

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Orient Express building world's biggest sailed ship, setting off in 2026

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Orient Express is prepping to introduce the world to the largest sailing ship on the planet. Image credit: Accor

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

International hotel, river cruise and rail company **Orient Express** is poised to hit the water in 2026 with the largest sailing ship in the world.

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The news coincides with the 140-year anniversary of the company's historic trains. The revolutionary ship, dubbed the Orient Express Silenseas, pays homage to French design and the company's innovative spirit.

"With Orient Express Silenseas, we are beginning a new chapter in our history, taking the experience and excellence of luxury travel and transposing it onto the world's most beautiful seas," said Sbastien Bazin, chairman and CEO of Accor, in a statement.

"This exceptional sailing yacht, with roots in Orient Express' history, will offer unparalleled service and refined design spaces, reminiscent of the golden age of mythical cruises," Mr. Bazin said. "Innovation is at the heart of this ultra-modern ship that will revolutionize the maritime world with new technology to meet today's sustainability challenges.

"It is a boat designed to make dreams a reality, a showcase for the best of French savoir-faire."

Hard sail

The expectation-defying feat cannot be credited to Accor's Orient Express alone. The company partners with international shipbuilder Chantiers de l'Atlantique to complete the challenging project.

The resulting super-yacht will be over 721 feet in length, weighing 49,163,084 pounds.

Orient Express Silenseas will feature 54 suites, each one featuring over 721 square feet of interior space. The terraced Presidential Suite lands at 4,600 feet.



The three masts tower above the hull of the ship, providing protection in strong storms and inclement weather. Image credit: Accor

The ship will also hold a swimming pool, a speakeasy and two eateries.

The architects of the ship drew on their knowledge of racing when drawing up designs of the craft, using a technologically advanced concept called "SolidSail." The design is a three-rigid sail approach, each one being 4921.26 feet in surface area.

The sails are on a baleson rig, reaching over 100 feet high due to the tall masts. The tilted masts are weather stabilizers, useful during the propulsion of the ship.

Using liquified natural gas and wind power, the fusion engine will tap hydrogen reserves when the technology's use is approved for a ship of its kind.

French broker Hetland Maritime had a hand in conceptualizing the groundbreaking ship, brainstorming with Chantiers de l'Atlantique. Going forward, French designer Stirling Design International is to head the architectural aspects of the design.

"With a signed letter of intent to order two ships, Chantiers de l'Atlantique is proud to herald a new era in the shipbuilding industry with Silenseas," said Laurent Castaing, managing director at Chantiers de l'Atlantique, in a statement.

"This concept, born in our design offices in 2018, is the quintessence of our savoir-faire in the fields of naval architecture, the construction of sophisticated hulls, as well as the design of luxurious spaces," Mr. Castaing said. "In addition, the installation of three SolidSail rigs, a revolutionary 1,500-square-meter unit wind propulsion system, for which we have developed and tested a first prototype, will contribute significantly to the propulsion of the ship.

"Combined with a hybrid propulsion system running on liquefied natural gas (LNG), Silenseas will thus become the ship of reference in terms of environmentally-friendly operation and design."

Not only is the ship dedicated to futuristic sailing, but it nods to maritime history. Maxime d'Angeac kept this in mind when designing the interior of the craft.



Spaces aboard any Orient Express craft, land or sea, incorporate the glamor of history's upper-class travelers. Image credit: Orient Express

Ms. d'Angeac drew inspiration from the life of Georges Nagelmackers, the founder of the Orient Express. His transatlantic journeys between Europe and the United States fueled his lifelong fascination with sea journeys.

Mr. Nagelmackers was reportedly most drawn to the grandiose spaces that upper-class travelers inhabited. It is this love of luxury that the Orient Express Silenseas is most rooted in.

The ship contains elements from the French Riviera's Golden Era, when elites and artists of all crafts flocked to the region. The "joie de vivre" of Saint Tropez, Monte Carlo, Cannes and Cap d'Antibes is at the heart of this upcoming craft.

Passengers will be able to enjoy shows in the Amphitheatre-Cabaret and create music in the recording studio onboard. There will also be guides in meditation, spa treatments and opportunities to disembark at various cultural gems around the world via extended stopovers.

The construction and total costs are to be backed by commercial banks by up to 80 percent. The last 20 percent will be contributed by Accor partners, though the company will hold a minority stake.

Accor has long been known to center consumer wellness across its brands, tracking conscious travel trends across the industry ([see story](#)).

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