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Saudi Arabia's First Luxury Train Is A Moving Oasis Of High Design

Arriving in 2026, the new Dream of the Desert train will traverse the Arabian Peninsula.

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Dream of the Desert train COURTESY OF ALINE ASMAR D'AMMAN

From Italy's new La Dolce Vita Orient Express to the United Kingdom's new Britannic Explorer, luxury rail travel is having a global renaissance, and the Middle East is about to get in on the action with Dream of the Desert, a new 14-carriage luxury train coming in 2026. Unveiled by Saudi Arabia Railways (SAR) and Arsenale (the Italian hospitality house behind Accor's upcoming La Dolce Vita Orient Express train), this five-star rolling masterpiece promises to define high-end rail travel across the Arabian Peninsula.

Designed by acclaimed architect and interior designer Aline Asmar d'Amman, who is based out of Beirut and Paris, the new 34-suite train is set to begin operations in late 2026 with itineraries throughout Saudi Arabia's vast desert landscapes. The train is part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, which aims to position the Kingdom as a global tourism and cultural hub, and it will traverse SAR's existing Northern Railway network, departing from Riyadh and featuring key stops along the way, such as the historic hotspot of AlUla.

Known for her transformative work on the Hôtel de Crillon in Paris and the Palazzo Dona Giovannelli in Venice, Asmar d'Amman's vision is inspired by both the natural surroundings and the famed high-key grandeur of Arabian hospitality. Expect a desert-hued color palette, rich textiles and intricate geometric motifs throughout.



Bar and lounge car COURTESY OF ALINE ASMAR D'AMMAN



Lounge seating COURTESY OF ALINE ASMAR D'AMMAN



Dining car COURTESY OF ALINE ASMAR D'AMMAN



Suite COURTESY OF ALINE ASMAR D'AMMAN



Train exterior COURTESY OF ALINE ASMAR D'AMMAN

The train's reception lounges take inspiration from traditional majlis (sitting rooms), with seating arrangements encouraging intimate conversations, while the bar area has distinct Deco touches with a tiled bar and low lighting.

Each of the 34 suites are sanctuaries of comfort and craftsmanship with wood marquetry and bespoke furnishings. Equine-inspired details, such as saddle-stitched leather trims, worn leather and curtain tiebacks mimicking traditional Arabian tack, nod to the country's deep-rooted horse heritage. Meanwhile, the use of signature green patina panels is meant to evoke Jeddah's iconic architectural façades, in particular, the coral stone merchant homes in Al-Balad (Jeddah Historic District), one of the Kingdom's UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The train's dining car will feature a menu blending Arabic tradition and global sophistication. Amber and green hues set a warm, luxurious tone, while subtle lavender accents (a homage to the desert flowers of Rafha) infuse a sense of place into the decor.

While exact details on the pieces and artists are still forthcoming, art and photography throughout the train will be designed to celebrate the Kingdom's natural wonders and cultural landmarks, and corridors will serve as moving galleries.