

# Luxury Roundtable

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Business at its best

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Orient Express to relive Golden Age with Art Deco-themed Italian hotels, sailing ship

November 8, 2023



*Orient Express will rely on a mix of marketing and nostalgia for a bygone era of elegant travel and hospitality with its hotels, ships and trains. Image: Orient Express*

By STAFF REPORTS

Orient Express, known for its famed trains across Europe, is set to open its first two hotels in Italy in 2025 even as it prepares for more collaborations with luxury brands and the imminent extension to seaborne journeys.

The hotels, via a partnership with hotels and hospitality specialist Arsenale, will open in the Italian capital of Rome and Venice, both tourist magnets. Orient Express has tapped Giampaolo Ottazzi as general manager for both properties.

"We want to create an unprecedented service that can make these two important hotels not just beautiful places, but a truly magical and authentic experience of Italian living," said Paolo Barletta, CEO of Arsenale, in a statement.



*Interior of a room at a soon-to-open Orient Express hotel. Image: Orient Express*

### On track for growth

**Orient Express** is part of hospitality giant Accor's portfolio of brands, which also includes the Raffles hotel with a new outpost in London to complement its Singapore flagship.

**Accor** is investing heavily in its luxury-oriented brands, particularly reinvigorating the Raffles and Orient Express marques.



*Orient Express La Minerva in Rome. Image: Orient Express*

Orient Express celebrated 140 years in existence since its founding Oct. 4, 1883, albeit under Accor ownership only since 2016. The original Orient Express company stopped operating in 1977.

However, as global affluence rises, so do aspirations of the newly wealthy and those already with money. That is where Accor has sensed opportunity, not only with Orient Express-themed merchandise, but also trains, hotels and cruises.



*Rendering of Orient Express Silenseas. Image: Orient Express Maxime d'Angeac, Martin-Darzacq*

Accor recently unveiled plans to launch in 2026 the world's largest sailing ship called the Orient Express Silenseas. Chantiers de l'Atlantique will build the ship, with an order for another vessel as well.

Collaborations are also key.



*Orient Express x Montblanc. Image: Orient Express, Montblanc*

A partnership this summer with Richemont-owned Montblanc has led to the debut of seven exclusive limited-edition, highly crafted writing instruments inspired by the Art Deco interiors of the original Orient Express trains.

SAVOIRE-FAIRE AND taking inspiration from the Golden Age of travel are key to Orient Express' go-to-market strategy. So is relying on the expertise of industry veterans to breathe new life into a storied brand.



*Giampaolo Ottazzi*

Mr. Ottazzi will be responsible for the strategic positioning, development and operations management of the [Orient Express La Minerva in Rome and Orient Express Palazzo Don Giovannelli in Venice](#).

With more than 40 years of experience in the luxury hospitality industry, Ottazzi began his career in sales and marketing management roles in Venice at the CIGA Hotel, in Portofino at Hotel Splendido, in Florence at Villa San Michele and in Como at Villa d'Este.

In 2000, Mr. Ottazzi became general manager of Villa La Massa Hotel in Florence. In 2008, he served as general manager of Belmond Hotel Cipriani in Venice for more than 12 years before his most recent position as general manager of Hotel De Russie in Rome where he took up his post in 2021.

"We are pleased to begin this journey together with Giampaolo," Mr. Barletta said in the statement. "His expertise and deep knowledge of the sector in Rome and Venice's city will be crucial elements to give even more value to a unique historical asset like Minerva and Palazzo Don Giovannelli."

## *Celebrating 140 years of Orient Express*

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