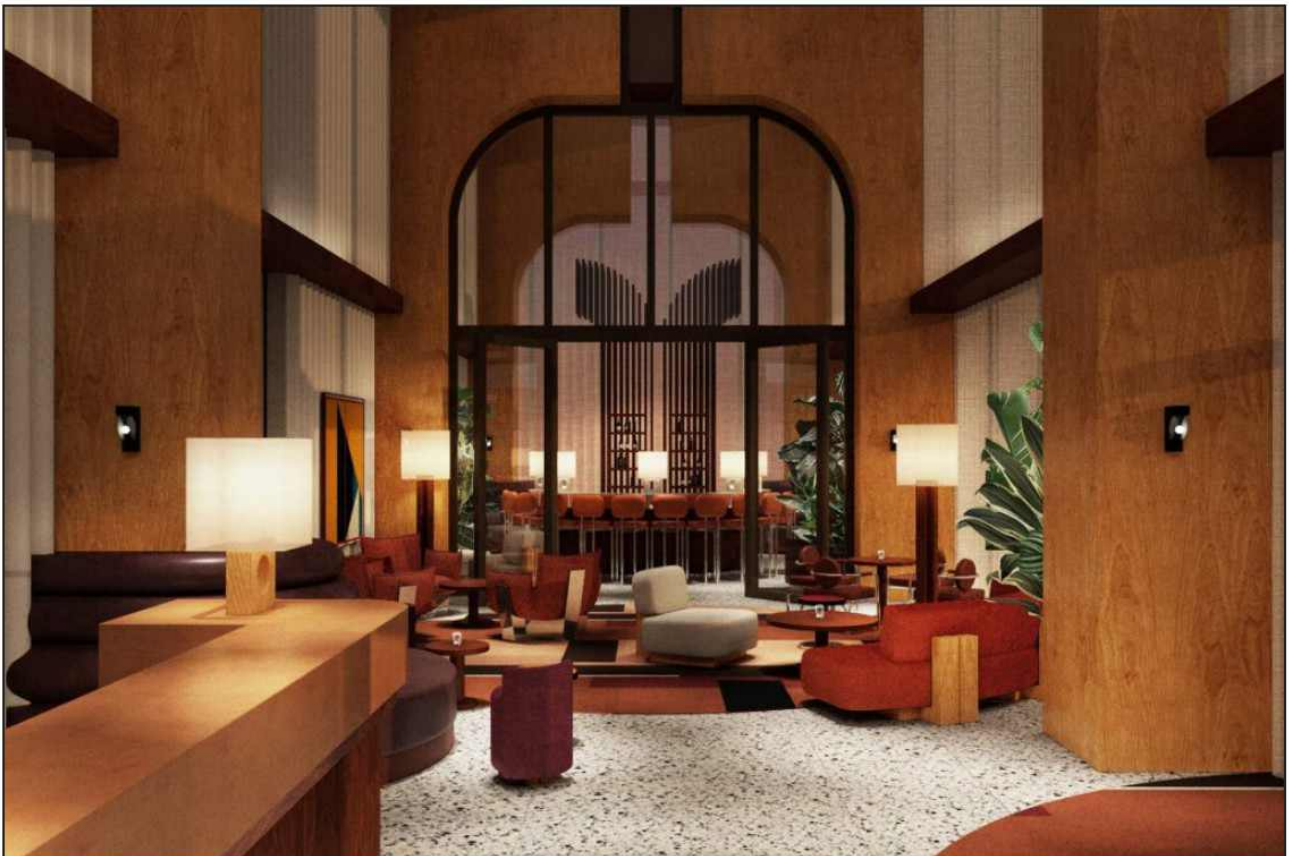
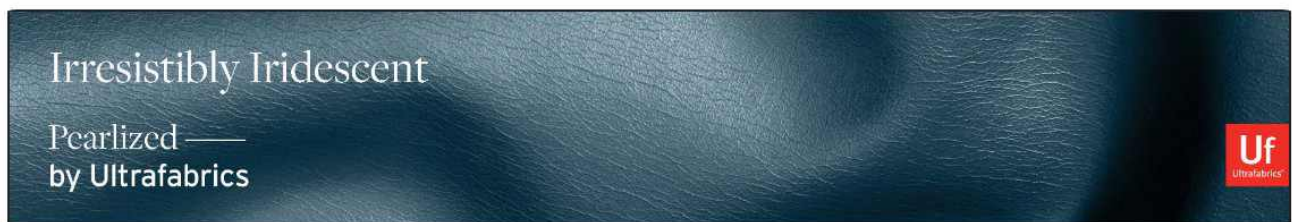
Champalimaud Design transforms Litchfield mansion into boutique hotel



Raffles sets sights on Lake Como



Q&A: Dornbracht celebrates 75th anniversary in Milan with Atelier launch



First Look: The Standard, Brussels



Desert & Delta Safaris unveils plans for new lodge in Botswana



Tihany Design envisions debut Emblems Collection hotel in Italy



Occa launches Spanish studio



Hector Finch debuts short film to detail 'Making Products With Soul'



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Rockwell Group to design Egypt's first Nobu hotel



A by Adina enters European market




Amtico introduces Spacia




Dorchester Collection appoints Philippe
Lebouef as CEO

Northern Lights crafts bespoke lighting for
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HOTELS

Orient Express La Minerva is now open in Rome

Vicky Karantzavelou

09.04.2025  100



Orient Express La Minerva (Photo: Alexandre Tabaste).

Orient Express La Minerva, the brand's first hotel in Rome, is now open, offering a luxury experience that marries historical charm with modern sophistication near the Pantheon.

ROME, ITALY – **Orient Express** announces that **Orient Express La Minerva**, its first hotel in **Rome**, is now open. Anchored in history and emblematic of a refined approach to travel, Orient Express La Minerva embodies a new vision of hospitality defined by the depth of experience.

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Suite Living Room (Photo: Alexandre Tabaste).

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La Minerva Bar, situated in the heart of the hotel's lobby, provides a serene haven amid the vibrant pulse of Roman life. Beneath its grand glass roof and adorned by the preserved statue of Minerva – is complete by original marble columns which glow softly throughout the day, creating an ambiance that shifts from natural Roman light to intimate sophistication.

Opening to the public in May 2025, Gigi Rigolatto will bring the spirit of la dolce vita to life from dawn to dusk at every table on the iconic Roman rooftop. A standout concept by Rikas Hospitality Group and Paris Society, it promises a vibrant energy above the Eternal City – paired with mesmerizing 360° panoramic views of the city's rooftops and monuments, including the Pantheon, the Vittoriano and the majestic dome of St. Peter's Basilica. With its Riviera-inspired elegance and vibrant atmosphere, Gigi Rigolatto offers an elevated dining experience that seamlessly marries timeless allure with contemporary energy – welcome to an immersion in glamour. Gigi is developed in collaboration with Rikas Hospitality Group. Gigi's design concept has been developed by Hugo Toro, drawing on historical references that have shaped Italy as we know it today.

Mimi Kakushi, which will open at Orient Express La Minerva later this year – is an award-winning restaurant, transporting guests to the Osaka of the 1920s, an era of the creative clash between Western modernism and traditional Japanese values. Mimi Kakushi captures this transformative moment complete with the boundary breaking jazz age, offering a fusion of Far Eastern flavors tempered with Western influences. Since its debut in Dubai in 2021, Mimi Kakushi has garnered numerous awards, including The World's 50 Best Bars recognition for Best Bar in the Middle East & Africa in 2024. The Mimi Kakushi concept is curated by Rikas Hospitality Group.



Suite Bedroom (Photo: Alexandre Tabaste).

Orient Express La Minerva offers five event venues:

- Olimpo Ballroom (165 sqm), adorned with eleven exquisite marble sculptures by Rinaldo Rinaldi, symbolizing the seasons, elements and continents.

- Rinaldi Meeting Room (54 sqm), designed in homage to the interiors of vintage Orient Express carriages.
- Alfieri Meeting Room (28 sqm), an intimate enclave perfect for refined gatherings beneath its atmospheric vaulted ceilings.
- Bernini Meeting Room (26 sqm), discreet and exquisitely appointed.
- The Gallery (75 sqm), adjacent to La Minerva Bar, on the ground floor – touched with ceilings inspired by the Pantheon itself.

Standing in quiet majesty, the statue of goddess Minerva watches over it all, a marble masterpiece sculpted in 1854 by Rinaldo Rinaldi, a disciple of Canova. Goddess of wisdom, arts and craftsmanship, she remains the silent guardian of the stories etched into these walls.

Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO Orient Express, states: *“Opening the doors of Orient Express La Minerva marks a powerful moment in our journey. A city of layered beauty and bold character, Rome offers the perfect canvas to reimagine the legacy of Orient Express through new purpose and experience – where Romans gather, and international aesthetes unite. In partnership with Arsenale Group and through the visionary work of artist-architect Hugo Toro, we have the privilege to breathe new life into a heritage property deeply rooted in the fabric of this timeless city.”*

Paolo Barletta, CEO Arsenale Group expresses: *“With Orient Express La Minerva, we are inaugurating the very first Orient Express hotel in the world, giving shape to a new concept of ultra-luxury hospitality. This project combines the identity of a legendary brand with the entrepreneurial vision of Arsenale: transforming iconic places into world-class destinations. We chose Rome because it represents the crossroads between history, culture, and Italian hospitality. This debut, alongside the one of La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains – with Rome as the centerpiece – confirms Italy’s ability to attract strategic investments and strengthens Arsenale’s role as a key player in international luxury development.”*

Italy unveils La Dolce Vita Orient Express: A luxurious revival of rail travel

Posted by CEO Destinations | Apr 7, 2025 | Transport



Italy has proudly launched its first homegrown luxury train, the La Dolce Vita Orient Express, heralding a significant step forward for the nation's rail tourism industry. The inaugural journey, a celebratory departure from Roma Ostiense station, set its course for the esteemed vineyards of Montalcino in Tuscany. This landmark event, a collaborative endeavour between Orient Express and Arsenale Group, supported by Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani, signifies a fresh and

opulent approach to experiential travel, artfully combining Italy's stunning landscapes, rich cultural tapestry, and world-class culinary heritage.

Orient Express, in announcing what it terms "the renaissance of rail as the ultimate luxury," marked the historic occasion with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting as the train embarked on its maiden voyage, 'Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards', towards Montalcino.

The La Dolce Vita Orient Express boasts 31 exquisitely designed cabins, including 18 lavish suites, 12 elegant deluxe cabins, and the signature 'La Dolce Vita Suite'. Orient Express CEO Gilda Perez Alvarado remarked, "The launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express marks the beginning of a new chapter in Italian train journeys, made possible through our partnership with Arsenale Group. This unique experience is an invitation to rediscover Italy through a new lens—where the glamour of 1960s and 1970s Italy meets the country's rich hospitality and warm conviviality."

This pioneering project introduces eight exclusive and meticulously planned itineraries, spanning across 14 of Italy's most captivating regions. These curated journeys promise to unveil iconic destinations, from the romantic waterways of Venice and the idyllic coves of Portofino to the medieval charm of Siena and the ancient wonders of Matera. The routes are thoughtfully designed to showcase the diverse landscapes, deep-rooted traditions, and vibrant gastronomic offerings of Italy, with notable stops in Sicily's cultural hearts of Palermo, Taormina, and Catania. Italian government tourism sources highlight the importance of these routes in fostering sustainable and culturally enriching travel experiences throughout the country.

The interior design, brought to life by Milan's renowned Dimorestudio, pays elegant tribute to Italy's golden age of the mid-20th century. Drawing inspiration from design luminaries such as Gio Ponti, Gae Aulenti, and Osvaldo Borsani, the aesthetic evokes a sense of nostalgic charm while providing contemporary luxury for discerning travellers. Alvarado noted that "every detail embody[ies] the spirit of this celebrated period, with all of its zest and charm." Official sources

underscore that this stylistic choice celebrates Italy's global leadership in design and manufacturing, further enhancing the prestigious 'Made in Italy' brand.

The luxurious experience extends to the culinary realm, where guests can savour exceptional dishes crafted by Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck. His onboard menus feature authentic regional specialities, offering a true narrative of Italy's rich gastronomic heritage. Alvarado described the dining as "a true celebration of all that Italy represents." Italian tourism agencies emphasise this unique culinary journey as a significant draw, further bolstering Italy's international reputation for fine dining.

The journey commences at the stylish Orient Express Lounge at Roma Ostiense station, a space meticulously designed by artist-architect Hugo Toro, setting a sophisticated and welcoming tone for the adventures ahead. "From the moment the journey begins at the La Dolce Vita Lounge – guests are brought into a new travel experience that celebrates Italy's landscapes, flavours, and culture – signed by Orient Express," stated Alvarado.

Arsenale CEO Paolo Barletta highlighted the profound significance of La Dolce Vita Orient Express as a groundbreaking model for international rail tourism. He emphasised the train's considerable potential to stimulate Italy's economy by seamlessly integrating high-end rail travel with existing hospitality sectors, encouraging tourism beyond peak seasons, and supporting local businesses. "Our commitment translates into a production that, to date, represents an international benchmark, with the ambition of creating a tourism offer that extends travel beyond peak seasons and promotes alternative destinations, thanks to the exclusivity and comfort of one of the most efficient and sustainable ways to travel," Barletta affirmed. He further added that "The Dolce Vita train can become a symbol of Italy's dedication to enhancing its territories, supporting local entrepreneurship, and strengthening national railway production while contributing to a more integrated tourism system."

Italian tourism authorities view this landmark initiative as a crucial step in positioning Italy as a leader in sustainable luxury travel. This ambition aligns with governmental efforts to strengthen national railway infrastructure, enhance the appeal of regional tourism, and showcase Italy's unparalleled cultural heritage to a global audience, all experienced through the refined lens of the La Dolce Vita Orient Express.

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Cultural Germany



Wallace's Indonesia Maldives beyond the honeymoon **Wandersleeps**

A waltz across Vienna **Just back from Japan** Festive USA **Guyana** Wild Oman





NEW Sleeps

The **Aman Nai Lert Bangkok** opens in April, offering a peaceful retreat in an often chaotic city. This new property is an all-suite affair with an infinity pool overlooking the park. And to truly escape the hustle, it has an entire floor dedicated to the spa: aman.com

The all-suite **Corinthia Grand Hotel du Boulevard Bucharest** has opened in Romania's capital in an iconic site. The Belle Époque building in which it lies has a long heritage, dating back to 1867, and was once home to an iconic stay. Following a long restoration, its 30 suites are joined by the intriguing Boulevard 73, a French-Romanian fusion restaurant: corinthia.com

The new **Serengeti Explorer** lodge promises some rare encounters thanks to its onsite hide. This overlooks a watering hole, so you won't have to travel far to see wildlife. And from its position on Tanzania's Nyaboro Hills, the Great Migration is literally on your doorstep. Other perks include a chef's table in the wine cellar, a photo lab and even an outdoor cinema: elewanacollection.com

Antigua's **Hermitage Bay** has reopened following a multi-million-pound glow-up. Nestled on the island's west coast, one thing that hasn't changed is the setting: built on the hillside of a much-loved cove. Pick between beachfront suites raised on stilts and sea-view stays further up on the cliffs. Both offer ample views of the tranquil waters: hermitagebay.com

The first Orient Express-branded hotel opens in Rome on 1 April. The 93-room **Orient Express La Minerva** is located in a building dating back to the 17th century, just steps from the Pantheon. We're rather intrigued to see how it brings its illustrious name to life: laminerva.orient-express.com



TOUR-OP NEWS

Are you fascinated by historical travels, early maps and photos?

Guided tour specialist **Travelsphere** has launched a new partnership with the **Royal Geographical Society (RGS)** that includes a range of itineraries delivering a deeper take on their destinations using historical insights from the RGS archives (travelsphere.co.uk/royal-geographical-society). Travellers will also receive a Royal Geographical Society Collection booklet offering destination content provided by the society. Itineraries already launched include the *Grand Tour of Italy*, *Japan – Land of the Rising Sun* and *Latin Wonders of the World*, with a new Uzbekistan trip coming soon. Elsewhere, Turkish Airlines has just launched **Turkish Airlines Holidays**, offering a range of global tours, hotels, activities and more, spanning city stays through to safaris, gulet cruises and cultural tours. Bookings include a best-price guarantee, and payment can be in two instalments (holidays.turkishairlines.com).



The latest flight routes



Air Canada has just resumed its Ottawa-to-London Heathrow service, with the Canadian flag carrier now operating the route four times a week. And this isn't the only new destination folks flying out of Heathrow can head to this spring, as **British Airways** has just begun operating flights to Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, four times a week.

The UK's second-busiest airport, London Gatwick, sees a new flight route to Billund (Denmark) begin on 30 June with **Norwegian**. This town

is the birthplace of LEGO, although it's also a good jumping-off point for exploring western Denmark.

Over in the USA, **United Airlines** is set to become the first US airline to offer direct flights to Nuuk, Greenland, with twice-weekly services beginning from 14 June. Finally, **Turkish Airlines** (see p30) is set to launch direct flights to Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, but you'll have to wait until 10 December for this new thrice-weekly service from Istanbul. ►

DEPARTURES

LUXE ALLA ITALIA



On Board

Luxe alla Italia

With its opulent design and don't-lift-a-finger approach, the newly launched La Dolce Vita Orient Express promises a return to a golden era of rail travel and Italian savoir-faire





