

# Chocolate TOURISM

People have been traveling the world for fine wine, beer, food, and other diversions for years. Why not chocolate?

With a growing number of health benefits being attributed to dark chocolate, an increasing number of chocolate lovers are wondering where they can find the best chocolate, how cocoa is grown and processed, and how handcrafted chocolate is made. And they don't just want to read about it: They want to experience it.

It's no wonder! The 2000 movie *Chocolat*, starring Juliette Binoche and Johnny Depp, put a certain sexiness on the screen that forever changed the way

we think and feel about chocolate. Who wouldn't want to have that same sensual experience eating a delectable handcrafted chocolate made just for us?

But the thing about fresh chocolate is that it has a very short life span—just one to three weeks for fresh truffles, and up to three months for most filled chocolates. So chocolate lovers are being encouraged to travel the world and eat chocolate at its source, where it's fresher, more exotic, and deliciously enticing.

Many cities and destinations are adding to the chocolate lover's experience by offering chocolate spa treatments and chocolate attractions and accommodations that will create lasting memories for any

red-blooded chocolate lover. Imagine having your entire body slathered in warm, molten chocolate made from locally grown aromatic cocoa. You can have that experience if you visit Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica, and make an appointment at the Pure Jungle Spa.

Travelers not wanting to wander so far could still have an equally seductive experience, as a growing number of American and Canadian spas are adding chocolate treatments such as scrubs, body wraps, and facials to their menus. The Hershey Chocolate Resort and Spa in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and Ste. Anne's Spa in Grafton, Ontario, Canada, are just a couple of examples.



Peruvian children welcome chocolate travellers along La Ruta Del Cacao.


## A Decadent New Niche

By Doreen Pendgracs

And for the adventurous travelers who want to go straight to the source, chocolate lovers can book visits to cocoa farms and even stay with cocoa farmers and help with the harvest.

Chocolate is not just for eating anymore. There are fashion shows in Paris where the haute couture is adorned with chocolate bonbons. There are chocolate art shows where visual art is inspired by the sensuality of chocolate, and chocolate is used to create sculptures and three-dimensional art.

How about riding the “Swiss Chocolate Train?” Switzerland is way out in front when it comes to organized chocolate tours, and has created a memorable trip on a historic train to take chocolate lovers from Montreux to Gruyères. All aboard for one sweet ride!

This is just the tip of the chocolate-covered iceberg. Chocolate travel—or chocolatourism—is the new niche, and I’m happy to be one of the drivers. 

Doreen Pendgracs is author of the award-winning book *Chocolatour: A Quest for the World’s Best Chocolate*. In volume I of *Chocolatour*, Pendgracs takes readers to Europe and the UK for chocolate tastings and events, and to cocoa growing regions of Peru, Ecuador, and St. Lucia, for insights into how cocoa is grown and processed. Find Pendgracs and her book at [chocolatour.net](http://chocolatour.net) and on Amazon. Read more about the pleasures of chocolate travel at [diversionswithdoreen.com](http://diversionswithdoreen.com).



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