



THE BLOG

Featuring fresh takes and real-time analysis from HuffPost's signature lineup of contributors

HOT ON THE BLOG

Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., M.B.A. Geoffrey R. Stone Dr. Peggy Drexler Jim Wallis



Brette Sember Become a fan Author, former attorney, mediator, and divorce expert

Gluten-Free Travel: Finding Local Specialties

Posted: 02/27/2015 4:51 pm EST | Updated: 02/27/2015 4:59 pm EST

Like 22, Share 6, Tweet 20, Pin it 0, Comment 2



ADVERTISEMENT



If you have a gluten intolerance or celiac disease, travel may seem nearly impossible. It's hard enough to find food you can eat at the grocery store at home or at the few local restaurants you trust. Heading out into the great unknown and putting your health in other people's hands for the duration of a trip may seem like a risk you can't take. I was diagnosed as gluten intolerant almost three years ago and travel is one of the things I love most. Since my diagnosis, I've been to multiple locations in the Caribbean, U.S., and Europe and have learned how to find food that is not only safe, but wonderful.

One of the joys of traveling is enjoying food that is unique to the region. When you can't eat gluten, this places many things off-limits and can suck a lot of the joy out of food tourism. Not only are a lot of specialties made with gluten, but if a food is unfamiliar to you, you may not have any idea if it normally contains gluten. Despite this, it's possible to find and enjoy amazing local favorites that are gluten-free. My finest example is the gluten-free éclair I enjoyed in Paris. I'm planning a trip to New Orleans and have already located a source for gluten-free beignets. Here's how to enjoy local delicacies while staying healthy on your travels.

- Determine how gluten-free friendly your destination is. Is gluten an ingredient that is routinely recognized? Ireland is a gluten-free paradise since many people in this area of the world are [celiac](#). Menus routinely list gluten-free items and any server you ask will understand. At the opposite side of the spectrum, I found it very difficult to communicate in French St. Maarten where most servers were puzzled by my requests and I was served several dishes I chose not to eat because I didn't feel I could trust them. If you're going someplace where you anticipate problems, you know to pack safe food and seek out fresh produce while there to supplement your restaurant meals. A hotel kitchenette can be your best insurance in these situations.

- Find out what the food specialties are of the region or city you will be visiting with some serious Googling. Determine which dishes, products, and foods are native to the area or traditional for the people who live there. What do people go there to eat? What do the locals eat? What foods are associated with holidays or events unique to the region?

- Once you know the local favorites, find out what their ingredients are. I was pleased to learn that cassava bread, a specialty in the Caribbean, is made without any gluten, so it pays to investigate ingredients since some things that sound off limits may end up being safe.

SUGGESTED FOR YOU

[The Mistake You're Almost Definitely Making With Scrambled Eggs](#)



[Why William Shatner Can't Attend Leonard Nimoy's Funeral](#)



[Sean Penn May Have Ruined The Entire Oscars With Incredibly Insensitive Comment](#)



[A Day At Disney's Magic Kingdom Will Now Cost You \\$105](#)



- Search out stores, bakeries, and restaurants that carry local specialties made without gluten. Google is your friend for this, but so is the concierge at your hotel, your innkeeper, or people you meet at gluten free restaurants and bakeries. In Bermuda a taxi driver pointed me towards a restaurant that had many gluten-free dishes, so it pays to talk to as many people as possible about gluten-free foods. There are some gluten-free restaurant guides for specific cities you can buy. Many large cities and regions also have web sites that review and recommend gluten-free restaurants and stores.

- Call restaurants. High-end restaurants in particular may be able to specially prepare local dishes for you without gluten if you call in advance. If you don't speak the language, ask someone at your hotel to call for you. In a tiny town in Normandy, France where almost no one spoke English, we happened upon a hotel clerk from the U.S. who called one of her favorite restaurants in advance to ask them to prepare a meal for us. It was one of the best meals we had in France.

- Ask questions. Even if you're fairly certain something is safe, don't assume anything. I learned that almost all the restaurants in Bermuda somehow use gluten in their Hollandaise sauce (which traditionally should be made only with butter, egg, and lemon). Always explain your situation to your server (use pre-made cards to communicate in other languages). Asking the right questions can not only protect you, but may pleasantly surprise you. A river rafting excursion we took in Jackson Hole had an included sandwich lunch with gluten-free bread as an option. If I hadn't asked, I would have eaten one of my emergency Kind bars instead and missed out on a wonderful lunch.

Brette Sember is a cookbook author and travel writer. She is the author of [The Gluten-Free Guide to Travel](#). Her web site is [BretteSember.com](#).

Follow Brette Sember on Twitter: www.twitter.com/BretteSember

MORE: [Gluten Free](#), [Gluten Intolerance](#), [Gluten Free Diet](#), [Celiac Disease](#), [Celiac](#), [Gluten Sensitivity](#), [Food](#)



Stephen Hawking: This Could 'Destroy Us All'



5 Famous Onscreen Couples Who Didn't Like Each Other In Real Life



'Birdman' Director Responds To Sean Penn's 'Green Card' Comment