On Board

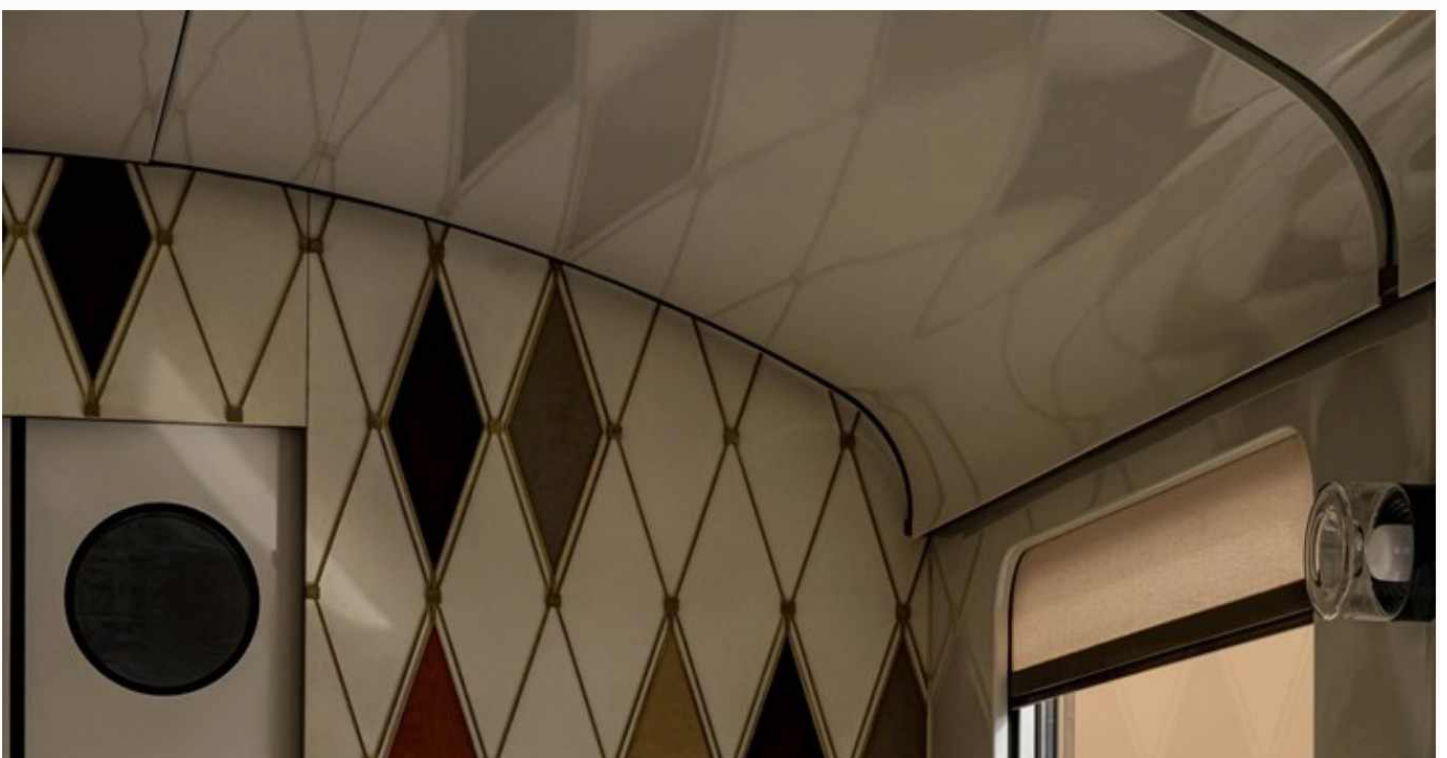
Written by
Ivan Carvalho

April 2025

The glamorous age of *la dolce vita* – cue scenes of Anita Ekberg dancing in the Trevi Fountain – saw 1960s Rome become the epicentre of extravagance, as people the world over celebrated the Italian lifestyle with its emphasis on enjoying small daily pleasures and moving at a slower pace. Today, that same spirit has been revived in an ambitious project dedicated to experiencing the best of the Bel Paese by rail.

Launched this month by Italian hospitality brand Arsenale in conjunction with French hotel group Accor, the aptly named La Dolce Vita Orient Express is a luxury train service that aims to pamper passengers as they enjoy overnight excursions to destinations across the peninsula, from Portofino to the vineyards of Montalcino.

The indulgence starts in Rome, where travellers check into a dedicated lounge at Ostiense station, complete with showers and an expansive bar lavishly designed in an Art Deco style by Franco-Mexican architect Hugo Toro. From here, guests may board their train while smartly dressed porters whisk their luggage away to their cabins. Six trains will enter service in total, each made up of converted Trenitalia Intercity carriages from the 1970s and 1980s. Carefully transformed into chic quarters by Milan-based Dimorestudio, the carriage interiors feature plush fabrics, soothing colour palettes and bespoke furnishings. Each train, tastefully decorated in a two-tone livery dominated by a dark blue shade, offers 31 premium sleeper cabins with en-suite bathrooms.









A restaurant carriage, with a refined menu developed by three-star Michelin chef Heinz Beck, ensures patrons can enjoy a leisurely lunch as they watch the countryside roll by their window. For entertainment, a separate lounge car is stocked with a full-service bar as well as an on-board band where singers – including a living relation to Frank Sinatra – belt out classic tunes and mingle with guests. To finish off the evening, expect to dance to the tunes of a DJ as Negronis and glasses of Prosecco are served.

The rolling stock, which runs on electrified and conventional lines, navigates a rail network that allows travellers to glimpse parts of Italy visitors rarely see. The as-yet announced itineraries, consisting of one- and two-night trips, include a journey to the city of Matera – a Unesco World Heritage Site famed for its cave dwellings – via the scenic Transiberiana d'Italia route passing through the majestic high plateaus

and mountains of Abruzzo. In summertime, expect excursions to Sicily (trains are loaded on a ferry to cross the Strait of Messina), with scheduled stops in Taormina and Palermo. Come autumn, plan for a jaunt up to Piedmont and a truffle hunt. Passengers on the latter itinerary typically disembark for a tour and meal at an opulent Venetian palazzo or a stately Tuscan winery.

Orient Express La Minerva Hotel

3/ 03









In Rome, before and after each train tour, guests can experience an added level of pampering at the newly refurbished [Orient Express La Minerva](#) (expect a second hotel in Venice to welcome arrivals later this year). Built as an aristocratic residence in 1620 and transformed into a hotel in 1811, the 93-key Minerva hotel has undergone a thorough refresh at the hand of Hugo Toro, with bathrooms tastefully decked out in gorgeous red Verona marble and bespoke hand-blown lamps placed throughout the property – no guestroom is the same in its decor. To unwind, retreat to the panoramic rooftop bar and dining room with its unobstructed views of the nearby Pantheon.

SLEEPER



Orient Express celebrates golden age of travel as debut hotel opens

8 APRIL 2025 | IN [PROJECTS](#) | BY [CARA ROGERS](#)

Orient Express has announced that its first hotel is now open, with the debut of [Orient Express](#) La Minerva in Rome.

Located in the heart of the city, the property – a transformed 17th-century palazzo long home to travellers and creatives – houses 93 rooms and 36 suites, each unique in scale, layout and spirit. The historic site has been restored by artist-architect Hugo Toro, with the hotel's design blending Rome's heritage with a new layer of sophistication.

Each room is an homage to the golden age of travel, featuring bespoke bedside trunks, rich wooden detailing reminiscent of Orient Express carriages, and bedding crafted by Rivolta Carmignani – the same linens that once graced Orient Express sleeper cars.

The hotel's corridors recall the polished elegance of the luxury train, while its lounges and public spaces invite guests to indulge in a voyage of textures and perspectives.



Toro has channelled the feel of the home of a refined aesthete, gently transformed into a hotel. Temporal and stylistic references ripple throughout the spaces, including in the hand-painted evocation of Rome's sky found above each bed.

Orient Express La Minerva is home to three dining and drinking venues. La Minerva Bar, situated in the heart of the hotel's lobby, provides a serene haven amid the vibrant pulse of Roman life. Design details include a grand glass roof, a preserved statue of Minerva, and original marble columns which glow softly throughout the day.

Opening to the public in May 2025, Gigi Rigolatto will bring the spirit of la dolce vita to the property's rooftop. A concept by Rikas Hospitality Group and Paris Society, it promises a vibrant energy paired with 360° panoramic views of the city.

Mimi Kakushi will also open at Orient Express La Minerva in late 2025, transporting guests to the Osaka of the 1920s – an era of the creative clash between Western modernism and traditional Japanese values.



“Opening the doors of Orient Express La Minerva marks a powerful moment in our journey,” says Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express. “A city of layered beauty and bold character, Rome offers the perfect canvas to reimagine the legacy of Orient Express through new purpose and experience – where Romans gather, and international aesthetes unite. In partnership with Arsenale Group and through the visionary work of artist-architect Hugo Toro, we have the privilege to breathe new life into a heritage property deeply rooted in the fabric of this timeless city.”

Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale Group, comments: “With Orient Express La Minerva, we are inaugurating the very first Orient Express hotel in the world, giving shape to a new concept of ultra-luxury hospitality. This project combines the identity of a legendary brand with the entrepreneurial vision of Arsenale: transforming iconic places into world-class destinations. We chose Rome because it represents the crossroads between history, culture, and Italian hospitality. This debut, alongside the one of La Dolce Vita Orient Express trains — with Rome as the centerpiece — confirms Italy’s ability to attract strategic investments and strengthens Arsenale’s role as a key player in international luxury development.”

CREDITS

Photography: © Alexandre Tabaste

REVIEW:

Orient Express La Minerva

The very first hotel from the group that gave us the Orient Express possesses all the allure Stendahl captures in his Roman promenades

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Alexandre Tabaste/Orient Express La Minerva



Reviewed by **MADDALENA FOSSATI**

Why book?

For a new contemporary hospitality address with timeless design in a wonderfully central location – only a few steps away from the Pantheon in all its glory – possessing the very allure Stendhal captures in his Roman promenades. It is also the very first hotel from the group that gave us the legendary Orient Express.

