

Global wine experts taste the best of SA, a Great Wine Capital

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By Melissa Keogh

South Australia's wine regions are being showcased on the world stage this week as the state plays host to an international gathering of wine industry heavyweights.

The Great Wine Capitals annual meeting is being held on November 3–9 and marks Adelaide's first hosting of the event since joining the [exclusive global network](#) in 2016.

About 100 delegates from the ten Great Wine Capitals of the world have descended on the state's wine regions and capital city to explore the theme 'Old World; New World; Our World'.

The Great Wine Capitals is an exclusive network of ten cities, each home to internationally renowned wine regions. Members include Bilbao/Rioja (Spain), Bordeaux (France) Lausanne (Switzerland), Mainz Rheinhessen (Germany), Mendoza (Argentina), Porto (Portugal), San Francisco Napa Valley (US), Valparaiso Casablanca Valley (Chile), and Verona (Italy).

Government leaders and representatives, wine industry associations, wineries, viticulturists, academics, chambers of commerce, media and key influencers will undertake the week-long exploration of SA.



Great Wine Capitals delegates Pascal Faugere, left, Jacques Faurens, PIRSA's Jo Collins, Sylvain Boivert, Penfolds' Peter Gago and Patrick Seguin. Photo by Andy Steven Photography.

Delegates will enjoy a range of culinary experiences across Adelaide's CBD, the Clare Valley, Riverland, Coonawarra, Barossa Valley, McLaren Vale, Langhorne Creek and Adelaide Hills.

A gala dinner on November 8 at the Adelaide Botanic Gardens will reveal the International Best of Wine Tourism award winners, giving recognition to the top wineries from across the 10 capitals.

PIRSA's executive director agriculture, food and wine, Jo Collins, says the successful bid for Adelaide to host the 2018 AGM has been two years in the making. Last year's global gathering was held in Chile.

She says the benefits of SA playing host include the building of ongoing relationships with world leaders in wine, as well as showing delegates first-hand "what we do and how well we do it".

"Wine is a product you experience rather than merely consume," Jo says.

“For our network colleagues to have the opportunity to enjoy the diversity of our wine in unique locations and in the company of great people will create lasting memories and relationships.”



Delegates began the week-long tour by exploring Adelaide’s CBD. Photo by Andy Steven Photography.

Jo says members of the Great Wine Capitals network don’t view each other as competitors, but rather help to promote each another and work together to help grow and protect the industry on a global scale.

Since Adelaide, South Australia, was unanimously voted to become a Great Wine Capital, a number of collaborations and activations have unfolded including a partnership between Bordeaux’s KEDGE Business School and the University of Adelaide to accelerate wine industry education.

Wine museum La Cité du Vin in Bordeaux is another benefit, with a selection of SA wines on show and available for tasting to thousands of visitors.

SA winemaker Peter Gago, who is behind Australia’s most iconic wine, Penfolds Grange, was appointed the inaugural Great Wine Capitals global ambassador in 2017.

Peter often travels overseas during non-vintage to spread the word about the network and SA’s wine industry as a whole.



Great Wine Capitals global ambassador Peter Gago shares with delegates at Penfolds. Photo by Andy Steven Photography.

He says there is still work to be done in getting the word out about the Great Wine Capitals network, however people are familiar with the names of SA's wine regions.

“In terms of the world of wine I have been speaking at Wine Spectator’s New York Wine Experience and I have found that people have no issue with talking about Adelaide, people are aware of it and know of these places like the Coonawarra, Clare Valley and Adelaide Hills,” Peter says.

SA is home to 18 wine regions, 720 wineries, 3400 grapegrowers, and 350 cellar doors – 200 of them within an hour’s drive of the city.

Our state produces 80% of the country’s premium wine, and we are also home to some of the oldest vines in the world thanks to rigorous biosecurity measures that have kept our vines free from the pest phylloxera.

At any one time almost one billion bottles of wine sit on tables and in cellars around the world with SA’s name on them.

Adelaide, South Australia’s membership to the Great Wine Capitals Global Network is a collaboration between the SA Wine Industry Association, PIRSA, the SA Tourism Commission and Brand South Australia.