

## Iconic 'Orient Express' to return in 2023!

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There was a time when a train trip across Europe aboard the Orient Express could be considered the height of luxury travel. Unfortunately, those days ended more than 10 years ago as high-speed rail became increasingly popular and fares for air travel became inexpensive.

If you're a fan of what is now called "luxury rail travel," here's some good news: The Orient Express is scheduled to return in 2023.

Under the new initiative, known as the Orient Express La Dolce Vita, six trains will follow routes across 14 regions, including three international destinations from Rome to Paris, Istanbul, and Split, Croatia. One of those itineraries will even include a stopover in Rome so guests can stay at the Orient Express Hotel, which is scheduled to open in 2024.

The initiative is the result of work between real estate investment firm Arsenale S.p.A. and Orient Express of Accor Group.

"We consider it an immense privilege to re-launch the historic Orient Express brand for passionate and discerning travelers," S bastien Bazin, chairman and CEO of Accor, said in a statement. "These trains offer a new vision of luxury travel that is beyond our imagination."

### A Historic Past

The original Orient Express was launched in 1883 by entrepreneur Georges Nagelmackers. It originally offered twice-weekly service that began in Paris, and then wound its way through Strasbourg, Vienna, Budapest, and Bucharest before ending at Varna on the Black Sea, an article on The Guardian recounts. Then, a steamer carried travelers across the Black Sea to Istanbul.

In the process, the luxury train also became a cultural icon, thanks to noted books

and movies. For instance, in 1929, the Orient Express was stuck in snow for several days near Istanbul, which served as inspiration for Agatha Christie's novel *Murder on the Orient Express*.

You may also recall that the Orient Express figures prominently in Ian Fleming's novel and movie of the same name, *From Russia with Love*. Even James Bond traveled on the Orient Express with Russian clerk Tatiana Romanova as they made their escape from agents working for international criminal association SPECTRE.

### A Triumphant Return

The original Orient Express stopped service in 2009. In 2023, however, the new Orient Express will begin offering service across 14 regions in Italy and travel to Paris, Istanbul, and Split. Though the trains' exact routes haven't been confirmed yet, trips are expected to run between 1 and 3 days, with room for approximately 60 passengers.

The trains will cross about 10,000 miles of railway lines, 4,400 of which are not electrified and are historic routes. Along the way, passengers will be able to see alpine mountains, sandy southern beaches, and metropolitan centers like Milan, Florence, and Venice — depending on the route.

The highlight of each trip may well be the train itself. The concept for the new Orient Express La Dolce Vita trains “pay tribute to ‘La Dolce Vita’, a historical period of glamor, joie de vivre, and artistic fervor in Italy during the 1960s,” Accor Group explains.

Architectural and design studio Dimorestudio designed the trains to “embody the Italian art of living and all its beautiful traditions” combined with a contemporary spirit. Each train will include 12 deluxe cabins, 18 suites, and one Honor Suite, as well as a restaurant.

The train service will also feature collaboration with local and international chefs and sommeliers to provide travelers with five-star service so they can “savor the beauty and excellence of ‘Made in Italy’ through award-winning Italian wines and exclusive haute cuisine,” the company explains. What's more, travelers will be welcomed at the Orient Express executive lounge before departure so they may relax and enjoy refreshments.

“The original train route was innovative in the way it paradoxically brought cultures together — the Occident with the Orient, history with modernity,” said Stephen Alden, CEO Raffles and Orient Express, Accor. “We wish to revive this old-world, awe-inspiring ‘journey to elsewhere’ and reconcile certain paradoxes: a journey and a destination, astonishment and inspiration, movement and contemplation.”

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