



## Orient Express and Simplon Orient Express

Roads and methods of communication are the prerequisite for the growth of any place. Stresa owes its first urban and economic development to the construction, on the coast of the lake, of the Napoleonic Regia Strada del Sempione (Simplon Road), a cyclopean work of engineering connecting Milan and the Simplon Pass in the direction of Paris. One hundred years later, in 1906, the Simplon railway tunnel was inaugurated, a symbol of the dynamism and technology of the time, promoted by Count Giberto Borromeo and celebrated in Milan with the grand "International Exhibition", whose main entrance reproduces the Iselle tunnel. The fact that trains started stopping in Stresa almost immediately saw positive repercussions on the life of the city - very soon the town (Stresa) became the main holiday resort on Lake Maggiore. The luxurious train the Orient Express, reserved for wealthy and high society travellers has become famous thanks to numerous novels and films. The carriages of this famous train crossed all of Europe reaching the gates of the East. In fact, there was not just one single Orient Express route but a complex network of routes gradually added as time passed by. The first line of the Orient Express, from Paris to Constantinople (Istanbul) through continental Europe, came into operation in 1883, with an ample stretch, from Bucharest, not yet completed which meant passengers were transferred to boats and other trains. This section was finally completed in 1889. With the opening of the Simplon tunnel in 1906, a shorter route came into operation, departing from London on to Paris and Lausanne stopping in Stresa and arriving in Milan to then carry on to Venice in 1908. After the First World War this route then carried on to Trieste and gradually advancing in stages, branching off as far as Istanbul and Athens. The train became known as the Simplon Orient Express. The train network was disrupted during the two world conflicts (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) and then reactivated. After the First World War, the railway lines reached their maximum extension, while in the second the activity resumed with difficulty, also due to the closure of the borders between some countries. Subsequently the routes undergo some changes; a line survived until 2009.

