

AFAR

Curiosity (and \$2,500) Is All You Need to Join This New Travelers' Club

By Lyndsey Matthews 9.5.2018



PRIOR will bring together travelers who care more about experiences than thread count and infinity pools.

If you've ever wished you had an endless black book of contacts around the world to help you plan your next trip, you might want to considering applying to become a member of PRIOR, a new travelers' club that started accepting applications on September 4.

The brainchild of David Prior, the former contributing international editor at *Condé Nast Traveler* and a *Bloomberg Businessweek* "One to Watch" in 2018, PRIOR is an Explorers Club for a new era. It is for travelers who crave immersive experiences but don't necessarily obsess over thread count or whether a hotel has an infinity pool.

"I wanted to look at my experiences as an editor and see how I could breathe life into them," Prior says. For a trial run, Prior planned a small-group trip to India in 2017 that included acclaimed travel photographers Gentl and Hyers and his former boss, legendary chef Alice Waters. (Prior was the director of communications at Waters's iconic Berkeley restaurant, Chez Panisse, after graduating from Italy's University of Gastronomic Sciences.)

After the trip attracted attention on social media, Prior gained backing from Marc Blazer, the chairman of the board of Noma's parent company, who helped bring Prior's idea to life.



Photo by Daniel Seung Lee

Marc Blazer and David Prior, founders of PRIOR travel club

Other than a \$2,500 annual membership fee, the only barrier to membership is a sense of curiosity, Prior says. Candidates should also be people who want to “travel for diversity,” and shouldn’t be seeking the same experiences they can have at home. While he says he loves an infinity pool as much as anyone else, he’s looking for people to apply who want something new and different when they travel.

Once your membership is approved, you’ll have unlimited access to travel-planning services for individual bespoke trips designed from scratch. Unlike other high-end travel agencies or outfitters, PRIOR team members come from a variety of industries—including fashion, arts, design, and even the Olympics—to help open the door to a wide variety of experiences and provide an editorial point of view to travelers.

“It’s like we’re writing a prescription,” Prior says. “Instead of coming to us and saying, ‘I want to go here on these dates, book it,’ it’s much more of a collaboration.”

In addition to the bespoke planning service, members will also get to take part in talks, dinners, and workshops across the globe. Plus, there will be several small-group trips that only members can take part in each year. One of the first will take place May 2-5, 2019, at the Italian country home that chef Massimo Bottura and his wife Lara Gilmore restored in Modena, Italy, before they officially open to the public. There, chef Bottura will cook a private meal for the group and those who participate will also score hard-to-get reservations at Bottura's Osteria Francescana, which claimed the title of World's Best Restaurant in 2018.



PRIOR also has a philanthropic component that will help preserve natural and cultural elements of communities where it sends its members. To help save the 1,500-year-old Kathputli puppetry tradition in Rajasthan, India, Prior and his team have provided financial support so that one of the last remaining families who make and perform with these puppets (seen above) can train a new generation of apprentices to carry on the art form.

Membership applications are currently being accepted and can be found at prior.club.