

The Eight Best Cities For Vegans

The destinations with the most dynamic vegan scenes might surprise you. From Warsaw to Seoul, we investigate the top eight cities for plant-based dining.

By Liz Dodd



In Warsaw, veganism goes hand in hand with political activism, and wholefood co-ops and cafes are a great way into Poland's counterculture.

Photograph by Getty Images

We're living in a time when vegan food has never been easier to find — with even big brands like McDonald's and KFC getting in on the trend. But it takes more than a couple of fast-food joints for a city to stand out as a real vegan hotspot.

In Bangkok, Buddhist food is spilling out of temples and into Michelin-starred restaurants, while in Bengaluru, cashew milk is proving perfect for blending into creamy, vegan curries. With

plant-based culinary innovation happening all over the world, we look at eight of the most vibrant and creative dining scenes.

1. Warsaw, Poland

This multi-faceted city is one of the top vegan-friendly cities in Europe, and the district of Śródmieście Południowe (Southern Downtown) has become the epicentre of plant-based dining. What began as a hipster food culture based around meat-free burgers has grown into a nuanced scene, as vegan ramen bars jostle for space with vegan bakeries, sushi restaurants and Polish diners. Veganism here often goes hand in hand with political activism, and Warsaw's wholefood co-ops and cafes are a great way into Poland's counterculture.

Must-try: Vegan pierogi at [Vege Miasto](#) (23 zlotys/£4.51 for eight)

2. Bengaluru, India

India's answer to Silicon Valley is a unique destination for vegans, thanks to a heady blend of Hindu vegetarian culture and a wellness craze drummed up by the city's young crowd of international tech entrepreneurs. Mock meat is out for religious reasons, and dairy-replacement imports are pricey. So, Bengaluru's vegans blend their own milk and cheese from cashews to add creamy textures to dhals, create new curries based on heritage grains like millet, and craft syrupy desserts from dates. Visit V V Puram Food Street, the rambunctious market where monks fill up on snacks such as dosas (remember to ask for no ghee, a ubiquitous cooking ingredient made from clarified butter).

Must-try: Palak tofu at [Carrots](#) (280 rupees/£2.80)



Vegan cheese pizza with tofu and house sauce at Carrots restaurant, Bengaluru.

Photograph by Hajrad Ahmad

3. Bangkok, Thailand

Like many things in Thailand's frenetic capital, Bangkok's vegan scene is split across two extremes. At one end, fine dining: upmarket restaurants that sit among skyscrapers are putting a Thai spin on plant-based meals, so you can nibble mushroom larb at Michelin-starred [80/20](#) or tuck into shiso (a herb in the mint family) sorbet at [Mia](#). Alternatively, head to the bustling 'je' (religious vegetarian food) stalls around Buddhist temples to try soy-based 'fishballs' and 'shrimp'. The annual vegetarian festival is another reason to visit.

Must-try: Chia seed pad thai at [Broccoli Revolution](#), a vegan cafe that's a local favourite (160 baht/£3.90)

4. Dublin, Ireland

The pace at which Ireland's vegan scene has grown over the past few years is extraordinary, and while Cork and Galway are worthy competitors, Dublin steals the show. Ranked among the most vegan-friendly cities in the world, it eschews light, California-style dishes for the kind of food that will warm you on a walk along the River Liffey. Standouts include cauliflower, fennel tofu and wakame pie at [Cornucopia](#) and home-grown baked potatoes with battered sausage and curry sauce from takeaway restaurant [McGuinness](#). Vegan bakery [Buttercream Dream](#) and [Sova Vegan Butcher](#) should also be on your radar.

Must-try: The vegan set menu at [The Merrion Hotel Dublin](#), showcasing locally grown fruit and veg (€39/£34.70)

5. Madrid, Spain

One of the real pleasures of vegan travel is cracking a city whose food culture seems impossibly meat- or fish-heavy. Forget any preconceptions you have about Spanish cuisine: Madrid's vegan scene is a treasure trove of tapas joints and tortilla restaurants, slow food and street food. [B13 Bar](#) is the place to go for plant-based takes on traditional dishes, including potato omelette and patatas bravas with vegan aioli; [Crucina](#) for fine dining and a raw food menu; and [Mad Mad Vegan](#) for casual nibbles such as vegan calamari. The coffeeshop and bakery scene is also glorious.

Must-try: 'Steak tartare' — made using pea protein — at [La Tía Carlota](#) (€15.90/£14.90)



Madrid's B13 Bar offers plant-based takes on traditional dishes, including patatas bravas with vegan aioli.

Photograph by Getty Images

6. Toronto, Canada

Canada's largest city is a haven for vegans, with a handful of designated vegan districts, of which the most famous is [Vegandale](#): a city block that's home to animal-free restaurants, a vegan brewery and ethical clothes shops. The focus here at is on burgers, pizza and other plant-based fast food; elsewhere, Toronto's vegans are experimenting with world food and fine dining — smart [Rosalinda Restaurant](#), in the heart of the finance district, does great modern Canadian cuisine. The city also plays host to some of North America's biggest vegetarian food festivals, including [Veg Food Fest](#).

Must-try: Shrimp po' boy at [Bar Vegandale](#) (C\$15/£8.60)

7. Seoul, South Korea

Temple food is the main focus of South Korea's thriving vegan scene. [Sanchon's](#) 16-course menu offers a variety of dishes within this cuisine, while [Maji](#) (which, unlike Sanchon, excludes garlic, onion and the other 'pungent vegetables' forbidden to monks) is a diminutive locals' place with lots of character. Most exciting of all, though, are the new plant-based startups, which preserve all the vibrancy and flavour of new Korean cooking without adding shrimp paste to their kimchi. [Maru JaYeonSik Kimbap](#) has cornered the vegan street food market.

Must-try: Traditional set lunch menu at Maji (10,000 won/£6.61)

8. Kyoto, Japan

Traditional Japanese vegan food is an art form. Flavours and elements are balanced like instruments in a symphony: pickled and sweet, bitter and umami-rich, it's composed to nourish both body and soul. Shojin ryori is the name for 'temple cuisine', but while it's typically vegan, it's wise to clearly specify your preference for the chef to not use fish stock or eggs. Kyoto, the city of temples, is where it flourishes; it's famous for its delicate tofu and yuba (tofu skin), eaten kaiseki style (across numerous courses). But it's not all temples and tradition: you'll also find chic vegan ramen bar TowZen.

Must-try: The shojin ryori banquet at [Shigetsu](#), the restaurant inside Tenryuji Temple Shigetsu (from ¥3,300/£23)

Source: National Geographic