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See 'Hamilton'? Sail to Havana? Prizes set for Winter Wine Fest

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The Naples Winter Wine Festival has released a final list of wow-er-than-ever prize auction lots for its 2017 auction, and even board members admit to having their noses pressed against the figurative store window.

"We did this to ourselves," said Brian Cobb, one of the co-chairs of the festival Jan. 27-29. "We tried to have a lot of ingredients in a lot of lots this year. We tried to mix it up, and we had a lot more input from board members than we usually do."

The festival, which has brought in \$146 million for its Naples Children & Educa-

tion Foundation, swaps places nearly every year with Napa Valley as top-grossing festival. It has topped Wine Spectator's Top Ten Charity Wine list for at least eight of the last 12 years.

Among its initiatives have been development of the NCEF Early Childhood Center in East Naples, its child care partnership and construction of a primary care clinic in Immokalee, and its "Lunch Boxes of Love" that provide nutritious food to children who might otherwise go hungry or be undernourished.

NCEF raises money through its \$10,000 per couple Naples Winter Wine Festival each January. The festival has become known for both its vintner dinners, which

pairs celebrity chefs and well-known vineyards, and a wine auction that includes experiential packages found nowhere else in the world.

Among the travel covetables just announced:

» An exclusive week on the private Australian island of Virgin Group magnate Sir Richard Branson. Among its offerings: a sunset cruise on the island's aircraft carrier barge and a gourmet picnic on its secluded Northshore beaches.

» A skiing adventure that includes private jet transportation to a private ski and golf community, the Yellowstone Club,

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TODD ROSENBERG PHOTOGRAPHY

Sebastian Maniscalco will perform for the highest bidder at the festival auction.

Wine Fest

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where lot winners could run into — not literally, they hope — members such as Justin Timberlake, Bill Gates and Jennifer Garner on the slopes. Next, jet to Deer Valley for a stay in suites at the slopeside St. Regis and more skiing.

» Sailing, by private yacht, to Havana for a luxury Cuban holiday in a nation on the brink of change and with new interest in and from the U.S..

» A seven-day fresh-air feast, with hideaway hikes on lesser known trails and close looks at attractions such as Old Faithful at Yellowstone Park. A transfer to an Amangan deluxe suite overlooking ski and hiking mecca Jackson Hole includes offroad tours and more. Visits to Zion National Park and both rims of the Grand Canyon will offer similar adventures.

» A suite for two weeks on The World to winner's choice ports of call, with five of those nights onboard with Ann Colgin and Joe Wender, of Colgin Cellars; a private onboard dinner party and vertical wine tasting with the ship's sommelier are included.

» A week absorbing wine, culinary and cultural experiences across Argentina, with private tango lessons, spa treatments and VIP wine tastings. There's a private dinner at celebrity chef Francis Mallman's restaurant, where he presides over the pit cooking that has brought him international fame.

» A week at Villa Paraiso, a sweeping open-air home on a private beach in Manzanillo, Mexico, with views of both the Sierra Madre Mountains and the Pacific Ocean from its dual-level infinity-edge pool.

Experiential packages have two unorthodox offerings. One is a Madison Square Garden suite "donated to us by the owner," said Cobb; the other is a trip with top amenities to see a concert that pulls in music stars like Florence and the Machine, the Lumineers, Buddy Guy and Lenny Kravitz:

» A three-city, three-nation hop among Broadway, to see the musical sensation "Hamilton"; the elegant Schloss Elmau spa and retreat in the Bavarian Alps; and an exclusive Chopard Jewelry event in Geneva.

» The luxury suite at Madison Square Garden for 20 people, with your choice from a variety of high-profile events, such as concerts by Billy Joel or Ariana Grande, a New York Knicks game or The Westminster Dog Show.

» Four platinum tickets to the dream rock concert known as BottleRock. Last year the trip for four to the three-day Napa Valley concert of music giants was so coveted it went for \$240,000 — and two other bidders matched it to bring in around \$750,000 for the 2016 Naples Winter Wine Festival. It includes lodging, private shuttle to premium seats, meals prepared by name chefs and more.

» The Concours d'Elegance at Pebble Beach, with chauffeured service in a Bentley, to see 200 of the most prized collector cars in the world. Weekend lodgings are at a private home on 20 acres in the Santa Ynez Valley, with one night at San Ysidro Ranch in Santa Barbara.

» A private performance by hot-ticket comedian Sebastian Maniscalco. The winner chooses the destination, and Maniscalco unloads his manic takes on what everyone is thinking for 50 people of the winner's choosing.

» VIP access to the "Project Runway" season finale in New York City and a meet-and-greet with supermodel-businesswoman Heidi Klum, plus tickets to the Michael Kors and Zac Posen fashion shows. Included among meals at haute cuisine places is a dinner at Fowler & Wells, celebrity chef Tom Colicchio's new restaurant.

Two things are important to the spirit of the festival, according to Cobb: That "everything under the tent goes toward the children," that is, bettering the lives and futures of children in Collier County; and that the festival stay true to its title as a wine festival

"That's important to us. We tried to pair a wine component with as many lots as possible," Cobb said. Even the BottleRock concert has an evening dedicated to good wine, food and a concert with two of the NWWF 2017 co-chairs, Jeff Gargiulo and Valerie Boyd, at their nearby vineyard.

Some of the lots are expressly dedicated to appreciating wine, including:

» A private visit to the home of Krug Champagne in Reims, France, where winners will open and taste "Krug Collection 1966," one of the last of the bottles in the Krug cellar.

» Three nights in an 18th century guest house in Beaune, France, the wine capital of Burgundy, including a personal visit of Maison Joseph Drouhin's historic cellars. It comes with private dinner in their 13th century cellar and an exclusive tour through Burgundy's best vineyards.

» An 11-night package stay in Venice, Verona, Valpolicella, Montalcino and Bolgheri. Lot winners will enjoy events such as a vertical tasting of top Allegrini wines, dinner at its historic Villa Della Torre and a private visit to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice.