

2024 Wine Tourism Conference to explore strategies for profitable growth

On 30 May 2024, the eighth annual Wine Tourism Conference is set to unfold, showcasing an array of esteemed international and local speakers who will delve into "The Business Case for Wine Tourism," the central theme for this year's event. Sponsored by Wesgro, Delta Air Lines, the Stellenbosch Wine Route, and South Africa Wine, this day-long event will take place at Lanzerac in Stellenbosch. The conference, convened by tourism and hospitality specialist, Margi Biggs, promises to be an insightful exploration into the economic aspects of wine tourism.



Source: Supplied

Biggs says South African wine tourism is following the same upward trajectory evident elsewhere in the world. "Figures released by Statistics South Africa show international tourist arrivals from January to November 2023 reached 7.6 million, a year-on-year increase of 52%."

She adds that traffic through Cape Town Airport's domestic arrivals rose by 20% in December, compared with 2022.

"While the total international visitor count is still almost 18% lower than in pre-Covid 2019, we are seeing a strong rebound."



#BizTrends2024: Trends shaping the future of the global wine industry in 2024

Rico Basson 24 Jan 2024



In a recent trends report published by *Bizcommunity*, South Africa Wine CEO Rico Basson confirms that despite challenges faced by the local wine industry, the "bright spot" is the "exponential growth of wine tourism". He said that "South Africa's Winelands, renowned for its world-class offerings, are becoming a magnet for recurring visitors. This trend generates revenue for wineries and builds the country's image as a destination rich in beauty and experiences."

Biggs believes further growth can be expected flowing from Cape Town coming in at the number two position in Time Out's '50 Best Cities for 2024' list.

"We think the new Winelands airport, expected to be operational by 2027 will also be a big growth driver. This is the time for us to get ourselves ready for the upswing."



Cape Winelands Airport unveils development plans, features

29 Dec 2023



Global expert speakers list

- US wine tourism and marketing supremo Paul Wagner has been marshalled as the headline speaker for the conference. A veteran member of Napa Valley College's Viticulture and Winery Technology Department, he speaks worldwide on wine and wine tourism with a strong accent on marketing and communication.
- Australian Peter McAtamney, who heads Wine Business Solutions (Australia), a global specialist in wine market research, wine education and direct-to-consumer (DTC) wine business, will discuss how to optimise revenue with effective wine tourism business strategies.
- Mike Ratcliffe, CEO of the Stellenbosch Wine Route, who has been a leading player in underscoring the pre-eminence of Stellenbosch as a district of excellence, will talk about how to boost wine tourism profitability. He was a major contributor to the success of Warwick Wines and more recently, Vilafonté, established as the first South African/US joint wine venture.
- Meanwhile, Mark Wilkinson, director of the Cape Winelands Airport, as well as Kevin Campbell of Delta Air Lines, will be outlining the business case for air access to the Winelands.
- Francois Rautenbach, formerly of Singita, a highly successful group of luxury lodges across Africa, will look at the benefits of tourism and wine partnerships. He established Singita's successful Premier Wine Direct programme that allows guests to buy and ship wines home that they have enjoyed on safari.
- Other specialist tourism speakers include Eric Matkovich, founder of leading US wine importer Cape Ardor, who will talk on the lifetime value of a tasting room sales conversion; and Xania van der Merwe, a seasoned wine marketer and customer experience manager, who is set to discuss key principles of creating a successful wine tourism business.

Wesgro CEO, Wrenelle Stander will open the conference.



Source: Supplied

Several workshops will be run after the presentations, with a report-back session scheduled to conclude the conference before an informal wine tasting by Stellenbosch Wine Route.

[More information here.](#)

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