



SPOTLIGHT ON: CULINARY TOURISM PG2



Photo courtesy of Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) / Heather Goodman

A monthly update including relevant information on travel industry trends, consumer and meetings market research, competitive intelligence, and Hawai'i's performance as a destination.

MARKET INSIGHTS UPDATE

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Culinary Tourism

It is one of life's interesting contradictions that food is simultaneously a basic necessity while also being a vehicle for cultural and individual expression. From its place at the center of family gatherings to its unique ability to express regional identities, cuisine and culture go hand in hand. Food is, simply put, an essential and universal part of the human experience.

In this light, it is perhaps not at all surprising that "culinary tourism" has exploded as a travel trend in the past few years. After all, the growing desire for unique, local, and authentic travel experiences has been well-documented and culinary travel is but a natural extension of this "experiential" revolution.

What is somewhat surprising is the extent to which this interest plays out. Travelers are not just interested in how food tastes. They often want to experience how the food is made and consumed, following its journey from farm to table.

Hawai'i of course is no stranger to unique, authentic, and delicious local cuisine. Success in culinary tourism takes more than just tasty food. Strong branding and savvy social media chops are also must-haves. This month's *Market Insights Update (MIU)* turns a critical eye toward this foodie travel trend and parses out what it means for the next generation of Hawai'i visitors.

Continued on PG2



Airfare Update

The average round-trip airfare from the U.S. Mainland to Hawai'i declined in the second quarter of 2018, due to increased capacity and competition between carriers.

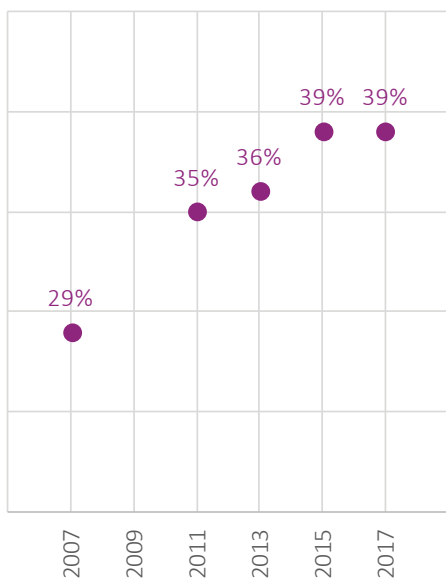
PG4





Culinary Tourism

Percent of U.S. Travelers who Take an Overseas Vacation to Indulge in Food and Wine



Source: TravelStyles USA 2018 Report

The Foodie Invasion

It is hard to overstate how much foodies—those travelers with a particular affection for good food and wine—have grown as a travel segment in the past decade. In 2007, less than three-in-ten U.S. overseas travelers considered themselves to be foodies. By 2017, that share had grown to nearly four-in-ten, and there is every indication that it will keep on climbing still. Foodie-ism is no idle claim, either; it directly and significantly impacts travel decisions. For example, one out of every nine U.S. travelers (and 19% of self-identified foodies) chose their most recent international destination based largely or entirely on the food.

With that said, culinary tourism goes beyond simply eating. Contemporary foodies are looking to partake in the entire food experience. Seven out of ten foodies (versus 57% of all overseas travelers) expressed a desire to visit a food market where they could interact with vendors and sample their local products. Two-thirds indicated they wanted to dine at a food truck or experience similarly authentic street fare. Going out even further, some 39 percent of foodies said they

wanted to experience food at its source by visiting a local farm or plantation.

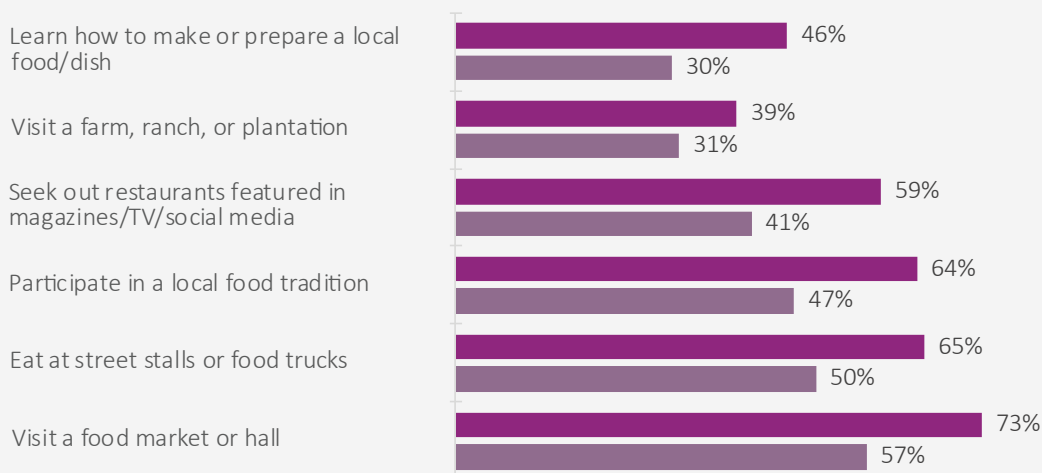
The benefits of culinary tourism are not restricted to the food-service industry, either. Foodies are about fifty percent more likely than the typical overseas traveler to view a vacation as a unique opportunity to engage and connect with local people and culture. Destinations that capture the foodie market can leverage that appeal to sell niche tours and authentic local activities that define experiential/transformational travel.

