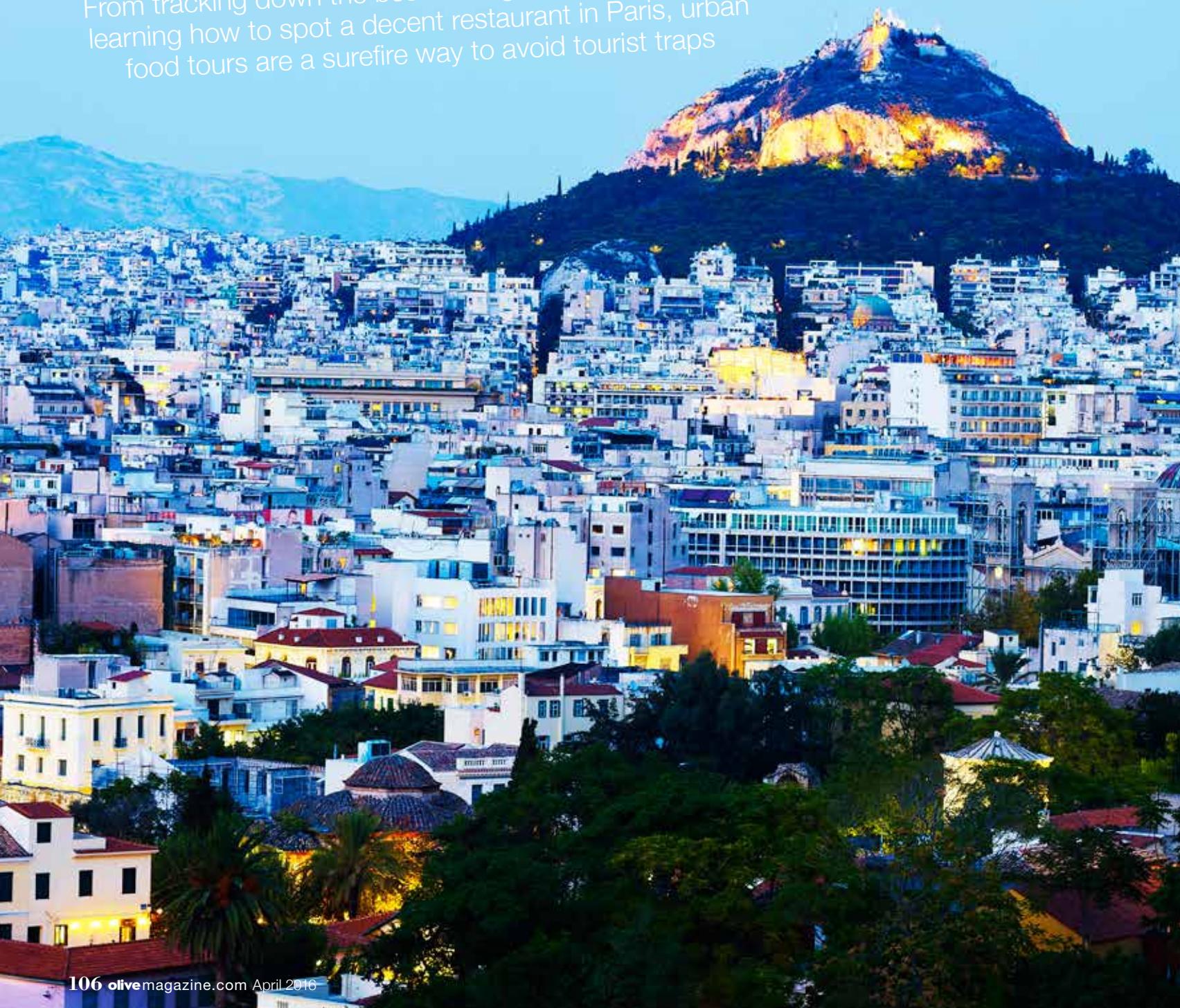


# WELCOME TO THE 'HOOD

From tracking down the best meringues in Melbourne to learning how to spot a decent restaurant in Paris, urban food tours are a surefire way to avoid tourist traps



PHOTOGRAPHS: MARK READ/LONELY PLANET TRAVELLER MAGAZINE; REINHARD SCHMID/4CORNERS; GETTY IMAGES; AUDREY GILLAN



## ATHENS

The Greek capital is famous for its souvlaki stalls, which sell cheap kebabs for when you're on the hop, but it is a city packed with must-eats that tourists rarely discover, unless they book a Culinary Backstreets tour. On these, local chef Carolina Doriti leads small groups to some of the lesser-known highlights of Athens' food scene. From doughnut balls soaked in syrup and sprinkled with sesame seeds and cinnamon to traditional Greek coffee, made 'at hovoli' – in warm sand – at café Mokka ([mokka.gr](http://mokka.gr)), most local favourites are covered. Then there's a detour to unearth the city's best souvlaki (kebabs), and a stop at Carolina's preferred cheese shop, an

atmospheric time warp that's just celebrated its 100th birthday. Plus there are pit stops to buy wild mountain herbs on Evripidou Street.