Set the scene

The piazza where the hotel is located encapsulates the Eternal City. There is the Basilica of Saint Mary of Minerva, and children playing ball, shopkeepers chatting on the doorstep of their stores, flushed tourists dragging their suitcases all around. In short, this is Rome. At the centre of it all is the hotel building, with chevroned doormen standing outside, jovial and smiling, ready to wait on the next guest and deliver yet another suitcase or trunk in perfect tune with the rhythm of the square.

Then the double glass, wrought-iron entrance gate built by Apulian craftsmen – a barrier both visual and acoustic – separates the hotel from the city. Inside, the clientele is diverse: young people, socialites, Grand Tour dreamers, couples and families loaded with shopping bags.

The backstory

The Orient Express La Minerva is set in the Fonseca Palace, which dates back to 1620 and is named for the Portuguese family who first owned it. In 1811 it was converted into a hotel and became the go-to destination for those on the Grand Tour, the journey across continental Europe that young aristocrats undertook to perfect their education. Stendhal stayed there for several months finding inspiration for his Roman walks, as did George Sand and Melville. It is the first hotel in the Orient Express portfolio, which just re-launched the **La Dolce Vita train** with a route from Rome to Montalcino. In the lobby, precious carpets echo the patterns of the Pantheon and the painted ceiling recalls the hues of Rome's skies.

The rooms

No two of the 93 rooms are alike – each one embodies a kind of nomadic eclecticism envisioned by Franco-Mexican artist-architect Hugo Toro, who personally designed every piece of furniture. The aesthetic is both timeless and deeply rooted in its locale, blending classic travertine with a striking red variation, Murano glass lamps, hand-painted ceilings, and vintage record players housed in elegant briarwood cabinets. A special mention goes to the shower cap, which feels plucked straight from a Wes Anderson movie, and the writing set,

perfect for penning letters to... well, whoever comes to mind.

Food and drink

As soon as you enter, the setting inspires amazement – starting from the bar. As you sip your Martini, a statue of Minerva watches over you from her frame of marble columns. It has the making of a place that can become iconic in five seconds. So can the aperitivo on the rooftop terrace, which offers what is likely the most beautiful 360-degree view of Rome, and feels like a place for important decisions. The menu is curated by Gigi Rigolatto and features Italian classics such as linguine alle vongole, arancini, and tiramisù. Honorable mention to the minibar, stocked exclusively with local products.

The neighbourhood

In front of the hotel, you will see an obelisk. Fun fact: the elephant holding it up was sculpted by Bernini. We are a stone's throw from Piazza Navona and the Tiber (a great place for a run, if anything to balance out the carbonara from the night before), but also from Via del Corso to get your mandatory shopping fix.

The service

The service is kind as only Romans can be, formal but always friendly. It feels a bit like home. The concierge can and will book anything, including the most packed trattorias.

Eco effort

From the minibar to the restaurants' locally sourced ingredients, everything is organic and there is no trace of plastic anywhere in the hotel. The Green Globe Certification, an internationally recognized sustainability program, attests to their commitment towards the environment.

Accessibility

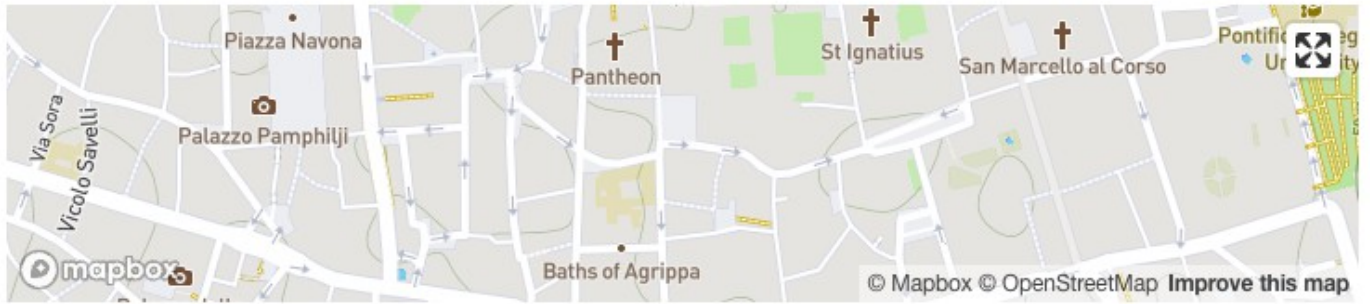
Despite being housed in a very ancient building, the hotel is perfectly fitted to accommodate every guest.

Anything left to mention?

Savour that time of day, when it is not yet evening and entering the hotel you find yourself in a lobby that doubles as a leafy bar under the painted ceiling, with travertine marble and music that makes you want to dance.

BOOK NOW AT [BOOKING.COM](https://www.booking.com)

LOCATION MAP



CONTACT

Piazza della Minerva, 69 , Rome, 00186

Italy

+39 06 84 42 90

<https://laminerva.orient-express.com/en/hotel/europe/italy/rome/la-minerva>

Friday, April 11th



Orient Express opens hotel near the Pantheon

Orient Express has debuted in Rome with Orient Express La Minervam, a restored 17th-century palazzo in Piazza della Minerva 69.

FULL STORY

AFAR

I Got a First Look at Italy's New La Dolce Vita Orient Express Train—and Was Transported Back to 1960s Glamour

From cuisine by a lauded chef to excursions to dreamy Italian locales, here's what to expect onboard.



The train has 12 carriages, including a lounge, bar, and restaurant. Photo by Mr. Tripper

When the Orient Express made its inaugural journey in 1883, it revolutionized travel, allowing passengers to take a single mode of transportation all the way across Europe. With its comfortable sleeping quarters, elegant restaurant, and salons that housed smoking compartments and ladies' drawing rooms, it became popular among Europe's elite, including royalty. The Jet Age, when commercial air travel took off, spelled disaster for the legendary train, which discontinued service in 1977. And while it was partially revived as the [Venice Simplon-Orient-Express](#) (now run by Belmond), a new age is dawning for the [Orient Express](#). The iconic brand will operate luxury trains, hotels, and yachts, in a joint venture by Accor Group and LVMH, which have partnered with Italian hospitality group Arsenale for the Italian assets.

As a Rome-based journalist, I regularly take Italy's high-speed trains, but when I had the chance to board the new [La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#) for its inaugural journey from [Rome](#) to Montalcino, I knew this trip would be different. I didn't even mind that a journey that normally would have taken a couple of hours lasted an entire day. From the moment I stepped into the luxurious lounge at Ostiense Station to when I returned the next morning, I embraced the art of slow travel and the chance to really appreciate the landscapes I normally speed by. In between, I savored a leisurely lunch by one of Rome's most decorated chefs, got to know my fellow passengers, enjoyed a tour and dinner at a historic Tuscan winery, and rattled a tambourine as a charming singer entertained everyone in the bar car with rousing renditions of classic songs.

The first of six trains, La Dolce Vita Orient Express currently offers eight itineraries in Italy lasting one or two nights. In addition to the [Taste of Tuscan Vineyards](#) trip that I experienced, there are routes that go from Rome to [Venice](#) and Portofino; pass through the under-the-radar region of Abruzzo and stop in Matera, known for its ancient cave dwellings; and cross the Strait of Messina on a ferry before bringing guests to Taormina and Palermo in [Sicily](#). Here's what to expect aboard and how to book.

Midcentury-inspired design and luxe accommodations

As you might expect from the name, this train embraces the 1960s glamour of the Dolce Vita era. It was designed by Milan-based Dimorestudio, which incorporated plenty of midcentury references. The bar car, for example, features a diamond pattern reminiscent of Gio Ponti's Arlecchino train, which debuted in 1960 and has recently been revived. Black-and-white photographs of Audrey Hepburn, Brigitte Bardot, and other movie stars decorate the hallways between cabins.

There are two different accommodations to choose from: deluxe cabins and suites; each can accommodate a maximum of two passengers. Deluxe cabins have a sofa bed that folds out at night, while the larger suites have a comfortable bed, separate sofa, and a black lacquer table with two chairs. Both have a bathroom with a toilet, sink, and shower, plus amenities like a plush robe and slippers. In my suite, there were little folding trays next to the bed and a USB port so I could charge my phone. My carry-on suitcase easily fit in a corner of the suite; deluxe cabins have an overhead luggage rack. Guests traveling with more than a carry-on can store large suitcases at the lounge.



There are 31 cabins, including 18 sumptuous suites that feature full-size beds.

Gourmet meals by a renowned chef

The cuisine is a highlight on the train. My journey started with a welcome drink (a cappuccino in my case) in the lounge at Ostiense Station and continued with a decadent five-course lunch devised by Heinz Beck, the chef behind Rome's only three-Michelin-star restaurant, La Pergola. Each menu is inspired by the train's route, so on the Rome-to-Tuscany trip, I savored dishes like *panzanella* (Tuscan bread salad) with prawns and pumpkin gnocchi with mushrooms and black kale.

The next morning, I opted to have continental breakfast in my suite. My cabin steward brought a tray with a bread and pastry basket, butter, jam, a selection of cheeses, smoked salmon, fresh fruit, orange juice, and a cappuccino. If you choose to have breakfast in the dining car, you can order à la carte.

