

VENICE SIMPLON-ORIENT-EXPRESS

A BELMOND TRAIN
EUROPE



VENICE SIMPLON-ORIENT-EXPRESS, A BELMOND TRAIN, EUROPE UNVEILS THE INTERIORS OF L'OBSERVATOIRE, A NEW SLEEPER CARRIAGE BY ARTIST JR

SEPTEMBER 2024 – The Venice Simplon-Orient Express, A Belmond Train, Europe proudly unveils the interiors of L'Observatoire by world-renowned artist JR, the first carriage to be designed by an artist, the most exclusive and spacious accommodation type on the train.

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Scheduled to join the rake in March 2025, L'Observatoire is an artwork in motion that pays tribute to the train's rich history of timeless crafts. Drawing inspiration from astronomical observatories and Renaissance Europe's cabinet of curiosity, the sleeper carriage has been meticulously curated by JR who has replicated the spirit of his Parisian art studio with personal "objets d'art" or keepsakes to be uncovered throughout the "studio on wheels". In the most outstanding accommodation on rails, JR invites guests to immerse themselves in a world that ignites curiosity, one's sense of adventure, and introspection.

AN ICON OF ART DECO, REIMAGINED

Known for pushing the boundaries of storytelling through art, JR applies this practice in his curation of L'Observatoire. A critical design component of the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is the marquetry, which JR has reimaged alongside Atelier Philippe Allemand, who brings long-standing knowledge of the legendary train to the project having worked on its marquetry since 1997. Collaboratively, they have created new motifs that are featured throughout the carriage, such as an urban cityscape with JR standing on a rooftop, connecting him with his most common canvas, the streets of a city.

Filled with hidden touchpoints designed to surprise and delight guests, L'Observatoire is an invitation to contemplate both the stunning rolling landscapes and rich interiors that spark curiosity and a sense of wonder, reconnecting guests with their inner child. Many remain a mystery whilst others will be uncovered over the course of the journey; these personal touches offer guests a glimpse into the artist's world, inviting them to explore JR's creative mind whilst journeying on the world's most iconic train. Experiencing L'Observatoire means a physical journey, but also an imaginary one, as guests will be immersed in a living gallery created by one of the most visionary artists.

The carriage interiors flow through several micro-environments, from the bedroom featuring a free-standing bathtub, the adjoining bathroom, a lounge, library, and hidden Tea Room. With astronomy at the heart of the design inspiration, two oculi have been added to the ceiling in the bedroom and the Tea Room, creating a sense of wonder whilst guests gaze at the sky as the train trundles through Europe. Inspired by camera lenses, the oculus-shaped skylights use wood pieces that rotate to open and close, showcasing exceptional detail and craftsmanship. The bedroom is enveloped in green leather scalloping that resembles leaves, bringing the natural landscapes into the carriage; evoking an arboreal feel, the scales continue across the double bed and free-standing bathtub as if forming a canopy mirroring the stained-glass art. The latter lavishly envelops the free-standing bedroom bathtub, a surprising addition to the carriage, with custom-made leaf patterns inspired by the 19th century Art Nouveau movement, whilst green Carrara defines the bathing area. Here stained glass expert Michael Mayer depicts a typical Venice Simplon-Orient-Express landscape with a twist of imagination by JR, a surrealist image where the tree trunk is a ladder, and its foliage is covered in the artist's signature eyes.

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Original photographs from JR's various travels adorn the hallway, accompanying the guests as they walk in a living gallery.

In the lounge, bespoke couches allow for flexible arrangement; guests can reconfigure the space into a private dining area, accommodating up to five people, enabling the travellers to invite guests. JR's choice of rounded furniture pieces aims to break up the carriage's rectangular shape, instead accentuating the natural curves of the space. A cocoon-like day bed at window level allows travellers to immerse themselves in the passing landscape and embrace the art of slow travel.

For those who enjoy travelling to other worlds through literature and music, the carriage is home to the library stocked with books by publishers Gallimard, Penguin and the Adelphi collection, as well as a curated selection of vinyl records for a glimpse into the cultural references which inspire JR.

Hidden behind the library and accessed via a secret door, is L'Observatoire's Tea Room, where an enchanting miniature train installation showcases an intriguing short film. Amongst the books, guests will discover miniatures of JR's notable *Giants* series including "*Giants, Rising Up, 2023*," and "*Giants, Kikito, 2017*," whilst sitting comfortably in front of the fireplace. This adds another layer of enchantment to the sleeper carriage, encouraging guests to engage with their surroundings on a more intimate level..

