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Hawke’s Bay Wins Global Wine Conference

The New Zealand region will host the Great Wine Capitals annual gathering in 2026 for the first time in years.

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Hawke’s Bay, New Zealand, will host the 26th Great Wine Capitals International Annual Conference from Oct. 18 to 22, 2026, bringing one of the wine industry’s main global gatherings to the Southern Hemisphere for the first time in several years and placing the region’s wine tourism sector in front of international buyers, tourism officials, wineries and media.

The conference is the flagship event of the Great Wine Capitals Global Network, which links major wine destinations including Bordeaux, Mendoza, Napa Valley and Adelaide. Organizers said registrations are now open for delegates from across the international wine and tourism community. The event will be held under the theme “A World of New,” with a program built around keynote talks, roundtable discussions, trade meetings, networking sessions, winery visits, hosted dinners and regional excursions.

Hawke’s Bay joined the network in 2023, and its selection as host marks a notable step for New Zealand’s wine tourism profile. The region is known locally as New Zealand’s Food & Wine Country and has built a reputation for red blends and Chardonnay, along with a growing hospitality sector that draws visitors for cellar-door experiences, cycling routes and coastal scenery.

Jo Collins, president of the Great Wine Capitals Global Network, said the timing was important as the wine sector faces pressure from changing markets and broader industry shifts. She said the conference would give members a chance to exchange ideas and strengthen cooperation across regions.

Kim Thorp, the Hawke’s Bay ambassador for Great Wine Capitals, said the region would use the conference to show delegates more than its vineyards. She pointed to the area’s Art Deco architecture in Napier, its mountain and coastal landscapes and its network of trails through wine country as part of what visitors will see during the five-day event.

The region’s soils range from the Gimblett Gravels to limestone ridges and clay hillsides, conditions that support a wide mix of grape varieties and styles. Organizers said pre- and post-conference experiences are being developed with local businesses to extend delegates’ stays and highlight nearby food, wine and tourism offerings.

The conference comes as wine regions compete more directly for travelers who are looking for destination-driven experiences tied to food, culture and landscape. For Hawke’s Bay, hosting the event offers a chance to present itself not only as a producer of wine but also as a place that can attract international business travel tied to tourism development.