

Abilene Reporter-News

SIP, STROLL, SNACK Must-try food tours across the US

Larry Bleiberg | Special to USA TODAY

Travelers love to eat and see the sights. Food tours combine both, which have helped them become a booming business, says Shane Kost, founder of Chicago Food Planet Tours (chicagofoodplanet.com) and executive director of the Global Food Tourism Association.

"People get really excited about eating their way through a city and feeling like a local," he says.

He says the best tours combine art, architecture and history together with food and include a chance to meet chefs. "You break bread with strangers, and by the end of the experience, you're friends." He shares some favorites with USA TODAY.

Local **Montreal, Old Montreal Food Tour, Montreal**

When Kost's Global Food Tour Association met in Montreal last year, attendees literally ate their way across the city on this tour. Highlights include the city's famed bagels and smoked salmon, along with French-inspired cuisine and a surprising Portuguese-influenced poutine. "It's such an incredibly unique city in North America." localfoodtours.com/montreal

Tasty Bites Food Tours, **Condesa Mezcal, Tacos & Helados Tour, Mexico City**

Tacos may be a global food, but there's nothing like sampling them in their home country. This walking tour through Mexico City's leafy and trendy Condesa neighborhood samples several varieties, including steak and cheese, Baja-style shrimp, Mediterranean-style served on pita, and the famed tacos al pastor, made with marinated pork seasoned with pineapple. "These are the regional tacos of Mexico," Kost says. There's also an artisanal mezcal tasting, even Mexican ice cream. tastybitesfoodtours.com.mx

Wander New Mexico, **Santa Fe Historic Plaza Food Tour, Santa Fe, New Mexico**

Famous for its chiles and its history, Santa Fe is a natural place to dine and explore, Kost says. This tour focuses on the city's historic center, covering everything from street food and tacos, to wine tastings and margaritas. There's also chef-prepared ice cream. "Santa Fe is a crossroads, and the flavors are always going to be unique," he says. wandernewmexico.com

Ithaca Is Foodies, **Downtown Ithaca Food Tour, Ithaca, New York**

You don't have to visit big cities to find great food, Kost says. This New York college town has famous chefs and tasty offerings, including several with a healthy focus. Tours visit the famed Moosewood Restaurant, known for its award-winning natural food cookbooks. There's also a stop at a Star Trek-themed vegan cafe and an Ethiopian restaurant. "This is a really cool, interesting area," he says. ithacaisfoodies.com

Juneau Food Tours, **Juneau Bites & Booze, Juneau, Alaska**

Alaska's capital city has a surprisingly robust food scene, Kost says. This tour hits the highlights, offering specialties such as crab bisque and crab cakes, rockfish tacos paired with regional beer and hog wings, which Kost likens to a pork rib on a stick. The tour touches on Juneau's colorful history as a seaport, including craft cocktails and shots to keep things interesting. juneaufoodtours.com

Taste Carolina Gourmet Food Tours, **Raleigh Downtown Dinner & Drinks, Raleigh, North Carolina**

While most tours offer lunch and afternoon snacking, this one provides a full

dinner. Stops include a speakeasy cocktail bar, a James Beard Award-winning chef's fried chicken and dumplings, and sake from a restaurant that started as a food truck. "They get more into gastronomy. It's a really cool, well thought-out diners-and-drinks concept," Kost says. tastecarolina.net

Vancouver Food Tour, Gastown Tasting Tour, Vancouver, Canada

This tour touts itself as a progressive four-course dinner through one of the best restaurant neighborhoods in western Canada – historic and scenic Gastown. Diners sample craft beers and appetizers and British Columbia wines paired with local farm cheese and charcuterie. There also are craft cocktails and canapes and even West Indies-inspired dishes served with rum. vancouverfoodtour.com

Madison Eats, Taste of Wisconsin Lunch Tour, Madison, Wisconsin

This tour pays tribute to Wisconsin's title as America's Dairyland, touring the state capital and offering a cheese tasting, pizza and ice cream. "They're focusing on real Wisconsin flavors," Kost says. But

there also are pastries, a visit to a specialty oils and vinegar shop and a Korean food stop. madisoneats.net

Austin Eats, Brunch, BBQ & Brewery Tour, Austin, Texas

Although known for nightlife, the Texas state capital also is big on brunch, Kost says. This weekend tour runs the gastronomic gamut, including breakfast tacos and an upscale brunch, plus, of course, barbecue and beer. "It's a ton of food, a really, really great value." austineatsfoodtours.com

Taste of Catalina, Avalon Tasting & Cultural Walking Tour, Catalina Island, California

Located about 25 miles off the Southern California coast, Catalina Island long has been popular as a quick getaway. But Kost says it's worth exploring for its food. The six-stop tour includes drinks, chocolate, fish tacos and more. And you can't beat the scenery. "The entire time you're pretty much looking at the ocean," he says. catalinafoodtours.com



The Old Montreal Food Tour hits famous city stops including the St. Viateur Bagel Shop and the Mile End neighborhood. CAMILLE GLADU-DROUIN