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Diageo launches first Chinese whisky distillery with $120 million investment

Diageo brings whisky production to China with YunTuo distillery

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Diageo has officially launched its YunTuo Single Malt Whisky Distillery in Eryuan County, Yunnan Province, with a planned investment of US$120 million over the next nine years. This project marks the UK-based spirits multinational's first whisky production site in China. The opening ceremony took place on November 15, 2024, and Diageo's CEO, Debra Crew, emphasized the significance of the moment, describing the distillery as a landmark for Diageo in the country. Crew expressed confidence in the growth potential of Chinese whisky, highlighting the company's extensive portfolio of Scotch whiskies, which includes notable brands like Johnnie Walker and Talisker.

The YunTuo distillery, situated 2,100 meters above sea level, draws inspiration from its environment, with its name rooted in local geography: 'Yun' (云), meaning 'clouds' and associated with 'Yunnan,' and 'Tuo' (拓), meaning 'exploration.' Diageo has designed the facility to be carbon neutral, utilizing spring water from the Erhai highland lake and incorporating local materials, such as Yunnan oak, for maturing whisky in casks. The site's environmental considerations are in line with Diageo's global sustainability goals.



Operational leadership at YunTuo will be managed by Jiao Changyi, with oversight from renowned industry experts, including Master Blender Craig Wallace and Master Distiller Andrew Millsopp. Jim Beveridge OBE, a highly respected figure in whisky blending, will also provide guidance. The distillery features a visitor center, which Diageo believes will boost local tourism and contribute to the economy. Crew described the facility as a "beacon of local whisky culture," aiming to elevate YunTuo as a notable player in both the Chinese and global whisky markets.