

# First look: inside the world's first food theme park

Here's what visitors need to know about food theme park Eataly

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The central aisle in the indoor pavilion at FICO Eataly World Bologna, a food and farming theme park which opens today. Photograph: Getty Images

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## A food theme park, what's that all about?

FICO Eataly World, which opens its doors at 4.30pm today (Wednesday, November 15th) is being described as Disney World for food lovers. It is a joint venture between the Eataly Italian food halls, of which there are 17 around the world and 18 in [Italy](#), and two Italian Co-Ops. It cost €140 million to build, and is expected to attract six million visitors a year. It is open from 10am to midnight, seven days a week.



The entrance to FICO Eataly World in Bologna, which opens today. Photograph: EPA/Giorgio Benvenuti

### **Where is it and how do I get there?**

The park is located on a 20-acre plot that was formerly home to the Bologna fruit and veg market. It is about 20 minutes drive from the city centre, and shuttle buses run daily from Bologna central railway station (every half an hour weekdays, every 20 minutes at weekends, €7 return). A fixed price €23 taxi transfer is available from the airport; look for the Cotabo Taxi Bologna signs.

### **What is there to see?**

The park has both indoor and outdoor attractions. It will take most of a day to fully explore it. You can ride around on three-wheeler trikes specially designed for the park by the Italian bicycle company Bianchi. They have wicker baskets front and back, and a mini fridge to store your purchases. There is also a mini train that you can hop on and off.



Marie-Claire Digby trying out the Bianchi shopping trikes at FICO Eataly World. The bikes will be fitted with mini-fridges to keep shopping cool

### **Where do I start?**

There are 200 Italian farm animals, from pigs, cows and sheep to hens and rabbits at the park, and most visits will begin with a visit to see them in their outdoor pens and runs. There are donkeys and horses too (horse meat is still eaten in Italy).



A Chianina cow at FICO Eataly World. Photograph: Getty Images

The outside exhibits also include growing areas where 2,000 cultivars are displayed. There are citrus and olive groves, an orchard, vegetable and fruit patches, and cereal fields.

You can follow the cereal crops from the field to the windmill to the restaurants and bakeries on-site where the flour is used. In the truffle wood, you can watch trained hunting dogs in action (truffles will be “planted” daily to avoid disappointment).

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A one-hour guided tour with one of the park’s “biodiversity ambassadors” costs €15.

### **Ok, I’m cold now, what’s going on indoors?**

There are more than 40 food and drink producers actively involved in the park, from mini-factories showing how pasta, cured meat products, cheese and olive oil are produced, to smaller outlets where you can watch confectionery being created, pasta sauces being cooked and bottled, and sugared almonds being turned into floral bouquets, for example.



Mortadella in production at FICO Eataly World. Photograph: Getty Images

### **Can I roll up my sleeves and help out?**

Where health and safety regulations must be observed, the action takes place behind glass walls. But you can book hands-on experiences including cookery classes (chef Massimo Bottura is curating the programme of demos), pasta making workshops, tutored olive oil tastings and breadmaking sessions. Most activities cost €20 and last for one hour.

### **It's supposed to be a theme park. Where are the rides?**

The vast L-shaped indoor pavilion is home to six multimedia carousels exploring themes such as Man and Fire, Man and the Sea and Man and the Future. These are being billed as the park's "rides". There are videos, games, submersive learning experiences – and lots of brightly coloured buttons to press.

### **Why are they playing beach volleyball, on real sand, right in the desserts and confectionery area?**

The connection between eating and staying healthy has to be made, somehow. Avert your eyes from the cocktails being consumed at the beachbar alongside the courts.





A wine tasting and retail space at FICO Eataly World. Photograph: EPA/Giorgio Benvenuti

### **Right, all that food has made me hungry. What's for lunch?**

With 45 places to eat and drink, from food kiosks to Michelin-starred restaurants, you'll be spoiled for choice. "Nowhere else in the world you can find the whole Italian traditional food offer in only one place", they boast. There are trattoria, osteria, pizzeria and pasta at every turn. Speciality restaurants include one devoted only to the potato, and another to the egg. There is also a vast wine cellar, beer counters and cocktail bars.

### **Is that it?**

Oh no. Right before the exit you'll pass through a vast Marketplace, selling everything from Italian food products to tableware and kitchen equipment. The 9,000sq m shopping area has its own post office, so you can have your goods despatched and not worry about baggage limits.



Homewares on sale at the 9,000sq m marketplace. Photograph: Geraldine Hope Ghelli/Bloomberg

**How much does it cost?**

Entry to FICO Eataly World is free, but there are fees for entering the multimedia carousels (€2 each or €10 for all six).

**I don't want to go home ...**

Never fear, there is a hotel under construction on-site, due to open in 2018.

*To read more about FICO Eataly World, see Marie-Claire Digby's report from the press preview day in the Irish Times Magazine on Saturday.*