

Innovation and Partnerships to Make Wine Tourism Driver Rural Development

Alentejo, Portugal, 10 September 2021 – *Innovation, partnerships and enhanced coordination are essential for making wine tourism a driver of rural development. That was the takeaway message from the 5th UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism, held this week in Alentejo, Portugal, around the theme “Wine Tourism – a driver for rural development.”*

Aligning with the central focus of World Tourism Day 2021, due to be celebrated 27 September, the Conference brought public and private sector stakeholders together to identify ways to maximise the sector’s potential contributions to inclusive growth. Also on the agenda was advancing digital transformation, marketing and promotion and the conservation of nature through a thriving wine tourism sector. Around 150 people attended the conference in person, with many more joining virtually to hear from a wide range of experts, from wine producers and distributors to tour operators, destinations and media.

Connecting tourists to territories

Opening the event, UNWTO Secretary-General, Zurab Pololikashvili: “The pandemic has strengthened the role of tourism in advancing rural development. Wine tourism and its connection with the territory, local products and traditions opens new opportunities to advance jobs and inclusiveness in rural areas”.

Joining Secretary-General Pololikashvili for high-level panel discussions were Rita Marques, Secretary of State of Tourism of Portugal, Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, State Secretary to the Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, Sofia Zaharaki, Deputy Minister of Tourism of Greece and Mariam Kvrivishvili, Deputy Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia.

The Minister of State, Economy and Digital Transition for Portugal, Pedro Siza Vieira, affirmed: “Wine tourism is at the forefront of our National Plan for Tourism. Its mission is to reach more visitors, from more countries, around the year, all over Portugal.” He also announced the launch of the Portuguese Wine Tourism website and a first Wine & Travel Week to be held in Porto, in February 2022.

Growing demand for authentic experiences

Wine tourism is in increasing demand as consumers look for more open-air experiences in rural areas in the post-pandemic era. The conference stressed the importance of developing the whole tourism value chain to complement the activities at the wineries as a means to create more jobs and businesses, promote local products and improve the visitor experience.

Mayor of Reguengos de Monsaraz, José Calixto added: "Local Authorities play a decisive role in enhancing the built and intangible heritage of winegrowing territories. For Reguengos de Monsaraz, this conference was the most important moment of the Vine and Wine history in the largest wine-producing regions in Portugal and will provide a further boost to rural development."

The Conference was held on **8-10 September 2021, in the village of Monsaraz in the Alentejo region**, in collaboration with the Government of Portugal, Turismo de Portugal and the Municipality of Reguengos de Monsaraz. The Italian village of Alba in Region Piemonte will host the 2022 edition of the UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism.

The Minister of Tourism of Italy, Massimo Garavaglia, said "The wine and food sector is increasingly proving to be a fundamental lever for Italian tourism. And it will be even more so in the future. For these reasons, the appointment next year in Italy of the sixth edition of the World Conference of Wine Tourism is doubly important."

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