

Los Angeles Times

Go Away With ... Seamus Mullen



Celebrity chef Seamus Mullen says his travel bucket list includes South Africa and Eastern Australia. (Daghan Perker)

By **Jae-Ha Kim, Tribune Content Agency**

Celebrity Travel by Jae-Ha Kim

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The author of "Real Food Heals: Eat to Feel Younger and Stronger Every Day" (Avery, \$35), Seamus Mullen was also a finalist on the Food Network series, "The Next Iron Chef." Based out of Brooklyn, New York, Mullen has been able to marry his love of cooking and traveling by pairing up with DuVine Cycling + Adventure Co.'s "Chef on Wheels" tours through Italy. Fans may stay in touch with Mullen via Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/seamusmullen/>) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/SeamusMullen>).

Q. What is your favorite vacation destination?

A. While I do like going back to places I love, there is nothing more amazing than discovering new places. I'm not so good at the lay around and do nothing vacations, so most of my trips are very active. For outdoor water activities, I love going back to Hawaii. I just got back from a quick trip to the Mani Peninsula. It was an incredibly wild and beautiful part of the world with rugged, untamed severe cliffs falling away to hidden coves and undiscovered beaches. I would go back in a heartbeat.

Q. What untapped destination should people know about?

A. Pantelleria. It's a small island off the coast of Tunisia that's actually considered part of Sicily. It's a remarkable, remote and wild island in the middle of the Mediterranean. The landscape is unlike any other and the waters are as pristine as they get. Sicily, in general, is an amazing and often overlooked part of Italy. I (recently) got back from a week of cycling with DuVine Cycling + Adventure Co. through the southeast of Sicily and it's the real-deal Italian experience. Cycling through this destination is an incredible way to see the culture. It has some of the most amazing food and landscapes I've ever experienced.

Q. What was the first trip you took as a child?

A. Car camping trip through the United Kingdom. I remember the flight being awful on a cheap charter plane. But once we got to London, I was so excited to explore and see so many new things. I loved exploring castles and ruins. We drove from London to the Lakes District in Scotland, stopping and camping along the way. I remember it raining for most of the trip, but I didn't care. I was so excited to be in a foreign place.

Q. What's the most important thing you've learned from your travels?

A. To be curious, to ask questions, to smile, to make an effort. Even if I don't speak the language, showing an interest in local culture, local cuisine and local history goes a long way in making friends. I've also learned to appreciate wherever I am for its own beauty and not to try to compare it to other places. I try to stop myself from saying, "This looks just like..." because each place is unique and, in reality, it doesn't look just like any other place.

Q. Where are your favorite weekend getaways?

A. I tend to go away for trips longer than a quick weekend, but if I were to say one place, close to New York City that can easily be reached in a weekend, I would say my home state of Vermont. It's well worth the drive. I was just there last weekend and in 45 minutes I saw a moose, a bear and tons of deer. It's still a wild and beautiful place.

Q. When you go away, what are some of your must-have items?

A. I always travel with my iPad, a good set of noise-canceling headphones, my supplements to stay healthy and avoid jet lag and compression socks. I never fly without them. In addition to being an important safety precaution, they reduce jet lag by increasing circulation.

Q. What would be your dream trip?

A. I would really love to do an around-the-world trip by motorcycle. Many years ago, I spent six months riding my motorcycle and camping from San Francisco to Panama and back. It was an amazing experience, traveling slowly, drinking it all in. If I found a magical place that I loved, I would stay for a while without the pressure of having to get to the next place. I would love to travel through Europe, Africa, South America, Asia and then back to the States by motorcycle.

Q. What is your best and/or worst vacation memory?

A. My worst vacation memory? Probably when my motorcycle broke down in Acapulco and I had to spend a week there trying to get spare parts shipped from the U.S. The city was once a great tourist destination that now has not aged well. My best memory? So many, but a favorite was cooking a huge Italian feast on the island of Pantelleria with new friends we just met. We bought fish from two fishermen right off their boat as they were coming into the docks and we cooked an amazing, endless, dinner outside beneath the stars with the silhouette of Tunisia in the distance. It was the stuff travel fantasies are made of -- the kind of meal you only see in movies.

(Jae-Ha Kim is a New York Times bestselling author and travel writer. You can respond to this column by visiting her website at www.jaehakim.com. You may also follow "Go Away With..." on Twitter at [@GoAwayWithJae](https://twitter.com/GoAwayWithJae) where Jae-Ha Kim welcomes your questions and comments.)

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