

# Travelers Are Going Nuts for Vegan Vacations (Even the Omnivores Want In)

Rachel Krantz 7.26.2018



Courtesy of Intrepid Travel

On one of Intrepid Travel's new vegan food tours, travelers get the chance to experience the flavors of Thailand without worrying about hidden fish sauce or shrimp paste.

With new vegan travel experiences sprouting up every day, it's easier than ever for the vegan, vegetarian, and vegan-curious eaters of the world to follow their taste buds.

Some travelers want to have their cashew cheese lasagna and eat it by the Venice canals, too. But until recently, hotels, restaurants, and tour operators have largely catered to a carnivorous crowd. Although it has become easier to enjoy great [vegan and vegetarian food anywhere in the world](#), traveling herbivores still face an added layer of stress when

mealtime rolled around. However, with more and more people following a plant-based diet, the travel industry is starting to pay attention.

From 2014 to 2017, the United States saw a staggering [600 percent increase in people who identify as vegan](#). In 2017, the demand for vegan and vegetarian food in Ireland [grew by 987 percent](#). “Vegan” is now officially a more common Google search term than “vegetarian,” [surging 90 percent in 2016](#). Beyond the strictest herbivores, an increasing number of “flexitarians” (those who will eat animal products but prefer plant-based food when it’s an option), “reducetarians” (those who are actively trying to reduce their consumption of animal-based products), and other health- and environmentally-conscious travelers are also interested in better vegetarian and vegan-friendly travel options. Enter the vegan vacation.



Courtesy of Intrepid Travel

On Intrepid Travel’s vegan food tours in India, travelers can sample street food under the guidance of a member of the local vegan community.

## A new way to travel vegan

In May, international tour operator [Intrepid Travel](#) announced a new line of vegan tours in [India](#), [Thailand](#), and [Italy](#). The three destinations are among the company’s most popular and provide a good range of options of both food and activities for vegan vacationers. “Travelers don’t just want to see the world anymore,” says Neil Coletta, brand and product

manager for Intrepid Travel’s food tours. “They want to experience it through its unique flavors and cuisines, and this includes people of all dietary lifestyles, including vegans.”

Each of the eight-day [Vegan Food Adventures](#) is guided by a local leader tapped into the country’s vegan community and food scene. Intrepid believes it’s important to offer travelers more than just good food and photo opportunities; its tour groups, no larger than 12 travelers, may stay overnight with a local in a small Thai village or visit a café in India that employs and supports female victims of acid attacks.

*“We saw a real need to not just accommodate the vegan community, but also to celebrate it.”*

For Intrepid, launching vegan tours was a relatively straightforward business decision: The company had seen 28 percent growth in bookings for North American food-themed trips in 2017, and food tours [are one of the fastest-growing experience categories](#) on the travel booking site Expedia. “While we’re able to accommodate most preferences on each of our tours, we saw a real need to not just accommodate the growing vegan community, but also to celebrate it,” says Coletta.

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The move also matches Intrepid’s progressive brand identity. Its 2013 [stance on elephant tourism](#) led to changes in the way elephants are treated around the world, and the company prides itself in using only suppliers that share its commitment to responsible travel, sustainability, and ethical treatment of animals.

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## The Best Vegetarian Restaurants for Omnivores

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Vegan tours aren’t just for big-ticket overseas vacations. Travelers can book them in foodie hubs such as [San Francisco](#), [Chicago](#), [Los Angeles](#), [New York City](#), and [Las Vegas](#).

Diana Edelman, author of [Las Vegas Vegan Food Guide](#), launched the [Vegans, Baby](#) food tour in 2018 to meet what she saw as an obvious need. “As the vegan dining scene continues to grow, the tour operators haven’t yet expanded to cater to this [growing] demographic of people,” Edelman says. “If you build it, they will come. The community is hungry for experiences that take the stress out of travel, like being able to communicate

dietary needs.” Her downtown Las Vegas tour hits five restaurants for a total of 12 dishes. Not all attendees are vegan; many simply want an off-the-main-strip travel experience.

## Beyond restaurants

Vegan-curiosity extends beyond restaurants. Thomas Klein, cofounder of the world’s first global network of entirely vegetarian and vegan hotels and inns, [Veggie Hotels](#), confirms that many vegan hotels listed on the site report that a significant percentage of their guests are actually flexitarians. Other guests may simply be health conscious or want to ensure that vegan or vegetarian members of their families don’t have to worry about food.

Either way, Veggie Hotels’ traffic continues to rise, and with it, the hotel industry’s interest in getting a piece of the dairy-free pie. “We see unbroken demand from guests,” Klein says. “Hotels from around the world are asking us what they can do to become more vegan friendly, and we are in the process of putting together workshops to educate chefs and hoteliers in plant-based hospitality.”



Courtesy of The Stanford Inn

**Veggie Hotels cofounder Thomas Klein says Stanford Inn with its abundant gardens is one of his favorite all-vegan properties in the United States.**

Veggie Hotels now lists more than 600 establishments around the globe, and its sister site, [Vegan Welcome](#), lists many more that are not entirely vegan but want to be known as vegan friendly. To qualify, hotels must list several vegan options on their menus at every meal.

## Get a taste of vegan travel

If you're interested in a vegan travel experience, which destinations should top your list? According to Klein, [Germany](#), [Austria](#), and [Switzerland](#) offer the most strictly vegetarian hotel options, followed by [Italy](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) (which is home to one of the [oldest vegetarian movements](#)).

The United States is catching up quickly, with about 50 vegan lodgings, most of them bed-and-breakfasts or retreat centers. Klein's favorites include [Stanford Inn](#), an all-vegan accommodation in [Mendocino, California](#), that is perhaps the most upscale vegan hotel in the country; and [Farm Sanctuary](#), a vegan bed-and-breakfast and animal sanctuary in upstate [New York](#) that's rustic without roughing it, with gourmet breakfasts and tours that allow you to bond with the sanctuary's rescued animals.

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Farther afield, Klein recommends [Willka Tika](#), a luxury wellness retreat in [Peru](#). And vegan travel writer [Wendy Werneth recommends the Mushroom Farm](#), an eco-lodge in [Malawi](#). "It's such an unlikely place to find an all-veg accommodation option, since vegetarianism, let alone veganism, is not very widespread in Malawi," Werneth says. "The lodge has a spectacular hilltop setting overlooking the Great Rift Valley and Lake Malawi. The owners invest in a lot of projects to give back to the local community, and they serve the best food in all of Malawi."

And change is on the horizon for the seafaring types, too; increasingly popular vegan and vegan-friendly cruises and river cruises set sail in the United States, [Europe](#), [South America](#), and [the Caribbean](#), linking vegan travelers to a world of culinary and exploratory options.