

Introduction. Culinary tourism or food tourism is the exploration of food as the purpose of tourism. It is now considered a vital component of the tourism experience. Dining out is common among tourists and "food is believed to rank alongside climate, accommodation, and scenery" in importance to tourists.

Culinary tours, food and wine events, and foodie competitions give travelers a chance to visit a new destination and sample local or regional cuisine. Whether the trip involves an opportunity to learn new cooking techniques or attend food and wine tastings, a culinary adventure can be a welcome change from the standard travel itinerary.

As an emerging travel trend, culinary tourism became prominent in 2001 when Erik Wolf, President of the International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA), presented a white paper about culinary tourism to his organization. The paper evolved into a book that documented the growing interest in food and wine tourism and how requests for culinary tours could drive local businesses and restaurateurs to meet the growing demand.

The goal of culinary tourism is to educate and inspire food and wine enthusiasts while giving the traveler a chance to explore the local area and learn about local food trends, cooking techniques and food history. Travelers can do so by participating in a cultural immersion experience at select destinations around the globe.

Culinary tours and travel packages can include a wide range of activities related to cooking, food sampling, food trends, wine making and baking. In addition to restaurant weeks in different cities, dining events and cooking competitions, culinary tourism encompasses culinary experiences, such as winery and brewery tours, tours of restaurants and food manufacturing plants, conferences and events with culinary professionals and cookbook authors, and ethnic food tastings.

Travelers can choose from a variety of culinary tourism packages at renowned destinations and sites around the globe.

French food lovers may consider cooking classes in Paris or attending a French cooking school as a guest. Italy, Spain and other countries in the Mediterranean offer farmhouse cooking vacations, where visitors can live in a farmhouse or villa for an extended period of time and learn about local and regional cuisine.

Some destinations offer culinary tours and specialty dining experiences, where travelers visit various restaurants, cafes and bistros, meet with chefs and take part in food seminars or events.

Culinary institutes and chef training schools, such as The Culinary Institute of America, the United States' premier culinary college, also offer programs and events for food lovers who want to learn about the local restaurant industry, emerging food trends and food preparation techniques.

According to the International Culinary Tourism Association, culinary tourism is growing exponentially every year. With the steady increase in interest of food channels, travel shows featuring local and regional cuisine, food documentaries and online culinary travel shows, more consumers are traveling to various destinations just to enjoy a new food and wine experience.

Consumers interested in booking a culinary tour or culinary vacation can work with a travel agent that specializes in specialty travel. They can also turn to the Internet to research local cooking schools and cooking vacation packages in their preferred destination.

Conclusion. Travel agents and tour operators that specialize in culinary tourism may offer insider tips and recommendations for creating a custom itinerary based on the traveler's goals and budget. Travelers can choose from self-guided tours, food demonstration events and cooking-lesson packages based on their budget and destination.

References:

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culinary_tourism
2. <https://abouttourism.wordpress.com/tag/culinary-tourism/>
3. <http://worldfoodtravel.org>