Excursions to dreamy Italian locales

Each itinerary gives you the chance to choose at least one or two excursions at an extra cost. I joined some of my fellow passengers for a tour and tasting dinner at [Argiano Winery](#), which has been producing Brunello di Montalcino for nearly 500 years. The visit started with a tour of the owner's private collection of medieval and Renaissance art, followed by a peek at the cellar to see

the barrels and enjoy an aperitivo. We then had a four-course dinner paired with various vintages of the winery's Rosso di Montalcino and Brunello di Montalcino.

Typically, guests have either lunch or dinner on the train, but not both. If you have lunch onboard, then you can choose an excursion that includes dinner or go off on your own and dine at a restaurant of your choice.

Entertainment onboard

Upon returning to the train after dinner, we were invited to the bar car for live music and drinks. I sipped a glass of franciacorta, an Italian sparkling wine, as Rome-based American singer Tess Amodeo Vickery—who's related to Frank Sinatra—serenaded us with classic songs like "Mambo Italiano" and "New York, New York." She even handed out tambourines and encouraged us to shake them and sing along. After she finished her set, a DJ came on to keep the party going.

The cost

Prices for La Dolce Vita Orient Express start at \$3,500 per person for a deluxe cabin. Tickets can be purchased at [orient-express.com](https://www.orient-express.com).

TRAVEL WEEKLY

BY NORTHSTAR

HOTELS

The Orient Express hotel brand is officially reborn in Rome



The Orient Express La Minerva occupies a restored 17th-century palazzo in Rome. Photo Credit: Alexandre Tabaste

Accor has opened its first Orient Express hotel, the **Orient Express La Minerva** in Rome.

The property, which began welcoming guests on April 7, is located in the city's Pantheon district at the Piazza de la Minerva.

Housed within a restored 17th-century palazzo, the hotel has 129 rooms, 36 of which are suites. The property features numerous nods to the Orient Express brand's railway legacy, including design elements like bedside trunks, train carriage-inspired wood detailing and Rivolta Carmignani bedding similar to what was on the original Orient Express sleeper cars.

The hotel will be home to three dining venues, with La Minerva Bar in the lobby currently open. Rooftop eatery Gigi Rigolatto is scheduled to debut in May and Japanese restaurant Mimi Kakushi is set to join later this year.

The Orient Express La Minerva also has five meeting and event spaces, including its 1,776-square-foot Olimpo Ballroom.



A suite bedroom at the Orient Express La Minerva. Photo Credit: Alexandre Tabaste

The Orient Express Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice is expected to open later this year. A project in Riyadh is in the pipeline.

Accor is concurrently expanding Orient Express in luxury rail travel and **cruising**. It recently launched **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** train and unveiled details for the first Orient Express Silenseas cruise ship in 2026.

Accor announced plans for a **new hotel concept** under the Orient Express name in 2017, after it acquired a 50% stake in the brand from French national rail company SNCF Group. Accor took full ownership of the brand in 2022, with luxury conglomerate LVMH forging a strategic partnership with Accor to accelerate development of Orient Express in 2024.

LVMH is the owner of Belmond, which operates the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express and several other luxury trains, as well as a hotel portfolio that was rebranded from Orient-Express Hotels Ltd. in 2014 when its SNCF licensing agreement ended.

AFAR

The World's First Orient Express Hotel Has Opened in Rome—Only Steps From the Pantheon

Set inside a 17th-century noble residence in Rome, Orient Express La Minerva is the first hotel from the heritage luxury train brand.



Orient Express La Minerva in Rome faces the famous elephant obelisk in Piazza della Minerva. Photo by Mr. Tripper

The vibe: The first hotel from the legendary Orient Express train company is an instant classic

Location: Piazza della Minerva 69, Rome, Italy | [View on Google Maps](#)

Loyalty program: Accor Live Limitless | From \$1,104

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The Afar take

Originally built as a noble residence in the 17th century, the Grand Hotel de la Minerve became a hotel in the 19th century and was a haven for aristocrats and writers on the Grand Tour. Following a four-year closure, it has just reopened as **Orient Express La Minerva**, the first hotel that represents the rebirth and expansion of the Orient Express brand, which now operates trains, yachts, and hotels. (A second hotel in Venice is in the works.)

Checking in after ride aboard the new **La Dolce Vita Orient Express**, I was immediately captivated by the elegance of the lobby, with its glass ceiling, original columns, and abundance of potted plants. Inside the intimate reception area, lacquered wood walls suggested the train's highly polished sheen. Looking around, I sensed that no expense was spared when redesigning the hotel.



A guest room and the lobby area of Orient Express La Minerva Photo by Alexandre Tabaste

The brand—a joint venture by Accor Group and LVMH in collaboration with Italian hospitality group Arsenale for the Italian assets—tapped Paris-based Hugo Toro, a rising star in the design world, for the interiors. Everything is bespoke, from the furniture and lighting to the porcelain dishes at the rooftop restaurant. Almost everything was made in Italy.

Who's it for?

Travelers who appreciate a historic hotel with a contemporary twist. I'm based in Rome and have been tracking several **exciting new hotels** in the city over the past year—and more are coming soon—but this one stands out with its storied past and contemporary cachet. Some visitors will remember the hotel in its previous incarnation, but it's ready to welcome a new generation of travelers.

The location

Set on Piazza della Minerva, a small square right behind the Pantheon, the hotel is in the heart of Rome's centro storico but **slightly removed from the crowds**. Piazza Navona, Campo de' Fiori, and the Trevi Fountain are all within a 10-minute walk. Bernini's elephant statue, bearing an Egyptian obelisk in the center of the piazza, inspired the hotel's logo.

“Some visitors will remember Orient Express La Minerva in its previous incarnation, but it's ready to welcome a new generation of travelers.”

The rooms

Each of the 93 guest rooms and 36 suites has its own unique characteristics, but they all share a warm color palette. The second floor, where my suite was located, has rooms with extremely high ceilings, while the Stendhal Suite retains its original ceiling frescoes. Some rooms have views of Piazza della Minerva and the Pantheon's dome, while others have a terrace.



A suite's living room at Orient Express La Minerva Photo by Alexandre Tabaste

I loved my spacious suite, which had an enormous and comfortable bed, bedside tables designed to look like vintage steamer trunks, and a separate living area with a curved velvet sofa, a table and chairs, a TV disguised as a mirror, and a minibar stocked with complimentary snacks and sodas. The bathroom had a large walk-in shower, a separate room for the toilet, and pretty hand-painted tiles lining the windows. Details like woven leather on the wardrobes, Italian cotton sheets by Rivolta Carmignani (which provided the bedding on the original Orient Express), and plush robes made for a truly cossetting stay.

The food and drink

The Minerva Bar in the lobby is open all day for light meals, afternoon tea, and aperitivo. For lunch, I enjoyed the octopus served with tomato consommé. But the rooftop restaurant, Gigi Rigolatto, is the place to be. Created by Rikas Hospitality Group and Paris Society, the concept is Italian by way of France and Dubai. Standout dishes include tuna tartare with avocado, seabream carpaccio dressed with lemon, and fregola with langoustines, calamari, and citrus.

At breakfast, also served on the rooftop, a selection of pastries, nuts, and fruit is available at the buffet, but I was glad to eat eggs Benedict with smoked salmon, perfectly poached eggs, and silky hollandaise sauce.

Coming later this year is Mimi Kakushi, a Japanese restaurant that aims to transport guests to 1920s Osaka. There's also a speakeasy, wine bar, and patisserie in the works.

Staff and service

The hotel had just opened when I visited, yet it offered impressively seamless service. That's no doubt owing to the fact that some of the key staff members, including the general manager and head concierge, are seasoned pros with decades of experience at Italy's top luxury hotels.

Accessibility

During the renovation, care was taken to make sure the main entrance, elevators, restrooms, dining outlets, and spa are accessible to people with limited mobility.

Spa and wellness

Currently under construction, the spa will have a Turkish hammam and a range of treatments. Facials will be in collaboration with **Furtuna Skin**, a sustainable Italian brand whose skincare is made with products from its organic farm.



VIP arrivals: hottest hotel openings in April 2025

WORDS BY SOPHIE HARPER

April 14, 2025



Come with us on a world tour as we search the globe for April's most anticipating hotel openings to keep you in the know...

Finally we're peeling the winter layers from our skin in anticipation of soaking up some natural vitamin D – but where in the world should we be looking for holiday (and design) inspiration? We're casting the net far and wide this April as we look forward to some exciting openings in Asia and Australasia, but are just as delighted to find a number of projects opening a little closer to home, starting on our doorstep in London.

[Templeton Garden](#)



Image credit: Miiro Hotels

A tranquil retreat in London, Templeton Garden can be found on Templeton Place in Kensington, a stone's throw from Earl's Court. Once a rural idyll, this historic neighbourhood evolved into one of the capital's most well-connected hubs, which Beatrix Potter, Alfred Hitchcock, and Agatha Christie all called home.

Templeton Garden comes with 156 guest rooms and suites, each designed as a calming city retreat. Many come with balconies, while others reveal gorgeous views of the verdant garden or Templeton Place.

The hotel's look has been overseen by interior designer James Thurstan Waterworth, former design director at Soho House. He took inspiration from the hotel's garden for its look and used upcycled materials and antique furniture, as well as collaborating with London-based craftspeople to create unique statement features for the hotel.

With [Nicola James appointed General Manager](#) at the beginning of the year, the hotel opened its doors to the public last week and promises to set a new precedent for the Miiro brand.



