

Rome: Vatican guard opens doors to 'secret' rooms on this tour

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What a time to go behind the closed doors of the Vatican. The recent scandal over the butler accused of stealing documents from Pope Benedict XVI makes the prospect of a tour to "secret" rooms of the papal palace all the more tantalizing.

Tour operator [Dark Rome](#) recently started a [VIP Vatican & Private Sistine Chapel tour](#) that promises access to areas usually off-limits to the public. The tour, limited to 10 people, follows a Vatican guard who opens doors to places such as the Niccoline Chapel (Cappella Niccolina), decorated with 15th century frescoes by Fra Angelico and his workers, and the spiral staircase a.k.a. Scala del Bramante.

The spectacular finish: 30 minutes alone inside the Sistine Chapel. OK, maybe not completely alone; the group and English-speaking guide will be there too. But anyone who has ever been elbow-to-elbow with tourists trying to take in Michelangelo's chapel will appreciate just how amazing a quiet half hour would be.



The tour lasts three hours and costs \$290 per person. It's offered at 3:15 p.m. Mondays and Saturdays only.

Of course, you can brave the lines and take a [Vatican tour](#) that costs \$38 to \$44 per person. But where's the mystery in that?