

CAPITALIZE ON CULINARY TOURISM

niche markets



Culinary tourism is defined as “the pursuit of unique and memorable culinary experiences of all kinds, often while traveling.” Although this is a relatively new segment of the industry, it’s one of travel’s most popular and lucrative niches. In fact, an estimated 46% of Americans deemed themselves as “deliberate” culinary travelers in 2007, and this number continues to steadily rise. With the popularity of cooking shows, cooking classes, organic foods, wine and culinary arts as a whole, “foodies” are flocking toward all things edible. More and more people want to learn, enjoy and have “out of the box” food experiences. So agents, don’t miss the shrimp boat!



To culinary tourists, authenticity is of critical importance. Harold Partain, CTC and Vice Chair of the Board of Directors at the International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA), commented: “People want hands-on experiences. They want to actually go where something originates or is being made. Therefore, travel agents must make it their business to identify, become familiar with and almost develop a passion for what the different food cultures really are. They must know their food cities, going way beyond just restaurants.”

Fortunately, there’s no shortage of gastronomic getaways that agents can readily offer their hungry clients. Here are some tasty suggestions from some of TRAVELSAVERS top suppliers...

An Experience to Savor from Holland America Line

The Culinary Arts Center program, presented by *Food & Wine Magazine*, is a groundbreaking effort where participants can immerse themselves in the unique traditions and tastes of the ports of call they visit. They can sample fine wines from around the world or learn to make a new gourmet dish in a hands-on cooking class taught by master chefs or culinary guests. Wine and cheese experts host special wine tastings, and food pairing seminars are held both onboard and off.

Classes are conducted in an innovative theater-style venue with a state-of-the-art demonstration kitchen, with all the action shown on multiple, large plasma video screens. Guests can also watch the broadcast from their comfortable staterooms. For pint-sized chefs, there is a Kids & Teens Culinary Arts Center program.

Avanti Destinations Caters to the Gourmand

For anyone who loves good food, Avanti Destinations offers a wide variety of culinary tourism options, such as their spectacular “Epicurian Route — Peruvian Food and Travel” 10-day package. This culinary journey encompasses dining, demonstrations and hands-on experiences amidst such sites as Lima, the Larco Museum, Cuzco, Macchu Picchu via the luxurious *Hiram Bingham* train service.

For those who desire a more intense culinary learning experience, the Provence Cooking Program will satiate. Guests stay in the heart of Provence at a five-suite auberge, which also houses La Fontaine Cooking School. They learn Provençal cooking with just 3-5 students in each intimate class, which ranges from traditional starters to desserts.

Avanti also offers “Culture and Cooking in Norway,” “Lausanne Gastronomy and Wine Package” in Switzerland, an “Argentina Food and Wine” package, and “Bruges Cooking Program” in Belgium.

Globus’ Fabulous Food and Wine Vacations

This year, Globus announced their new Food & Wine vacations, which include eight itineraries throughout Europe and North America. The tour operator crafted a collection of epicurean-themed vacations and river cruises with world-renowned food and travel television host Burt Wolf, taking guests to a variety of culinary-rich locations.

Other unique experiences by Globus include: an Italian cooking lesson, a Parmesan factory visit and tasting, a Bordeaux Wine School lecture and tasting, a visit to a Chocolate Museum, dinner at a local beer garden, a visit to Dallmann Confectionery Shop for an apple strudel making seminar, dinner at Boston’s oldest restaurant, a twilight tasting at Buena Vista Winery, and a visit to V. Sattui Winery for a wine and cheese pairing. Globus also offers regional culinary journeys.

So be sure to capitalize on this exploding industry — it’s one that you can successfully market and substantially profit from. After all, isn’t it the food that people often remember most from their travels?

For more information on culinary tourism products, please visit your Agent Extranet agents.travelsavers.com, www.foodtrekker.com, or check out the International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA) at www.culinarytourism.org.