

The European market potential for food tourism

Last updated:

07 September 2021

Food tourism is diverse and includes many specialist niches such as food festivals, food museums, cooking classes, wine trails and producer visits. European food travellers value locally produced and authentic food and are eager for new culinary experiences. Italy, Germany and Austria offer great opportunities if you provide sustainable food tourism and know how to combine the food, its history and its entwinement with your culture in a story and sell it via social media.

Contents of this page

1. [Product description](#)
2. [What makes Europe an interesting market for food tourism?](#)
3. [Which European countries offer most opportunities for food tourism?](#)
4. [Which trends offer opportunities or pose threats on the European food tourism market?](#)

1. Product description

Food tourism is defined as the act of travelling for a taste of place in order to get a sense of place. It is sometimes referred to as culinary tourism or gastronomy tourism, and wine and other beverages are included within the definition. Food tourism is a segment of the wider section cultural tourism and 60% of the food tourists are interested in participating in other cultural activities as well. Within food tourism, several niche market can be distinguished, which are mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1: Specialist niches within the niche market of food tourism

Specialist niche	Example
Food festivals	The Eat drink festival celebrates the best food of Nigeria and offers an extensive selection of food and drinks served by some of the best chefs, restaurants, and street food vendors in Lagos.
Food trails	Cape Food & Wine offers several different full-day tours in Cape Town and they introduce tourists to the food of their destination, combined with historical backgrounds.
Food museums	Wonderfood Museum Penang is filled with replications of unique and diverse food of Malaysia and is accessible for the intrinsic food tourist as well as the casual food tourist.

Cooking classes	Templation offers a unique cooking class in Cambodia. Tourists can join the chef and assistants to the local market to pick out the food which they will cook under supervision of the chef.
Wine and food tastings	Vasjia Secreta is the oldest winery in Cafayate, Argentina and they offer wine tastings to tourists every day. Next to their tastings they have a wine museum where they educate tourists about the history of their winery.
Wine trails	Luxury wine trails offers several packaged experiences and customisable tours, all available in variable duration between three and ten days. These journeys offer a look into the culinary elements of South Africa.
Vegan tourism	Responsible travel takes the tourist on a tour of ten days around Ethiopian vegan dishes and cultural history.
Producer visits	Offer culinary tourists the opportunity to visit farmers, producers and restaurants, educates tourists about the entire food chain and provides tourists with locally produced food.
Local farmers' markets	Local markets are the sources for the local cuisines and there are often many different providers of trips to local farmers' markets at a destination. An example is the farmers' market in Amman .

If culinary tourism is marketed well, it can become a huge boost to tourism in your region, for several reasons. First, culinary tourists contribute highly to the local economy, because many will spend a lot of money in local restaurants, festivals, tastings, and so on. Second, many regular tourists will enjoy a culinary experience as well. The large scale of this form of tourism cannot be understated and can even be seen as one of the pillars of healthy and sustainable local tourism. Third, food tourism stimulates year-round visitors as these travellers are not bound by season. And last, it creates cross-cultural connections, preserves heritage and traditions and educates travellers about the local culture.

This study will further answer the questions why Europe is an interesting market, which European countries offer the most potential and which trends offer opportunities.

Tips:

Combine a culinary activity with [complementary cultural activities](#). Examples are visiting farms to see where the food is grown, visiting local food producers and organising a food workshop.

Get a certificate or take a course in the industry in order to educate yourself. For example, the world food travel association (WFTA) [offers several ways to educate yourself](#) by means of certificates, events and seminars.

Combine existing places where you can buy food, from restaurants to street food vendors, and merge them into one product by means of a story. An example of this is [Yangon Food Tours](#) in Myanmar. Their aim was to show real food from Myanmar to visiting tourists. Read the article by Food'n Road on

[further explanation and tips for setting up a food tour.](#)

Collaborate with other entrepreneurs and tourism bodies to promote food tourism in your region. Although pure food tourists, who solely travel with the aim of tasting, only provide a small market, a destination will become more appealing if it has an appealing culinary offering. This can be done by tipping restaurants which offer good quality and locally produced food, setting up food tours, or writing blogs to market appealing dishes or restaurants. An example of the latter is a [blog by Culture trip](#), recommending the ten best restaurants in Accra.

