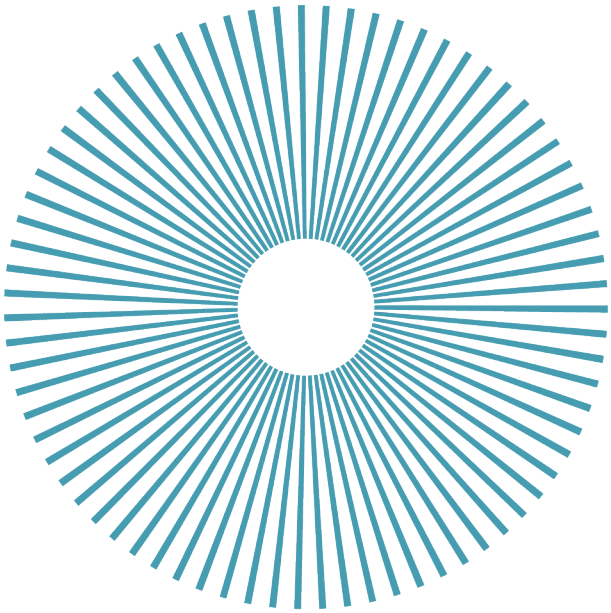


ARSENALE

PRESS COVERAGE

January - October 2025

World Travel & Tourism Council

GLOBAL SUMMIT

PERTH (BOORLOO) 2024

WORLD TRAVEL & TOURISM COUNCIL

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
WALKING ON A DREAM

GLOBAL SUMMIT REPORT

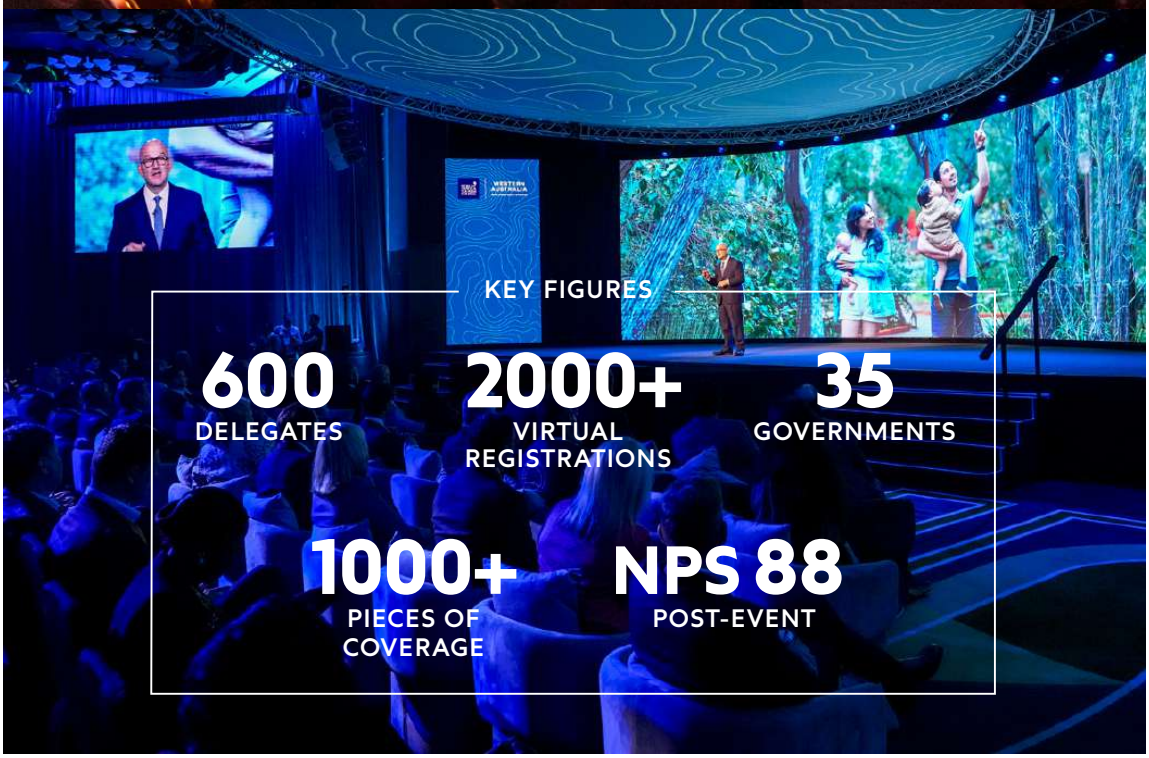
World Travel & Tourism Council

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

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

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

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

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, 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.

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 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

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

Zubin Karkaria, CEO, VFS Global

Katie Briscoe, CEO, MMGY Global

Hiroyuki Takahashi, Chairperson, JTB Corp

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.

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,** 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,** 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,** 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

TRAVEL CURATOR

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, Buglaria, 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 passengers 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

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

All products are independently selected by our editors. If you buy something, we may earn an affiliate commission.

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 Britannic 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.

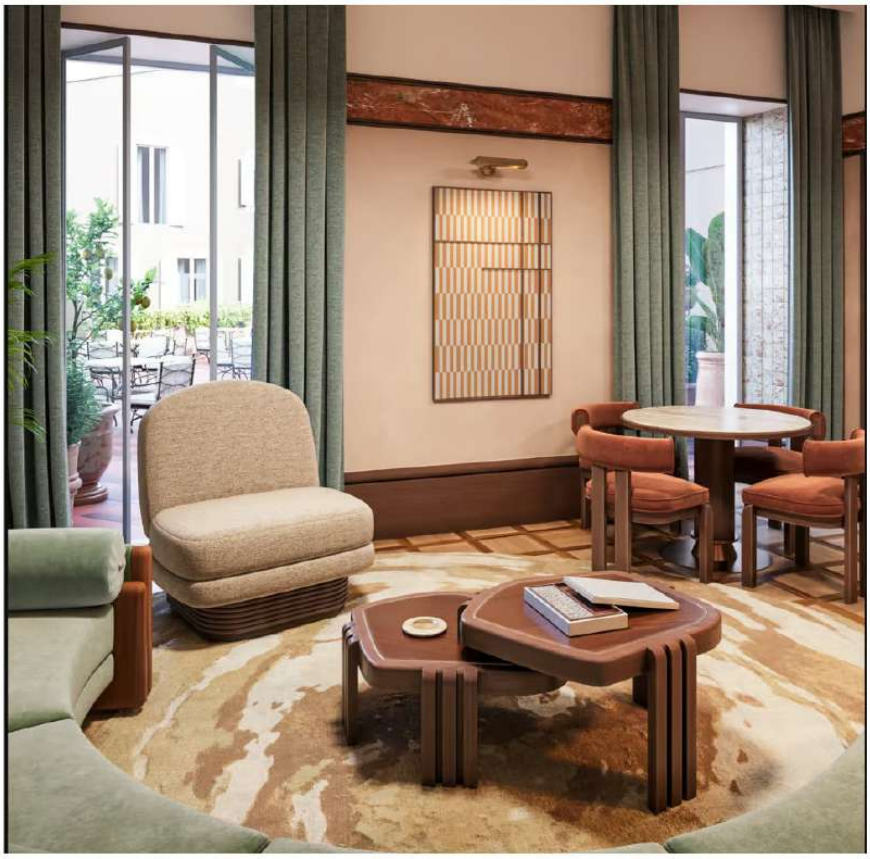
Maison Barrière Vendôme, Paris, France

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*

A taste of the Orient: La Dolce Vita Orient Express is embarking on six new routes

Water way to go: Scenic's five-star luxury all-inclusive cruise takes in the Danube

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

• continued from page 17

SEMI-GUIDED TRAVEL

Sitting in that sweet spot between completely independent travel (which can lead to time wasted) and strictly time-tabled holidays, semi-guided travel combines the perks of a guided trip with a bit more flexibility.

This means putting tech away and allowing journeys to unfold naturally through greater engagement with local life and simple pleasures.

Travelsphere has seen a sharp rise in demand for its local expert guides and experiences, such as baking traditional Apulian bread in open wood ovens at a fortified farm in Italy or sharing an asado social barbecue in Argentina.

Guides – known as holiday directors – live, eat and breathe their regions, so exploring secret backwaters and sharing local folklore ensures their travel groups can engage with the destination as never before.

DESTINATIONS TO DISCOVER

The top trending hotspots for 2025 are in and it's clear that alternative or once-overlooked destinations are having a moment – especially if they are dupes for more expensive and better-known destinations.

At the top of the Skyscanner table, southern Italian seaside city Reggio Calabria has seen a whopping 341 per cent increase in flight searches compared with last year, and Bendis's capital, Thiruvananthapuram – sitting in tenth place – has seen its popularity soar by 66 per cent.

Tucno in western Estonia is also bathing in the spotlight, having bagged the most recent European Capital of Culture crown, as are Cambodian gateway to Angkor Wat, Siem Reap; historic Dominican harbour town Portsmouth; Andalusian architectural gem Cordoba; and northern Norway's sales-tourism hotspot Tromsø, which is a new twice-weekly addition to BA's flight roster.

SPLASHING THE CASH

When it comes to overseas trips, trading up is very on-trend, with more people predicted to splash the cash and treat themselves to five-star stays.

Baby boomers are also in on the action, so much so that "Silv – Spending Kids' Inheritance – has been identified as a separate travel trend, with Booking.com finding that 42 per cent of the generation plan to spend their savings on the trip of a lifetime rather than leaving their kids an inheritance.

But in a full-circle moment, it seems Gen Z are pushing this spike, with around half opting for luxury trips this year.

Luxury tour firm Scenic's five-star all-inclusive Rhine, Main and Danube river cruises in 2025 – with low guest numbers, fine dining and a wellness area – seem to be a perfect fit for this cross-generational demand for the very best of experience and service.

FIVE-STAR RAIL RENAISSANCE

On the same five star basis, rail is thundering back on track as the nostalgic lure of bygone train travel is proving an alluring draw. And the year ahead sees the introduction of two new ultra-luxe train trips.

Little more than 140 years after the launch of the Orient Express, the iconic luxury sleeper trains are returning in spring 2025 with six new La Dolce Vita services catering to passengers' every whim on a journey through 14 Italian regions. The vibe here is stunning retro 70s, with on-board catering by three Michelin star chef Heinz Beck. Itineraries include a Truffle Route between Rome and Nizza Monferrato and a Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards tour. To coincide, 2025 sees the launch of the first Orient Express hotel – La Minerva in Rome.

If money really is no object, departing in September 2025 is RailRoosters' Around the World by Luxury Train – a bucket list, 59-day trip through 12 countries and more than 20 cities that criss-crosses the planet on seven luxury trains including La Dolce Vita Orient Express. The cost? From an eye-watering £96,995. Start saving now.

SEASON STRETCHING

A heady combination of changing climates teamed with an increasing need to escape peak-season crowds has seen a boom in shoulder-season travel that shows no sign of waning.

Instead of scrambling to book a classic summer holiday, travellers are now considering exactly what climate suits them best and whether they want to share their experience with other tourists, making the likes of Antalya, Malta and Lanzarote popular in late spring and early autumn. Meanwhile, Agadir is another new, face-times weekly flight from Gatwick for BA.

It's all great news for families with school-age kids, this surge is incentivising hotels and resorts to extend their summer season opening periods, and airline schedules are reflecting this change.

Cooking up a storm: You could be sharing an asado with locals in Argentina

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SCAN TO FIND OUT MORE

*terms and Conditions: Application times, bookings made before 7 February 2025. †Offer is per invitation only and limited availability may be withdrawn at any time without notice. Scenic reserves the right to cancel, revise or terminate any of its offers and promotions at any time. Offer is applicable for eligible residents of the United Kingdom. ^Fares are based on our Best Available Rate. Save up to 30% on two qualifying guests sailing in full. Cannot be used retrospectively. Offer is per booking. Deposits are £500pp for Standard Suites, £1,000pp for Balcony Suites, £2,000pp for Junior Suites, £2,500pp for Suites and £5,000pp for Owner's Suites. Subject to availability. Deposits are non-refundable. Final payment is due 12 weeks before departure. Offer is per booking. Fares are per person, based on two guests sharing a twin/double cabin and include all taxes and charges. Fares are correct at time of publication and are subject to change and availability.

WWD

WWD

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

Inside the Orient Hotel Venice

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

WWD: Now that you have LVMH as a major investor, will this impact your other partnerships and boutique openings? Will all the products in and around the hotel be under the LVMH umbrella?
G.P.A.: Not necessarily. Of course all elements would be considered. For others, we might consider something that is more relevant to the product or where we stand in the market. So it's quite nuanced. Of course we are working with LVMH in other areas but the reality is that everything is tailored piece by piece, market by market, item by item.

WWD: How about in terms of onsite retail?
G.P.A. : I think what the industry is trying to do, especially at the ultra-luxury level, is to bring experiences that are bespoke or unique, tailored to that particular market. It goes back to what I said at the beginning... we want to make sure that we're working with the local, fabulous 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 are 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.

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

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

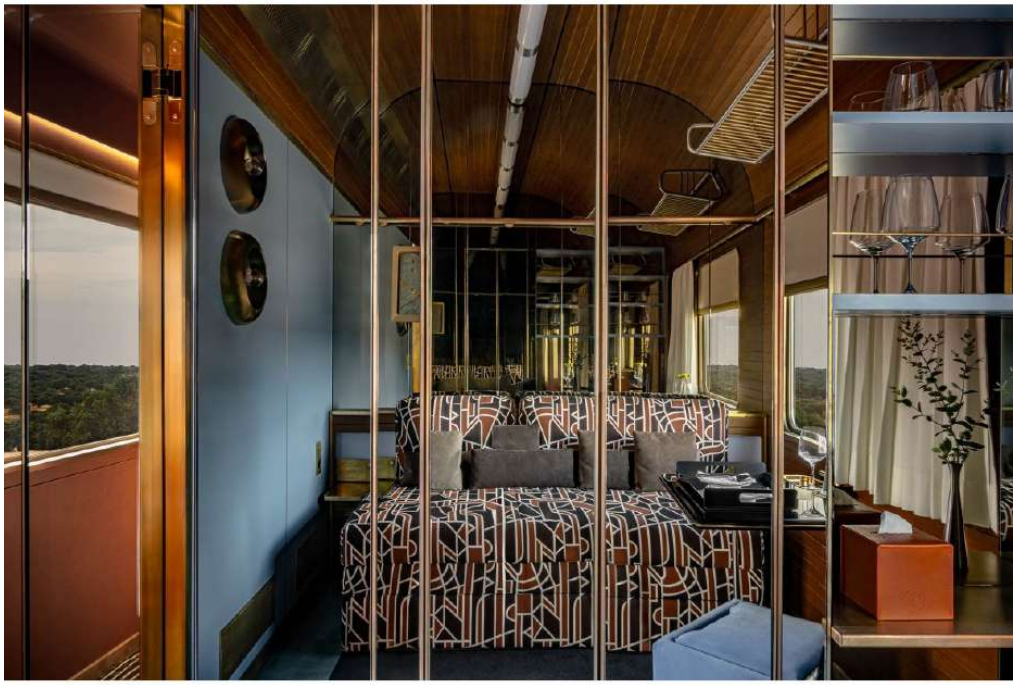
Share

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*]

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.

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

"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.

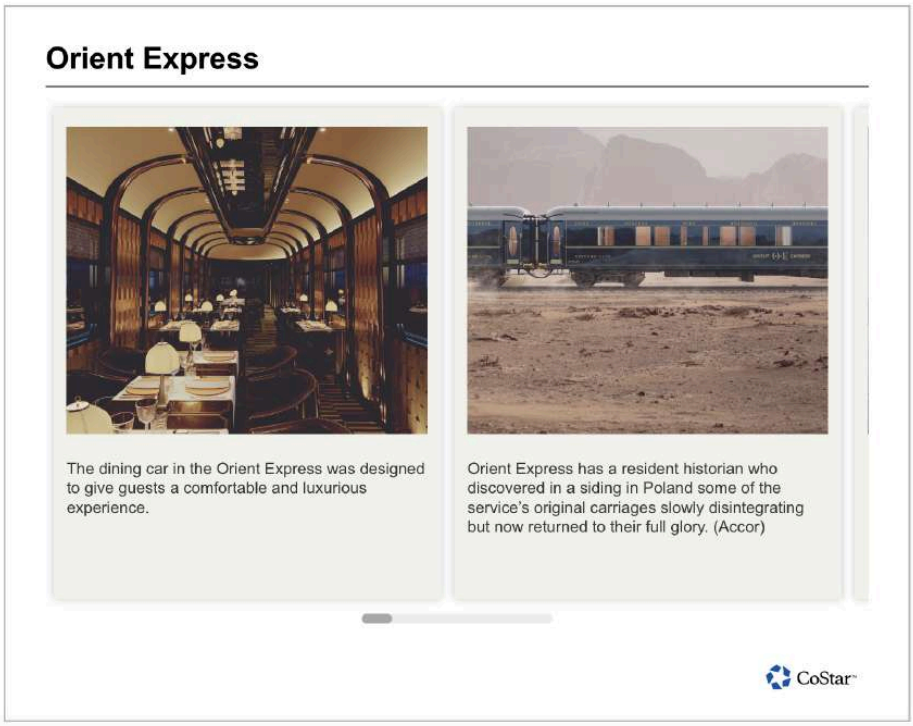
Perez-Alvarado said Accor's entrepreneurial focus is another big success factor. The company has placed a lot of strategy emphasis in recent years on food and beverage, wellness, co-working and branded residential.

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.



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 his 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.

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

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.

"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.

hertelier

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

Last month at ILTM 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

Gilda opened up to hertelier 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.

The International Travel Writers Alliance

Making a difference in today's world

Jumeirah Burj Al Arab, Dubai (See : News)

The Alliance Bulletin

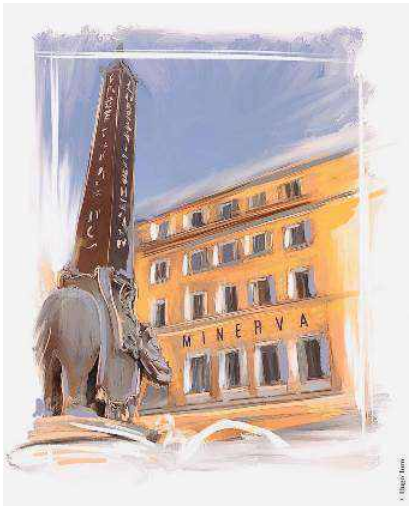
Providing key information in a no-frills format for professionals who travel to write, edit, broadcast or create images.

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.

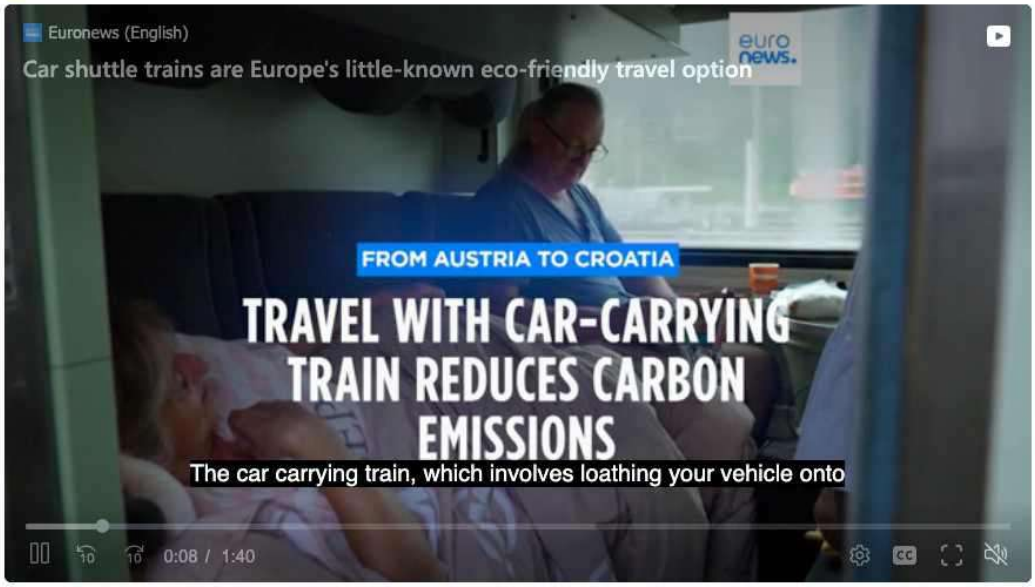
Headed toward some of the globe's most captivating destinations, and uncovering its best kept secrets along the way, these spectacularly crafted trains are designed to transport the sense of awe, wonder, and excitement of our furthermost expeditions within their Art Deco design-inspired coaches.

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

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(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.

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 furthermost 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

Image 4 of 5

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

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.

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)

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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.

FATHOM

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.

Bloomberg

Pursuits | Travel

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 Moet 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

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Luxury train travel is booming. Here's why, and the trips you must book Bloomberg | | Posted by Tapatrisha 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 Moet 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

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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 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. '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 Eastern and Oriental Express, a Belmond Train, Singapore and MalaysiaFollowing 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

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per person. Seven Stars in Kyushu, JapanWith 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, EuropeEven 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, ItalyWhen 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 AfricaSince 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

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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:

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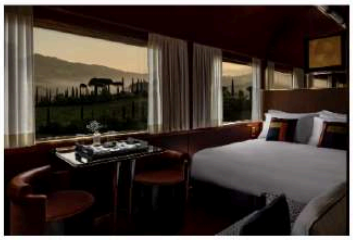
We've rounded up some of the best stories from Bloomberg Pursuits this month that will help you splurge on your bonus, explore some of Japan's hidden corners, and find just the right Lunar New Year gift, whatever your budget. And of course, we'll leave you with a list of new resorts around the world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



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Hot Hotels '25

The year ahead looks exciting with more hotel openings than ever for every kind of traveler. ***Sarah Miller*** *was on the inside track at ILTM, the industry's leading travel fair.*

The end of 2024 and the beginning of the New Year saw a stream of innovative openings and refurbishments from major brand cues well as indep endents. In December, Jumeirah announced two new openings marking its entry into Africa: Jumeirah Thanda Island in Tanzania, and Jumeirah Thanda Safari in South Africa, situated in one of the most exclusive Big Five private game reserves in South Africa. A singular conservation and community small is beautiful is another key mantra for the year ahead and, in Italy, the Bianca Relais, a 10-room boutique gem, reopens imminently under it Collection management, overlooking Lake Arnone. City hotels continue to thrive with Casa Brera, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Milan, Marriott's 101-room hotel, opening in the buzzing quarter of Milan. In France, the Cour des Loges re-opened in Lyon attracting all manner of fashion and art lovers to experience the city's hidden. The Welltech Hotel opens on February in the heart of the vibrant urban district of Marylebone. The Park Lane Copenhagen is the city's luxury destination, after undergoing a stunning transformation. In February, The Langham in Pasadena, Los Angeles will undergo an extensive renovation designed to enrich its historic grandeur with an infusion of contemporary elements.

Cour des Loges, Lyon, a Relais & Châteaux and Leading Hotels of the World property

~ Winter ~

The Thanda Safari, South Africa

For travelers seeking exotic destinations, the JW Marriott Kaafu Atoll Island Resort in Maldives and The St. Regis Aruba Resort in the Caribbean open in January while February sees Marriott's Sallema, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, Turks & Caicos open, offering unspoiled nature and a mix of relaxation and fun.

Wit and quirky concepts are also at the fore and early 2025 sees the opening of The Goethe Hotel in Rome which pays homage to writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and his Italian journey; in Frankfurt, Kennedy 89 blends high-end design with local charm.

The Brilliant Outlier Collection is taking its European capital up to the U.S. for the first time with The Venetia Hotel in Pittsboro, while, way on a quiet stretch north of Miami Beach, The Sunny opens in Sunny Isles, Florida, available to book through Essential1's membership-based travel services. Not to be outdone, Andaz Miami Beach brings its distinctive style to Miami Beach in March.

Over in Asia, Aman continues its city conquering with the waygel yawlisted 52 suite Aman Nai Lert in Bangkok, featuring an Aman Wellness center and 39 private residences within. Ash Nai Lert Park and Raffles Sentosa Singapore is set to expand on the illustrious legacy of Raffles Singapore with a 62-villa resort. Regent Bali Canggu will offer 150 luxurious suites and villas overlooking the Indian Ocean.

Closer to home in Europe, the Fairmont La Hadeena Costa del Sol, a 311-room resort opens in a yet-undiscovered corner of southern Spain. And in destinations less well-known for leisure travel, but no less worth exploring, the Kempton Main Frankfurt debuts in the financial district. Des Pesonan will open in The Hague, Netherlands in the former headquarters of iconic Dutch aviation brand KLM. Corinthia Bucharest opens in the restored 19th-century Grand Hotel du Boulevard. In Amsterdam, Rosewood Hotel & Resorts launches the brand's first property in the Netherlands. The Mantott opens The Palace, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Madrid in Spain.

For winter sun seekers, Nalagu, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, is set to open in Peninsula Papagayo on Costa Rica's Pacific Coast, and the delightful Spier Wine Farm will welcome guests to its new hotel from March. If you are a skier don't miss the Chedi Andermatt, which re-opens for the season in Gstaad, Switzerland.

The boom in hospitality continues in the Middle East with Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab in Dubai designed to evoke a futuristic superyacht and Raffles Jeddah opens with uninterrupted views of the Red Sea.

~ Spring ~

For the adventurous, the exclusive Mbamba will open in Botswana's Northern Okavango Delta with 12 vintage-inspired tents offering premium game-viewing. For families, and in time for Easter, The Standard, Pattaya opens its doors in Thailand on Naljomtien Beach. If people-watching is more your style, the stylish Pensione Americana opens in Forte dei Marmi, Italy, renovating a historic villa in the ultra-luxurious purlieu by the sea. While the Eden Roc Ascona, Switzerland is great for spring mountain air.

In May when thoughts turn to the gentle breezes of the Mediterranean, the Lagana Coast Resort opens on the Greek island of Naxos while Patmos Akti, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, opens overlooking the blue waters of the Dodecanese. JW Marriott Crete Resort & Spa opens on Crete while Ameti, a Luxury Collection Resort, opens on Rhodes.

In Mallorca, the Son Moll is the second opening from the team behind the award-winning Can Bonet by the five-star boutique hotel in Palma's historic La Lonja Quarter. Mandarin Oriental Punta Negra opens its first luxury resort in Spain on a beautiful peninsula in the Mar Menor lagoon. Iberostar Grand Portals Nous, first-ever luxury boutique hotels, Rondoga opens in the heart of the capital. Notto be missed is the reopening of the Splendid, a Belmond Hotel, in Portofino which reveals a new major phase in its multi-year renovation.

In nearby Rome, Orient Express La Minerva, situated in the heart of Piazza della Minerva opens in spring as the first-ever hotel under the Orient Express brand. Further north, Marriott opens JW Florence in the Tuscan capital and Marriott opens The Lake Como EDITION. Over on the Atlantic, Andaz opens Lisbon as a retreat across five interconnected building.

In April, The Oetker Collection's le Bristol Paris celebrates its 100-year anniversary. As via the channel in London, The Newman, a Firmdale Hotels Hotel, opens in summer on to a namesake Newman Street, and is the first hotel from Kimshalk & Co.

At the end of last year, Uitoma Qua Wilson Geneva opened its five private full-floor residences in central Geneva, and the 78-room Pullmire Jinbaran Resort opened in the forests of China's Golden Buddha Mountain. Nestled in the Norwegian fjords is Arnoe, an authentic seven-bed property for 14 guests, while Desmoland Lodge, Ireland, offers a beautiful five-bedroom private residence on a 500-acre estate in Italy's fashion capital. Rocco Forte House Milan opened in September 2024 and Rocco Forte House Lucca opens in May, a 40-key HQ. Private Fashion Austria announced several developments including the opening of Villa Mauria in 2025, a five-suite private home, and Le Collection Hotels's 2025 summer villas are now available to book, plus new properties launching throughout the year.

Due to launch in north eastern Ibiza this April is the latest addition to the Almare Collection. Auma Ibiza Residences. This indoor/ moets-outdoor six-bedroom villa, close to Santa Eularia harbor village, is set amongst 10 hectares of lush private gardens with spectacular coastal views. Also recently opened on the island is Fincadel'olm, nine-room villa, Xamaca, available as a buy-out.

Another Mediterranean escape is Villa La Guitolès, Hotel du Cap-Eden-Roc's nine-bedroom villa opening early 2025, and the 19-room expansion of Kalesma Mykonos, Greece. Opening this spring, Calma Olimpia-pizzi is an exclusive-use 18th century Manor House set on a 40-acre estate in Putignano, Puglia, and in the Tuscan region of the Maremma is Villa La Vedetta, part of Castello di Vicarello.

Rocco Forte House Milan

Travel Trends 2025

Micro-Hotels, Residences and Buyouts

The demand for micro-hotels, residences and buyouts is steadily growing as travelers seek privacy without sacrificing hotel-standard services. Marriott is rebranding its exclusive homes as exceptional homes, with eight ormately 30 openings in 2025, including Madrid residences near the Museo Nacional Prado.

Opening early 2025 is German designer Philipp Plein's Phantom The Palm Hotel in Milan, and the 12-room Nikki Beach Marina Yendime, set on the island Praia de Lucas, Cape Verde, a HQ. Private Fashion Austria announced several developments including the opening of Villa Mauria in 2025, a five-suite private home, and Le Collection Hotels's 2025 summer villas are now available to book, plus new properties launching throughout the year.

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Members' Clubs

According to Marriott Luxury Group, luxury travelers want exclusive and elevated settings where like-minded individuals bond over shared interests, hence the growth in private members's clubs. In light of this, we expect to see an increase in exclusive travel experiences, such as Casa J.K. Place Roma. Opening this spring, the property will offer 15 private apartments within a 17th-century building on Via dei Prefetti, while Bali InterContinental's new Club InterContinental features VIP services, private pools and access to two elite lounges. The Preferred Club at Dreams Sapphire Resort & Spa has also launched in Mexico, offering 70 exclusive beachfront suites and 10 villas. Another exciting 2025 launch is Discover Collection, a global members's community offering luxury retreats to off the beaten-track locations, such as Oman, followed by Kenya.

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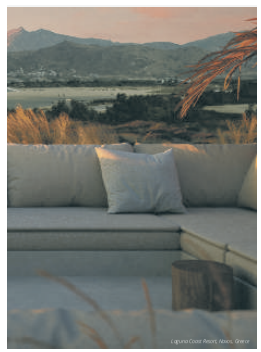

Laguna Coast Resort, Naxos, Greece

~ Fall ~

Two of the most exciting launches this year are the Cheval Blanc Seychelles, the sixth Maison within the collection which opens this December and Amanarun in Mexico, a private oasis at the edge of the Sea of Cortés with eco-friendly designs and direct access to beach and desert landscapes. Or stay in the Mayan jungle on the Mexican Caribbean at La Casa de la Playa which join Leading Hotels of the World this year.

For the even more adventurous, opening in Puerto Williams, Chile, is the world's most southerne ice hotel, transforming the Silversea Antarctica cruise expedition experience by facilitating the journey from the sub-Antarctic zone of Patagonian Chile to the White Continent. Not quite as starkly remote, the brand behind Nihi Sumba, sees the much-anticipated opening of Nihi Rote on West Timor, Indonesia. And Aikr launches its Ragbha lodge Nihiua Plains Lodge, in Amboseli National Park, from where you can witness the majority of Mount Kilimanjaro and immerse yourself in the heart of Kenya's wildlife-rich savanna—all coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the film Out of Africa.

Amboseli Plains Lodge, Amboseli, Kenya

Back in the cradle of civilization a gem opens this quarter in Rome Palazzo Brade, a five-suite micro-hotel in the heart of the city, housed in a Baroque private mansion, once home to the Borghese family. If it's fully booked, check out Palazzo Portheri Salviati, a 15th-century Renaissance palazzo that was once home to Nelkia and to Grimaldi, which joins Leading Hotels of the World this month.

More contemporary, in a renovation by Jean-Michel Gathy, the Aman Rosa Alpina opens in time for the ski season in the UNESCO-listed Dolomites. For those who love northern climes, Hotel Oslo opens in Norway, followed by Copenhagen, continuing the expansion of the Hotel Hotel concept in the Nordic region. In Eastern Europe, the Fairmont Golden Prague opens in the Czech capital's Old Town at the gate of the prestigious Pařížská Boulevard. Baseline in Europe, Nobu Hotel, in Madrid's city center, is set to open this quarter as six Kimpton Hotel Teatro is set with panoramic views of the Sicilian castles. The hottest hotel opening in London is The Chancery Rosewood in Grosvenor Square which opens at the end of this year in the former US Embassy Building. Wine lovers can stay at Château de la Commanaraine, sister hotel to Royal Champagne Hotel & Spa.

North Africa and the Middle East come into their own at this time of year and in Casablanca LXR Hotels & Resorts-Casablanca will open in the Triangle d'Or. The Middle East re-sou openings of the Regent Jeddah Corniche, InterContinental the Red Sea, Jumeirah Red Sea and Mirvaal the Red Sea in Saudi Arabia. Over in UAE, LUX Abjad, a modern beach from resort, and LUX Al Barsh, a tented desert retreat open in Sharjah.

Asia is also in the throes of redevelopment. Asia sea SALT of Wellness opening in the Zhejiang province of China, known for its lush bamboo forests and pristine lakes.

In the ever-popular destination of Japan, JW Marriott Hotel Tokyo is another addition to the capital while InterContinental Sapporo will open in the second half of the year offering sweeping views of Nakajima Park. Perfect for cherry-blossom season, Capella Kyoto, designed by Kengo Kuma, is one of 3 Capella properties opening in 2025 including Taipei in Africa as Fairmont Hanoi also opens in Hanoi in the Old Quarter while elsewhere in Vietnam, the InterContinental Ha Long Bay Resort opens in Vietnam's UNESCO-listed Halong Bay.

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However if you plan to stay in the U.S. then The Cooper opens in Charleston, South Carolina and Thompson Miami Beach launches reimagined luxury in Florida.

Qasr Al Watan, Sylvain Grandadam

~ Summer ~

Mandarin Oriental Milan, Italy

If whisky is your tipple, Ardbeg House was recently purchased by LVMH near the distillery and a Ardbeg has been creating its untamed smoky whisky for more than 200 years on the remote Scottish Island of Islay.

Over in Italy, the charming Masa Ostuni opens this summer in Puglia near the Baroque splendor of Lecce and the timeless Sassi of Matera. On the Mediterranean coast, Villa Beatrice Portofino will launch in July 2025 as one of the most scenic retreats on the Italian Riviera. Another Riviera welcomes Nordelaia Beaulieu and if you enjoy Mediterranean island life, Four Seasons Resort Mykonos opens in the Aegean. The latest hotels from the Vestige Collection, San Ermete and Bimbaluta, open in July. Four Seasons Mallorca at Formentor also opens this summer, and, on the mainland, ONIX Andalusia opens as the ultimate boathside retreat.

Asian brands all have major openings this summer with Rocco Forte Hotels opening the Carlton Milan, the family company's second property in Milan; Corinthia Rome opens in Italy's former Central Bank and Conrad Hamburg will open in the historic Levantehaus building on one of Germany's most popular shopping streets. Four Seasons Hotel and Residences Cartagena is a must-visit in Colombia as is The Red Sea EDITION, Egypt.

Fairmont Tokyo is the first Fairmont in Japan and overlooks Tokyo Bay. Other Fairmont openings include Fairmont Udaipur, India, and Fairmont New Giza, part of the historic red-exel opment of the former Bank of New Orleans building. Don't miss the views - day and night - from One & Only Moonlight Basin, in Big Sky, Montana. For somewhere even more remote stay in Kenya's northern Lake plan egion at an Beyond Suyian Lodge, opening July.

Beyond Suyian Lodge, Lake Turkana, Kenya

Two London openings are also scheduled for 2025: Six Senses London at The Whiteley, the brand's first-ever UK property featuring the brand's first wellness-focused members' club, Six Senses Place, and The Other House Covent Garden, offering 94 guest rooms and 'Club Place' plus two penthouses and exclusive facilities, all available on a long or short stay basis.

Travel with Purpose

Travelers are seeking meaningful experiences that contribute to personal growth, sustainability and cultural enrichment. Anguilla is an introduced a new 'Value-Tourism' initiative, promoting travel experiences that actively contribute to local communities, while Small Luxury Hotels of the World's 2025 summer villas are now available to book, plus new properties launching throughout the year.

Exclusive Experiences and Adventure Travel

Traveler sare not easing's seeking adventures that provide an escape from the everyday. In Svalbard, a Norwegian Archipelago north of the Arctic Circle, G2 NORD is launching a brand-new Signature Adventure in 2025, where guests can explore the area via dog sleds and sledges. Over at Ilbeen Deplar Farm in Iceland, there's a new 5k-to-4oar adventure, combining trek-king with flyfishing. For those seeking warmer adventures, Fairmont's 'Discover the Undiscovered, involves a road trip across northern Morocco, through the Sahara Desert to the Atlas Mountains and Atlantic Coast. PONANT's Le Jacques Cartier is also introducing new Polynesian expeditions this year providing a deep dive into authentic cultures.

Last but not least, a recent introduction to the private jet experience is AMAYA: The Grandest Tour. Tokyo to Greece! April 19 – May 19, while traveling to new heights with accessible space exploration is Zephalto's Celeste, a low-carbon capsule designed by architect Joseph Dirand. Passengers will be whisked off on an 80,000-foot adventure into the stratosphere, before returning back to Earth, six hours later, to a different destination.

