

Wine in India surprised us: the lesson learned from Sula Vineyards

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Sula Vineyards in India, a pioneer in Asian wine tourism, welcomes over 500,000 visitors annually. With inclusive experiences, sustainable practices, and a vibrant atmosphere, Sula has become a cultural and wine tourism icon. This winery exemplifies the fusion of wine, education, and hospitality, offering lessons in innovation and adaptability for the global wine industry.



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After exploring wineries in **Europe, Africa, America**, and we are waiting for our **Australian** adventure at the end of December, Asia became a mandatory stop. That's how we found ourselves in **Nashik**, at **Sula Vineyards**: India's most famous and visited winery and a true giant of **Asian wine tourism**.


Sula Vineyards: a story of vision and adaptation

Founded in **1999** by **Rajeev Suresh Samant**, Sula was born from an insight cultivated in the hills of Nashik, a region already renowned for **table grapes**. Rajeev, with a **Stanford education** and work experience in **California**, transformed his family's land into a **visionary project**. Not only did he establish India's first winery, but he also became a **benchmark** for the country's entire wine industry.

Wine tourism without borders where experience is central

What's striking about Sula Vineyards is their ability to **welcome everyone**, excluding no one. **Families, young people, wine enthusiasts**, and casual visitors, they can all find an experience tailored to their needs. With **two resorts, four restaurants** (including one Italian, a tribute to our culinary culture), a **wine shop**, a **panoramic bar**, and a winery that is always open to visitors, Sula is a **microcosm of wine tourism**.

Every year, they host over **half a million visitors**, with tours running at a rapid pace: **every hour** on weekdays and **every half-hour** on weekends, each with around **twenty participants**. This **unrelenting flow** doesn't stop at guided tours: visitors can enjoy a glass at the **wine bar**, dine at the restaurant, have a picnic, or simply soak in the **scenic views**.

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Even the **youngest visitors** can find their space: the tours are inclusive, and the setting – which is enriched by **temples** and natural landscapes – perfectly complements an **experiential tourism** model.

Events are a significant asset for the company: one of the most original initiatives is the **Sula Wine Fest**, held every year in February. It's the **third-largest festival in India**, featuring **live music, markets, gourmet food**, and, of course, **wine tastings**. This event, that will reach its **14th edition in 2025**, attracts young people from around the world and serves as a brilliant example of how wine can become a **cultural catalyst**.

Sustainability in every aspect

Sula is a **well-oiled machine**, excelling not only in hospitality but also in production. Across over **1,200 hectares** between Nashik and Bangalore, they produce **14 million liters** of wine annually, spanning **35 labels**. While their main market is India, they export to **30 countries**.

Sustainability is central to their philosophy: from the use of **solar panels** to converting their vineyards to **organic practices**, and even choosing **plastic stoppers** to keep wines fresh at reduced costs. The workforce is also a priority: most agricultural workers have **long-term contracts**,

ensuring **stability and expertise** in vineyard management.

What can we learn from Sula?

Sula Vineyards teaches us that becoming a reference point in the wine world means investing in **people** and in the **quality of the experience**. Sula's educational programs, which range from **wine tastings** for consumers to **specialized courses** for distributors and industry professionals, demonstrate that **knowledge is a key tool** in fostering a wine culture.



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In a country where Sula's wines dominate the domestic market but reach only **2% of the population**, the company has chosen to focus on the **domestic market** rather than overly pursuing export opportunities. This strategy of prioritizing

the **internal wine culture** reflects a clear and forward-thinking vision.

Sula Vineyards reminds us that success isn't measured solely in sales but in the ability to **educate, engage, and inspire**. It's a lesson the Italian wine world, with its rich tradition and vast potential, could embrace to strengthen connections with consumers and build a solid foundation for the future.

Key points

1. Sula Vineyards welcomes 500,000+ visitors yearly with inclusive, vibrant wine tourism experiences.
2. Events like Sula Wine Fest integrate music, food, and wine, attracting global audiences.
3. Sustainability drives Sula's practices, from organic vineyards to solar energy use.
4. Strategic focus on domestic wine culture strengthens Sula's market leadership.
5. Innovative marketing circumvents India's alcohol advertising restrictions.