




Global veganism

From movement to mainstream, veganism has truly gone global



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Since 1944, when Donald Watson coined the term ‘vegan’ and kicked off a revolution of compassion, the world has seen the v-word go from fringe to familiar. Gone are the days when vegans were considered pale, bark-eating weaklings. Today, we have such vegan athletes as footballer Dean Howell, champion mixed martial artist Mac Danzig, and Olympic gold medalist Alexey Vovayevoda to remind us that plant-based eating is not only the most ethical choice, but better for our health. And as mounting evidence points an accusatory finger at animal agriculture as a major contributor to climate change, it’s now common to find at least one vegan cookbook in even an omnivore’s kitchen.

Retail with a conscience

Among the signs that veganism has grown beyond a health-food craze to become a global phenomenon is the spectacular evolution of vegan shopping. Remember when buying non-leather boots or a wool-free winter coat meant ordering online, waiting two weeks, and hoping they fit when they arrived? Now, brick-and-mortar vegan businesses from grocery markets to clothing and shoe shops are changing the face (and feet) of veganism around the world. The United States has no fewer than eight vegan grocery stores—Food Fight! in Portland, Oregon; NOOCH in Denver, Colorado; Vegan Haven in Seattle, Washington; Republic of V in Berkeley, California; Park+Vine in Cincinnati, Ohio; Artichoke Red in Orlando, Florida; and two locations of Viva la Vegan in the Los Angeles area—with more on the way. And the plethora of stateside vegan shops offering clothing and accessories includes Éthique Nouveau, Herbivore, Moo Shoes, Vaute, and Vilchez Boutique.

“I think the importance of vegan markets has shifted over the years,” said Chad Miller, co-

founder of Food Fight! “In the old days, we were really focused on making it easier to be vegan and to show interested folks that there were tasty options. Nowadays, with vegan stuff everywhere and the ethical focus sometimes getting lost in healthy-eating fads, I think vegan stores need to do our part to keep the spotlight on the animals, environment, and food justice, and not just turn into specialty stores catering to upscale customers.”

Down Under, you can grocery shop at Vegan Perfection in Melbourne or The Cruelty-Free Shop in Sydney, a one-stop shop with a stunning selection of vegan food items, cosmetics, shoes, handbags, and more. Stroll into Vegan Style or Vegan Wares and walk out with the kind of footwear and purses that make people say, “Wow, *that’s* vegan?”

Boutique vegan stores abound in the United Kingdom, where ethical shoppers can find groceries at such markets as Birmingham’s 100% Vegan, Honest to Goodness in Hoylelake, and Vx in London. Vegans the world over hoof it to Vegetarian Shoes in Brighton for their amazing range of boots, shoes, and sandals, and The Third Estate in Camden offers a welcome choice of ethical fashion for men and women.

On the continent, Un Monde Vegan is Paris’s answer to the something-for-everyone shop, with a truly *énorme* variety of vegan groceries, as well as shoes, shirts, belts, and books. Meanwhile, the German supermarket chain Veganz is re-branding the idea of the vegan grocery store with seven locations in Germany, one in Prague, one in Vienna, and a goal of having 60 markets worldwide by 2020, including a London branch this year offering more than 6,000 vegan products.

And, of course, this doesn’t include the countless vegan bakeries that are springing up like cake batter in major cities and small towns from Atlanta to Zurich. >

A China study

Although China has yet to provide the variety of cruelty-free shopping you'll find in the West, it's becoming a vegan powerhouse. According to Public Radio International (PRI), four to five percent of the Chinese population—or more than 50 million people—no longer eat meat or dairy. In other words, China has more vegans than any other nation in the world. They are mavericks in a country where consuming animals is seen as a sign of happiness and prosperity. (In China, the words for 'chicken' and 'fish' sound like those for 'auspicious' and 'abundance'.)

Call it a counter-movement; while meat and dairy consumption are on the rise throughout Asia, there is a growing concern about how these mass-produced foods impact human health, the planet, and animal welfare. Not surprisingly, it's the twenty- and thirtysomethings who are driving the dietary shift. "Young people are more environmentally aware and more open to new ideas," Dong Ziyang, the manager of the organic vegetarian Jintai Catering Club, told China Central Television. "They love to be in the trend or lead the trend. So we're quite confident about the prospects."

Chinese pop star and vegan activist Long Kuan agrees. "Times have really changed," she told PRI. "Maybe 10 years ago, when I was a vegetarian, a lot of people said, 'Why? Are you Buddhist?' or something. But now, it's completely different. The young generation, especially, they love to be eco-friendly, and they love to be compassionate. And they really care about the environment and the quality of life, about pollution . . . they really care about fellow creatures on this planet, animals, and even trees."

Convening for compassion

What better place for these caring Millennials and Gen Xers to convene than an animal-rights conference? Not only do they attract attendees, exhibitors, and speakers from around the globe, but there's a growing list of such events that do not serve animal products. One of them, the annual International Animal Rights Conference in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg, is even held at a former slaughterhouse. Locals no longer



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wanted an abattoir in their city, so the facility has been transformed into a cultural centre that hosts decidedly more peaceful activities.

The two major annual events in the United States—FARM's Animal Rights National Conference and Taking Action for Animals, organised by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS)—have a strict vegan policy, as do New Zealand's National Animal Rights Conference, Australia's Animal Activists Forum, every event managed by the Institute for Critical Animal Studies, and the Minding Animals Conference in India, which recently switched from vegetarian to vegan.

The ethic is catching on with the welfare gang, too. The week-long Animal Care Expo, hosted by HSUS, has been completely vegan for the last decade, and more animal shelters around the world are eschewing meat, eggs, and dairy foods at their fundraising events. Colombia's Paramatma Animal Shelter, for example, opened a few years ago and is the country's only vegan sanctuary.



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Veganism goes on the road

Of course, the best way to experience a changing vegan world is to see it firsthand. Like ecotourism for the adventure traveller, vegan tourism is spreading like hummus on a bagel, and it's yet another example of how the lifestyle is going global. Tour companies such as Veg Voyages and UK-based VegiVentures specialise in taking vacationers to far-flung destinations for a vegan getaway, while Holistic Holiday at Sea, a health-educational foundation, even offers a seven-day vegan cruise of the Caribbean.

Green Earth Travel kicks things up a notch by offering tours of Italy with author and vegan chef Colleen Patrick-Goudreau. "One of the biggest misconceptions is that it's hard to eat vegan in Italy," said Patrick-Goudreau. "It's a misconception because of all the European countries, Italy values the local food of the various regions, and so your options in restaurants are often locally grown vegetables, mushrooms, pastas, breads, fruits, and nuts."

Green Earth Travel's founder Donna Zeigfinger says she's seeing more people than ever participate in vegan vacations. "It's definitely on the rise. I've been doing this since the early '90s, and I had to offer vegan travel because of so many requests."

For those with an itch for travel—or who just want a new recipe—the Internet has become the vegan's most valued companion. But the real proof of veganism's mushrooming popularity is what's happening in the real world. From brick-and-mortar retail and compassionate young adults to conferences and ethical vacations, it's clear that veganism is making its way from movement to mainstream.



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1 Vegan consumerism has given rise to a new wave of boutiques cropping up in unexpected places, including middle America (in this case, Cincinnati, Ohio)
2 At Vegan Style in Melbourne, stylish leather-free footwear reigns. Owner Justin Mead (pictured) is a longtime vegan



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