

prêt à VOYAGER

TRAVEL IS NOT ABOUT WHERE YOU GO, BUT HOW YOU SEE THE WORLD

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2011

Train Living



Every Monday on *design*sponge* I help run the "sneak peek" column showcasing homes around the world. My favorite homes tend to be the small ones, as I discover new ways to be efficient with space. So I thought it'd be fun to wrap up my posts about my journey on the *Orient Express Venice-Simplon* (check out the first two [here](#) and [here](#)) with a "sneak peek" inside the living quarters.

Image above: In Calais, France, finally getting off the train we first boarded in Venice. For the Chunnel crossing we had to take a coach. Subconsciously Margaret and I wore navy dresses the day we boarded which matched the train quite well!

BONJOUR!

PRÊT À VOYAGER



This is the blog of a Paris-loving graphic designer with a visual mind, love of

travel and desire to explore the everyday world. You can also find me over on *design*sponge* where I am a contributing editor for the "sneak peek" interiors column. Thanks for stopping by and if you want to join the dialogue, shoot me an email at [pretavoyager \[at\] gmail \[dot\] com](mailto:pretavoyager@gmail.com)! You can find more of my professional work at anneditmeyer.com ~Anne

[VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Flickr](#)

[Facebook](#)

SUBSCRIBE!

Posts

All Comments



Inside my cabin. We were lucky enough to have a cabin suite so we each had a banquette where we could lounge, read, nap and look at the ever changing views out the window.



Magically when we returned from dinner, our cabins were converted into bedrooms. (The beds can be made into bunk beds in single cabins). We slept so well that night. When we woke up the train was pulling into Paris (some folks ended their journey there).



The wash basin in the cabin when we arrived (left) and in the evening (right). All the little things you hardly know are there when you first arrive.



Beautiful classic light fixtures.



Each time you walk down the train you notice the marquetry on the walls, and it's different in each car, making it truly unique.



Eventually you start to see the landscapes from outside reflected in the walls.



Despite being one of the more luxurious ways to travel, there are no showers on board and there is a shared toilet at the end of the hall (still quite nice). One of my favorite things was this convertible sink that ensured water wasn't wasted. On the left the sink is folded as when you enter and go to the bathroom. Then when you are ready to wash your hands you lower it, add a touch of water, and there is soap in the top compartment. When you're finished you lift it up and the water flows out the back. Truly ingenious!



Our sleeping car was car A at the very front/back of the train, depending on which direction we were going. In nearly every country we had to change engines with a local car and driver. I love this logo.



When we got to England, the Pullman dining cars became our home. We consumed high tea during the 2 hour ride to London.



Digesting the Orient Express



While onboard the **Orient Express** there are four main activities: 1) Looking out the window 2) napping/sleeping 3) Eating and 4) Digesting. (Plugging in your laptop isn't even an option as there are no outlets). As the scenery outside passes you by, the inner feel of the train is constantly morphing and transforming from day to night. One thing is for sure, you will never go hungry on this journey, as life revolves around meals, and even between meals there is tea time, which often feels like a meal within itself. I was lucky to have **Margaret** for the insider with tips like, "eat lunch at the first sitting and dinner at the last sitting in order to give yourself ample time to digest." All told there were three dining cars and we experienced each one for a different meal - lunch, dinner and brunch the next day. Each menu tied into the location we were passing through at the time. Although a set menu, the waiters would come by to confirm our order and was happy to make substitutions to our liking (I changed nothing). I can honestly say I don't think I've ever eaten so well, and meal after meal, in my life. I'm not sure that I ever will again after this.



Shortly after leaving the Venice train station we were called to lunch. As we were in Italy, we of course had to start with Bellinis. Besides, they matched the lampshade and flowers. The glass decoration in this dining room was amazing.



First came this delicious "Tonno del chianti" with apples.



Then one of our favorite meals of the trip, a pan-fried anglerfish with braised celery and saffron pistils, green cabbage with mushrooms, and steamed purple potatoes. We were sold with the color palette alone.



The soufflé dessert with passion fruit sauce was the perfect end to our first meal. Then off to nap and take in the scenery.



Luckily the second seating didn't start until 9:30pm, and even that wasn't enough time to digest (insert top image of tea time between lunch and dinner here). It did give us enough time to hit up the bar car (gin + tonic and a Pimm's Cup for me, while Margaret tried their signature Agatha Christie with 12 secret ingredients). It was an amazing ambiance with many men in tuxes with the piano music behind me. We're still impressed with the ability of the bartenders to navigate with so many drinks in a moving car.



