



Food Tourism Putting Under-The-Radar Destinations On The Map

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BBQ, chocolate, whiskey and wine give vacationers a reason to getaway this Memorial Day

DALLAS –May 18, 2015 – The rise of food tourism has been spurred by travelers seeking out new ways of exploring local cultures through memorable eating and drinking experiences. To help travelers discover unique culinary destinations this Memorial Day and throughout the summer, the experts at Hotels.com® compiled a list of the most affordable stops along the country’s top food and beverage trails according to the latest Hotel Price Index™.

“By offering local and authentic culinary experiences to visitors, these destinations are able to share a piece of their culture,” said Taylor L. Cole, APR, Hotels.com travel expert. “Social media and mobile technology have also played an important part in the growth of this tourism trend as travelers can easily find affordable places and amusing ways to explore new cities this upcoming summer season.”

BBQ Trails

While major cities like Kansas City, Memphis and St. Louis are most-renowned for their barbecue offerings, the Carolinas are home to some of the best in the country. The North Carolina Barbecue Trail stretches from the eastern part of the state all the way to Tennessee with 24 pits carefully selected by the North Carolina Barbecue Society. [South Carolina](#) – best known for its mustard-style barbecue – has 70 barbecue restaurants stretching from Greenville through Columbia and all the way to the state’s popular coastal cities.

Austin is also often recognized for its famous barbecue restaurants, but travelers looking to find some great [Texas-style BBQ](#) off the beaten path can find it in nearby towns such as Lexington, Lockhart, Luling and Taylor. Lockhart’s four BBQ restaurants are enough to make the town known as the BBQ Capital of Texas.

Where to stay under \$100*: Winston-Salem, N.C. (\$99); Greenville, S.C. (\$97); Bastrop, Texas (\$99)

Whiskey Trails

Whiskey tourism has gained popularity in recent years, with the most prominent destination being Kentucky's Bourbon Trail. A record number of visitors flocked to the region in 2014 to get a firsthand look at the art and science of crafting Bourbon according to the Kentucky Distillers' Association.

Tennessee has a long whiskey history and is home to two of the oldest distilleries in the country, but the state's whiskey trail is relatively new. Thanks to a [change in legislation](#) in 2009, the number of Tennessee whiskey distilleries has grown from three to more than 20. Another region that's experienced a whiskey boom is Montana, with Bozeman at the center of the state's [rapidly growing distilling industry](#).

Where to stay under \$110*: Bardstown, Ky. (\$104); Fayetteville, Tenn. (\$101); Bozeman, Mont. (\$109)

Wine Trails

While Napa may be the best-known wine region in the country, travelers can find a more casual and less crowded wine tasting experience in Sonoma County. Because Sonoma wineries occupy a larger area, visitors have more lodging options and can stay in more affordable destinations such as Petaluma and Oak Hurst. Further north, Oregon's Willamette Valley also has been growing in popularity and visitors can take advantage of the [Oregon Wines Fly Free program](#).

On the other side of the country, New York's Finger Lakes region is home to three wine trails and over 200 wineries, with the Seneca Lake Wine Trail being the largest and most active. The Rieslings found in the Finger Lakes have won many prestigious medals at national and international wine competitions, but the region is also becoming known for its pinot noir.

Where to stay under \$130*: Petaluma, Calif. (\$126); Seneca Falls, N.Y. (\$121); McMinnville, Ore. (\$100)

Chocolate Trails

Chocolate tourism is popular in several European countries, but the U.S. also has its share of exciting sweet experiences in places like Connecticut and Indiana. With a profusion of world-renowned chocolatiers and local chocolate artisans, the [Connecticut Chocolate Trail](#) stretches from Norwalk to the Hartford area. Visitors can make their own chocolate bars or visit a chocolate-themed cafe along the trail's 12 decadent stops.

Midwest travelers can also feast on chocolate along stretches of Indiana and Illinois. The Richmond Chocolate Trail – an hour outside of Indianapolis – allows visitors to sample complimentary chocolates by obtaining a Chocolate Trail Passport. Meanwhile, the Blackhawk Chocolate Trail, two hours outside of Chicago, features more than 20 stops including chocolate-themed coffee shops, bars and wineries.

Where to stay under \$110*: Milford, Conn. (\$103); Richmond, Ind. (\$83); Dixon, Ill. (\$90)

Hotels.com helps travelers save up to 40% this Memorial Day weekend when booking through the Hotels.com website. To find the latest Memorial Day deals, please visit <http://www.hotels.com/hotel-deals/memorial/#tab1>.

*The actual prices paid per night by travelers during the full year of 2014, according to the Hotel Price Index.

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Press contacts:

Taylor L. Cole, APR
Director Public Relations, Hotels.com North America
Phone: (469) 335-8442
Email: taycole@hotels.com
Twitter: @TravelwithTLC