2. What makes Europe an interesting market for food tourism?

Europe is the [largest source market](#) worldwide for outbound tourism and counts for half of the total outbound tourism. According to experts, 3-5% of all European tourists are purely culinary tourists. But food and beverages make up a significant part in the budget of every tourist, as everyone needs to eat and drink. According to the WFTA, tourists [spend around 25% of their budget](#) on food and beverages, this number can be as high as 35% for expensive destinations, and as low as 15% for less costly destinations.

Over 80% of all leisure travellers state that food and drink experiences have a big influence on the overall satisfaction with a trip and make them more likely to return to the destination. Furthermore, 81% of tourists agree that food and drinks help them understand the local culture.

COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of Europeans travelling outside of Europe has decreased. The main cause for these low numbers were the travel restrictions put up by national governments. However, governments in Europe are gradually easing their restrictions because of vaccinations. The rates of vaccination, and therefore restrictions, differ per country.

The European Union is implementing a vaccination passport, which can prove that someone is vaccinated, is tested negatively or has antibodies. This passport is not universal throughout the EU, every country has its own form within this model. When attracting European tourists, it is important to stay updated about local travel restrictions.

After the travel restrictions are lifted and everyone can travel again, safety will be a big concern. Europeans are used to a very high standard of hygiene and strict rules regarding corona. European tourists prefer to see in some measure similar rules as where they come from regarding COVID-19, especially if the virus is particularly active in the destination.

Political circumstances and current affairs in destination countries

Europeans are very aware of current affairs in destination countries. Tourists are less likely to visit a country with unstable political circumstances or recent disastrous events. See the source country's advice on their citizens travelling to your country. For example on the [Dutch](#), [United Kingdom](#), [Swedish](#), or [German](#) Ministry of Foreign Affairs page.

Tip:

Learn about [managing the effects of COVID-19 on the tourism industry](#) to find current sources about the COVID-19 situation in different European countries. Read about [how to respond to COVID-19](#) to learn about a step-by-step plan that can help you respond and recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attracting European food tourists

European food travellers are interested in learning about the culinary cultures and customs of the places they visit. They are fascinated by history, storytelling and go to great lengths to find authentic food and beverage products and experiences. All these elements are combined in the foodway: the who, the what, the where, the why, and the how of food. In order to reach the tourists, make use of all these elements and package these together. Pick the unique dishes of the destination and elevate it with a story to a foodway.

The best way of doing so is by following a step-by-step procedure.

1. The first step is to find out which food is unique to your region. Most European tourists, and culinary tourists even more so, are curious about your local dishes. These local dishes can be very simple, but the more unique, the more exclusive, and therefore the better. Dishes can be either unique due to their ingredients (such as a locally harvested fish), special ingredients, or due to the mixture. An example of this is hoentay, a local dish from the Haa Valley in Bhutan. Hoentay are dumplings filled with cheese, a local spinach and turnip leaves.

Figure 1: Hoentay, a local dish from the Haa Valley in Bhutan



Source: [Yee Wong Magazine](#)

Finding out which dishes are special is easy, it just means that you have to think which food is common in your culture. If this is not different from European countries, find out about the local food of your parents or grandparents.

2. The second step is to combine the dish with a story, which you tell your tourists. Tell your tourists for how long it has been important to your country, when it came into existence, where the food comes from, how ingredients are locally and sustainably produced and what the importance was to your community. Your story will be enhanced if it can be combined with visual elements, such as a picture (or real) fishing boat or local tools. Also, personal elements can contribute to the story, such as the fact that your parents grew up with this dish, but that it is eaten less nowadays.

