

World Wine Tourism Awards

Welcome to the inaugural International Wine Tourism Awards. *Drinks International* Editor Christian Davis sets the scene

Tourism is one of the most effective ways of marketing your products, services and facilities. Wine lends itself perfectly to tourism.

The growing of grapes and the making of wine involves everything anyone is interested in. History, geography, geology, botany, chemistry, physics, gardening, let alone educated wine drinking. You name it. You don't have to be interested in wine to find something of interest in a documented, well laid-out winery that explains everything about how grapes came to be grown and wine made in that particular place, region or country.

Best of all, if visitors have had a good time, they buy the wine (among other things) and go back and tell their friends about the trip, the experience and the wine. There is no more powerful marketing tool

than word-of-mouth endorsement.

Drinks International has launched the awards to reward producers, winemakers and generic bodies be they local, regional, national or international that set their stalls out to attract visitors be they on the step of their cellar door or from the other side of the planet. Despite a few noticeable absences from Napa Valley – the second biggest tourist destination in California after Disney – a high level of entries were received across the categories in our first year of the competition.

Our winners have clearly recognised and grasped the importance of wine tourism by implementing a successful tourism initiative. This generates brand awareness, brand loyalty and ultimately an increase in sales.

Congratulations to our winners. We look forward to the next Wine Tourism Awards later this year.

Best Major Producer

Winner: Wyndham Estate, Australia

For the judges, it was the range of activities that made Pernod Ricard-owned Wyndham Estate (pictured) in Australia's Hunter Valley the clear winner.

Not just tours around the vineyard and/or winery, but the estate features a large amphitheatre for concerts (pictured) and boasts an extensive riverside park with picnic and barbecue facilities.

Its Opera in the Vineyard has over 16 years attracted 60,000 visitors and last year it featured opera singer Dame Kiri Te Kanawa.

There is an annual Grape Adventure mountain bike race and is a popular venue for weddings, Christmas parties and corporate functions.

Harris said: "Historic. Very broad appeal. Roberts noted: "Won Australian tourism award. Has different offerings." Davis commented: "Impressive operation. Not just tours and tastings."



Most Innovative Vineyard/Cellar Tour

Winner: Bodegas Miguel Torres, Spain
Highly commended: Warwick Estate

The visitor centre claims an average of 100,000 guests a year. It offers a traditional tour that includes a tunnel of aromas, a tour by train (pictured) and a multi-sensory visit. The VIP tour is an expanded version with a visit to the Mas la Plana vineyard and to various cellars. The Ecotour features a walk through the Mas la Plana country house, focusing on the viticulture and showing visitors the care that goes into the vineyards.

Roberts was impressed by the comprehensive nature of the tours. Harris commented on the sheer numbers that go through - "100,000 visitors! Varied tours appealing to different levels." Davis: "Impressive. A big operation from a big operator."



Best Generic Body

Winner: Robertson Wine Valley, South Africa

Robertson has a battle on its hands. With the likes of well-known names Stellenbosch, Paarl and Franschhoek within easy driving distance of Cape Town, Robertson has to work hard to get people to visit it.

The Robertson Wine Valley, with its 55 members, has five wine festivals a year. The Hands-on Harvest event in the last week in February is followed by the Wacky Wine Weekend in June, which attracts about 18,000 people and brings in between ZAR25m to ZAR30m (\$3.2m-\$4.5m). Come August, we have the Robertson Slow, with dinners, baking, cooking and hiking to work it all off. Finally, Robertson Wine on the River in October (pictured above) features more than 300 wines to taste on the banks of the Breede river.

Roberts said: "Economic impact – fun, hands-on and year-round." Davis wrote: "Impressive for a small region with limited resources. Original and made the region sexy".

Best Wine Event

Winner: Vine and Dine, Denbies, England

Close to *Drinks International's* home, the judges liked the concept of people getting tuition in grape picking and "first hand experience in the workings of the vineyard and winery" in what is the UK's largest vineyard (107 ha, 265 acres). Some 523 people paid £49.50 (€59, \$77) to learn about and watch the harvest and enjoy a traditional rustic vineyard workers' lunch with Denbies wine. At the end of the day they get a tasting and an estate-grown vine to take away.

Harris called it: "Great PR" for Denbies. Roberts liked the "hands-on experience and the educational element".



Meet the judges

The World Wine Tourism judges (l-r)

Christian Davis, editor of *Drinks International*.
Ian Harris, chief executive of the Wine & Spirit Education Trust and former marketing director of a global drinks company (Seagrams) that sold and marketed wines and spirits.
Emma Roberts, director of a major London PR and marketing agency that has a number of wine producers, brands and generic bodies as its clients.

