

Eats meets west

MERRY KIRKWOOD THE AUSTRALIAN MARCH 31, 2012 12:00AM



Stefano de Pieri leads food tours to Italy. Source: Supplied

CULINARY journeys across the globe promise a feast of unforgettable experiences.

MICHELIN DINING IN SPAIN WITH FRANK CAMORRA

When Melbourne chef Frank Camorra launched his first food tour to Spain in conjunction with the release of his 2009 book *MoVida Rustica*, he had little idea that many of the inaugural participants would demand more of the same. Such was the popularity of the small-group sojourn that this year marks Camorra's third tour of his home country, with the itinerary covering Spain's Basque region. Guests on the 10-day trip will be given an insider's take on Basque cuisine, with fishing excursions, visits to small towns and farms, market shopping and trips to local bars to try pintos and wines. Other highlights are dining at Michelin-starred Arzak restaurant and a visit to Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum. The 12-person El Pais Vasco tour with Frank Camorra, from July 10 to 20, starts and finishes in San Sebastian, with guests travelling by private vehicle. From \$11,490 a person twin-share, including accommodation in San Sebastian, Getaria and Bilbao. More:

biznaga.com

(<http://biznaga.com>)

TONY TAN'S GOURMET TOUR OF CHINA

While we're not short of a decent xiao long bao in Australia, leading food identity Tony Tan's epicurean explorations of China are bound to turn up the best in their class. His 12-day Gourmet Tour of China, taking in Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, includes visits to bustling markets, cooking classes, sessions with a tea master, specially chosen restaurant experiences and accommodation in five-star properties. There is also an excursion to the Great Wall. The tour departs Beijing on September 14 and finishes in Hong Kong on September 25 (with transfers between cities by private coach and plane); from \$7899 a person twin-share, including all meals. The tour is organised by Jetset Travel South Melbourne and Tan's Unlimited Cuisine Company. More: 1300 967 979; tonytan.com.au (<http://tonytan.com.au>); 0412 126 663.

TUSCANY AND AMALFI COAST WITH STEFANO DE PIERI

A two-week, small-group tour led by chef Stefano de Pieri in September will explore Florence and the lesser-known secrets of Positano and Chianti. It's Venetian-born de Pieri's first food tour and the chef, who runs the award-winning Stefano's restaurant in Mildura, Victoria, will conduct cooking classes in historic villas and prepare meals in partnership with local chefs.

The tour (maximum 10 participants) starts in Florence and takes in wine and cheese tastings, language lessons with de Pieri's wife, Donata Carrazza, walking tours, a yacht charter around Capri and a concert in Ravello, before guests are transferred by private vehicle to Rome. Seven nights' villa accommodation in Tuscany and Positano is included. The Tuscany and Amalfi Coast tour, from September 29 to October 13, costs from \$10,900 a person twin-share, including most meals. More: avantitaly.com.au (<http://avantitaly.com.au>).

THE GLOBETROTTING GOURMET TOUR TO NORTHERN VIETNAM

Described as a tour of "revolutionary cuisine and dining revelry", this seven-day Vietnam itinerary with cookbook author Robert Carmack and textile designer Morrison Polkinghorne is one of several Asian escapes from The Globetrotting Gourmet, including Thailand, Burma and Singapore. Starting and finishing in Hanoi, the tour takes in street food, market visits and lesser-known dining venues, with day trips to surrounding areas and overnight stays in Ninh Binh and Haiphong. Highlights include meeting Hanoi chef Didier Corlou of La Verticale restaurant and a trip to a charity training school. From \$3495 a person twin-share, including most meals, accommodation, private transfers and specified tours. Pre and post-tour extensions are possible. More: globetrottinggourmet.com (<http://globetrottinggourmet.com>).

WALKABOUT GOURMET ADVENTURES

Australian-owned Walkabout runs 26 food-focused walking tours in Europe between April and October each year, plus four further itineraries in Victoria and Tasmania during summer. Designed for travellers who want to experience life as a local, the packages allow guests to explore character-filled hamlets and enjoy the local cuisine. Run by Provence-based Gabriela Clarke, a cordon bleu chef and outdoor enthusiast, and her husband Graeme, originally from Victoria, Walkabout's signature 15-day Follow the Gourmet Trail from Turin to Florence is one of the most popular itineraries. This year's tours are sold out, but bookings are now being taken for May 21 and September 9 departures in 2013; from \$6875. More: walkaboutgourmet.com (<http://walkaboutgourmet.com>).

TASTES OF BURGUNDY

A rotating band of leading Australian chefs is one of the highlights of Tastes of Burgundy, a week-long culinary retreat in this glorious part of France. Serge Dansereau (The Bathers' Pavilion, Sydney) and Andrew McConnell (Cutler & Co and Cumulus Inc, Melbourne) will lead this year's classes, from April to late June. Guests will be based in the charming 18th-century Chateau de Tailly just outside the village of Meursault, and menu planning, market visits (in Dijon, Beaune and Chalon-sur-Saone or Autun) and meals are on the itinerary. Non-cooking days include visits to cheesemakers and bistros, and a trip to the stunning Abbaye de la Bussiere, a former monastery converted into Relais & Chateaux accommodation with a Michelin-starred restaurant. The all-inclusive tour, which features a degustation dinner at three-Michelin-starred Maison

Lameloise in Chagny, is \$9000 a person twin-share, including meals, wine, champagne and coach transport. More: [tastesofburgundy.co](http://tastesofburgundy.com) ([http://tastesofburgundy.co](http://tastesofburgundy.com)) m

GUSTO SUD TOUR WITH COLIN McLAREN

Some would think running food tours to the heart of Italy's mafia territory would be foolhardy for a former undercover detective who almost singlehandedly destroyed a mafia cell in NSW, but Colin McLaren has been doing just that for seven years. The owner of Italian-styled Villa Gusto in Bright, Victoria, McLaren takes participants in his 14-day Gusto Sud Tour on a colourful journey through regions such as Calabria and Sicily (including Savoca, where scenes from The Godfather were shot) between mid-June and late September. The tour, with a maximum of 14 participants, also includes Naples and the Amalfi Coast, with lunches and dinners, wine tastings, cooking classes and market tours. From \$9500 a person twin-share, including meals, accommodation and coach transport. McLaren is accepting bookings for 2013; More: villagusto.com.au (<http://villagusto.com.au>).

Unless stated otherwise, international flights are not included in tour prices.