

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Veuve Clicquot, Belmond hop aboard luxury travel trends

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As they chug by the Andes or enjoy lush jungle scapes in Malaysia, passengers can expect bespoke experiences and cuve pairings around the world. Image courtesy of Veuve Clicquot

By EMILY IRIS DEGN

LVMH-owned Champagne maker Veuve Clicquot is pairing sips with train trips this year.

Working with LVMH-owned hospitality group Belmond, the maison is presenting [Solaire Journeys 2024](#), a series of three international railway adventures. From Andean excursions to routes through Alpine meadows, the brands are embracing slow travel as locomotive voyages pick up steam, befitting the current consumer landscape and shaping the future of experiential luxury.

"There's no doubt about it, train travel is back in fashion," said Misty Belles, vice president of global public communications at [Virtuoso Travel](#), Washington D.C.

"Looking at Virtuoso's rail travel bookings made from January through September of 2023, our U.S. travel agencies experienced a 50 percent increase in sales over the same time period in 2022 and an 18 percent increase over 2019," Ms. Belles said. "With a movement toward slow travel pacing the journey so as to fully enjoy the experience and the destination that has evolved post-pandemic, train travel is perfect for those who wish to take their time.

"And with luxury and service as defining elements with Belmond's train product, it's also the height of travel elegance."

Ms. Belles is not affiliated with Veuve Clicquot, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Hit the tracks

Veuve Clicquot's unveiling of itineraries aligns with the revival of the locomotive tourism industry.



Trains are having their moment in the sun as luxury consumers flock to the unique offerings they present. Image courtesy of Veuve Clicquot/Boby Allin

Long considered a thing of the past due to air travel taking off in the past century, trains are now becoming a popular way to vacation again. The niche mode of transportation brings together the growing demand for slower-paced voyages, ultra-luxury services and all things nostalgia.

Whether because of central roles in recent summer blockbusters ([see story](#)) or because of a re-evaluation of priorities largely caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, railways are emerging as a giant in the modern tourism sector ([see story](#)).

Those already involved with locomotives have been seeing growth in recent years, with many, including Belmond, embracing the expansion via bolstered leadership ([see story](#)) and increased route options ([see story](#)).

Solaire Journeys 2024 is just the latest of these additions, continuing an ongoing partnership between Veuve Clicquot and the hospitality group.



Those aboard the April train will be treated to bespoke care and rainforest views. Image courtesy of Veuve Clicquot/Matt Hind

Customers will be able to enjoy gala dinners made by award-winning chefs, cuve pairings with Swiss cellar master Didier Mariotti and striking vistas outside their windows. Champagne and fine gastronomy will serve as centerpieces to the upscale experiences, marrying the areas of expertise held by both participating maisons.

The first of the trips will take place from April 22 to April 25, 2024, kicking off with a Solaire Champagne brunch overlooking Singapore's Marina Bay. Taking passengers through jungles to Kuala Lumpur on the Eastern & Orient Express, those onboard will stay in cherry wood paneled cabins, restyled for this year's season.

From July 4 to July 6, 2024, another journey is taking place in Europe and the home of Veuve Clicquot.



Chefs and wine experts will craft pairings and fine dining for passengers. Image courtesy of Veuve Clicquot/Boby Allin

Starting in Vienna, a gala dinner will be hosted for travelers before heading to Reims on the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express. On the Art Deco-inspired train, voyagers will be treated to a black-tie dinner crafted by French chef Jean Imbert with pairings by Mr. Mariotti.

Upon arrival in the Champagne region, a guided tour will be led by the label's winemakers, allowing fans of the house to see the source of their beverages in person. Before ending the trip in Paris, culinary programming will also occur in Veuve Clicquot's UNESCO-listed chalk quarries, put together by Mr. Imbert and French chef Mory Sacko, complete with more cuves.

For those wanting a longer and more remote option, from Oct. 22 to Oct. 26, 2024, the Hiram Bingham and Andean Explorer trains will take passengers from Cusco to Arequipa in South America.



Bucket list destinations around Peru pepper the final Solaire Journey. Image courtesy of Veuve Clicquot/Nicolas Quiniou

This five-night luxury expedition will include ancient landmarks like Machu Pichu, natural wonders such as Lake Titicaca and vibrant Peruvian sunrises. Identical to the other routes, Mr. Mariotti and other chefs will prepare meals and Champagne choices to be savored.

Experiential explosion

While Belmond has been affirming its place in tourism by establishing annual events ([see story](#)), emphasizing its culinary involvement ([see story](#)) and celebrating culture ([see story](#)), Veuve Clicquot has likewise been eyeing experiential luxury.

With investors showing massive support for brands that fall into this category ([see story](#)), the maison is not alone in its participation in the tourism sector as an outside player. However, its recent efforts are extensive.



Veuve Clicquot is fusing its own sector with tourism via various programming and trip offerings. Image courtesy of Veuve Clicquot/November Studio

From hosting sensory spaces filled with art ([see story](#)) to creating a pop-up hotel in Australia ([see story](#)), Veuve Clicquot has

dug into many elements of hospitality. Along the Baltic Sea, the company even held trips for consumers to interact on a deeper level with its products ([see story](#)).

The move, like Solaire Journeys, positions the house's Champagne as an integral part of memorable experiences and embraces a particularly lucrative category.

"While it's not necessarily a new concept to associate a luxury beverage with a luxury experience, transforming travels into special occasions and celebratory events, which is what naturally happens when champagne is involved, is quite clever," said Ms. Belles.

"With Veuve Clicquot under the LVMH umbrella, it's that much easier to create branded lifestyle experiences with Champagne at the center, while utilizing other LVMH assets like the Belmond trains to ring it to fruition."

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