Slow Travel

Travel this year is all about taking things slowly and the best way to do this is aboard a train or boat. L'Observatoire, a rail carriage designed by artist JR, will debut on LVMH and Venice Simplon-Orient Express, A Belmond Train in March. While Accor's La Dolce Vita will be the first luxury train in Italy. Over in the UK, The Britannic Explorer, A Belmond Train, launches in July. This three-night adventure will traverse the landscapes of Cornwall, Wales and the Lake District.

For those looking to take to the water, this year also marks the launch of three additions to the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection – Evrima, Ilma and Luminara – while Aqqa has announced the launch of 'Orient Express Corinthian', a 54-suite yacht that will navigate the Mediterranean, Adriatic and Caribbean. Equally exciting is Aman-at-Sea, a 183-meter yacht featuring 50 suites, dining facilities, a spa and two hydraulic platforms for bookings this year prior to its 2027 launch.

If understated voyages are more to your taste, AMA is launching an eco-conscious riverboat experience. Pure Amazon, and Capsenza Yacht has also announced a super quality experiences. Aventura is also bringing a luxury river cruise to the heart of Laos alongside the recently launched The Vedege by Avantaal train line, connecting the beach towns of Quy Nhon and Na Thrang, Vietnam.

By Cressi Sovereturits

Edited for ILTM by Sarah Miller, Founder and CEO of Sarah Miller and Partners

Stay to See the Sport

International Sporting Fixtures

If you want to make London your base between January and March for the Rugby Six Nations Championships. The Beaumont Mayfair in London reopened its door sin 2024 following a renovation, which also coincides with the hotel's 10th anniversary. In Perth, rugby fans can stay in one of Pan Pacific Perth's selection of newly refurbished rooms and facilities for the Bledisloe Cup championship in October at Optus Stadium.

From September 2025, AlUla's The Oneli Hegra, a Saudi Arabian desert retreat, offers exclusive access to events including the Richard Mille AlUla Desert Polo. Regent Seven Seas Cruises has announced the launch of its 'Spotlight Voyage on Golf' experience, offering exclusive access to top golf courses across the British Isles with golfing legend Annika Sörenstam.

Annika Sörenstam

For skiing fans, Badrutt's Palace Hotel in St Moritz, Switzerland, reopens with a new Series Wing, adding 25 guest rooms and suites and The First Hotel Cortina in Italy's Dolomites opens its doors in time for the 2026 Milan Cortina Olympic Games.

Bespoke Sports Offerings

Also in Italy, Aramtaxe Palazzo Naiadi Rome Hotel is offering exclusive packages for the inaugural Aramtaxe Concorso Rome from April 24 – 27, which will involve a three-day celebration of vintage cars. While on UNESCO recognized Hawaii Island, Hawaii Resort by Mantis has launched a Blue Grytis Ice Vival Academy. At Hotel Fenoyar in Torshavn, Faroe Islands, runners can explore a series of nature-filled running trails alongside a fully equipped fitness centre, while Bluewater Yachts' Flying Fox Fountaina cryo sauna, mixed martial arts, a hell-dieck sports court and more.

In Thailand, Capella Bangkok has combined sports and leisure with its new immersive bike tour, One Road, Two Wheels'. Alternatively, given people watching is a great sport in hotels, Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui and the Tourism Authority of Thailand have partnered with HBO to support the filming and promotion of the highly anticipated third season of 'The White Lotus', set to air in 2025 and shot in locations across Thailand.

Rosewood Phuket, Thailand

Brand Partnerships

The newest ship of Explora journeys, EXPLORA II, will be docked in the heart of the famous Port Hercule throughout Formula 1 Grand Prix de Monaco 2025 in May and marking the Alla Dhabi Grand Prix on December 7, the Yas Bayahi, a Rajdoun Collection Resort, is offering guests a new 'cube-inspired guest experience. Regent Seven Seas Cruises has also collaborated with Aston Martin Aramco Formula One® for an exclusive 10-night cruise with former driver Pedro de La Rosa aboard the Seven Seas Splendor®.

Coinciding with the U.S. Tennis Open in New York between August and September is Aman New York's 'Strength and Recovery' programme, curated by Aman's Global Wellness Ambassador and former world No. 1 tennis player, Maria Sharapova. Another great place to stay is Corinthia's first North American property The Surrey, which recently opened in October 2024.

By Cressi Sovereturits and Sebastian Clifton

Aman at The Surrey

HEARTTHROB HOTELS

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

BY LAUREN GALLOW

NATELEE COPPO

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

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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 TravelThe 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

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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.

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

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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 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

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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 passeneger 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

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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

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WWD

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.

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

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Travel / Destinations

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.

Condé Nast Traveller

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.

TDG THE DAILY GUARDIAN

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 châteaus 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

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 Netherland's 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.

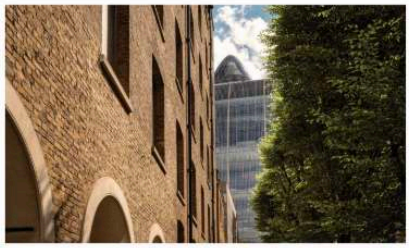
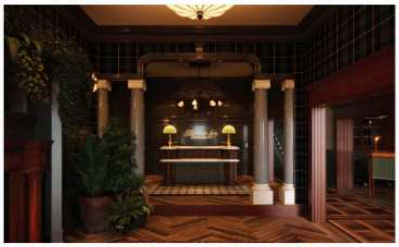


Photo by STEVE HERUD

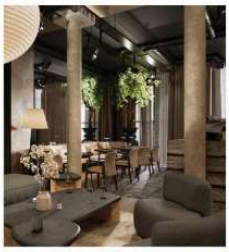


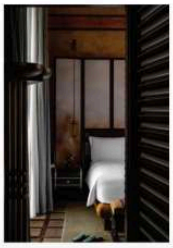
Portrush Adelphi
Northern Ireland

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, Klaipéda 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.

WWD

WWD

BUSINESS

From Runways to Resorts: Fashion Executives Are Reshaping Luxury Hospitality

Fashion industry veterans Saba Landmann, Stephanie Le Badezet, Michael Grieve and Claire Abeillé 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 UPADHYAY
WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MILES SOCHA

When communications director Claire Abeillé 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: Abeillé 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. Abeillé 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," Abeillé 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 marketed 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 Marriot'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."

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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 POINTS GUY

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 night 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

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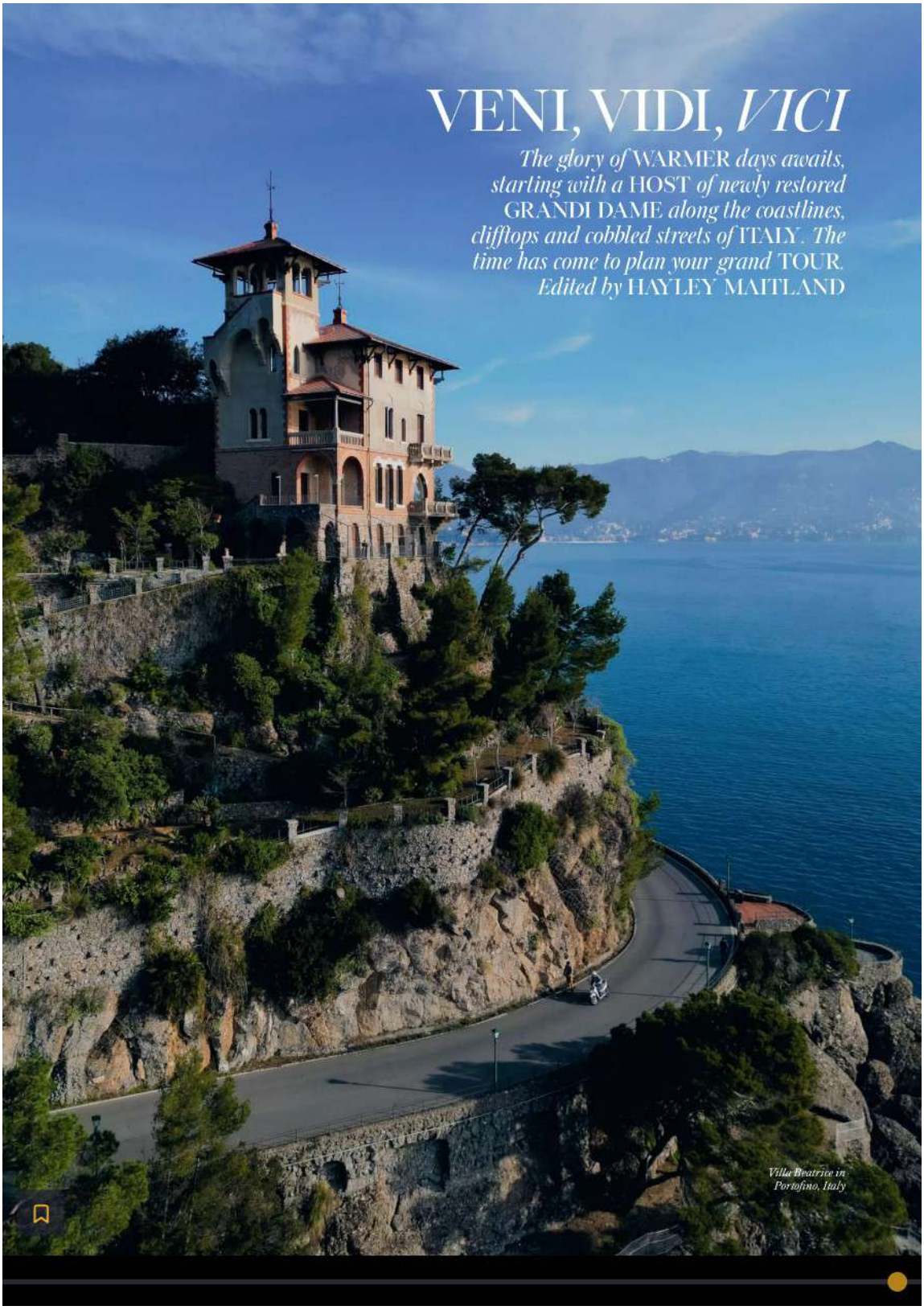
One of those is the Heart of Wales Railway Line, which has been ranked among the top 19 train journeys to take in the world in 2025 by National Geographic.

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
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, clifftops and cobbled streets of* ITALY. *The time has come to plan your grand* TOUR. *Edited by* HAYLEY MAITLAND

Villa Beatrice in Portofino, Italy

If 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

GH Good Housekeeping UK + Follow 61.8K Followers

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.

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 Haajira Mazzamil

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*

PureWow

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`ravelers. 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 excursions around the country from Rome.

yahoo!life

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

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LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS

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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**.

Unique Honeymoon Destinations For 2025

By Jemima Sissons
2 Days Ago

Off-the-beaten-track ideas for your post-wedding getaway

More

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*

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*

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

GRECOTEL
LUX·ME
LUXURY MADE EASY
Crete, Corfu, West Peloponnese, Kos, Rhodes

The Best ALL-INCLUSIVE RESORTS in GREECE

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

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

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

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**) 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

Six Senses will be coming to London later this year

The long-waited debut of Six Senses (**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

ARDBEG HOUSE

Lovers of a "wee dram" can head to the refurbished Ardbeg House (**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**) 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.

Condé Nast Traveler

NEWS & ADVICE

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

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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

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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

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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

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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 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 / 7 hottest new hotels to book in Italy this summer See Less This story has been published from a wire agency feed without modifications to the text. Only the headline has been changed.

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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.

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.

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.

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

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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.

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.

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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.

The A-List of Travel ®
LUXURY TRAVEL
MAGAZINE

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Unveiled in Rome 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.

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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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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.

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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. 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".*

FT Weekend

UK £5.10; Republic of Ireland €5.10 — NATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR — SATURDAY 5 APRIL / SUNDAY 6 APRIL 2025

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 REPORTERS

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 Composite 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 4.7 per cent at $65.33 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 10 per cent round this year.

"CHINA PLATED 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 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.

Inside

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High fashion rowing

Chanel styles the Boat Race

HTSI

The art of Arctic warfare

Training warriors in the ice

FT WEEKEND MAGAZINE

'You can't just condemn people'

Theatre director Robert Icke

LUNCH WITH THE FT

Boarding now

The brand new Orient Express

LIFE & ARTS

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

MADELEINE 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 €870mn worth of beer to the US in 2024, according to the trade group. It estimates that 100,000 out of 2mn 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 3 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".

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World Markets

STOCK MARKETS

	Apr 4	Prev	%chg
S&P 500	5107.70	5286.12	-4.74
Nasdaq Composite	15660.01	16550.61	-6.28
Dow Jones Ind	38067.01	40545.93	-3.71
FTSEurofirst 300	1875.41	2080.08	-5.03
Euro Stoxx 50	4844.10	5132.28	-4.79
FTSE 100	8054.88	8414.74	-4.56
FTSE All-Share	4341.85	4564.31	-4.67
CAC 40	7216.85	7589.98	-4.76
Xetra Dax	20661.72	21717.38	-4.86
Nikkei	33780.58	34735.92	-2.75
Hang Seng	22948.61	23252.55	-1.52
MSCI World $	3532.64	3689.59	-3.70
MSCI EM $	1132.78	1171.08	-3.93
MSCI ACWI $	807.64	836.11	-3.40
FT Wilshire 2000	6814.00	7284.58	-5.00
FT Wilshire 5000	52714.13	55903.75	-5.10

CURRENCIES

	Apr 4	Prev	Fair	Apr 4	Prev
$/€	1.098	1.112	€/$	0.910	0.899
£/€	1.196	1.201	€/£	0.772	0.778
£/$	0.848	0.866	£/$	1.178	1.156
¥/$	145.508	146.435	¥/€	159.598	161.703
$/¥	188.308	191.580	£ index	80.235	81.180
SFr/€	0.961	0.960	SFr/£	1.188	1.152

CRYPTO

	Apr 4	Prev	%chg
Bitcoin $	82857.28	82900.85	0.05
Ethereum	1780.19	1703.50	0.03

COMMODITIES

	Apr 4	Prev	%chg
Oil WTI $	61.72	66.85	-7.67
Oil Brent $	65.28	70.14	-6.96
Gold $	3118.19	3113.75	0.13

GOVERNMENT BONDS

Yield (%)	Apr 4	Prev	Chg
US 2 yr	3.81	3.74	-0.13
US 10 yr	3.94	4.05	-0.13
US 30 yr	4.38	4.48	-0.13
UK 2 yr	3.69	4.00	-0.08
UK 10 yr	4.53	4.99	-0.08
UK 30 yr	5.12	5.19	-0.08
JPN 2 yr	0.58	0.74	-0.15
JPN 10 yr	1.15	1.30	-0.15
JPN 30 yr	2.26	2.39	-0.13
GER 2 yr	1.81	1.94	-0.14
GER 10 yr	2.58	2.85	-0.07
GER 30 yr	2.97	3.04	-0.07

Prices are latest for action. Data provided by Morningstar

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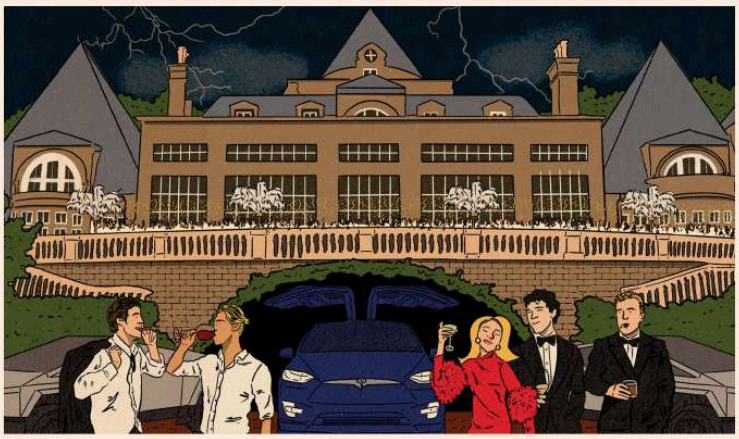


The careless age

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

Illustration by Tatyana Alanis

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."

Far 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 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 "vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house" at the novel's bravura close.

Gatsby reaches beyond the moral failures of its 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 infamous 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.

F Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald on a road trip in Connecticut in 1920 — Alamy

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 gleaning 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 civilisational 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 *Gatsby*, Tom Buchanan would emerge as 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 everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white."

Tom has picked up these ideas from eugenicist books whose modern equivalents would embrace "great replacement" theory. A century ago, it was called Nordicism, and the book Tom harangues his listeners about, "The Rise of the Coloured Empires' by this man Goddard", is a thinly veiled version of Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* — a real eugenicist diatribe popular at the time. Nick adds caustically of Tom's tirade: "Flushed with his impassioned gibberish he saw himself standing alone on the last barrier of civilization."

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

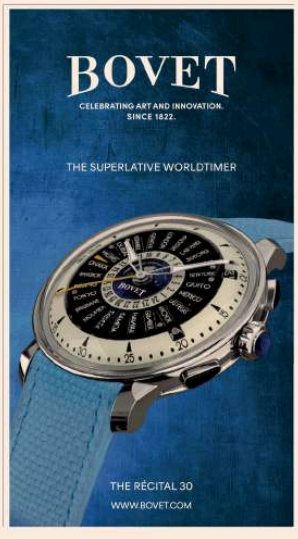
> Fitzgerald was writing about the world he saw. He knew many men like Tom, rich, entitled and stupid

If there is a philosophical undercurrent to this panic, it is the same ambient declinism revived by today's "Dark Enlightenment" ideologues — 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" anonymous.

Thiel has translated his ideological

Continued on page 2



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

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 *superstrade*, no Autogrills, 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-ironic, pre-revenge-travel notion of a sweet life that could only ever exist here – while traversing some of the least-plied 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 Montalcino, 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 is 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 at the Antinori family's Pian delle Vigne vineyard in Montalcino, along with curator-led museum visits in Siena, hikes on Mount Etna 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 historic 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 sq 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 Giovanelli, 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, interiors 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 Railways) 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 Dimorestudio, whose design assertively signals Italian glamour: 1960s-inspired, high-gloss, articulated in palettes and patterns that reference the era's masters – Gio Ponti, Nanda Vigo, Osvaldo Borsani and their peers.

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

The feedback on board is mixed, but net positive, leaning in a couple of cases towards dazzled. 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 trysting, if the clientele weren't largely coupled off).

The compact en-suite bathrooms glitter with fingernail-sized terrazzo tiles in black 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 cubbies 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 freezers 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 gnocchetti served *al cacio e pepe* – a very cheese- and carb-forward Roman standard – 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 *eccellenze italiane*, 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 sinuous 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 conductor called Luigi Cantamessa, that Barletta acquired his carriages, and Cantamessa 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 downed postprandial 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 is 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 reinvigorated 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 59 per cent stake in Orient Express in order to "accelerate" the brand's development. LVMH had already snapped up Belmond (in 2019), and gives Belmond's Italian hotels include the Hotel Cipriani in Venice, the Villa San Michele in Florence, the Grand Hotel Timeo in Taormina and Hotel Splendido in Portofino, the scope for co-operation on 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 Calabrian pines. It's the Maremma National Park; a place I've been many times – like Siena, like Venice – playing out from a wholly new vantage 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

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 (CIWL), introducing sleeper services on a number of international routes.

1883 CIWL runs its first "Express d'Orient" services, taking passengers on a seven-day journey from Paris via Munich, Vienna and Budapest to Constantinople. The twice-weekly departure involves two ferries, but by 1889 new tracks mean the trains can run direct from Paris.

1891, "Express d'Orient" becomes "Orient Express".

1919 Launch of the Simplon Orient Express, offering an additional alternative route from Paris to Constantinople, via Milan, Venice and Belgrade.

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

1947 Services to Istanbul resume postwar, but the following decades see growing competition from national rail operators and, later, air travel. By the 1970s the services are in decline and routes shrinking.

1978 Swiss entrepreneur Albert Glatt 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 Glatt's "Nostalgie" carriages, retrieved from Poland and restored.

Forbes

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 fo summer.

By Nicole Trilivas, Contributor. ⓘ Nicole Trilivas is a luxury travel ...

Follow Author

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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

Share

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 longsuffering 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 Tuscan, 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
Paris
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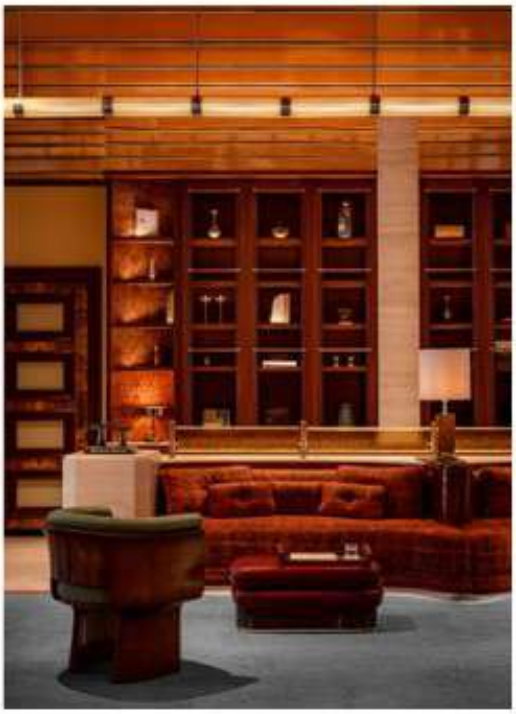
Good morning from Midori House. This week the Monocle team will be toasting great design at Bar Basso as Salone del Mobile begins in Milan. Later in the week a delegation will land in Greece for the Delphi Economic Forum, which will take place at a crucial time for Europe's economy. For more news and 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.

Share this story

GROUND TRANSPORTATION

The grand premiere of La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Theodore Koumelis

07.04.2025 104

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".*

TRAVEL ▸ HOTELS

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

Sign up to our newsletter

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

(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

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The Daily Traveler

Today's Free Stories

- La Dolce Vita Orient Express: First Guest
- 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.

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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.

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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 secretively 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.

yahoo/life

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

HOTELS & RESORTS

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 Tabletts 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

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

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 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.

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SPACE
INTERNATIONAL HOTEL DESIGN

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 ro 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 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 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”

hospitalitynet

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 inmortalizado 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 vuo' 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.*

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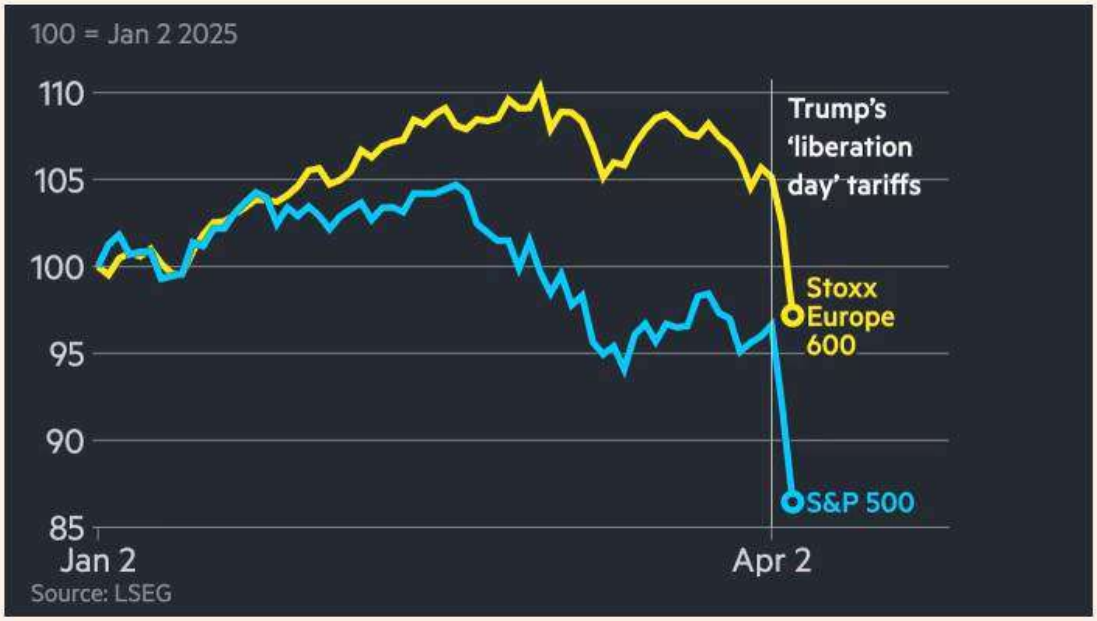
Hedge funds hit with steep margin calls

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 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 reimagined 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**.

LUXURY
TRAVEL ADVISOR

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.

travelmarket report
Voice of the Travel Advisor

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.

HOTELS
PASSION FOR HOSPITALITY
SINCE 1966

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.

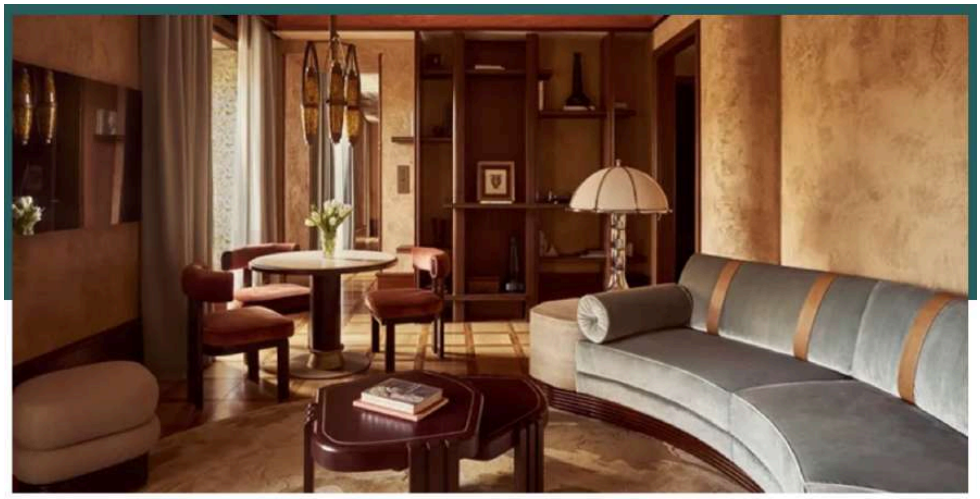
"Gigi Rigolatto will reflect the Roman rhythm of life, from morning to night," said a representative of Paris Society. "It is an interpretation of Italian elegance through a contemporary lens."

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

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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."

TravelDreamsMagazine
What is your version of living the dream?

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 play 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

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

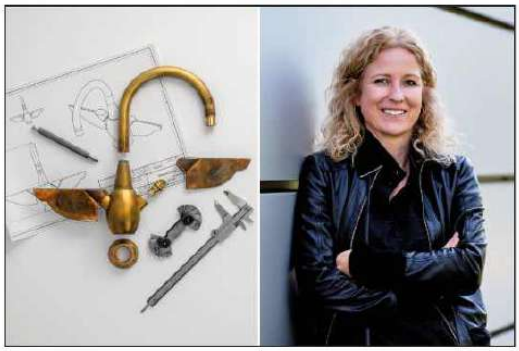
SLEEPER

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

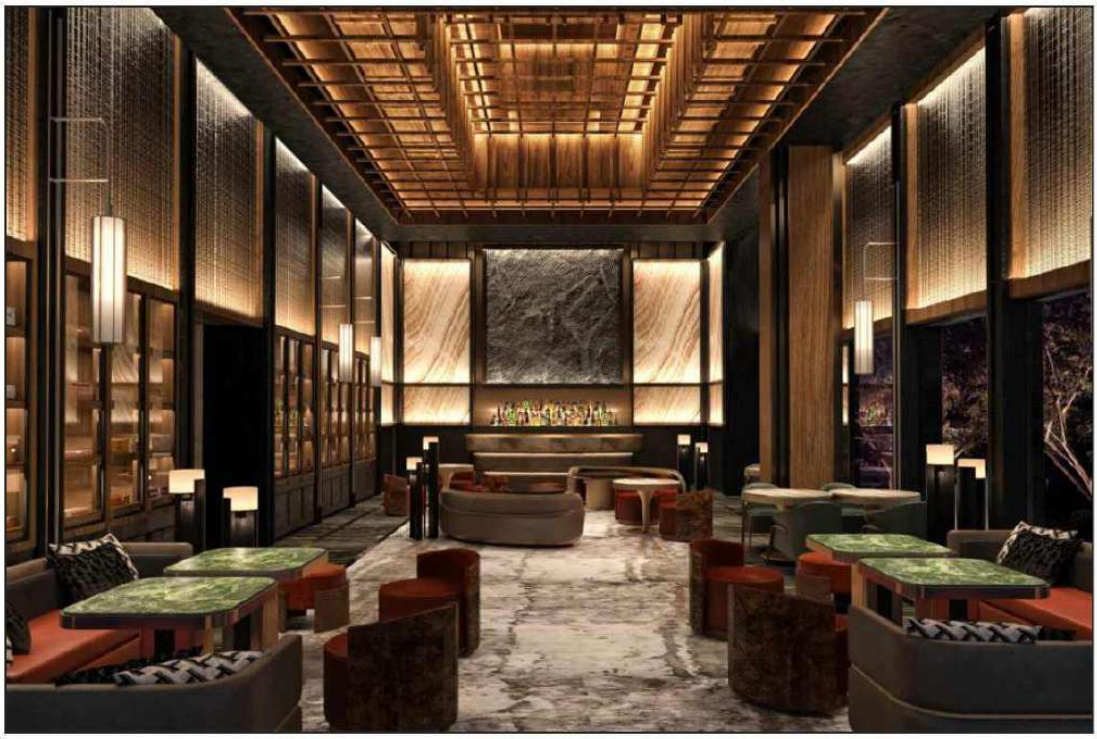
First Look: The Standard, Brussels

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'



Rockwell Group to design Egypt's first Nobu hotel

A by Adina enters European market

Amtico introduces Spacia

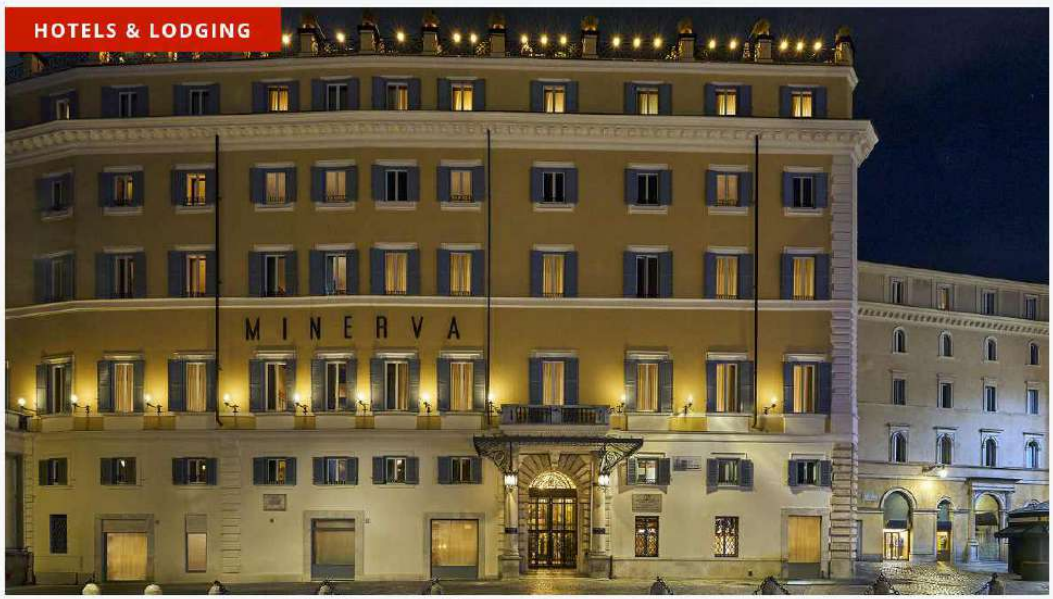
Dorchester Collection appoints Philippe Lebouef as CEO

Northern Lights crafts bespoke lighting for Le Jardin de Verre

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.

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Suite Living Room (Photo: Alexandre Tabaste).

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Suite Bedroom (Photo: Alexandre Tabaste).

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- 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 throhoteugh 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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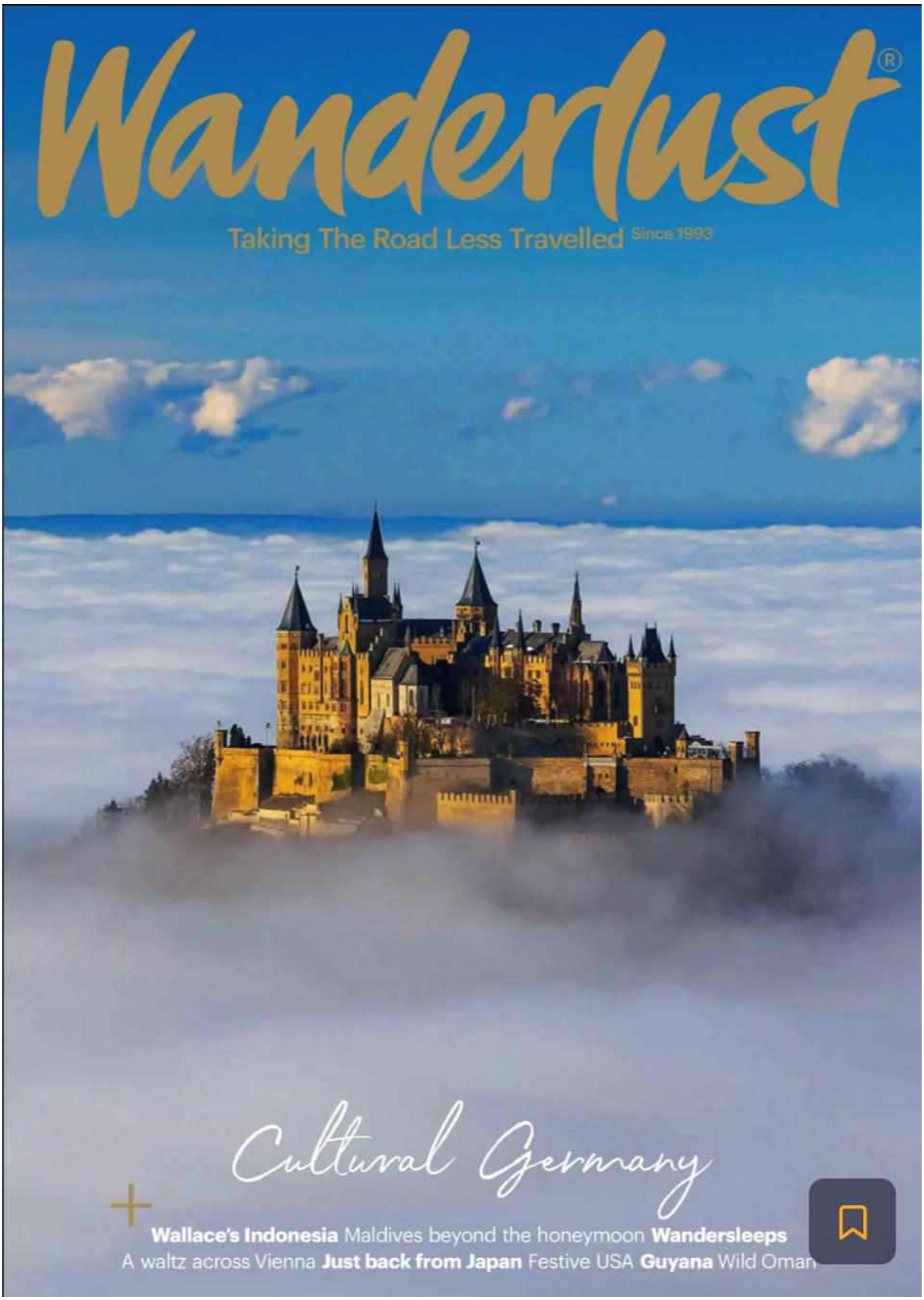
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NEW *Sleeps*

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 İstanbul. ▶

Patrick Lacoumenia, Royal Geographical Society, Shutterstock

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

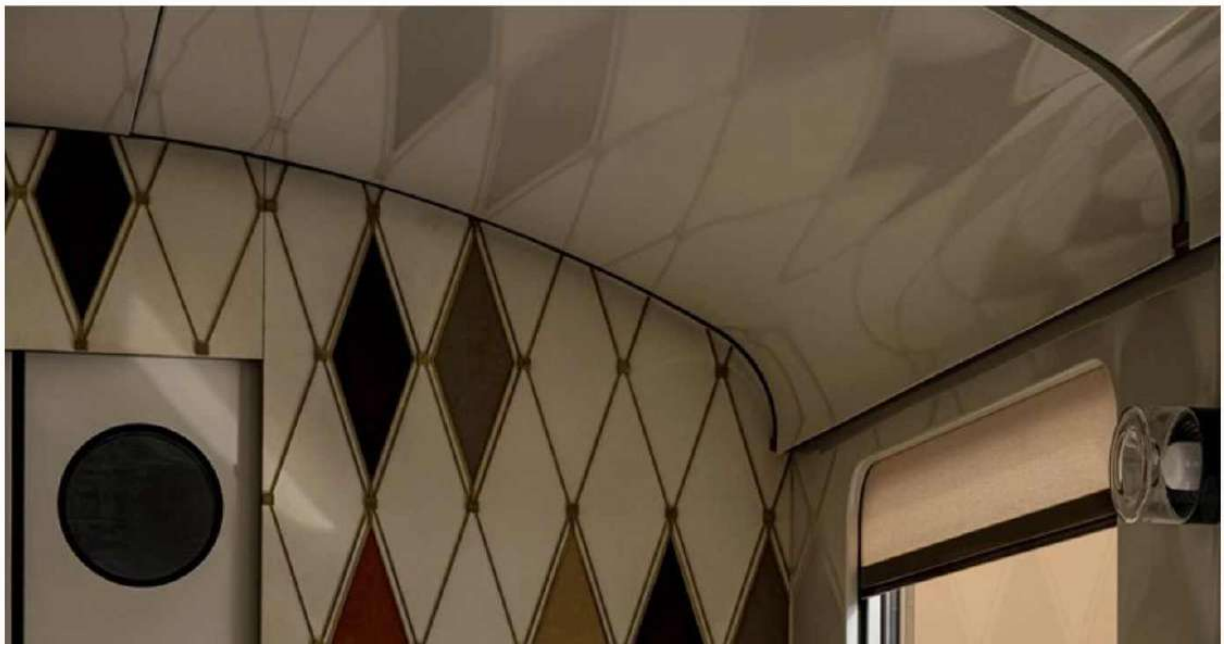
April 2025

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.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express



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

All listings featured on Condé Nast Traveller are independently selected by our editors. If you book something through our links, we may earn an affiliate commission.

