

TRAVEL

Tour News: Spirits in Japan, Food in Maine

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In Transit

SAMPLING SPIRITS IN JAPAN

By SHIVANI VORA

With the new “[Spirits of Japan Tour](#)” from the travel company [Zicasso](#), travelers get a firsthand look at some of the country’s top producers. The 12-day itinerary covers the cities of Tokyo, Takayama, Kanazawa, Kyoto and Osaka and includes tours of sake breweries that date as far back as the 1600s in Kyoto and Takayama; visits to two of Osaka’s leading beer breweries, Asahi and Minoh Brewery, known for its stouts and porters; and a visit to Suntory Yamazaki Distillery on the outskirts of Kyoto, famous for its single malt whisky. Non-spirit excursions are also part of the trip, including dinner at the three-Michelin-star Sukiyaabashi Jiro in Tokyo and a temple and architecture tour of ancient Kyoto. Prices from \$6,990 including accommodations, a 14-day Japan Rail pass, transfers, guided tours and some meals.



Cakebread Cellars in Rutherford, Calif. Terrance McCarthy

TOURS WITH A TASTE OF MAINE

Maine has a thriving culinary scene, and with the 11 walking tours from [Maine Foodie Tours](#), visitors and locals alike can get a flavor of what the destination has to offer. The walks are available in Portland, Bar Harbor, Kennebunkport and Rockland; they are each between two and four hours long and include stops at locally owned restaurants, breweries and food producers. Pamela Laksey, the founder, and her staff lead the walks like the one through Portland’s Old Port to sample New England clam chowder, lobster mac and cheese, and potato doughnuts. A new addition this year is a culinary tour of Rockland, a city in the state’s northeast, where participants can try craft beers, Italian sausages from a local farmer and wines made from Maine-grown blueberries. Prices from \$32. Portland tours are year-round, while the others run from June to Oct. 31.

IN ROME, NEW ASSUNTA MADRE RESTAURANTS

[Assunta Madre](#), in Rome's Campo dei Fiori neighborhood, is regarded as one of the best places in the city to enjoy fresh, simply prepared seafood. Now, the owner Gianni Micalusi is expanding his brand. A location in London's Mayfair neighborhood opened last year, and two more are coming: one in Milan's Piazza Repubblica, debuting Oct. 8, and another at the end of November in Barcelona on Passeig de Gracia, the city's main thoroughfare. The menus at all four branches only serve fish found in the Mediterranean such as sea bream, octopus and perch, and while Mr. Micalusi says that he has always wanted to have restaurants in other cities, he likely won't add more locations. "People eat at Assunta Madre because they know that the seafood is the highest quality and incredibly fresh, and I want to make sure to be able to maintain that standard, which is difficult to do with too many places," he said.

CELEBRATING HARVEST SEASON IN CALIFORNIA WINE COUNTRY

Harvest season in California's Napa Valley runs from mid-August to mid-October, and [Cakebread Cellars](#) in the town of Rutherford has a series of [events](#) planned during this festive time of year. The activities include a tour of the half-acre produce garden with the head gardener Anton Ginella, where guests are encouraged to sample fresh fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes and strawberries; culinary classes followed by a meal paired with wine, including one featuring comfort food; and several options for tastings like the one of five Cakebread reserve wines. Activities start at \$15.