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**10 Tours To Wet Your Whistle**

Iced vodka in Norway, weasel coffee in Vietnam, alcoholic muesli in Africa... Danielle Demetriou shows you the world through the bottom of a glass  
16 October 2006

**1. Coffee in Vietnam**

There are many reasons why weasel coffee does not sound appetising. First, the name. Then, the hefty price tag. But hardest to stomach is the fact that the coffee beans are passed through the digestive system of a Vietnamese weasel. Yet, weasel coffee is a rare delicacy sought by coffee experts the world over. If you're a fan, head for Buon Ma Thuot, its birthplace, in the rolling green hills of the remote central highlands. Amid the Buddhist monasteries and pagodas stand numerous coffee plantations, which turn out the bags of beans - non-weasel varieties included - that are sold at stalls in nearby villages.

**Bottoms up:** Take a plantation tour, before heading off on a caffeine-fuelled walk to the nearest village cafe.

**Bottom line:** Visit the Buon Ma Thuot region as part of the 16-day Trails of Vietnam tour with Travel Indochina (01865 268940, [travelindochina.co.uk](http://travelindochina.co.uk)) from £1,010, including b&b and one lunch, transfers and an English-speaking guide. Excluding international flights.

**2. Vodka in Norway**

Enhance the view of the Northern Lights with a shot of vodka, a body-warming spirit best enjoyed in teeth-tingling temperatures. Try the sensory contrast in the North Cape of Norway where an ice bar is being built at the Alta Igloo Hotel. After downing a few in this network of caverns filled with ice sculptures, head for bed in an "ice room". Needless to say, bring industrial-strength thermals.

**Bottoms up:** Chink frozen ice glasses containing the bar's Blue Igloo cocktail, a potent mix of vodka and blue curacao. Don't miss the on-site ice chapel and ice gallery.

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Bottom line: Discover the World (01737 214214; discover-the-world.co.uk) offers four-night packages to the Alta Igloo Hotel from January from £1,154 per person, based on two sharing, including return flights, b&b, one Sami meal, a trip to the North Cape and a night in an ice room.

### 3. Water in Fiji

Mischa Barton carries one in her designer tote. Cameron Diaz is never without hers. Fiji Water may resemble little more than a plastic bottle of, well, water, but its high-profile fans clearly know otherwise. If you're keen for a drop of the celebrity elixir head for its source: a slice of paradise known as the Wakaya Club in Fiji. Owned by David Gilmour, the billionaire rock star, this private 2,200-acre island is a paparazzi-dodger's dream.

Bottoms up: Gilmour started bottling eau de Fiji after getting fed up with flying endless bottles of Evian across the South Pacific. The secret of its success is the high concentration of the mineral silica which allegedly strengthens hair and nails while helping to plump out wrinkled skin.

Bottom line: Seasons in Style (01244 202000; seasonsinstyle.co.uk) offers seven nights all-inclusive, for £6,275 per person, based on two sharing.

### 4. Tea in Sri Lanka

Popping on the kettle is elevated to an art form in Sri Lanka, where tea-lovers should visit the green highlands of Bogawantalawa Valley, home of the Ceylon Tea Trails Resort. Opened by the tea company Dilmah last year, the resort will teach you everything you need to know about the perfect brew. Guests are absorbed into life on a working tea estate, albeit while revelling in five-star luxury. Four elegantly restored bungalows, built for British tea estate managers in the days of the Raj, provide the accommodation.

Bottoms up: Follow in the footsteps of the Old Ceylon tea planters on a walk through the hillside jungle and tea fields, or visit a tea-producing factory.

Bottom line: Ampersand Travel (020-7723 4336, ampersandtravel.com) offers a 14-night trip from £2,700 per person, based on two sharing, including return flights, four nights' full board at the Ceylon Tea Trails Resort, b&b for the rest of the trip and a driver with private car.

### 5. Prosecco in Italy

Venice is famous for its Bellini cocktail, a mixture of peach juice and Prosecco, the latter being an elegant fizz produced amid the gentle hills and medieval villages to the north of the city. So a visit to the region should not be without a trip to a winery or two.

