Wine tourism models in comparison: France, Portugal and Spain

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After two years of taking us around Italy, our vintage camper Gino went 6.000 kilometres across Europe this year. We visited more than 50 wine companies between Portugal, Spain and France to understand their wine tourism models and their welcoming level.

What emerged, which is valid for all the above-mentioned countries, is that **wine tourism is seen nowadays as an extraordinary opportunity all around the world's wine nations.** It is not even possible to draw up a precise ranking of the best Countries from a wine tourism point of view, even if, undoubtedly, **South Africa and California (especially Napa and Sonoma) represent the main reference point in the wine tourism front.**

Our goal was not to draw up rankings, but to try and understand **how to learn how to turn the enormous potential of the wine tourism industry into a viable business opportunity.** To do this kind of analysis, it is useless to deny it, there is no need for vague theorizing, but **we need the concrete study of the winning case history** (together with projects which, instead, do not work), which means the companies' visits that are trying to invest efficiently on the welcoming front.

For this reason, without aiming to be presumptuous, **we believe that having visited in the last 3 years almost 450 wine tourism companies around the world, corroborates us as an authoritative source of analysis** in the development of the wine tourism to an international level.

This European tour brought us further in-depth analysis and considerations which will be the object of many more articles and precious contents for our educational activity.

France

Let's start from France which remains **the most prestigious wine Country in the world.** After many visits in the historical French wine areas such as Champagne, Borgogna and Bordeaux, this year we focused in one of the most trendy wine tourism areas in the world, the Provence, which, thanks to its very much appreciated rosés, saw its notoriety grow extraordinarily even in the wine front.

I have to admit that **I was very disappointed with the Provence wine tourism level.** Given the rosé's success and the notoriety of many companies from this evocative territory, so appreciated in the tourism front too (it is sufficient to quote the legendary Cote d'Azur), I expected something more. Or, to be precise, I expected companies to be able to offer more experiences and not to concentrate almost exclusively on the product.

The cellar and the wines were the cardinal points of the greater part of the wine tourism visits in the Provence land with very few exceptions, among which Château La Martinette, in Lorgues – which surely deserves a notice – where it is possible to live a series of extraordinary experience (from yoga in the vineyard to a first level food service).
But, surely, it must give someone pause for thought how the majority of the wine tourism realities, in particular the so-called old Europe, keeps concentrating exclusively on the product experience. There is nothing bad about it, but it is undeniable that this intercepts only partially the expectations of the greatest part of the wine tourists.

The idea that cutting ties with wine lines risks undermining the company's reputation in the wine world, particularly for larger producers, **is firmly entrenched.**

Spain

From Provence we moved to Spain, in the most famous producing area: **La Rioja.** A territory which, especially during the last decade, developed many wine tourism activities and, not by chance, right in this denominations there are two of the most beautiful and famous cellars also from the international wine tourism point of view: **Marques de Riscal e Ysios, where the "esthetic" and "architectural" elements play a key role in the company's image qualification.**

It has to do with **a wine tourism model which we could define "wine villages or citadels",** where the greatness and the peculiarities of the territories represent fundamental elements of the company's welcoming and attractiveness. A model which, to some extent, is very similar to the wine tourism format of the new world. And, looking at the number of visitors which register the two realities mentioned above, it is undeniable that it is a model which attracts many European wine tourists. These are places where wine is important, but it does not represent the main reason of the visit.

It is clear that in La Rioja, as well as in Provence, **there are different companies typologies and, as a consequence, different welcoming models,** but this does not mean that the greatest realities are often also those giving the most relevant imprinting to the wine tourism offer of a territory.

Portugal

Finally, Portugal and, in particular, the Douro, maybe one of the wine territories which had the most profound transformation in the last 20 years becoming from denomination only focused in the Porto production to **one of the most diversified wine areas at international level.**

Here, the wine tourism is “written” from the Douro river which not only characterizes the territory in an indelible way from the landscape point of view, but it is also the main logistic path for the wine tourism flow. It undoubtedly serves as **the best example of how to utilize a “natural” factor to promote tourism in a wine region today.**

These are just the first few observations of general nature which emerge from our Wine Tour 2022; shortly we will share other details and in-depth analysis aimed especially to study better the **best ways to develop the wine tourism in our country.**