

Webinar: Wine tourism beyond lockdown

Destinate, with the participation of UNWTO, Wesgro and VinPro, will be hosting The Future of Wine Tourism webinar from 19-21 May 2020. This interactive virtual event will bring together 26 panellists, tourism businesses and people working within the value chain of wine tourism to explore and reimagine wine tourism in a post-lockdown world.

The webinar will be hosted over three days with six interactive themed sessions to allow for flexibility.



Mariëtte du Toit-Helmbold

"The tourism industry globally is suffering unimaginable losses and wine tourism, that is the lifeblood for many, has come to a grinding halt. Loss of current business and the anticipated costs associated with future-fitting businesses to comply with strict health and safety regulations that will be required, means that thousands of jobs and many businesses are at risk," said Mariëtte du Toit-Helmbold of Destinate.

It is our aim to present a webinar that is packed with practical and thoughtful guidance, advice and interventions that can assist the local and international wine tourism sector to gear up for a future where our freedom of movement and human interaction will fundamentally change," she added.

South African picture

Since South Africa entered a coronavirus lockdown on 27 March 2020, the country's economic decline has been a major cause for concern. While the effects have been far-reaching, tourism and hospitality have been particularly hard-hit.

For the country's various wine regions, the loss of visitors and other tourism-related income has been exacerbated by an extended ban on trade and transport of alcoholic beverages.

In a recent release, Vinpro MD Rico Basson shared his concern saying that the extended lockdown and ban placed on the sale of alcohol and initially, the export of wine will have a significant effect on the survival of the South African wine industry, and the livelihood of the close to 300,000 persons employed by the value-chain. It was further reported that the South African wine industry has lost close to R2bn since the start of the Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa, with an estimated 80 cellars and 430 grape producers at risk of going out of business.

International Wine Review identified the South African industry as the best-developed wine tourism destination in the world in 2012, while the UNWTO identified South Africa as one of the best-developed wine tourism destinations in the world in 2016.

South African Wine Information and Systems (SAWIS) in 2013 estimated that the wine industry as a whole contributed R6billion to the gross domestic product. More importantly, wine tourism supports numerous small businesses and employs thousands within its value chain as more and more of the world's travellers discovered the joy of experiencing local destinations beyond the well-known tourism attractions through the unique flavours of the destination, often in the company of local people.



Image Supplied.

A global picture

While restrictions on alcohol sales have been less severe in other parts of the world, wine regions around the globe find

themselves facing in an unprecedented moment of 'adapt or die' as tourism has ground to a complete halt.

In a recent article on FTN News, WineAmerica President Jim Trezise said: "Wineries and tourism have a symbiotic relationship. The romance of 'wine country' attracts millions of tourists, who are the lifeblood of the industry, especially for the smaller wineries."

The article adds, however, that most wineries seem to have taken a creativity and innovation approach to fill the void left by the shuttering of tasting room sales and restaurant support.

Some of the popular strategies that have been employed include curbside winery pickup, reduced shipping costs, special direct-to-consumer promotions, home delivery, wine club specials and virtual wine tastings.

A recent market bulletin released by Wine Australia shared that while very little quantitative data is available for online wine sales, they anticipate that Australian consumers will switch to online purchasing of wine like their American counterparts.

"With cellar doors and on-premise outlets closed, and consumers making fewer trips out to 'bricks and mortar' retailers, both consumers and wine producers have little choice but to focus on e-commerce and virtual wine events and experiences. This trend had already started in Australia following the bushfires," the bulletin states.



Preparing for a post-Covid-19 era in the tourism industry

Mariette du Toit-Helmbold 25 Mar 2020



Collaboration – the only way forward

One of the positive outcomes the unprecedented lockdown regulations has had on the wine industry both locally and abroad, is a renewed drive to work together for the greater good as we prepare for an uncertain future.

From putting heads together on how to deal with a possible over-supply following the 2020 harvest and the South African government's ban on trade of alcoholic beverages to collaborating on possible e-commerce solutions, the local wine industry is showing its resilience.

Similarly, it's been exciting to see global wine regions enter into conversations with one another during this time, sharing hard-won insights and advice.

Ultimately, this is what The Future of Wine Tourism webinar hopes to encourage and support.

"We've worked hard to bring together a group of thought leaders, innovators, creatives and pioneers in wine tourism to share insights and creative solutions with the industry. It is heartbreaking to watch businesses suffer and people lose their jobs. We have to work together to assist the sector to navigate this crisis and prepare for the future," concluded du Toit-Helmbold.

the future of wine tourism: beyond lockdown

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The online sessions will cover key topics including:

- Preparing for a new era in wine tourism
- Our target markets and building our local market
- Reimagining wine tourism experiences
- A global perspective and innovation in crisis times
- Going virtual and the feasibility of virtual events
- Operational readiness and equipping our workforce for the future
- Sales and marketing

Sessions will feature expert panellists from South Africa and abroad, including:

- Sandra Carvao, Chief: Market Intelligence and Competitiveness at World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO);
- Margie Whitehouse, Chief Tourism Officer, Wesgro;
- Marisah Niewoudt, Wine Tourism Manager, Vinpro;
- Prof. Robin Back, Rosen College of Hospitality;
- Ntsiki Biyela, Aslina Wines;
- Charles Back (Fairview and Spice Route);
- Ian Haggie, Explore Sideways;
- Paul Mabray, Digital Futurist;
- Robert Josph, The Wine Thinker;
- Thapelo Mokoena (Nero) and
- Robin Shaw, Wine Tourism Australia.

[View the programme and full list of panellists here.](#) Participants can register for specific sessions at R250 (approximately \$13) per session or attend all six for the special package price of R550 (\$30). Registration is open until 18 May 2020.

*A **Post-Lockdown Wine Tourism Paper** will be made available after the webinar with insights and guidelines shared during the webinar to assist the industry.*

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>