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Top sandwich shops: Travelers pick their favorites

By Gary Stoller, USA TODAY

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Frequent business traveler Kathryn Alice wishes that someone would develop an app pointing out the country's best sandwich shops.

"Sandwiches are quick and portable, and I am often on the hurry, needing to eat en route," says Alice, a Los Angeles-based author and speaker.

Alice and many other business travelers often want a quick bite on the road or tasty food to bring on a plane. But they frequently don't know where to find a quality sandwich and instead settle for fast food.

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USA TODAY asked food guidebook publisher Zagat to identify the nation's top sandwich shops. It also asked its panel of USA TODAY Road Warriors — some of the world's most frequent travelers — for their favorites.

Zagat gives its highest food scores — 28 on a 30-point scale — to Chicago's Fontano's Subs and Seattle's Paseo.

Fontano's Subs on East Jackson Boulevard has terrific bread and deli meats for "awesome" subs, Zagat and its reviewers say: "You know it's good, because all the cops eat here."

Paseo on Seattle's Seaview Avenue offers "magnificent, messy Cuban sandwiches stuffed with pork that melts in your mouth, practically inspiring poetry," Zagat says.

In neighboring Oregon, travelers may not want to miss Bunk Sandwiches on Portland's Southeast Morrison Street.

The eatery is the "gold standard for inventive, almost daily changing varieties piled so thick with fillings that you need a bib," Zagat says.

Farther down the West Coast in Los Angeles, Zagat steers sandwich seekers to Langer's Deli on South Alvarado Street. There, Zagat says, they'll find "world-class pastrami

stacked on crusty yet chewy, double-baked rye."

GREAT AMERICAN BITES: [Philly's other famous sandwich](#)

PHOTOS: [Check out Philly's other famous sandwich](#)

GREAT AMERICAN BITES: [Muffuletta sandwich at Central Grocery, New Orleans](#)

On the East Coast, Zagat recommends Washington's C.F. Folks, New York's Num Pang, Boston's Flour Bakery & Café, [Atlanta's Rising Roll](#), Baltimore's Attman's Delicatessen, and Fort Lauderdale's LaSpada's Original Hoagies.

C.F. Folks on 19th Street Northwest in Washington, D.C., is a "lunch-only hole-in-the-wall

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that's oddball in a good way," Zagat says.

Expect "eclectic fare at bargain prices, extraordinary specials" and some of the city's best crab cakes.

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New York's Num Pang, with locations on East 12th and East 41st streets, serves "mouthwatering Cambodian *banh mi* sandwiches."

The sandwiches — which include pulled pork, peppercorn catfish, coconut tiger shrimp and roasted cauliflower — are served with semolina baguettes, cucumber, cilantro, pickled carrots and chili mayonnaise.

Boston's Flour Bakery & Café has three locations — on Farnsworth Street, [Washington Street](#) and [Massachusetts Avenue](#). Sandwiches on the menu include smoked turkey, hummus, curried tuna and roasted lamb.

Quick, with local flavor

"Everyone likes a good sandwich, and every city has its own take on the sandwich," says [Nina Zagat](#), Zagat's co-founder. "When people travel for business — whether with others or alone — they are often looking for a meal that is quick and casual, especially where they can also sample the local flavors."

The local flavors attract Road Warrior Art Meripol to Brick & Tin in Birmingham, Ala.

"The owners are doing a great job with local foods, coming up with paninis like roasted free-range chicken salad with pecans and celery, or heirloom tomatoes with basil and tomato pecan pesto," says Meripol, a magazine photographer.

GREAT AMERICAN BITES: [Iowa's iconic 'loose meat' sandwich](#)

PHOTOS: ['Loose meat' at Taylor's, an Iowa tradition](#)

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Meripol's other favorite is Noble Pig in Austin, owned by two culinary school friends, John Bates and Brandon Martinez.

"Those guys make or cure their own meats, make their own breads and condiments," Meripol says.

Meripol recommends the seared beef tongue with smoked green onions, red pepper relish and aioli, or the smoked duck pastrami with Russian dressing and rye pickles. His favorite, though, is the BLT: "house-smoked bacon" with lettuce and tomato.

Alice, the Los Angeles Road Warrior, has a favorite sandwich shop off the beaten path of most business travelers: Punalu'u Bake Shop on Hawaii's Big Island.

"They have the best home-baked bread I've ever had, so any sandwich you get is going to be amazing," Alice says.

She says most sandwiches at [U.S.](#) airports are "pretty lacking." Yet she manages to carry a sandwich onto about half of her flights, because the pickings on board are slim for a vegetarian.

Not knowing where to quickly pick up a quality sandwich on the road, she says she sometimes heads for Subway.

Airport sandwiches

Road Warrior Marcelo Almeida says the quality of food at airports is much better than it was 10 years ago and recommends the Potbelly Sandwich Shops in many airports, including Washington Dulles and Chicago Midway.

"The Potbelly places are a great value and offer honest, tasty food," says Almeida of Coppell, Texas, who works in the education industry.

PHOTOS: [Smitty's King Tenderloin sandwich](#)

GREAT AMERICAN BITES: [Matt's Bar](#), [Minneapolis: Home of Jucy Lucy](#)

PHOTOS: [Check out Matt's Bar and the Jucy Lucy](#)

At Miami's airport, he recommends La Carreta and Café Versailles for Cuban sandwiches, and he can't get enough of La Carreta's *tres leches*, a [Latin American](#) sponge cake.

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"The *tres leches* dessert is to die for," Almeida raves. "I always carry one with me on the plane."

His favorite sandwich shop, though, is not at an airport: the legendary Mother's Restaurant in New Orleans.

"You don't get good service, the place is greasy and old, but the food is excellent and the prices are wonderful," Almeida says. "It's a must every time I am in the Big Easy."

ZAGAT'S BEST SANDWICH SHOPS

- Atlanta:** Rising Roll Gourmet, 1180 W. Peachtree St.*
- Baltimore:** Attman's Delicatessen, 1019 E. Lombard St.
- Boston:** Flour Bakery & Café, 12 Farnsworth St.*
- Chicago:** Fontano's Subs, 20 E. Jackson Blvd.
- Cleveland:** Melt Bar & Grilled, 13463 Cedar Rd.*
- Columbus, Ohio:** Katzinger's, 475 S. Third St.
- Fort Lauderdale:** LaSpada's Original Hoagies, 4346 Seagrape Dr.*
- Las Vegas:** Capriotti's Sandwich Shop, 322 W. Sahara Ave.*
- Los Angeles:** Langer's Deli, 704 S. Alvarado St.
- New Orleans:** Domilise's Po-Boys, 5240 Annunciation St.
- New York:** Num Pang, 21 E. 12th St.*
- Philadelphia:** John's Roast Pork, 14 Snyder Ave.
- Portland, Ore.:** Bunk Sandwiches, 621 SE Morrison St.
- San Diego:** Cheese Shop, 311 Island Ave.
- San Francisco:** Saigon Sandwiches, 560 Larkin St.
- Seattle:** Paseo, 6226 Seaview Ave. NW
- Washington:** C.F. Folks, 1225 19th St. NW

* — Shop has multiple locations. Source: Zagat

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