Figure 2: Visualise your story: making fufu



Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#), no changes made

An example of [a story is that of the Basque cider houses](#), connecting the drink to the region, its economy, landscape, history and culture. In short, the story tells how 16th-century sailors suffered from vitamin C deficiency and spoiled water, and how cider provided a solution for both problems, keeping the sailors healthy and alive and able to explore the world.

3. The third step is to elevate the dish itself. Although Europeans are eager to taste new dishes, some of your dishes might need some alteration to become appealing to Europeans. This can be done by a slightly different way of cooking or by adding different ingredients. But also the way it is served does a lot to your dish. Experiment with your dish by serving your clients different versions and let them decide which is best or hire a professional cook to elevate your dish.

Waakye is a local dish in Northern Ghana, consisting of ingredients such as meat, rice and beans. It is eaten any time of the day, but mostly for breakfast and lunch. An example of an elevation is offered by Best body Africa in Figure 2, who took out the meat from Waakye to make it suitable for vegans and vegetarians and served it on a trendy poke bowl.

Figure 3: Vegan waakye, served on a poke bowl



Source: [Best body Africa](#)

The European food lover is looking for unique experiences. The more authentic and real a destination is, the better. They like to experience the raw side of their destination, because it is very different from their own background. However, there is a limit to the extent to which these tourists actually want to experience this. Even though many tourists claim that they want to experience everything, this varies greatly between tourists. Therefore, it is important that the activity is tailored for the tourist and that they have the ability to skip certain parts which are considered too extreme.

Market segmentation

There are several sorts of tourists that can be distinguished within the food tourism segment but there are two main categories: broadly oriented food tourists and culinary/gastronomical tourists.

Broadly oriented food tourists

These tourists tend to search for many diverse and authentic food experiences but are rather price conscious. They are often adventure and cultural tourists as well and consist for a large part of gen Ys and Gen Zs. Their interest lies in cooking with locals, visiting food markets, trying street food, and discovering the various restaurants of a destination — from historical to new, and from family-owned to large chains — so that they can get an authentic glimpse into the destination and its cuisine. Broadly oriented food tourists offer the largest market.

Figure 4: a trip to the local rice paddies combines food with cultural emersion and some physical exercise



Source: [pexels.com](#)

The broadly oriented food tourist often has a high exposure to social media and other information sources. These tourists are encouraged more than ever to experience food travel. Orientation is especially done on social media and programs on both TV and the internet. One post on social media or promotion on other media can seriously raise the popularity of the destination and attract these travellers. Gen Ys and Gen Zs consider the fame or popularity of a food and drinks destination to be an important factor in choosing their destination. Furthermore, they enjoy experimenting with products from different cultures the most.

These tourists often choose to travel with their family and friends. Therefore, it should be made easy for casual groups of friends to participate in the experiences together. This means that one person of the party books the experience, but it should be made possible to split the bill among the travellers. One bill per table is an outdated policy according to these tourists. These travellers have an interest in social dining or meal sharing with other tourists. Breaking bread with strangers gives them the greatest opportunities to learn about other cultures and cuisines.

Sustainability is important to these tourists and they prefer tourism businesses who are environmentally and

socially aware. This is expressed in tourists feeling ashamed of flying, eating less meat and they like to see their values and beliefs mirrored in the companies they visit.

Tips:

Ensure sustainability is incorporated in your business and communicate this to the visitors. It should be impactful and honest, as guests can be critical of companies who say they find sustainability important but don't act accordingly. This can be done in many ways, such as offering local and vegetarian or vegan food, not using plastics or other disposables, or by making sure there is no waste and that any leftovers serve other purposes.

Make sure you have a strong and wide digital portfolio, with photos, videos, stories and reviews. This will familiarise the tourist with the destination and creates trust. Read our article on [how to be successful online](#) for more tips.

