



# WALK THIS WAY

One of the best ways to experience a new city is through its foodie offerings. We've curated 10 of the best walking culinary tours around the world.

BY ISHAY GOVENDER-YPMA

## 1 RIO, BRAZIL

The **Eat Rio** guides are all either *cariocas* (locals) or married to locals. "This gives us a unique insight into both the local culture and what visitors to the city really want to experience," says founder Tom Le Mesurier, who was booked solid during the recent Olympic Games. Tom, who started Rio's first food tour company in 2013, feels it essential that his team offers the insider's edge. "A big part of our service is to help people get more out of the time they spend in Rio after the food tour." The team supplies guests with recommendations for great samba clubs, *churrasco* (barbecue) restaurants and coffee shops too.

**Book:** Best of Brazilian and watch out for the new project launching to create jobs for residents of a local *favela*. [eatrio.net](http://eatrio.net)

## 2 ROME, ITALY

**Katie Parla's** private tours stand out from the generic large-group tours in Rome because she blends 12 years of academic study of Roman food and drink, history and modern culinary writing and food criticism with lessons in the local culture. "I bring a level of knowledge that is unmatched, but it is presented in a way that is fun and accessible," she says. Katie started giving tours in her adopted hometown in 2006, branching out from her cultural and archaeological tours because of requests from curious repeat guests. "Food and drinks can tell you about a city and its origins and evolution. A delicious bite is more than just a snack, it's a piece of history" she adds.

**Book:** The Prati and Trionfale tour. [katieparla.com/tours](http://katieparla.com/tours)

## 3 TOKYO, JAPAN

Food and beverage professionals Yukari Sakamoto and Shinji Sakamoto held their first food tour more than 10 years ago. It all started with visiting food writers who needed a local to accompany them and act as a translator. Now they host visitors who are often well versed in Japanese cuisine. "Our **Food Sake Tokyo** tours are in high demand because Japanese food has become so popular all over the world. We are lucky to have started our business then," says Yukari. A natural progression from market tours that feature exceptional and varied seafood has been to classes to demonstrate how to prepare it. The sashimi classes are hugely popular.

**Book:** Tsukiji Market tour. [foodsaketokyo.com](http://foodsaketokyo.com)

## 4 BARCELONA, SPAIN

Marta Laurent Veciana, founder of **Forever Barcelona** has been giving sightseeing tours since 1999. A request from a local five-star hotel to take a guest on a tapas crawl (unheard of back then, she says), planted the idea for a food tour of the city. Her team incorporates the world-famous Boqueria market, old gourmet stores and diners in the old town quarter. Vegetarians and those with allergies, who often find Spain as a whole tricky, are welcomed on the tours.

**Book:** Tapas + Sagrada Família and a new cheese tour outside Barcelona launching soon. [foreverbarcelona.com](http://foreverbarcelona.com)

## 5 LIMA, PERU

For Lucas Montes de Oca and his wife Samantha Lewis, who started **Lima Gourmet Company** in 2011, food tours should transcend food. "One has the opportunity to present a dish in context by combining tasting menus with unforgettable surroundings and heart-warming, dramatic tales about their origins," Samantha says. Taking guests to the ancient pre-Inca ruins of Huaca Pucllana means local cuisine is given its proper historical and cultural context. Moving away from street food, the tours offer an insider experience showcasing talented chefs too, who have access to unique Peruvian ingredients. From honeymooners to presidential candidates, actors and chefs, Lima Gourmet Company has hosted them all.

**Book:** The Day or Evening tours. [limagourmetcompany.com](http://limagourmetcompany.com)

## 6 LISBON, PORTUGAL

Journalist and author Célia Pedrosa's food tours of Lisbon now fall under the respected **Culinary Backstreets** umbrella of tours around the world. The focus, she says, is in the unsung heroes of the food world. What started as jaunts for fellow journalists and friends up and down Lisbon's steep, cobbled streets three years ago has become a regular gig with travellers from every part of the globe. A city in flux, there are constantly new food discoveries to be made in Lisbon. Cakes and pastries are the most popular items on the tours, Célia says, and there's even cod tripe for the more adventurous.

**Book:** The new Song of the Sea: Fish, Seafood and Tradition in Lisbon's Port Zone tour. [culinarybackstreets.com/culinary-walks/lisbon](http://culinarybackstreets.com/culinary-walks/lisbon)

## 7 LONDON, U.K.

For the longest time English food has received a bad rap. "Just wait until you try our food. Even the most discerning food critic will change their mind!" says **Secret Food Tours London** founder Oliver Mernick-Levene who started the company in 2013. Think sausages, freshly cooked breads, fish and chips, artisanal chocolates and fudge, classic English puddings and cheeses, and a variety of local drinks, including a good cup of tea. Guests will walk past the iconic London Bridge and Tower Bridge too. Because of the volume of queries, they've started an Indian food tour run by Raj Singh. "Going for an Indian' has become a quintessentially British thing to do," they say. The company once arranged a surprise engagement on a private tour. She said 'yes', we were told.

**Book:** London Bridge or the East End Indian tour. [secretfoodtours.com](http://secretfoodtours.com)

## 8 STELLENBOSCH, SOUTH AFRICA

In 2010 Hanli Fourie set out to give visitors a deeper South African experience. Weaving history, sightseeing and interaction with local cooks and food and drink artisans, **Bites and Sites** steers clear of a purely commercial and homogenous approach. "Our food tours offer a memorable way of exploring the unique culture here," she adds. Increasingly, she finds guests want a taste of what's truly local and seasonal, so they've made that the focus in the city walking tour. For the township food tour, a respected

home cook and expert guide take the reins, welcoming guests into their community with a generous African spirit.

**Book:** Township tour and Xhosa Lunch or Classic Cape Cuisine Walk. [bitesandsites.co.za](http://bitesandsites.co.za)

## 9 RIGA, LATVIA

**Eat Riga** started hosting tours back in 2008 to get people out of the Old Town and to explore widely. "It was a lack of original and alternative tours that served as the motivation to start something unorthodox but not cliché," says Eat Riga guide Artūrs Ādamsons. On the tours guests will try foods not always available in supermarkets or restaurants, classic staples and some with regional protected status too. "The food is part of our culture and history and tells you how cuisine changes from region to region and how it's been shaped by neighbouring nations," Artūrs explains.

**Book:** The Tasting Tour or Feast for a Day [eatriga.lv](http://eatriga.lv)

## 10 NEW YORK CITY, U.S.

With an expansive career in the restaurant industry, culinary educator and guide Liz Young makes a point of seeking out the hidden gems on her **Culinary and City Tours**. In 2003 August 2003 Liz arranged her first food tours as part of a module during her Food Studies graduate degree. "The school asked me to give tours to incoming graduate students and a business was born," she says. The tours focus on a single area, such as Northside Williamsburg, the High Line or the Lower East Side and incorporate history, architecture and the best markets, plus everything from *gelaterias* to cookware stores. Liz hopes to include outlets that use food waste creatively on her tours soon.

**Book:** Highline and Chelsea Market tour. ♦ [culinaryandcitytours.com](http://culinaryandcitytours.com)

IMAGES: EAT RIO; FOREVER BARCELONA; GETTY IMAGES; RICK POON; SECRET FOOD TOURS LONDON; SHUTTERSTOCK.COM