
9th UN Tourism Global Conference on Wine Tourism

The Art of Wine Tourism

6-7 October 2025, Plovdiv, Bulgaria

Programme Outline

Background and Objectives

Wine tourism stands at the intersection of cultural heritage, regional development, and creative expression. As the sector evolves, it increasingly embraces not only the tradition of winemaking itself, but also a wide array of complementary art forms and creativity that deepen the visitor experience and foster meaningful connections with places, people and stories.

The 9th UN Tourism Global Conference on Wine Tourism, to be held in **Plovdiv, Bulgaria**, a city with winemaking traditions dating back to 500 BC and a rich cultural legacy shaped by centuries of history, will explore the theme “**The Art of Wine Tourism**”. This edition will highlight the multifaceted relationship between wine tourism and the arts, positioning both as vital tools for protecting heritage, promoting creativity and enhancing the attractiveness of rural and wine-producing destinations.

The conference will broaden the definition of "art" to include architecture, music, literature, visual and performing arts, but also the art of culinary traditions, of hospitality, design, as well as digital and experiential storytelling. From vineyard landscapes and traditional winemaking techniques to the crafting of wine glasses and the staging of immersive tastings, every aspect of the wine tourism value chain is a form of art worthy of discovery, preservation, and celebration.

This shows that wine tourism is a stage for cultural exchange, sustainable local development and innovative experiences that resonate with diverse travellers, including younger generations and those seeking low- or no-alcohol options.

Through a dynamic programme of **panel discussions, expert presentations, masterclasses, and thematic visits**, the Conference will bring together **policy makers, destinations, entrepreneurs, academicians** and **experts** from around the world. The aim is to explore how wine tourism can:

- Serve as a driver of **economic diversification and social inclusion**;
- Promote the **preservation of cultural traditions and heritage**;
- Leverage **art and creativity** to enhance visitor engagement and community pride;
- Support **regional cohesion and resilience** in the face of global change;
- **Foster environmental sustainability** and protect biodiversity;
- Embrace innovation to shape the **future of tourism in wine regions**.

By showcasing both established and emerging practices, and encouraging collaboration across sectors, the 9th UN Tourism Global Conference on Wine Tourism will reaffirm the sector's role as a catalyst for sustainable development—where the art of winemaking and the art of experience come together in one of Europe's most culturally rich wine destinations.

Sunday, 5 October 2025**Venue:** International Fair Plovdiv

15:00 – 18:00 Registration

17:30 – 19:30 Visit to the Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis and Plovdiv's Urban Wine Festival

Venue: Plovdiv Drama Theatre

19:30 – 22:00 Welcome Cocktail

Monday, 6 October 2025**Venue:** International Fair Plovdiv09:00 – 09:30 *Transfer from official hotels to venue¹*

08:00 – 10:00 Registration

10:00 – 10:50 **Opening Ceremony**10:50 – 11:00 **Venturing into the art of wine making**11:00 – 11:45 **Wine Tourism as a Driver of Sustainable Development – Perspectives from Leading Wine-Producing Countries**

This session will explore the opportunities and key enablers for developing and promoting wine tourism as a driver of sustainable and inclusive tourism development. It will highlight national strategies, policy frameworks, and collaborative initiatives that support innovation, cross-border cooperation, and regional route development. Particular focus will be placed on strategic partnerships and coordinated efforts to position wine tourism as a competitive and integrated segment within broader tourism agendas.

11:45 – 12:30 **Special High-Level Session: Unlocking the Potential of Regional Tourism in South-East Europe**

This session will explore how wine, culture, and connectivity can serve as key drivers of regional tourism development in South-East Europe. It will highlight the potential of cross-border wine routes and shared cultural assets to foster regional cooperation, co-creating new opportunities for the region's tourism offer. Discussions will focus on the policy frameworks, joint programmes, and strategic partnerships needed to enhance international visibility, drive innovation in wine tourism experiences, and position the region as an integrated and attractive destination.

¹ Detailed transfer schedules will be available at the official hotels.

12:30 – 12:45	Blending Wine Tourism and Culture: In conversation with...
12:45 – 13:15	Wine Exhibition tour led by Minister of Tourism of Bulgaria <p>Participants can expect an immersive journey into the rich winemaking traditions of Bulgaria. Delegates will have the opportunity to taste indigenous grape varieties such as Mavrud, Rubin and Shiroka Melnishka Loza, revealing the history and character of Bulgaria's wine regions. Expert sommeliers and winemakers will be on hand to share insights into the unique terroir and techniques behind each bottle.</p>
13:15 – 14:30	Lunch
14:30 – 14:50	Thinking Outside the Box
14:50 – 15:40	Wine Tourism and the Arts: What makes an experience unique <p>Integrating the arts into wine tourism—whether through gastronomy, music, design, or cultural expression—adds emotional depth and a strong sense of place to the visitor experience. As travellers increasingly seek authentic, creative, and inclusive activities, there is a growing opportunity to reimagine how wine tourism is designed and delivered. This session will explore how destinations and businesses can create distinctive experiences that connect wine with diverse forms of art, appeal to evolving audiences (including the sober-curious), and elevate the identity of wine regions. It will also examine how innovation across the value chain, strategic partnerships, and emerging technologies like AI and blockchain can enhance authenticity, traceability, and personalization, while generating shared value for communities, visitors, and the environment.</p>
15:40 – 16:00	<i>Transfer from venue to masterclasses locations</i>
Venue(s): Various locations	
16:00 – 17:30	Thematic Masterclasses <p>In a highly interactive and participative atmosphere, participants will have the opportunity to gain in-depth insights into a topic of their choice, while exchanging challenges and exploring solutions to issues facing the industry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masterclass 1 – A Culinary Canvas: Enhancing Wine Tourism through Gastronomic Art (Plovdiv Regional Ethnographic Museum) <p>Explore how local cuisine, culinary traditions, and creative food pairings can elevate wine tourism experiences and strengthen the connection between territory, identity, and taste. The session will also discuss sustainable practices across the entire wine tourism experience, from eco-friendly production methods to waste reduction and resource conservation, emphasizing the role of sustainability in wine pairing and gastronomy.</p>

