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# REST EASY

## On Belmond's new Britannic Explorer, England and Wales' first luxury sleeper train, slow living is the order of the day







Observation Car and Bar on the Britannic Explorer, Belmond's ultra-luxury sleeper train in the UK; *Top right:* Double Suite featuring bespoke fabric panels designed by British artist Luke Edward Hall in collaboration with heritage textile maker Rubelli

There's a reason Victorian doctors used to suggest heading for the seacoast when you needed a break. With its salty, salubrious air and soothing, mineral-rich waves, the sea is good for the soul. That's exactly what I thought when I lifted the shade of my train cabin window to see the British coastline whooshing by in a smear of blue. I exhaled – both literally and figuratively – and immediately felt my nervous system reset.

There is just something extra special about visiting the seaside by slow train, and the new Britannic Explorer by LVMH's Belmond has made this more leisurely pace of travel its *raison d'être.* The first luxury sleeper train in England and Wales, the Britannic Explorer launched in the summer of 2025 with three routes: Cornwall, the Lake District, and Wales. Each route takes three nights, departing from London's Victoria Station, and two can sometimes be combined for a six-night trip.

In dire need of vitamin sea, I took the Cornwall route. Belmond knows how to create a sense of occasion, and at Victoria Station my fellow travellers and I – about 30 in all, from around the world, including the UK, the US, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia – gathered in the station lounge for some live best-of-British music (think Oasis) before boarding.

First, we settled into the sunlit, nostalgic Observation Car for a bite-sized and oh-so-British afternoon tea. Sandwiches of Burford eggs, Port Isaac lobster, and smoked trout. Sweet treats of Douglas fir fudge; chicory and walnut cakes with rye cream; and Bakewell tarts

with pollen cream and sea buckthorn gel – it's all here. This would be the first of many opulent-but-earthy meals designed by Chef Simon Rogan, MBE, whose international coterie of restaurants holds a collective nine Michelin stars. A farm-to-fork pioneer with real respect for provenance, Rogan sources much of the menu hyper-locally, including mussels from Fowey (which we sampled just after departing), the most perfect sourdough from a Cornish bakery, and his own English sparkling rosé from West Sussex.

Following afternoon tea, we retired to our cabins. There are 18 in total: three Grand Suites with double beds, plus 11 Double Suites and four Twin Suites, each with sofas that turn into beds. All are handsomely outfitted by London-based Albion Nord in pale oak and soft sage or powdery-blue velvet, and mine came with a pretty silver pedestal bowl of fresh summer cherries from Kent – the perfect welcome touch. Bathrooms are small but stylish, with honeycomb tile and vintage-inspired taps, evoking a twee English cottage. The flickering countryside scenery – wildflower meadows, snoozy seaside towns in ice-cream shades, milky green waves, stretches of sand at low tide – acts like ASMR: gentle and genteel, so rhythmic and hypnotic you could drift off to sleep to it.

But there was no time for a nap yet; there was more feasting to be done. The two dining carriages have antique mirror ceilings, chairs dressed in a tapestry-inspired print, and blown-glass sconces with the opaline glow of the inside of a seashell, while tables of four and six encourage socialising. This mixing and mingling reminds me of an old-world steamship, where first-class passengers gather and gossip daily. Unlike on Belmond's sister train, the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express, there's no need for black tie at dinner; however, gentlemen are asked to wear jackets (don't worry: train stewards can help with pressing).

After another magnificent meal and a little live music in the Observation Car, I retired to my cabin, which had been transformed for the night, the fern-green velvet settee now a bed dressed in pristine white sheets. Left at turndown were a set of Desmond & Dempsey pyjamas and an eye mask–yours to keep. The train is a celebration of all things British, and other homegrown






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*Left page:* Juniper Grand Suite; *This page (top right):* Dining carriage on the Britannic Explorer; *Above (from left):* Onboard fine-dining and culinary experiences are curated by Michelin-starred British chef Simon Rogan; Station clock and route board panel

brands on board include Wildsmith, whose products are used in the bathrooms and in the spoiling Wellness Suite, for facials and massages on a welcomingly oversized treatment bed.

The train itinerary is hardly taxing, with several optional excursions to choose from. Our adventure included a tour of Tremenheere Sculpture Gardens in Penzance, with views over the storybook tidal island of St Michael's Mount; a RIB ride through the dolphin-filled waters off the pretty bunting-strung village of Fowey; and an evening at the Hauser & Wirth Somerset gallery. The Cornwall route has an art focus, while the Lake District journey tilts towards a foodie angle, and the Wales trip is a little more outdoorsy, with hikes and a visit to a lavender farm.

Whichever itinerary you choose, the real point of distinction with the new Britannic Explorer is what happens aboard the train itself: the soft live guitar in the Observation Car at cocktail hour, the late mornings eating buttery crumpets for breakfast in bed, and the old-fashioned intimacy of spending a few days with strangers-turned-friends. And then there's the restorative, shoulder-slackening power that comes from watching the countryside and the seaside pass by outside your window as the mind wanders and ideas and inspirations are born. A slow train trip fully embraces the idea that it's the journey, not the destination, that matters – and it makes a beautiful argument for doing it in style.