On the way back from the WC I waited for a waiter's order to come up. A couple cocktails and some wine in my system, and the next thing I knew was the chefs were inviting me into their kitchen. The kitchen is a traditionally French speaking crew, so it was quite entertaining being invited back for a quick chat en francais. The waiter kindly notified Margaret that I was indeed not lost, but was hanging out in the kitchen.



Chefs at work, and for the record, this Ecurie butter was amazing.



Inside the kitchen of our dining car. Very impressive to see this is where they prepare up to 180 meals as we joked about my 12m2 apartment, I could relate to them working in such a tight space. Christian Bodiguel was the chef de cuisine behind all of our meals.



I think I was too full to photograph much of dinner, but luckily our waiter offered to take this shot (note: the entire crew have become talented photographers due to the nature of their job and everyone wanting to remember the experience). By the time dinner was done we were ready to roll back to bed.



But by 9am we were already enjoying breakfast brought to our cabins.



And a couple hours later it was brunch.



After the scrambled eggs we were served this amazing lobster with potatoes.



Since we were now in France, we had tarte tatin for dessert. (In case you're curious there was caramel inside that slab of chocolate!). I almost keeled over when they brought by another plate of chocolates after this – I'd finally hit my limit.



When we got to Calais, France we bid farewell to our train that had carried us so far, boarded a coach, went through customs and our coach was inside a carriage (not the old school kind) as we crossed under the Chunnel. On the other side, the Pullman train was waiting for us (with a live band, like in the old days). This train is only composed of dining cars, and each one was carefully restored and has a bit of a style of its own. Full tea-time consisted of a range of tea sandwiches, scones with clotted cream, and small pastries. We stayed hydrated with what felt like a bottomless glass of champagne and hot tea (for digestion, I kept telling myself). A couple days later, and I still don't really feel like I ever need to eat again after this experience.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2011

A Journey Like No Other on the Orient Express



For 30 hours aboard the **Orient Express's Venice Simplon** between Venice and London I felt like I traveled back in time to a bygone era of travel where slow luxury reigned supreme. My 12m2 Paris apartment trained me well for the cozy cabins that became our home on wheels, yet provided further proof that you do not need much space to lead a glamorous life. I was lucky enough to be the guest of my dear friend **Margaret** who has worked for **Orient Express** for the past five years (that's her on the right sporting her fabulous "fascinator" and me in the window with the hat). Dressing our best, we played the roles of sophisticated seasoned travelers in an once in a lifetime adventure, we won't soon forget. More coming soon, but a sneak peek of more photos for those who can't wait [right here!](#)



Each car has its own cabin attendant. Claudio was a very knowledgeable guy (and also a trained archaeologist). It's fun to get to know your attendants, as I even got to see the area where they put the coals and wood in the fire to heat the rooms. Their uniforms are pretty fabulous too.



Champagne waiting for us in our cabin (Margaret's connections!), Soon followed by Prosecco, an Italian sparkling wine. The best part was that Margaret knew other people on the train, so we could all share and enjoy the experience together,



The tracks weren't as smooth as high speed rails, but imagine walking a bit like a ping-pong ball bouncing off the walls en route to the dining car. It adds to the fun, especially in high heels and evening wear.



A quick stop for fresh air in Switzerland. In almost every country we would stop, change engines, and often direction as well. The goal is not the fastest journey, but the most beautiful one.



We had a double cabin that opened up and was joined together. We each had our own area for lounging and taking in the ever-changing views.



A certain attire is required on-board (namely, no jeans, and plan to look your very best for dinner). It's amazing how fabulous clothes can help dress up an already amazing environment. The robes (and slippers) were only for night/early morning. There was incredible handmade marquetry detailing in our car, but each car was unique.



Before dinner, we arrived in the bar car just before everyone else had the same idea. A live piano player played anything from the Beatles to Casablanca as the nimble bartenders made their way through the tight - and moving - space without so much spilling a drop. Then off to dinner in one of the three elegantly designed dining cars where very meal had a minimum of three deliciously decadent courses.



Finally, I could never travel with Margaret without taking an OFS [Official Foot Shot]. Here, wearing our slippers before bed, where we slept like babies that night.

You might also like:



Fashion Week:
Paris (Elie Saab)



Comment dit-on
"awkward"?



Tour de France:
Toulouse – Denise
Laborde

[LinkWithin](#)

POSTED BY PRÊT À VOYAGER 11 COMMENTS



Recommend this on Google

LABELS: [ORIENT EXPRESS](#), [TRAINS](#), [TRANSPORTATION](#)