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Discover your taste
for travel through the mouth-watering
cuisine of Greece, Italy, France,
and Belgium.

Eat YOUR WAY ACROSS EUROPE

BY GINGER TAGGART

Perhaps nothing can incite one's desire for travel like anticipation of the world's most renowned delicacies. Consider immersing yourself in the exotic spices of the Orient, the garlic-laden smells of an Italian kitchen, or the caloric masterpieces filling the windows of a Parisian patisserie. Such culinary hallmarks often are the most-savored memories of an international adventure.

The rich diversity of European fare provides a feast for any traveler. Within a relatively short geographical distance, it's easy to discover countless specialties available for any meal of the day. Let your stomach become your guide as you explore some of Europe's best destinations on your own culinary adventure.

Breakfast: Greek Coffee and Cheese Pie in Athens

Start your day in the birthplace of civilization and stroll among the ancient ruins of the Agora where Socrates and Plato once roamed, discussing philosophy. Cited as the origin for democracy, Athens provides a haunting glimpse into the foundations of today's modern world.

Enjoy your breakfast under the shadow of the Acropolis at one of the many Greek tavernas in the Plaka—the old district of Athens. Within walking distance of the Agora, this tourism mecca marvelously mixes old and new. Juxtaposed against the ruins of the Tower of the Winds and Hadrian's Library is a maze of twisting streets. Within these passages, visitors will find numerous open-air, vine-covered restaurants

and shops flanked with owners twirling traditional worry beads as they encourage would-be shoppers to step inside.

Move over Seattle because Greece is a coffee lover's dream. In addition to the traditional Greek coffee, national specialties are the frappé and freddo—tall, whipped coffees drunk throughout the day. For breakfast, add a traditional cheese pie (tyropita) or a tasty Greek yogurt and honey mixture that is also offered as dessert.

After your meal, climb to the Acropolis and give your eyes a visual feast as you take in the Parthenon and the archaeological treasures within



A CHOCOLATE LOVER'S GUIDE TO BELGIUM

Chocoholics unite! What better way to end your culinary quest than with a dessert of delectable chocolate? And there's no better place to submit to this craving than in a country with centuries of chocolate legacy. Belgium produces 172,000 tons of chocolate each year and has 2,130 chocolate shops in the country. How's that to satisfy a craving? So, indulge like a professional. Here are a few tips to up your chocolate-lover's IQ:

BEST PLACE TO INDULGE: Surround yourself with the splendor of the Grand-Place in Brussels and sample from the flagship stores of the country's famous brands such as Neuhaus and Godiva, the latter of which offers more than 80 varieties in each store.

DON'T MISS IT: The Belgian Museum of Cocoa and Chocolate in Brussels offers something for the chocoholic in everyone. A visit highlights the different production phases of chocolate-making and includes free tasting.

Located just off the Grand-Place, the museum is open daily except Mondays. Also visit the Choco Story in scenic Bruges, which highlights the history of chocolate in this must-see charming town, sometimes called "the Venice of the North" due to its many canals.

HISTORY FUN FACT: While the debate may continue regarding preference between Swiss and Belgian chocolate, did you know that it all started in Belgium? In 1697 the mayor of Zurich discovered chocolate on the Grand-Place in Brussels and decided to introduce it to Switzerland.

COOLEST NEW CHOCOLATE TREND: For an indulgent way to enjoy cold, refreshing chocolate, try the new Chocolixir line launched by Godiva in May 2005. The decadent beverage, blended with real Godiva chocolate and made to order each time, comes in three flavors: Dark Chocolate Decadence, Milk Chocolate Latte, and White Chocolate Raspberry. Mmm . . .

—G. T.



Pizzeria Brandi is the birthplace of the famous Pizza Margherita.

the Acropolis museum. Be sure to see the Odeion of Herodes Atticus, a 5,000-seat outdoor amphitheater built in 161 B.C. and still used today. For longer visits to Greece, marvel at the sunset on the cliffs of Sounion (Poseidon's Temple), trek to mysterious Delphi, once considered the center of the world, or find adventure on one of the stunning Greek islands.

Lunch: Pizza in Naples

As you leave Greece behind, follow in the footsteps of its ancient explorers to Italy's largest port, which the Greeks named Neapolis (New City) in the sixth century B.C.

