

COLUMNS

Culinary cultural immersion a foodie-forward travel trend

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Breakfast at Casa Dos Cisnes at Puerto Vallarta in Mexico

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Whether for adventure travel or more relaxing respites, travelers are increasingly seeking regionally authentic itineraries that offer an intimate view of local cultures.

In fact, reports show the trend of being "connoisseurs of local culture" will boom this year. Indigenous tourism and cultural immersion experiences especially those with culinary components are white hot.

Food for thought

For culturally and culinary-minded meanderers, food tourism has evolved into a mission critical travel consideration.

Exemplifying this is data from Venngage underscoring the importance of food in travel, revealing that more than a third of tourism spending is devoted to food.

In fact, nearly three-fourths of millennials 69.4 percent are "food and cuisine driven travelers," according to a Destination Analysts, Inc. study, which also revealed baby boomers are like-minded at 62.7 percent.



Interestingly, this foodie-driven travel trend is being bolstered by the private villa vacation sector, specifically, with many such residences surpassing leading luxe resorts relative to authentic epicurean experiences in addition to accommodations and amenities.

The bespoke breed of private villa vacation rentals have become the ultimate "virtual vacation" indulgence for leisure and business travelers, alike.

One private villa exemplifying this experience is Casa Dos Cisnes Puerto Vallarta's foremost premier private oceanfront villa. This 10,000-square-foot property, a five-bedroom colonial style home with breathtaking views of the Pacific, goes over-and-above to ensure each gastro-guest's needs, desires and expectations for an extraordinary, foodie-forward private villa vacation are fulfilled.

This includes custom gourmet meals prepared on-site by a dedicated five-star private chef specializing in Mexican-contemporary cuisine, served in an elegant separate dining room which seats up to 12.

The private gourmet chef also prepares what this villa calls a "Magical Mexican Fiesta" a lively evening of regional food, cocktails and Mexican musicians entertaining at the property. This is available to guests in addition to three full meals a day plus snack and happy hour service, which can be served in the dining room or the separate dining terraces at the main and pool levels.



A dining table set at the Casa Dos Cisnes villa in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico

But the baroque benefits of Casa Dos Cisnes far exceed these epicurean exploits, as its bevy of other premium amenitiesavailed in an authentic and stylishly-appointed residential settinginclude 24/7 bilingual butler service and multiple staff, monitored security, housecleaning services, private infinity-edge ocean view pool, fully equipped state-of-the-art gym, large media-entertainment room, concierge and spa service, musicians for hire, sports and boating excursions, and VIP treatment at the city's leading beach club and most renowned restaurants.

Given that guests enjoy complete privacy and security in the most exclusive residential area in Puerto Vallarta, commandeering the entire 10,000-square-foot space with all of the relaxation, solitude and discretion that affords, the result is a remarkable culinary and luxury living vacation experience.

While gourmet private chef-prepared meals, maximized privacy and security, uber-tailored guest service and five-star accommodations and amenities are chief reasons the trend toward private villa lodging is exploding, an elite few such as Casa Dos Cisnes have offerings far beyond that do not just rival, but far exceed, those offered by high-end resorts, including those elite Penthouse suites.

Aye aye

Private villa residences offering first class, one-of-a-kind services are ushering in an entirely new era of bespoke hospitality around the globe. They are, in fact, single-handedly setting a new and decidedly elevated standard for luxe travel worldwide.

Another facet of food tourism helping drive demand for regionally authentic itineraries is the escalation of artificial intelligence (AI)a tech trend that will continue to evolve at a rapid pace.

According to Advito's 2017 Industry Forecast, AI has already enabled a range of applications, bots and software that makes it easier for industry purveyors to interact with travelers and diners at every step of a trip to expedite, ease and enhance the experience at every touch point.

AI automates computer processes to work in the same way as the human brain. Natural language processing (NLP) helps computers understand human speech or typing, and AI then applies machine learning to provide a useful response.

In the food and beverage realm, travelers are increasingly relying on AI. Many already use conversational voice-driven platforms such as Google's AI personal assistance or iPhone's Siri function to research and arrange dining plans, winery tours, festival attendance and more foodie fun all over the world.

Throngs of AI-equipped smart-device apps are available for suggestions, streamlined reservation bookings and other assists such as on-demand intelligence on that boutique wine label or locavore food ingredient with which you are not familiar.

Advito reveals that the travel industry is "well-positioned to embrace AI," and also that the wider travel industry is adopting the technology.

"AI is still in its infancy, but it is in our immediate future," the report asserts. "As it develops, it will help simplify complex travel decisions, shorten the buying process and deliver a more personalized offering."

WITH THE WORLD economy poised to regain momentum and the penchant among consumers to spend on experiences such as travel and gourmet food and wine rather than goods like clothes and accessories, the future is tasty for the hospitality trade.



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