Image credit: Ennismore

Backlit by the Med's dazzling sunshine, [SLS Barcelona](#) brings its distinctive brand of immersive extravagance to the waterside district of Port Fòrum. The hotel is set behind a striking, undulating façade that emulates the waves of the Mediterranean Sea. Offering 471 beautifully appointed rooms and suites, six distinct restaurant and bar concepts, three pools, a spa, and extensive events space culminating in a spectacular ballroom; SLS Barcelona is a true urban resort.

A creative collaboration between leading designers AIME Studios, AvroKO, and Rockwell Group has resulted in spaces that are brilliantly functional yet flamboyant, setting the stage for the extraordinary to unfold every day. SLS regulars will notice the brand's design signatures sprinkled throughout the interiors, from the gala arrival vibes of the light-studded entrance hall to the use of richly textured fabrics and embellishments.

This design narrative extends to the 471 rooms and suites, which artfully combine luxe design and modern opulence. Each accommodation feels indulgent and glamorous with oversized headboards and mirrored glass and warm timber accents, while the chic bathrooms are informed by white marbled details, clean white tiling, and sculptural mirrors.

[Waldorf Astoria Osaka](#)



Image credit: Hilton Hotels & Resorts

Designed by internationally acclaimed architect André Fu, Waldorf Astoria Osaka reimagines the brand's residential style, offering guests a refined sanctuary that feels both intimate and grand. A thoughtful interfusion of Eastern and Western motifs brings Osaka to life through the lens of Art Deco aesthetics, echoing the legacy of the original Waldorf Astoria New York.

With 252 expansive rooms and suites, Waldorf Astoria Osaka sets a new benchmark for design and comfort in the city. Occupying the top floors of the South Park Tower skyscraper at GRAND GREEN OSAKA, each room – including two 146-square-metre penthouse suites and the 193-square-metre Presidential Suite – sits between the 31st and 38th floors, offering breathtaking 360-degree views spanning from Osaka Bay to the Hyogo mountaintops.

This latest offering follows the reimagining of [Waldorf Astoria New York](#) and marks the first in a number of [exciting developments from Hilton's luxury portfolio](#).



Image credit: Aman Resorts, Hotels & Residences

A masterclass in urban architecture, [Aman Nai Lert Bangkok officially opened its doors on 2nd April](#). Following in the footsteps of Amanpuri, the brand's original home in Phuket, the newest Aman retreat meticulously blends modern design with the rich cultural heritage of its location. Created by long-time Amanrox collaborator Denniston Architects, the property's design draws from the bygone legacy of Bangkok's first and foremost developer, Nai Lert, and the historic park in which it resides.

"Nai Lert's rich heritage provided an incredible foundation for this project. Our goal was to honour this legacy and Thai culture in a modern, timeless way alongside Aman's renowned design DNA, developed over three decades," said Jean-Michel Gathy, Principal, Denniston.

"Throughout, we integrated details of the park and its Heritage Home with contemporary interpretations, creating a palette that made sense within this context and the tapestry of influences."

With every Aman destination drawing inspiration from the culture and history of its location, Denniston, with interior design lead David Schoonbroodt, sought to use tone-on-tone colours and sparse accents, emblematic of the brand's calm ethos while still providing functionality. To create a harmonious balance between what is old and new, the design incorporates a mix of contemporary pieces and custom-made products, inspired by antiques, and made by

local artisans.

Hotel Indigo Auckland



Image credit: IHG Hotels & Resorts

Hotel Indigo, part of IHG Hotels & Resorts' luxury & lifestyle portfolio, has made its New Zealand debut with the official opening of Hotel Indigo Auckland in the heart of Midtown. The much-anticipated 225-room hotel is a powerful neighbourhood storyteller, blending rich local history, culturally inspired art, and globally influenced cuisine, creating a vibrant new destination for both visitors and Aucklanders in the City of Sails.

Located on the historic site of a 1912 motor house that imported Cadillacs into New Zealand, Hotel Indigo Auckland's design pays homage to its industrial past with an exciting mix of heritage-listed and modern architecture. Stunning interiors and gallery-quality artworks make every corner of the hotel an immersive cultural experience.

Renowned stylist, Simone Haag, has transformed the hotel's lobby into a captivating showcase of local artistry, featuring handcrafted paintings, wooden sculptures, ceramics, glasswork, woven pieces, and leather creations. Multidisciplinary artist, architect, and designer, Raukura Turei, has created two extraordinary installations using natural elements sourced from her ancestral land, exploring connections to atua (gods) and tīpuna (ancestors).

[La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#)



Image credit: Accor

[La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#), the first Italian made luxury train, makes its much-anticipated debut with a bold ambition: to reinvent the very essence of travel in motion. Eight curated itineraries blending art, landscapes, and three-star Michelin cuisine by Heinz Beck, all in celebration of Italian excellence in motion.

The train was last week at Roma Ostiense Station, within the exclusive La Dolce Vita Lounge dedicated to its passengers, on the eve of its inaugural journey.

Born of a visionary collaboration between Arsenale and Orient Express and supported by Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani of the FS Group, this pivotal project signals the renaissance of rail as the ultimate luxury.

The interiors, by Milan's Dimorestudio, are a reverent salute to Italian design golden age: geometric echoes of Gio Ponti, the sensual modernism of Gae Aulenti, whispers of Osvaldo Borsani. It embodies the spirit of mid-century glamour, an homage to La Dolce Vita and the cultural pulse of 1960s Italy.

TAKING A RIDE ON LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS – ITALY’S NEWEST LUXURY TRAIN

14 APR 2025

La Dolce Vita Orient Express is Italy’s first luxury hotel train to make its debut under the reborn brand. *Anthony Lambert* gets onboard for *TTG* to experience what’s on offer



La Dolce Vita Orient Express has made its long-awaited debut (credit: Mr. Tripper)

Dozens of candles flicker along the dark corridor of the 16th-century palazzo as guests alight from gleamingly varnished launches and enter Venice’s largest private garden, with champagne in hand.

Standing around the city’s tallest palm, we wonder if there’s ever been a more dramatic nocturnal or daylight exit from a station than Santa Lucia, its steps

leading down to the Grand Canal and looking straight across at San Simeone Piccolo. We climb the stairs to a long table ribboned with white flowers and take our seats for a three-course dinner serenaded by a harpist at the window overlooking the Grand Canal.

We had arrived at dusk for the very first evening of the two-night Venice and Tuscany tour aboard Italy's new luxury train service. It has been created by Arsenale, hot on the heels of the opening of its complementary Orient Express La Minerva Hotel in a 17th-century Rome palazzo with 93 rooms, with nearly all itineraries starting and ending in Rome. As Silvia Carlesso, La Dolce Vita's marketing director, tells me: "They will bring many people to Rome, so it's a good moment for our city."

In the palatial new Orient Express Lounge in Rome Ostiense station, I meet an array of guests of surprisingly varied ages from Britain, Ireland, France, Finland, Mexico, South Korea and India. The lounge offers a contemporary twist on an Art Deco theme beneath a lacquered tangerine ceiling, with expensive art and design books arranged on tables leading up to the bar. I also inspect the opulent shower rooms provided for anyone coming straight from the airport or perhaps another train to meet this one. Glazed wooden cupboards await branded souvenirs sourced from Italy, as is almost everything on the train.





The lounge car is a contemporary twist on an Art Deco style (credit: Mr. Tripper)

ARRIVING IN STYLE

It's not a new train, though you wouldn't know it. The 12 carriages from the 1970s have been completely stripped and rebuilt with design work by Dimorestudio of Milan to create 31 en-suite cabins: 18 suites of 11 sq metres and 12 deluxe compartments of 7 sq m, to be followed by a full-carriage suite with two bedrooms.

I'm impressed by the use of mirrors on opposite walls to increase the sense of space, but I wonder how the generously dimensioned will fare on the cramped throne. Deluxe cabins have a chair, collapsible table and a sofa which converts into a small double bed, while a dressing gown and slippers are found in the small wardrobe.

Suites, meanwhile, are large enough to obviate the need to fold the bed, and there are two chairs. Controls in each compartment adjust the air-conditioning temperature and fan speed, and there is wi-fi throughout the train.

I wander along the fabric-lined corridors to inspect the open lounge car. With long sinuous banquettes, bar and piano, it's the social hub of the train with pianist, saxophonist and singer performing in the evenings. The lounge is placed next to a dining car with enough covers for a single sitting.

Lunch is a six-course tasting menu with paired wines and portion sizes that are well judged to allow for the dinner to follow later. Menus for La Dolce Vita Orient Express have been devised by chef Heinz Beck whose La Pergola is Rome's only Michelin three-star restaurant.

The 35 staff on each train work as a fixed team to develop camaraderie and all have been recruited by ex-Venice Simplon-Orient-Express managers from five-star backgrounds, to ensure they are accustomed to service in a moving environment such as this.



Menus are created by chef Heinz Beck for the elegant restaurant (credit: Mr. Tripper)

A NEW DAWN

Italy's first luxury hotel train is the beginning of an ambitious programme of new trains driven by Italian entrepreneur and CEO of Arsenale, Paolo Barletta, in partnership with Accor, which owns the Orient Express brand. The French-based hospitality firm has also secured a strategic investment for this project from LVMH, which of course, also owns Belmond, operator of several other legendary luxury trains.