The vibrant ambiance of this seaside city reflects its colorful and tumultuous past. Offering a mix of galleries, ruins, and restaurants, Naples is also close to historic sites such as Pompeii, which was devastated by the explosion of Mount Vesuvius in A.D. 79.

If the modern-day rumbling you feel is hunger pains, head to Pizzeria Brandi, which has graced its city-center location for more than 225 years. Founded in 1780, this pizzeria is the birthplace of the Pizza Margherita—a classic Italian specialty that mixes red tomato sauce, white mozzarella cheese, and green basil leaves as toppings. This patriotic pizza—designed to highlight the colors of the Italian flag—was first created in 1889 for the royal visit of King Umberto I and Queen Margherita and was so adored by the queen that it was later named after her. In fact,

Pizzeria Brandi still displays the royal thank you letter for that first pizza, dated 1889!

After treating your taste buds to this historic experience, explore the second-century catacombs of San Gennaro or visit the Castel dell'Ovo (Egg's Castle), which derives its name from a medieval legend of a wizard who buried an egg within the castle and warned the locals to beware of the day the shell cracked.

To discover Athens and Naples in one fabulous vacation, consider a Grand Mediterranean or Greek Isles 12-day cruise on Princess Cruises, which stops in both destinations along with other ports of call. Ask your Carlson Wagonlit Travel expert about early booking discounts for upcoming voyages.

Dinner: Wine and Dine in Bordeaux

Commanding historic and cultural offerings as rich as its cuisine, Bordeaux has given its name to one of the oldest wine regions in France—a region often

acclaimed as the wine capital of the world.

Nestled among the city's 18th-century architecture and scenic waterways, Bordeaux offers more than 50 sites, museums, and monuments (several listed as UNESCO World Heritage

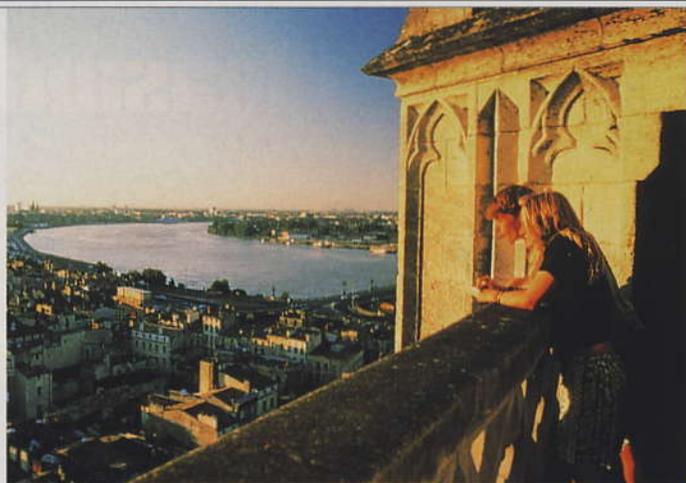
Sites) in addition to a myriad of art, sporting, and musical events creating a series of cultural aperitifs for the region's main attraction.

At the heart of a visit to Bordeaux lies the desire to indulge in its gastronomical delights. More than one

Bordeaux is home to more than 12,000 wine estates.

thousand restaurants grace the city with specialties including regional foie gras, escargots, suckling Pauillac lamb, and traditional canelé dessert. But the centerpiece of the region remains its acres of rolling vineyards and distinctive wine chateaux.

The best way to explore the more than 12,000 wine



Relax and enjoy Bordeaux's many cultural and historic sites.

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF THE BORDEAUX TOURIST OFFICE



PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF ALAIN BENOT

estates and visit legendary districts such as Saint-Emilion and Médoc is to take one of the tours offered by the Bordeaux Tourist Information Office, which also offers wine tasting seminars every Thursday. Other options include a day at the Ecole du Vin (School of Wine) for instructive tasting and chateaux tours. Visitors can also pay homage to the region's famous grapes

at the Musée des Vins de Bordeaux (Bordeaux Wine Museum) in the city center. To help you explore the best of France, your Carlson Wagonlit Travel expert can book you on an escorted tour by Globus or Cosmos, whose 15-day highlight tours include Bordeaux, Paris, Normandy, Provence, the Loire Valley, and the French Riviera. Bon appétit! □

the insider

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