Alexandre Tabaste/Orient Express La Minerva

ROOMS

93

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 tiramisu. 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

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

WWW.HOTELSMAG.COM

HOTELS

SINCE 1966

NEWS & VIEWS

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.

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

Book now

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 cosseting 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

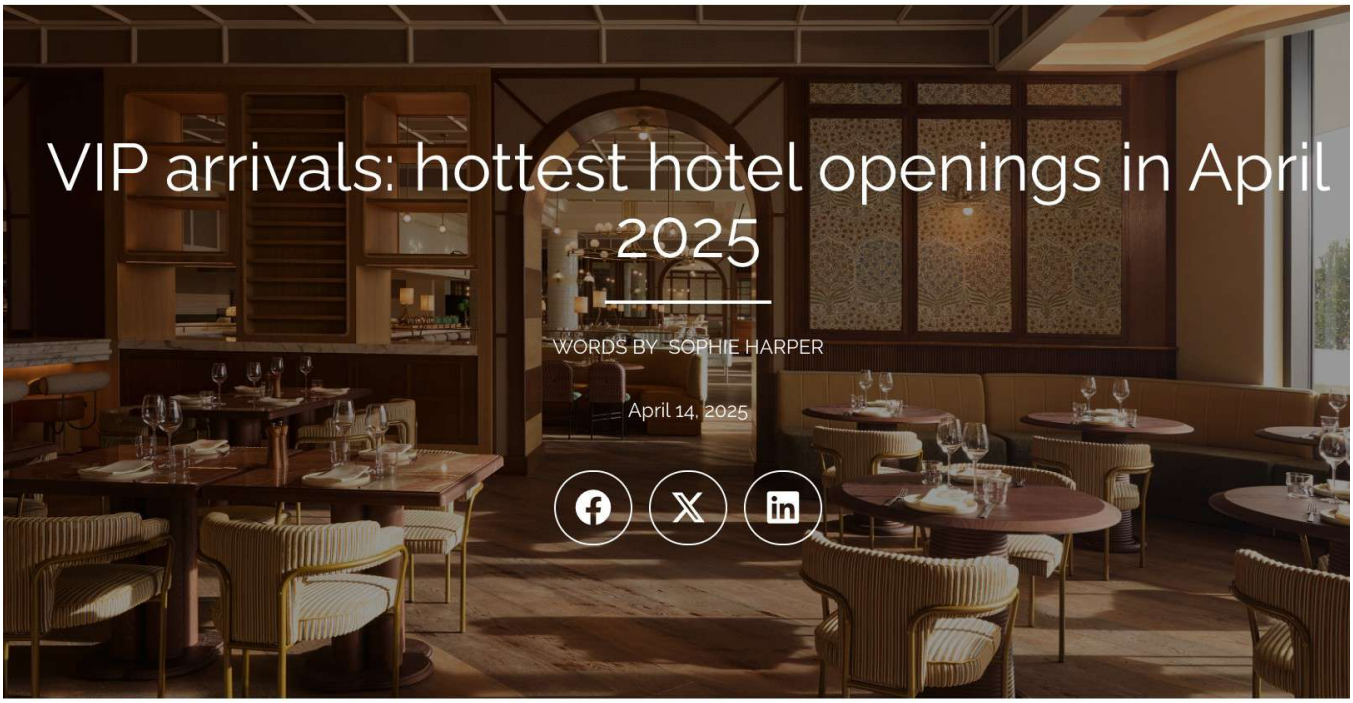
The hotel had just opened when I visited, yet it offered impressively seamless service. That's no doubt owing to the fact that some of the key staff members, including the general manager and head concierge, are seasoned pros with decades of experience at Italy's top luxury hotels.

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.

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)

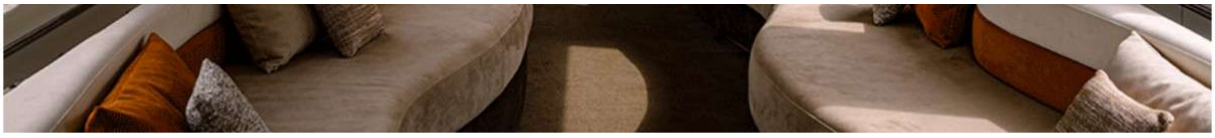
Dozens of candles flicker along the dark corridor of the 16th-century palazzo as guests alight from gleamingly varnished launches and enter Venice's largest private garden, with champagne in hand.

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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Robb Report

The Orient Express's First Hotel Just Opened in the Heart of Rome

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Robb Report

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.

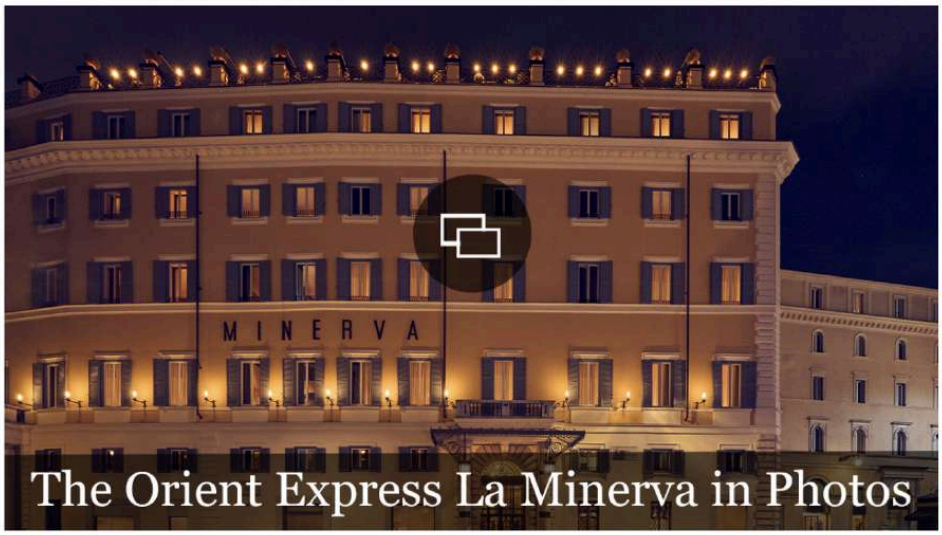
A bedroom within the Orient Express La Minerva.
Alexandre Tabaste

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

On board Europe's most luxurious new train, with tickets from £2,600

An opulent journey aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express offers a taste of the five-star lifestyle – but it comes at a cost

66 Gift this article free

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

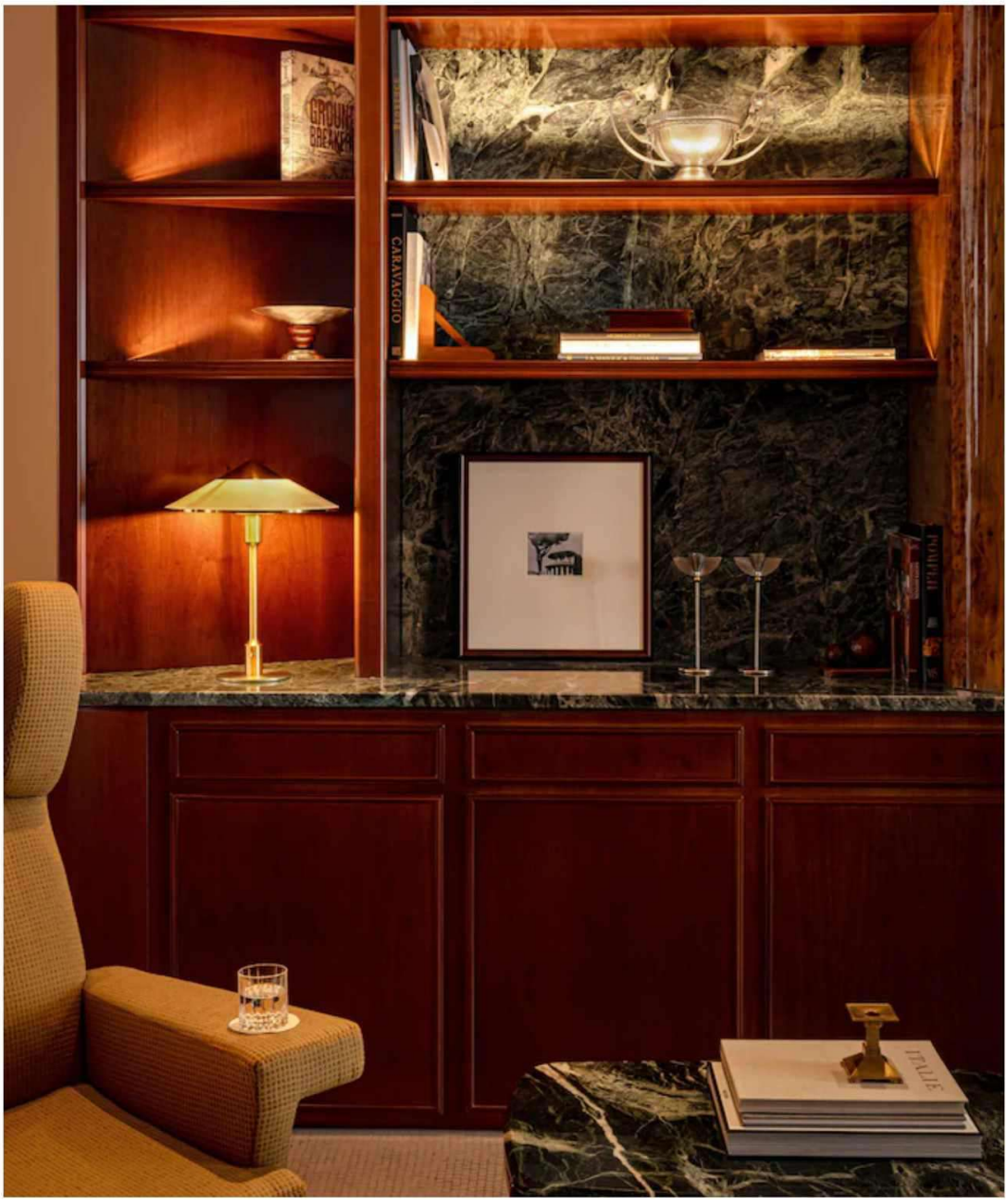
An ambitious programme of eight one and two-night itineraries covering 14 Italian regions has been devised, most starting and ending in Rome and the most elaborate entailing a transfer of the train across the Straits of Messina on a privately chartered vessel to Sicily for visits to Taormina and Palermo.

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.

Our writer journeyed from Rome to Venice aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express Credit: Dorian Mongel

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 Tavere 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.

Bloomberg

Seven Stunning New Hotels to Book in Italy This Summer

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 travelers 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 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.

Orient Express La Minerva, a new hotel in the heart of Rome. *Source: Orient Express La Minerva*

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 €1,000.*

CULTURE / 30 APRIL 2025

The SLMan Hot List: May

The SLMan Hot List gives you all the inspiration, recommendations and ideas you need for the month ahead. From glassware to elevate your at-home bar to luggage that will enhance your travel experience, here are the coolest things out there this May...

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ALEXANDRE TABASTE

THE HOTEL

ORIENT EXPRESS LA MINERVA

Orient Express La Minerva is now open in Rome. Anchored in history, the hotel is found inside a revived 17th-century palazzo off Piazza Della Minerva 69, just steps from the Pantheon. The design-centred property has 93 rooms and 36 suites – each space entirely singular in scale and layout. In honour of those famous trains, 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 follows the recent launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express through Italy, and arrives ahead of the opening of the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice later this year.

Visit LaMinerva.Orient-Express.com

FASHION / 01 MAY 2025

The Luxe List: May

The SL team shares a selection of their new favourite things. From the latest fashion launches to a beauty must-have, May's Luxe List offers all the inspiration you need...

BY HEATHER STEELE

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All products on this page have been selected by our editorial team, however we may make commission on some products.

THE FASHION SHOW:
Chanel Cruise 2025/26

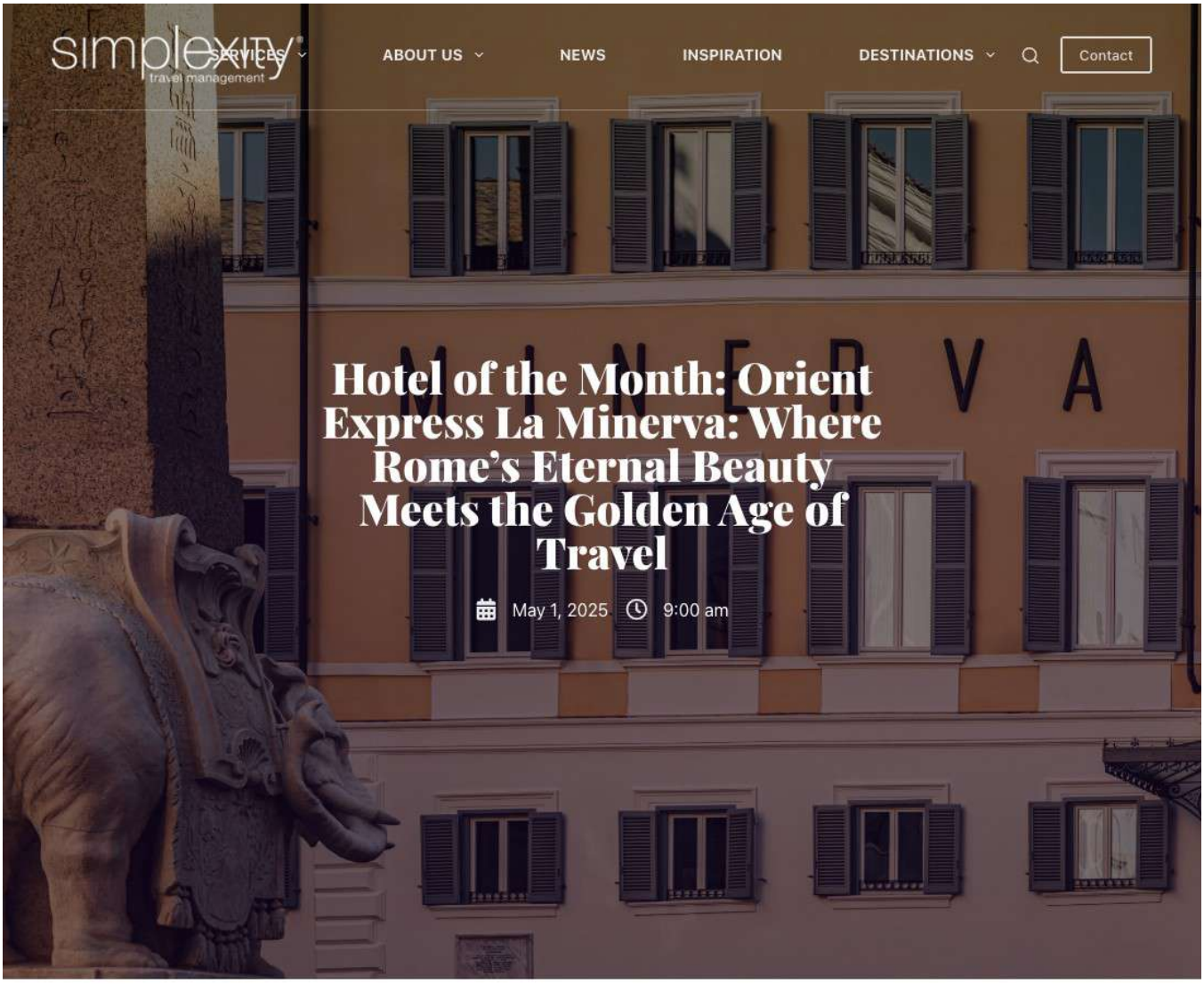
Taking place along the banks of Lake Como, Chanel's 2025/26 Cruise show was reminiscent of early-1970s Hollywood glamour. From fresh twists on the iconic tweed co-ord to pastel pink gowns and sequin embellished suits, this collection is testament to Chanel's cultural relevance within luxury fashion. Stay tuned to see what new creative director Matthieu Blazy has in store for the collections from the autumn.

Visit CHANEL.COM

THE HOTEL:
Orient Express La Minerva

Orient Express La Minerva is now open in Rome. Anchored in history, the hotel is found inside a revived 17th-century palazzo off Piazza Della Minerva 69, just steps from the Pantheon. The design-centred hotel has 93 rooms and 36 suites – each space entirely singular in scale and layout. Like its trains, 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 follows the recent launch of La Dolce Vita Orient Express through Italy and ahead of the opening of the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice later this year.

Visit LAMINERVA.ORIENT-EXPRESS.COM



Hotel of the Month: Orient Express La Minerva: Where Rome's Eternal Beauty Meets the Golden Age of Travel

May 1, 2025 9:00 am

PREVIOUS
Hotel of the Month – The Bodrum EDITION: A New Generation of Luxury

Orient Express, the legendary name that still conjures images of opulent sleeper cars winding through Europe, has officially opened its very first hotel: Orient Express La Minerva. Nestled in the historic Piazza della Minerva – just a short stroll from the Pantheon – this is truly a defining moment in luxury hospitality.

Housed in the meticulously restored 17th-century Palazzo Fonseca, La Minerva is no ordinary Roman stay. Once a haunt for cultural heavyweights like Stendhal and Herman Melville, the building now plays host to 93 rooms and 36 suites, each uniquely designed to channel the romance and craftsmanship of Orient Express's heritage. Think: rich wood panelling, bespoke leather bedside trunks, hand-painted ceilings that evoke Rome's skies and linens by Rivolta Carmignani, the same brand that once graced the sleeper cars themselves.

photo credit: Alexandre Tabaste

Behind the magic is Hugo Toro, the Paris-based architect-artist whose design blends the timeworn grandeur of Rome with the sensual edge of contemporary travel. Every hallway nods to the glamour of the original train interiors, while lounges and public spaces whisper stories from centuries past. Toro's work transforms the hotel into a living gallery of textures, tones and timeless charm.

But it's not just a feast for the eyes, but for every sense. The La Minerva Bar, beneath a soaring glass roof and original Minerva statue, offers everything from refined aperitivos to a Roman-inspired afternoon tea. A rooftop restaurant, Gigi Rigolatto, opens this month with Riviera-inspired cuisine and 360-degree panoramas that sweep from the Vatican to the Victor Emmanuel monument.

Mimi Kakushi, which launches at Orient Express La Minerva later this year, will transport guests to the Osaka of the 1920s, an era which witnessed the creative clash between Western modernism and traditional Japanese values. The restaurant captures this transformative moment, offering a fusion of Far Eastern flavours 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.

Finally, for those in search of celebration, serious business or perhaps a combination of both, five elegant event spaces await, including the Olimpo Ballroom, adorned with Murano chandeliers and sculptures by 19th century artist, Rinaldo Rinaldi.

photo credit: Alexandre Tabaste

photo credit: Alexandre Tabaste

THE TIMES
LUX
THE BRIGHT STUFF

OPULENCE ON WHEELS

PAUL RICHARDSON takes the first Orient Express La Dolce Vita train ride, from Rome to the vineyards of Tuscany

IN THE ORIENT EXPRESS lounge at Ostiense station in Rome, my train leaves in an hour but the high living is already under way. There are glasses of iced Veuve Clicquot and Italian mid-morning snacks, alongside gorgeous marble bathrooms that invite one to linger over the artisan soaps, the soft towels, the fresh flowers. A trio of piano, saxophone and double bass serenades passengers with a medley of cool jazz standards, among which I recognise a Duke Ellington classic, *Take the "A" Train*.

What I'm about to take is an A train in another sense altogether. Unveiled with great ceremony, La Dolce Vita is a new iteration of the Orient Express marque, raising the bar for rail travel to heights rarely scaled even in the splendiferous 140-year history of the brand.

In the humdrum surroundings of this suburban-line station, the newly refurbished carriages, gleaming in their smart blue-and-brown livery, give off alpha waves of sophistication. At 12.07pm precisely the train pulls out of Ostiense to embark on a 24-hour round-trip journey entitled Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards – one of eight La Dolce Vita routes (all within Italy) that will be available by the end of this year.

We cross the Tiber, slinking through Trastevere station where a group of locals gawp open-mouthed as the train glides by. I settle into my suite, a substantial cabin incorporating a double bed with crisp cotton sheets, a small sofa, a lacquered table and leather-upholstered swivel chairs, a miniature bar and a bathroom with a power shower.

The train's interior, designed by the Milan-based masters Dimorestudio, avoids the chintzy maximalism of the brand's fin-de-siècle origins in favour of a sleek, chic evocation of mid-20th-century Italian style, the curvy retro shapes and glossy surfaces channelling designers such as Gio Ponti and Gae Aulenti. The references are telling: in the low-lit corridor outside my cabin, black-and-white photographs by the society snapper Marcello Geppetti (the original paparazzo) reflect the gilded 1960s world of Federico Fellini and Marcello Mastroianni, of Gina Lollobrigida, Sophia Loren and Claudia Cardinale.

Lunch, served in the all-white dining car, is a multicourse affair created by the chef Heinz Beck, whose restaurant, La Pergola, holds Rome's only trio of Michelin stars. Banish all thought of regular rail food: this is by some way the most lavish, but also the most delicious, collation I've eaten on board a train, nimbly served by uniformed waiters (no overspilling soup bowls here) and accompanied by fine Italian wines. Beyond the window, postwar housing blocks gradually give way to a landscape of open fields, stone farmhouses, vineyards and umbrella pines.

The original Orient Express made its maiden voyage in 1883, linking European cities from Paris to Istanbul in a service that, especially after being immortalised as a crime scene by Agatha Christie, became a byword for glamour and intrigue. This route ran until 1977, then the service petered out in 2009, having become a series of shorter routes operated by Belmond under the name Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.

Somewhat confusingly, the French hotel giant Accor has reactivated the Orient Express brand per se,

A suite featuring a sofa and a miniature bar. Opposite: curvy retro shapes recall the designs of Gio Ponti

using it as an umbrella for high-end hospitality projects that include the Italy-based La Dolce Vita train and the historic La Minerva hotel in Rome, which has recently been given a stunning new lease of life. (Slated for later this year are a Venice hotel, the 15th-century Palazzo Dona Giovannelli, and a sailing yacht, the Corinthian, said to be the largest in the world.)

Halfway through the afternoon we pull into a country station serving the hill town of Montalcino, where the programme features a visit to the aristocratic wine estate at Argiano. (La Dolce Vita journeys are the closest thing on land to a kind of hyper-exclusive cruise, with bespoke gastronomic and cultural visits instead of harbour stops.) The visit begins with a private tour of the Renaissance art collection amassed by Argiano's owner, the Brazilian magnate André Santos Esteves, followed by a tasting in the estate's 16th-century cellars and a magnificent dinner in the grand hall.

Probably a higher degree of railway luxe exists somewhere in the world, but it's hard to imagine where or how. A detail that impresses me are La Dolce Vita's next-level guest amenities: the bathroom soap from heritage soap makers Eredi Zucca in Milan comes neatly wrapped in tissue paper and tucked inside a cobalt-blue box; a leatherbound notebook from the Florentine stationers Pineider is monogrammed in gold with my initials. A highlight of this Tuscan trip is returning from a night-time negroni in the bar to discover a pair of pointy-toed velvet Friulane slippers (made in Venice) waiting for me on the down-turned bed, along with a saffron-scented macaron, should I feel peckish before snuggling down into those cool cotton sheets.

Life aboard the Orient Express is a heady experience of contemporary travel at a level of opulence that feels almost surreal. But for me the best thing about La Dolce Vita is the *dolce far niente* – the sweetness of doing nothing. Simply to lounge on the big white bed in a post-breakfast glow, idly watching the spring-green Tuscan countryside slide by, soothed by the motion of the train as it rolls back to Rome and reality, is genuinely as good as it gets.

The two-day, one-night Tastes of Tuscan Vineyards journey by Orient Express costs €4,160pp, orient-express.com

The glamorous new train in Italy that will take you from city to countryside – for £6k

This new sleeper train is the ultimate luxury voyage through Italy's most beautiful sights.

By **HOLLY KINTUKA**, Audience Writer
08:00, Sat, May 10, 2025

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The train has multiple itinerates (Image: @afarmedia via TikTok / Getty)

A stunning new sleeper train will whisk you on a magical trip through some of Italy's most remarkable places - but it'll cost you.La Dolce Vita Orient Express is the ultimate luxury travel experience, perfect for those wanting the explore Italy's beautiful sights. The sleeper train offers multiple

itineraries including a route that will take you on adventure through Venice and the Tuscan countryside before ending in Italy's capital, Rome. The round trip that costs from 7,440 euros (£6,361) per passenger, lasts for three days and two nights.

The company describes the trip as a "a grand expedition" that unveils "the marvels and mysteries" of the three cities passengers get to visit. The journey departs from Rome Ostiense in the morning before arriving in Venice in the evening and giving people on board the chance to explore the city's "historic charm".

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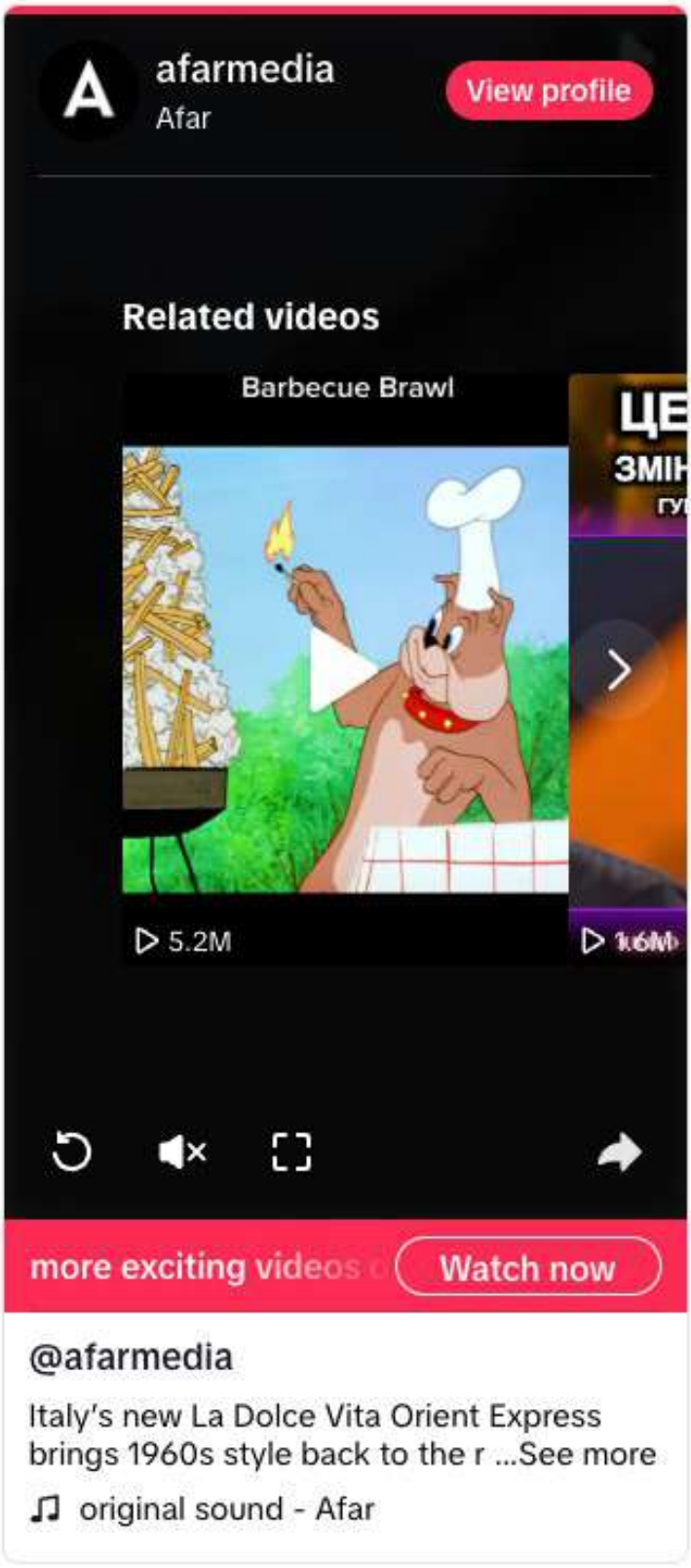
READ MORE: Inside new Orient Express taking tourists to Italy's best towns and cities



@afarmedia

Italy's new La Dolce Vita Orient Express brings 1960s style back to the r ...See more

original sound - Afar

The next day passengers are whisked off to the beautiful city of Siena in Tuscany, where visitors can explore the the incredible medieval architecture and soak up the Tuscan culture, before reboarding La Dolce Vita Orient Express and making their way back to Rome.

The experience includes a three-Michelin-starred dinner on the first two days and a "sumptuous" breakfast in the morning of the final day. There is also live music and entertainment throughout the evenings.

TikTok account Afarmedia shared a video by Laura Itzkowitz of her experience of the voyage, showing viewers "what it's like on board".

The video creator - along with other passengers - were welcomed on board with live jazz music and drinks, before enjoying a five course lunch prepared "by the chef behind Rome's only three Michelin star restaurant."

The first departure for the Venice, Tuscany route takes place in June (Image: Getty)

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Europe's incredible new 'Orient Express' train - but the tickets cost £2.6k [REPORT]

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After departing from Rome, Venice is the first stop (Image: Getty)

TRENDING

Africa's 10 'most beautiful' cities unveiled in ranking - Cape Town not number 1

The African island with white sand beaches, turquoise water and £2.88 beers

The African city named the 'best' place to visit on planet Earth

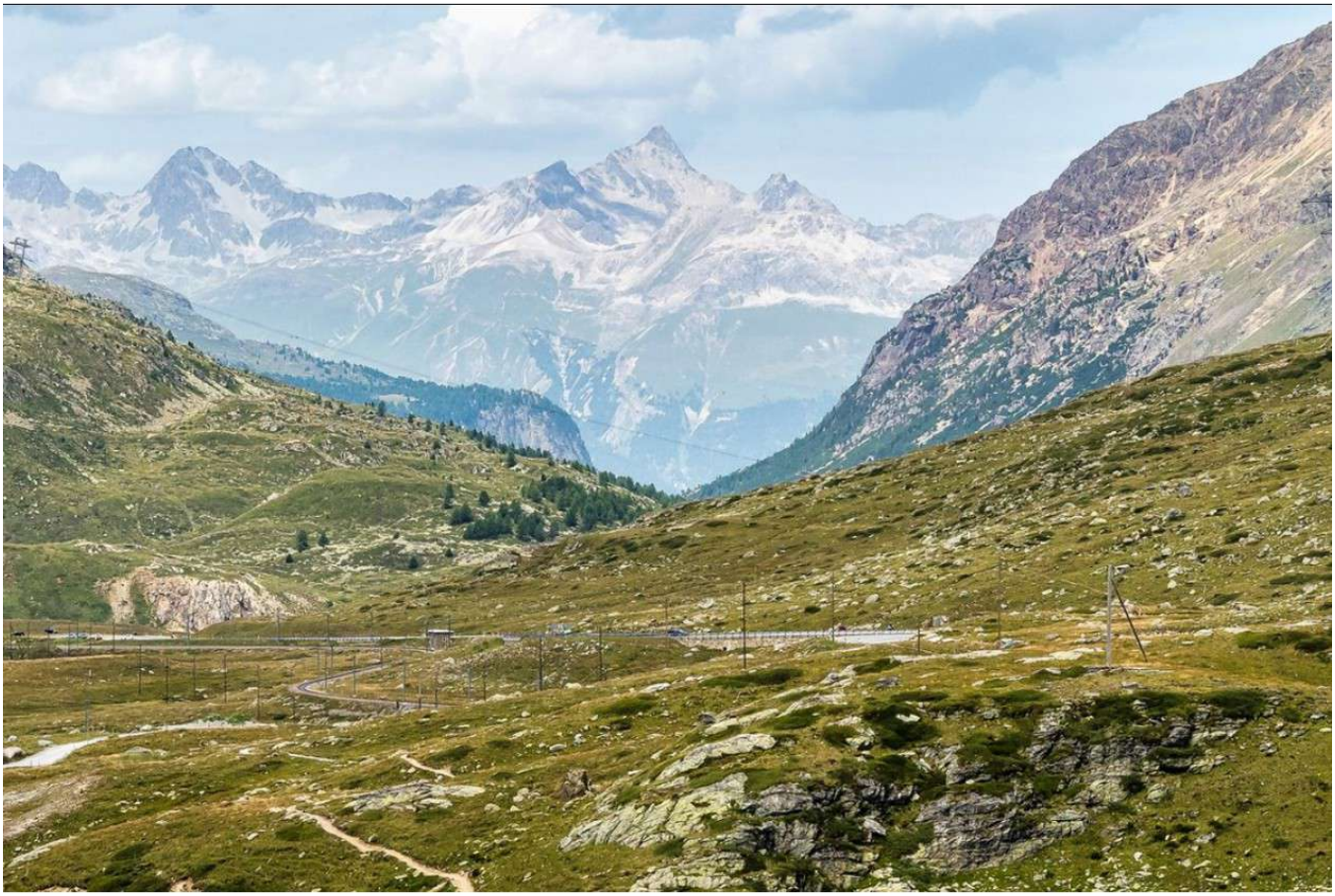
Upon arriving in Tuscany, she enjoyed some wine tasting and dinner at a historic winery and then hit a bar for some live music. The following morning, she was served breakfast in her suit where she could take in the views of the Meditteranean. Laura opted to only do one night on board rather than two.

Many people in the comments were taken back by the price. However, one person who defended the cost said: "People saying it's expensive, keyword is 'luxury'"

Others didn't seem bothered by the price with one commenting "added this to the bucket list".

For those also hoping to experience the incredible trip, the train's first departure for the Venice and Tuscany route is on June 24, 2025.

THE STANDARD



8 EPIC TRAIN HOLIDAYS FOR 2025 THAT PROVE IT'S THE SECOND GOLDEN AGE OF TRAVEL

TRAVEL

We've entered a second golden age of rail travel – here are the most noteworthy routes to know for 2025, to traverse everywhere from the South of America to Somerset

ALICIA MILLER
1 HOUR AGO

When was the last time you enjoyed the actual 'travel' bit of travelling? It's hard to imagine a time when we weren't all just trying to get from A to B as quickly (and cheaply) as can be – or when a successful journey was measured not in time taken, but joy given.

It's time to fall back in love with the magic of the journey – relishing the relaxation, eco-mindfulness and sweet anticipation that slower means of transport can bring. A holiday by train is the perfect excuse to kick back and appreciate the true scale and majesty of the landscapes you're traversing. Rather than burying heads in phones and wishing away the hours, you'll savour an ever-changing panorama as your destination draws serenely closer.

A recent study by London St. Pancras Highspeed found that the demand for international rail travel is set to triple by 2040, while flight-free holiday specialist Byway reports a 60 per cent increase in bookings over the past year. Rail travel is entering a second golden age, with an explosion in new routes and an unprecedented standard of luxury trains hitting the rails.

Eurostar is set to expand operations into Germany and Switzerland in upcoming years, while grand projects like Dream of the Desert – a luxury train zipping through the wilds of Saudi Arabia – are laying tracks in previous unexplored quarters.

It's all rather timely, too, given that 2025 is the 200th anniversary of modern rail travel.

These are the hottest rail trips to take in 2025, where the journey is a destination in itself.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express

IT'S FULL-BLOWN GLAMOUR ON LA DOLCE VITA

ORIENT EXPRESS / MR TRIPPER

Is there any more storied luxury train than the Orient Express, immortalised in Agatha Christie's 1934 thriller? The original high-glamour cortege, which debuted in 1883 and linked Paris and Istanbul in a week-long trip of unparalleled indulgence, went kaput in the 1970s as cheap air travel took off.

Now the brand's legendary style has returned to the rails with La Dolce Vita, a new, ultra-exclusive train with routes snaking through Italy's sun-baked landscapes. Nine opulent carriages showcase impeccable golden age Italian design, with marbled en suite bathrooms and crisp-sheeted double beds in cabins and suites.

