



EXPLORE TRAVEL BAG

»» JUST BACK FROM:

Just Back From... Portugal with Christopher Collins

Christopher and Melissa Collins (left) with Shari and Cannon Whitby (right) of Shamrock Foods at Chez Croissant, right; aged beef tartare at O Frade, below



“ LOVE WHAT I DO, I think, more than any human being on this planet,” chef Christopher Collins says. Collins owns more than eight restaurants in the Valley under his Common Ground Culinary hospitality group, and has been in the restaurant business his entire life. So, when local food-service company Shamrock Foods’ owners offered him a trip to Portugal in October – a token of gratitude for their long partnership – experiencing the local cuisine was top of mind. Collins says he went in with no expectations, but fell in love with the delicious food, old-school architecture and friendly people. “I didn’t know Portugal was going to be like this, and I left away just beaming,” he says.

BELCANTO
Collins had high hopes for Lisbon’s two-Michelin-star restaurant Belcanto, and he wasn’t disappointed. As a child, Belcanto chef-owner José Avillez got yelled at for wiping his mouth on his sleeves. That experience inspired his unconventional dessert served on a napkin: a pig-shaped ice cream sandwich with prosciutto and crumbly popcorn. “Sweets don’t have to be the single composition of the dish,” Collins says of the salty and savory dessert. [belcanto.pt/en](#)

O FRADE
Collins and his wife usually plan their trips methodically, but in Lisbon, they went off script. They stumbled upon O Frade on a walk in the Belém neighborhood, and their minds were blown. “It turned out to be the best experience in the entire trip,” Collins says. He noticed duck rice on the menu at most restaurants on the trip, a hearty meal of rice cooked in duck fat and broth. “It’s just a

hip thing that a lot of the chefs are doing in Portugal.” O Frade’s version was the best he tried. [fraderestaurante.com](#)

CHEZ CROISSANT
No European vacation is complete without some form of bread. According to Collins, Lisbon is “a big pastry city.” Beyond the country’s famed pastéis de nata, he loved the croissants at Chez Croissant, which were filled with Brie, walnuts and honey. [chezcroissant.pt/en](#)

EXPLORING VIA CAR
Collins also enjoyed sailing in the Lisbon Harbor and attending a ball with performers from all over the world. But his favorite part of the trip was driving around with his wife, taking a break from life’s chaos. “We didn’t have anywhere to go, didn’t have anywhere to be,” Collins says. “It was just us, cruising around the country.”

— Eleri Mosier

NEW AROUND TOWN

BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON

Just across Lake Washington from Seattle, the tony, techie enclave of Bellevue is building one of the most walkable – and accessible – globally minded food scenes in the Pacific Northwest.

ACCLAIMED CULINARY TRAIL

Stretching roughly half a mile through downtown Bellevue, the Acclaimed Culinary Trail packs a serious punch into a compact footprint. Within minutes, diners can move between James Beard Award-winning chefs, Michelin-recognized tasting menus and internationally celebrated restaurants. The trail reflects how tapped in the city is to international cuisine, where refined Japanese omakase, elevated Chinese cuisine and Pacific Northwest-driven menus sit side by side.

ACCESSIBLE RECREATION

Bellevue offers inclusive travel with kayaking on Lake Washington, barrier-reduced trails, paved adaptive hikes and even an adaptive zipline course. Now a Wheel the World Certified Destination, the city features more than 55 verified businesses and wheelchair charging stations throughout its parks and trailheads, making outdoor adventure seamless for people of all abilities.

INTERCONTINENTAL SEATTLE BELLEVUE

The first InterContinental in the area brings five-star polish to the Eastside. Anchoring Avenue Bellevue, the hotel pairs residential-style suites, art and wellness experiences with floor-to-ceiling views. It’s just steps from Bellevue Square and the culinary trail, with easy access to nature excursions.

— Kasturi Tale



PHOTOS COURTESY CHRISTOPHER COLLINS, VISIT BELLEVUE WASHINGTON

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