

# Q&A *Ask the experts*

Do you need help with your vegan cooking, or do you have a nutritional query? Email your question to [sally.fitzgerald@anthem-publishing.com](mailto:sally.fitzgerald@anthem-publishing.com)

**Q** “I’m trying to decide on my summer holiday this year and wondered if you could recommend some really good countries/cities for vegan food?”

Is there anything more that we all look forward to throughout the entire year than those few weeks spent indulging, reclining and exploring parts of the planet unknown? Travel, they say, is the only thing that makes you truly richer (tell that to my bank balance).

When it comes to choosing a hotel or holiday destination, it is of uppermost importance to ensure your appetite will be equally as satisfied and excited as your extremely well-deserved peace, quiet and seaside cocktail at noon habit. Veganism is pretty commonplace in the UK, with increasing global reach and recognition seeing destinations becoming almost specialist in catering for plant-based diets, with other locations significantly lagging behind. So, if you are as yet undecided on where you should vay-cay this year, I have comprised a useful list of my top 5 destinations to suit every budget (I’ll also very willingly accept invites, you know, as a guide).

- **Bali, Indonesia:** A popular destination for the Insta-Famous, Bali is well known for delicious gourmet plant-based cuisine. Bali is a picturesque set of islands, with varied landscapes and natural beauty nothing short of jaw-dropping. What’s more, Bali has an array of eco-hotels and lodges that place you right in the heart of nature, with no cost to the local environment and cultures. What’s not to love?: [www.bali-indonesia.com/magazine/10-best-eco-friendly-hotels.htm](http://www.bali-indonesia.com/magazine/10-best-eco-friendly-hotels.htm)
- **Germany:** Efficient transport links, friendly locals, incredibly diverse and rich historical attractions. There’s so much to love about Germany. I spent a wonderful week in Berlin last year, engrossed in a foodie’s tour of the city, cycling from one restaurant to the next, pausing only to take pictures of the wonderful architecture. Germany is extremely forward-thinking when it comes to vegan food, with a variety of options and plant-based eateries around: [www.vegantravel.com/destinations/europe/germany](http://www.vegantravel.com/destinations/europe/germany)
- **Portland, Oregon, USA:** Oregon is most certainly the green-heart of the USA. The vast amount of lush greenery, incredible hiking routes and breath-taking natural



beauty will be sure to inspire. If you are after an escape to nature, Portland will provide a perfect base for exploring the State’s great green lung. What’s more, Portland itself is home to a vegan tattoo parlour, cat café (no, really), vegan clothing store and a vegan supermarket: [wtfveganfood.com/complete-vegan-guide-portland-oregon](http://wtfveganfood.com/complete-vegan-guide-portland-oregon)

- **Melbourne, Australia:** I don’t need to tell you how immensely picturesque Australia is. Unless you have been living under a huge sandstone rock, you’ll be familiar with the clear, crisp blue ocean and the lush wildlife. Melbourne has been called Australia’s most liveable city for vegans, a claim that comes paired with just about every type of veganized-cuisine that you could ever imagine. If money is no option, Melbourne is a certain bucket-list destination: [veganguidemelbourne.com](http://veganguidemelbourne.com)
- **Dublin, Ireland:** A little closer to home, Dublin is a certified vegan-friendly destination for a city break. The capital of Ireland is bursting with vibrancy, and the whole city exudes a coolness that matches the variety of great nightlife and luxe eateries, all at a reasonable price. The historical culture of Ireland pairs perfectly

with Dublin’s great vegan food scene. If your waistline is not an issue, Dublin has the perfect selection of gluttonous indulgences, such as gluten-free and vegan doughnuts to snack on, pancakes for brunch and hearty burgers stacked high. I heard the alcohol selection is also not too bad! [www.peta.org.uk/blog/vegan-guide-dublin](http://www.peta.org.uk/blog/vegan-guide-dublin)

**Charlotte Willis**

**Q** “I went vegan for health and animal welfare reasons, but now I’m starting to think more about my impact on the environment too. As well as being vegan, obviously, what more things can I practically do to help the environment?”

You’re right about veganism being great news for the environment! Eating plant-based can reduce your diet-related carbon emissions by 50%, meaning that cutting out animal products is a really straightforward way to improve your carbon footprint. This is a message we’re currently promoting at The Vegan Society through our Plate Up for the Planet campaign.

As you’re vegan already, have you considered encouraging your non-vegan friends and family members to try out our 30 Day Vegan Pledge? They can sign up for free at [www.vegansociety.com/pledge](http://www.vegansociety.com/pledge). If they don’t sound keen, you

can always ask for Pledge sign-ups instead of a birthday or Christmas present. It's much harder to say no to something like that!

