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## This New Travel Club Gives Members Exclusive Access to Some of the World's Best Kept Secrets

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Photo: Courtesy of PRIOR



"Travel makes you feel sexier. It makes you feel smarter," says David Prior, co-founder and CEO of PRIOR. The former contributing international editor of *Condé Nast Traveler* and contributing editor at *Vogue Living Australia* started his modern travelers' club for those who want to see a solar eclipse amidst Chilean volcanoes, or source fresh Belon oysters with local farmers in Brittany; people who want to go beyond booking a nice hotel and wandering its surroundings.

To Prior, today's age of unlimited online guides and trip reviews called for a new approach to organizing travel. He wanted to create a business, and a set of experiences, with a strong point of view. His trial included taking 18 people to India for 23 days in 2017. "We took over a fort in the middle of India and created a 5-star hotel for a few days, with all sorts of experiences that were designed by me...I gave myself the mission of creating cover-worthy moments every day."

The trip to India gained traction on social media, which ultimately connected Prior with Marc Blazer, the chairman and CEO of Overture Holdings. The two saw eye-to-eye, and after just a few meetings they joined forces to create the club, hiring a staff that came with contacts across the globe. Initially, PRIOR was invitation-only, with most members hailing from the film and fashion industries, along with some creative types from Silicon Valley (early members include John Derian, Aurora James, and Lisa Eisner). David says that the unifying factor between members is an authentic sense of curiosity in adventure. "That doesn't necessarily mean hiking Patagonia," he says with a laugh. "They want to go deeper in the places that they visit and really get under the skin. People want experiences over things now. It's a cliché, but it happens to be true."



Photo: Courtesy of Prior



One of PRIOR's goals is to redefine what luxury travel means, including experiences that might not ordinarily seem "five-star." One trip might involve shutting down the Picasso Museum in Barcelona for a private tour, another could allow guests to live like a monk for the day in East Asia. "We're challenging the idea of the star system and other marks of luxury: thread count and infinity pools," Prior says. "We're traveling in a sophisticated way to really get to the essence of a place."

A spring trip to Seville, for example, will give guests exclusive access to parts of the city's Feria de Abril festival that are typically limited to locals. An Andalusian insider, hotelier Anthony Reid Mora-Figueroa, will help guide the group.

Since PRIOR builds many of its experiences around traditions (some of which are vanishing), they will donate 5 percent of their profits to preserving these cultural aspects. "We want to weave those experiences into the trip itself, but also advocate for them. Every trip that we do, we support one particular act of cultural or bio-diversity," Prior explains.

Besides unlimited access to one-off itinerary design anywhere in the world (as well as 24/7 support while traveling), PRIOR members will have traditional club benefits like events, talks, and special book signings. Plus, nomadic clubhouses: members gather at an exceptional property, and PRIOR brings the best of that region to the house for the weekend. This October, the clubhouse will be Heckfield Place, a newly renovated historic property in North Hampshire, where guests will be immersed in "a grand English house party that's modern, intimate, cozy and quirky all at once," with activities ranging from basket weaving to exploring the forest with a tree whisperer (yes, that is a real job).

Above all, Prior intends to imbue unbridled enthusiasm into every journey. "The great thing about this business is that the world is so endlessly fascinating and there are so many opportunities," he exclaims. "There is so much to celebrate. It's just endless." (PRIOR is accepting membership applications starting September 4.)

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