

Task 1: Sentence completion

Read the text and complete the sentences below. Use 1–5 words in each gap. Bear in mind that all contracted forms with the exception of *can't* count as two words. There is an example at the beginning: Sentence 0.

The Orient Express – Research notes

History

- Entered service in (0) **1883** _____;
- first train service to connect one end of (1) _____ with the other;
- during the first years of service, the journey from Paris to Istanbul involved travelling (2) _____ in its final stage;
- after World War I, the original route (3) _____;
- after 1919, the service was named after (4) _____;
- no service during World War II, but reintroduced in 1947;
- stopped running in 1977 because of (5) _____;
- also appeared in different (6) _____.

James Sherwood

- An American businessman who decided to revive the old train service;
- the first step was the purchase of two original train cars at an auction;
- Sherwood's Orient Express is a combination of cars from different (7) _____ and different (8) _____;
- Sherwood's Orient Express was first considered a bad imitation because it was more stylish than the original;
- the public, however, were prepared to believe it was (9) _____.

Venice-Simplon Orient Express

- The service does not run from November to March;
- a newly-wed couple, going on a romantic trip from London to Venice, would have to pay (10) _____ for a return ticket;
- to be in Venice on 21 May, the traveller from London, wanting to travel by the VSOE, should take (11) _____ at the latest.

Orient Express: Train

The Orient Express, also called Simplon Orient Express (1919–77), was a luxury train that ran from Paris to Istanbul for more than 80 years (1883–1977). Europe's first transcontinental express, it initially covered a route of more than 1,700 miles (about 2,740 km) that included brief stopovers in such cities as Munich, Vienna, Budapest, and Bucharest. The Orient Express was developed by the Belgian businessman Georges Nagelmackers and made its inaugural run in 1883. During its first journey the passengers travelled from Paris to the Bulgarian port of Varna via train and were then ferried by steamship across the Black Sea to Constantinople. By 1889, however, the entire trip was by rail.

Its service was stopped by World War I but resumed in 1919, with the route running from Calais and Paris to Lausanne, then via the Simplon Pass to Milan, Venice, Zagreb, Belgrade and Sofia, and was accordingly advertised as the Simplon Orient Express. The service was interrupted again during World War II, but it was resumed in 1947. The Orient Express was discontinued in 1977 after several decades of steadily declining ridership. In 1982, an American, James Sherwood, revived the train as the Venice-Simplon Orient Express, with several routes between London and Venice.

The train, which had sleeping, restaurant, and salon cars that housed smoking compartments and ladies' drawing rooms was originally furnished by Nagelmackers' Belgian firm, the Wagon-Lits Company. With its Oriental rugs, velvet draperies, mahogany panelling, deep armchairs covered in soft Spanish leather, and fine cuisine, the Orient Express was unmatched in luxuriousness and comfort. For years it attracted the elite of Europe's society, including royalty. The glamour of the train also caught the imagination of numerous writers, among them Graham Greene and Agatha Christie, whose works helped to make it world-famous.

Travel special 2014: Recalling murderous fun on the Orient Express

But Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* wasn't set on the original train but on the Simplon Orient Express, which started life in 1919 and went from Calais to Istanbul. Greene's *Stamboul Train* is set on something called the Oostende-Vienna Orient Express. World War II and the fall of the Iron Curtain badly affected the luxury train services and by the 1960s the Orient Express had been dispersed into several minor services not worthy of the grand old name. From 1971, the Wagons-Lits Company didn't own or run the train any longer, they just supplied the catering, the linen and the uniforms. In 1977, they withdrew from the Orient Express completely.

Enter James Sherwood, an entrepreneur who owned the Sea Containers Ltd. company, which dealt with leasing containers and shipping. At auction, he bought two of the original Wagon-Lits train carriages, and over the next five years he bought 35 more. He found elderly British sleeping cars from the 1920s and 1930s, and Pullman cars from the 1950s. He kitted out the English Pullmans in cosy brown-and-cream livery, and restored the interiors. In addition, he redecorated the old cars by the Wagons-Lits company in shiny midnight blue. And on 25 May, 1982, Sherwood's Orient Express, officially named the Venice-Simplon Orient Express, made its first trip from London to Venice, 100 years after G Nagelmackers had started the whole thing. Of course it was a luxurious fake, a mock-up, a fairground forgery of an original that hadn't been half as stylish. But in the early 1980s, the travel-trade world and the public collectively agreed to pretend this super-luxurious train was the old Orient Express.

What is the Venice-Simplon Orient Express (VSOE)

The VSOE is a privately-run train, providing a 5-star luxury train experience between London, Paris, Innsbruck, Verona and Venice, running roughly once a week from March to November. The journey from London to Venice takes 24 hours and costs £2,000 per person one way, including meals. If you can afford it, the VSOE is the most romantic and luxurious way to reach Venice, and its vintage carriages are a piece of history in themselves. The food and on-board service are truly world class.

Departure dates southbound, London to Venice:

23 Mar, 30 Mar, 6 Apr, 20 Apr, 23 Apr, 27 Apr, 4 May, 14 May, 18 May, 21 May, 28 May, 4 June, 22 June, 25 June, 29 June, 6 July, 13 July, 3 Aug, 10 Aug, 17 Aug, 14 Sep, 17 Sep, 21 Sep, 24 Sep, 1 Oct, 5 Oct, 8 Oct, 15 Oct, 19 Oct, 22 Oct, 29 Oct, 2 Nov.

Departure dates northbound, Venice to London:

22 Mar, 29 Mar, 5 Apr, 8 Apr, 19 Apr, 22 Apr, 26 Apr, 3 May, 17 May, 20 May, 31 May, 21 June, 24 June, 28 June, 5 July, 12 July, 2 Aug, 9 Aug, 16 Aug, 13 Sep, 16 Sep, 20 Sep, 23 Sep, 4 Oct, 7 Oct, 18 Oct, 21 Oct, 1 Nov.

(Adapted from various sources)