A TASTE OF FRANCE
Alan Richman turns his love of food into a pursuit of true culture

BRITISH COLUMBIA
A father’s gift, a daughter’s discovery

GHOSTS OF HONG KONG
The past still lives in a city that craves the future—if you know where to look

YOUR OWN PRIVATE AFRICA

ATHENS IN JUST 48 HOURS

URBAN HIKING
THE NEXT ADVENTURE

24 Scones from Mary Jane’s Farm, Idaho.
company Off-the-Beaten Path. “The more urban we get, the more disconnected we can be, to the point where kids don’t know milk comes from cows.” Here are five places where they can learn that.

Dig up more at state tourism websites or registries, such as farmstays.com or ruralbounty.com.

STONY CREEK FARM, WALTON, NEW YORK
Visit this farm in the rolling hills of New York’s Catskill Mountains and you get your own safari-style tent and provisions available round-the-clock. The barn cum “honesty shop” is stocked with farm-raised beef, pork, chicken, lamb, freshly laid eggs, seasonal organic veggies, and glass bottles of milk topped with a thick layer of cream.

While hosts Kate and Dan Marsiglio and their two children welcome a hand with chores, including digging potatoes, baling hay, or milking Sierra (their Jersey cow), “it’s all up to guests how dirty they want to get,” assures Kate. Kids have free rein on the 85 acres of pasture and the eponymous creek that cuts through it as well as access to a neighboring swimming hole. When one guest fretted about his child playing in the mud last summer, his wife responded, “That’s why we’re here; he can’t do that in Brooklyn.”

The farm’s six canvas-wall, hardwood-floor tents are the hallmark of Feather Down Farms, with whom the couple partnered in 2009. Each is equipped with rustic furnishings, plush bedding, oil lanterns, and a cast-iron wood-burning stove to cook your own meals.

On Saturday evenings, the Marsiglios fire up an outdoor oven for homemade bread and pizza—green tomato, purple basil, and lamb sausage is a house favorite—and a chance for guests to mingle. Other nights, the activities—card games, stargazing, sleeping to the sound of the babbling brook—are up to you. From $189 per tent, sleeps six; three-night minimum stay; www.stonycreekfarm.org.

RINCONADA DAIRY FARM,
SAN LUIS OBISPO, CALIFORNIA
Sprawling 92 acres in the verdant coastal hills of California’s San Luis Obispo County, Rinconada Dairy Farm is an ideal base for exploring the nearby wine country of Paso Robles and Santa Ynez Valley. But the ranch has become a destination in itself, especially for families from Los Angeles or San Francisco who pine for the country. “Adults come because they may remember visits to their grandparents’ farm. Kids get to climb on rocks and run around,” says host Christine Maguire.

Maguire was a city girl before a stint on a farm in Devon, England, sold her on living off the land. She and her husband, Jim, moved back to their native California and began raising sheep, goats, pigs, and chickens. Today, Rinconada also makes award-winning sheep- and goat-milk cheeses. Hosting visitors was a natural extension for the vocal advocates of integrated agriculture, a holistic approach where nothing is wasted.

Unless you’re game for milking the sheep before dawn, days begin in the kitchen of the restored hacienda-style ranch house with a breakfast that may include an egg strata, scrapple, whole-grain waffles, and an array of jams and fruit butters—all made from ingredients grown or raised on the farm. Guests can pitch in with gardening or relax under one of the sprawling oak trees with a book. Forgot one? You’ll find a copy of Michael Pollan’s best-selling treatise on food, The Omnivore’s Dilemma, in each of the two guest rooms at the farm. From $150 per night; two-night minimum stay; www.rinconadadairy.com.

FARMHAND FOR A WEEK
Fancy working at an olive grove in Tuscany? It can be done.

An international network of farms lets you indulge in your rural fantasies. World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) connects willing volunteers with farms in more than 50 countries, including Italy, France, and Holland. It was founded in 1971 by a London secretary whose craving for the countryside led her to organize a volunteer weekend at a local farm. Today, participants get room and board; farms get help with chores ranging from shoveling manure to mending fences. So-called Wwoofers pay a fee to access the directories in each country and should be willing to work up to six hours a day. Lodging can be basic and the work mundane. But for many—membership in the U.S. chapter doubled in the last year—the opportunity to travel and learn about organic farming is worth the elbow grease (www.wwoof.org). —M.L.
MARYJANE’S FARM, MOSCOW, IDAHO
Set in northern Idaho’s Palouse prairie, MaryJane’s Farm welcomes guests to stay in six tastefully appointed permanent tents in a grove of hundred-year-old walnut trees. Guests rise early and gather around an outdoor campfire for elaborate spreads of organic eggs, meats, and fruits sourced almost entirely from the farm. Lunch is a packed picnic. For dinner, guests head back to the campfire.

A sort of homespun Martha Stewart, entreprenuer MaryJane Butters has built a mini-empire out of her passion for organic farming; she publishes an organic lifestyle magazine, writes books, and markets everything from organic backpacking food to hat stands with her signature farm-girl flair. But for visitors down on the farm, life is slow. There are Jersey cows, horses, chickens, and fruit trees to admire.

Guests can take up one of the lost arts of rural life. Butters leads seminars on everything from chopping firewood to growing your own natural starter for sour-dough bread. Later, relax sore muscles by soaking in one of the farm’s outdoor heated claw-foot bathtubs. From $179 per night; two-night minimum; www.maryjanefarm.org/bb.

TREVIN FARMS, SUDBURY, VERMONT
Fledgling fromagers at Trewin Farms in west-central Vermont usually find that the hardest part of making chhive is milking the goats. “It looks easy,” says farmer Kevin McNaught, “but it’s not.” Guests who come to learn cheesemaking usually find the rest of the process a cinch by comparison. Besides adding enzymes to goats’ milk and cutting the curd, making goat cheese involves a lot of waiting, leaving plenty of time to roam the farm’s 40 acres of meadow and woodlands. Guests can also get a lesson in hitching up Tyrone, a Percheron draft horse, for a carriage ride or soak up panoramic views of the Green Mountains from Adirondack chairs on the hillside. Nearby is the 20,000-acre Moosalamoo National Recreation Area, with some 70 miles of trails for hiking, bird-watching, and cross-country skiing.

McNaught left his job as a chef in Boston to raise Nubian goats in the Champlain Valley with partner Troy Peabody three years ago. The move paid off, and now they eagerly share their cheesemaking chops and Cape-style farmhouse with those who crave a taste of the New England pastoral life. “People are surprised when they drink goat milk for the first time,” he says. “Their response is ‘Wow!’” The creamy fruits of guests’ labor figure prominently in the dinner menu—sauteed atop a pile of greens or crowning a braised pork loin, with plenty left over to take home. Rooms from $100 per night; weekend cheesemaking package from $295; www.trevinfarms.com.