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TOURS & TRAVELS

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• A MEAL TO • REMEMBER

From eating dishes freshly cooked in a volcano to dining on delicacies 16 feet above ground, here's a look at some eating-out options that should be on any foodie's bucket list. **By Tania Bhattacharya**



Roller-coasters deliver your meal at 's Baggers in Nuremberg



Eat on a tree at Soneva Kiri in Thailand

Once upon a time, eating crocodile or cobra meat or deep-fried scorpions would lead people to bow before you in reverence. But you don't qualify as a die-hard foodie anymore unless you've had a fully fledged meal in the dark or dined on a volcano.

These experiences will leave you breathless and truly appreciative of the more nuanced aspects of what you put in your mouth.

Location is everything and might threaten to dilute a gastronomic experience, if it's gorgeous enough. Often, however, it merely

complements the exotic fare on offer. Enter Ithaa at the Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, the world's first undersea all-glass restaurant, nestled among coral reef in the Indian Ocean at a depth of 16 feet. Old hat maybe, but *New York Daily News* recently called it the world's most beautiful restaurant, and why not? The aura of the restaurant is almost movie-like with all kinds of marine life on display. Add to that a seven-course set menu, which includes dishes such as malossol imperial caviar with sour cream and potato blinis, Maldivian lobster carpaccio with reef fish tartare and poached quail egg with passion fruit

dressings, and you're all set for a meal to remember.

A different experience in luxury is dining in a plush pod in the trees, and Soneva Kiri in Thailand offers just that. Guests board the rattan pod, which is then hoisted 16 feet above the ground, while the host zip-lines to your table with food. The menu follows jungle themes such as Forager's Basket and Woodland Offerings and the chef whips up your meal using fresh organic and local produce.

But, if the adventurer in you is asking for more, give eating on a volcano or in mid-air a shot. El Diablo, which stands out in the Martian landscape of the

Pictures courtesy Sarah Johnson and supplied



Dive into delicacies with Dinner in The Sky, which is run by Fun Group. It hosts up to 22 people



Try egg gruyère at Paul Pairet's restaurant Ultraviolet

London, O'Noir in Montreal, where all waiters are visually impaired, and unsicht-Bar in Berlin, the largest dark restaurant globally, have assuredly set a unique trend.

Multisensory experiences

But more exciting aspects of the concept are fast emerging. The iconic Roca Brothers of Spain, for example, took the trend to a new level with their culinary opera El Somni, and

chefs around the world are offering diners the opportunity to experience gastronomic heaven through scintillating digital immersions.

Take, for instance, Ultraviolet, a ten-seater restaurant in Shanghai by Paul Pairet, which attempts to unite food with multisensory technology to create a fully immersive dining experience. Flashy pop-kitschy interiors and psycho-taste rule the roost here, with projections, sound, music, hot and cold air and scent enhancing each dish.

Automated restaurants make for interesting dining experiences as well. At 's Baggers Restaurant in Nuremberg, you place your order through touchscreen menus and the food slides down roller-coaster-like metal tracks to the tables. On the other hand, you're served by dancing robots at Hajime Robot Restaurant in Bangkok.

Of course, there are more varieties of crazy experiences on offer, from dining in caves and tasting menus consisting of cutting-edge food or dishes made with just one ingredient.

But these will give you a head start and, possibly, the momentum you need to look for more.



Eat with the fishes, literally, at the Conrad Maldives Rangali Island, the undersea restaurant

Timanfaya National Park in the Canary Islands, serves authentic Canarian food barbecued on a grill built with nine layers of volcanic basalt rock. The geothermal heat emanating from the volcano cooks the meat, poultry and fish.

A meal in the sky is imminently enjoyable. Christened Dinner in the Sky and operated by Fun Group, it's hosted at a table for 22 people suspended 50 metres above the ground. It began a tour in Europe in April and will continue until September.

But, for a dinner that you'll end up

talking about for years, keep a tab on The Cube, which has so far appeared on top of monuments in London, Stockholm, Brussels and Milan. A pop-up restaurant created by Electrolux, it provides sweeping views of the city you're dining in, The Cube hosts dazzling meals prepared by the world's best chefs.

Dark fantasies

Eating in the dark reigns in the world of multisensory dining, and places such as Dans Le Noir? in

On the spot
Try The Cube for an unforgettable pop-up restaurant experience