It's clear there have been many entities involved, and while talking with Silvia Carlesso about the train's genesis, she stresses "we couldn't have done it without the support of Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani", whose role is to expand the use of trains for tourism throughout the country.

From Venice the train travels to Siena, famous for its Gothic cathedral, whose colour-banded campanile resembles ice-cream parfait, and the world's oldest horse race. The Palio might be a huge tourist attraction, but it is very much for the locals, as I learn at the stables and training ground of last year's winner. This is one of the off-train tours tailored to client's interests as expressed in a booking questionnaire in advance, and which PR manager Valentina Silvestri tells me "are often experiences that tourists would find difficult or impossible to arrange themselves".

By the end of the summer, a second train for Italy will have been completed, and work is progressing on the Dream of the Desert luxury train for Saudi Arabia. Arsenale also has plans for trains in Egypt, Uzbekistan and the UAE.

I expressed my feeling that the evening in Venice had been too short, even though most guests may have previously been to Venice – after dinner we departed to a siding for five motionless hours of sleep, before continuing on to Siena. It's still early days, and I'm told itinerary adjustments to reflect such reactions will be made.

The generous staff-to-passenger ratio, train construction costs and the complex logistics and tour arrangements account for prices that some clients may find eye-watering. But full bookings on early departures already seem to suggest that the appetite for train travel, increased by numerous television series, is alive and well, and unlikely to diminish anytime soon.

BOOK IT

A one-night itinerary onboard **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** starts from £2,662pp, departing Rome Ostiense station on multiple dates. Price includes private transfers from other stations, airport or hotel, meals and drinks onboard, and all tours.

LA DOLCE VITA – THE ITINERARIES

There are eight itineraries on offer this year:

- Venice and Portofino (2 nights): Rome–Venice–Portofino–Rome, €8,320
- Venice and Tuscany (2 nights): Rome–Venice–Siena–Rome, €7,440
- Eternal Stones of Matera (2 nights): Rome–Matera–Pescocostanzo–Rome, €5,780
- Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards (1 night): Rome–Montalcino–Rome, €4,160
- The Truffle Route (2 nights): Rome–Nizza Monferrato–Rome, €8,320
- From Rome to Sicily (2 nights): Rome–Maratea–Taormina–Palermo, €9,840
- From Sicily to Rome (2 nights): Palermo–Taormina–Maratea–Rome, €8,880 (and vice versa)
- Shores of Sicily (1 night): Catania–Palermo–Taormina–Catania, €4,720

The itineraries will be adjusted in 2026 to allow the flexibility of a stay in the Orient Express Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice, which is expected to open before the end of the year, as well as more departures with the second train and a Rome–Istanbul train. Packages are also already available with Rome’s Orient Express La Minerva Hotel.

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The Orient Express's First Hotel Just Opened in the Heart of Rome

The luxury train company's newest venture is staying put inside a 17th-century palazzo.



Alexandre Tabaste

The Orient Express is entering the hotel game.

The iconic luxury train company, owned by French hospitality brand Accor, has just opened its first hotel ever. Housed in a 17-century palazzo in the heart of Rome, the Orient Express La Minerva offers up 93 rooms and 36 suites—each of which are entirely unique in layout and size.

The hotel's address at Piazza della Minerva 69—a gathering place of many a creative and traveler over the decades—puts it mere steps away from the Pantheon, as well as other landmarks in the Eternal City. To bring the palazzo to life, Orient Express tapped artist-architect Hugo Toro to add some contemporary flare to the locale while still preserving its Roman roots. The combination can be seen as you enter the tower lobby, full of stoic columns, earthy hues, pops of greenery, and vibrant, patterned flooring. Overlooking it all is a 1854 marble statue (by Italian sculptor Rinaldo Rinaldi) of the property's namesake, the Roman goddess of wisdom, Minerva.



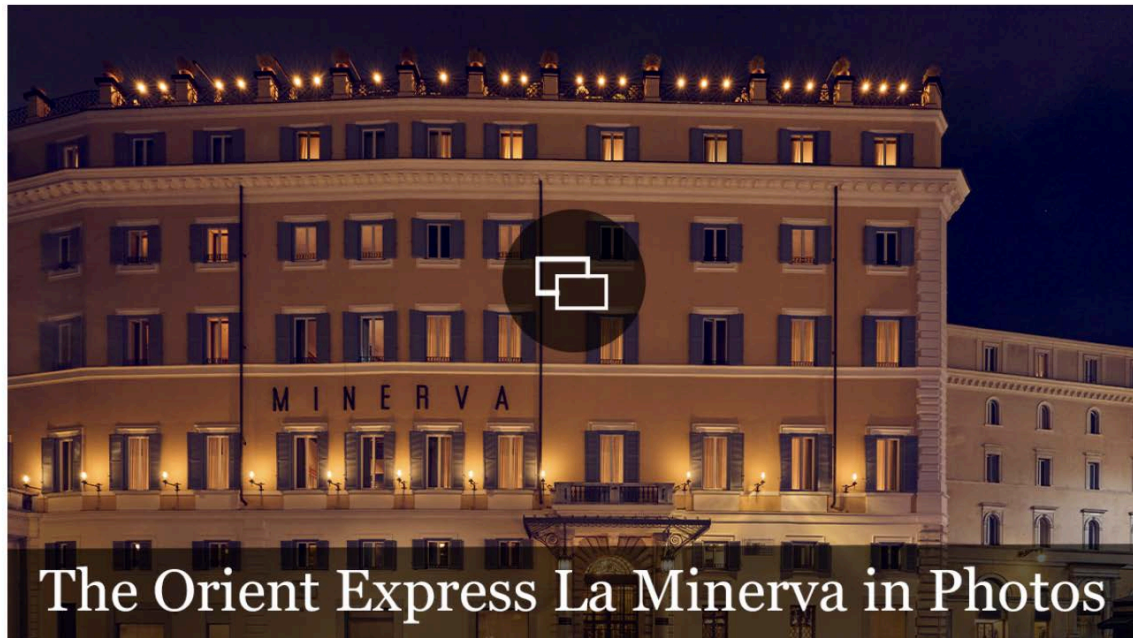
A bedroom within the Orient Express La Minerva.
Alexandre Tabaste

Toro brought that same attention to detail to the rooms and suites. Each accommodation pays tribute (fittingly) to the golden age of train travel, with details such as bespoke bedside trunks and wood details mirroring those found in Orient Express carriages dotting each space. Even the bedding, luxe linens from the masters at Rivolta Carmignani, is the same as those found in the train's sleeper cars. And, of course, each space, filled with to the brim with different textures, has soft reminders that you're in the Eternal City, lest you forget: A hand-painted motif of the Roman sky hangs above each bed. As for the suites, one is named for Stendhal, a French writer who often frequented the property's past iteration.

There are not one but three restaurants to enjoy during your stay. In the lobby, La Minerva Bar can be found under a glass roof, with original marble columns as decor. The watchful eye of that Minerva marble statue nearby might just keep you from overindulging. Head to the rooftop to enjoy the 360-degree views at Gigi Rigolatto (opening in May), inspired by the Rivera; Rikas Hospitality Group and the Paris Society brand have helped launch the vibrant eatery. Later this year, you can expect Mimi Kakushi, a Japanese spot that brings guests back to 1920s Osaka with a hint of Western influences.

That's not all Orient Express has on the docket. The brand is opening yet another hotel; called the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, the property will make its debut in Venice later this year. Orient Express also just launched its La Dolce Vita trip, which will take passengers into Tuscany aboard one of its locomotives. Seems like the company is in for quite a ride, then.

[Click here to learn more about the Orient Express's first hotel.](#)



Alexandre Tabaste

TRAVEL

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An opulent journey aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express offers a taste of the five-star lifestyle – but it comes at a cost



66



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La Dolce Vita Orient Express departs from Rome Ostiense station for a tour of Venice and Tuscany Credit: Mr Tripper

Anthony Lambert

15 April 2025 5:00pm BST

Is there a station exit in the world that can match the *coup de théâtre* of leaving Venice Santa Luca, with the Grand Canal and the Pantheon-modelled San Simeone Piccolo laid out before you? “[Venice](#) never loses that magic of appearing as if for the first time,” as Freya Stark observed.

We had arrived from Rome on [La Dolce Vita Orient Express](#), Italy’s first luxury train, intended to create the glamour and care-free spirit of the 1960s, as portrayed in Federico Fellini’s film, with its unforgettable images of Anita Ekberg cavorting in the Trevi Fountain and Marcello Mastroianni driving round the city in a Triumph TR3.

Under a full moon we boarded deeply varnished launches to breeze down the Grand Canal to Palazzo Nani Bernardo, one of the few palaces still owned by the family who built it, in this case in the 1550s.

A dark candlelit corridor from the landing stage led to glasses of champagne and a courtyard garden with Venice’s tallest palm tree. Upstairs, dinner was served at a long table festooned with white flowers, while a harpist played in the window overlooking the canal.

The itineraries on La Dolce Vita Orient Express combine the pleasures of scenic routes with quintessentially Italian off-train experiences that would be hard or impossible for a tourist to arrange.



The interiors of La Dolce Vita Express evoke the glamour of Federico Fellini’s films Credit: Mr Tripper

The train has been created by Italian luxury brand Arsenale in partnership with Orient Express, and the pampering begins before departure from Rome Ostiense station in the palatial reception area Arsenale has

fashioned out of unused spaces. There's a modern twist to the art deco feel of the lounge areas and bar, and showers are provided for anyone coming straight from a plane or train via the complimentary transfer service.

