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Taste of Summer

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15

FABULOUS
FOOD
TOURS



French Chocolate
Colombian Coffee
Saucy Manila





15 Fabulous Food Tours Around the World

BY MARGARET LOFTUS

Treat your taste buds

to a global tour of flavors with these 15 food itineraries, from a half-day stroll through the craft breweries of Asheville, North Carolina, to nine chocolate- and cheese-filled days in the mountains and lakeside towns of Switzerland. The only prerequisite: a healthy appetite.

North America

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Craft Beer Calling

Combine mineral-rich mountain water and a cool-kid community hopped up on the latest in artisanal suds, and you have craft beer mecca Asheville. With more than 25 breweries, this mountain town makes finding a favorite ale daunting. Guide Cliff Mori leads beer enthusiasts on walking tours of the small-batch brewers in the downtown South Slope area. Come thirsty: You'll try seven to ten beers, from IPAs to barrel-aged sour beers. "*Brewery Tours of Asheville*," *Brew-Ed*, 2 hours \$37, or 3 hours \$50. brew-ed.com

KENAI PENINSULA, ALASKA

Backcountry Bounty

Alaska's Kenai Peninsula is the land of king salmon, Kachemak Bay oysters, and a wide variety of wild edibles, from berries to mushrooms to seaweed. Visit a bivalve farm, forage in a forest of Sitka spruce trees, and learn to cook such local dishes as salmon bacon in rhubarb lacquer with chef Kirsten Dixon of the Tutka Bay Lodge, a National Geographic Unique Lodge of the World. "*Tutka Bay Lodge Culinary Retreat*," *Within the Wild*, 4 days, \$2,185. withinthewild.com

OAXACA, MEXICO

Fiesta Fare

Chef Susana Trilling shows off the flavorful heritage of Oaxaca, her adopted home, by guiding cultural tours and leading classes in everything from making *queso* to mastering mole sauces. Her seven-day "Dia de Muertos" course combines culinary lessons with field trips to learn about Day of the Dead customs. "*Dia de Muertos Course*," *Seasons of My Heart*, 7 days, \$2,300. seasonsofmyheart.com

Caribbean

CUBA

Cuisine Revolution

Cuba has been forging new culinary paths and celebrating its traditional foods as it opens its doors to the wider world. This gastronomic survey of the island samples the Cuban-Mediterranean fare at Atelier, a *paladar*, or privately owned restaurant, in Havana's Vedado neighborhood, and such plates as seafood-papaya lasagna at the *paladar* La Guarida. Work up an appetite between bites by learning salsa moves from a local pro and how to make the perfect daiquiri with a bartender at the famed El Floridita. A bonus: Your ride is a '57 Chevy. "*Cuba Culinary Tour*," *Access Trips*, 8 days, \$3,190. accesstrips.com

South America

CHILE

Chilling With Master Chefs

Lauded in the food world as the latest star in South America's culinary constellation, Chile finally is getting the love it deserves. Find out what the fuss is about on one of a series of tours inspired by the television series *MasterChef*. Browse the Central Market in the capital city, Santiago, where you can try conger eel chowder that inspired Pablo Neruda's ode to *caldillo de congrio*; sip Carménère wine in the cowboy country of the Colchagua Valley; and cook lunch with Chilean food ambassador Pilar Rodriguez. "*Chilean Wine and Cuisine: Inspired by MasterChef*," *Cox & Kings*, 9 days, \$4,995. coxandkingsusa.com

Europe

SWITZERLAND

Say Cheese—and Chocolate

Travel from the 800-year-old lakeside town of Lucerne to the ski resort of Zermatt for an immersion in Alpine culture and cuisine, including a visit to Maison Cailler, the home of Switzerland's oldest milk chocolate brand; a tour of the walled medieval cheese village of Gruyères; and a raclette tasting at the 16th-century Château de Villa, east of Geneva in the canton of Valais. "*Cheese, Chocolate, and the Scenic Alps*," *Alpenwild*, 9 days, \$3,795. alpenwild.com

CROATIA, SLOVENIA, ITALY

Where Great Flavors Converge

A series of treks from Zagreb, Croatia, to Venice, Italy, traverses one of the richest culinary corners of Europe. Highlights include the Istrian Peninsula, known for its olive oil and truffles, and the Collio wine country that straddles the hills of Slovenia and Italy, famous for its bottles of big reds. Also on the itinerary: day-trips to the Škocjan Caves, a World Heritage site, and Slovenia's capital of cool, Ljubljana. "*Istria to Venice: A Culinary Route*," *Mountain Travel Sobek*, 9 days, \$4,595. mtsobek.com



Mint tea (left) is poured from on high in Fes, Morocco, to form a surface foam. Tilework (right) decorates the Mausoleum of Moulay Ismail, in nearby Meknes, a town known for its wineries.

