

Marketing Organizations Focus on Food Tourism

Food and beverages are an essential part of human life and of one's lifestyle in general. It is also one of the main aspects which, when added up, form what is perceived as a region or country's local culture.



“Learning about, appreciating and/or consuming local foods and beverages” is what is considered food tourism, and while it may not be the focus of a lot of people's travels, it is almost unavoidable to do it, especially when travelling abroad, to places where the majority of hotels and restaurants serve traditional dishes instead of international ‘tourist food’.

While food has always been an integral part of the travelling experience, the way people perceive and experience it these days is entirely different from how it used to be. Nowadays, people are returning to the kitchen and enjoying preparing food and savoring homemade meals. They are also interested in experiencing new and alternative cuisine, and not just through take-out restaurants. This is prompting them to sometimes travel to exotic locations specifically to enjoy exotic food in its real habitat and see how it is prepared on the spot – sometimes even taking some tips and tricks to try and replicate the dishes at home.

This is a recent trend, born out of the new millennium and the expanded access to information people have with the internet and it is taking off fast, as shown by a report published in 2013, which claims the percentage of Americans who traveled abroad because of food alone had grown from 40% to 51% between 2006 and 2013.



The trend hasn't escaped the notice of destination marketing organizations, who have been taking full advantage of tourists' interest in local food and drinks to open new markets and promote new locations, targeting these ‘food tourists’ specifically by placing the focus on the local gastronomic experiences

through different narratives.

A 2012 report by the University of Florida suggests this is a great path for the tourism industry, seeing as a fourth of all the US's travel income in that year was spent on food expenses, making it the biggest portion of travelling expenses for American tourists at that time, and confirming that food tourism is definitely a business that should be taken seriously.

The report also provides some interesting insights about tourists' preferences, such as the fact that some might avoid certain locations based on the assumption that they may not be able to find similar food to those they usually eat back home. It doesn't seem to be the case for 39 million Americans though, who choose their travel destination based on the availability of food-related activities and experiences.



The Chinese, however, are more likely to be in the first group, as a local report claims that they'd rather not leave Asia than to be faced with foreign food. Bearing this in mind though, American hotels are quickly adapting by expanding their menus in order to accommodate the preferences of the growing number of Chinese tourists visiting the country.

Given the modern tourist's propensity for sharing their experiences on social media – and the food they consume, in particular – it seems food tourism is a trend that isn't likely to go away anytime soon, and thus something not only to take note, but also take full advantage of, in order to build and consolidate certain locations' reputations in new, digitally connected markets such as the West and the Far East.

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