



## Gastronomic West Country

'The best larder in all of Europe'

**20–26 September 2021 (MH 904)**

7 days • £3,260

Lecturer: Marc Millon

Encompasses both a study of artisan food and drink production and outstanding restaurants.

Michael Caines MBE, holder of two Michelin stars for 18 years, has devised a menu specially for this tour.

Takes place among some of the loveliest landscapes in Britain.

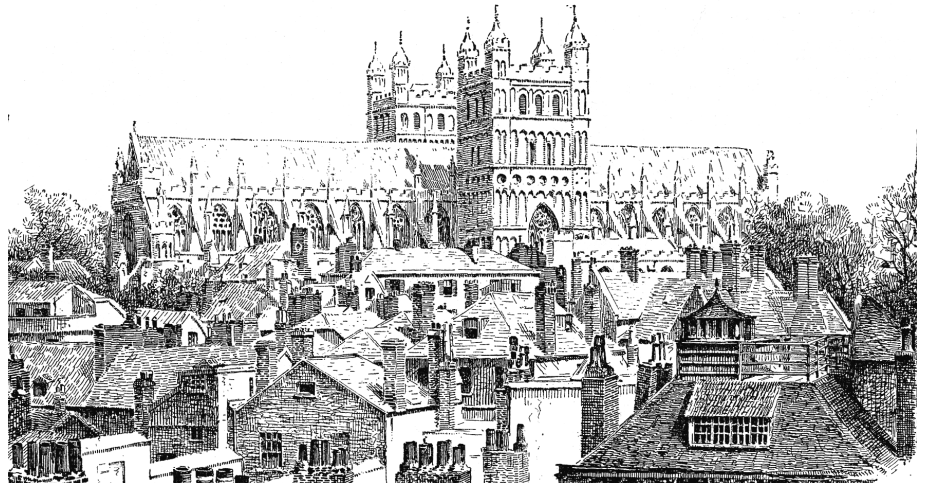
Most visits possible by special arrangement only and the lecturer's personal contacts.

The gastronomic renaissance that has been taking place all over the United Kingdom has profound roots in the West Country, notably in the counties of Devon and Cornwall.

Climatically the mildest area of the country (Devon's so-called English Riviera boasts palm trees, while south Cornwall features sub-tropical foliage and plantings), this region has long been the source of some of the finest things to eat and drink: organic vegetables from the South Hams; rich dairy products such as traditional farmhouse cheeses, clotted cream, farm ice cream; an outstanding catch of fish and shellfish landed at Exmouth, Brixham, Newlyn and Padstow; meats from local breeds such as Red Ruby cattle and Exmoor sheep; English wines, regional and craft beers, and farmhouse ciders; and much more.

A supportive and virtuous circle of farmers, fishermen, cheesemakers, artisan producers, some of the country's most talented and high-profile chefs, and appreciative and knowledgeable consumers and diners has resulted in a food scene that is squarely local, wonderfully varied and, at all levels, never less than deliciously vibrant.

This tour goes direct to the source to discover, learn, taste and enjoy. We meet some of the inspirational people who work so hard to produce such good things to eat and drink. We enjoy a lunch of just-picked organic vegetables and local meat in a 'field kitchen'. We dine, seated on hay bales, on a feast of the best meat you will ever eat, expertly cooked over fire pits by the farmer himself. We learn about the mysteries of tea at a sub-tropical plantation that has climatic conditions similar to Darjeeling. And we visit the National Lobster Hatchery to understand how this delicious crustacean can be sustainably raised. A cream tea is obligatory



*Exeter Cathedral, engraving c. 1880.*

of course – but does the cream or the jam go on first? Other highlights include a picnic on Dartmoor, pub lunches, a vineyard visit, a cheese tasting masterclass, and a splendid seafood feast in the most famous fish restaurant in the country, Rick Stein's at Padstow.

'The West Country has the best larder not just in the UK but in all of Europe,' says Michael Caines, the inspirational and highly acclaimed two-star Michelin chef. The tour concludes with lunch at Lympstone Manor, Michael's country house hotel overlooking the Exe estuary.