Do not offer your client a list of activities or restaurants but highlight special things for them as this creates the experience. For example, ask for their preferences and wishes and offer personalised recommendations for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Culinary/gastronomical tourists

The culinary tourist is considered the more luxury-oriented and exclusive food tourist, who is willing to spend a lot on their food-loving activities. In general, these are people who are older than the broadly oriented food tourist and they have a higher education. These tourists are interested in doing other cultural activities besides their food activities, but mainly as a side activity, as people are not eating all day long. These tourists plan these other cultural activities around their food activities, as this is the main goal of their trip.

This group does not want to eat at a street food place but only settles for the more exclusive experiences. An example of this could be to eat at home with a chef and meet his parents. They prefer having a highly curated and inside experience that comes close to a VIP experience. However, just like the other group of food tourists, they find the story and the authenticity of the experience very important.

Tip:

Offer something truly unique and only focus on smaller groups when you target the culinary/gastronomical tourist, as this target group prefers exclusivity. Do not save too much on the costs incurred as everything has to be excellent in order to have a complete experience.

3. Which European countries offer most opportunities for food tourism?

The main source countries for food tourism in Europe are France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. These countries provide the highest numbers of travellers towards developing countries and they are relatively prosperous and well-educated, and therefore most interested in culinary tourism. When focussing on sustainable food tourism, Austria offers an interesting target market as well. Although Austria offers a relatively small market, Austria has the highest demand for sustainable food in Europe.

Food is rooted in the culture of many European countries. Because they are used to travelling, they are very

used to experiencing food from different cultures. Europeans are often looking for parts of their own country in their destination country. Countries that have inherited food in their culture the most are France, Italy and Spain. Germany and the United Kingdom are huge source markets, and their tourists can be found all around the world. Tourists from the Netherlands are quite adventurous travellers, and therefore it is an excellent source country for novel projects.

Germany

As 34% of Germans plan their travel around [where and what they eat and drink](#), food is a less important driver for travel compared to the French and British market. However, the relatively prosperous Germans are a great target group for offering sustainable food tourism activities. On average, they [spend 16% of their travel expenditure on food](#). The local component is most important to German tourists when they think about sustainable food. Therefore, activities such as visiting farms, food festivals for locals and tourists combined, and visiting a local wine producer are appealing activities for German tourists.

63% pay attention [to the impact of food choices on the environment](#), and 64% agree that sustainability concerns have at least some influence on their eating habits. Especially the more wealthy Germans will pay more attention to the sustainability of food production. While 22% is prepared to pay more for sustainable food, 33% of Germans is willing to spend more money on food for which they are sure that farmers get a fair price in return.

Looking at their tendency towards vegetarianism, 36% are willing to cut down on red meat. Germany is among the countries with the largest percentages of vegetarians (7%) in Europe. Together with Austria and the Netherlands, the Germans are most willing to replace meat with insect derivatives.

Germany is one of the largest source markets for tourism globally; in 2019 55.2 million Germans [took a trip of five days or more](#). Furthermore, 78.2% of the total population indicates they travel, and 74% of the trips taken go abroad. Germany accounts for the largest economy within the EU, with a GDP of over €3.1 trillion, and GDP per capita of around €42 thousand.

Germans have an ever-growing concern about the sustainability of holidays, as 73% feel at least a little guilty about climate consequences when they travel by air. Furthermore, 61% of German tourists feel positive towards sustainable trips, but only 6% are acting on it. This means there is still a large gap between the attitude and actual behaviour of these tourists.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has [caused a huge drop in outgoing travel](#) in 2020, it also made German travellers even more eager to travel the world, as 62% [of travellers have a heightened desire](#) to see more of the world. 60% won't take travel for granted in the future, which is about equal to the global average of 61%. The German vaccination rate is comparable to most other Western European countries, with 42% of the adult population being fully vaccinated by July 2021.

Hygiene safety measures are important for German travellers, but less important compared to other European countries. Only 51% of German travellers, compared to 70% globally, will book an accommodation if it is clear about health and hygiene policies. 47% of travellers accept health spot checks on arrival, which is much lower than the global average of 67%.

