

# Travel ideas

# WOW



50 TRAVEL EXPERIENCES FOR 2019

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# 18

## Eat vegan around the world

YOU DON'T MAKE FRIENDS WITH SALAD,  
OR DO YOU? VEGAN TRAVEL IS ON THE UP

*Words: Cassandra Laffey, editor, Travel ideas*



**FROM LEFT:** The menu at Melbourne's Matcha Mylk Bar is plant-based and very colourful; every millennial's favourite fruit has a starring role at Avobar in London.



PHOTOS SUPPLIED

**A**round 20 years ago I backpacked around Europe, travelling on an Interrail Pass from Amsterdam up to Germany and Denmark, back through the Czech Republic and Austria and west via Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Belgium and France. I remember the sights, the people I met, the long hours on the train and the feeling of exploring a new city. I still recall what I ate everywhere, too. And that was a lot of bread.

Living in London in the late '90s, which had well-established vegetarian and vegan restaurants before the plant-based lifestyle went mainstream, the overwhelmingly meaty and starchy options around Europe meant my dietary choices were often limited to bread.

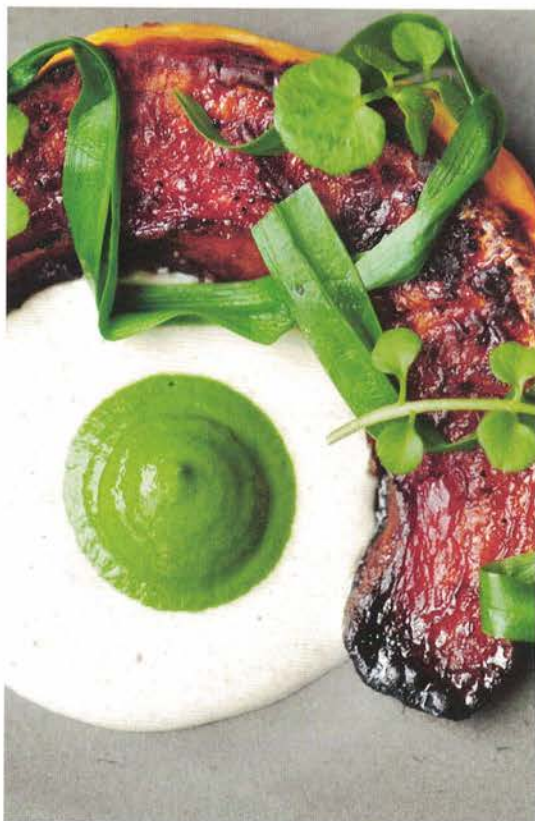
Globally it's now estimated more than three million people follow a vegan diet, with this number set to triple in the next 15 years. The rise of veganism (recent Google Trends data show Australia topped worldwide searches for the word 'vegan'), and the myriad established health, environment and animal welfare benefits associated with adopting a plant-based lifestyle, ties in with the increased awareness of our impact on our planet (see our story on travelling plastic-free on page 48). In fact, Australia aired its first-ever vegan TV ad in October, 2018, spruiking the new vegan cheeseburger from Hungry Jack's.

As a travel writer, I'm incredibly lucky that being vegan no longer restricts my options but opens up a whole world of choice, from vegetable-first degustation menus in Boston to comfort-food staples such as dim sum in Hong Kong and mac'n'cheese in Portland. Plant-based lifestyle magazine *Veg News* recently selected its top 10 international vegan cities, and with cities in Europe, Australia, Asia, Central America and the Middle East making the list, travelling as a vegan is now easier than ever. ▶

## PORTLAND

As the undisputed hipster capital of the world and a vegan hotspot, Portland is ripe with plant-based possibilities. Vegans head here to make a pilgrimage to the Vegan Mini Mall – a strip of all-vegan shops including a bakery, grocer and tattooist, plus a plethora of Portland restaurateurs are pivoting their culinary creativity to hero the vegetable – see Holiday, Departure and Tusk, for starters.

With its emphasis on local, Farm Spirit restaurant challenges the notions of what vegans actually eat (tip: it's not just rabbit food). You'll need to book and pay ahead for a spot at the 14-seat chef's counter to sample the wonderfully inventive tasting menu. The nuanced flavours and intricate textures coaxed from the locally sourced produce makes for an elevated dining experience.



**CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:** Onions and roasted squash with wild cress and creamy filbert milk at Portland's Farm Spirit restaurant; the green theme extends to the decor at Avobar in London; the seasonal offerings at Doe Donuts are always a highlight.



Farm Spirit chef-owner Aaron Adams explains: "We definitely place ourselves in the fine dining category, but we don't take ourselves too seriously. Our presentation is modern, detailed and specific, but we also want our guests to have fun. We encourage them to eat with their hands sometimes or even lick a bowl."

"At its core, Farm Spirit is about shaping the regional identity of Cascadian cuisine in a way that is free of all animal products and focuses purely the bounty of the forest and farm."

### WHERE TO GET YOUR FIX

► **Freewheelin' food** – With more than 700 food carts within the city limits, Portland has your meals on wheels sorted. Several food carts are all-vegan and you can choose from Mexican to Middle-Eastern, sushi to subs. Homegrown Smoker made the transition in July, 2017 from food cart to bricks-and-mortar cafe in St Johns, complete with dog-friendly outdoor seating, and is beloved for its vegan barbecue and Southern comfort food.

► **Life of pie** – Portland has so many vegan pizza joints, you'll never notice the curds have gone away. Sizzle Pie is a headbanging pizza chain that pairs heavy metal with a selection of slices topped with cashew or soy cheese as well as hearty salads with dairy-free dressings.



**Hackney is ground zero for the burgeoning vegan movement with London's first vegan pub, fish and chip shop and fast-food fried 'chicken' outlet...**



The all-vegan Virtuous Pie is a local fave with housemade pizzas topped with artisanal nut cheese and dairy-free ice-creams that earned it *Eater Portland's* Vegetarian/Vegan Restaurant of the Year 2017. Try The White Pie for a cheese (free) fest.

► **Sweet somethings** – Doe Donuts is around 10km from downtown Portland, but it's worth the trek for this hometown treat. Delectable, homemade vegan donuts come in an array of artisanal and seasonal flavours such as apple butterscotch fritter and prickly pear hibiscus. You can also scope out the Portland ice-cream scene with three new vegan ice-creameries set to open: Little Bean, V.O.W. Ice Cream and Be Sweet.

## LONDON

When I lived in London, veggie sarnies were always available at Marks & Spencer, while in Covent Garden you could eat vegan around the world. If you're doing it for the 'gram, Covent Garden now has an avocado-only eatery in Avobar (five types of avocado toast, anyone?) plus there's Palm Vaults in Hackney, a millennial pink oasis overflowing with potted plants where the pastel decor blends beautifully with the beet, turmeric and spirulina lattes.

Hackney is ground zero for the burgeoning vegan movement with London's first vegan pub, fish and chip shop and fast-food fried 'chicken' outlet all based in the northeast borough. The Spread Eagle pub's ethical ethos even extends to the sustainable sourcing of its fixtures and fittings.

Co-owner Meriel Armitage says the response to flipping the traditional pub menu to plant-based fare has been overwhelmingly positive. "Even the long-standing locals love it. It's given the pub a new lease of life."

High-street stalwarts are following suit. London wellness ambassadors Jasmine and Melissa Hemsley opened their Hemsley + Hemsley cafe (with many vegan options) at Selfridges & Co department store in 2016, while Harvey Nichols added vegan set-course menus and a vegan wine list to its Fifth Floor Cafe and OXO Tower Restaurant in January, 2018. For vegan on-the-go, pop into Pret A Manger's Veggie Pret locations in Carnaby, Shoreditch and Exmouth Market.

"It's an extremely exciting time at present in London," Spread Eagle publican and co-owner Luke McLoughlin says. "It feels like we are finally catching up with other vegan hotspots around the world and are overtaking them in some respects."

### WHERE TO GET YOUR FIX

► **Fast food made vegan friendly** – Temple of Seitan has two locations in Camden and Hackney serving vegan fried 'chicken' (shaped from seitan, a wheat gluten meat substitute). This is the spot to get your fried food fix that includes 'beef' burgers, battered 'chicken' and buffalo 'wings'. For that quintessential British ►