Meals are by three-Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck, served up in a swanky dining car with lacquered walls and yawning windows that let you relish the rolling landscapes of Bel Paese as you glide on by.

Book it: One night from £3,000 per person. *orient-express.com*

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Maria Shollenbarger

Published MAY 18 2025

2

Now calling in the Eternal City

MINERVA

The façade of Orient Express La Minerva in Rome © Mr Tripper

Orient Express La Minerva, Rome

Price: from €1,320

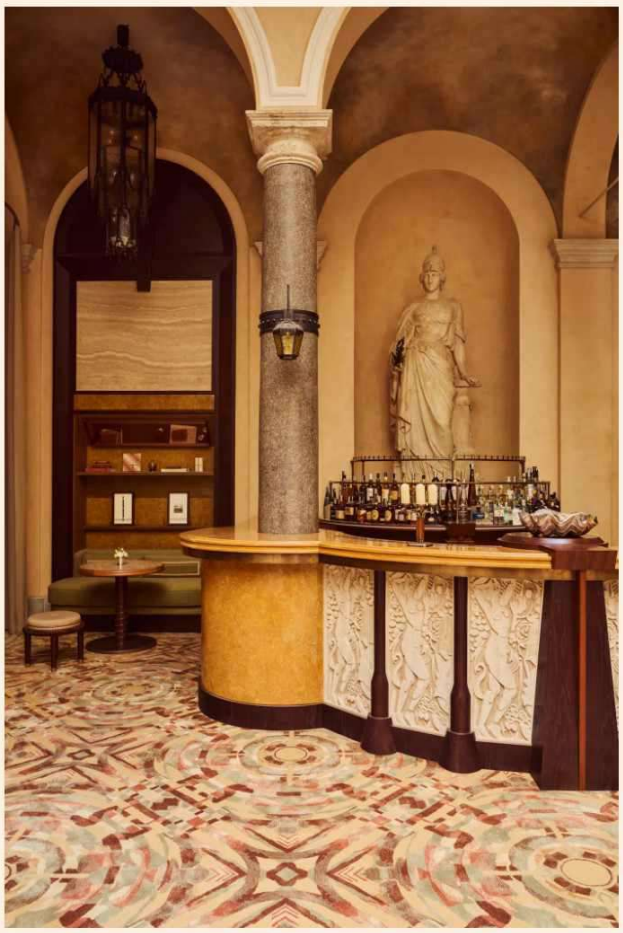
Click: orient-express.com

Orient Express, one of the most romanticised brands in travel, has taken over Grand Hotel de la Minerve, one of the longest continuously operating hotels in Rome. It's among several ambitious projects with which the 142-year-old company rang in 2025; besides La Dolce Vita, its brand-new belter of a sleeper train, there are Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice (opening in the autumn), a Mediterranean sailing yacht called *Corinthian* (due late 2026), and a second pan-European train (2026) well under way, with whispers of several more hotels in the pipeline.

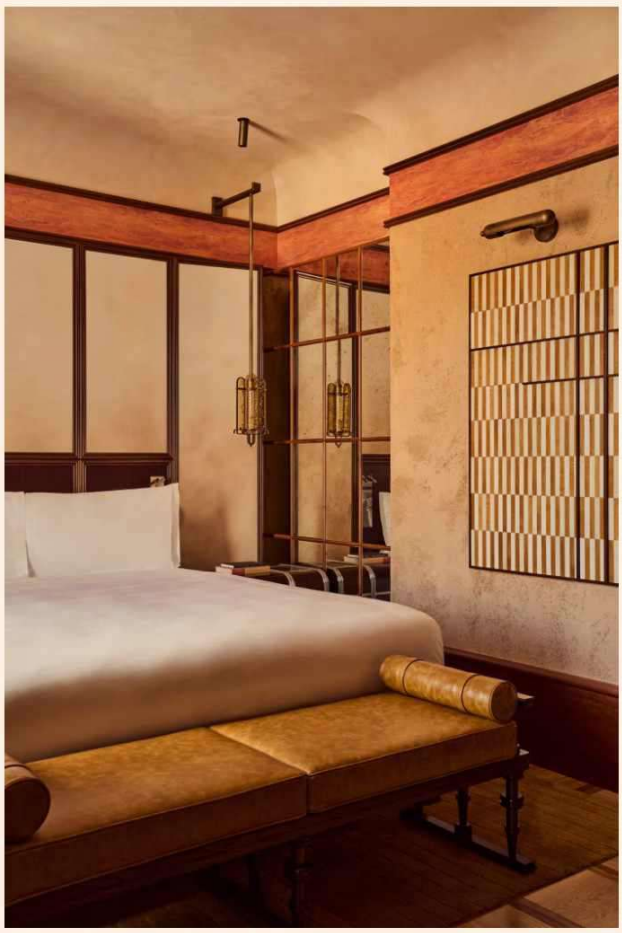
One of the suites at the hotel © Alexander Tabaste

But for now, it's all eyes on Orient Express La Minerva, which is impressive enough to have put a few local incumbents on notice. The location – on the Piazza della Minerva, barely 200 metres from the Pantheon (roughly a quarter

of the rooms and suites have views of it) – is ideal. Thirty-five-year-old Franco-Mexican artist and architect Hugo Toro has taken care of the design, and his work is polished but adventurous: rough stucco, hammered brass, window frames clad in handpainted tiles, and lots of bevelled high-shine wood – a nod to Orient Express's roots in railway lore. Architecturally the building is a late 17th-century hodgepodge, with no two spaces exactly alike; Toro mapped out singular decor schemes for all of them, which means you're guaranteed something unique, whether a scalloped pink-marble column sink or a sprawling terrace almost as large as your suite. The one common element: charming frescoes, spread across wide panelled headboards, that replicate Rome's diaphanous dawn skies.



The La Minerva bar © Alexander Tabaste



A bedroom at La Minerva © Alexander Tabaste

The original statue of the goddess Minerva still presides over the grand ground-floor bar-restaurant. But the space has been given a full glow-up by

Toro, with banquettes and clutches of potted palms dividing it into more intimate little quadrants under a gleaming conservatory roof. There's an all-day menu served along with a wine card that pays homage to Italy's finest (a bijou *enoteca* with its own street entrance is slated to open in a few months' time). But the main attraction is the hotel's second restaurant, Gigi Roma, on the seventh floor. Panoramic hotel rooftops have become a soft arms race here in recent years; this one, with its near-360 degree exposure taking in everything from the dome of St Peter's to the glorious white confection that is the Vittoriano, looks to be the one to beat.

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Above: the façade of Orient Express La Minerva in Rome. Right: the entrance to the Minerva Bar. Below: one of the suites at the hotel

PHOTOGRAPHED: ALESANDRO TARANTE (2); MR TAPPER

TRAVEL NEWS

TWICE AS NICE

Bold new faces in favourite places, from Puglia to South Africa

WORDS BY **MARIA SHOLLENBARGER**

NOW CALLING IN THE ETERNAL CITY

ORIENT EXPRESS LA MINERVA, ROME

Orient Express, one of the most romanticised brands in travel, has taken over Grand Hotel de la Minerve, one of the longest continuously operating hotels in Rome. It's among several ambitious projects with which the 142-year-old company rang in 2025; besides La Dolce Vita, its brand-new belter of a sleeper train, there are Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice (opening in the autumn), a Mediterranean sailing yacht called *Corinthian* (due late 2026), and a second pan-European train (2026) well under way, with whispers of several more hotels in the pipeline. But for now, it's all eyes on Orient Express La Minerva, which is impressive enough to have put a few local incumbents on notice. The location – on the Piazza della Minerva, barely 200 metres from the Pantheon (roughly a quarter of the rooms and suites have views of it) – is ideal. Thirty-five-year-old Franco-Mexican artist and architect Hugo Toro has taken care of the design, and his work is polished but adventurous: rough stucco, hammered brass, window frames clad in handpainted tiles, and lots of bevelled high-shine wood – a nod to Orient Express's roots in railway lore. Architecturally the building is a late 17th-century hodgepodge, with no two spaces exactly alike; Toro mapped out singular decor schemes for all of them, which means you're guaranteed something unique, whether a scalloped pink-marble column sink or a sprawling terrace almost as large as your suite. The one common element: charming frescoes, spread across wide panelled headboards, that replicate Rome's diaphanous dawn skies. The original statue of the goddess Minerva still presides over the grand ground-floor bar-restaurant. But the space has been given a full glow-up by Toro, with banquettes and clutches of potted palms dividing it into more intimate little quadrants under a gleaming conservatory roof. There's an all-day menu served along with a wine card that pays homage to Italy's finest (a bijou *enoteca* with its own street entrance is slated to open in a few months' time). But the main attraction is the hotel's second restaurant, Gigi Roma, on the seventh floor. Panoramic hotel rooftops have become a soft arms race here in recent years; this one, with its near-360 degree exposure taking in everything from the dome of St Peter's to the glorious white confection that is the Vittoriano, looks to be the one to beat. *orient-express.com, from €1,320*

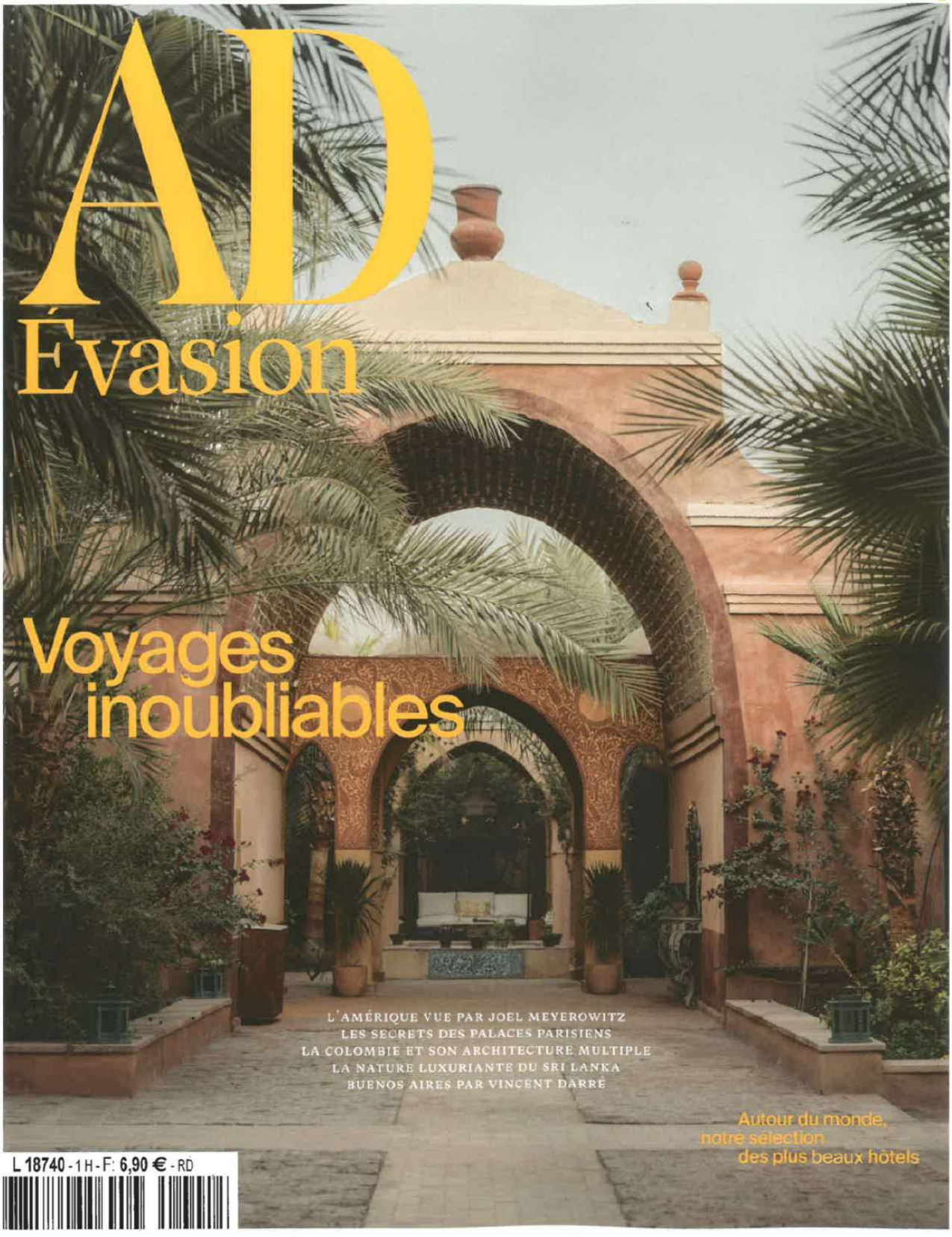
CHARMING FRESCOES REPLICATE ROME'S DAWN SKIES

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

HORS-SÉRIE ÉVASION N° 1 – 2025

AD Évasion

Voyages inoubliables



L'AMÉRIQUE VUE PAR JOEL MEYEROWITZ
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LES NOUVEAUX, LES MYTHIQUES, LES INSULAIRES, LES CHÂTELAINS… LES 36 ÉTABLISSEMENTS QUE NOUS AVONS SÉLECTIONNÉS AUTOUR DU MONDE VISENT TOUS L'EXCELLENCE TANT PAR LEUR ARCHITECTURE QUE LEUR SITUATION ET LEURS PRESTATIONS D'EXCEPTION. LE TEMPS EST VENU DE LES DÉCOUVRIR.

Annex / Alexandre Taburet ; Ian Dinwiddie Palmer, « Four Seasons Hotel ; Sicaie van Der Vyer ; Mark Anthony Fox, Estelle Manor ; Aman

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Nouveaux départs

UNE TOUR MODERNISTE À BRUXELLES, UN PALAIS MIRIFIQUE AU RAJASTHAN… LES DERNIERS-NÉS DE L'HÔTELLERIE SE RÉVÈLENT AUSSI SOMPTUEUX QUE SURPRENANTS.

À ROME, UN PALAIS SOUS LE SIGNE DE L'ART DÉCO

01. C'est à deux pas du Panthéon romain, sur la place de la Minerve, que siège le «nouvel» hôtel Orient Express La Minerva, remodelé par l'artiste, architecte et designer Hugo Toro. Cet ancien palais du XVII[e] siècle renaît entre les mains de l'expert qui l'a pensé comme *«une oasis de tranquillité»* : dès l'entrée, des lumières diffusent leur effet relaxant à travers les lanternes en métal et verre de Murano. Quant aux 91 chambres, elles sont toutes différentes, avec des détails Art déco évoquant les voitures de l'Orient Express, des salles de bains en marbre et le jaune comme fil conducteur. Au sol, les tapis reproduisent les peintures du designer. Sur le toit, un restaurant-bar d'où admirer la Ville éternelle. Un autre privilège. A.P.

ORIENT EXPRESS LA MINERVA, ROME, ITALIE.
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À BORD DE LA DOLCE VITA ORIENT EXPRESS

VOYAGE ENCHANTÉ

Départ immédiat
Les anciennes voitures Z1 parées de nuances "Bleu Abysse" et revisitées par Dimorestudio suffisent pour se sentir happé par la magie du voyage en train.

Mythique ! Orient Express fait son grand retour à Rome – en collaboration avec le groupe Arsenale –, porté par trois projets d'exception célébrant l'art du voyage sous toutes ses formes : le train de nuit La Dolce Vita signé des Italiens Dimorestudio, son lounge de départ et l'hôtel La Minerva, tous deux imaginés par l'architecte français Hugo Toro. Andiamo !

par **Audrey Schneuwly**
photos **Gaelle Le Boulicaut**

TOUS EN VOITURE !

Le 4 avril dernier, le train La Dolce Vita Orient Express s'élançait officiellement pour la première fois depuis la gare de Rome Ostiense en direction de la Toscane, l'un des huit itinéraires proposés, à la découverte des paysages et de la richesse culturelle italienne. Un voyage inoubliable, entre luxe et nostalgie, qui redonne tout son éclat à l'art de voyager en train, dans un décor enchanteur signé du duo milanais Dimorestudio.

Un peu avant midi, le personnel en livrée – bleu marine pour les femmes, crème pour les hommes – escorte les passagers depuis le lounge de départ (lire p. 72) jusqu'au quai avant de monter à bord du train aux nuances bleues, composé d'anciens wagons Z1 et doté de 31 cabines, dont 18 suites, 12 cabines Deluxe et la sublime Suite La Dolce Vita. Boiseries laquées, moquette épaisse, larges fenêtres ouvertes sur l'extérieur plongent immédiatement le voyageur dans le glamour des années 1960. À l'image des clichés en noir et blanc de Marcello Geppetti, célèbre paparrazzi de l'époque, accrochés le long du couloir et évoquant l'âge d'or du ▸

Tenue correcte exigée
Dans le wagon-restaurant aux tables jolment dressées, les rayures de la moquette répondent aux lamelles en laiton du plafond qui rythment l'espace tout en diffusant une lumière douce, particulièrement à la nuit tombée.

« La marque Orient Express existe depuis plus de 140 ans. **Nous devons cultiver son aura légendaire avec la même passion et la même magie** pour au moins autant d'années ! »
(Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO d'Orient Express)

Commedia dell'arte
Convoquant les esprits des architectes Gio Ponti et Giulio Minoletti, à l'origine de l'aménagement du train Arlecchino dans les années 50, le duo de Dimorestudio a imaginé le wagon-bar dans un esprit théâtral et raffiné. Clin d'œil à son parovent "Indiscreto", le comptoir se pare de losanges noir laqué, tandis que les parois situées aux extrémités de la voiture s'animent sous la même géométrie, version colorée. Au-dessus, une enfilade de caissons lumineux rythme l'espace et accentue l'effet scénique, comme un décor de spectacle en mouvement.

Grand écran
Enveloppé de tons crème, du plafond laqué aux lignes ondulantes des banquettes en velours, le wagon-bar offre un cocon intimiste où prolonger les soirées festives ou simplement contempler le paysage qui défile.

cinéma italien. « Concevoir l'aménagement d'un tel train a été une expérience incroyable, se souvient Britt Moran, cofondateur de Dimorestudio. Le design de ces anciens wagons, avec notamment leurs larges fenêtres, est extraordinaire. Il a fallu les désosser. Ensuite, nous avons relevé de nombreux défis techniques, impliquant une réflexion sur l'usage des matériaux et leur poids, sur l'aménagement des cabines et des espaces communs, le dessin du mobilier, la sécurité à bord, sans jamais perdre de vue le glamour inspiré par l'Italie des années 60 et le confort absolu, bien sûr. »

12 h 07, le train s'ébranle, direction la Toscane. Le spectacle commence : confortablement installés sur un canapé ou attablés face aux fenêtres panoramiques, les passagers sirotent une coupe de champagne en admirant le paysage qui défile lentement, jamais à plus de 120 km/h. À 13 h, place au déjeuner dans le wagon-restaurant à la table du chef triplement étoilé Heinz Beck. Pendant que les plats se succèdent, le train longe la côte tyrrhénienne et traverse la province de Grosseto, offrant des vues spectaculaires sur la lagune bleu turquoise d'Orbetello. ▶

Dans les suites aux finitions laquées, **la magie du décor opère autant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur**

En coulisses
Dans cet espace exigu, Emiliano Salci et Britt Moran ont déployé tout leur talent décoratif. Mosaïque finement posée, marbre délicatement veiné et palette de teintes chaudes composent une salle de bains aussi élégante qu'harmonieuse. Courbes douces, finitions précieuses et éclairage tamisé transforment ce lieu intimiste en petit bijou d'architecture intérieure qui fait écho à l'esthétique rétro-chic du train.

Nuits magiques
Chacune des dix-huit suites enveloppe le voyageur dans un écrin de confort, sous un ciel flamboyant "Orange brûlé". Un spacieux tourné vers les deux fenêtres, banquette accueillante et table-bureau laquée noir distillent une atmosphère douce et feutrée, pensée pour savourer chaque instant du voyage.

Après le déjeuner, les voyageurs hésitent entre une sieste et un caffè latte au wagon-bar avant le premier arrêt, à 17 h 30, à Sant'Angelo-Cinigiano, une gare désaffectée qui reprend vie le temps de ce voyage. « Nous empruntons des lignes ferroviaires qui ne sont plus utilisées aujourd'hui, c'est aussi cela la magie de cet itinéraire », explique Marco Giratto, directeur général du train La Dolce Vita Orient Express. S'ensuit une escapade à travers les collines toscanes plantées de cyprès, en direction du village de Montalcino. Au programme : visite du prestigieux domaine viticole Argiano, dégustation de vins et dîner dans le somptueux édifice du XVIe siècle.

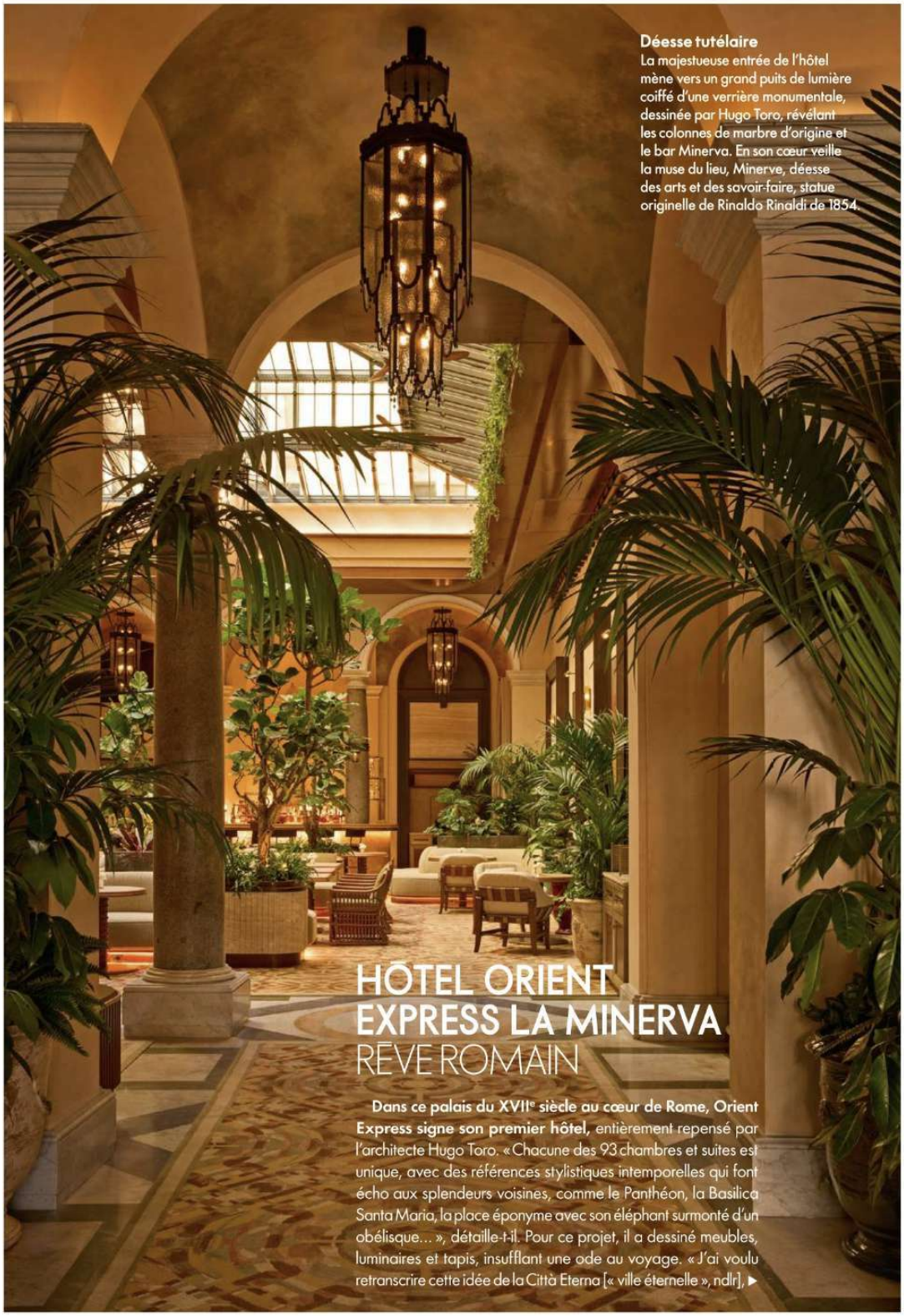
De retour à bord, la soirée s'anime dans le wagon-bar, portée par une chanteuse qui reprend des classiques italiens, avant de laisser place à un Dj. Chaque moment de cette odyssée inoubliable est orchestré par Diego Buongiorno, compositeur et directeur artistique pour Orient Express. Au fil de la nuit, bercés par le roulis du train et dans le confort de leur cabine, les passagers s'endorment dans une plénitude absolue. Le lendemain, le petit-déjeuner est servi, au choix, dans le wagon-restaurant ou en cabine. Le temps semble suspendu, mais bientôt, Rome approche. De retour au lounge, la magie se prolonge encore un instant… avant le retour à la réalité ■

LE LOUNGE, UN SAS VOLUPTUEUX

À la gare Ostiense, à Rome, le retour à la réalité se fait en douceur. Le lounge de départ et d'arrivée accueille les voyageurs dans un cadre chaleureux et hors du temps, signé par l'architecte Hugo Toro. Après une parenthèse enchantée à bord de La Dolce Vita Orient Express, les passagers ne quittent pas immédiatement l'univers feutré du train, ils sont accompagnés jusqu'au lounge, une étape qui prolonge l'expérience dans un espace sophistiqué où chaque détail a été conçu pour offrir une transition en douceur. Rafraîchissements, encas, boutique de souvenirs, musique live : tout est pensé pour que les hôtes puissent savourer encore un instant le luxe et l'atmosphère singulière du voyage.

« J'ai voulu insuffler un esprit années 1960/70, l'âge d'or des lounges, tout en apportant une touche solaire et chaleureuse, en continuité avec l'expérience du train La Dolce Vita, explique l'architecte Hugo Toro. Le plafond laqué jaune est rythmé par des suspensions en verre de Murano extrudé, tandis que le mobilier, conçu sur mesure, invite à la détente, que ce soit en solo sur l'un des fauteuils ou en petit comité sur des banquettes », précise-t-il. Un délice de chaque instant ■

Passage obligé
À la gare, dans le lounge dédié aux voyageurs de La Dolce Vita Orient Express, la mosaïque d'origine au sol est le seul vestige du passé. Pour le reste, l'architecte Hugo Toro a tout réinventé et signe un décor tout en finesse, jouant sur les contrastes entre lignes verticales et horizontales, bois laqué et tables en marbre, tissus feutrés, teintes solaires et éclairages doux. Une mise en scène pensée comme une passerelle élégante entre la gare et le voyage.



Déesse tutélaire
La majestueuse entrée de l'hôtel mène vers un grand puits de lumière coiffé d'une verrière monumentale, dessinée par Hugo Toro, révélant les colonnes de marbre d'origine et le bar Minerva. En son cœur veille la muse du lieu, Minerve, déesse des arts et des savoir-faire, statue originelle de Rinaldo Rinaldi de 1854.

HÔTEL ORIENT EXPRESS LA MINERVA
RÊVE ROMAIN

Dans ce palais du XVII^e siècle au cœur de Rome, Orient Express signe son premier hôtel, entièrement repensé par l'architecte Hugo Toro. « Chacune des 93 chambres et suites est unique, avec des références stylistiques intemporelles qui font écho aux splendeurs voisines, comme le Panthéon, la Basilica Santa Maria, la place éponyme avec son éléphant surmonté d'un obélisque… », détaille-t-il. Pour ce projet, il a dessiné meubles, luminaires et tapis, insufflant une ode au voyage. « J'ai voulu retranscrire cette idée de la Città Eterna [« ville éternelle », ndlr], ▶

créer un lien entre passé, présent et futur », poursuit-il. L'emblème du voyage, la malle, se décline ainsi sous diverses formes : bar, chevets, meuble de salle de bains tout comme l'inspiration romaine qui se lit dans chaque détail : les têtes de lit sont des interprétations artistiques du ciel de Rome, tandis que les tapis évoquent les reflets lunaires traversant l'oculus du Panthéon. Au septième étage, le toit-terrasse et son vaste restaurant offrent une vue imprenable sur la ville. Un lieu idéal pour prolonger la soirée et s'évader encore un instant… sans quitter Rome ■ **Rens. p. 268.**

1. Songes palatiaux
Chaque tête de lit est peinte à la main, révélant au fil de la journée et de l'intensité de la lumière d'élégantes variations dans le décor. Les essences de bois rappellent la décoration des trains, tout comme les tables de chevet qui s'apparentent à des malles de voyage et le linge de lit signé Rivolta Carmignani, le même que celui qui était autrefois présent dans les voitures-lits du train Orient-Express.

2. Expériences singulières
Chaque chambre a son identité propre, avec des agencements et des décors pensés sur mesure. Dans le salon de cette suite, un canapé courbe bleu gris s'ouvre sur une cheminée. Des carreaux de faïence peints encadrent les fenêtres.

Un hommage au patrimoine de la Ville éternelle, **où l'art infuse chaque espace de l'hôtel**

Déclaration romaine
Le parquet damier semble adresser un clin d'œil à la voûte du Panthéon tout proche, bel hommage aux lignes classiques de Rome. Partout dans l'hôtel, un important travail de curation d'art a été mené pour rythmer les espaces, mis en valeur par un mobilier et des luminaires dessinés par Hugo Toro.

I visited the world's first Orient Express hotel

The luxury rail operator has revamped a Rome classic – this 17th-century palazzo hotel brings a new-old grandeur to the Eternal City

1 Gift this article free

Suites at the Orient Express La Minerva borrow their aesthetic from the Golden Age of rail Credit: Alexandre Tabaste

Rebecca Winke
Travel writer
24 May 2025 12:00pm BST

Rome's luxury hotel boom began in the aftermath of the pandemic, but in 2025 it might just be reaching its crescendo. This Jubilee year is a huge one for the Italian capital generally of course, even more so since the inauguration of the new Pope Leo XIV.

The Eternal City is firmly back on the gilded map decades after its mid-20th-century heyday, so it's little surprise that luxury rail operator Orient Express chose it for the location of its first hotel.

The brand has spent four years renovating the landmark Grand Hotel de La Minerva, set in a 17th-century palazzo steps from the Pantheon. This grand dame in the heart of the city's *centro storico* had long been a favorite among Romans – despite its rather time-worn air in more recent years – and its conversion from local staple to the flagship property of a company known for high luxury was a delicate one.

Luckily (and maybe surprisingly), the commission for the new Orient Express La Minerva was entrusted to 35-year-old French-Mexican artist and architect Hugo Toro. This was the Paris-based creative's first hotel project.

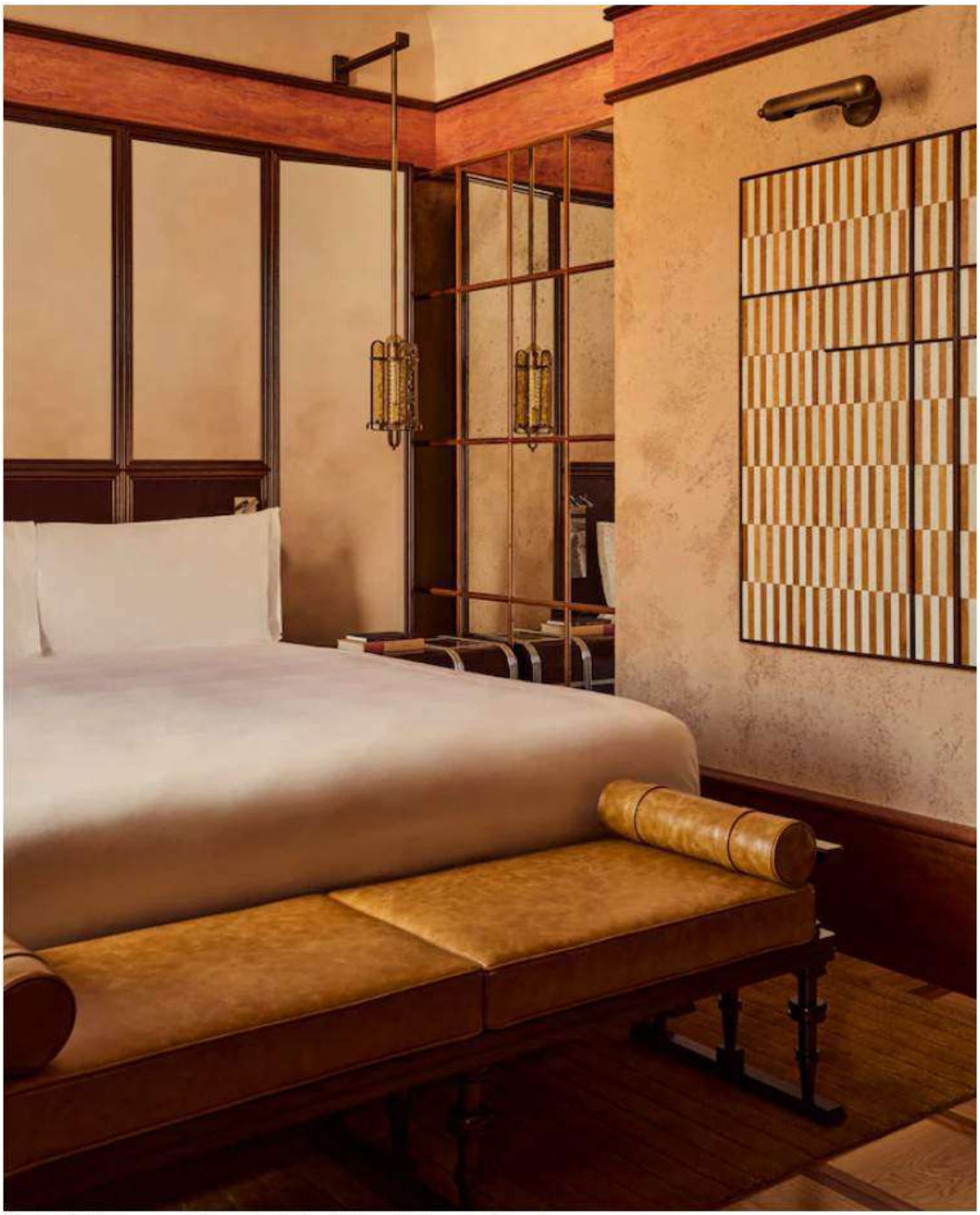
Mexican artist and architect Hugo Toro hoped to awaken the hotel's 'sleeping beauty' Credit: Alexandre Tabaste

"La Minerva is an institution that is super close to the heart of the Romans, so I didn't want to destroy it," he told me as we explored the hotel together just days after it opened. "I wanted to awaken this sleeping beauty."

Toro has given the hotel a 21st-century glow-up that sets a visionary example of how to evoke the style and spirit of a heritage brand with sophistication and subtlety. I walked through the doors half expecting choo-choo artwork and railway-themed objets, but instead found a thoughtful homage to the Orient Express legacy that remains firmly anchored in the Eternal City.

Meticulously curated public spaces blend the Art Deco flavour of vintage Orient Express trains with a distinctive personality that is the fruit of Toro's granular attention to detail. He designed and curated every aspect of the décor, from the rugs – inspired by the view of the sky through the Pantheon's oculus – to the travertine friezes lining the lounge bar (which he carved himself).

"This one was at my place, but it was perfect for here," he murmured, running his hands over a small sculpture as we passed by the concierge desk. It does indeed look as if it was created for this very nook.



The hotel's interiors are subtle and sophisticated Credit: Alexandre Tabaste

Reception has been reworked to accommodate seated check-in, with the area dedicated to the veritable battalion of concierge staff just opposite. Glossy wood and sinuous lines keep the image of a Golden Age train car just in your peripheral vision – what Toro explained to me as "translating the idea of travelling, even though we are static."

A glass and iron ceiling topping the once mildly claustrophobic central courtyard lends a winter garden vibe to the lounge and bar, helped along by lush greenery. Later I settled into a Toro-designed armchair here to sip a signature champagne cocktail that sparkled with gold dust under the gaze of a towering marble Minerva statue (one of the

few relics salvaged from the previous hotel).

The 93 rooms and suites are each uniquely laid out to fit the Renaissance building and sport the same clever references as public areas. Artisan headboards have been painted to reflect the Roman sky based on the specific orientation of the room, hand-crafted night stands close like miniature travel trunks to hide away messy phone cords, custom marble bathroom sinks are carved like Rome's shell-shaped Baroque fountains.

The Renaissance building has 93 rooms and suites. Credit: Alexandre Tabaste

The luxury isn't limited to bespoke design, of course. Linens are sourced from Rivolta Carmignani, a historic Milanese manufacturer that once provided the silks for the Orient Express trains, and guests will find high-end hairdryers and straighteners, steamers, indulgent bath products and dreamily plush robes.

Each guest is assigned a personal "conductor" upon check-in, who is available 24 hours a day via a dedicated WhatsApp number. This type of white-glove service is a specialty of Filip Boyden, Head of Hospitality for Orient Express Hotels Italy.

He was happy to report that the newly opened hotel had retained about 30 members of the previous staff, ideal for a smooth transition.

The entrance to the Orient Express La Minerva radiates luxury Credit: Alexandre Tabaste

The staff did seem to already have their sea legs just a few days after opening: my text request for tickets to the Edvard Munch exhibition running in Rome was dealt with in minutes and honey for my herbal tea appeared in my room magically after I mentioned a lingering cough.

