

Geronimo Stilton

Thea Stilton
**AND THE MYSTERY ON
THE ORIENT EXPRESS**



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ALL BECAUSE OF A STORM!

The **SUN** was setting over the Bosphorus, streaking the sky with golden light. I was on the terrace of my hotel in Istanbul, Turkey. What a **fascinating** place! It was hard to believe that only a week earlier I had been in the middle of a **snowstorm**.

Yes, dear reader, I'd gotten **stuck** on a





ISTANBUL AND THE TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM

Istanbul is the largest city in the Republic of Turkey, and it's a very important historical, cultural, and commercial center. The Topkapi Palace Museum is located there. For about four centuries, the palace served as the primary residence of the Turkish sultans. In 1924, it was turned into a museum that houses ancient armor, classical antiquities, and other artifacts.

mountaintop during a **CHALLENGING** climb up Alaska's Mount McKinley.

Oh, pardon me. I almost forgot to introduce myself. My name is Thea Stilton, and I am a special correspondent for *The Rodent's Gazette*, the biggest newspaper on Mouse

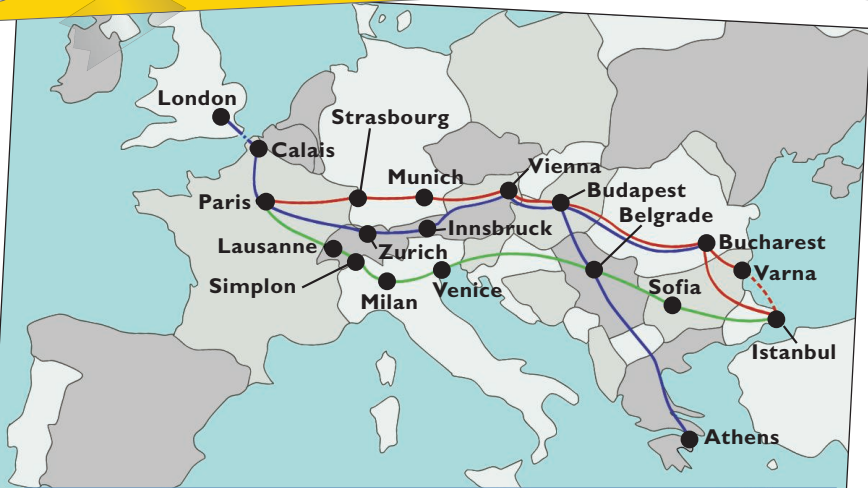
Island. My brother, Geronimo, is the publisher.

Now, where was I? Oh, yes — a week before, I was **snug as a bug in a rug** in my comfortable, **stormproof** tent. I had a warm sleeping bag and plenty of cheese. But I was certain I would never arrive in *Paris* in time to catch my train!

You see, I had received a special invitation to travel on the most famous train in the world, the **Orient Express**. The Paris police had found the legendary **Veil of Light**, an ancient wedding gown that had been stolen from the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul nearly a century earlier.

Now, finally, the Veil of Light was headed back to Turkey on the Orient Express. But that storm made it impossible for me to get to **France** to join the gown's journey!

The Orient Express



- Orient Express (1883–1914, 1919–1939, 1945–1962, with a maritime connection across the Black Sea until 1889)
- Simplon-Orient Express (1919–1939, 1945–1962), later the Direct-Orient Express (until 1977)
- Arlberg-Orient Express (1930–1939, 1945–1962)

The Orient Express is the most famous passenger train in the world. For decades, it was a symbol of luxury throughout Europe. The train was furnished with gorgeous Oriental carpets, mahogany paneling, and velvet draperies, and its café car was known for its fine dining. The train's route connected Paris and Istanbul, making a journey of 1,700 miles across the Balkan Mountains.

The Orient Express made its first trip in 1883, and it remained active until 1977, although there were interruptions due to the two World Wars. The most brilliant period in its history came between 1920 and 1930, when the train hosted royalty, artists, celebrities, and even international spies.

Initially, the train was known as the **Express d'Orient**, and it didn't go all the way to Istanbul; instead, passengers traveled to Varna and then took a ferry to Istanbul. By 1889, passengers could make the entire journey by rail. Over the years, the railroad company added new destinations and new tracks.

The Orient Express's prestige has lasted through time. Although the original route was discontinued in the 1970s, today there is a train known as the **Venice Simplon-Orient-Express** that connects London and Venice.



The Orient Express became well known thanks to novels by **Agatha Christie** and **Graham Greene**, who created homages to this special train.

That's when I had a brilliant idea. I needed someone to take my place on the train, and who better than the Thea Sisters? The **THEA SISTERS** are Colette, Nicky, Pamela, Paulina, and Violet — five **intelligent** mouselets I taught a while back in an adventure journalism class at my old school, **MOUSEFORD ACADEMY.**

I picked up my satellite **telephone** and placed a call to **MOUSEFORD'S** headmaster, Octavius de Mousus. It didn't take me long to persuade him.

"This is an educational opportunity the **mouselets** simply can't miss!" I told him.

"There will be lots of **celebrities** to interview. And the Thea Sisters' articles about the trip will be published in *The Rodent's Gazette!*"

