

MY TRAVELS: FERGUS HENDERSON

Architect-turned-chef **Fergus Henderson** is the pioneer of modern British 'nose to tail' cooking. His two London restaurants, St John and St John Bread & Wine, have generated two books and a Michelin star. Henderson is a central figure in east London's arts community as well as an active campaigner for Parkinson's charities.

FAVOURITE JOURNEY

I love taking the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry from Oban to the Hebrides, because it means I'm on my way to my favourite place for the summer holidays. In a perfect world I'd travel everywhere in the dining car of a train. The sense of movement while eating is very satisfying; the crazy way they insist on silver service on a wobbly train. Sadly, in the UK, the dining car is disappearing.

Airplane food is another thing all together. I can't resist it, but don't really eat much of it. Fortunately I fly much more comfortably than I used to but this means the food has aspirations that possibly it shouldn't. There's a particular flavour to the chocolate mousse on planes that I'm rather taken with. The real secret of a long flight is gin.

FAVOURITE CITIES FOR DINING

I go straight to the Spotted Pig when I go to New York. After the first Campari and white wine I feel I've arrived and of course April Bloomfield's food is delicious. In the same way, when I arrive in Paris I go to Le Rubis for lunch: tete d' veau and chilled Brouilly. Restaurants

are amazing ways into a city; they are touchstones for the tummy. There is something fantastic about your first lunch in a city.

I love the Chinese food in London. Dumplings are great for the kids. There are graduations of dim sum: Yauatcha and Hakkasan, then the Royal China. The turnip paste dumplings at Yauatcha are sublime. I had the wildest thing at the Royal China, delicious crab cooked in vinegar and egg white, but I really go there for dumplings.

I like visiting Bar Italia in Soho in the morning, when it still has a nice gentle atmosphere. You can go for a coffee, bump into friends, and it can turn into a very long and jolly day. My favourite stretch in Soho is what I think of as the 'dangerous one', Dean Street's Groucho, Quo Vadis and Jerry's, where things can go on very late.

FAVOURITE CITIES FOR ARCHITECTURE

The excitement of the first view of Manhattan is always a moment of delight; Florence standing in the courtyard of Brunelleschi's Ospedale dei Innocenti made me think 'this is pretty good why don't you become an architect?'; the centre of Glasgow always gives me a thrill.

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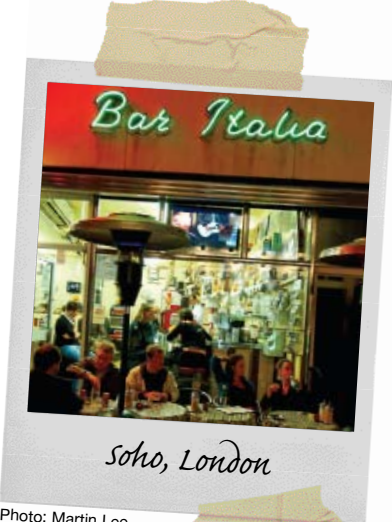


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Soho in London is on a good scale; it's really just four streets, and very manageable. Centrepoint has become very attractive in a strange way, it's found itself. The writing on top; it's a real beacon that building. In London you must look up, we never look up enough in London.

I think the seafood restaurant Sweetings, in the City of London, which only opens for lunch during the week, represents a lesson for any architect. In real life there is chaos and there should be chaos in buildings. The problem is that if you try it in a building it becomes trite and dull very quickly. Sweetings is a lesson in space.



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Paley's

'AMAZINGLY, PIGS' HEADS, BONE MARROW AND OX HEART GO DOWN VERY WELL IN NEW YORK CITY.'

You sit at counters around the sides of the room and you put your orders in and they yell it over to a runner who hands it back to the waiter. It's a ritual and it works but, if you designed it, it wouldn't work; you need to 'catch it'.

FAVOURITE PLACES TO COOK

Working with American chefs has been a treat and a joy. I must say they are helpful to an extreme. Alice Walters let me do a night at Chez Panisse, which felt very grown up. I visited Paley's Place in Portland as part of a game festival, so got to grapple with elk and bison tongue; things you don't run into every day.

The third Fergustock event took place in New York in October and I cooked at April and Ken Friedman's new restaurant, the Breslin, at the Ace Hotel. My memory is so bad that I'm not quite sure how it all first came about but amazingly pigs' heads, bone marrow and ox heart go down very well in New York City.

MOST UNUSUAL MEAL WHILE TRAVELLING

For the TV show Could You Eat an Elephant?, Jeremy Lee and I went travelling in search of unusual meals and had cobra washed down with bile vodka in Hanoi. Then there was brandy made with gecko and sea horse. Particularly unusual was the serving of crinkle cut chips with the snake. All good!

NEXT JOURNEY

I'm going to Estonia, which should be very cold and exciting. ■



Manhattan



St John Bread & Wine

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Ace Hotel: New York

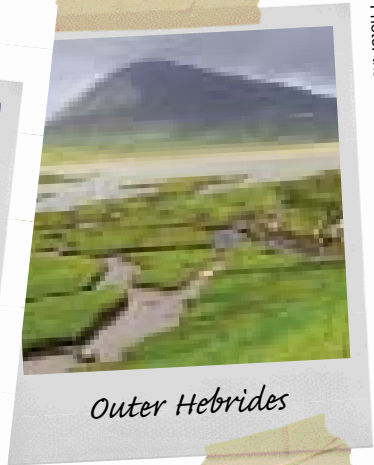


Dim sum at Hakkasan

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My next trip: Estonia



Outer Hebrides

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