

TravelLife

WINTER 2022

Delicious Detours

OUR CULINARY TRAVEL COLLECTION

SPECIAL FEATURE

Let's Go
Florida!

CONTRIBUTORS

We asked some of our contributors about a meal (or meals) they've had in their travels they feel is well worth going back for.



PARM PARMAR

FROM BEAN TO BAR, PAGE 36

While I've had many memorable meals in my travels, the dishes I've enjoyed in the Veneto region have all been particularly exceptional, including radicchio in a creamy sauce with crumbled pancetta, risotto simmered in well-seasoned chicken broth and lamb-filled agnolotti. In any place you visit in Veneto (capital of Venice), a glass of Prosecco is poured before the conversation begins. It doesn't get more civilized than this and I'm ready to visit all over again.



NICOLE SERVINIS

THE MANY FLAVOURS OF BAJA SUR, PAGE 28;
FALLING IN LOVE WITH LORETO, PAGE 40

In my recent travels, the most delicious and memorable meal I had was in Loreto—trigger fish and scallops we enjoyed minutes after we caught them. Aside from the obvious freshness, the way our guides prepared and cooked them over an open fire on the beach, combined with the fresh tomatoes, onions and herbs, made for a unique, tasty and unforgettable experience.



MARK STEVENS

SUN, SAND, SEA-AND SONG, PAGE 56

After searching for Louisiana's best gumbo on a recent New Orleans trip, I found it at the Gumbo Shop in the French Quarter. Consistently rated NOLA's best by locals, this delectable concoction with a side of jambalaya proved them to be spot-on. I shall return.

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COVER PHOTO:

Courtesy of Chef Edgar Núñez at María Dolores Restaurant where the motto of transmitting an authentic love for Mexico offers a new appreciation of the Mexican cuisine evolution and the secrets from its ancestral techniques.

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From Bean to Bar

Chocolate tourism flourishes in Saint Lucia

BY PARM PARMAR

Cocoa beans at Emerald Farm Jade Resort

“Pound, pound, pound those nibs,” says our instructor Merle, from Hotel Chocolat’s Project Chocolat. Merle takes over my colleague’s chocolate pounding because he’s slow and we need to turn these cocoa nibs into liquid pronto. The mortar and pestle is hot and eventually even after switching hands, our arms hurt. Eventually liquid is achieved and we add cocoa butter and castor sugar (so it blends smoothly). How much sugar you add determines how sweet your chocolate is. The liquid is then poured into a mould for setting and creating a 60 per cent cocoa chocolate bar to take home.

Earlier we tasted our very first chocolate lunch in Project Chocolate’s cafeteria-style restaurant. You pick and choose from fish, chocolate chicken wings, hamburgers and much more. Every item incorporates some form of chocolate. My eyes kept wandering over to the dessert selections—ice creams, brownies, hot chocolate drinks laced with liquor. I settled for the rich ice cream sundae with caramel, chocolate swirls and cookie crumbs. If only licking dishes in public was acceptable!

On a tour of Project Chocolat farm (situated on the 250-year-old Rabot Estate cacao plantation), we see young cocoa trees, vegetables and plants grown on the property. We learn how cocoa beans are fermented, dried and turned into nibs for chocolate.

At the end we graft our very own cocoa plant, which we name “Merle Pound.”

Chocolate has been cultivated in Saint Lucia since the 1700’s but was pushed aside when more profitable sugar cane plantations sprung up fueling the economic coffers of European owners. Later, banana trees replaced sugar cane crop until the 1990’s, when this profitable trade collapsed. It was at this time farmers turned back to cocoa farming.

Saint Lucia’s volcanic soil and annual rainfall provided the ideal conditions for growing cacao. In the past, cocoa beans (cacao as the bean is called here) were shipped to Europe and the United States, specifically to the Hershey factory. Today, a good portion of the bean supply is kept back for local use. The cocoa industry is flourishing and has strong backing from the government.

Our second chocolate making experience occurs in Belvedere, Canaries. Cacao Sainte Lucie owner, Maria Jackson started chocolate making at her home and launched her business in 2011. Now expanded to a brick and mortar shop, she stocks chocolate-infused pastries, truffles, bars and other treats. Jackson establishes partnerships with small local farmers to source her beans while at the same time providing advice on what is needed to grow and harvest healthy beans.





Koko chocolate products by Yvonne



Merle, from Project Chocolat



Emerald Farm



Chef Allen



At the shop, Jackson conducts chocolate-making workshops. We start our session with a cup of cocoa tea, made from a shaved chocolate stick boiled in water with a variety of spices—nutmeg, cinnamon, vanilla—then milk is added.

In this class, liquid chocolate is prepared and it's our job to temper it on a clean marble table. By tempering with a pastry handle we bring the temperature down to 29 degrees Celsius. The mixture is then poured into moulds and we decorate with our toppings of choice. Holding on to our precious bar bundles we leave the shop with smiles.

I quickly came to realize that most pastry chefs at the island's luxury hotels are well

versed in the art of chocolate making. On return to our room at Sugar Beach, A Viceroy Resort, a tray of house made chocolates awaits.

Guests of Jade Mountain or Anse Chastanet can also book an excursion to visit Emerald Farm, where a thousand cocoa trees provide cocoa beans for Jade Mountain's chocolate production. We visit the chocolate lab to see how chocolate is used in desserts, gourmet chocolates and bars.

If you visit Saint Lucia without a chocolate making or tasting session, then you've missed one of the top tourism experiences on the Island.