Table 2: German travellers' long-haul destinations in 2019 compared to 2017

Destination	Percentage of bookings in 2019 compared to 2017
South East Asia	18% (-5%)

North America	23% (+3%)
Caribbean	11% (-4%)
Africa	14% (0%)
Latin America	11% (+3%)
India	8% (+2%)
Middle East	5% (-1%)
China	4% (0%)
Australia and New Zealand	6% (+2%)

Source: [Reiseanalyse](#), 2020 and 2018

France

With 39% of French tourists [planning their travel around where and what they eat and drink](#), culinary activities are far more important for French tourists compared to German and British tourists. Their spending behaviour however is similar, as they [spend 16% of their travel expenditure on food](#).

France has the second-largest population of the EU and it has a travel market that shows healthy growth. Total expenditure for outbound travel by French tourists in 2019 [grew by 11.5%](#) to over €45 billion, which was the largest growth of the mentioned source countries.

French tourists prefer to travel to countries where they can speak their own language, and that serve dishes that are from the French cuisine. These tourists are always looking for elements of their own country in other countries. A way to reach this target group is by incorporating French elements into the local dishes, especially if it is a French-speaking country. When they see ingredients or recipes they are familiar with, they tend to be more open to the food experience.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has [caused a huge drop in outgoing travel](#) in 2020, it also made French travellers even more eager to travel the world. [45% of travellers have a heightened desire](#) to see more of the world. 65% of travellers won't take travel for granted in the future, which is about equal to the global average of 61%. 38% of the adult population [was fully vaccinated](#) by July 2021, which is less than most other Western European countries. Many French are sceptical about the COVID-19 vaccine.

Hygiene safety measures are relatively important for French travellers, compared to German and Dutch travellers. 64% of French travellers, compared to 70% globally, will book an accommodation if it is clear about health and hygiene policies. 66% of travellers accept health spot checks on arrival, which is comparable to the global average of 67%.

After the UK, France has the third-biggest GDP of Europe and the seventh-largest of the world, with about €2.3 trillion in 2019. Their population count is just over 65 million. Just like other European source countries, France saw a serious decline in their GDP in 2020. The average [holiday budget has decreased](#) from €2,201 in 2019 to €1,522 in 2020. This is comparable to the holiday budget of Germans.

United Kingdom

Out of the three largest source countries, Germany, the United Kingdom and France, the British consider food to be the most important when planning their travel, as 40% of the British plan their travel around [where and what they eat and drink](#). On average, they [spend 16% of their travel expenditure on food](#).

The United Kingdom is the second-largest economy in Europe and the fifth-largest in the world, with a GDP of €2.2 billion. Just like the Germans, people from the United Kingdom can be found all around the world as tourists, which makes them a good target group. As their native language, English, is considered a standard globally, there is a lower barrier to reach these tourists.

The duration of stays for these tourists [has shifted in 2020](#); an increasing percentage of Brits stay for more than seven days at their destination, up to 14% in 2020 from 6% in 2019. British people are travelling alone more and more, the percentage of British tourists travelling solo is up from 16% in 2019 to 26% in 2020. The main interests among these tourists are still sampling local cuisines and exploring neighbourhoods.

Compared to other European source countries, British travellers are more demanding and assertive if their requirements are not met. In general, they will ask for a lot of information on possible activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made British travellers even more eager to travel the world, as [47% of the travellers have a heightened desire](#) to see more of the world.

Hygiene safety measures are important for British travellers, compared to German and Dutch travellers. 68% of British travellers, compared to 70% globally, will book an accommodation if it is clear about health and hygiene policies. 63% of travellers accept health spot checks on arrival, which is comparable to the global average of 67%. The United Kingdom currently has the highest vaccination rate in Europe, with 50% of the adult population being fully vaccinated by July 2021.

Italy

Food and drinks are deeply integrated in the culture and tradition of this country; they are well known for their pizza, pasta and other classical Italian dishes. As food is well known to the Italians, they look for it in the destinations they visit as well. They are more likely to go to a local market or participate in a cooking class than other countries.