Bottoms up: Take a private tour of the Villa Sandi winery in Crocetta del Montello, where five wines created from the delicate white Prosecco grape can be savoured. Continue to the family-run Bisol winery, where the fine Prosecco is the vin du choix for Bellinis served at the Dorchester.



Bottom line: Cellar Tours (00 34 91 521 3939, [cellartours.com](http://cellartours.com)) offers two-day private Prosecco tours with a chauffeur-driven Mercedes and guide from €1,400 (£945) per person, including one night's half-board, excluding international flights.

## 6. Beer in Zambia

It's beer, but not as we know it. In the remote villages of Zambia and South Africa visitors may be invited to share a bucket of what the locals refer to as "traditional beer". This opaque beverage is brewed from maize and sorgum. The taste? An acquired one...

Bottoms up: Head for Kawaza Village in the Luangwa Valley in Zambia to sample what is often referred to as "alcoholic muesli".

Bottom line: Expert Africa (020-8232 9777; [expertafrica.com](http://expertafrica.com)) offers a 10-night safari in the Luangwa Valley, Zambia, from £1,956 per person, based on two sharing, including flights, transfers, full board - and a night sipping limitless supplies of beer.

## 7. Armagnac in France

Once used to clean soldiers' wounds, today Armagnac is a popular digestif. And it causes a quiet corner of south-west France to erupt with festivities once a year. La Flamme de l'Armagnac begins as the grape ends and distillation begins.

Bottoms up: This isn't just about drinking: there are art exhibitions, theatre productions, bicycle tours, tastings and jazz concerts throughout the region, all themed on Armagnac. But the main attraction is the Armagnac-fuelled gourmet dinners served around the distilleries.

Bottom line: This year's festival starts at the beginning of November. For listings, contact the Bureau National Interprofessionnel de l'Armagnac (00 33 562 08 11 00, [armagnac.fr](http://armagnac.fr)). Rent a two-bedroom house in the ramparts of the 13th-century village of La Romieu from £350 a week with Gascony Secret (01284 827253; [gascony-secret.com](http://gascony-secret.com)). Easyjet (0905 821 0905; [easyjet.com](http://easyjet.com)) flies twice a day from Gatwick to Toulouse from £38.72 return, including taxes.

## 8. Tequila in Mexico

The national drink of Mexico can - and should - be consumed in more moderate quantities than those favoured by the average British student. And, licking salt off your hand before downing a shot of tequila is not the height of sophistication in Mexico. Instead, order a sangrita, which is a shot of fine tequila followed by a palate-cleansing chaser of orange juice with lime and chillies.

Bottoms up: Tequila is created from the agave cactus. Find out how at Casa Herradura, an elegant tequila distillery established 136 years ago near Guadalajara in Jalisco. Visitors are led through the caverns of the distillery as well as the gleaming new plant with its 1,600 workers.

Bottom line: Abercrombie & Kent (0845 0700 614; [abercrombiekent.co.uk](http://abercrombiekent.co.uk)) offers 13-night trips from £3,065 per person, including return flights, transfers and b&b.

## 9. The best: rum in Havana: Cocktails all round

Along with hip-swinging salsa and vintage cars, a generous tot of rum is a vital part of life in Havana, Cuba. It was here that Ernest Hemingway was inspired to pen poetic descriptions of the perfect daiquiri. Order one at El Floridita. Move on to taste Hemingway's second love, a mojito, at the La Bodeguita del Medio. Other highlights are the colonial rum museum and the Havana Club rum factory. Cuba Welcome (020-7593 5835; cubawelcome.com), can tailor-make a seven-night Cocktail Culture trip from £1,150 per person, including flights, accommodation and tours.

#### **10. The best malt in Scotland: Have a Highland fling**

Heaven is drawing up a seat by a roaring fire with a drop of fine malt whisky. If you're keen to improve your appreciation of the hard stuff, head for the Spey Valley in the Scottish highlands where nearly 50 per cent of Scotland's malts are produced. Most distilleries offer demonstrations and tasting sessions. Luxury Vacations UK (020-8669 3666, luxuryvacationsuk.com) offers a five-day bespoke whisky and mountain tour with chauffeur guide from £645 per person, based on a party of six, including b&b and transport out of Edinburgh.

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