

Saudi Arabia's first luxury train service to launch in 2025

- A Monitor Report

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Jeddah : Production is underway of the first luxury train service in Saudi Arabia-Dream of the Desert-scheduled to run across the kingdom's desert by 2025 end.

Made in Italy, by hospitality company Arsenale Group and commissioned by Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR) under a USD 53.33 million deal, the 40-cabin train will run on 800 miles of existing railway lines from the capital Riyadh to Al Qurayyat in the northern province of Al Jawf, making stops 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 20 miles from the border with Jordan.

On the development, SAR Chief Executive Bashar bin Khalid Al-Malik

said that the train service would enable Saudis and tourists to explore more of the Kingdom. He said during signing an agreement with Arsenale CEO Paolo Barletta, on January 30, 2024.

The railway carriages will be built in Italy, Barletta added, but would be "fully customised and inspired by Saudi style and tradition."

The Italian company is already working in collaboration with Orient Express on La Dolce Vita, a new luxury rail service with six itineraries criss-crossing Italy, set to launch in 2024.

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 ventures come as luxury train cruising is set to become a popular post-Covid travel trend.

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 150 million visitors by the end of the decade. Hence, 2023 was marked by news of hotel and resort developments across the Kingdom.