

Dining Down Under

From the bustling streets of Melbourne to the vineyards of the Margaret River, these destinations are a food lover's fantasy, says **Lina Molloholli**

With its fresh flavours and vibrant restaurant scene, Australia has emerged as a must-visit destination for food enthusiasts. Interest has been piqued by ITV's recent hit show *John and Lisa's Food Trip Down Under* – hosted by TV chefs John Torode and Lisa Faulkner – which took viewers on a gastronomic adventure across the country, visiting culinary pioneers ranging from black truffle growers to winemakers.

Ben Hall, chief executive of AAT Kings, says food-inspired tours are booming. The 11-day Tastes of Southern Australia is the Australian coach tour operator's second-best-selling tour for the UK market, and Hall says trade sales for the itinerary rose 185% in 2023 compared with the previous year.

Whether your clients are die-hard foodies on the hunt for their next fix, or casual diners looking to try something new, Australia has got them covered.

MELBOURNE, VICTORIA

Why go? Melbourne is well known for its multicultural cuisine, with a blend of Asian and European influences. For those seeking an alfresco feast, Queen Victoria Market has an abundance of fresh produce, artisanal cheeses and pastries. Meanwhile, the city's vibrant street-food scene beckons with bowls of steaming ramen, crispy Peking duck pancakes and spicy Sichuan hotpots. Craving Italian? Lygon Street is the gateway to pasta paradise, where fresh egg tagliatelle, handmade risottos and wood-fired pizzas await.

Must try: The beloved Aussie meat pie – minced meat, gravy and a dash of traditional spices encased in flaky pastry. ➤

Regional Flavours food and wine festival in South Bank, Brisbane

PICTURE: Shutterstock/EQRoy

DESTINATIONS

AUSTRALIA | FOOD TRIPS



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Queen Victoria Market; rock lobster; Australian meat pie; Vasse Felix vineyard, Margaret River

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HOBART, TASMANIA

Why go? The Tasmanian capital Hobart is as diverse as it is delicious. The city's waterfront and Salamanca Market are the go-to for seafood, with chefs creating dishes with locally caught produce such as Tasmanian salmon, rock lobsters and oysters. Peruse Battery Point's 19th-century streets and you'll find quaint cafes serving hearty fry-ups and restaurants offering innovative twists on Aussie classics. Hobart is also home to some of the country's finest whisky distilleries, where you can sample a dram or two and learn about the art of whisky-making from the experts.

Must try: Tasmania's famous apple pie. Made with crisp Tasmanian apples and buttery shortcrust pastry, it's the ultimate comfort food that will have you coming back for seconds (and thirds).

BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND

Why go? Start your day the 'Brizzy way' – urban legend has it that avocado on toast originated in the city. Here, it's sprinkled with Queensland macadamias and washed down with a freshly brewed cup of coffee. In the South Bank area, plates range from

Mediterranean mezze to pancake stacks drizzled with golden syrup made with the harvest from nearby sugar cane fields. For those seeking a taste of Queensland's agricultural heartland, tropical produce – including seasonal guava, papaya and custard apples – takes centre stage on dessert menus across town.

Must try: A Brisbane-style barbecue. When locals fire up the grill, get ready to feast on sizzling snags (sausages), steak and prawns – best enjoyed with a cold beer or two.

MARGARET RIVER, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Why go? Margaret River's claim to fame is its world-class wines. The region's Mediterranean climate and maritime breezes help create some of Australia's finest bottles, from crisp chardonnays to robust cabernets. For a more beer-focused experience, follow the 83-mile Margaret River Craft Beer Trail stretching from Geographe Bay to Eagle Bay, where 12 quirky breweries and alehouses have unique brews made with top-notch Aussie hops on tap.

Must try: The wines at Vasse Felix vineyard, which produced Margaret

River's first cabernet sauvignon in 1972. The estate is well set up for visits, with a restaurant, tasting room and art gallery.

ADELAIDE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Why go? Set between the gentle hills and vineyards of South Australia, Adelaide boasts some of the country's best Aboriginal cuisine, with an increasing number of chefs honouring the country's traditional guardians and celebrating once-underrated ingredients for their nutritional value, sustainability and flavour. Indulge in dishes ranging from pepper-leaf gnocchi to eucalyptus-smoked pumpkin, or stock up on fruits such as finger limes and bush tomatoes. Don't forget to pair any meal with Adelaide's Green Ant gin and tonic, served with a sprig of antioxidant-rich saltbush.

Must try: Southern fried oyster bagels and lamingtons (sponge cake coated in chocolate and desiccated coconut) at the Tasting Australia Festival. It spans Adelaide and regional South Australia, and is the country's longest-running food and drink festival. This year it takes place from May 3-12. **TW**

ASK THE expert



Adrian James
product and commercial director, Gold Medal

"Travellers to Australia are spoilt for choice when it comes to food and wine. Those who like to get involved in the process can shuck their own oysters in Coffin Bay, in South Australia, or catch a lobster on a cruise to Rottnest Island in Western Australia. The cosmopolitan cities offer a wide variety of cafes, bars and restaurants to suit all budgets and palates. Australian wine is ranked among the world's best, so a visit to one of the 65 wine regions is recommended."

SAMPLE PACKAGES

Cosmos offers a seven-day Tassie Quick Bite trip from £3,436 per person, based on two adults sharing. The price includes some meals and flights from Heathrow with Qantas on October 23. cosmos.co.uk

Gold Medal's eight-night South Australia Epicurean Way road trip starts from £1,689 per person. Includes motorhome hire, one night at Hotel Grand Chancellor Adelaide and Qantas flights from Heathrow on November 4. goldmedal.co.uk

Cunard's five-night Great Australian Culinary Voyage, departing from Sydney on February 6, 2025, starts from £889 per person, based on two adults sharing a Britannia inside cabin. cunard.co.uk