I dined on what is probably Orient Express La Minerva's most stand-out feature – its 360-degree rooftop terrace, now home to the Gigi Rigolatto Roma restaurant.

Romans have been gathering here for special celebrations and romantic meals overlooking the Pantheon's dome for generations, and its restyling has opened up the view even more.

Gigi Rigolatto Roma has views of the Pantheon, the largest unsupported dome in the world Credit: Patrick Locqueneux

The menu of shared and small plates highlights seafood – Rome's proximity to the sea is often overlooked – and ingredients are sourced from local and artisan producers.

Each morning, the table-service breakfast features a range of healthy and indulgent international and Italian options while live harp music ushers in the day.

A few of the hotel's features are still being completed. A train carriage-themed speakeasy is in the works, as well as a Turkish hammam-inspired spa.

A bar seating area at the Orient Express La Minerva Credit: Alexandre Tabaste

Saying goodbye to Toro before he returned to his Paris studio the following day, we discussed the plush patterned fabric (inspired, I was told, by the seagulls that roost on the Pantheon's dome each night) covering the new seating in the indoor and outdoor rooftop dining rooms.

"This was the first Orient Express hotel in the world," he mused, "so it had to make a statement."

And the statement is this: with its head-turning style and high-touch service, the Orient Express La Minerva sets a new bar for Rome's luxury revival.

Rebecca Winke travelled as a guest of Orient Express La Minerva, which offers doubles from €1,320 (£1,108), including breakfast.

Transporting Travelers to a Bygone Heyday Is the New Luxury Experience

LINK: https://wwd.com/home-design/interior-design/golden-age-travel-orient-express-luxury-experiences-1237921247/

Transporting Travelers to a Bygone Heyday Is the New Luxury Experience Top designers talk about how to recreate a new Golden Age of Slow Travel. By Plus Icon Sofia Celeste Senior Correspondent, Home and Interiors Recent Articles by Sofia Celeste June 28, 2025, 12:01am 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 Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits (International Sleeping-Car Company), 1927. Private Collection. (Photo by Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Getty Images) Getty Images 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 ROME - Inside the new Orient Express La Minerva hotel in Rome, the lobby bar is punctuated with ferns and palms, big band music is playing as waiters in impeccable white uniforms and well-coiffed hair serve gin and tonics to the international jet set. If it weren't for the absence of cigarette and cigar smoke, one might feel directly transported to the 1930s. Opened in April, it also unveiled Gigi Roma, a swanky bar and restaurant terrace furnished with the brass detailing and plush velvety furnishings prevalent in dining cars of yore. The talk of the town for locals and visitors alike, it's so close to the Pantheon one can almost touch the travertine benches carved into the exterior of its dome. Related Articles Furniture Flos B&B Italia Group Says Its Plan Is to Sell Asset by Asset Furniture What Is Fueling the Online Sales of Luxury Design? Orient Express La Minerva, Rome. Alesandre Tabaste Is this experience a relic or replica of a bygone age? One of the Orient Express' key partners, Arsenale Group, says the provocative mix of both is

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

key. You May Also Like "We are giving shape to a new concept of ultra-luxury hospitality," says Arsenale chief executive officer Paolo Barletta, adding that Rome, the cradle of the Roman Empire, is the perfect playground for such an experiment. Accor, which owns the Orient Express brand with LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, says a lot of it has to do with the training of its staff and the design, for which award-winning artist and architect Hugo Toro made bespoke Art Deco-era pieces constructed to mirror the group's train. French writer Stendhal once stayed in the main suite of what was known as La Minerva, first built in the 17th century as the residence of a Portuguese noble family and which later became a main stop on the Grand Tour for international aristocrats of the era. The Stendhal Suite now houses 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 and which make it ever more possible to travel in time. 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. The first Orient Express yacht will set sail in 2026. Dimorestudio on Channeling Old Maestros April also marked the maiden voyage of the new and improved Orient Express, with interior designs by Dimorestudio, the architecture and design firm established by Emiliano Salci and Britt Moran. The duo propelled the decor into the '50s and '60s, celebrating the brilliance of Italian masters Giò Ponti, Nanda Vigo, Gae Aulenti and Osvaldo Borsani. "It's about creating spaces where travelers can fully immerse themselves in the experience, where every detail contributes to a sense of wonder, comfort, and escape from the ordinary," Salci reflects in an interview. Interiors of the Orient Express Dolce Vita train designed by Milan based Dimorestudio. Courtesy of Orient Express Moran said the design process involved understanding this new traveler. In a lot of ways they are a lot like the upscale design client in search of rare pieces steeped in history and ultimate quality. "We imagine a curious, cultured traveler, someone who appreciates design, craftsmanship, and storytelling. A person who seeks not only to reach a destination but to savor the journey itself, embracing both the historical legacy and the contemporary reinterpretation of this legendary train," he says. Designing for the Elite Traveler Paris-based designer Aline Asmar d'Amman is working on Orient Express' upcoming Venice location, which will open inside the fabled Palazzo Donà Giovannelli later this year. Asmar d'Amman explains that she's also designing for the type of person who took journeys in the '50s through the '70s, a time when generally only the elite travelled, experiencing lavishness and glamour in every detail. "The Golden Age meant haute couture uniforms and tailored suits, gastronomy and socializing in plane lounges fit for a party. Now we're just a click away from overcrowded, overwhelming traveling experiences. Artistry and spaces that embrace a rich cultural tapestry, make you want to dress up, unleashing character and attitude. A discerning traveler seeks these tailored experiences where culture and lifestyle are elevated to the utmost refinement," she muses. Asmar d'Amman is also involved in the design of

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the Middle East's first five-star train, which will afford travelers a privileged view of the desert for the very first time. Named the Dream of the Desert, the train is also another project of which Arsenale is involved, this time partnering with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Culture and Saudi Arabia's Railways. Aline Asmar d'Amman's designs for Dream of the Desert. Courtesy of Culture in Architecture 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 facade, the intricate textile weavings, the wood carvings, and the oil lamps whose light diffuses a cinematographic mood, interpreting these through a delicate modern lens, adapted to the train space and constraints. The suites, she said, are characterized by rich wood marquetry, luxurious upholstery, sensual lighting and bespoke furniture. "From the reception lounge to the restaurant, the interiors become a continuous meditation on presence and place in motion, touching upon a noble notion of travel. Passengers who seek to feel a sense of belonging, of suspended time - where comfort, beauty and culture come together in a sensorial crescendo - will be served. My aim is to induce this feeling by translating it into a tactile and visual language: velvety textiles that invite touch, warm woods that recall traditional dwellings, sculptural lighting that creates intimacy," she adds. Aline Asmar d'Amman at Galleria Rossana Orlandi. Giulio Ghirardi An Investment Opportunity Cashing in on the heyday of the Golden Age and its landmarks is on the rise. Earlier this month, Yoox Net-a-porter Group founder Federico Marchetti revealed his foray into the hospitality world, joining a consortium of investors to restore the old Belle Époque landmark Grand Hôtel des Bains on the shores of Venice's Lido. Opened in 1900, the fabled resort was long a Venetian refuge for cultural glitterati and has hosted Winston Churchill, poet Ezra Pound and celebrities including Elizabeth Taylor, Marcello Mastroianni, George Clooney, Johnny Depp and Madonna. "Venice is the land of dreams - and the Des Bains is its antechamber," wrote Thomas Mann, author of "Death in Venice," about the Grand Hôtel des Bains. Hôtel Des Bains NurPhoto via Getty Images The Marketing In the same vein, Raffles Hotels & Resorts is embracing its own part in the history of the Golden Age, but this time with a focus on services. Last year it launched "The Butler Did It," calling to mind the "whodunits" throughout history. A spot directed by Trey Laird and shot by photographer Dylan Don featured actor and designer Waris Ahluwalia, fashion figure Robert Rabensteiner, and model May Siu as Raffles guests, while well-known model Tim Easton appears as the butler. It was filmed at the flagship Raffles Singapore, which has been known for its butler service since the hotel's opening in 1887. Raffles Hotels & Resorts chief executive officer Omer Acar says that reviving traditional pillars of hospitality is key in a frenetic modern era. "The golden age of travel is and was a time when journeying wasn't just about reaching a destination - it was about the experience itself, defined by elegance, a sense of inspiration, and impeccable service. Born from this era, Raffles Hotels & Resorts has long embodied this spirit with each stay inviting guests to step into an enchanted world where the art of hospitality transforms every moment into something magical," he said. In a recent Raffles campaign,

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May Siu, Waris Ahluwalia and Robert Rabensteiner appear as Raffles guests, while Tim Easton appears as the butler. DYLAN DON Slow Travel Replaces Revenge Travel Earlier this year, data analysts and research

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Robb Report

Orient Express's Newest Train Journeys Let You Tee Off at Golf Courses Around Italy

The two new adventures spotlight some of Italy's best courses.

Orient Express wants to take you to Italy's finest greens in a truly extravagant fashion.

The luxury train company, owned by French hospitality brand Accor, has just unveiled new golf-focused itineraries for the 12-carriage La Dolce Vita Orient Express. Created in partnership with the Italian Golf Federation (FIG), the two adventures were designed to help cement Italy as a top golfing destination by showcasing the best courses the boot-shaped country has to offer.

Kicking off this October, the Northern Greens itinerary includes stops at four renowned golf clubs in the north of the country. Following a welcome reception in the La Dolce Vita Lounge in Rome's Ostiense Station, guests will be whisked away to the Marco Simone Golf & Country Club. Located just outside the city, the club famously hosted the 2023 Ryder Cup and is a great place for a round or two. The train will then stop at the Franciacorta Golf Club in Brescia, the Royal Park I Roveri in Fiano, the Antognolla Golf Club in Perugia, or the Terme di Saturnia Natural SPA & Golf Resort in Tuscany.

Taking place in November, the Italian Swing voyage spotlights the central and southern regions of Italy. Golfers will have the opportunity to tee off at the San Domenico Golf Club in Puglia (pictured top), the Club at Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany, and the Argentario Golf Club. The latter is Italy's only PGA-licensed facility.

The itineraries will not only include plenty of competitive play but also bespoke technical masterclasses to help you improve your game. There will also be an internationally renowned professional golfer present on each journey so you can get some pointers along the way.

Travelers can expect exceptional Italian hospitality both on and off the green. Each club will offer high-tech gear and high-end cuisine, while the train includes impeccable personalized service and plush facilities.

As the moniker suggests, La Dolce Vita is all about enjoying the good life. The train features 12 Deluxe cabins, 18 suites, and one suitably lavish La Dolce Vita Suite. It is also equipped with an elegant dining car and a glitzy bar from which guests can soak in the incredible Italian landscapes. Michelin three-star Chef Heinz Beck is responsible for the culinary offering, which includes everything from traditional Italian delicacies to classic aperitivo. Nothing like an Aperol Spritz to cap off a round.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express only debuted this past April. The train currently offers eight other itineraries throughout Italy. Bookings can be made via the Orient Express website.

Rebecca Nicholson · 1 day ago

New Golf Train Launches in Italy – With Michelin Dining, Pro Tips and Iconic Courses

Golf just got a glamorous upgrade. In a bold move combining world-class sport with iconic slow travel, the *La Dolce Vita Orient Express* has launched a new luxury train experience across Italy's most prestigious golf destinations — complete with Michelin-starred cuisine, onboard golf pros, and postcard-perfect landscapes.

The experience, unveiled to coincide with the 2025 Italian Open (where the train is a Special Partner), marks a new era of high-end sports tourism. Golfers and their companions will travel in ultimate style aboard one of the world's most legendary trains, stopping at Italy's elite clubs while indulging in signature hospitality, fine wine, and curated masterclasses.

A Hole-in-One Deserves the Ultimate Prize

To celebrate the partnership, *La Dolce Vita Orient Express* is awarding an extraordinary prize to the first player who scores a hole-in-one during the Italian Open: a two-night journey aboard the luxury train, followed by a stay at the soon-to-open Orient Express La Minerva Hotel in Rome — a flagship retreat known for its opulence and charm.

A Dream Itinerary for Golfers

The first journey, Northern Greens, sets off in October 2025. It begins at the prestigious Marco Simone Golf & Country Club — home of the 2023 Ryder Cup — with a welcome event in the exclusive *La Dolce Vita Lounge* at Rome's Ostiense Station. From there, guests will travel to a handpicked collection of world-class courses, including:

- **Franciacorta Golf Club**
- **Royal Park I Roveri**
- **Antognolla Golf Club**
- **Terme di Saturnia Natural SPA & Golf Resort**

Each stop includes opportunities for competitive play, technical masterclasses with a world-renowned professional golfer, and elegant hospitality rooted in Italian culture.
In November, the second itinerary, Italian Swing, takes travellers through Central and Southern Italy. This route features premium courses such as San Domenico Golf Club in Puglia, The Club at Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany, and Argentario Golf Club — Italy's only PGA-licensed facility.

Golf, Gourmet and Grand Design

Designed for an international audience, this is no ordinary golf tour. With interiors inspired by 1960s Italian glamour, Michelin-level dining on board, and personalised service throughout, the *La Dolce Vita Orient Express* offers a rare fusion of luxury travel and championship sport.

Created in collaboration with the Italian Golf Federation (FIG) and Infront (official advisor to FIG), the itineraries are part of a wider push to showcase Italy as a leader in sustainable, high-end golf tourism.

Every stop offers not just exceptional golf, but also bespoke experiences — from gourmet tastings and vineyard visits to cultural encounters and designer relaxation.

Bookings are now open via the official website:👉 https://www.orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita/it

Golf Business News
Essential Intelligence for the Business of Golf

All board La Dolce Vita Orient Express to sample Italy's finest courses by train

La Dolce Vita Orient Express, a partner of the 2025 Italian Open, which took place at Argentario Golf & Wellness last week, has announced two exclusive golf tours taking place in Italy later this year.

The exclusive itineraries combine the heritage of luxury train travel with the prestige of some of Italy's most celebrated golf courses, while highlighting the country's cultural and natural beauty.

Guests will travel on a replica of the world-famous Orient Express, La Dolce Vita Orient Express, the first Italian-made luxury train, which 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 travelled 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 fine dining restaurant.

The *Northern Greens* itinerary in October begins in Rome and heads north, while the *Italian Swing* in November heads south, travelling down through Tuscany to Puglia.

The *Italian Swing* takes in rounds on some of Italy's most famous courses, including Marco Simone Golf & Country Club in Rome, home of the 2023 Ryder Cup; San Domenico Golf Club in Puglia, venue for numerous top-flight professional events; The Club at Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany, Italy's only private golf club; and Antognolla Golf Club in Umbria, which boasts an award-winning Robert Trent Jones Jr designed course.

The second route, Northern Greens, departs from Rome in October (a second trip is planned for May 16-19, 20026), comprises four days and three nights aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express, taking in rounds of golf at Marco Simone Golf & Country Club, Franciacorta Golf Club, Royal Park I Roveri, and Antognolla Golf Club.

Prices for these four-day, three-night trips, both of which depart from Rome, start from €16,500 per person for a deluxe cabin.

For reservations call +44 2030244949 or visit **www.orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita/**

Travel, Leisure & Lifestyle

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Launches Golf-Themed Itineraries for 2025

July 1, 2025

Facebook Twitter Pinterest WhatsApp

Terme di Saturnia Golf © Victor Fitz

On the occasion of the 2025 Italian Open, **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** is unveiling its first itineraries designed exclusively for golf enthusiasts. This new experience aims to elevate Italy's status as a premier golf destination, celebrating rich sporting heritage through a refined and immersive journey.

Luxury Rail Meets Golf in a Unique Italian Experience

To mark its partnership with the Italian Open, **La Dolce Vita Orient Express** will present a special prize to the first player to achieve a hole-in-one during the tournament: an exclusive two-night journey aboard the **La Dolce Vita Orient Express**, followed by a stay at the new **Orient Express La Minerva Hotel** in Rome.

First Itinerary Departs in October 2025

Set to depart in **October 2025**, the new itineraries invite golfers to embark on an extraordinary voyage across some of Italy's golf destinations. This curated experience combines world-class courses with postcard-perfect landscapes and Michelin-starred cuisine. Aboard, guests will be accompanied by an internationally renowned professional golfer for the duration of the journey.

The **Northern Greens** itinerary will begin at **Marco Simone Golf & Country Club** – host of the 2023 Ryder Cup. This follows a welcome reception in the exclusive **La Dolce Vita Lounge** at Rome's **Ostiense Station**. Subsequent stops include **Franciacorta Golf Club**, **Royal Park I Roveri**, **Antognolla Golf Club**, or **Terme di Saturnia Natural SPA & Golf Resort**. The itinerary offers a refined blend of competitive play, scenic beauty, and exceptional hospitality.

Italian Swing Follows in November 2025

In November, the experience will expand with a second itinerary, **Italian Swing**, spanning the Central and Southern regions of Italy. This new route will include stops at **San Domenico Golf Club** in Puglia, **The Club at Castiglion del Bosco** in Tuscany, and **Argentario Golf Club** – Italy's only PGA-licensed facility.

The journey will be enriched with bespoke technical masterclasses and personalised services. Each stop will offer a warm welcome, exclusive materials, and gourmet moments on the green – seamlessly merging the pleasure of play with the discovery of Italian excellence.

Bookings for La Dolce Vita Orient Express Golf Itineraries are now open on the official website. For more information, visit: orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita/

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La Dolce Vita Orient Express launches two golf-themed itineraries

TOUR OPERATORS JUL 1, 2025 BY KATIE BYNG-HALL

Journeys to take place in October and November this year

La Dolce Vita Orient Express will debut two golf-themed itineraries through Italy this year.

The journeys have been designed to "elevate Italy's status as a premier golf destination" following the Italian Open in June, where La Dolce Vita Orient Express was a Special Partner.

The first three-night Northern Greens itinerary will take place in October and will begin at Marco Simone Golf & Country Club – host of the 2023 Ryder Cup – just outside of Rome, following a welcome reception at the La Dolce Vita Lounge in the city's Ostiense Station.

The train will subsequently tour locations including Franciacorta Golf Club, Royal Park I Roveri, Antognolla Golf Club and Terme di Saturnia Natural Spa & Golf Resort.

The second three-night Italian Swing journey will take place in November, with stops in central and southern Italy including San Domenico Golf Club in Puglia, The Club at Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany, and Grosseto's Argentario Golf Club – Italy's only PGA-licensed facility.

A professional golfer will accompany guests throughout each journey.

La Dolce Vita Orient Express said the itineraries had been created in collaboration with the Italian Golf Federation (FIG) to support "sustainable, high-end sports tourism" and "highlight Italy's cultural and natural beauty".

The luxury train line said the new journeys "complemented" its existing portfolio of eight itineraries in Italy.

Pictured: The Club at Castiglion del Bosco

Il Sole 24 ORE
Travel

For golf lovers come the La Dolce Vita Orient Express itineraries

The first one will start in October and will visit the Franciacorta Golf Club, the Royal Park I Roveri, the Antognolla Golf Club and the Terme di Saturnia Natural SPA & Golf Resort

Golf lovers will be able to reach some of Italy's most prestigious greens on board a luxury train. The Dolce Vita Orient Express, the luxury train born from the joint venture between LVMH and Accor with the Arsenale Group, adds to its eight itineraries this autumn some dedicated to golf lovers, with the aim of enhancing the Italian landscape and cultural heritage and, in particular, to promote the golf courses in the country at an international level, combining high level sport and a slow, elegant and immersive journey. The project, in fact, is aimed at an international audience and aims to strengthen the attractiveness of Italy as a golf destination of excellence, combining the charm of travelling by train with the appeal of some of the country's golf courses.

The routes

In November, the experience will be enriched with a second itinerary in Central-Southern Italy, Italian Swing, which will touch upon the San Domenico Golf Club in Puglia, The Club at Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany, and the Argentario Golf Club, the only Italian PGA-authorised facility. Not to be overlooked is the offer on board, characterised by maximum comfort, starred cuisine and atmospheres that enhance the Italian lifestyle; ashore, exclusive services, reserved hospitality and high-level sporting moments, with the participation of an internationally renowned professional golfer on board who will accompany guests for the entire duration of the trip.

Starting in October 2025, the Northern Greens itinerary will travel through Northern Italy, kicking off at the Marco Simone Golf & Country Club, home of the 2023 Ryder Cup, with a welcome in the Dolce Vita Lounge at the Roma Ostiense station and the official train departure. Subsequent stops will include the Franciacorta Golf Club, the Royal Park I Roveri, the Antognolla Golf Club or the Terme di Saturnia Natural SPA & Golf Resort, offering a combination of great courses, picture-postcard views and outstanding hospitality.

An award for the best golfers

The project at La Dolce Vita Orient Express also stems from the collaboration with the Italian Open. For this reason there will be a special award for the first player to score a hole-in-one. The prize will consist of an exclusive trip of two days and three nights on board the La Dolce Vita Orient Express with a subsequent overnight stay at the Orient Express La Minerva Hotel in Rome, for an experience of relaxation and comfort signed Orient Express. The itinerary will be enriched with moments of personalised technical study and a tailor-made service for each guest. Each stage will include a reserved welcome, exclusive materials and gourmet breaks on the green, to combine the pleasure of the game with the discovery of the territory.

LIV Golf Weekly

Train, Turf and Tuscany: Golfers Invited on Luxe Italian Journey with La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Ah, *La Dolce Vita*—a phrase that once conjured images of Fellini, fountains, and flirtation now comes with the satisfying sound of a well-struck iron. The La Dolce Vita Orient Express, already a symbol of luxury rail travel, is trading tuxedos for tartan as it teed up an exclusive golf tour launching this November.

The train, now a Special Partner of the 2025 Italian Open, will roll out from Rome, sweeping through Tuscany like a silk scarf in the breeze, with a rather refined pit stop: The Club at Castiglion del Bosco, Italy's only private golf club.

This isn't your average golf break. This is *La Dolce Vita* on rails—part vintage elegance, part golfing pilgrimage, and all Italian indulgence.

At the heart of the journey lies Castiglion del Bosco, a majestic layout carved into the Val d'Orcia's UNESCO-protected landscape, where sheep probably outnumber bunkers. Designed by none other than the late Tom Weiskopf—champion golfer and maestro of minimalism—this 18-hole marvel is the only Weiskopf course in Continental Europe. Think medieval village meets manicured fairways, all under that dreamy Tuscan sun.

David Waters, General Manager & Director of Golf at The Club at Castiglion del Bosco, put it best: "We are delighted to welcome guests of La Dolce Vita Orient Express for this very special visit to The Club at Castiglion del Bosco.

Italy has become one of the great golf destinations of the world and there is no finer way to travel through the country and experience our golf courses than in the slow comfort of a luxury train."

And slow comfort it is. This isn't a mad dash between tee times. The journey unfolds at a pace that encourages espresso sips, deep exhales, and the occasional gaze out the window to marvel at the rolling hills, Renaissance ruins, or—if you're lucky—a flock of flamingos in Puglia.

Following its showcase at the Italian Open, La Dolce Vita Orient Express unveiled two new itineraries that would make even the most jaded traveller giddy: *Northern Greens* in October, charting a course from Rome northwards, and *Italian Swing* in November, a southbound voyage from the Eternal City through Tuscany to the sun-kissed charm of Puglia.

These aren't just train rides—they're curated, golf-soaked escapades. Imagine pairing rounds at championship courses with Michelin-starred dining, elegant sleeper cabins, and the company of an internationally renowned professional golfer riding shotgun—or in this case, bar car.

As for the onboard experience, it's less "caddy shack" and more "cinema paradiso." The train's interiors channel the golden age of travel, but with modern touches that would make James Bond cancel his flight.

Eight itineraries now make up La Dolce Vita's portfolio, but these two new additions are custom-built for those who prefer their golf with a side of Chianti.

For those looking to chase birdies between bites of truffle risotto, bookings are now live at **orient-express.com/la-dolce-vita**.

In short: this isn't just a trip. It's a backswing into bliss. *La Dolce Vita*—where every fairway tells a story, and the only thing better than the view is your second shot into a sunlit green.

TRAVEL OFTEN · LIVE WELL TRAVEL MAGAZINE
DRIFT

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Launches Golf Itinerary

As Special Partner of the Italian Open, La Dolce Vita Orient Express announces an exclusive journey through Italy's golf courses

On the occasion of the 2025 Italian Open, a highlight on the European golf calendar, *La Dolce Vita Orient Express* – Special Partner of the event – is unveiling its first itineraries designed exclusively for golf enthusiasts. This new experience aims to elevate Italy's status as a premier golf destination, celebrating the country's rich sporting heritage through a refined and immersive journey. A unique encounter between sport and slow travel, this experience embodies the essence of Italian elegance – both on and off the green.

To mark its partnership with the Italian Open, *La Dolce Vita Orient Express* will present a special prize to the first player to achieve a hole-in-one during the tournament: an exclusive two-night journey aboard the *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*, followed by a stay at the new *Orient Express La Minerva Hotel* in Rome – a signature experience of relaxation and refined hospitality.

Set to depart in October 2025, the new itineraries invite golfers, enthusiasts, and their companions to embark on an extraordinary voyage across some of Italy's golf destinations. Complementing the train's existing portfolio of eight itineraries, this curated experience combines world-class courses with postcard-perfect landscapes, Michelin-starred cuisine, and the timeless charm of Italian lifestyle. Aboard, guests will be accompanied by an internationally renowned professional golfer for the duration of the journey.

The itinerary *Northern Greens*, will begin at Marco Simone Golf & Country Club – host of the 2023 Ryder Cup – following a welcome reception in the exclusive *La Dolce Vita Lounge* at Rome's Ostiense Station. Subsequent stops include Franciacorta Golf Club, Royal Park I Roveri, Antognolla Golf Club, or Terme di Saturnia Natural SPA & Golf Resort, offering a refined blend of competitive play, scenic beauty, and exceptional hospitality.

In November, the experience will expand with a second itinerary, *Italian Swing*, spanning the Central and Southern regions of Italy. This new route will include stops at San Domenico Golf Club in Puglia, The Club at Castiglion del Bosco in Tuscany, and Argentario Golf Club – Italy's only PGA-licensed facility.

Conceived for an international audience, the project further enhances Italy's position as a premier golf and lifestyle destination. It combines the heritage of luxury train travel with the prestige of some of the country's most celebrated golf courses. In collaboration with

The journey will be enriched with bespoke technical masterclasses and personalized services. Each stop will offer a warm welcome, exclusive materials, and gourmet moments on the green – seamlessly merging the pleasure of play with the discovery of Italian excellence.

The agreement between La Dolce Vita Orient Express and the Italian Open has been signed in collaboration with Infront, official advisor of the Italian Golf Federation (FIG).

INTERNI

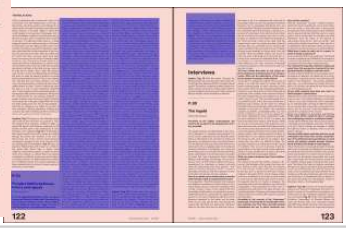
P. 74

Parallel tracks between luxury and speed

by Valentina Croci

From the suspended elegance of the new Orient Express by Maxime d'Angeac and Dimorestudio to the functional dynamism of the TGV by Nendo, railway design narrates two visions of travel. In continuing pursuit of nostalgia and innovation

Luxury trains and ordinary ones speak of two opposing ways of traveling: the first is slow, crafted, made to measure; the second is fast, industrial, created for millions of passengers. From the retro charm of the Orient Express to the efficiency of the TGV, the comparison between these two universes is a story of human ingenuity: extreme bespoke styling or the creation of serial spaces that respond to factors of economics and sustainability for a massive flow of travelers. Both these worlds speak of ongoing research, spanning nostalgia and innovation. Luxury trains are back, as the protagonists of an elite take on tourism: not just means of transport, but sensorial experiences where the journey itself becomes the destination, relying on craftsmanship, gastronomy and design to rediscover the elegance of the past with a contemporary vision. It all links back to the atmospheres of transportation at the end of the 19th century – the first Orient Express was activated in 1883 – to rediscover the pleasure of traveling slowly, immersed in contexts out of the ordinary and outside time. One of the protagonists of this sector is Belmond, an English company active since 1976, which operates night trains on various continents, with refined offerings that combine culture, cuisine and fine local crafts. Its trains include the Britannic Explorer, which kicks off this July, providing three-day service from London to Cornwall and Wales, while indulging in the creations of star-winning chef Simon Rogan. The 18 carriages (15 suites and 3 maxi-suites), produced in Great Britain and designed by Albion Nord, reflect a posh British style featuring handmade furniture and colors inspired by nature. The Royal Scotsman, recently renovated, provides an experience of wellness in collaboration with Dior: four days across the Highlands for just 38 guests, with an onboard spa. The Eastern & Oriental Express, on the other hand, runs from Singapore to Malaysia. It was totally updated in 2024: the interiors, decorated with cherry paneling, batik carpets and oriental silk, reflect the complex layers of the crafts tradition in Southeast Asia. Finally, the new Venice Simplon Orient Express includes the first rail car entirely envisioned by an artist: the Observatoire by JR is a single space that combines bedroom, bathtub, lounge, library and tearoom. The Orient Express brand is now part of the Accor group, bent on reviving the mythical status of rail travel. The new train, slated for activation at the end of 2026, has been designed in Italy with 12 deluxe cabins and 18 premium units, along with a bar and a restaurant. The artistic direction has been entrusted to the French architect and set designer Maxime d'Angeac, who for the interior design has drawn on the brand's DNA: "All the inspirations behind the project are contained in the famous train: the history of inventions since 1883, the Art Deco of René Prou, and – obviously – the pursuit of excellence on the part of artisans. The materials I have selected – the dark wood already introduced in 1925, the etched glass to evoke the days of Lalique, the fabrics and carpets with character motifs, with brass and steel for the technical details – suggest the elegance of the past and the innovations of the present. A total design based on a coherent balance of natural and artificial light, depth of field and chromatic harmony. All the custom furnishings have been made by excellent French craftsmen like Jouffre, Rinck Mobilier and Chauvet. Because the train sets out to offer the sensation of being part of a unique, rare ensemble, rediscovering a lost time and a rarity that is beyond fashion." In Italy, Arsenale, a company of the Oaktree fund, has entered the luxury rail market with La Dolce Vita Orient Express, launched in April in collaboration with Trenitalia - Gruppo Ferrovie dello Stato and with the Orient Express brand of Accor. The project calls for the expansion of the fleet until 2027, and collaborations with international railway firms. The interiors, created by Dimorestudio, are inspired by the Italian design of the 1960s and 1970s. "The soft geometric shapes of the seating," say Britt Moran and Emiliano Salci, "suggest the forms of Mario Marenco, while the functional and poetic rigor of Claudio Salocchi finds echoes in various transformable and multifunctional pieces. The use of pure, modular volumes reflects the influence of Cini Boeri. On an artistic level, guests find references to the rhythmical patterns of Bonalumi and Castellani, with relief brushstrokes and games of light that amplify the space, while the pictorial signs reinterpreted in an abstract way are reminders of the work of Capogrossi. Through our stylistic approach that plays with the contrast between memory and the contemporary, matte and reflecting surfaces, unexpected but harmonious juxtapositions between eras, colors and materials (carpeting in saturated hues, lacquered wood, smoked mirrors, chrome-plated metals, leather and velvet) on which time seems to have left its mark, we want to generate rarified, suspended elegance that belongs more to recollection than to the present." The new TGV M, the fifth generation of the French high-speed train produced by Alstom, has been shaped by ideas of modularity, modernity and control. It stands out for its unprecedented flexibility: the number of cars can be adapted, like the configurations of first and second class. The internal spaces for luggage or bicycles have been organized to vary with the seasons and the level of demand. With nine passenger carriages instead of eight, it provides 20% more seating thanks to the simplification of the electrical system and the introduction of two mini-motors that permit annexing of the auxiliary car for a maximum of 740 passengers. The TGV M consumes 20% less energy, and reduces CO_2 by 50% with respect to other high-speed trains. It is made with 25% recycled materials (about 100 tons) and is 97% recyclable in its own right. The design is by Nendo in collaboration with the engineering firm Arep. "The train resembles no longer means of transport," says Oki Sato, founder of Nendo. "It makes its way across the landscape like a flowing river." The interior has been refined to suggest this fluid harmony: continuous horizontal lines, dark materials below and light ones above, seats and lamps with forms inspired by stones polished by water. A functional design that also focuses on the wellbeing of passengers. "We have resolved a complex mixture of technical challenges – like the augmented seating capacity, the flexibility in the formation of the trains, the reduction of environmental impact and easier access – and emotional challenges, related to the comfort and wellbeing of passengers. Just because the train is fast does not mean that the passengers want design similar to that of Formula 1 racers, implying only speed; likewise, more compact spaces do not have to feel cramped. The choice of colors and forms stems from this necessity. One of the biggest issues was the reduction of weight to guarantee speed and stability, without compromising strength. For example, the fabric on the seats is a recently developed 3D knit, light but very sturdy." Even for trips of a few hours, railway design has to be capable of combining efficiency with the pleasures of travel.



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INTERNI

Captions: **Pag. 75** On these pages, the interiors of La Dolce Vita Orient Express designed by Dimorestudio. The project has been organized by Arsenale in collaboration with Trenitalia - Gruppo Ferrovie dello Stato and the Orient Express brand of the Accor group. Photos: Mr. Tripper. **Pag. 76** Two spaces on the Britannic Explorer, a train of the Belmond group.

Designed by Albion Nord as a tribute to British style, it features finely crafted furnishings and colors inspired by nature. The architect and set designer Maxime d'Angeac interprets the 21st-century version of the legendary Orient Express (Accor). The train is like an anthology of the finest French workmanship. **Pag. 77** The study of every serial element is aimed at ensuring ergonomic quality, space and comfort, while reducing bulk and weight. Also through the materials, like the lighter fabric with a three-dimensional weave covering the seats. Together with Arep, Nendo has designed the TGV Inoui (Alstom) with a focus on fluidity: aerodynamic for the exteriors, flexible for use in the interiors. Soft forms inspired by river stones and playful accents appear, from the dining car to the details of the seats.

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yahoo!life

The Best Room At ... Orient Express La Minerva

In an ancient corner of Rome, the past and present collide at a one-of-a-kind new hotel.

"Most of our guests, when they arrive, the first thing they say is, 'We weren't expecting this,'" says Filip Boyen, the general manager of **Orient Express La Minerva**, the recently opened, first-ever hotel from the hospitality brand. "They're talking about the level of detail that went into creating this hotel; the last thing La Minerva could be is cookie cutter."

Part of that has to do with the building itself; La Minerva is situated inside the Fonseca Palace, which overlooks the Pantheon, dates back to the 1600s, and has been a hotel since the 1800s. But much of it is what has been done to the building, bringing in glamorous, train-inspired custom design by Hugo Toro (including every piece of furniture in the place), and adding touches like the rooftop restaurant and bar **Gigi Rigolatto Roma** and the lobby's La Minerva Bar, which is watched over by a statue of the place's namesake goddess. "Every detail in the hotel brings it together and people feel very intertwined with the culture and the history of Rome," Boyen says.

The bedroom of Orient Express La Minerva's Stendhal Suite features original frescoes on the ceiling as well as design, including custom furniture, by Hugo Toro.

Here, we speak with Boyen about the hotel's best accommodations and how to make the most of its historic setting and modern amenities.

What do you consider to be the best room at the property and why?

The best room is certainly not the biggest one. My preferred room is the Stendhal Suite, which is only 90 square meters—in Italy, that's a nice size for suite, but it's the smallest out of the four signature suites. Still, I think it is by far the most exciting. It has original frescoes still in the bedroom and in the bathroom, and it offers a hint of this illustrious past that we are trying to keep alive. All the furniture there is bespoke—there's even a marble bathtub in the middle of the bathroom—and it fits beautifully into the space. Outside the room, you're practically within touching distance of the Pantheon, right on the Minerva square. It's very special.

How much does it cost per night?

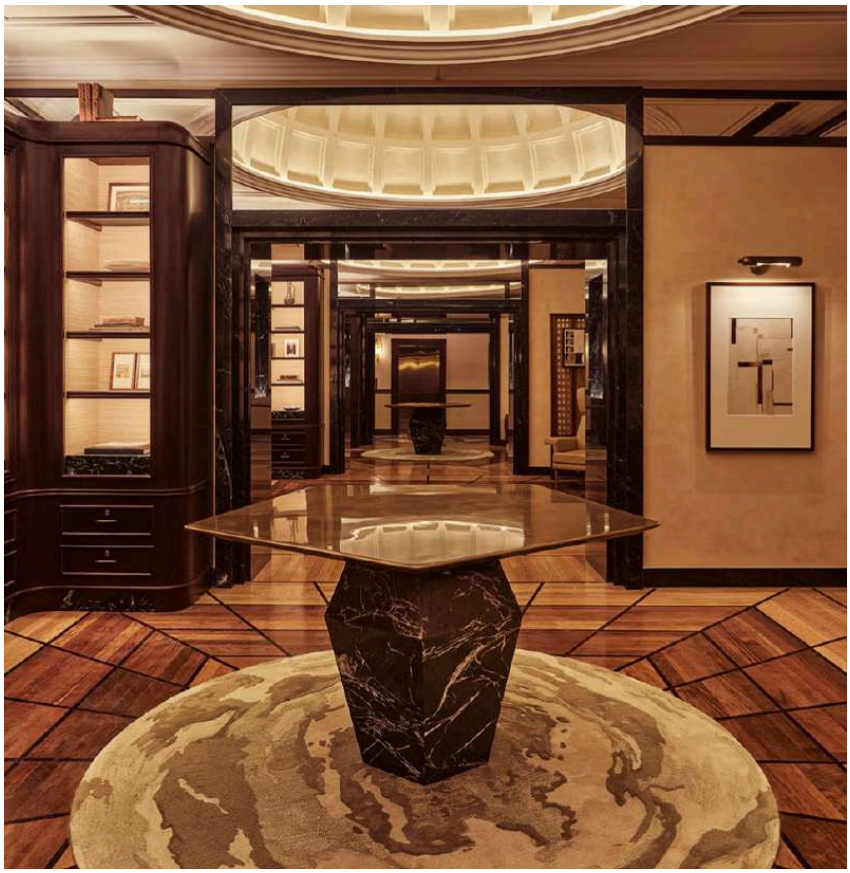
It's €4,400 per night, and that includes breakfast.

