

In pursuit of romance and adventure

	ROVOS RAIL (AFRICA)	THE BLUE TRAIN (RSA)	VENICE-SIMPLON ORIENT EXPRESS (EUROPE)	EASTERN & ORIENT EXPRESS (FAR EAST)
THE TRAIN				
THE VIBE	Vintage splendour – Indiana Jones meets Cecil John Rhodes.	21st century African opulence.	The Grande Dame of trains – the most famous train in the world.	Life on board is like a Merchant-Ivory movie.
PUBLIC SPACES	Stand-alone wingback chairs and deep pile couches give the appearance of an elegant sitting room rather than a train carriage. Dining cars are elegantly appointed with large freestanding armchairs. Damask linens, crystal and silverware are standard.	Excessive use of animal-print aside, anything that can shine, does. Smoking is permitted in the club car, which also has a large TV and a selection of games. The furniture is timber-framed with leather or upholstered in Karoo shades.	The bar car is the heart of the train and is a unique, intimate and stylish experience. Dining Car 4141, known as the 'Lalique Pullman', was built in 1929 and decorated by René Lalique in Côte d'Azur style. Some panels from the same series are in the Ritz London's Rivoli bar.	The bar car is the centre of social life on board, where pianists and fortune-tellers will entertain you. Drinking a Singapore Sling is essential. The observation car has a teak-panelled open veranda. Smoking is permitted outdoors.
CABIN LIFE	Select Deluxe for a king-size bed with large freestanding armchairs (above). Vintage images promoting travel to South Africa adorn the walls. <i>En suite</i> toilet and either a shower or a bath.	All cabins have either a bath or a shower, and all have toilets. There are either eight or nine De Luxe coaches depending on the train set. Windows don't open, so there's no dust.	All cabins are standard (banquette seating that converts into double bunks after dark) and come with doors connecting to the next cabin. No toilet or shower facilities in the cabin.	Compartments are beautifully appointed with Pullman Superior beds. Each compartment is fully air-conditioned with an <i>en suite</i> shower, washbasin and toilet.
ROMANCE QUOTIENT	Lots of room to get comfortable and a mini-bar stocked with your requests is included in the board fee (except French Champers and super-premium tipple).	Having a bath on board a train while looking out of the window is one of the most sensual experiences.	Given the lack of space, there isn't going to be much on-board action. However, the rewards will be felt after arriving in Paris or Venice.	Perhaps it's the steamy heat of the East or the lush environment...
THE JOURNEY	Various options, including a 14-day journey to Tanzania. The three-day trip from Pretoria to Durban takes in the sights of two game parks. The train stops overnight to ensure peaceful sleep.	Between Cape Town and Pretoria. Look out at the Du Toitskloof Pass (about an hour after leaving Cape Town). In urban areas, the graffiti is better shut out. One night on board.	Travels on tracks (that other commercial services no longer use) via the Italian Dolomites through Austria and onwards to Switzerland.	The first train to transport passengers directly between Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. Life in the open observation car among potted palms and rattan chairs is the best way to enjoy the views.
WHO'S THERE	Generally moneyed internationals, but also honeymoon couples and a smattering of locals who prefer three days on board to a week on an island.	Big business deals happen on the Blue Train, but there is a strong sense that there are as many people playing on board the Blue as there are working.	Minor European royalty and those who believe they are.	Mainly folk celebrating a silver or golden anniversary, or those on honeymoon.
FOOD AND WINE	High-quality cuisine is served at a gentle pace. Excess is encouraged at every turn. Smoking is allowed on the observation deck and in cabins only.	A selection of South African wines is available by the glass. Cuisine is outstanding. Meals – and the constant offering of after-dinner drinks – are long, drawn-out affairs.	The best cuisine I've enjoyed while moving. <i>Haute cuisine</i> prepared by awarded French chefs. Meals are a highlight, but wine is costly.	A menu for both Asian and occidental tastes. The best Caesar salad I've ever had.
PRICE AND VALUE FOR MONEY	From R9 860 per person sharing, for two nights. It's good value compared to other services. www.rovos.com ★★★★★	From R9 215 per person sharing, for one night. www.bluetrain.co.za ★★★★★	From about R20 000 per person sharing, for one night. www.vsoe.com ★★★★★	From about R14 200 per person, for two nights – excellent value compared to its European counterpart. www.orient-express.com ★★★★★