**DON'T MISS:** Athens' Central Market. Here, Carolina points out the best fish, fresh pork and ripe tomatoes before zooming in on a tiny stall selling herb sausage patties with salad, olives and glasses of tsipouro, a brandy-like drink. Carnivores will love Ta karamanlidika tou Fani, whose name means 'cold cuts and delicacies', where you can enjoy just that by ordering a platter of sausages, meats and pastourma – cured meat coated with paprika, fenugreek and garlic ([karamanlidika.gr](http://karamanlidika.gr)).

### WHERE TO EAT & DRINK AFTER

**THE TOUR:** To Triantafilo tis Nostimias is a lunchtime-only taverna specialising in seafood



(Lekka 22, 00 30 210 322 7298). It's worth returning the following day to take a seat and share plates of fava (broad-bean dip) and zohi (boiled wild greens) alongside anchovies, sardines and calamari. If you're still hungry, refer to your copy of *Culinary Backstreets' Athens: An Eater's Guide to the City* – it's a local food bible and all participants get one.

**HOW TO DO IT:** Culinary Secrets of Downtown Athens 5½ hour tours cost £93pp, including everything eaten and drunk along the way ([culinarybackstreets.com](http://culinarybackstreets.com)). Return flights from various UK airports to Athens start from around £60 ([easyJet.com](http://easyJet.com)). Double rooms at Athens Hilton cost from £163, b&b ([hiltonathens.gr](http://hiltonathens.gr)).

**MORE INFO:** [visitgreece.gr](http://visitgreece.gr) »



## MELBOURNE

For anyone with a sweet tooth, Queenies' Sweet Dreams food tour is a must – as is a trip to Melbourne, where high-end confectioners and pastry chefs have created a major new food trend. Last-course-only restaurants like Om Nom (*omnom.kitchen*) are increasingly popular, some of the world's best chocolatiers are here (make time for a visit to chocolate brewer Mörk, *morkchocolate.com.au*), and people even go on dessert dates. Is there a better philosophy by which to live than the one decorating the window of pudding restaurant LuxBite (*luxbite.com.au*), the first stop on the tour? 'Life is uncertain. Eat dessert first.'

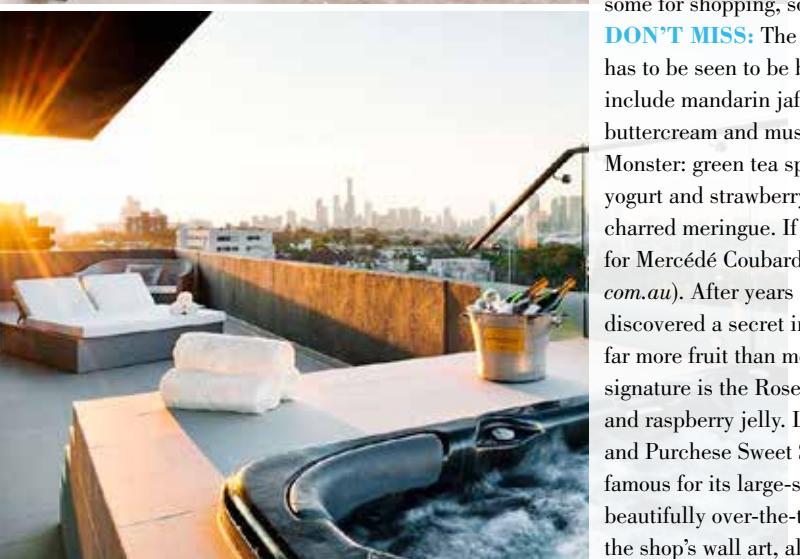
Andrew Prior founded Queenies' after taking part in *MasterChef* in 2013, as an alternative to returning to his former, corporate, life. The Sweet Dreams tour is one of four small-group food trips he leads around the city, and includes five sugar-laced stop-offs in the up-and-coming South Yarra neighbourhood – some for shopping, some for eating.

