

Orient Express Corinthian

Maxime d'Angeac tells Alex Smith how the world's largest sailing yacht evokes the history and luxury of the storied Orient Express brand

Orient Express Corinthian became the first ship to set sail for Orient Express Sailing Yachts on 2 May 2026, bringing the heritage of the storied rail brand to the sea.

At 220 metres long, Corinthian is the world's largest sailing yacht and accommodates 110 guests in 54 suites. The interior design project was led by Maxime d'Angeac, architect and creative director for Orient Express, who brought his 30 years of design experience to the sea for the first time. d'Angeac and his team worked closely with French shipyard Chantiers d'Atlantique to adapt to the unique challenges of marine design.

"What sets marine design apart from other forms of design is simple: the sea," says d'Angeac. "Humidity, salt, fire, water, vibrations – in short, a whole range of technical challenges that Chantiers de l'Atlantique has mastered to perfection. Our role was to push the boundaries as far as possible... without ever forgetting the shipyard bears ultimate responsibility for the vessel and its interiors, in terms of weight, cost and schedule. This obliges us to remain humbly in their wake, even though we have constantly pushed them forward, encouraged them to evolve or changed their minds regarding feasibility."

This close collaboration shaped the project from its earliest stages. Design and technical teams worked in parallel, allowing the interiors to influence core architectural decisions.

"What has helped us considerably is that, from the moment the contract was signed, we were able to integrate with the design and technical teams, working on the plans, the details, the heights between decks, vertical circulation, compartment allocations, all openings and even, from time to time, the structure," says d'Angeac.

Establishing a close relationship with suppliers also enabled d'Angeac to deliver on his vision by allowing the line to incorporate innovative materials into the design. For example, the team worked closely with flooring specialist Bolidit to customise its decking solutions for Corinthian. We worked with them for 12 months to create a textured



Accommodation onboard Orient Express Corinthian is entirely suite-based



Venues onboard Corinthian include a library with over 1,500 books and a fully equipped spa

Bolidt finish that resembles teak – it’s a lovely touch,” says d’Angeac.

The result is a vessel where spatial planning and guest experience are tightly interlinked. Accommodation is entirely suite-based, with even the ship’s lowest room category offering 506 square feet of space and panoramic ocean views.

Meanwhile, the most luxurious accommodation, the penthouse suites, are located on deck seven. There are six two-bedroom suites, including the Agatha Christie suite, which spans the width of the ship and offers a personal fitness room and a marble bathroom, as well as literary-inspired artwork. Meanwhile, the five Zephyr suites each feature an Orient Express Heritage cabin – a replica of the sleeping compartment on the 1927 Orient Express train.

Deck seven stands out to d’Angeac as the best example of the philosophy behind the ship’s design.

“For me, deck seven defies belief, pushes the boundaries as far as possible and brings us face to face with the world of yachting – it’s a free-flowing, meticulously crafted and innovative design,” he says. “Anyone lucky enough to spend time there will remember the experience for a long time to come.

I could say that about the whole of Corinthian, but I particularly love the freedom of deck seven’s design.”

The Heritage Cabins are just one example of the way in which d’Angeac drew heavily on Orient Express’s cultural and historical foundations for the creation of the interiors.

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“The core inspiration lies in the brand’s DNA – the pursuit of comfort, innovation and the application of French craftsmanship – culture and history then do the rest,” says d’Angeac, referencing precedents set by the luxury French ocean liners, Normandie and Île de France, in the early 20th century. “The design draws on historical references without becoming nostalgic, combining a contemporary interpretation of tradition with seamlessly integrated engineering. It therefore delivers on the aesthetic vision while providing the durability required

for a marine environment. The ship is a major industrial project as well as a major decorative one, but ultimately, it is a representation of Orient Express.”

Among the onboard venues is La Table de l’Orient-Express by Yannick Alléno, which offers fine dining in a room featuring a pillared alcove, luxury wooden furnishings and moonlit glasswork. Meanwhile, Le Speakeasy is inspired by the secretive illegal bars found in America during the Roaring Twenties and offers an intimate setting for a classic cocktail.

Entertainment and cultural spaces are similarly varied and include a 20-seat cinema, a library with approximately 1,500 books, a music salon hosting live performances, and a cabaret-style theatre inspired by Parisian venues.

Ultimately, Corinthian is an expression of the reputation Orient Express has built over more than a century – its pursuit of craftsmanship, its reverence for history and its belief that travel can be genuinely transformative. With just 110 guests onboard at any one time, the ship will offer luxury in its rarest form. As d’Angeac himself puts it: “Our experience thrives on exclusivity – you have to be lucky enough to be part of it.” **CFI**