

# EXPERIENCES THAT ONLY INSIDERS CAN DELIVER



You can delve deeper into an unfamiliar culture when you're able to gain access to places, events, and people that are normally off-limits. Below are 50 examples of such extraordinary opportunities worldwide, ranging in price from \$100 to \$70,000. Because of the nature of these experiences, they are of course subject to change and even cancellation. Most cannot be booked à la carte but only as part of a larger itinerary. This list is not exhaustive, either: The very act of publicizing some rare opportunities offered by the most well-connected travel firms would burn the bridges that make them possible. (Note that prices quoted are estimates for two people.)

Reported by Kathryn Maier and Brook Wilkinson

**CZECH REPUBLIC**  
Diplomatic Dining | 🏠

**31** Have dinner with the U.S. ambassador and his art-enthusiast wife in their palace home in Prague, a 1920s architectural gem filled with art and antiques. Conversation may range from opera to politics, or from the life of a diplomat to the city's best sights. Cost: From \$100, depending on the menu. Source: Martha Gaughen, Sterling Travel, Atlanta (800-447-2799; martha@sterlingtvl.com; sterlingtvl.com).

**ENGLAND**  
Acing Wimbledon | 🎾

**32** Snag exclusive reserved seats for Wimbledon, the world's most vaunted tennis tournament and the last remaining Grand Slam event still played on grass. Attend the opening-day Centre Court matches in late June, with access to a tent for a private champagne reception and afternoon strawberries and cream. Cost: \$3,900. Source: Susie Worthy, Noteworthy Events, London (44-20-7824-8995; susie@noteworthy.co.uk).

Members Only at Henley | 🏆

**33** Take in the Henley Royal Regatta from the Stewards' Enclosure, a private club near the finish line that yields the best views of the world's most famous rowing race (held in late June). Mix with the club's members, hear live music, and feast on a four-course lunch and afternoon tea. Cost: \$1,500 and up. Source: Susie Worthy (see No. 32).

**FRANCE**  
Kitchen Confidential | 🍴

**34** Watch chef Patrick Bertron lead the staff of his Michelin three-star La Côte d'Or, in Saulieu, through an evening's service. You'll dine at the kitchen table, located directly in front of Bertron's station. Dominique Loiseau—widow of the original chef, Bernard Loiseau, and herself a mastermind in the Loiseau culinary and hospitality empire—may well join you for a chat over dinner or drinks. Cost: \$1,200, including

three nights at this Relais & Châteaux property. Source: Richard Turen, Churchill & Turen, Naperville, Illinois (630-717-7777; rturen@traveltruth.com; churchillandturen.com).

**ITALY**  
Hidden Florence | 🏠 🍷

**35** Explore the Vasari Corridor in Florence (see page 186). Cost: \$500. Source: For the museum only, guide Alessandra Marchetti (39-347-386-9839; aleoberm@tin.it); for full Italy itinerary arrangements, Roberto

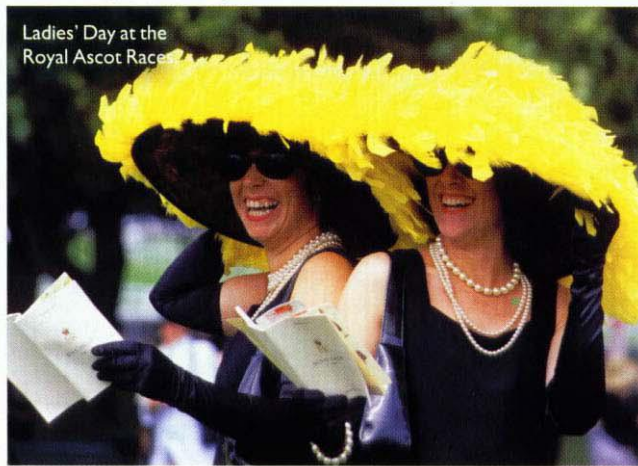
cluding overnight accommodations.  
Source: Maria Teresa Berdondini, Tuscany by Tuscans, Montecatini Terme, Italy (39-0572-70467; info@tuscanybytuscans.it; tuscanybytuscans.it).

Alone with Michelangelo | 🏛️

**39** Tour the Vatican Museums after they close for the evening. Except for your guide and two Vatican police escorts, you will have the Sistine Chapel, the art gallery, the Egyptian and Etruscan collections, and other rooms entirely to yourself for two to three hours. Cost: \$4,500. Source: Roberto Agostini (see No. 35).

**ENGLAND**  
Go Racing with the Queen | 🏇 🏠 View the Royal Ascot Races

**36** from a private box in the grandstand overlooking the Royal Box (the queen and her entourage attend daily, arriving by carriage with footmen in gold livery). The entire site has been renovated for 2006, and you'll have access to the horse paddocks as well. Cost: \$2,900–\$3,940. Source: Susie Worthy (see No. 32).



Ladies' Day at the Royal Ascot Races

**RUSSIA**  
Putin's Private Glory | 🏠 🏛️

**40** Marvel at the Grand Kremlin Palace (see page 186). Cost: \$1,880. Source: Greg Tepper (see No. 30).

Secrets of the KGB | 🏠 🏛️

**41** Penetrate the KGB Museum (see page 186). Cost: \$500. Source: Greg Tepper (see No. 30).

Stalin Underground | 🏠 🏛️

**42** Tour Joseph Stalin's World War II bunker, hidden beneath the stadium in the center of Moscow's Izmailovsky Bazaar. A meeting hall and Stalin's office are preserved as they were during his time there, with original furniture. As you step back into the Soviet era, your guide will relate stories of Stalin's life, the bunker's construction, and its wartime use. Cost: \$700. Source: Greg Tepper (see No. 30).