76% pays attention [to the impact of food choices on the environment](#), and 75% agrees that sustainability concerns have at least some influence on their eating habits. While 28% is prepared to pay more for sustainable food, 35% of Italians are willing to spend more money on food for which they are sure that farmers get a fair price in return. Therefore, their willingness to choose sustainable food is among the highest in Europe.

Looking at their tendency towards vegetarianism, 45% is willing to cut down on red meat. This is the highest percentage in all European countries compared and is done primarily for environmental reasons. [6% of Italians are vegetarian](#), and 1% are vegan.

Italy [counted 32.64 million people travelling outside of Italy](#), and is expected to grow in the coming years after the COVID-19 pandemic is slowed down. One of the main reasons for this growth is increased interest in travel and experiences, especially among Gen X and Gen Z who are exposed to a lot of information online. This is combined with a rising income among these travellers and a growing interest in exploration and the search for different cultural experiences. Important aspects for Italians when booking a trip are affordability and accessibility.

Just like the Spanish, the Italians prefer to book their travels via a tour operator and especially value a tailor-made holiday. Many Italians also tend to travel in larger groups, often with large (multi-generational) families, with an Italian-speaking guide. It is often hard to meet the needs of different family members with different

wishes. Also, margins are generally lower for larger groups. However, their large group sizes offer some economies of scale.

The Italian vaccination rate is slightly lower than in Western European countries, with 37% of the adult population [being fully vaccinated](#) by July 2021.

Spain

Just like for Italians, food and drinks are a significant part of Spanish culture; they look at consumption of food and drinks as a socialising moment and they often eat with their whole family. This makes them also want to enjoy food and drinks at their destination with others, and they often travel together in larger groups, including families and friends.

70% pay attention [to the impact of food choices on the environment](#), and 73% agree that sustainability concerns have at least some influence on their eating habits. While 23% are prepared to pay more for sustainable food, 32% of the Spanish are willing to spend more money on food for which they are sure that farmers get a fair price in return.

Spain is one of the countries with the lowest number of vegetarians. However, 33% are willing to cut down on red meat, which is comparable to most European countries.

Expenditure on outbound Spanish travel [has increased by 55% in the period 2014-2019](#), and after travel restrictions are over, this is expected to grow further. However, Spain has been badly affected by COVID-19 and the Spanish are the weariest of their health, compared to other countries. The average travel budget of Spaniards was €1,583 in 2020.

The Spanish have a high preference for Spanish-speaking guides and have a higher preference for buying with a tour operator, in comparison to the other countries in this top six.

The Spanish vaccination rate is relatively high: 44% of the adult population [was fully vaccinated](#) by July 2021.

Netherlands

Dutch tourists are often very adventurous and exploratory which makes them unafraid of discovering new places. They are a great target group when you offer something that is quite unique and novel, as these tourists are prepared to try it out. Dutch tourists associate sustainable food with fair revenue for farmers, as their population has a high concentration of farmers. If you're aiming to attract Dutch tourists, make sure to show the connection of your product to the local farmers.

Only 52% pay attention [to the impact of food choices on the environment](#), and 54% agree that sustainability concerns have at least some influence on their eating habits. While 13% are prepared to pay more for sustainable food, which is lower than most other European countries. 23% of the Dutch are willing to spend more money on food for which they are sure that farmers get a fair price in return. Overall, in comparison to the other European source markets, the Dutch are among the least willing to pay for sustainable food in Europe.

Looking at their tendency towards vegetarianism, only 31% are willing to cut down on red meat. However, the country has one of the largest percentages of vegetarians (7%) in Europe. Together with Austria and Germany, the Dutch are most willing to replace meat with insect derivatives, which is in line with their adventurous nature.

