

Could Stellenbosch rival Napa Valley in wine travel?

According to Clay Gregory, president and CEO of Visit Napa Valley who will be a headline speaker at [The Business of Wine and Food Tourism Conference](#) in Stellenbosch on 1 and 2 November, "Stellenbosch has the potential to become as significant as the Napa Valley."



Clay Gregory

He believes South African already has the skills and assets, but lack the investment. "You have the wine, the people, and the natural beauty to rival any wine tourism region of the world. But South Africa first needs to spend more on marketing and getting the region top of travellers' minds," he says.

Wine travel market

Market research by Destination Analysts of San Francisco, on behalf of Visit Napa Valley, showed that 3,3 million tourists visited Napa Valley in 2014, an increase of 11% on the prior year, spending \$1,63 billion (R22,82 billion), of which \$1,2 billion (R16,8 billion) was spent in hotels. By contrast, Conningarth Economists estimated the entire wine tourism industry of South Africa's Western Cape to be worth R4,8 billion (\$358 million) in 2013.

The size of the global wine travel market alone is estimated to be \$17 billion (R238 billion), and the culinary travel market is estimated as \$25 billion (R350 billion). This has encouraged local tourism entrepreneur Margi Biggs to convene South Africa's inaugural The Business of Food and Wine Tourism Conference. Her goal is to provide insights and practical information that not just Stellenbosch, but all of the local industry can use in growing business to

realise the still vastly untapped potential.

Potential to lure food/beverage travellers

In a recent article published on [Hotel Business Review](#), Erik Wolf, executive director of the World Food Travel Association, explains: "if we look around our entire planet, there are a few destinations that stand out with the underdeveloped potential to lure food/beverage travellers. These destinations include Poland, Ecuador, Chile, South Africa, Finland and Iceland, just to name a few. What qualifies these as up-and-coming destinations? The reasons are many and include quality, diversity or uniqueness of local products; entrepreneurial proclivity of food/beverage manufacturers and providers; and destination readiness to receive foodie travellers."



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Gregory is one of four international speakers who will take the stage at the conference. Australian Peter McAtamney who runs an international wine business consultancy will present on creating and delivering a world-class wine, food and tourism experience, including how South Africa can promote its key points of competitive advantage. Other international speakers are Felicity Carter, editor of the authoritative Meininger's Wine Business International, based in Germany, and Dr Robin Back, a US-based academic who conducts wine tourism research in both South Africa and the US.

A bright future

Currently, tourism in South Africa provides employment for 4,5% of South Africa's workforce nationally, and in the Western Cape accounts for 204,000 formal jobs. The Western Cape Government's Provincial Strategic Plan has set a goal to grow employment in this sector by 60%, adding another 120,000 formal jobs by 2019.

"With the wine industry working together with government, who are set to launch the first-ever National Wine Tourism Strategy at the conference, the future looks bright," says Biggs.

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