- **Masterclass 2 – Staging the Moment: The Role of Events in Wine Tourism** (City Art Gallery)

Discover how cultural, artistic, and seasonal events can activate wine tourism destinations, attract diverse audiences, and create memorable experiences that blend storytelling, place, and celebration.

- **Masterclass 3 – Spaces that Speak: Culture, Museums and the Power of Place in Wine Tourism** (Bishop's Basilica of Philippopolis)

Explore how cultural spaces—such as museums, interpretive centres, and thoughtfully designed wineries—play a vital role in showcasing local identity, honouring the terroir, and offering immersive experiences that attract both domestic and international visitors. This session will highlight how architecture, storytelling, and cultural programming can elevate a wine destination's appeal while reinforcing its authenticity and sense of place.

- **Masterclass 4 – Lights, Camera, Terroir: Audiovisual Storytelling in Wine Tourism** (City Art Gallery – Exhibition Hall 2019)

Explore how wine tourism experiences can be brought to life through powerful storytelling, creative interpretation, and engaging cultural narratives. This masterclass will highlight how wineries and destinations use a range of tools—from visual arts and design to immersive experiences and digital content—to convey the identity of a place, celebrate its terroir, and connect emotionally with diverse audiences. Learn how thoughtful communication strategies can inspire visitors, elevate local heritage, and position wine tourism as a meaningful cultural experience.

17:30 *Transfer back to official hotels*

19:30 *Transfer from official hotels to gala dinner venue*

Venue: Ancient Theatre of Philippopolis

20:00 – 22:00 **Gala Dinner** *(by invitation only)*

Savour Bulgarian cuisine while enjoying a captivating live performance, set in the breathtaking Ancient Theatre of Philippopolis, one of the best-preserved Roman theatres in the world and a symbol of Plovdiv's rich cultural heritage.

22:00 *Transfer back to official hotels*

Tuesday, 7 October 2025**Venue:** International Fair Plovdiv

08:30 – 09:00	<i>Transfer from official hotels to venue</i>
09:30 – 09:45	Sharing is Caring <p>In this interactive session, participants will be encouraged to engage in the conversation via a live survey, contributing their views on the topics discussed in the masterclasses on the previous day, as well as current challenges and opportunities for wine tourism.</p>
10:00 – 11:00	Panel Debate: Wine Tourism Excellence in Action <p>Organized by the Great Wine Capitals Global Network, this session will feature outstanding case studies from leading wine regions around the world. Speakers will share best practices that highlight how creative strategies, cross-sector collaboration, and a strong connection to local identity and heritage have driven successful, innovative wine tourism initiatives.</p>
11:00 – 11:15	Global Wine Tourism Trends: The art of understanding the market
11:15 – 11:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:45 – 12:00	Get Inspired! The Art of Communicating Wine Tourism <p>Discover how emerging technologies, creative storytelling, and sensory design are transforming the way wine tourism is experienced and communicated. From immersive media and interactive exhibitions to digital narratives and multi-sensory journeys, this masterclass explores how destinations and wineries can craft compelling visitor experiences that celebrate terroir, engage international audiences, and honour local culture in fresh, inspiring ways.</p>
12:00 – 12:45	Panel Debate – Crafting the Future: The art of the human touch <p>As wine tourism evolves into a more sophisticated, multi-dimensional sector, the need for targeted education and capacity-building grows stronger. From hospitality to heritage interpretation, from digital storytelling to the arts, this session will explore how skills development and training must adapt to support the new generation of wine tourism professionals. Through an interactive format, the session will aim to identify concrete actions and recommendations to strengthen human capital across the wine tourism value chain.</p>
12:45 – 13:00	Conclusions
13:00 – 13:15	Closing Ceremony

13:15 – 13:45	<i>Transfer to technical tours</i>
14:30 – 18:00	Technical Tours (lunch and visit to selected wineries)² <i>(for international participants)</i> <i>Participants will choose their preferred option during online registration. First-come, first-served basis. Participants may be re-located if maximum capacity is reached.</i> Option 1: Starosel Winery and Wine & SPA Complex Option 2: Midalidare Estate
<i>(time tbc)</i>	<i>Transfer back to official hotels</i>
<i>(time tbc)</i>	<i>Transfer from official hotels to Farewell Dinner venue</i>
Venue: Plovdiv	
20:00 – 22:30	Farewell Dinner <i>(for international participants)</i>

² More details about the technical tours are available on the Conference's website