SICILY, ITALY

Tomato Queen

The Anna Tasca Lanza cooking school, based in a farmstead east of Palermo, has been teaching the finer points of Sicilian cooking for more than 25 years. Fabrizia Lanza offers a workshop around that Italian kitchen staple, tomato paste. Breaks from canning include jaunts to a local cheesemaker and a coffee roaster. “*Preserving August*,” Anna Tasca Lanza Sicilian Cooking Experience, 6 days, \$2,500. annatascalanza.com

GEORGIA

Toasting the Caucasus

With its ancient winemaking culture and hearty cuisine anchored by *khachapuri* (cheese-stuffed bread) and *khinkali* (brothy meat dumplings), the republic of Georgia has been wooing visitors to the Caucasus Mountains. This itinerary explores four regions of the country, including the wine country of Kakheti, where ceramists make *qvevri*, the huge earthenware vessels used to ferment wines. “*A Taste of Georgia: Wine, Cuisine & Culture*,” MIR Corporation, 12 days, \$4,795. mircorp.com

Asia

HONG KONG

The Ways of Wonton

Traveler contributor Daisann McLane designs private food tours (three people max) that reveal the culinary nuances of such culturally vibrant Hong Kong neighborhoods as Wan Chai, Sheung Wan, and Sham Shui Po. Tastes run from egg custard tarts to pork and dim sum. *Little Adventures in Hong Kong*, 4 hours, \$115. littleadventuresinhongkong.com

INDIA

Curry in Context

Spectacular sites such as the Taj Mahal combine with flavor-packed dishes on this “real food adventure” that has you sampling *parathas* (flatbreads), *chaat* snacks, and Goan fish curry; preparing a traditional meal in Udaipur; and visiting a spice farm in Goa. “*Real Food Adventure: India*,” Intrepid Travel, 15 days, from \$2,170. intrepidtravel.com

HOI AN, VIETNAM

To Market to Market

Hoi An, a town on Vietnam’s central coast, is considered one of the country’s

food hubs. Learn why on a guided walk through the Tan An markets, meeting vendors and tasting *dau bu*, a warm tofu custard served with ginger syrup, and *sinh to trai cay*, a shake made with fruit, condensed milk, and ice. “*The Original Taste of Hoi An Food Tour*,” Taste of Hoi An, 4 hours, \$65. tasteofhoian.com

JAPAN

Sashimi and You

Ask worldly chefs to name their favorite food city, and the answer always seems to be Tokyo. Japan’s capital bookends this private food-centric odyssey that includes sake tastings in the old town of Takayama, picking tea leaves in Kyoto Prefecture, and a crash course in ramen prep in Osaka. “*Japanese Culinary Exploration*,” Global Basecamps, 14 days, \$9,378. globalbasecamps.com

Africa

FES, MOROCCO

Medina Dining

Your base is a traditional *riad* (courtyard residence) in the old quarter of Fes, Morocco’s cultural heart. From here, explore Roman ruins and the Berber town of Azrou when not cooking North African classics such as *tagine*, couscous, and *zaalouk*, a dip made with eggplants and tomatoes. “*A Feast for the Senses in Morocco*,” International Kitchen, 7 days, \$2,550. theinternationalkitchen.com

WESTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

Bikes and Bottles

This cycling tour of the wine country outside Cape Town routes you to producers in Robertson Valley and the Stellenbosch region, such as Kanonkop, known for its Pinotage. Also on offer: a visit to the Klipdrift brandy distillery and a whale-watching excursion. “*Cycling South Africa’s Winelands: The Cape’s Boutique Producers*,” Immersion Journeys, 7 days, from \$3,295. immersionjourneys.com

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Savoring the world (clockwise from top left): The entrance to the Anna Tasca Lanza cooking school frames views of Sicily's countryside; Fabrizia Lanza, Anna's daughter, often leads classes on preserving tomatoes; the colorful Jack of the Wood pub, in Asheville, North Carolina, is known for Green Man ales; craft beers crowd a table at Asheville's Wicked Weed Brewing; sidewalk fare in Hoi An, Vietnam, includes an array of tropical fruits; "white rose" shrimp dumplings are a Hoi An special; fireweed blazes on Alaska's Kenai Peninsula; menu items at Kenai's Tutka Bay Lodge include beignets of king crab with aioli sauce.