You could also consider switching your energy supplier to a company founded on green credentials. Ecotricity is a sustainable energy company tackling climate change – and if you sign up and cite 'The Vegan Society' as a referral, our charity receives a donation to fund our work too.

Making your everyday actions more sustainable and better for the environment can seem like a huge and daunting task. You've made a great start by being vegan – but where does it end? Consider making small changes at a time, and perhaps adding in another good habit each month.

You can link these good habits to your hobbies. Are you into cooking? Try to buy local ingredients, and opt for products which don't come wrapped in plastic. Are you a keen gardener? You can support your local bee population by growing wild flowers outside or in a pot on the window ledge. Are you an exercise enthusiast? Save emissions by leaving the car at home and walking or cycling where possible, or using public transport. If you do travel by plane, you can consider donating to a carbon offsetting tree planting organisation, if you have the means to. Good luck, and thank you for caring for our planet!

**Elena Orde**

**Q** “I'm fairly new to veganism and I want to start introducing more nuts into my diet, as I've heard they're really good for you. However, aren't they quite high in fat too? How many should I be eating and how do I make sure they're not just adding too many calories to my diet? Which are the best ones to eat?”

A small handful of unsalted nuts every day is a great addition to a wholesome diet and especially a vegan diet, which excludes some major protein sources. Alongside protein, nuts are packed with fibre and essential fats. Eaten

in moderation, nuts can be hugely beneficial. They make a great snack, especially when used as a replacement to crisps or other processed items.

Their high protein content means that nuts are fabulous source of energy and many of the micro-nutrients make them great for our skin. Take the Vitamin E content of almonds, for example. Studies show that increased nut consumption has been associated with a reduced risk of major chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes.

There is of course the 'fat' question; the concern that frequent nut consumption can result in weight gain. However, studies have associated nut consumption with a slimmer waist, less weight gain and lower risk of obesity. Fats increase satiety levels by triggering the release of cholecystokinin, which is a gut hormone that is released after a meal, and this helps with digestion and reduces appetite.

Nut types differ in their fat profile, therefore it is wise to incorporate a variety of nuts into your diet in order to obtain a beneficial balance of healthy fats. For monounsaturated fats, include almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans and pistachios. Brazil nuts, pine nuts and walnuts offer more polyunsaturated fats.

The essential plant omega-3 fat called alpha linolenic acid or ALA (important for heart health) can be found in walnuts, with smaller amounts in pecans, hazelnuts and macadamias. We often hear of omega-3 being found in fish, so here we have an alternative for vegans. ALA is not identical to fish omega-3s, but it's still a health-giving fat.

As part of a healthy balanced diet, eating a handful of nuts (40-50g (1½-2oz)) five times a week has been shown to increase longevity. Over-eating nuts can put pressure on the digestive system, and for IBS sufferers it can irritate an inflamed gut. I suggest grinding nuts in a mini-chopper until a fine powder is formed and sprinkling on a smoothie.

**Belle Amatt**

## OUR EXPERTS



### CHARLOTTE WILLIS

Charlotte is a student researcher of nutrition and human disease. Studying to become a Doctor of Human Nutrition, she is

particularly interested in wholefood, plant-based nutrition and healthful lifestyle intervention in the prevention and reversal of chronic human diseases, including cancer and cardiac disorders. Charlotte became vegan after discovering its health and fitness benefits and has never looked back. She is a part-time nutritional journalist and writes for The Vegan Society and online publications.



### ELENA ORDE

Elena is The Vegan Society's Communications and Campaigns Officer and Editor of *The Vegan* magazine. *The Vegan* shares inspiring

stories of vegan activists from all over the world, and keeps members up to date with The Vegan Society's latest projects and campaigns.

Elena regularly contributes vegan news, stories and opinion pieces to the mainstream press in both print and online, and can also be found blogging for The Vegan Society's website. There are lots of resources and information available via the website, so it's worth regular visits to keep up to date with news from Elena and the rest of the Vegan Society team on all things vegan.

[www.vegansociety.com](http://www.vegansociety.com)



### BELLE AMATT

Nutritionist Belle Amatt lectures at CNM (College of Naturopathic Medicine). CNM offers training in a range of natural health therapies

[www.naturopathy-uk.com](http://www.naturopathy-uk.com) Belle describes herself as "Nutritionist, educator, writer, blogger, mamma, food enthusiast and culinarian... though perhaps not in that order". Belle says, "The main aim of my work is to inspire, and to allow and encourage the finest health and wellbeing in whatever way this is best achieved." Find out more by visiting Belle's own website.

[www.belleamatt.com](http://www.belleamatt.com)

