Wine tourism in Italy: are we really that “behind” the rest of the world?

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Italian wine tourism shows surprising parity with global standards in visitor numbers and international appeal. While perceived as lagging behind, Italy is actually experiencing rapid maturation, with average visitor spending jumping 28% in two years. The challenge isn’t attracting visitors – it’s transforming emotional hospitality into a structured, profitable business model that measures returns systematically.

As a professional who deals daily with winery strategies, I often find myself facing a mix of enthusiasm and frustration. The enthusiasm is for the immense potential of wine tourism that I see every day, the frustration is for the widespread narrative that always positions us “one step behind” foreign models, as if we were doomed to an amateur approach.

For this reason, every time new industry reports come out, my first reaction is to try to understand whether this perception is supported by facts, or whether it’s just an old preconception.

I compared two reports: the Global Wine Tourism Report 2025 by Great Wine Capitals and other authoritative bodies, which captures the global scenario, and the Wine Tourism and Direct-to-Consumer Sales Report 2025 by Winesuite/Divinea, which analyzes our domestic market instead. And the results are anything but obvious.

Italy is not behind in numbers, but in method

Let’s start with a curious fact: the average number of visitors to Italian wineries is practically identical to the global average (median of 1,500 visitors per year). And even the origin of tourists (58% Italian, 42% foreign) perfectly mirrors the global one. In other words, we are not a country “only for Italians” and we have nothing to envy global competitors in terms of attractiveness.

Where differences emerge is in terms of model maturity. The global report shows wineries, especially in the so-called New World, that have built their strategy around wine tourism as a primary source of income. In Italy, on the contrary, the path has been reversed: hospitality was born as “courtesy of the house,” and only in recent years has it been transforming into a structured and planned economic activity.

The real positive signal: value is

growing, not just volumes

Yet, and this for me is the most important data of all, there is an unequivocal signal that tells of an Italy in full evolution: **the average spending of visitors in wineries has grown by 28% in just two years, going from €140 to almost €178.**An impressive leap, which cannot be explained only by inflation, but by a profound cultural change.

Wineries are learning to give value to experiences, to charge the right price for them and, above all, to convert them into direct sales.

In a context where visits are growing, but not exploding, this is precisely the key: increasing value per visitor. Less “passing through” tourism, more valuable experiences, more loyalty. It’s a sign of entrepreneurial maturity, even before tourism maturity.

Not less profitable, but less aware

So while in the world 65% of wineries define wine tourism as “profitable or very profitable,” in Italy we don’t yet have an equivalent figure. But be careful not to draw hasty conclusions.

My thesis is that it’s not because the margins are lower, but because there is a lack of full economic awareness of the phenomenon. Many companies do not systematically measure the returns of hospitality, or they confuse them with wine sales in general. Yet, where monitoring and seriously managing the channel has begun, the results are extraordinary. It’s proof that profitability doesn’t depend on the country, but on the business model.

That’s why I chose this title. Italy is not “less profitable” in wine tourism: it’s simply in a transition phase. We are moving from an emotional approach to a managerial one, and the data proves it.

While the world runs on consolidated models, we are (finally) building our own rules, and we're doing it quickly. The challenge today is no longer attracting visitors, but knowing how to transform them into customers. And I'm certain: in this field, Italy, with its ability to excite, to tell stories and to welcome, starts with a definite advantage.

Key points

1. **Italy matches global averages** with 1,500 annual visitors per winery and 42% international tourists
2. **Average spending increased 28%** in two years, reaching €178 per visitor
3. **Italian wineries are transitioning from hospitality as courtesy** to structured business
4. **The real gap lies in economic awareness and measurement**, not profitability potential
5. **Italy's strength**: converting emotional experiences into loyal customers