The fear of violence, price, political stability and the chance of (COVID-19) infections are the most important drivers when choosing a destination. Over 75% of tourists mainly book their trips online. Dutch travellers don't value luxurious accommodations but want to make the most out of their trips by being physically active.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made Dutch travellers even more eager to travel the world, as 26% [of travellers](#)

[have a heightened desire](#) to see more of the world. 45% won't take travel for granted in the future, which is below the global average of 61%. 44% of the adult population [was fully vaccinated](#) by July 2021, which is a bit higher than most Western European countries.

Hygiene safety measures are important for Dutch travellers, but less important compared to other European countries. Only 52% of Dutch travellers, compared to 70% globally, will book an accommodation if it is clear about health and hygiene policies. 50% of travellers accept health spot checks on arrival, which is much lower than the global average of 67%.

Austria

68% pay attention [to the impact of food choices on the environment](#), and 64% agree that sustainability concerns have at least some influence on their eating habits. While 25% are prepared to pay more for sustainable food, 38% of Austrians are willing to spend more money on food for which they are sure that farmers get a fair price in return.

Looking at their tendency towards vegetarianism, 40% are willing to cut down on red meat. However, Austria has the largest percentage of vegetarians (7%) in Europe. Together with Germany and the Netherlands, Austrians are most willing to replace meat with insect derivatives. Altogether, Austria is one of the countries with the highest emphasis on sustainable food choices, and therefore an excellent target market if your aim is to sell sustainable food travel.

With a population of almost 9 million, Austria offers the smallest source market. Austria's GDP per capita is approximately €45 thousand, indicating that the Austrians also have disposable income to spend on holidays. German is the dominant language in Austria, but especially younger Austrians master English as well.

The Austrian vaccination rate is slightly lower than most other Western European countries, with 38% of the adult population [being fully vaccinated](#) by July 2021.

Tips:

Offer the information on your website in at least English, German and Italian, if your aim is to attract sustainable and culinary food tourists. With these countries, you cover the most important target countries regarding sustainable food tourism.

Learn about the European values and standards if you want to attract European tourists, because they care about their standards being met. They expect to leave on agreed times, have clean accommodation, and having the table set the way Europeans do it. Developing organisational skills to run your business is important to accommodate European tourists. These skills can be developed through a training programme, for example.

Read [what the demand is for outbound tourism on the European market](#) to learn about the travel behaviour of different European countries.

4. Which trends offer opportunities or pose threats on the European food tourism market?

Growing importance of sustainability

Almost three quarters (72%) of travellers in 2019 [agree that people must act now](#) to save the world for future generations by making sustainable travel choices. This number is up from 62% in 2016, so the awareness that sustainability is needed has been growing over the past years and is expected to increase further in the coming

years. This interest in sustainability trickles through in food tourism by means of sustainable food. Tourists prefer to eat organic food which is made by the local community and not by large food chains.

Sustainability is most popular among the younger generations. Younger generations stir up the discussions about climate change and social equality, but it won't take too long before these generations are the largest source market and sustainability will be a prerequisite instead of a choice.

Most Europeans see sustainable food as food with a low environmental impact, avoidance of pesticide and local supply chains. Economic growth, animal welfare, fair revenue for farmers and health are less associated to sustainable food. The main barriers to eating more sustainably are the expense and a lack of information on how to do so. Therefore, many Europeans opt for sustainable choices, but only if prices are competitive and the information is clear.

Some tourists go beyond sustainability and prefer to participate in regenerative tourism. Whereas in sustainable tourism there is a focus on doing no harm, in regenerative tourism it is all about improving the destination.

Greater influence of social media on tourism

Social media posts are used to promote unique food and drink experiences. Travellers from [generation Y](#) and Z are growing to become the largest target group, and a very large percentage of these use social media. Another part of this new interest is fuelled by increased attention to food programs, both on TV as well as on online streaming services. When this target group is exposed to a destination, they can quickly gather more information on the internet and gain knowledge on local food and drinks before they travel.