**DON'T MISS:** The seven-layer lolly cake at LuxBite has to be seen to be believed – its wafer-thin layers include mandarin jaffa ganache, spearmint leaf buttercream and musk mallow. Or try a Meringue Monster: green tea sponge, pistachio, watermelon yogurt and strawberry mousse all wrapped in softly charred meringue. If you love macarons, leave room for Mercédé Coubard's beauties at A La Folie (*alafolie.com.au*). After years of experimentation she has discovered a secret ingredient which allows her to add far more fruit than most macaron recipes allow; her signature is the Rose Delight, with orange blossom and raspberry jelly. Like a posh Willy Wonka, Burch and Purchese Sweet Studio (*burchandpurchese.com*) is famous for its large-scale edible installations and beautifully over-the-top wedding cakes – check out the shop's wall art, all made entirely from sugar.

### WHERE TO EAT & DRINK AFTER THE TOUR

**THE TOUR:** Cross the Yarra River into neighbouring Richmond and grab a seat at Kong BBQ (*kongbbq.com.au*). One of Prior's favourite restaurants, it's loud, achingly hip, and has a no-bookings policy, but it serves the best short ribs in town (with pine nut ssamjang and daikon kimchi). Or go for soft-shell crab with salted duck egg relish, wood-roasted sweet potato with wakame butter and a pile of Korean fried chicken wings.

**HOW TO DO IT:** Queenies' three-hour Sweet Dreams walking food-tours cost £45pp (*queeniesfoodtours.melbourne*). Return flights from Heathrow to Melbourne with Malaysia Airlines start at £875 (*malaysiaairlines.com*). Rooms at the Olsen Hotel, decorated with original works by artist John Olsen, start at £120, b&b (*artserieshotels.com.au/olsen*). **MORE INFO:** [visitmelbourne.com](http://visitmelbourne.com)



## LISBON

It's easy to make a pig of yourself 'at the pork place', aka Manteigaria Silva, where shelves of spiced, cured and smoked porcine produce fill the cabinets of this 100-year-old deli. Delivered to port-barrel tables out front: plates of requeijão (ricotta), marmelada (quince paste) with delicate dried figs and silken slices of 24-month-cured presunto (aged ham) from Portugal's Barrancos region.

Having started the day with a shot of ginginha (sour cherry brandy) at the eponymous, neighbouring bar, you might welcome these gourmet stomach-liners, but there's more to come.

These are just two of many stop-offs on a new, two-hour walking tour hosted by Lisbon's

Inspira Santa Marta Hotel, themed around petiscos, the Portuguese answer to tapas. These aren't just the 'small plates' of the worldwide bar-snack type, but rather an excuse to graze or to dine with friends on deli dishes or half portions. Hosted by local food experts from *Eat Portugal*, these bespoke tours are a great introduction to Lisbon's affordable food scene.

**DON'T MISS:** Lisbon's recently revamped Mercado da Ribeira may have hipster food trucks, but the pretty 1930s Mercado de Campo de Ourique stocks a no-nonsense range of Portuguese goods; look out for classic pasteis de nata (custard tarts) from Pasteleria Aloma (*mercadodecampodeourique.pt*).

### WHERE TO EAT & DRINK AFTER THE TOUR

**THE TOUR:** The flaming chorizo is the fiery standout on the small but perfectly formed menu at Dona Quiteria. This teeny bistro, in a 19th-century grocer's, is a cool new addition to a residential hilltop overlooking the Cais do Sodré nightlife district. Garlicky gambas and delicate bacalhau are also a must (*instagram.com/dona\_quiteria*).

**HOW TO DO IT:** Return flights from Heathrow, Gatwick and Manchester to Lisbon cost from £121 (*flytap.com*). Inspira Santa Marta Hotel offers petiscos tour packages for €548 for two people, including two nights' b&b and a guided petiscos tour (*inspirahotels.com*).

