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Fine Italy puts wine tourism at the center of Italy’s wine strategy.

Wineries now treat hospitality as core business after visits generated €3.1 billion in 2025, or 21% of revenue on average.

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For Italian wineries, welcoming visitors is no longer a side activity. It has become a real source of revenue, a marketing tool and a way to build direct relationships with consumers. But industry figures and event organizers say that even as wine tourism

expands, it cannot replace exports, which remain the main pillar of Italy’s wine economy at a time of weaker global demand and growing trade pressure.

That tension is likely to shape this year’s edition of Fine Italy, a trade fair focused on wine tourism that will be held in Riva del Garda on Oct. 27 and 28. The event, organized by Riva del Garda Fierecongressi in partnership with Feria de Valladolid, is presented as Italy’s only trade show dedicated specifically to wine tourism. Its latest edition, in 2025, generated more than 1,440 targeted business meetings involving 76 exhibitors and 74 buyers from 24 countries, according to the organizers.

The fair arrives as Italian wineries continue to invest in hospitality. Across the country, producers have expanded visitor programs with on-site restaurants, guided excursions on foot, by bicycle or by Vespa, yoga sessions in vineyards and cooking classes. For many wineries, these offers are meant to do more than attract tourists for a day. They are designed to strengthen brand recognition, encourage direct bottle sales and turn visitors into repeat buyers after they return home.

The financial impact is increasingly visible. A first report on Italian wine tourism, prepared by UniCredit and Nomisma Wine Monitor in collaboration with Vinitaly and the National Association of Wine Cities, found that winery visits generated more than €3.1 billion in value for Italian wine companies in 2025. On average, that represented 21% of company revenue.

The same report said Italy topped 13 million wine tourists in 2025, linked to more than 20 million overnight stays. Those figures help explain why wine tourism has become one of the most discussed growth areas in the sector, especially as producers search for ways to offset pressure on traditional sales channels.

Still, the export picture is much more difficult. Data from the Wine Observatory of Unione Italiana Vini, based on Istat statistics, showed that Italian wine exports ended 2025 at €7.78 billion, down 3.7% from 2024. Volumes fell 1.9%.

The United States, Italy’s largest export market for wine, was a major source of the decline. Export value to the U.S. dropped 9.2%, with a sharper slowdown in the second half of the year, according to the trade group’s analysis. Industry observers linked that

weakness to U.S. tariffs and a weaker dollar. By contrast, some European markets were more resilient, with Germany and France posting gains.

That gap between stronger tourism income and softer overseas sales is central to the current debate in the Italian wine business. Dario Stefàno, president of the Wine Tourism Studies Center at Lumsa University and a wine producer in Puglia, has argued that wine tourism should be seen as a strategic lever rather than a cure-all. In his view, it helps producers deepen their relationship with consumers, build reputation and create loyalty, but it cannot by itself carry the finances of a sector whose international sales are still worth nearly €8 billion.

That distinction matters for producers because the two channels serve different roles. Hospitality can bring higher-margin direct sales and help wineries tell a story about place, food and culture. Exports, by contrast, still provide the scale needed to support production across large parts of the country. For beverage companies more broadly, that makes wine tourism an important complement to sales strategy, but not a substitute for access to retail, restaurant and import markets.

Alessandra Albarelli, director general of Riva del Garda Fierecongressi, has said that wine remains one of the most dynamic segments of international tourism even as global wine consumption slows. In that context, she has described Fine Italy as a response to a practical market need: a place where tourism demand can meet wineries and destinations, while industry professionals update their knowledge and build long-term commercial ties.

This year’s event is expected to draw both individual wineries and regional groups from some of Italy’s strongest wine tourism areas, including Emilia-Romagna, Piedmont, Puglia, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige and Veneto, as well as participants from Spain. Buyers are expected from Central and Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, the United States, and Central and South America.

The program will include conferences, debates and workshops, with national and international roundtables centered on the development of wine tourism. Travel agencies and tour operators are expected to play an active role in those discussions. Other sessions will feature leading destinations presenting strategic plans and case

studies. Among them is Saint-Émilion in France, the first wine-growing territory to be listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, a place often cited as an example of how a wine region can build international recognition through tourism as well as through the wine itself.

For Italy, that example carries both promise and caution. The open winery has become a valuable image builder and a direct sales channel, and many producers now treat hospitality as a core business line. But with consumption trends shifting, health concerns affecting drinking habits, economic uncertainty weighing on spending and trade barriers still hurting exports, many in the sector say the industry’s compass must remain fixed on international markets even as the cellar door becomes more important.