PROUD CUSTODIANS OF TIMELESS CRAFTS

L'Observatoire's interiors are a testament to the exceptional artisans who've worked on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express throughout the years and have brought JR's vision to life. These craftspeople have evolved into patrons through the years, working tirelessly to preserve the train's intricate heritage. One of these is world-acclaimed marquetry master Philippe Allemand, who specialises in blending traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design.

"The carriages have travelled through countless decades and eras – so I wanted to find a new way to approach them, maintaining the connection to this deep story. Both my work and the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express are very artisanal, so L'Observatoire felt like a natural fit. Working with artisans, choosing woods and materials, and discovering motifs was not a constraint, because I am interested in making this a timeless artwork – as if I was an artist from the 1920s. I have added some features that are only possible in the 21st century but the fundamental craft is timeless". JR

Gary Franklin, Vice Presidents Trains & Cruises at Belmond says: "Intended as an 'artwork in motion', L'Observatoire will offer an unparalleled blend of art, luxury, and immersive storytelling. JR's thoughtful integration of exceptional craftsmanship is evident throughout, resulting in a truly unique and transformative travel experience. Alongside our pre-existing room categories – Historical, Suite, and Grand Suite - this launch underscores Belmond's commitment to perpetuating the art of slow luxury."

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L'Observatoire will join the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express in March 2025. The stay will include all meals with sommelier's choice of wine and unlimited soft drinks, 24-hour butler service, private in-cabin dining, transfers to and from the train, bespoke amenities, and further special surprise touches from JR.

L'Observatoire is now open for bookings, please visit the link [here](#).

For further information surrounding L'Observatoire, please visit the **Belmond Media Hub**.

ENDS



NOTES FOR EDITORS

Images of L'Observatoire can be downloaded [here](#).

For more information, please contact:

SABRINA PANIZZA, DIVISIONAL COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
sabrina.panizza@belmond.com

ABOUT VENICE SIMPLON-ORIENT-EXPRESS, A BELMOND TRAIN,

The original icon of the rails, Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, A Belmond Train, Europe has been at the forefront of luxury railway travel for nearly half a century, since its first journey in May 1982. The history of this legendary train began in 1977, when Belmond's founder, James B. Sherwood, bought two original Art Deco sleeping cars at a Sotheby's auction in Monte Carlo with the ambition to bring back to life the 'golden age of travel' with the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express train. An enduring symbol of luxury, today the train operates between March and December. It features 16 painstakingly restored 1920s and 1930s carriages, inviting guests to surrender to the journey as it criss-crosses Europe's most dramatic landscapes and uncovers some of the world's most fabled cities, such as Vienna, Rome, Florence, Paris, Venice and Istanbul. On board, guests can choose between three different accommodation categories - characterful Historic Cabins; lavish newly launched Suites; and opulent Grand Suites; indulge in refined dining by Michelin-starred French Chef Jean Imbert in the colourful restaurant carriages and enjoy an evening of late-night revelry with live performances and handcrafted cocktails in the famous Bar Car '3674'.

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ABOUT BELMOND

Belmond was born from a passion for connecting discerning travellers with the world's most remarkable properties, locations and journeys.

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From hotels and trains to river cruises and safaris, Belmond curates incomparable experiences and crafts unforgettable stories. With a legacy spanning over 45 years, since the acquisition of Hotel Cipriani in Venice in 1976, Belmond has grown into a global collection of 47 properties spread across 28 countries and territories. Exceptional destinations connected by legendary journeys are the very soul of Belmond, where the path that brings you to a place is as important as the destination itself. As a pioneer of slow travel, Belmond has been operating the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express since 1982. The group later expanded to include pristine beach resorts, such as Maroma on the Riviera Maya, historic hideaways such as Villa San Michele in the Florentine foothills, urbane icons, such as Copacabana Palace in Rio de Janeiro, and gateways to UNESCO world heritage sites, such as Hotel das Cataratas in Brazil's Iguassu National Park. As proud custodians of storied properties, Belmond is committed to building on the past to create a new legacy: the heritage of the future. Working with communities and local talents, together with the world's most respected chefs, designers and artists, Belmond continues its purpose of perpetuating the legendary art of travel. Since 2019, Belmond has been part of the world's leading luxury group, LVMH (Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton).

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