



VENICE SIMPLON-ORIENT-EXPRESS, A BELMOND TRAIN, EUROPE PRESENTS L'OBSERVATOIRE, A NEW CARRIAGE DESIGNED BY ARTIST JR

APRIL 2024

The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is proud to present L'Observatoire, an exclusive sleeper carriage with interiors conceptualised and designed by world-acclaimed artist JR. Joining the rake in 2025, this private carriage is the first to be designed by an artist on board the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express and will become the most spacious accommodation type onboard the train.

JR's passion for the rails, sparked off as a child, largely informs the inspiration behind the creation of L'Observatoire. The artist was also influenced by the design of his personal art studio in Paris, the charm of century old crafts, astronomical observatories and the cabinets of curiosity of Renaissance Europe.

"With L'Observatoire, people can enter my imaginary world. I envisioned the carriage primarily through shapes, with curved corners and round windows, so guests have little places to daydream. Guests can now stay in an artist's private space while being in the most iconic train in the world – experiencing this creative crossroads for the duration of a journey is very special and hasn't been seen in this way before". JR, February 2024



AN ARTWORK IN MOTION

The carriage interiors unfold through different environments where JR injected a level of detail never seen before: a bedroom with double bed, an ensuite bathroom, wardrobe, reclining day bed, lounge area, library with book selection by French publisher Gallimard, and secret tearoom with fireplace. Guests are encouraged to explore these worlds of incredible detail, while the rounded windows and oculus skylight on the ceiling allow them to engage with the exterior landscapes of Europe.

Each of the spaces, designed with the utmost respect for timeless crafts, feature hidden details that JR curated to drive curiosity and instill a sense of imagination – from hidden compartments to secret messages layered in the intricate marquetry, guests can uncover the wonders of L'Observatoire as they crisscross the continent on board the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.



"I wanted to create so many hidden details and layers that can help inspire that sense of wonder, your inner child – whether that's hidden compartments or secret messages that some guests will notice, and others will miss. There's so much in this carriage that will be impossible to explore in a single trip."
JR, February 2024

A SHARED LOVE FOR TRAINS

A passion for trains and century-old crafts attracted JR to this project onboard the legendary Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. Sparked off during his childhood, the interest in trains is evident in JR's career from his seminal work 'Women Are Heroes' (2007) - which involved the installation of his instantly recognisable pasting of eyes on the roofs and sides of trains as they travelled through the Kibera slum in Nairobi - to 'Mind the Gap' (2017) which saw a giant installation of 700 miniature trains depicting faces, looping in an endless circle.

"I have a very long story with trains – they've always been a canvas for me. When I was a kid, I would sit by the window and just watch the world go by. There is something about viewing the changing landscape from a bubble, as if you are travelling through different worlds. Then when I started creating art, I realised that trains were a way to make my work travel, so I started replacing Metro maps with my photography. It allows me to send my work into the unknown like a message in a bottle."

JR, February 2024



PROUD CUSTODIANS OF TIMELESS CRAFTS

The Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is formed by 17 carriages, built in the 1920s and 1930s. At that time, the most acclaimed designers and exponents of the Art Deco movement, like René Prou and René Lalique (who created the train's iconic 'tulip lamp' and the glass panelling of the Côte d'Azur restaurant car), were commissioned to decorate these historic carriages. Almost a century later, the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express chooses leading artist JR to infuse new life into one of its original carriages, Sleeping Car 3553, through a meticulous restoration of the interiors.

A task for a true visionary, JR used artisanal century-old techniques to preserve the train's look and feel. At the same time, he was able to create something powerfully immersive, an artwork in motion that invites guests to embrace observation, curiosity, adventure and listening - all core tenets of the artist's universe.



"I would never have dared to imagine this collaboration, because the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is such a historic train. Working with artisans and discovering motifs that respect the era [in which the train carriages were built] was not a constraint, because I was interested in making this a timeless artwork – as if I was an artist from the 1920s. The fundamental craft is timeless". JR, February 2024

Gary Franklin, Vice Presidents Trains & Cruises at Belmond says: *'The team and I are thrilled to be working with JR, who shares with us a real passion for the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. L'Observatoire is a testament to our company's prominent role in reinventing the railway experience as we perpetuate the art of slow luxury across our growing portfolio.'*

L'Observatoire will join the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express in 2025. To register your interest in experiencing a journey on board this new carriage, please click here. [click here](#).

Visual assets can be downloaded from this [link](#).

For further information surrounding L'Observatoire, please visit our [Belmond Media Hub](#).

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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. 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. 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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