

## TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

# Belmond unveils artistic collaboration onboard Orient Express

September 17, 2024



*Making its inaugural expedition early next year, the team behind Europe's private luxury train service has unveiled an Art Deco-designed carriage called "L'Observatoire." Image courtesy of Belmond/Ludovic Balay*

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By ZACH JAMES FOR LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

LVMH-owned hospitality group Belmond's Venice Simplon-Orient-Express is integrating the work of French artist Jean Ren, who goes by JR, amid its interiors.

The team behind Europe's private luxury train service is announcing the addition of an Art Deco-designed sleeper carriage called "L'Observatoire" onboard. Curated by JR, the cabin is scheduled to make its debut trip in March 2025, with reservations now open to the public.

"Intended as an artwork in motion, L'Observatoire will offer an unparalleled blend of art, luxury, and immersive storytelling," said Gary Franklin, VP of trains and cruises at **Belmond**, in a statement.

"JR's thoughtful integration of exceptional craftsmanship is evident throughout, resulting in a truly unique and transformative travel experience," Mr. Franklin said. "Alongside our pre-existing room categories Historical, Suite, and Grand Suite - this launch underscores Belmond's commitment to perpetuating the art of slow luxury."

## Round trip

L'Observatoire is the first artist-designed accommodation type to join the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.

The space is filled with decor mirroring that of JR's Parisian art studio, and aims to enhance guest journeys.



*L'Observatoire is the first artist-designed accommodation type to join the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. Image courtesy of Belmond/Ludovic Balay*

Housing a private dining room for up to five guests, the sleeper carriage includes a bedroom and an attached bathroom with a high-end, freestanding bathtub, as well as a lounge that flexes into a dining room with spots for up to five guests.

A hidden tea room and library also feature touches synonymous with the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. For instance, the artist collaborated with France's Atelier Philippe Allemand to reimagine its marquetry, harkening back to intricate woodwork found aboard the locomotive.

The rate for a L'Observatoire stay next year includes all meals with the sommelier's choice of wine, a 24-hour butler service, private in-cabin dining, transfers to and from the train, bespoke amenities and "further special surprise touches from JR."



*The carriage also features photography from Mr. Ren. Image courtesy of Belmond/Charlotte Abramow*

"The carriages have traveled through countless decades and eras so I wanted to find a new way to approach them, maintaining the connection to this deep story," said Mr. Ren, in a statement.

"Both my work and the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express are very artisanal, so L'Observatoire felt like a natural fit," he said.

"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."

In June, French hotel giant Accor, a partial owner of the Orient Express brand and French luxury conglomerate LVMH inked a strategic development deal involving the luxury rail company ([see story](#)).