**MORE INFO:** [visitlisboa.com](http://visitlisboa.com) »



## Malmö

Matkaravan's ('food caravan') food tours were originally set up to help Swedes navigate the exotic and unfamiliar ingredients of the ethnic food stores and stalls around the city's Möllevången square. Still based in the same vibrant area, the focus has shifted over the years to include more local ingredients, Swedish food history and current food trends. **DON'T MISS:** As Sweden's youngest and most multicultural city, Malmö has a dynamic food scene and the tour's passionate guides Lena Ilkjær and Linda Dahl lead visitors to gems such as Söder om Småland, a hop-head's

paradise where you can sample locally brewed sour beer ([twitter.com/soderom](http://twitter.com/soderom)), and Söderberg & Sara for the best cardamom buns in town ([soderbergsara.se](http://soderbergsara.se)). At cheese shop Möllans Ost, taste creamy, astringent tommaprusrulle goat's cheese rolled in vine ash from Österlen and sweet, nutty skåne alp cheese, perfectly paired with local rosehip marmalade ([mollansost.com](http://mollansost.com)).

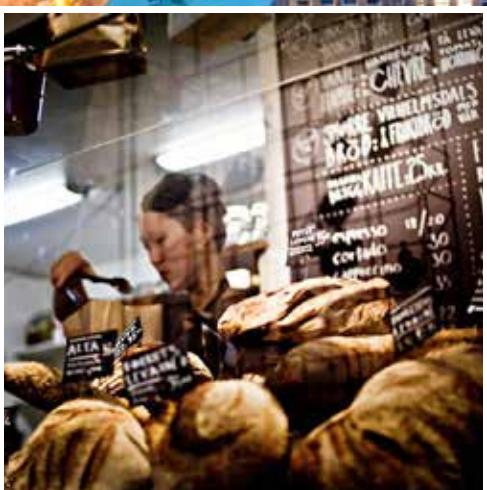
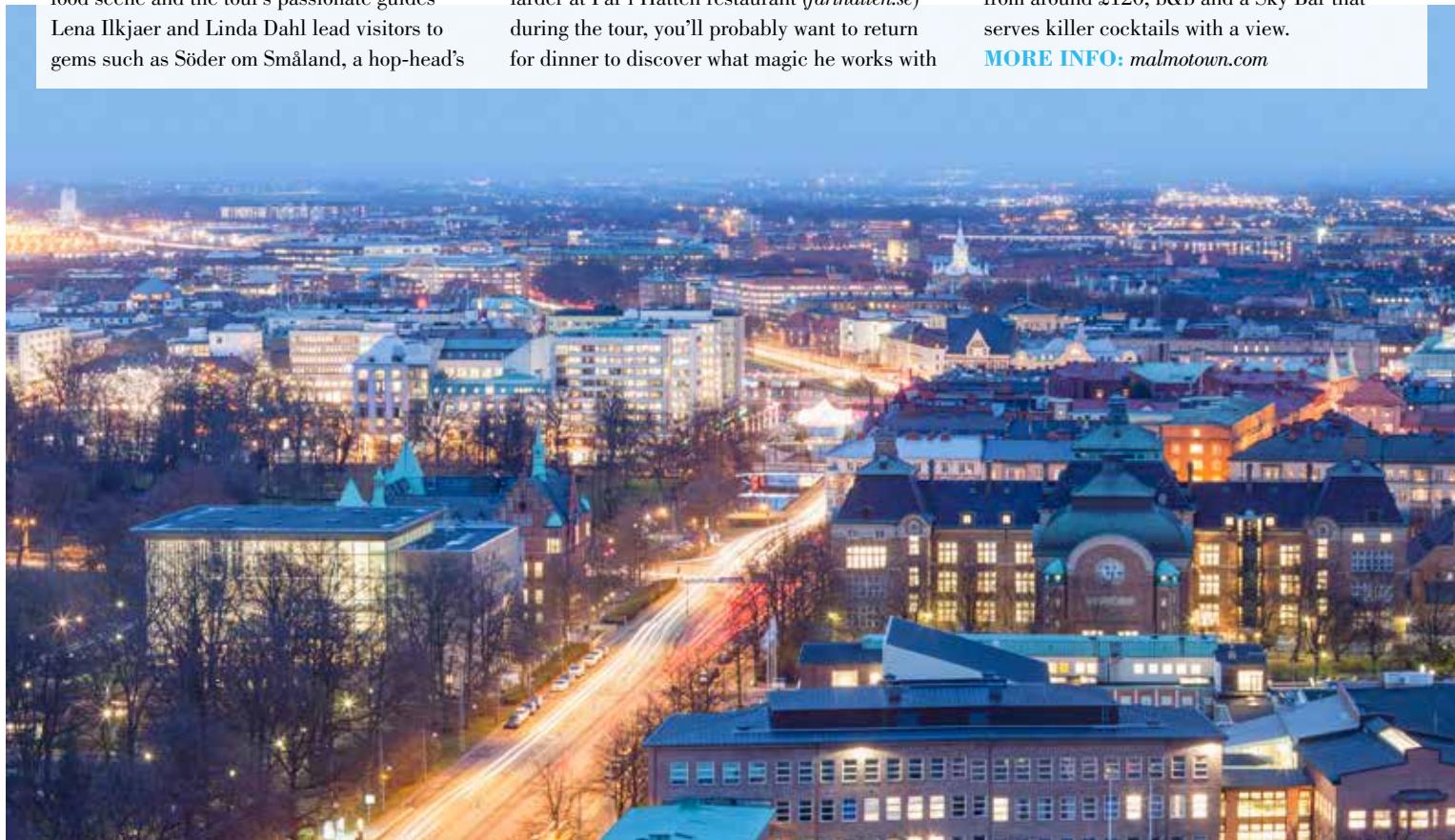
### WHERE TO EAT & DRINK AFTER THE TOUR:

