The real limit of wine tourism is human resources

scritto da Lavinia Furlani | 31 Marzo 2026



Italian wine tourism doesn’t suffer from a lack of excellent wines, but from a shortage of professionals capable of enhancing them. According to Wine Tourism Hub, 43% of wineries identify the lack of human skills as the main obstacle to their business. Communication and language skills beat technical wine knowledge: hospitality is not a cost, it is the product.

Let’s start with a figure

In the latest Wine Tourism Hub surveys, 43% of Italian wineries identify the lack of adequate skills and human resources as the main obstacle to the development of their wine tourism business. Forty-three percent. Almost half of the sector admitting, in black and white, to having the wrong

people – or simply no one – managing hospitality.

This is not a statistic to be filed away in a PowerPoint.

That number tells us something precise: we have invested decades in the vineyard, in the cellar, in technology. **We have hired renowned oenologists, marketing consultants, export specialists.** Then a tourist arrives – often foreign, often willing to spend, often already in love with Italy before even setting foot in a winery – and is welcomed by an improvised figure, overloaded with roles, w**ho by the afternoon has already led three tastings and answers emails between one glass and the next.**

Timing is a symptom, not the problem

There is a great deal of talk about booking slots that are too tight, guests who feel like they're on a conveyor belt, visits compressed to the bone. It's a real issue, but it is almost always treated as if it were a planning problem. It is not.

When a winery cuts time to the bone, it usually does so because a single person must manage three groups within two hours. **The conveyor belt is the direct consequence of having too few trained people to handle too many visitors with any dignity.** As long as we read timing as an operational problem and staff shortages as a separate structural problem, we won't get anywhere. They are the same thing.

What is truly needed is not learned in the vineyard

The Wine Tourism Hub survey is clear about the most sought-after skills for the Hospitality Manager in wine companies: communication and relational skills come first (36.2%), language skills second (31.5%). Technical wine knowledge – what wineries tend to value most during selection – comes only third, at 27.7%.

This tells us something very important: what makes the difference between a mediocre visit and a memorable experience has very little to do with knowing how to cite tannins, and everything to do with reading the room, shifting register, **holding a tasting in English with a buyer from Hong Kong and ten minutes later welcoming an Italian family with bored children.** These skills can be learned. But they require time, investment, and above all, the willingness to stop treating hospitality as a residual cost to be minimised.

A question the sector keeps avoiding

35.8% of wineries identify support for staff training as their top financial priority. Good: the sector knows where the knot lies. But how many of these wineries have a structured internal training plan? How many have ever built a partnership with a tourism school, a hospitality institute, a dedicated university course?

How many treat the Hospitality Manager as a professional figure with a growth path, rather than as "the one who does the tastings"? Italian wine is extraordinary. The countryside, the landscapes, the history – an asset no other country in the world can replicate. Wasting it with rushed, improvised hospitality – that would truly be the missed opportunity.

Punti chiave

1. **43% of Italian wineries identify lack of skilled human resources** as their main business obstacle.
2. **Communication and language skills** are more valued by visitors than technical wine knowledge.
3. **Timing problems in winery visits are a direct consequence of understaffing**, not poor planning.
4. **The sector knows training is a top financial priority**,

but few have structured programmes in place.

5. **Improvised hospitality risks wasting Italy’s unique landscape,** history, and wine heritage.