With social media gaining influence on the food travellers' destination choices, social media become increasingly important when attracting food tourists. Therefore, it is very important that your culinary products are promoted on Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and Twitter. It is best to provide a lot of information, using a combination of text, photos and video. Furthermore, it is important to connect to as many of your clients as possible, so your posts can be shared and liked by large numbers.

Vegans, vegetarians and flexitarians

Vegans, vegetarians and flexitarians are an ever-growing segment within food tourism as people start to reconsider the consequences of their consumption. Vegetarianism is a serious commitment for most people, which means that they are dedicated to following their diet. These tourists are very strict on selecting their food as it has to comply with their diet. Vegetarian and vegan tourists are looking on the internet and other sources for offerings that are suited to vegetarians and vegans. They are open to new experiences and meeting new people who are likeminded.

Next to attracting vegans and vegetarians, you're also attracting their partners or travel companions, as they often choose to support them in their life choices and comply with their restaurant choices. As women have a higher tendency towards reducing meat, in many cases women are vegetarians while their partners are not. Furthermore, vegan tourism is also considered kosher and halal, so this will attract many more tourists as well.

Besides vegans and vegetarians, there are many flexitarians, who try to reduce meat, but sometimes do eat meat. Flexitarianism can vary between eating meat five times per week or eating meat once a month. Flexitarians are, by definition, not strict at all, and many will be convinced to eat meat to experience something new, or when it offers the opportunity to immerse themselves deeper into your culture. However, many flexitarians will feel a sense of guilt when eating (too much) meat. In some cases, their feeling of guilt can be stilled by emphasising that meat is produced locally and that animal welfare is taken care off.

Healthy or power food/diets

Health and a healthy lifestyle are becoming increasingly important in tourists' decision making. Aging tourists, the lifestyle of Gen Y and Gen Z, a growing middle class, and the technological and digital revolution all

contribute to the growing importance of the health trend. Concerns about obesity, food sensitivity, and people affected by diseases, have resulted in a shift in attitude towards health care, nutrition, beauty, physical activity, and overall self-improvement.

As a consequence, people begin to reconsider their past eating habits, also when travelling. Many people begin to reform their diet in a way that is much healthier. There is an increasing demand for food that is fresh, organic, nutritious and produced in a sustainable way.

Besides the information provided on a scientific basis on how to eat healthy, there is a growing number of Europeans that are inspired by other nutrition and lifestyle gurus as well. In addition, there is an increasing number of people who are restricted on their doctor's advice due to allergies, intolerances or illness. This results in a growing number of travellers that have restrictive eating habits.

Examples of these restrictions are no meat, meat-only, gluten-free, peanut-free, lactose-free, kosher, halal, vegan, pescatarian, keto, paleo, raw-food, clean-eating (no additives), dietary approaches to stop hypertension (DASH) containing low sodium and high calcium, Mediterranean, and many more. In this blog by Social Tables you can find [much more information on these restrictions](#).

Tips:

Consider getting international standards when providing sustainable tourism. These standards are well known to tourists around the world and can easily differentiate your business from the competition. An example of this is [the ISO 21401](#), which specifies environmental, social and economic requirements for sustainability practices.

Provide multiple options on the menu when you target vegans or vegetarians. Vegetarians and vegans, just like other tourists, want to have a choice in what they eat. They do not consider it fair when you market vegan or vegetarian cuisine, but only offer one dish.


Communicate what is in your meals by whatever means, this could be with a separate menu, listing the ingredients in dishes, or having specific signs that indicate it is vegan, vegetarian or gluten-free. As many tourists live on a strict diet, they have to be sure your meal meets their conditions. Communication is key in this matter.


Combine healthy cuisine and other contributors to a healthy lifestyle, and package these together. Examples of these are outdoor exercise, new fitness programmes that are highly focussed on results, meditation and yoga, life coaching that embraces health aspects such as nutrition, empowerment and physical exercise. For more information, read [our study on opportunities for wellness tourism](#).


This study has been carried out on behalf of CBI by [Molgo](#) and [ETFI](#).

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