If you've been lucky enough to have enjoyed a poke around chef Simon Lennblad's larder at Far i Hatten restaurant ([farihatten.se](http://farihatten.se)) during the tour, you'll probably want to return for dinner to discover what magic he works with

foraged ingredients such as dried pikeperch liver and meadowsweet cordial. Skilled cooking, with a modern edge and a dash of humour, it's very Malmö.

**HOW TO DO IT:** Two-hour food tours with Matkaravan cost from £30pp; tailor-made tours in English can also be arranged ([matkaravan.com](http://matkaravan.com)). Return flights from Gatwick to Malmö Sturup cost from £145 ([norwegian.com](http://norwegian.com)). The recently opened Clarion and Congress Malmö Live hotel ([nordicchoicehotels.com](http://nordicchoicehotels.com)) has double rooms from around £120, b&b and a Sky Bar that serves killer cocktails with a view.

**MORE INFO:** [malmotown.com](http://malmotown.com)



PHOTOGRAPHS: ALAMY; WORDS: TATTY GOOD

## PARIS

Montmartre is one of Paris' iconic districts, with well-trodden tourist routes that rarely give much insight into how the local residents live or eat. A three-hour Secret Food Tour, however, unlocks another side of Montmartre, showing you where to shop for food and wine, where to eat out and leaving you with all manner of insider tips, including why a baguette is made to be torn and not cut.

The tours are guided by P.J. (Pierre Jean), a knowledgeable bon vivant of truly awesome French-ness, beret and all. He is an absolute hoot, giving an impromptu lecture on how to buy good-value, good-quality wine by drawing a map on a cardboard box, peppering the day with historical anecdotes (from his own political perspective) and explaining how the layout of

the streets makes Paris the city it is. He will also do his best to get you to eat chocolate, macarons, cheese, pork belly, saucisson and more chocolate before lunch. Then it's off to a local park for a picnic bought from the shops you've just visited and more mini lectures on charcuterie, wine and how to eat like a French person (shop every day, know your shopkeepers). Montmartre is five minutes from the Eurostar terminal at Gare du Nord so a perfect day trip from the UK. Just don't eat breakfast before you start; you'll barely be able to move by the end of the tour as it is.

**DON'T MISS:** The chance to retrace your steps and do a bit of shopping on your own afterwards. You'll visit at least one patisserie, butcher, boulangerie, creperie, chocolate shop, and wine shop and it won't be until you've sampled everything that you will be able to decide what will be best to take home.

**WHERE TO EAT & DRINK AFTER THE TOUR:** Naming names would spoil the secret but, as you tootle around Montmartre, you'll learn how to spot a good French restaurant. The gospel according to P.J. is that the venue should make its money by selling food, not wine (unless wine is what you're after), should have a blackboard with specials and no more than 40-50 covers. Look out for places embellished with pink Le Bonbon window stickers. Distributed by the local newspaper, they're a sign of local approval; if you want to do more research before you go, you can look up some of the places listed on its website ([lebonbon.fr](http://lebonbon.fr)).

**HOW TO DO IT:** One-day Secret Food Tours of Paris cost €89pp ([secretfoodtours.com](http://secretfoodtours.com)). Return Eurostar fares from London to Paris cost from £58 ([eurostar.com](http://eurostar.com)).

**MORE INFO:** [paris.info](http://paris.info)