How would you describe the guests and vibe at the hotel?

People are coming to Italy for the food, the culture, the history, the arts, and especially the people. That's the biggest advantage that we have: Not only do we have a unique hotel with an incredible atmosphere, we also have this Italian character, and the personality of the staff that makes you feel immediately at home. Sometimes I think we may be a little over the top, but the guests absolutely love it.

What feeling about Rome do you hope to impart to guests?

We are in the heart of Rome. I don't think there is one important monument that you can't reach within a 15-minute walk. There's a real sense of place, meaning if I blindfold you and we fly from New York and bring you to the hotel, you can tell me then where you are. You can sit on our rooftop, with that 360-degree view, and you don't need to explain to people where they are, it's just automatic. And inside, the art is all Roman; it doesn't get any better than that.



What's a local attraction that you always recommend?

Near the Piazza Navona, in one of the most historic and culturally rich parts of the city—and about a seven-minute walk from the hotel, is Palazzo Altemps, a former aristocratic mansion that was home in the 16th century to a collection of classical sculptures in a magnificent architectural setting. Now, it's one of the sites of the National Roman Museum specifically dedicated to the history of art collecting, and we have special access for guests to do private visits. It's one of the greatest highlights of Rome, and we can provide exclusive entry.

TOWN&COUNTRY

The Best Room At ... Orient Express La Minerva

In an ancient corner of Rome, the past and present collide at a one-of-a-kind new hotel.

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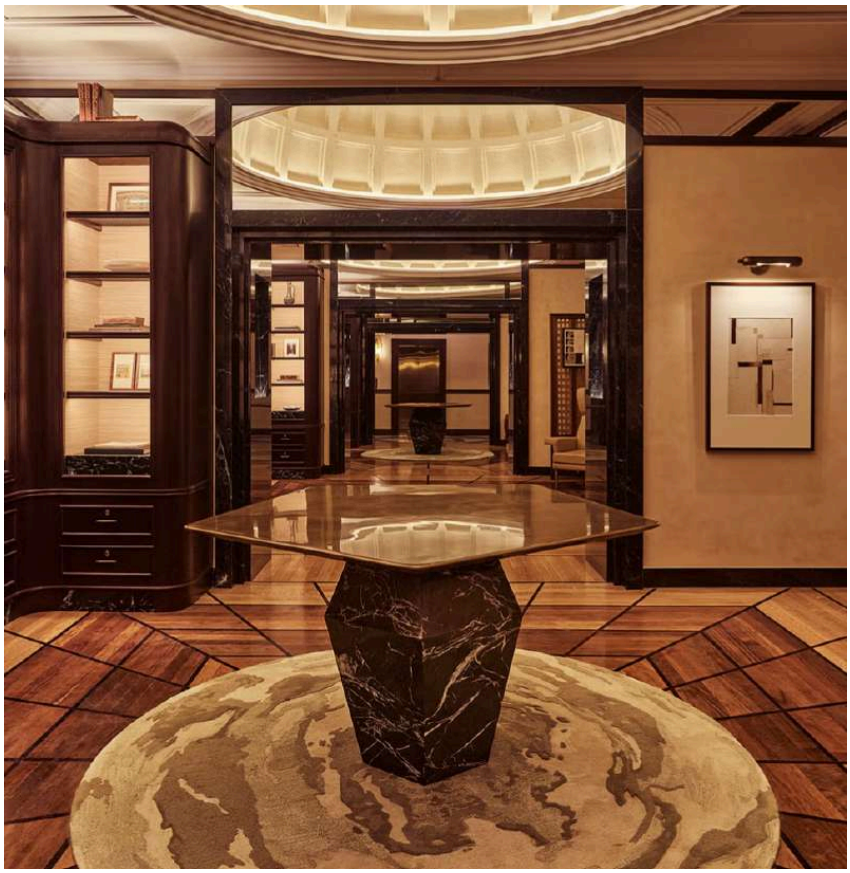
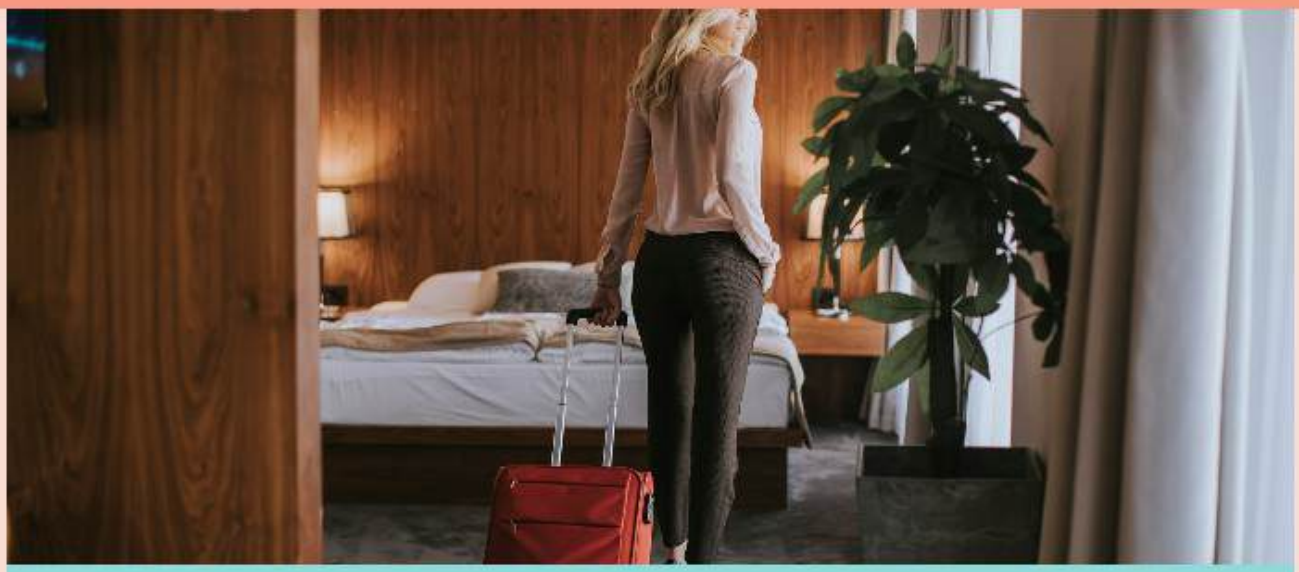
What feeling about Rome do you hope to impart to guests?

We are in the heart of Rome. I don't think there is one important monument that you can't reach within a 15-minute walk. There's a real sense of place, meaning if I blindfold you and we fly from New York and bring you to the hotel, you can tell me then where you are. You can sit on our rooftop, with that 360-degree view, and you don't need to explain to people where they are, it's just automatic. And inside, the art is all Roman; it doesn't get any better than that.



What's a local attraction that you always recommend?

Near the Piazza Navona, in one of the most historic and culturally rich parts of the city—and about a seven-minute walk from the hotel, is Palazzo Altemps, a former aristocratic mansion that was home in the 16th century to a collection of classical sculptures in a magnificent architectural setting. Now, it's one of the sites of the National Roman Museum specifically dedicated to the history of art collecting, and we have special access for guests to do private visits. It's one of the greatest highlights of Rome, and we can provide exclusive entry.



LIFESTYLE GUIDES COFFEE BREAK READS

A New Era Of Hotel Design: Where Sustainability Meets Elegant, Understated Experiences

BY EDITORIAL TEAM JULY 17, 2025

Step into any of 2025's most anticipated hotel openings and you'll quickly realise that something fundamental has shifted in high-end hospitality design. From Rome's ancient ruins glimpsed through glass-bottom pools to Crete's revolutionary earth-sheltered suites, this year's properties are rewriting the rulebook on what a hotel can be.

The transformation goes far beyond aesthetics. Today's most innovative hotels are pioneering sustainable technologies, celebrating local craftsmanship, and creating spaces that serve their communities as much as their guests.

Three defining movements are shaping 2025's hotel landscape: the embrace of 'quiet luxury' over ostentatious display, the rise of bioclimatic architecture that works with nature rather than against it, and the seamless integration of technology that enhances rather than dominates the guest experience.

Quiet Luxury Replaces Grand Gestures

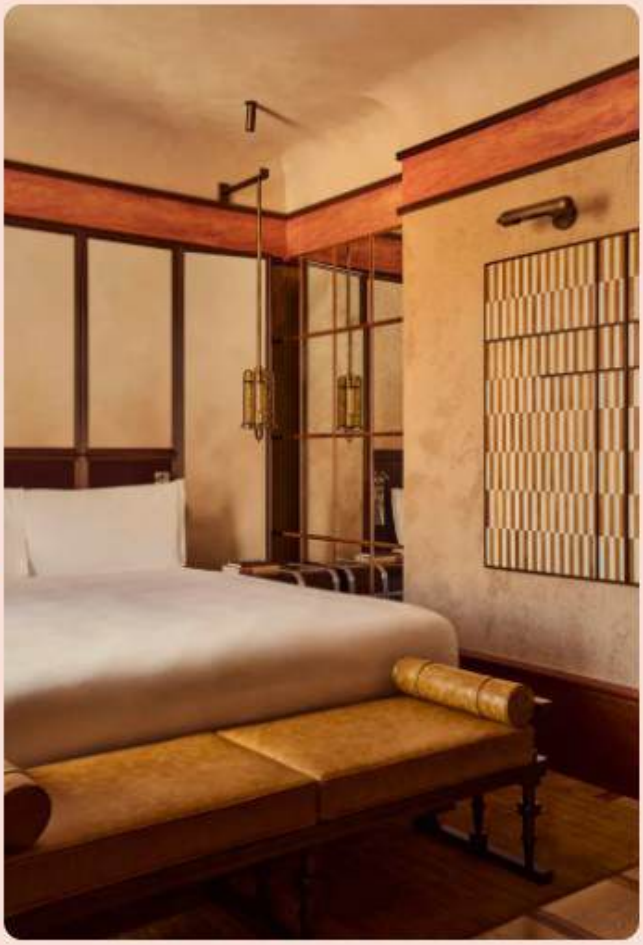
The era of gilt and glitter has given way to something altogether more refined. This year's most talked-about openings demonstrate that true luxury lies in craftsmanship, heritage, and thoughtful restoration rather than superficial opulence.

The Waldorf Astoria New York's reopening after a $2 billion renovation perfectly encapsulates this shift. Designer Pierre-Yves Rochon has transformed the legendary property from 1,400 rooms into just 375 suites, with the smallest measuring 475 square feet.

The painstaking restoration preserved 60,000 square feet of landmarked interiors, including the iconic 1893 World's Fair clock, whilst creating Manhattan's largest luxury accommodations. As Hospitality Design reports, it's a masterclass in respecting history whilst meeting contemporary expectations.

In Rome, the Orient Express La Minerva takes a different approach to historical preservation. Franco-Mexican designer Hugo Toro has transformed the 17th-century Palazzo Fonseca into 93 rooms that blend Art Deco glamour with Roman heritage.

The property's showpiece – a glass-bottom pool suspended over ancient ruins discovered during construction – exemplifies how modern hotels are celebrating rather than concealing their archaeological treasures, according to Elite Traveler.

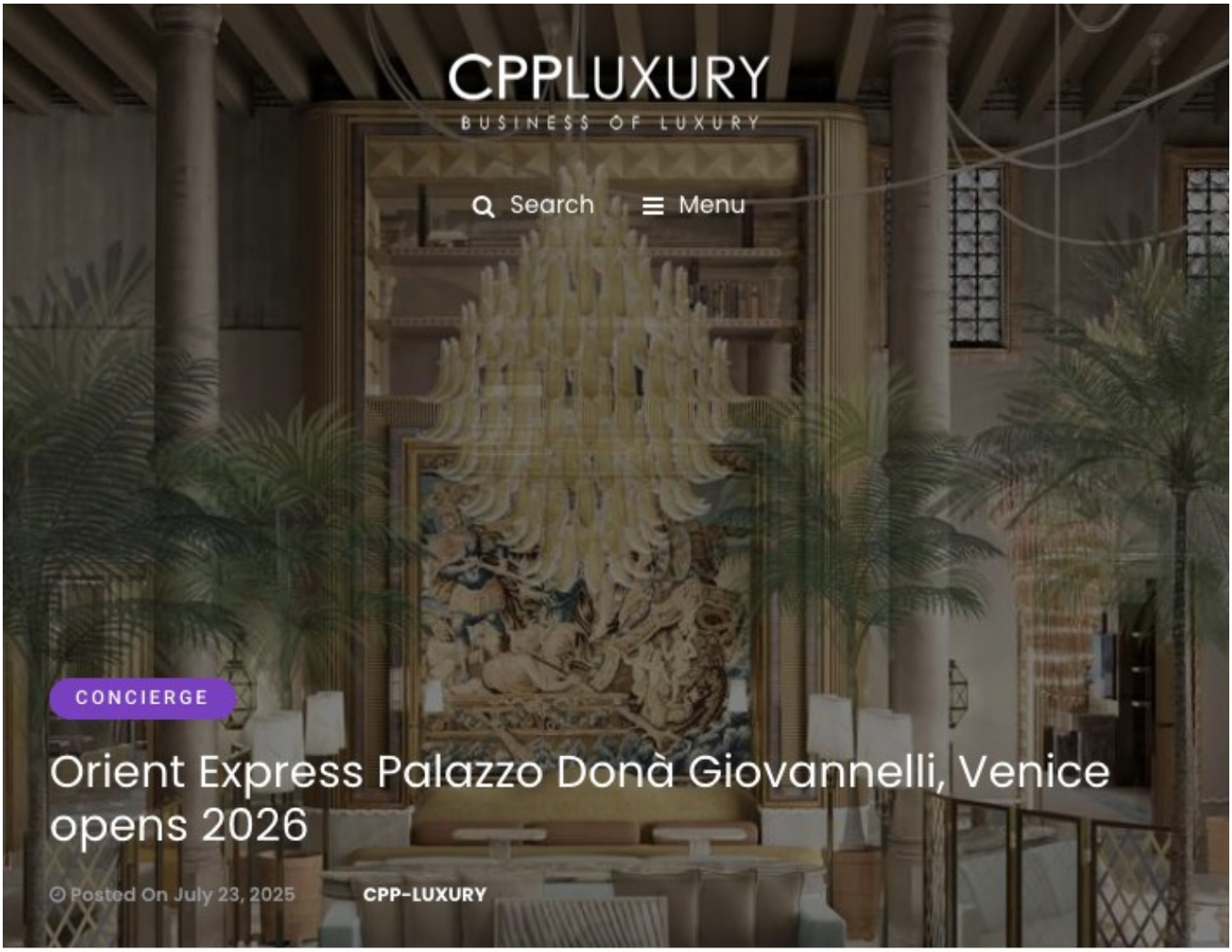


A New Colour Palette For A New Era

Pantone's choice of Mocha Mousse as 2025's Colour of the Year reflects a broader shift towards warmth and authenticity in hotel design. This sophisticated brown – reminiscent of perfectly frothed coffee – appears throughout the year's most significant openings, from Orient Express La Minerva's terracotta accents to the earth tones dominating Tella Thera's interiors.

The move away from stark whites and cool greys towards warmer, more enveloping colours creates spaces that feel residential rather than institutional. Supporting palettes incorporate sage greens, dusty pinks, and deep blues that reference nature whilst maintaining sophistication.

Materials tell a similar story of authenticity and responsibility. FSC-certified woods, recycled metals, and fabrics created from ocean plastics are becoming industry standards. Properties are discovering that guests increasingly value knowing their luxury experience doesn't come at the environment's expense. Consultancies like IH Group are instrumental in helping hotels navigate these material choices whilst maintaining the premium feel guests expect.



Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, Venice is the next upcoming hotel of Accor's ORIENT-EXPRESS brand following the opening of Orient Express La Minerva in Rome. A jewel of Neogothic and Baroque architecture once nestled on the original Orient Express route to Constantinople, Palazzo Dona Giovannelli reawakens as an immersive destination where history meets emotion, beauty and rebirth.

In the heart of Cannaregio, the first Venetian district where the life of La Serenissima remains untouched, Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli occupies a singular position at the confluence of two canals, in a noble residence built in 1436 under the reign of master architect Filippo Calendario, the visionary behind the Doge's Palace.

Architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman has masterfully orchestrated a multilayered restoration, where theatrical grandeur meets luminous poetry. From original frescoes by great Italian masters to mosaic floors, every patina, every detail was revived with reverence to rekindle Palazzo Dona Giovannelli's enduring legacy.

A tribute to Venice as a crossroads of civilizations, the architecture blends Neogothic verticality, Baroque opulence and classical harmony, a rich dialogue between the styles that have shaped its layered stories. Outside, Palazzo Dona Giovannelli's spectacular façade, punctuated by a row of seven finely carved Gothic windows, gleams above the Rio de Noale, dancing with light and reflections.

Once the private residence of the noble Donà and Giovannelli families, great patrons of the arts and later gifted to the Duke of Urbino, Palazzo Dona Giovannelli holds a legacy of grandeur and celebration. From its gilded ballrooms to its hidden passageways, it now reawakens as a cultural sanctuary in the heart of Cannaregio.

Guests begin their journey by private boat, arriving through a spectacular 15th- century Gothic portal on the canal, or passing across a discreet doorway into Santa Fosca's secret garden. Others step off the Strada Nova into the serene courtyard, each entrance a prelude to an experience as rare as it is unforgettable.

The journey continues inside a dramatic lobby flooded with light and theatricality, under woodeen high ceilings with a welcoming scene befitted for a noble mansion, studded with old and new treasures, meticulously curated and considered. Guests are drawn upward by the breathtaking octagonal staircase, an architectural masterpiece added in the 19th century by Giovanni Battista Meduna, the architect behind Venice's Ca' d'Oro and La Fenice theatre. Crowned by a celestial stone and glass vault, the splendid space appeals to discover the Piano Nobile with unprecedented glamour and elevation.

At the Piano Nobile, a series of storied rooms open their doors for celebration and reflection revealing additional layers of cultural richness: the shimmering baroque Vittoria Ballroom, originally created for the 1548 wedding of Princess Vittoria Farnese, the spectacular Library of Cultures with its lapis lazuli pigments and gilded woods, and the Music Room where the spirit of Venice's golden age lingers in every detail, reviving the intellectual fervor of past gatherings.

Palazzo Donà Giovannelli offers 47 guestrooms, suites and apartments, where heritage meets contemporary design in a timeless setting, evocative of the finest venetian lifestyle. Transforming such an extraordinary address demanded an exceptional creative force: architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman. Her masterful renovation of Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli is both an artistic statement and an architectural feat, an effortless dialogue between memory and modernity, exceptional artistry and creative nowness.

Six Signature Suites, located on the Piano Nobile and first floor, reflect the distinctive grandeur of the Serenissima's art of living with tailored spaces of unique character, while the first-ever Orient Express Apartments housed in an adjacent building offer a residential vibrancy with reinterpreted modernity and outstanding canal views.

The hotel's culinary offering includes an intimate fine dining restaurant with private boat access, an all-day dining space overlooking the lively courtyard and lush garden, a rarity in Venice, and the iconic Wagon Bar – a nod to the golden age of rail travel. Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli is a new chapter in the brand's poetic journey: a noble soul reborn in Venice.

Reservations are available from today at: palazzodonagiovannelli.orient-express.com or via your reservations center at +39 041 8858004. Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli is composed of forty-seven luxurious rooms, ranging from 30 to 148 square meters, featuring 29 rooms, 16 suites including 6 Signature Suites, and 2 Orient Express Apartments.

Prices for a superior room start from €1,320 with breakfast and VAT included; for a Suite: starting from €2,310, breakfast and VAT included; for a Signature Suite or Orient Express Apartment: from €4,400 and up to €20,000 with breakfast and VAT included.

Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli

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WWD

Orient Express' Venice Hotel With a Noble Past to Open April 1

Sofia Celeste

Wed 23 July 2025 at 7:42 pm EEST
2 min read

MILAN — Following the success of its first hotel in Rome, the Orient Express said Wednesday that it has begun taking reservations for its highly anticipated second hotel location in Venice. Luxury travelers can check into the aristocratic haven of Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli as soon as April 1, with superior rooms starting at 1,320 euros.

The romantic venue is situated at the heart of the centrally located Cannaregio district. Paris-based architect and designer Aline Asmar d'Amman spearheaded the modern revamp of the once noble residence built in 1436. Its original design was led by master architect Filippo Calendario, one of the visionaries responsible for the design of Palazzo Ducale, the ancient seat of the Venetian Republic (Doge's Palace).

More from WWD

- Salvador Dalí Inspires Kent State Fashion Students With Help From Scabal
- Eames House Reopens Post-L.A. Wildfires, Family Announces New Foundation and Fire Resilience Efforts
- Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Medals Unveiled

Palazzo Donà Giovannelli was originally built with hidden passageways and grand ballrooms and was home to the Donà and Giovannelli families.

Guests of the hotel will be privy to a rare Venetian welcome and will begin their journey by private boat and will enter the venue through a 15th-century Gothic portal on the canal or through a discreet doorway into the Santa Fosca secret garden.

"More than a hotel, Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli is a transformative voyage through centuries of splendor. Rooted in the poetic vision of Orient Express, this Venetian property embodies a heritage in motion where every stay becomes a passage through memory, art and emotion," said Orient Express chief executive officer Gilda Perez-Alvarado. Orient Express opened its first hotel in Rome in the 17th-century La Minerva palazzo earlier this year, coinciding with the maiden voyage of the new Orient Express train.

The new location boasts defining characteristics like the octagonal staircase added to the site by 19th-century architect Giovanni Battista Meduna, famous for cultural landmarks like the Ca' d'Oro and the city's La Fenice theatre. It also houses the baroque Vittoria Ballroom, originally created for the 1548 wedding of Princess Vittoria Farnese, the Library of Cultures adorned gilded wood accented with lapis lazuli as well as a music room, frequented by generations of

Venetian high society.

Palazzo Donà Giovannelli offers 47 guest rooms, apartments, and six signature suites.

The hotel's culinary offerings feature an intimate fine dining restaurant with private boat access, an all-day dining space overlooking the lively courtyard and

The IRISH Mail ON SUNDAY
JULY 27, 2025
€4.00 (£2.10 NI)

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

Ghislaine quizzed by Trump lawyer over Andrew and Musk

SEE PAGES 14 & 15

BRACE FOR THE FIRST AUSTERITY BUDGET IN A DECADE

Loss of energy credits and double welfare payments to go as Coalition partners fall out over 9% VAT rate cut

By John Drennan and John Lee

THE country is facing its first austerity budget in a decade, top Coalition sources told the Irish Mail on Sunday this weekend.

And Fine Gael's much-trumpeted 9% VAT rate cut for the hospitality sector will not be decided until Budget Day and may not happen at all, given the worsening economic situation, a Government minister told the MoS.

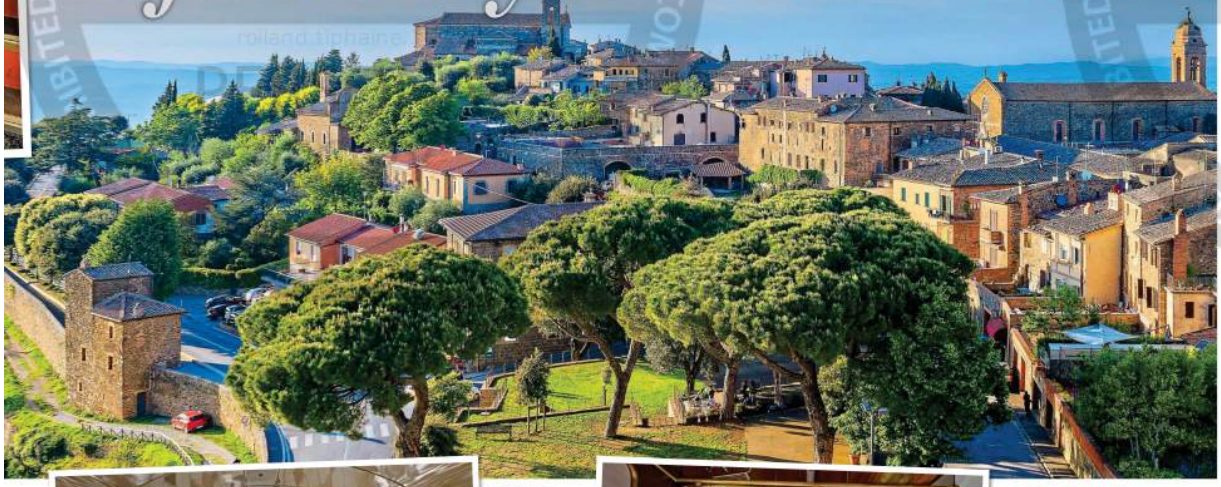
The slashing of Universal Energy Credit, double child and social welfare bonuses at

Turn to Page 6 ››

How my chance meeting with a Canadian cop bagged me a ticket to Croker

SEE PAGES 2 & 3

All aboard for the new GOLDEN AGE of luxury train travel



TRIP TO TUSCANY: The hilltop town of Montalcino, above; the lounge car that allows travellers to take in the magnificent views, left; The deluxe cabin with its comfortable sofa bed and swanky mirrored wall, right

six-course repast, including smoked gnocchi with shellfish, stuffed veal fillet with pistachio crust and a panzanella salad.

A team of 30 look after guests' every demand. Champagne in your suite? No problem. Board games in the bar? They arrive two minutes later. Breakfast in bed? But of course.

The excursions take travellers to the lesser-known sides of each region. For us, this is the magnificent hilltop town of Montalcino.

At 5pm, we're whisked in cars to the town centre, past cypress trees and vineyards producing the region's famous Brunello red wine. We walk through the cobbled streets up to the fortress and to a cavernous wine bar where Sergio pours us three tastings in gigantic glasses alongside plates of bruschetta and piles of prosciutto, parma ham and pecorino which is produced in the neighbouring town.

We waddle back to the waiting cars and are greeted on the platform by a saxophonist and Valentina holding a tray of much-needed cold towels.

That evening, we're treated to yet more food – this time an eight-course tasting menu, before we're directed back to the piano bar for a night of jazz and entertainment. Our fellow guests – a mix of British, Italian, Korean and Middle Eastern couples – get more involved as the cocktails flow.

We hit the sack at 12.30am. The soundproofing proves problematic (the noise of the track) but we're eventually rocked to sleep as the train chugs its way back to Rome.

Next morning, a few of the guests fail to make an appearance at breakfast. 'The cocktails and music were just too good,' one bleary-eyed passenger tells me.

The golden age of train travel has well and truly returned.

TRAVEL FACTS

One-night train rides are from €3,500pp in a deluxe cabin and €4,700pp in a suite (orient-express.com).

EUROPE'S BEST NEW SLEEPER TRAINS AND SOME OLD FAVOURITES TOO

- Belmond has just launched its Britannic Explorer, offering four- and five-day trips to the UK's Lake District, Cornwall and Wales, at a cost of up to €18,300pp (belmond.com).
- Journeys from Paris to Venice cost from €4,447pp for one night on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (belmond.com).
- A 12-day Balkan Explorer journey from Venice to Istanbul via Trieste, Ljubljana, Timisoara, Belgrade, Skopje and Sofia costs from €16,478pp (goldeneagleluxurytrains.com).
- The Al Andalus train begins and ends in Granada, Spain, with a six-night trip covering Seville, Córdoba and Cadiz, from €5,947pp (eltrenalandalus.com).
- The El Transcantábrico Gran Lujo offers an eight-day trip between San Sebastián and Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain, stopping at Bilbao, Santander and Santillana del Mar, from €9,166pp (eltrentranscantabrico.com).
- The Norient Express is set to open up Norway's lakes, mountains and fjords in 2026. Exact itineraries and prices yet to be confirmed (norientexpress.com).
- The original Orient Express will whisk travellers along the old route in restored carriages between Paris and Istanbul from next year (orient-express.com).

The Mail ON SUNDAY
JULY 27, 2025
£2.20 £1.90 to subscribers

SCAN TO SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

ROYAL EXCLUSIVE 1

Revealed: Harry's 'significant' peace offering to King

SEE PAGES 10, 11

Epstein's ex hopes for Presidential pardon after 'truthfully' answering questions on 100 big names in nine-hour grilling

GHISLAINE QUIZZED ABOUT ANDREW BY TOP TRUMP LAWYER

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

From Caroline Graham
IN LOS ANGELES

GHISLAINE MAXWELL was grilled about Prince Andrew during her nine-hour meeting with the US Deputy Attorney General, The Mail on Sunday can reveal.

The 63-year-old convicted sex-trafficker – a former close friend of the Duke of York – answered all questions 'honestly and truthfully' as she was quizzed about Andrew and 'more than 100 different people' connected to paedophile Jeffrey Epstein, her former boss and ex-lover.

While it is not known exactly what Maxwell said about the Duke, this is the first time she has ever been formally

Turn to Page 4 ››

ROYAL EXCLUSIVE 2

Are Kate and William eyeing move to huge mansion set in 59 acres?

SEE PAGE 7

All aboard for the new GOLDEN AGE of luxury train travel

ART DECO: The stylish lounge car of La Dolce Vita Orient Express. Top: The deluxe cabin with its sofabed and mirrored wall and, above, Harriet Sime onboard the train

Italiane) is the latest arrival. In April it launched itineraries across Italy, and my husband and I are among 60 passengers on the two-day, one-night Tastes Of Tuscan Vineyards return trip from Rome to Montalcino.

Our journey starts at Orient Express's private lounge at Rome Ostiense station, where bellboys take care of our luggage, canapes are distributed and a jazz quartet plays Italian tunes. We're greeted like royalty outside the gleaming blue and gold carriages on platform eight, before being escorted to our cabin. As our train chugs out of the station at noon, our 'butler', Valentina, helps us settle into what will be our home for the next 24 hours.

We're in one of 12 deluxe cabins (the other 18 are 'suites'), complete with a retro orange and brown sofa which turns into a double bed; a table; a wardrobe; a mini bar; and a plush black-and-white marble en suite shower room with high-end toiletries, fluffy towels, dressing gowns, branded slippers and a hairdryer. But at just 7ft long, it's a tight space. The cabin contains deep blue leather notebooks, along with our itinerary.

The train has the exuberance of Italy in the 1960s – think wood-beamed ceilings, burnt orange and purple tones, diamond-shaped tiles and smoked mirrors. It travels at a maximum speed of 50mph, allowing us to soak up the breathtaking scenery, constantly changing from terracotta-roofed towns to fields framed by the glittering Tyrrhenian Sea.

Once familiarised, we head to the dining carriage for lunch, where chef Heinz Beck serves a six-course lunch, including smoked gnocchi with shellfish, stuffed veal fillet with pistachio crust and panzanella salad.

A team of 30 look after guests' every demand. Champagne in your suite? No problem. Board games in the bar? They arrive two minutes later. Breakfast in bed? Of course.

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The golden age of train travel has well and truly returned.

TRAVEL FACTS

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THE BEST NEW ROUTES IN EUROPE – AND SOME OLD FAVOURITES TOO

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- The El Transcantabrico Gran Lujo offers an eight-day trip between San Sebastian and Santiago de Compostela in northern Spain, stopping at Bilbao, Santander and Santillana del Mar, from £8,007pp (eltrentranscantabrico.com).
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- The original Orient Express will whisk travellers along the old route in restored carriages between Paris and Istanbul from next year (orient-express.com).

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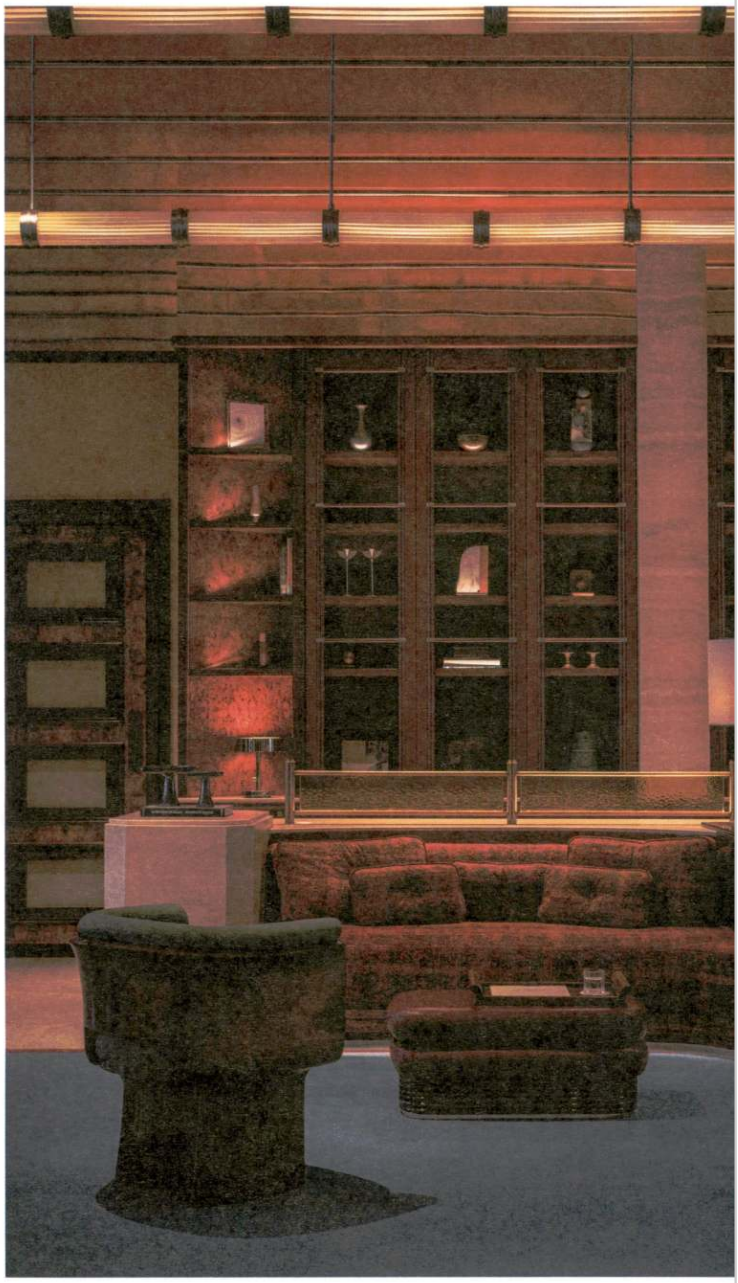
Mini rail cruises

After extensive restoration and restyling work, La Dolce Vita Orient Express train offers refined atmospheres and slow adventures through the Italian landscape and culture



Often on an exploratory vacation, the time spent traveling is as important as the destinations. In the itineraries made possible by La Dolce Vita train, the means of transportation also counts. The first train under the Orient Express brand, launched in Rome Ostiense at the beginning of April by Arsenale and Orient Express with the support of Fondazione FS Italiane and FS Treni Turistici Italiani of the FS Group, takes its guests to visit Montalcino, the medieval village, the vineyards, the wineries, and returns to Rome in two days. A slow journey, of just over 200 kilometers, through history, landscape, culture, and gastronomy that seeks a different dimension, and speed, for international luxury tourism, starting with life on board. The train, designed and built in Italy, has 31 cabins in its 12 carriages, including 12 deluxe cabins and 19 suites, for only 62 passengers, and of course, as in the classic imagery of cinema and literature, refined bar and restaurant carriages, where the themed menus are curated by the Michelin-starred chef Heinz Beck. The interiors, based on a design by Dimorestudio, reveal a well-reasoned layering of the inspiring themes: slow travel on railway routes, the manufacturing experience of Made in Italy, the masterfully creative legacy of the masters of Italian design from the 1960s,

IFDM Wonder Book

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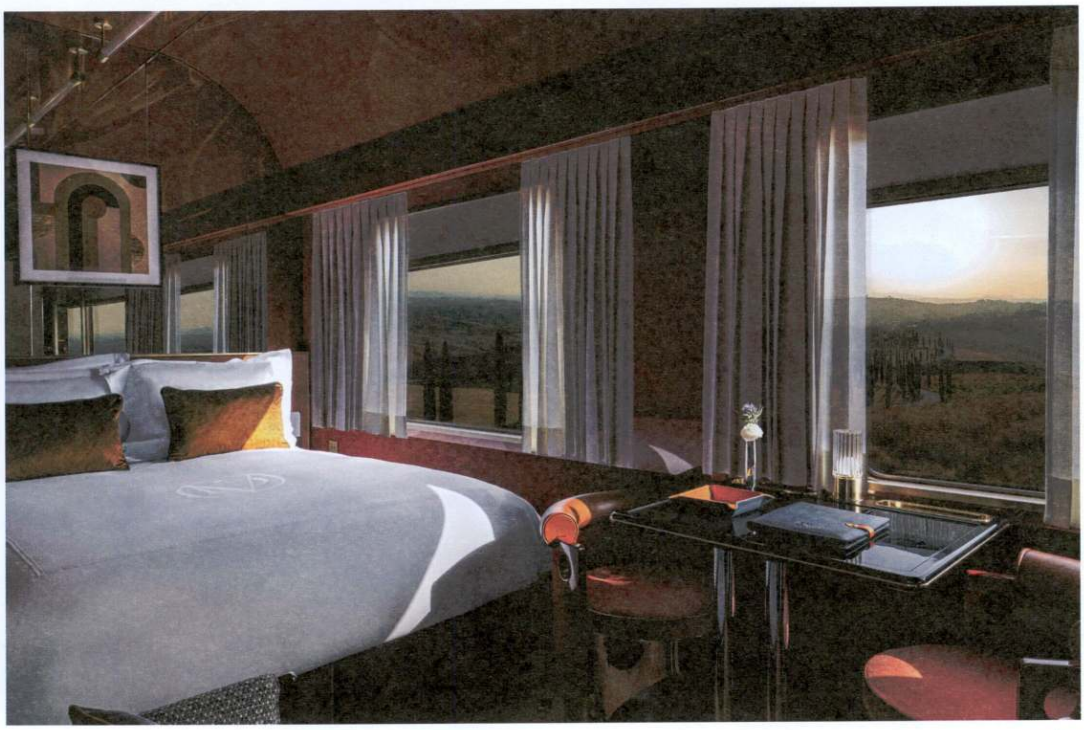
Owner and operator: Arsenale, Orient Express
Interior design: Dimorestudio, Hugo Toro (Orient Express Lounge)
Furnishings and lighting: custom made

Author: Alessandra Bergamini
Photo credits: Mr.Tripper



the balance between functionality and decoration, the homage to the Roman 'Dolce Vita' and to artists such as Capogrossi, Bonalumi and Castellani, the custom-designed lamps and furnishings. The refined work of selecting and combining precious materials, walnut wood and velvets, lacquered surfaces, brass details, alternating glossy and matte finishes, becomes part of a language of contemporary translation of the almost legendary environments of the Orient Express. The original Z1 model carriages have been restored with great care and considerable resources by companies from Southern Italy specializing in railway processing and design, with work carried out between CPL in Brindisi and Omer in Carini, Palermo. With the 6 trains planned, operating only in Italy, and 8 itineraries in 14 regions, the investors' goal is to create the largest private fleet in the world that can offer travelers destinations not only in cities with high tourist traffic such as Venice, Rome, Palermo, but also in more select centers of attraction such as Monferrato, Portofino, Siena, Matera, Maratea, Taormina.