### Itinerary

**Day 1: Topsham.** The coach leaves Exeter St David's Railway Station at 12.30pm. Take a boat on the Exe estuary from Topsham to the Turf Hotel (accessible only by boat, walking or cycling) for a simple lunch. Transfer to the Deer Park Country House Hotel near Honiton for the first of three nights.

**Day 2: Riverford Farm, Sharpham Vineyard.** Guy Watson's Riverford Farm is the source of organic vegetables delivered in 'boxes' all around the country. Farm visit followed by lunch of organic vegetables and local organic meats in the 'field kitchen'. Visit and tasting at the Sharpham Vineyard, beautifully situated above a sharp bend in the River Dart, where award-winning wines and cheeses made from rich Jersey milk are produced. Dinner includes a tasting of house-smoked foods and beer from the local Otter Brewery at The Holt, Honiton.

**Day 3: Quicke's Cheese, Pipers Farm.** Cheese masterclass and tasting at Quicke's, award-winning producer of cloth-wrapped traditional farmhouse cheddar. Visit to Pipers Farm to meet the animals, then lunch on hay bales around the fire pits. Dinner at The Pig at Combe, with a menu of foods sourced locally within a 25-mile radius.

**Day 4: Haytor.** A walk on Dartmoor to Haytor Rocks is followed by a picnic lunch of local food and drink. Continue to Padstow, where the next three nights are spent. Dinner at Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant. The well-known TV chef's acclaimed restaurant is considered one of the best in the country for seafood.

**Day 5: Tregothnan Estate, Padstow.** Tregothnan Estate is home to one of the UK's only tea plantations. See how tea is grown in sub-tropical conditions before lunch at a nearby restaurant on the Roseland peninsula, overlooking the south Cornish coast. Return to Padstow for an early-evening seafood cooking demonstration and tasting at Rick Stein's Cookery School.

**Day 6: Padstow.** Learn about the life cycle of lobsters and what can be done to help them to reproduce sustainably at the National Lobster Hatchery. Free afternoon in the utterly charming port town of Padstow, with an optional ferry trip to Rock and a walk to St Enodoc Church, where the poet laureate Sir John Betjeman is buried. Dinner to be confirmed.

Gastronomic West Country  
continued

**Day 7: Lympstone Manor.** Michael Caines held two Michelin stars at Gidleigh Park for 18 years. His country house hotel which opened in 2017 won a Michelin star only six months after opening. Michael has devised a special lunch menu for us to highlight and showcase places and producers visited during the week. Finish at Exeter St David's Railway Station by 5.30pm.

## Lecturer

**Marc Millon.** Wine, food and travel writer. Marc is the author, together with his photographer wife Kim, of some 14 books on wine, food and travel. Titles include *The Wine & Food of Europe*, *The Wine Roads of France*, *The Wine Roads of Italy*, *The Food Lover's Companion France*, *The Food Lover's Companion Italy*, and *The Taste of Britain*. He also has his own wine company, importing Italian wines from small family estates. When not on the road, Marc lives on the River Exe in Devon.

## Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £3,260.

**Single occupancy:** £3,630.

**Included:** travel by private coach; hotel accommodation as described below; breakfasts; 7 lunches (one light) and 5 dinners (one light) with wine, water, coffee; all admissions, private openings, tours, tastings and cooking demonstrations; all tips; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

**Accommodation. Deer Park Country House Hotel, near Honiton** (deerparkcountryhotel.co.uk): a charming country house hotel set in beautiful grounds in the Devon countryside.

**Padstow Harbour Hotel** (harbourhotels.co.uk): Recently renovated Victorian hotel with excellent views of the estuary. *Single rooms throughout are doubles for sole use.*

**How strenuous?** There is a lot of walking on tracks in vineyards and farms, participants must be steady on their feet and able to walk unaided over rough ground in order to fully enjoy the tour. There is quite a lot of driving, often in two minibuses as access is limited at many of the special sites visited. Average distance by coach per day: 75 miles.

**Group size:** between 10 and 22 participants.