Finally, it is worth noting that culinary tourism is not the only factor at play here. Everyone has to eat at some point, and U.S. air leisure travelers are much more likely than their counterparts to visit a high-end restaurant during their trip. How much more likely? According to TravelTrack-America, a full one-third of U.S. air leisure travelers ate at a fine dining establishment during their last trip, compared to just 14 percent of the population at large. All of this is to say that a healthy restaurant scene adds to the broad-spectrum appeal of a destination whether they are deliberately marketing to the foodie scene or not.

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Top Food-Related Travel Activities

■ FOODIES ■ ALL TRAVELERS



Source: TravelStyles USA 2018 Report

Culinary Hawai'i

As a destination, Hawai'i has played this surging interest in culinary travel perfectly. *Poke* has taken the mainland by storm, with the number of such restaurants growing five-fold since 2011. The cumulative effect of this rich cultural and culinary identity has been the expansion of Hawai'i's brand as a destination, and these efforts are paying off. In Resonance Consultancy's 2018 Best Cities report, for instance, Honolulu took home the top spot in the Small Cities rankings in no small part due to its culinary achievements. To quote the report's authors, "Authenticity and locavorism are table stakes in Honolulu these days, and the city is better for prioritizing sustainability and food security, strengthening the local supply chain, creating thousands of new jobs and—more important to visiting palates—delivering intense, fresh flavors only made possible by farm-to-table that doesn't involve a side trip in a cargo airliner."

Part of the culinary appeal of Hawai'i is that locally grown food truly is unique. Hawai'i farms and farmers markets offer options that simply are not available fresh on the mainland -- coffee, chocolate, and a wide variety of tropical fruit for starters.

Toss in the fact that the islands' unique agricultural environment necessitates a heavy emphasis on sustainability and it becomes clear that Hawai'i has something to offer every type of modern foodie.

It also important to remember that, while they are undoubtedly essential, great food and sustainability are only part of the culinary tourism equation. Success also hinges on a strong understanding of how people make their food-related choices. First and foremost, restaurant selection is often a last-minute affair, at least relative to other travel decisions. As such, a robust, accessible, and inviting digital presence is a must. Case in point, 2016 saw more than half of all U.S. visitors report using social media to help find a restaurant or make reservations. Nearly 60 percent used a mobile app to do the same. That is not to say digital marketing is the only effective marketing; those lucky restaurants that secure a television episode's spotlight certainly reap the benefits, particularly among the hard-core foodie crowd. The fact remains, though, in a world as dynamic and fickle as the food service industry, it is those businesses who keep pace with the changes that win out.

As long as the food is good.



Sources: HVCB analysis of TravelStyles USA 2018 Report, Resonance 2018 Best Cities Report

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Photo courtesy of HTA / Heather Goodman

Airfare Update

Sneak Peek at Next Month



Spotlight On:
2019 Travel Industry Outlook



Competitor Update

Round-trip airfares from the U.S. Mainland to Hawai‘i declined considerably in the second quarter of 2018, driven in large part by the addition of air seats. Overall, the average round-trip fare from the mainland fell -11 percent. Lower prices were seen across most major gateways, though they were more pronounced in West Coast

gateway cities where the increased competition was the strongest.

These competitive fares as well as a record number of additional seats contributed to an increase of new visitor arrivals observed throughout the year. It is likely that fares will stabilize and perhaps even resume upward growth as we move into 2019.

Average Round-Trip Airfare from U.S. Mainland to Hawai‘i Q2 2018