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25 Luxurious New Hotels To Know In 2025

By Olivia Emily & Lauren Ho
5 Days Ago

The hottest new spots across the globe

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Hjortviken – Gothenburg, Sweden

Planning your 2025 adventures? If a brand spanking new hotel is on your bucket list, check out these shiny spots that have just opened or are still to come in 2025…

25 Hot New Hotels For 2025

Close

La Dolce Vita Orient Express Suite

25 Of 25

La Dolce Vita Orient Express

For luxury on the tracks, La Dolce Vita Orient Express will embark on its maiden journey in 2025, comprising 12 carriages and whisking up to 62 passengers through Italy's most beautiful natural scenery. With it, Orient Express' first hotel, La Minerva Rome, will launch for the perfect start and end to each journey. Read all about it here.

BOOK IT

TRAVEL

7 classic Italian journeys, from Vespa rides to vintage trams

Exploring Italy using one of its iconic modes of transport makes for a journey just as thrilling as the destination itself.

Lake Como's vintage vaporinas are part-artwork, part-motorboat. The sightseeing mode of choice since the late 1900s, these vessels ferry visitors between opulent hotels, waterside towns and tucked-away villas in high style.
PHOTOGRAPH BY GUIDUARTE, AWL IMAGES

By Alicia Millar
August 16, 2025

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

Italy hasn't stopped moving since the Romans began building their extensive road network, and the country has a penchant for speed and drama — despite its reputation for a slow, savoured approach to life. Whether you choose to board a plucky Vespa or a zippy vaporino, ride a poker-red Ferrari or a sky-scraping cableway, this way of exploring brings a fresh perspective and up-close interaction with some masterful examples of Italian craftsmanship.

Lake Como by vaporina

Dark varnished wood, buffed to a bar-top lustre; curvaceous metallic detailing, glinting under sunlight; cushy leather banquettes, for kicking back with an icy glass — Lake Como's vintage vaporinas are part-artwork, part-motorboat. The sightseeing mode of choice since the late 1900s, these vessels ferry visitors between opulent hotels, waterside towns and tucked-away villas in high style. Operators like Como Classic Boats offer driver-guides who'll zoom you across the peak-ringed expanse of blue, pointing out landmarks such as palatial Villa del Balbianello, featured in the James Bond film Casino Royale. One-hour tour from €370 (£314).

Tuscany by Vespa

Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck's 1953 film Roman Holiday made the Italian scooter world famous, and the vehicle retains plenty of star power today. Its 1940s-era design has barely changed over the decades, and the region that manufactures them has a similarly timeless appeal. Get behind the handlebars on a day-long guided trip with Tuscany Vespa Tours. Its 20-mile route zooms past Chianti vineyards and cypress trees, and it includes a stop for lunch and an olive oil tasting. From €95 (£82) per person.

Amazing #1 Car Scratch Remover Removes Scratches In 30 Seconds With No Tools... [READ MORE]
Herbeauty

Whether you choose to board a plucky Vespa or a sky-scraping cableway, get an up-close interaction with some masterful examples of Italian craftsmanship.
PHOTOGRAPH BY LEE FROST, AWL IMAGES

Turin by vintage tram

Board Turin's number seven tram line and you might think you've entered a time machine. Its beautifully preserved cars — built variously between 1910 and the 1950s — take passengers past handsome baroque buildings, the gleaming windows of 19th-century Porta Nuova station and the Renaissance-era Duomo. Settle in for the full loop, around an hour, or hop on and off for gallery visits and pit stops at art nouveau cafés — its circular route is perfect for laid-back sightseeing and a bargain, too, priced the same as a standard Turin transport ticket. Tickets from €1.90 (£1.60).

Matera by luxury train

In April, Orient Express launched its La Dolce Vita service, putting Italy at the forefront of a new age in luxury rail travel. Effectively a high-end boutique hotel on tracks, its seven passenger carriages are replete with nods to mid-century Italian design, from polished metallics to exquisite fabrics in juicy hues. Kick back in the dining car — order a negroni or a dish from a menu designed by lauded chef Heinz Beck — while watching the scenery slip by on the way to the mountaintop, UNESCO-listed city of Matera, home to ancient cave dwellings cut from tufa stone. Two-night Rome-Matera trip from €5,780 (£4,990) per person.

Emilia-Romagna by Ferrari

This region is famously the home of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese, Parma ham and balsamic vinegar — unless you're a petrolhead, in which case you'll know it as the birthplace of the Ferrari. Supercar fans flock to the city of Maranello to visit the official Ferrari Museum (€27/£23), while 12 miles north is the Autodromo di Modena (two laps from €704/£607) circuit, where you can get behind the wheel yourself. Even better is the chance to test drive a Ferrari in the Modena Apennines, feeling the guttural roar of the engine as you tackle hair-raising hairpins and pass forested hamlets in a blur. 10km (just over six miles) test drive from €190 (£163).

Capri by yacht

Beloved by a 1960s jet set that included Grace Kelly and Sophia Loren, the sunny island of Capri — off the southerly Amalfi and Sorrento Coasts — has long been a byword for glamour. Its rugged coastline and hidden caves, framed by glittering waters in variegated blues and greens, are best explored by yacht — but you needn't be in possession of an A-list budget. Capri Island Tour has a kicky styled traditional gozzo boats, available for private hire by the hour or day. Two-hour private tour from €390 (£163).

Aosta Valley by cable car

Floating above the plunging valleys, Alpine meadows and ashen peaks of the Aosta Valley, Skyway Monte Bianco sets out from Courmayeur to ferry visitors to Italy's highest accessible point — Punta Helbronner, an eye-watering 11,370ft above sea level — and views to the snow-capped summit of Mont Blanc, just over the French border. On your way back, stop at the halfway Pavilion station to visit boundary-pushing Cave Mont Blanc, home to some of Europe's highest vineyards and an experimental high-altitude winery. Round trip Courmayeur-Punta Helbronner from €58 (£50).

Legend of the Titanic: Tickets
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Summer 2025
Issue No. 3
Passport
The adventure issue

THE HOT LIST

Five adventures to get excited about this summer

Below: The Master Room at JK Place Roma, Italy

1. New Italian escapes

Italy is always *in vogue*, but 2025 promises to be its most exciting year yet. The Orient Express La Dolce Vita train has just launched, offering a nostalgic route from Rome to Venice in classic Italian style. This reimagined, ultra-luxurious experience celebrates the romance of train travel with a journey that showcases Italy's most alluring landscapes. For city explorers, Italy's newest hotels offer the perfect base. Opening later this year, Six Senses Milan is the ultimate sanctuary for unwinding after a day spent uncovering the city's hidden spots. In Rome, the much-anticipated openings of JK Place Roma Maison and La Minerva place you right in the heart of the Eternal City. Our insider experts can arrange private tours to skip the crowds at the Vatican Museum or show you the best of the Umbrian countryside — our perfect pairing to any Roman holiday.

POSTCARD from...

Italy is on everyone's radar for 2025 as the country gears up to celebrate the once-every-25-years Jubilee, when Catholics flock to Rome to receive forgiveness for their sins. Rome will be buzzing but for every Italian hotspot there is a similar, undiscovered region instead of Tuscany, try the rolling hills of Umbria. Skip Lake Como and head to spectacular Lake Garda. Already done the Amalfi Coast? Discover farm-to-table cuisine and uncrowded beaches in Puglia.

Julie Durso, Scott Dunn Private

Above: Experience glacier paddleboarding and coastal views at Fawn Bluff, British Columbia, Canada

2. Into the Canadian wild

Accessible only by seaplane or helicopter, Fawn Bluff is an ultra-remote retreat committed to preserving the raw beauty of British Columbia's Bute Inlet and its sacred connection to the Homalco First Nation. The 310-acre estate offers rustic lodges with coastal views, secluded bays and the Great Bear Rainforest right on your doorstep. Here, sightseeing takes on a whole new meaning, with ocean safaris offering the chance to spot orcas, humpback whales, dolphins and sea lions.

The experience here is designed to blend seamlessly with nature, whether you're tracking wildlife with expert guides, paddleboarding on glacial lakes or unwinding by a crackling fire with a glass of BC's finest. For a breath-taking perspective, we recommend a tailored helicopter adventure, followed by guided bear tracking in the heart of the wilderness. The autumn salmon run, when grizzlies gather around fast-flowing rivers to fish, is the best time to visit — an unforgettable finale to your Canadian adventure.

Arundhati Roy My fugitive childhood

Saturday

Exclusive extract

Indian BBQ veg recipes

The Guardian

Saturday
23 August 2025
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Noel Clarke loses landmark libel case against Guardian

Judge rejects accusation that sexual misconduct claims by over 20 women were false

High court rules newspaper succeeded in defences of truth and public interest

Haroon Siddique
Caroline Davies

The Guardian has successfully defended a libel action brought by Noel Clarke over an investigation in which the actor was accused of sexual misconduct by more than 20 women.

In a landmark high court judgment handed down yesterday, Mrs Justice Steyn rejected Clarke's claims, and ruled the newspaper had succeeded in both its defences of truth and public interest.

Clarke had claimed the allegations in the Guardian's investigation were false and that he had been the victim of an unlawful conspiracy. In her ruling, Steyn said she accepted some of Clarke's evidence, "but overall I find that he was not a credible or reliable witness". His "general pattern" was "of only being prepared to admit that which was established by documentary evidence (which he had carefully studied), and even then only to the minimum extent shown".

She said there had been no conspiracy to lie by 2

PHOTOGRAPH: JAMES VENUS/SHUTTERSTOCK

UN-backed experts declare famine in Gaza City that is 'entirely man-made'

IPC says an immediate response is needed and warns deteriorating conditions threaten an exponential increase in deaths. Page 10 →

The bar car on the new La Dolce Vita Orient Express has been designed to evoke the glamour of the 1960s

It comes at a steep price, but the remodelled luxury train now immerses passengers in the country's culture as well as passing through stunning scenery

A taste of la dolce vita on Italy's revived Orient Express

Words: Angela Giuffrida

MR TRIPPER

"If anyone mysteriously vanishes, I can be Poirot," said the passenger from India, twirling his moustache. It felt as though the spirit of Agatha Christie's most famous character – best known for solving the Murder on the Orient Express – was lingering in the breeze at Palermo's sublime botanical garden, which had been transformed into a makeshift waiting room for the 40 or so travellers about to board an Italian replica of the fabled train.

Sipping espresso and sampling *cannoli*, the classic Sicilian pastry, the curiosity and suspicion for which Poirot is famous was palpable as the passengers subtly sized each other up. But the only mystery waiting to be unravelled over the next couple of days was whether their Rome-bound journey on La Dolce Vita Orient Express would live up to their dreamy expectations.

The sleeper rolled into service in April with the aim of reviving the glamour of the original train, as well as the romanticised notion of Italy's *dolce vita*, or "sweet life", not to mention tapping into the resurgence in demand for slow luxury travel.

Comprising refurbished carriages formerly in service on Italy's railway in the 1960s, the train has spent the last few months taking passengers on various journeys: through Tuscany's wine region, to Venice and along the Ligurian coast – all of them sold out.

Now the Dolce Vita has ventured south, and the Guardian was invited to experience its debut voyage from Palermo, Sicily, to the Italian capital.

The original Orient Express made its initial journey in 1883, and crossed much of Europe on long-distance itineraries stretching from Paris to Istanbul, before reaching the end of the line in 2009, the victim of both high-speed rail and low-cost flights.

But various offspring kept its legacy alive, with passengers still hungry for high-end nostalgic escapades far

Christ the Redeemer statue in the town of Maratea, left, on the Palermo-Rome route. La Dolce Vita Lounge at Roma station, below left, and a deluxe train cabin, below right

from the chaos of airports and overcrowded tourist hotspots.

"The ultra-high-end market is constantly growing and demand for rail experiences is developing in a significant way," said Dario Minutella, a luxury and fashion sector analyst at the management consultancy firm Kearney. "But it's not just the preserve of millionaires or billionaires. There are many people with the time and resources seeking an experience, and Italy, with its long coastline and beautiful landscapes beyond the big cities, provides the perfect package."

At Palermo station, we were greeted by Stefano Sgambellone, the Dolce Vita's train manager, and his team of impeccably dressed staff.

"In 1883, the Orient Express became the first way to travel slowly, in luxury," said Sgambellone, who for years worked for Venice Simplon-Orient-Express (VSOE), a luxury rail service with a range of European routes. "Today, slow travel is even more popular than it was then."

While the focus of VSOE is primarily the onboard experience, the Dolce Vita itinerary also includes off-board jaunts and experiences across its 10 Italy-only itineraries, such as learning to cook a local dish, exploring off-the-beaten-track medieval towns and dining in a private Venetian home.

"People are choosing the Dolce Vita not only for the train itself, which is beautiful, but because it's the best way to discover Italy," said Sgambellone.

The train's whistle blew at 10.30am, and we departed Palermo. It then glided along Sicily's sparkling northern coastline, passing the town of Cefalù and the city of Messina, offering distant views of Salina, one of the Aeolian islands, along the way.

Lunch has been curated by Heinz Beck, owner of the three-Michelin-starred La Pergola restaurant in Rome. In the afternoon, the train stopped in the Sicilian hilltop town of Taormina, where passengers had the opportunity to explore its ancient Greek theatre.

'The train is not only beautiful, it's also the best way to discover Italy'

The Dolce Vita initiative, with plans for a fleet of six trains, is a collaboration between Orient Express, the brand part-owned by the French hospitality group Accor; Arsenale, an Italian luxury hospitality company; and the heritage arm of Italy's state railway, Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane.

Itineraries are between one and three nights onboard, and needless to say, they do not come cheap,starting at €3,060 per person for a two-day/one-night trip into the heart of Tuscany's wine region, to more than double that for the three-day/two-night trips.

The luxury train is not the only service that has benefited from FS Italiane's project to revive abandoned rail tracks. A network of historic routes has opened up under its Timeless Tracks initiative, offering a cheap way to explore Italy's less visited areas, such as the highlands and hidden hamlets of Abruzzo or the mountains of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, while promoting sustainable tourism. Tickets for these shorter trips start at just €5. There has also been a renewed focus on sleeper train services.

The passengers on this trip had come from all over the world. There was the family from India seeking a once-in-a-lifetime experience; another, from Scotland, celebrating a milestone birthday. There was the US author, the Italian ambassador and the Parisian couple who are seasoned long-distance train travellers.

It was also the first time that Britt Moran and Emiliano Salci, the architects from the Milan-based Dimorestudio who designed Dolce's 1960s-inspired cabins, restaurant and bar, had travelled on the train.

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After a night onboard in Sicily, the carriages were loaded on to a privately chartered ferry for the 30-minute crossing to the mainland. From there, the train headed up the coast of Calabria and towards Maratea, where it made another afternoon stop, before departing for Rome in the evening.

When the Dolce Vita arrived at Ostiense station the next morning, all the passengers appeared to be satisfied. While they boarded the train as strangers, running the risk of animosity in such a confined space for two days, they disembarked as friends.

The trip was provided by La Dolce Vita Orient Express (orient-express.com); the three-day/two-night Sicily to Rome trip starts at €11,280 per person (the reverse Rome to Sicily trip starts at €9,440)

M8 TRIPPER; NURPHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

Puzzle solutions

(puzzles on page 78)

Answers to quiz
by Thomas Eaton

1 *Badminton shuttlecock.*
2 *Ozone layer.*
3 *George (Enid Blyton books).*
4 *Rugby.*
5 *Celine Dion.*
6 *Cairngorms.*
7 *Elephants (male).*
8 *Martin Luther.*
9 *New Unesco world heritage sites in 2025.*
10 *Women in main narrative of the Bayeux tapestry.*
11 *Reservoirs in or supplying London.*
12 *Prison islands/penal colonies: France; French Guiana; US; South Africa; Russia.*
13 *Foss: Foss river; Fossa; Fosse Way; Bob Fosse.*
14 *Mythological birds: Egyptian; Roman; Hindu; Norse; Jewish.*
15 *Cosmetics brands founded by singers/celebs: Rihanna; Lady Gaga; Harry Styles; Selena Gomez; Ariana Grande.*

Answers to Weekend Crossword
by Sy

Italy holidays

'I'll be Poirot': the Orient Express is back – but what is it like to ride?

The bar car on the new La Dolce Vita Orient Express has been designed to evoke the glamour of the 1960s

It comes at a steep price, but the remodelled luxury train from Sicily to Rome immerses passengers in the country's culture as well as passing through stunning scenery

Angela Giuffrida
Mon 25 Aug 2025 07.00 BST

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Christ the Redeemer statue in the town of Maratea on the Tyrrhenian coast. Photograph: Raffaele Celli/Getty Images

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> *After lunch on board curated by a three-star Michelin chef, we stop at Taormina to explore its ancient Greek theatre*

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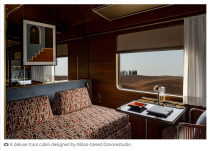

A deluxe train cabin designed by Milan-based Dimorestudio

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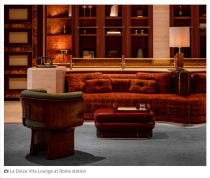

La Dolce Vita Lounge at Roma station

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INSPIRATION

This Italian train journey is a testament to aesthetic travel, beyond the trends

Aboard *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*, Sarah Allard finds that the art and decor are as important as the itineraries and food

BY SARAH ALLARD
25 August 2025

Alice Lay

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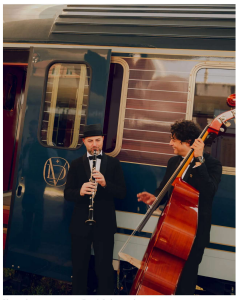
It's a dull, grey day in Rome, but as I step inside *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*'s lounge, a dedicated space for passengers inside the city's Ostiense Station, the gloom lifts. The glossy yellow ceiling creates a sense of sunlight flooding the room, Murano-glass tube lights line the walls in rhythmic rows, casting a golden glow. My bags vanish into the hands of a snappily dressed porter. As I settle into one of the burnt orange sofas, a kind server hands me a cappuccino in crisp porcelain adorned with the *Orient Express* emblem in blue. The journey has already begun – and that's precisely the point.

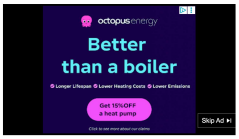
The lounge is the first hint of the centrality of design to the latest venture from the French hospitality brand Accor, which has collaborated with the Italian luxury travel company Arsenale Group to revive the *Orient Express*, the storied train line that journeyed across Europe for 126 years before shuttering in 2009. *La Dolce Vita Orient Express* launched in April as the first of what will become a six-train fleet with 12 carriages that can carry 62 guests around Italy on one-, two-, and three-night journeys, my voyage will take me to Venice and Portofino. "What attracted me to this project was the idea of creating a journey while remaining still," says Hugo Toro, the French-Mexican architect behind the lounge.



Live music greets passengers at Rome's Ostiense station Alice Lay

Immersive, emotionally resonant design is part of *Orient Express*'s DNA, which was known for its opulent white-tablecloth dining carts and gilded carriages. The new-look train, by Milan-based Dimorestudio, is a glossy midnight blue that stands out among the commuter trains on the platform. It's an homage to midcentury Italian glamour but attuned to the tastes of the creative directors, entrepreneurs, and celebrities who will ride it today. The rich velvets and considered patterns are both chic and comfortable. Nothing is overdone, but being on board feels like a special occasion. (There are no dress codes, but I did make a point to wear heels at dinner each night.) Every cabin, corridor, and common space has been meticulously reimagined by Dimorestudio's Britt Moran and Emiliano Salci, known for their emotive layering in locations like London's famed Arts Club. Moments after I've boarded, I'm handed a glass of Franciacorta, which I sip in one of the bar car's neat retro booths while taking in its diamond-shaped motifs and warm jewel tones. "It's a place where geometry and atmosphere meet," says Moran. "We imagined it as the setting for a quiet moment at sunset, with curved lines and sharp details guiding the eye like a stage."

WATCH
A Postcard from the Amalfi Coast



Like Toro, Moran and Salci embraced the brief while staying true to their own creative ethos. The bold patterns reference the Indiscreto screens they sell through Dimoremilano, their luxury furniture line. "Designing a train meant crafting a journey, not just a space," says Salci. The snug corridors encourage passengers to mingle. At breakfast, I swap stories with a dapper gentleman at the table beside me; at night in the bar car, the Italian passengers cheerfully share the lyrics to "Tu Vuò Fà L'Americano" so I can join an impromptu sing-along. But the train's design also invites us to admire the sights outside out the window – like the moment near Venice when the sprawling green of Veneto suddenly gives way to the Mediterranean.

The Italian countryside as seen from the dining car Alice Lay

Pulling into Santa Margherita Station in Liguria Alice Lay

The marriage of form and function reaches its peak in the cabins. Mine has undulating wood panelling, moody lighting, and a vanity so thoughtfully conceived it should be a design-school case study. There's space for everything, from hair dryers to travel clutter, all of which can be tucked discreetly into custom cabinetry. "We approached functionality as part of the aesthetic, not as a compromise," says Salci. "Every element had to contribute to the emotional and visual experience."

Over 48 hours, I fill my camera roll with details: the glint of cutlery in the dining car, the angle of a light fixture catching the dusk. But what lingers afterward is the way the train has become a conduit for connection. "We weren't just designing interiors," Salci tells me. "We were building a moving world, a stage for personal stories."

This article appeared in the September/October 2025 issue of Condé Nast Traveler. *Subscribe to the magazine here.*

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Aline Asmar d'Amman on Turning One of Venice's Most Opulent Homes Into the Orient Express

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Aline Asmar d'Amman on Turning One of Venice's Most Opulent Homes Into the Orient Express In an exclusive interview with WWD, the Lebanese-born, Paris-based architect and designer says her latest luxury hospitality project took eight years and involved the help of skilled divers. By Plus Icon Sofia Celeste Senior Correspondent, Home and Interiors Recent Articles by Sofia Celeste September 4, 2025, 12:08pm 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 Growing up during the Lebanese Civil War, famed architect and designer Aline Asmar d'Amman was often cozied in her room, her nose buried in a book to dampen the noise from the bombs outside. One of those stories transported her to a world she would one day come to know quite well. It was an essay written by Russian American writer Joseph Brodsky, who wrote awe inspiring prose on Venice, its charm and treasures. Little did she know that when she was all grown up, she would spend almost a decade envisaging and executing the renovation of one of the city's most historic palaces, Palazzo Donà Giovannelli, a noble residence built in 1436. Its original design was led by master architect Filippo Calendario, one of the visionaries responsible for the design of Palazzo Ducale, the ancient seat of the Venetian Republic (Doge's Palace). Related Articles Watches EXCLUSIVE: Zenith Teams Up With USM Modular Furniture for Retrofuturist Watch Collaboration Interior Design Italy's Yachting

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Sector Braces for Tariff Impact Eight years ago, Arsenale Group asked her to turn an old Venetian residence into the hospitality world's latest gem with the Orient Express. Orient Express joined Arsenale in 2022 on the Palazzo Dona Giovannelli project. Asmar d'Amman is also currently working with its owner Arsenale Group on the Dream of the Desert train, the Gulf region's first luxury travel vessel. "I remember my encounter with Paolo Barletta when I entered the palazzo for the first time. There was dust in the air and rays of light, and it was a suspended moment," she reminisces. You May Also Like Inside the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli. Courtesy of Orient Express It wasn't the first time Asmar d'Amman has worked on a hotel. Before Karl Lagerfeld's death, she led the artistic direction of the renovation of Paris' Hôtel de Crillon, elevating it to a modern, regal glory. With her studio Culture in Architecture, she was in charge of designing its exceptional suites and historical salons. She also worked as the architect to Lagerfeld on the hotel's Les Grands Appartements, which were outfitted with crystal chandeliers, marble baths, Lit à la Polonaise canopy beds, and 18th-century double doors that were originally designed for the Royal Opera House of Bordeaux. Orient Express' latest location tells Venice's history. It's brimming with defining characteristics and historic relics, like the octagonal staircase added to the site by 19th-century architect Giovanni Battista Meduna. Meduna is famous for other cultural landmarks like the Ca' d'Oro and the city's La Fenice theatre. It also houses the baroque Sala Vittoria, originally created for the 1548 wedding between the Duke D'Urbino's son, Guidobaldo II della Rovere, and Princess Vittoria Farnese, the Library of Cultures adorned gilded wood accented with lapis lazuli as well as a music room, frequented by generations of Venetian high society. When it officially opens April 1, guests of the hotel will be privy to a rare Venetian welcome. They will begin their journey by private boat and will enter the venue through a 15th-century Gothic portal on the canal or through a discreet doorway into the Santa Fosca secret garden. An Arduous Task The revamp process, however, was hardly a romantic endeavor. At times, the work was tedious and involved a team of experts including a supervisor from the Culture Ministry, engineers, patrimonial architects and many artisans. At the start, the project required building a damn to drain the water from the facade. A team of divers excavated the stones of the underwater foundation and inserted each one with a straw to extract the water inside, over hundreds of meters around the canals to dry, she recalls. The stones that make up the walls and floors from the ground level were also treated one by one: Each one was removed then numbered, soaked in basins of electrified salt water to also remove the salt from the stones, she recalls. "And this is where I think about Joseph Brodsky, because he has this most beautiful sentence about the stones of Venice looking like the flesh of time. And he said, every surface carves dust because dust is the flesh of time," she says, adding that the excavation team unearthed a well in the courtyard that could date back to the origins of Venice. Orient Express Venice, Palazzo Donà Giovannelli Jeremy Zaessinger In the 1800s, the palazzo functioned as a Pinacoteca housed the 15th- and 16th-century painter Giorgione's "Tempesta." Meduna controversially sought to block the natural light emanating through the neo

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Gothic arches on the main facade, in an attempt to protect the famed painting. The Tempesta is now housed in Venice's Gallerie dell'Accademia. Asmar d'Amman is careful to point out that she stayed true to the work of both Calendario and Meduna. The spaces have been entirely transformed, some new surface layers have been added, yet every new addition was carefully thought out, with the ultimate goal of creating liveable hospitality scenes that dialogue with a historic past. "These salons have six-meter high ceilings and frescoes on the wall you can't really touch. They also have decor on the ceilings you can't really touch. They're not only elements of heritage but also of wonder, balancing east and west, orientalist influence with the finest craftsmanship, speaking to Venice's rich history of cultural exchange and artistic innovation," she says, stressing the intent to respect its origins as a home, while transforming five historical salons into five exclusive suites. If These Walls Could Talk You have to keep the soul intact, otherwise you would miss out on the fact that this was a grand home of the Donà then the Giovannelli families and that was passed to the Duke D'Urbino - all of them great patrons of the arts. It was also a hub for intellectuals and scientists who were opposed to the oppression of the Austrian occupation that endured from 1797 to 1805 and again in 1815 to 1866. The latter part included the anti-Austrian movement. Some of the artistry inside, she says, embodies this era of resistance. "There are painted medallions of the scientists and the intellectuals who met here to reinforce the Italian spirit, contributing in their own way to the independence of Italy. They are met by the gaze of fierce goddesses painted on the ceilings - such as La Minerva, goddess of justice warfare and victory, and protector of the arts - bathed in [Giovanni Battista] Tiepolo and Tintoretto's [Jacopo Robusti] palette of lost colors. Strength and grace, architectural marvels and the mystery of whispered tales permeate the grounds with the power of transformative artistry," she muses. Aline Asmar d'Amman Orient Express As this is the 21st century, there will be some contemporary accents, like the photography of Sheila Metzner, who once worked with Lagerfeld on a Fendi campaign in the 90s and whom Asmar d'Amman contacted specifically for this project. Elsewhere, there will be a salute to one of Lagerfeld's favourite catwalk muses, and one of Venice's most revered residents, Luisa, Marchesa Casati Stampa di Soncino. Casati Stampa di Soncino inhabited Peggy Guggenheim's former home Palazzo Venier dei Leoni and infused Venice with 1920s glamour, wild parties with big band music and monkeys and filled it with famous guests like her lover, poet Gabriele D'Annunzio and visual artist Man Ray. Lagerfeld's memory and key advice was also with her throughout this project, especially when tackling the most complicated challenges. "We would spend hours on details or designing something and then, he always used to say 'corriger est plus important que faire' quoting [Charles Pierre] Baudelaire. It's a certain état d'esprit or mindset that means reworking relentlessly is more important than just doing it." Painted ceilings inside the Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli. Courtesy of Orient Express Tags

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How the 'Train Case' Became Luggage's Newest, Most Elegant Trend — Embodying the Daring New Age of Rail Travel

2025 is witnessing the grand revival of train journeys: the retro-futuristic design of this sleek accessory alone captures their craftsmanship-led rebirth

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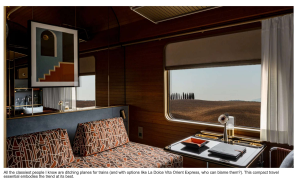

All the obsessed people I know are plotting plans for trains (and with options like La Dolce Vita Orient Express, who can blame them?). This compact travel essential embodies the mood all to itself.

(Image credit: © 5th. TRIPPER. Design: Cinnamon&Jo)

BY DAISY BRAND PUBLISHED 19/07/2025 LAST UPDATED 20/07/2025

On September 27, exactly 208 years will have passed since George Stephenson's Locomotion No. 1, the world's first public passenger steam railway, completed its inaugural journey between Shildon, Darlington, and Stockton, northeastern England, marking the beginning of the Golden Age of train travel — a modern invention that continues to revolutionize how we live even today.

From the unveiling of Italy's debut luxury train, La Dolce Vita Orient Express, whose dazzling interiors ooze with 1960s glamour, and that of Belmond's Britannic Explorer, a sumptuous overnight sleeper stopping off at multiple locations across the UK, to a handful of affordable railway services ranking the connection between central Italy and the French Riviera as easy and scenic as it's ever been, and further international solutions rumored to commence operation in the coming years, it's official: a new era of train travel is here.

After two decades of low-cost plane fares, a return to a slower, more intentional way of conceiving the travel experience is underway. The design reboot of long-distance trains, then, isn't simply coincidental. Instead, it reflects the longing of modern globetrotters for a transportative journey that, stretching well beyond the duration of a weekend, pays attention to the talent of details: from the plethora of artistic references that converge into these sleepers' retro-inspired couches and the food, drinks, and entertainment offered aboard along the way, to the travel essentials that the style set themselves decide to carry on board of those trains.

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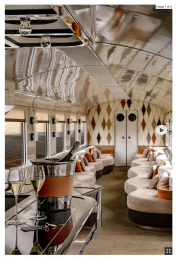
People might mistake the rise of these cinematic, [period-set rides](#) for a desire to turn back time, at least symbolically, by reaching for the past. But if the suggestively decorated carriages of La Dolce Vita Orient Express and the Britannic Explorer show anything, it is that, in conceiving their interiors, the designers at [Dimorestudio](#) and [Alfonso Nava](#), respectively, allowed the best of yesterday to enter into dialogue with the best of today.



A peek inside La Dolce Vita Orient Express and its 1960s splendor.
(Image credit: © 5th. TRIPPER. Design: Cinnamon&Jo)

The creative vision behind them is best embodied by one of the travel must-haves that populate these overnight services, namely the train case. Take, for example, the aluminum-clad one dreamed up by American lifestyle house [TUMI](#): practical, timeless, and elevated, this handy luggage accessory wins — like these 'moving' capsule hotels — on modest dimensions to store and safely transport our most cherished belongings.

Compared to more generously sized bags (or, in the case of sleepers, accommodations), it prompts us to reconsider our true needs, valuing quality over quantity. The modern train traveler thus prefers to pack lower hand-picked, classy, and artisanally crafted objects rather than a wider, yet less curated selection of items. It is a mindset that invites us to shed the wasteful in embrace linear elegance, just like choosing rail transport instead of flying allows us to cut back on emissions while simultaneously enabling us to reconnect with the beauty of our surroundings over a longer-lasting ride.

The train case embodies the philosophy at the heart of luxury train travel as a whole, where anything from a cabin aboard to the themed ambiance exuded by the painstakingly executed designs all around it feels as exclusive as tailor-made, envisioned especially for you. Created with the discerning globetrotter in mind, the TUMI train case comes with removable magnetic dividers that make room for personalized organization, and can house your choice of fragrance, jewelry, and toiletries in an easy-to-find place.

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Ironically to the [road-unfriendly](#) that typifies the inside of La Dolce Vita Orient Express — unable to move, it certainly flatters about it — the chrome case shell brings a touch of light into the game, offering sterling [color trends](#) with a wavy, textured surface that won't cease to impress. But it doesn't just do that. Rather, with the wear and tear, scratches, nicks, and dings bound to appear on its undulating surface, it captures what this new age of rail travel is all about — passing our online activity to give in to encounters, explorations, and interactions that leave a mark beyond the algorithm.

TUMI
19 Degree Aluminium Train Case
$1,795 AT TUMI

TUMI
19 Degree Aluminium Sunglass Case
$595 AT TUMI

TUMI
19 Degree Aluminium Briefcase
$1,795 AT TUMI

When traveling, I often make the mistake of putting some of my most precious items (jewelry, cosmetics, perfume) at the bottom of my bag. This doesn't just make them hard to find, but it also leads me to question if I've actually packed the right item in the first place, leading to stress I could have easily avoided had I remembered to transport them separately. Measuring 24 H x 35 W x 16 D cm and weighing just 4.13 kg, the aluminium shell of TUMI's Train Case promises you with bump-resistant storage for all of your most delicate essentials; it comes with concealed tie straps for a more streamlined, tidy travel setup, and can be nested an top of your carry-on to ensure no-fuss, hassle-free.

Sunglasses are, for obvious reasons, one of those travel accessories you want to be sure to have packed, and have packed safely, when hopping on a train to your favorite destination. Imbued with the same 19 Degree Aluminium finish as the Train Case and the [13 Degree Aluminium Collection](#) as a whole, this jewel-like design will look after both your shades and daily eyewear throughout your journey. Measuring 6 H x 15 W x 5 D cm, the TUMI flip-top sunglass case, this TUMI alternative is complemented with a magnetic latch system opening, soft-touch inner lining, and cleaning cloth.

Long before the design-driven makeover of international train travel, the railway moment has always had professional commuters as its most devoted travelers. This desk, dreamy TUMI briefcase puts a spin on the classic leather and fabric models, turning even the most infamous portion of our work's routine (read: commute) into an aspirational moment, with a timeless design. Then, in addition to the leather-embossed top carry handle, means it can be worn to reflect your mood and outfit, while its pockets (including file and card storage) and pen loops for your tech accessories keep/s merry productivity with organization while never overlooking style.