We all thought the train looked new, but it isn't. Instead, 1970s carriages have been completely rebuilt to the designs of a Milan studio to create 31 cabins, lounge and dining cars, and accommodation for the train's 35 staff. Cabins are masterpieces of compression, but sumo wrestlers wouldn't do well in the space between shower, washbasin and lavatory.

Cleverly contrived storage has been created behind one of the opposing mirrored walls, giving an illusion of greater space. Deluxe cabins have a single chair and a sofa that converts into a small double bed, but suites – larger by 60 per cent – have a fixed bed, sofa and two chairs.



Cabins aboard La Dolce Vita are specially designed to feel spacious Credit: Mr Tripper

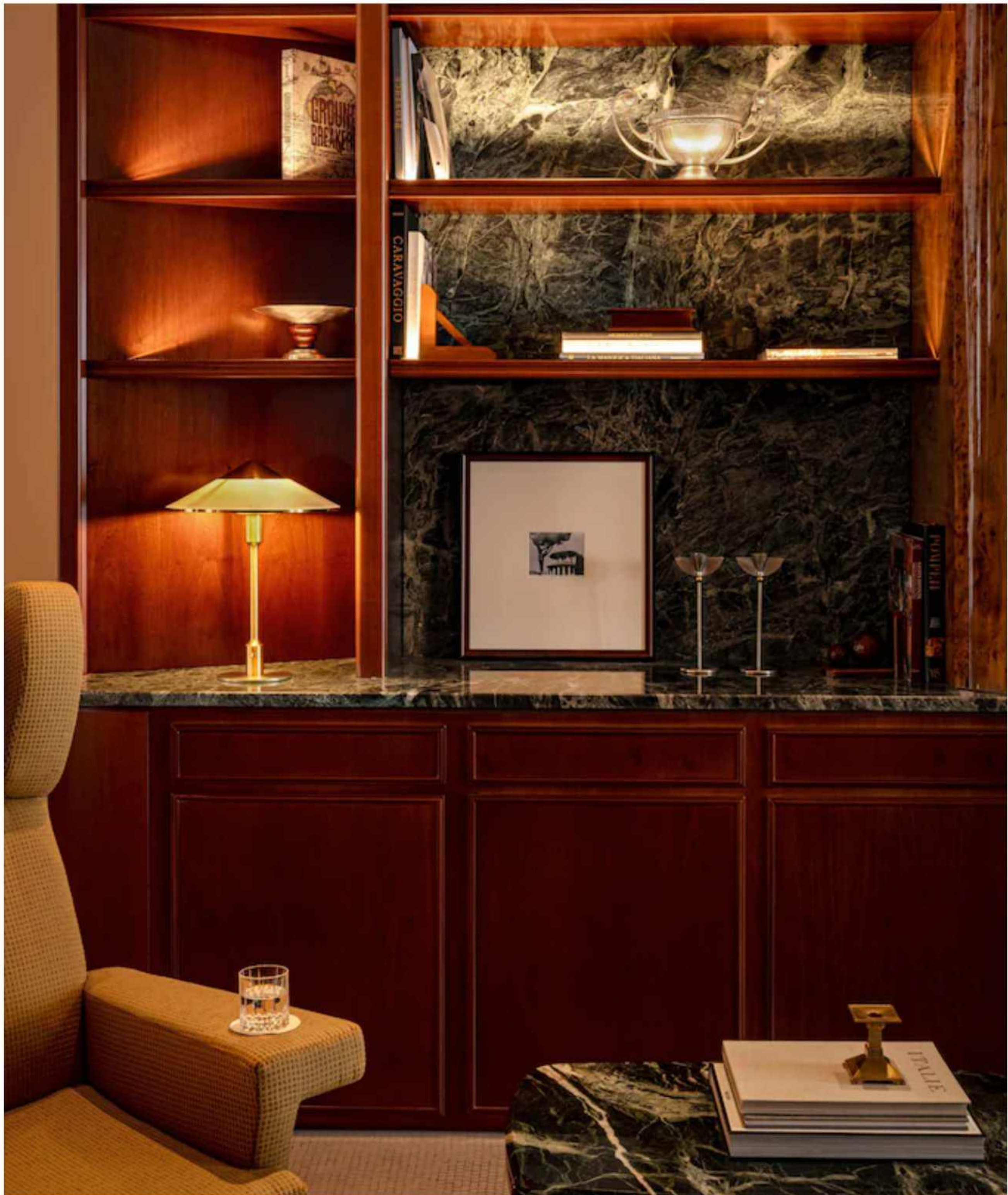
An ambitious programme of eight one and two-night itineraries covering 14 Italian regions has been devised, most starting and ending in Rome and the most elaborate entailing a transfer of the train across the Straits of Messina on a privately chartered vessel to Sicily for visits to Taormina and Palermo.

Some thought two nights was the right duration, others wanted longer, but all agreed that more time at our destinations would have been welcomed, and that will be reflected in tweaks to tours.

As invariably happens on hotel trains, guests from half a dozen countries soon bonded in the lounge car, where the bar and piano were placed

between an area of sinuous banquettes and seats arranged in twos and fours. The youngest in the surprisingly wide age range were a couple from South Korea, evidently on their honeymoon.

Other passengers included an investor who had been successful enough to retire early and become a professional bridge player, and a couple from Delhi in the legal profession. Most of us matched the glad rags of the pianist, saxophonist and singer entertaining us after dinner.



The bar has an art deco feel with a modern twist Credit: Mr Tripper

The near extinction of proper dining cars on so many national railways has increased the pleasure of eating in one, and we began lunch to views over a glittering bay to the island of Napoleon's first incarceration, Elba.

Our creative and high-quality six-course tasting menu with paired wines was created by Heinz Beck, who runs Rome's only three-Michelin-star restaurant, and produced by one of his protégés, Walter Canzio.

The train stops for four or five hours every night, and over breakfast it was evident that the world divides into those who can sleep on moving trains, and those who can't – however comfortable the bed.



A six-course tasting menu is served in the restaurant Credit: Mr Tripper

Italy had the wit to retain many of its cross-country railway lines, which often venture into its equivalent of *la France profonde*, so it was a pleasure to reach Siena by the single-line route from Montepescali through remote countryside.

Between woods, an avenue of slender cypresses led to a characteristic Tuscan farmhouse with arcaded veranda on the upper level, surrounded by fields of artichokes, vines and apple orchards.

On distant hilltops, a jumble of pale brown houses rising above wooded slopes recalled a turbulent past, when villages were safer on high ground.

Another form of endemic rivalry was the subject of our visit by minibus to meet the winning jockey of last year's Palio at his stables and training fields just outside [Siena](#).

Remarkably self-effacing for the man who had become the city's hero until the next Palio, Carlo Sanna took us through the Byzantine rules that govern the world's oldest horse race and the highlight of the Siena calendar since 1283.



The restaurant is presided over by a protégé of chef Heinz Beck Credit: Mr Tripper

So fierce is the rivalry between the *contrada*, neighbourhoods traceable back to medieval guilds, that he has to be protected against malfeasance by four bodyguards from the moment he is selected until he enters the bareback race around the Campo. The three circuits took him just 75 seconds.

Before lunch in the kind of unpretentious restaurant that Italy does so well, we had time to admire the jewel in the city's glorious Gothic cathedral, the Carrara marble pulpit sculpted in the 1260s by Giovanni Pisano, with its seven narrative panels of Christ's life and a cast of almost 400 figures.



He also sculpted the statues encrusting the lavish façade, which still looks astonishingly crisp and unweathered.

Because the train has to dovetail with passenger and freight trains or replenish water tanks, there are occasional *longueurs* in stations, but that is all part of slow travel.

The train never exceeds 75mph, and – unlike on high-speed services – this lack of velocity makes it possible to actually admire the landscapes. As we headed back to Rome, morning mist was rising over the broad plain flanking the Tevere river.



La Dolce Vita Orient Express travels at a speed at which it is possible to admire the landscape Credit: Mr Tripper

A long double avenue of umbrella pines shading a farm track spoke of the forethought of past generations. We skirted the lagoons enclosed by the peninsula of Monte Argentario, where the rackety life of Caravaggio came to an end in 1610, and as we approached Ostiense station, a large section of the Roman walls still stands beside the line.

All this luxury and exclusive access comes with a steep price tag, of course: a single-night itinerary costs from £2,662 per person. But strong forward bookings suggest there is healthy demand for this sort of five-star experience, and I was told some celebrities have booked the whole train.



A single-night itinerary costs from £2,662 per person Credit: Patrick Locqueneux

Arsenale certainly expects it to continue – a second train will be finished later this year, intended for a Rome to Istanbul journey, among others, and it is building a train for Saudi Arabia with plans for others in Egypt, UAE and Uzbekistan. The sweet life is going global, for those who can afford it.

Anthony Lambert was travelling as a guest of La Dolce Vita [Orient Express](#) on its Venice and Tuscany tour, which costs from £6,447pp. One-night itineraries start at £2,662pp, departing Rome Ostiense station on multiple dates. Prices includes private transfers from other stations, an airport or a hotel, all tours, meals and drinks.