TUMI
19 Degree Aluminium Compact Carry-On
$1,295 AT TUMI

TUMI
19 Degree Aluminium Watch Travel Case
$550 AT TUMI

TUMI
19 Degree Aluminium Backpack
$1,795 AT TUMI

If there's one thing that's great about train travel, it is that you don't have to pay for extra luggage allowance. Still, railway journeys should not be taken lightly, with allowing you to cut through waiting time at customs and conversing you to only pack the strictly necessary items for your trip. This handy Compact Carry-On (40.5H x 35W x 20D cm, weighing 4.24 kg) does just that, while, fitting under the seat of most airlines and trains, its retro-futuristic design marries the slightly nostalgic essence of the ongoing train travel revival with a rather feeling blend. Plus, it is fitted with multiple pockets and compartments for smooth organization. After a more traditional trolley? Check out TUMI 19 Degree Aluminium Compact Carry-On.

That the recent railway travel renaissance has got a timeless feel to it doesn't mean we shouldn't be able to tell what the time actually is when we're on the platform or enjoying the benefits of a business trip — the opposite, jokes aside, there is a connection between the growing popularity of train travel, particularly when considering its more luxurious interpretations, and a renewed interest in accessories like this this TUMI aluminium watch case, people might have previously considered a little bit too much for them. As more and more multi-day, Orient Express-inspired itineraries are unveiled across the world, potential guests are called to step up their globetrotting wardrobe, from the clothes to the interiors of their chosen carriages. Suddenly, even the smallest of luggage add-ons can become a status symbol.

When I became the owner of a chrome carry-on case, as trivial as that may sound, it changed everything. In the contemporary era, the rise of minimalism has given [rise to](#) rules that the way in which we travel — including what we wear while doing so, and how we wear it — can prove game-changing in extending the benefits of our getaway to the rest of our lives. That's why branded pieces like this TUMI case have to never been more covetable: because personality sits at the heart of the travel experience and can help us bring home as a shortcut into our personality for those around us. The modern globetrotter who chooses a train ride over a plane is dreaming, mindful, and playful. Their choices? Highly curated, like these are crafted with care to embody your personal aesthetic for many years to come.

The interiors-driven revamp of overnight train carriages and expansion of the existing railway networks is just one of the recent trends that reveal our urge for slower and more authentic lifestyle experiences. In the F&B realm, [the rise of matcha-inspired cafes](#) is rewriting the rules of hospitality design as we speak, by favoring spaces that make us feel nurtured, grounded, and present.

Gilda Bruno, LIFESTYLE EDITOR

Gilda Bruno is Livingetc's Lifestyle Editor. Before joining the team, she worked as an Editorial Assistant on the print edition of *Architectural Digest* and as a freelance Sub-Editor on the Life & Arts desk of the *Financial Times*. Between 2020 and today, Gilda's arts and culture writing has appeared in a number of books and publications including, fourteenwords's *Creative Business & Manufacturing: Above the Fashion Fixtures*, Frank Wright's kitchen monograph *The City of the Sun*, *The British Journal of Photography*, *DAZED*, *Dezeen*, *Elephant*, *The Face*, *Family Style*, *Frame*, *Il Giornale dell'Arte*, *KULCA*, *Hunger*, *i-D*, *INSIDE*, *Re-Edition*, *VICE*, *Vogue Italia*, and *Wallpaper*.

HOSPITALITY & CATERING NEWS

Simone Giorgi Appointed General Manager of Orient Express La Minerva, Rome

September 13, 2025

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Orient Express is pleased to announce the appointment of Simone Giorgi as General Manager of Orient Express La Minerva in Rome, effective October 1.

Simone Giorgi, General Manager of Orient Express La Minerva, Rome

With more than two decades of experience in luxury hospitality, Simone Giorgi brings a rare depth of leadership to one of Italy's most anticipated hotel openings. At the helm of the recently opened Orient Express La Minerva, the first hotel of the brand owned by Arsenale Group and developed in partnership with Orient Express, he will oversee strategic positioning, development, and day-to-day operations, with a vision rooted in excellence and timeless Italian hospitality.

Before leadership roles in some of Italy's most iconic addresses, Giorgi began his career in 2000 as Director of Food & Beverage at Park Hyatt Milano, then advancing to Director of Operations at Starhotels Italy in 2007, overseeing properties in Venice, Milan, Trieste, Paris, and New York. He later held General Manager roles at Il Salviatino in Florence, JK Place Capri, and Villa Cora. Since 2018, he has led Park Hyatt Milano as General Manager, while serving as Chairman of the Board of Feasibility for Hyatt in Italy. Awarded Hotelier of the Year 2024 by Virtuoso, he is celebrated for his singular ability to shape transformative guest experiences.

This appointment marks a key step in the Orient Express vision: to craft a journey through Italy that fuses elegance, discovery, and authenticity. From the immersive voyages aboard La Dolce Vita Orient Express luxury train to extraordinary stays in Rome and Venice, the brand continues to celebrate the art of travel.

"With the appointment of Simone Giorgi, we reinforce our commitment to Italy. His leadership will be instrumental in bringing the Orient Express philosophy to life in Rome, ensuring that our unique spirit of travel, refined and immersive, flourishes in the Città Eterna." said Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express.

Simone Giorgi Appointed General Manager Of Orient Express La Minerva

Giorgi's Appointment Officially Takes Effect On 1st October

Hospitality | Italy

WRITTEN BY : MARGA MANLAPIG

SEPTEMBER 12, 2025

Orient Express announced that, from 1st October, Simone Giorgi will be the new general manager at the Orient Express La Minerva in Rome.

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Meet Simone Giorgi

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SIMONE GIORGI APPOINTED GENERAL MANAGER OF ORIENT EXPRESS LA MINERVA, ROME

yesterday

Orient Express is pleased to announce the appointment of Simone Giorgi as General Manager of Orient Express La Minerva in Rome, effective October 1st.

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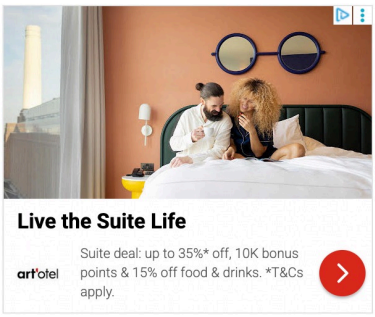


Orient Express La Minerva, ideally located in the heart of Rome, just steps from the Pantheon and Piazza Navona, Orient Express La Minerva opened its doors in April 2025 and revives aristocratic grandeur with a contemporary soul. Set within a 17th-century palazzo, on the lively piazza della Minerva, the hotel reclaims a storied address once favored by Grand Tour luminaries. From Stendhal to George Sand and Herman Melville, artists and thinkers found inspiration in its quiet elegance and perfect location. A beloved Roman landmark, the hotel has been meticulously restored by Artist-Architect Hugo Toro and invites guests to rediscover its historic charms with a modern touch. On the seventh floor, Gigi Rigolatto in Roma is a stunning rooftop restaurant and bar which breathtaking view over the Pantheon that radiates Riviera glamour, with a dash of flamboyance.

Simone Giorgi Takes the Helm at Orient Express La Minerva in Rome

by Editorial Team

Published 12 September 2025 at 09:07

Blending aristocratic grandeur with contemporary charm, the recently opened Orient Express La Minerva will write its chapters under the leadership of General Manager Simone Giorgi, who will bring his vision to this storied Roman palazzo nestled just steps from the Pantheon.

In the heart of Rome, where history intertwines with contemporary elegance, Orient Express La Minerva is crafting a fresh legacy in luxury hospitality. The appointment of Simone Giorgi as General Manager, effective October 1st, marks a pivotal moment in the hotel's journey to reimagine timeless Italian warmth and the art of travel.

With over two decades of leadership across Italy's most iconic addresses, Giorgi brings vision and a spirit of innovation to Orient Express La Minerva, the first hotel of the famed Orient Express brand owned by Arsenale Group and developed in partnership with Orient Express itself.

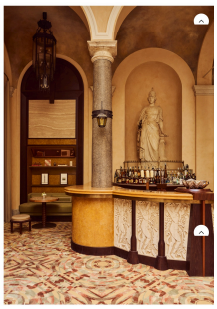
His career path reads as a masterclass in luxury hospitality — from his beginnings in 2000 as Director of Food & Beverage at Park Hyatt Milano to his recent tenure as General Manager of **Park Hyatt** Milano and Chairman of Hyatt's Board of Feasibility in Italy. Notably honoured as Virtuoso's Hotelier of the Year 2024, Giorgi's reputation for curating transformative guest experiences lends a unique brilliance to this esteemed Roman address.

Nestled in a 17th-century palazzo on the vibrant Piazza della Minerva, just a stone's throw from the Pantheon and Piazza Navona, Orient Express La Minerva opened its doors in April 2025, marrying aristocratic grandeur with a contemporary soul.

The hotel's restored interiors, the creative vision of artist-architect Hugo Toro, whisper tales of Grand Tour luminaries like Stendhal and Melville, whose footsteps echo through its historic hallways.

Guests are invited to savour the city's most breathtaking rooftop views at Gigi Rigolatto, where Riviera-inspired glamour meets a vibrant dining atmosphere high above Rome's iconic skyline.

Whether relaxing beneath the grand glass roof in the lobby's La Minerva Bar, where a restored statue of the goddess Minerva presides, or immersing themselves in the city's rich cultural tapestry, every moment at La Minerva is curated with exquisite attention to detail.



"Simone Giorgi's appointment reinforces our commitment to Italy's heritage and hospitality," **said Gilda Perez-Alvarado, CEO of Orient Express**. *"His leadership will ensure the enduring spirit of the Orient Express shines brilliantly in the Eternal City."*

This landmark hotel is the cornerstone of Orient Express's renaissance — a journey that extends beyond the Italian capital with upcoming openings such as Orient Express Palazzo Donà Giovannelli in Venice and the celebrated La Dolce Vita Orient Express luxury train.

Together, they embody a renewed celebration of elegance, authentic discovery, and unparalleled craftsmanship that the brand has symbolised since 1883.

As the world rediscovers the art of travel, Orient Express La Minerva stands as one of its beacons. At this destination, past and present converge to offer guests a uniquely immersive Roman escape, underpinned by Simone Giorgi's passion for excellence and timeless Italian hospitality.

Hotel interior photography ©Alexandre Tabaste.

THE TASTE ISSUE

FALL 2025

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TRAVEL BEYOND

Trained to Thrill

WRITING AND PHOTOGRAPHY: SIMON URWIN

A NEW GILDED AGE OF RAIL TRAVEL BEGINS WITH THE RELAUNCH OF ORIENT EXPRESS.

Rome, Italy

Smooth Operator: (Opposite) Aperitivo hour on *La Dolce Vita*. (From top) The train's Lounge Car and a proper welcome at Rome's Ostiense station.

It was 200 years ago when the world's first railroad opened in the Northeast of England. The service covered just 11 miles, with passengers crammed onto a single coach — a converted coal wagon with a makeshift roof, no windows, no suspension and even less comfort.

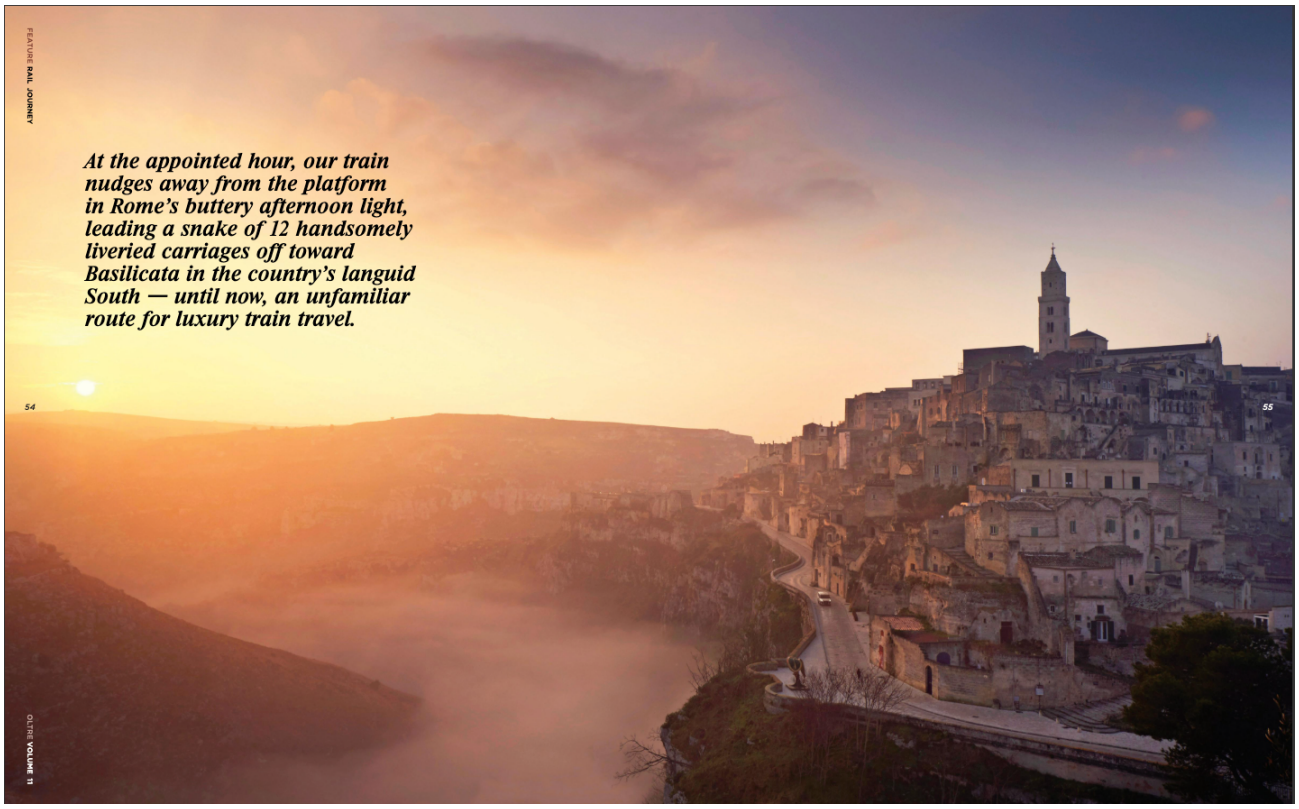
I reflect on this as Cristiano Natoli, my own personal conductor (the train's equivalent of a butler), escorts me to my gleaming suite aboard the 30-cabin *La Dolce Vita*, the latest incarnation of the Orient Express — the brand that revolutionized train travel in the 19th century and became synonymous with stylish opulence.

My suite displays a spectacular blend of sleek lines and retro accents in shades of burnt orange and ripe plum that evoke the golden age of Italian glamour so vividly captured in Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (the sweet life). Natoli pours me a glass of Champagne before pointing out the room's many modern luxuries, amenities that would've been unimaginable to those earliest of train travelers: air-conditioning, a 24-hour room-service menu, the minibar, mood lighting, a mosaic-tiled en suite bathroom and sumptuous double bed. Then, with a courteous "Buon viaggio!" he's gone, leaving me to begin this, the second part of my Orient Express adventure.

When in Rome: (Above) Signature suite living room at Orient Express La Minerva hotel and (below) red-prawn carpaccio at the hotel's Gigi Rigolatto Bar. (Opposite) The Flavian Amphitheatre, aka the Colosseum.

The journey had begun a couple of days earlier with a stay at **Orient Express La Minerva**, the brand's return to hotels. La Minerva occupies a 17th-century palazzo in the heart of historic Rome, birthplace of an empire and the cradle of Western civilization. Some of the city's most significant sights are easily admired from the rooftop terrace — I spot St. Peter's Basilica and the 2,000-year-old Pantheon — while sipping a Lipari (the bar's signature cocktail, made with gin, tarragon, orange and elderflower) or feasting on a plate of red-prawn carpaccio with citrus and pink pepper.

After a far-too-brief stay, the hotel staff whisks me to Roma Ostiense station to board *La Dolce Vita*. At the appointed hour, our train nudges away from the platform in the buttery afternoon light, leading a snake of 12 handsomely liveried carriages off toward Basilicata in the country's languid South — until now, an unfamiliar route for luxury train travel.



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INSIDER INSIGHT:

"You can never overdress aboard La Dolce Vita, *so pack accordingly — and you can have the butler press your clothes. And don't go to bed too early. The entertainment at night is wonderful."*

—Caroline Settle, travel advisor

Scene Stealer: (Above) The dining car, ready for service.

The first highlight of this two-night loop quickly proves to be the dining car, bathed in the warm, Aperol-orange glow of its bespoke, mid-century-modern lighting. It soon rings with the gentle chime of fork tines on porcelain and the soft clink of crystal glasses raised in a toast as the impeccably uniformed staff present a seven-course celebration of Italian cuisine from Heinz Beck (of Rome's Michelin-starred La Pergola, among others). On the menu: turbot with licorice, charred fennel and bergamot, and orecchiette tossed with turnip tops and ocean-fresh frutti di mare.

Contented after a round of digestivi, I retreat to my cabin, where I slumber through the starry night as we gently tremble toward Matera, in Basilicata — the "instep" region of Italy's boot, located between the Puglian "heel" and Calabrian "toe."

While Rome is undeniably ancient, Matera is literally Neolithic. The UNESCO-listed landscape dates back at least 10,000 years. At its core is an area known as the Sassi (stones), a sprawling village of man-made cave dwellings gouged from the honey-hued limestone — among the oldest habitations on Earth — that now house trendy boutiques, restaurants, hotels and second homes.

The area is also dotted with more than 150 rupestrian churches hand-carved by Benedictine monks in the Middle Ages. The most astonishing of these is the Crypt of Original Sin, adorned with vibrant frescoes that have endured for more than a thousand years, earning it the moniker "The Sistine Chapel of Rupestrian Art."

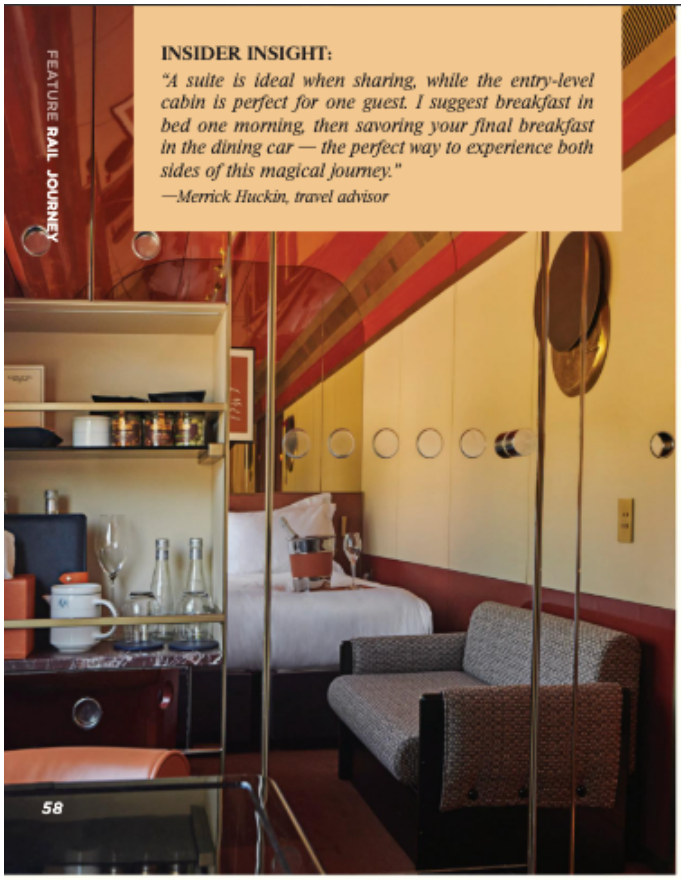
My privately guided city tour — everyone chooses their own excursion at each stop — unveils Matera's culinary treasures, including sun-dried Italian peppers known as peperoni cruschi, made from a variety introduced by 17th-Century Spanish conquistadors, and pillowy Pane di Matera, the local bread with a thick crust slashed three times to symbolize the Holy Trinity.

Rock Candy: (Above) Cathedral of the Madonna della Bruna and Sant'Eustachio, atop the village of Matera, and (below) the ancient Chiesa di Santa Lucia alle Malve in the Sassi de Matera. (Left) Pasticcini delivered to a suite on board *La Dolce Vita*.

INSIDER INSIGHT:

"A suite is ideal when sharing, while the entry-level cabin is perfect for one guest. I suggest breakfast in bed one morning, then savoring your final breakfast in the dining car — the perfect way to experience both sides of this magical journey."

—Merrick Huckin, travel advisor



Sleeper Cell: (Above) A suite on *La Dolce Vita* and (below) Orient Express' signature backgammon board at La Minerva.

The most elevated dining experience in Matera is Vitantonio Lombardo, the world's only Michelin-starred cave restaurant, where the lunchtime tasting unfolds like pure theater. The curtain rises to a lollipop of cod with peppers and raspberries, then later closes to a sphere of dark chocolate speckled with edible gold. The maître d', Donato Addesso, cracks the latter open with a tiny hammer, revealing — Matryoshka-style — smaller balls inside that have been fashioned from white chocolate, coconut and lemon. Addesso tells me the dessert was inspired by an annual festival in Matera, for which a grand papier-mâché chariot parades through the streets before being gleefully destroyed by the crowd — an act that is said to bring good luck.

Shortly afterward, I am back on board the train, considering my own good fortune and sipping a citrusy negroni in the Lounge Bar car. In the two centuries since the first passenger-train service departed, travel may have evolved beyond recognition, but no transport will ever rival the romance of a sleeper train — and there can be few journeys so elegant, so atmospheric or so indulgent as a ride on the reimagined Orient Express. ()

Details

Orient Express La Dolce Vita *debuted in the spring and traverses Italy's railways with one- to three-night itineraries to Venice, Matera, Portofino, Tuscany and Sicily. Rates from about $3,500. Your travel advisor can plan a detailed itinerary with pre- and post-rail hotels and experiences.*

I am back on board the train, considering my own good fortune and sipping a citrusy negroni in the Lounge Bar car.

Elevated Railroad: (Above, right) Train staff awaiting guests in Rome. (Above) Dining on board.

ORIENT EXPRESS *VS* ORIENT-EXPRESS

Although they share a legacy name, the just-launched Orient Express *La Dolce Vita* and the Belmond *Venice Simplon-Orient-Express* are entirely separate entities. The newly revived **Orient Express** brand is a joint venture between Italian hospitality firm Arsenale Group and French hotel giant Accor. The portfolio includes hotels (with Venice up next), trains (another due next year) and, soon, yachts. Meanwhile, the historic *Venice Simplon-Orient-Express* — along with the *Eastern & Oriental Express*, for that matter — is owned and operated by **Belmond**, which is part of LVMH. It'll be a posh ride either way.

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Orient Express La Minerva, Italy

Having pioneered slow travel since 1883, the iconic train brand Orient Express has put down some more permanent roots in Rome with the opening of its first hotel, La Minerva. Originally built in 1620 as a private palazzo, the property became a hotel in 1811 and was a hotspot for writers such as George Sand, Stendhal and Herman Melville. It's now been revived by designer Hugo Toro, who has blended original features with a more contemporary art deco-influenced style and rich, tactile fabrics such as Italian linens, braided leather and, in the bathrooms, marble shell basins. Downstairs, the bar still sports its historic skylight, while the rooftop restaurant has sweeping views of the Roman skyline.

laminerva.orient-express.com

Alexandre Tabaste

Tella Thera, Greece

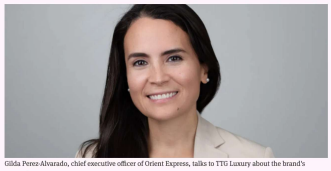
With its geometric villas stacked in layers on a hill of olive trees, Crete's Tella Thera looks more like a small village than a hotel. Each of its suites has been designed with sustainability in mind, from rooftop planting to help control indoor temperatures to a collaboration with local artisans to source materials responsibly and highlight Cretan craftsmanship. Inside, the earthy tones and minimalist, natural furnishings relax and soothe, as do the panoramic Aegean views from the distinctive curved windows. A sustainable ethos also underpins the Anemoia Restaurant, which champions seasonal Cretan ingredients, while in the spa, treatments relax and rejuvenate with homemade botanical oils.

tellathera.com

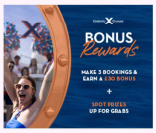
Orient Express boss shares 'lynchpin' of expansion as luxury brand enters next era

HOTELS EMMA DOONEY 21 SEPTEMBER 2025

The historic brand is set to become the only ultra-luxury operator providing rail, ocean and hotel experiences.



Gilda Perez-Alvarado, chief executive officer of Orient Express, talks to TTG Luxury about the brand's expansion

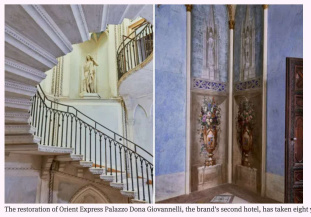


Orient Express's chief executive officer has revealed the company's top priority as it pushes to solidify the brand's comeback to the market earlier this year.

Part of Accor, La Dolce Vita was the first new element to make its debut in April, marking a return to the railways 10 years after the original brand ceased operation. That same month, the first hotel was launched, Orient Express La Minerva, which is set in a Renaissance building close to the Pantheon in Rome.

The portfolio will double in 2027 with the revival of the "original" Orient Express; the maiden voyage of Orient Express Corinthian (the world's largest sailing yacht); and the opening of its second hotel, Orient Express Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice.

This decision to diversify its products is part of a long-term strategy to create a "connecting brand," which offers clients the ability to sail, ride and stay with Orient Express all within a single journey.



The restoration of Orient Express Palazzo Dona Giovannelli, the brand's second hotel, has taken eight years

The name Orient Express has long been shorthand for "luxury sleeper train," with books like Agatha Christie's bestselling 1934 novel pushing it into popular culture. It has also been a fixture on the silver screen, appearing in movies such as *From Russia with Love*, *102 Dalmatians*, and *Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One*.

Its popularity in literature and films exposed the brand far beyond its actual clients; regardless of whether a person has boarded the train, they are likely to have encountered its grandeur. "We have a huge responsibility on our shoulders as custodians of the brand," Gilda Perez-Alvarado, chief executive officer at Orient Express, told *TTG Luxury*. "We have to think long-term in terms of our strategy so we're successful for years to come."

The weight of this "custodianship" is heightened by the expansion of its product, with the brand working to weave together its train journeys with its hotels and sailing yacht. Each experience will be seen as a "chapter of the Orient Express book" connected by the "golden thread of its elevated service".

"The planning aspect is the lynchpin of the operation," Perez-Alvarado explains. "We need to make sure that the engineers are speaking to the designers at the same time they're talking to the operations team. The right hand is always talking to the left hand."

She adds that this military-level organisation is especially important for the teams working on Orient Express Corinthian and the trains, which, by default of being transient, present a whole host of additional concerns.

Central to this project is protecting the legendary brand image of Orient Express.

Accor purchased 13 of its original carriages in 2022 after they were discovered by a French railway researcher on the border between Poland and Belarus. The vintage carriages (12 sleeper cars, three lounges, a restaurant, and one van) have since been "meticulously" restored, with interiors strikingly similar to those of the original train.

Guests will be able to experience the original carriages of Orient Express next year

Designed by Parisian architect Maxime d'Angeac, the renovated cars feature dark wooden panels, green velvet lounges, and low, soft lighting. Other nods to its 1920s heritage include headboards with mother-of-pearl embroidery and plush furnishings in deep jewel tones.

"For us to do all of these renovations, we needed people who know how to do the art the same way it was done 100 years ago," said Perez-Alvarado. "We are celebrating an art that could very well go into oblivion."

This focus on craftsmanship is also evident in the Orient Express Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice, which will open April 2026 after an eight-year restoration. Originally a 15th-century palace, the building has been transformed into a 47-room luxury hotel with a Gothic portal entrance and canal views.

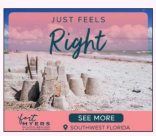
"The renovations of the palazzo were extremely meticulous," said Perez-Alvarado, referring to the large-scale project that involved building a dam to drain the water from the facade.

It's an investment that will pay off, extending the longevity of these buildings for decades to come: "We are adding not just years but quality years to these assets."

With so much already in the pipeline, there are no other current plans to expand the portfolio. The vision for its future, however, remains clear.

"We have to make sure we're curating something that fits and feeds people's perception of Orient Express," said Perez-Alvarado. "I'd love in five years' time for the team to be true to the myth, and to remain joyful, playful and mysterious."

The Musee des Arts Decoratifs in Paris will host: One Hundred Years of Art Deco *from 22 October to 26 April, marking the centenary of the 1925 International Exhibition. Three full-size Orient Express carriages (a cabin, restaurant and lounge) designed by Maxime d'Angeac, will be on display. This marks the first public reveal ahead of the full train launch in 2027, featuring 17 restored carriages previously lost and recovered on the Belarus-Poland border, connecting iconic European destinations.*



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TRAVEL

Hotel of the Week: Famed Rome Landmark Orient Express La Minerva Reopens After a Masterful Renovation

Conceived by Paris designer Hugo Toro, the hotel's romantic interiors capture the allure of old-world grandeur with magnificent spaces at every turn

Orient Express La Minerva.
PHOTO: ALEXANDRE TABASTE

Exterior of La Minerva hotel in Rome.
PHOTO: MR. TRIPPER

Overlooking Rome's intimate cobbled Piazza della Minerva and its famous Bernini statue of an elephant topped by an ornate obelisk, the 93-room Orient Express La Minerva is the lush Baroque quintessence of a steamer-trunk vintage Italian grand hotel, right down to the potted palms in the atrium and a courtly concierge in a black jacket with a leonine mane of salt-and-pepper hair.

The hotel was originally built during the 17th-century as a private palazzo for the Fonsecas, a noble Portuguese family engaged in the port trade. In 1811, it was converted into a hotel and due to its central location, it became the preferred address of aristocrats, writers, and artists on the grand tour—everyone from Stendhal and Herman Melville to George Sand and Picasso.

Grand foyer at Orient Express La Minerva in Rome.
PHOTO: ALEXANDRE TABASTE

Interior of Orient Express La Minerva, crafted by Paris designer Hugo Toro.
PHOTO: ALEXANDRE TABASTE

After being bought by the Paris-based Accor hotel group, La Minerva has been given a much needed top-to-bottom renovation with a superb new interior by Franco-Mexican designer Hugo Toro whose studio is located in Paris.

It's Toro's nimble visual wit that makes La Minerva's new look at once so resonantly historical and thrillingly original. Taking inspiration from sources like Los Angeles in the 1920s—hence the discreet Hollywood glamour of this place—as well as the tension between the sacred and the profane that's at the heart of Baroque architecture and art in Rome, Toro created lounge-like rooms in schemes of terra-cotta, vanilla, topaz, Sienna red, olive, and bronze that are ideal for repose after the post-prandial afternoon siesta that a morning of busy sight-seeing requires.

Concierge desk at Orient Express La Minerva.
PHOTO: ALEXANDRE TABASTE

Living room at Orient Express La Minerva.
PHOTO: MR. TRIPPER

Bar seating at Orient Express La Minerva.
PHOTO: ALEXANDRE TABASTE

Many of the pieces here are bespoke, like a pearl-gray velvet canape with leather belting, or the wrought-iron and amber-glass bedside sconces that show a fascinating intersection between Italian Baroque and Los Angeles's Mexican and Spanish revival architecture. Beds are made up in linens by Rivolta Carmignani, a Milanese firm founded in 1867.

Suites come with record players and a selection of vinyl discs and baths feature red marble counters. Almost best of all, the hotel's patrician patina survived intact, so that even if the lobby and bar have been modernized, guests still expect to hear the hooves of horse-drawn carriages clomping on the cobblestones outside rather than anything automotive as they settle in over a perfectly made Negroni.

Stendhal Suite at Orient Express La Minerva in Rome.
PHOTO: ALEXANDRE TABASTE

Main bath inside the Stendhal Suite at Orient Express La Minerva in Rome.
PHOTO: ALEXANDRE TABASTE

Roman hotels are fierce when it comes to having the best rooftop amenities, and La Minerva is a hands-down winner, with views of the dome of the Pantheon and the spire of nearby Church of Sant Ivo della Sapienza, one of the handsomest Baroque churches in the city. Visitors will want to head here for breakfast or drinks with snacks. (The hotel does have a restaurant, Gigi, however there are many excellent old-fashioned trattoria in the neighborhood, notably Armando al Pantheon, which must be booked well in advance).

The hotel is also planning to build an on-site spa in the near future. In the meantime, it's again one of the top addresses in Rome as a truly charming and very romantic destination.

Il Sole 24 ORE

Arsenal conquers Golden Eagle: a global luxury train hub is born

The British company offers rail cruises in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

by Marco Morino

Arsenale, the Italian champion of luxury rail cruises, scores a new coup. The company's CEO, Paolo Barletta (the Barletta family is also Arsenale's majority shareholder with over 70% of shares), has signed a preliminary agreement to acquire 100% of the British company Golden Eagle Luxury Trains (Gelt), an iconic brand in the luxury train sector. Based in Manchester (UK), Golden Eagle has been in the market for 35 years and offers long-distance rail cruises in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The deal was announced by Barletta at the Wttc in Rome, the world event dedicated to the tourism of the future.

Arsenale made headlines last spring with the debut of 'La Dolce Vita Orient Express', the first luxury train entirely designed and built in Italy. Always projected onto international markets (the Italian company has projects underway in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan), with the acquisition on British soil Arsenale aims to create the world's largest luxury cruise train hub. And it will be an Italian-driven hub. When fully operational, between convoys already in operation and projects in progress, Arsenale's share of the world luxury cruise train market will rise to 42 per cent.

Says Paolo Barletta: "With Golden Eagle we are acquiring a very strong brand, a pioneer in this sector, which allows us to create a series of synergies between the commercial offers of the two companies, with a cost efficiency in the order of 15% and an enrichment of the routes on short and long distances. Over the next five years we plan to invest around 15 million euros in the modernisation of Golden Eagle's fleet, also thanks to the support of Arsenal's rail yards. Golden Eagle's experience represents an extraordinary added value for the international expansion of our group." International activities will be coordinated between Dubai and Manchester as part of a shared global growth strategy.

The value of the acquisition, which will be finalised by the end of the year, remains confidential at the moment. However, Barletta provides some figures: 'Golden Eagle was valued at a multiple of approximately 20 times Ebitda. The agreement provides for the payment in cash of 30 per cent of the total value and the exchange of shares for the remaining 70 per cent. The agreement will allow Gelt's current shareholders to enter the corporate structure of Arsenale, with a minority share, alongside the group's reference families: Barletta, Bulgari and Rovati'.

Golden Eagle currently operates two trains connecting cities such as Paris, Istanbul and Budapest and has an important presence in Eastern Europe and Turkey, with iconic routes such as Cappadocia. These are joined by additional routes in Central Asia. Tim Littler, founder and chairman of the Manchester-based company, along with his nephew James Masterson, will continue to work with Arsenal, ensuring continuity.

Arsenale's imminent start of operations in Saudi Arabia with the Dream of the Desert train will be the first test case for developing synergies with Golden Eagle. Built by Arsenale in collaboration with Saudi Arabia Railways, the Dream of the Desert will be the Kingdom's first five-star luxury train. This is the first time that Italian carriages destined for recovery and disposal have become part of an international railway project. The carriages of the Saudi train were made in the Cpl factories in Brindisi, Arsenale's production hub. The technical design and space development were handled by Standgreen, a company from Bergamo that followed the entire process, from engineering to production and mock-up assembly.

LATTE

Golden Eagle Luxury Trains sold to owner of La Dolce Vita Orient Express

Italy's Arsenale Group has acquired the U.K.-based luxury train company

Italy's **Arsenale Group**—owners of numerous luxury trains, including *La Dolce Vita Orient Express*, as well as hospitality brands such as Orient Express and Soho House—announced that it has acquired U.K.-based **Golden Eagle Luxury Trains**.

"This acquisition establishes Arsenale Group as a global leader in luxury rail travel, accelerating expansion across Europe and Asia, and enriching its portfolio with an even broader range of unforgettable journeys inspired by innovation, excellence, and sustainable tourism," the company said on a LinkedIn post sharing the news.

Golden Eagle Luxury Trains operates five private rail services:

- The *Golden Eagle*, taking guests through Central Asia via the Silk Road
- The *Golden Eagle Danube Express*, which travels across the entirety of Europe
- The *Deccan Odyssey*, located in India
- The *Golden Eagle Silk Road Express*, a fully en-suite train
- The *Vietnam Express*, touted as "Vietnam's first luxury train"

Beyond La Dolce Vita Orient Express and, now, Golden Eagle Luxury Trains, Arsenale also owns Dream of the Desert, an upcoming luxury train project in Saudi Arabia; The Samarkand Express in Uzbekistan; Guardian of the Nile, taking guests through Egypt's Valley of the Kings; and another upcoming project in the United Arab Emirates that has not yet been named.

The official announcement, according to Italy's Il Sole 24 Ore, came during the World Travel & Tourism Council's Global Summit, taking place this week in Rome. Paolo Barletta, the company's CEO (and majority owner of Arsenale), said the group will invest approximately €15 million in modernizing Golden Eagle's fleet over the next five years.