



Travel Industry TODAY



HOME

ABOUT VIDEOS COLUMNISTS CONTACT SEARCH



A NEW ZEAL ON THE EDGE OF THE EARTH

Quenching the Wine Hobbit

Steve Gillick

SHARE ON FACEBOOK



02 JUN 2014: Jim Robertson summed it up pretty clearly. “We live and make wine on the edge of the earth. After New Zealand all you have is Antarctica and penguins”. Robertson, in his role as Global

Wine Ambassador at Pernod Ricard, was one of twenty-seven New Zealand wineries and winemakers represented at the “New Zealand in a Glass” event in Toronto on May 08.



Most of those present indicated that they were already engaged in some form of tourism, ranging from short tasting visits, to full days that included bicycling through the vineyards, learning hands-on about New Zealand Falcons and Conservation, enjoying aerial views of the vineyards by helicopter (with stops, of course, for tasting) and spending time with the owners and their families to better appreciate the ‘terroir’, meaning ‘a sense of place’, and referring specifically to the geography, geology, climate, soil composition and human history of each wine growing region.

The Experiential Potential

But the winemakers also indicated that there is much more that can be done to enhance the experiential potential of wine tourism. One noted

that it's like the Disney philosophy where you create more visual and hands-on experiences to provide visitors with the option of staying longer at the destination. And a sure means of doing this is to educate travellers about New Zealand wines and make the industry itself one of the 'wants and needs' of travellers.

Not that New Zealand has a problem when it comes to satisfying travel dreams. Adjectives such as 'stunning, staggering, awesome, amazing and thrilling' are tossed about effortlessly when it comes to describing views such as Milford Sound's mountains, waters and waterfalls; Tongariro's active volcano, or Rotorua's geysers and hot springs. And these words carry forth when visiting the Franz Joseph Glacier by foot or helicopter, or immersing yourself in the ocean at Kaikoura.

Aside from the natural attraction-visual thrills, there are the Ringers (sometimes called Tolkienists or Fandoms) who would definitely include the movie-set recreations of Middle Earth and the Shires of Hobbiton in Matamata, as a type of sensory thrill based on their appreciation of Lord of the Rings, The Hobbit and other works by J.R.R. Tolkien.

And there are the physical thrills for which New Zealand is well known, starting with bungy jumping 440 feet over the Nevis River in Queenstown, then floating through the Lost World Cave on inner tubes to explore the Haggis Honking Holes at Waitomo, and possibly concluding at Fly By Wire, at Paekakariki near Wellington where visitors can practice soloing 'in a high-speed tethered plane'.

In addition there are the museums, galleries,

beaches, dining, sports attractions, shopping and more, that comprise New Zealand's tourism bounties.

Drinks for DINKS

Jim Robertson noted that New Zealand currently produces 170 million litres, less than one percent of the total world wine production and with noticeably less shelf space in Canadian liquor stores than most other countries, the focus of New Zealand's wine industry has been on quality, not quantity.

According to several of the winemakers, the typical wine tourist is a free and independent traveller, not bound by the timetable restrictions of a package tour. They tend to stay longer at the destination and spend more on a per day basis. Dr. John Forrest, of Forrest Wines was quite upfront in referring to these travellers as "DINKS" ♦ double income, no kids. He noted that the Marlborough area in which his winery is located ♦ should be on every traveller's bucket list as one of the world's great wine regions".

Haysley MacDonald of Te Pa Family Vineyard echoed this sentiment by proudly boasting that his family has owned their land near historic Wairau Bar for 800 years and as custodians of the land, their vineyards reflect ♦ the clean, green, crisp image that new Zealand portrays to the world' and their Sauvignon Blanc in turn reflects this with a fruity, clean, fresh taste.

Haysley and the other Marlborough and Nelson area winemakers may be great marketers but their products speak for themselves. The general rule in New Zealand is "Hawkes Bay-Red/Marlborough-

White” (but there are many exceptions to this).

Hawkes Bay, situated on North Island, is the second largest growing area in the country and features some of the best Pinot Noir’s: full flavour without overwhelming the taste buds. The staff manning the Sileni Estates booth said that 35-40 cruise ship lines might visit Hawkes Bay and the town of Napier on an annual basis and many are already opting for winery tours as the main emphasis of their visit.

Marlborough, on south island, accounts for over 60 percent of the wine growing area in the country. It’s famous, first and foremost for Sauvignon Blancs that are delicate and fruity. But Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Chardonnay are also grown. Jim Robertson talked about creating the visitor experience which goes hand in hand with bringing the taste of New Zealand to other countries and creating a sensory demand. And on that note he proudly claimed that wine tourism is commissionable to travel agents - a smart move to engage travel advisors to want to learn more about the product and in turn, interest their clients, in an ♦everyone wins’ travel strategy.

CRM is out ♦ CRE is the new ♦ smart’

It’s all part and parcel of the new era of CRM (customer relationship management) which is yielding ground to the more appropriate acronym: CRE-customer service engagement. You might ♦manage’ relationships through software packages or spreadsheets, but the concept of ♦managing’ relationships could be conceived as being somewhat controlling and over-reaching.

♦Engaging’ relationships is more inclusive as it

sets the tone and the goal for the relationship right off the bat. It reveals your intentions as a travel consultant and ideally, promotes creativity in the many ways in which you might engage your clientele.

And wine tourism is one of those engagement mechanisms.

For instance, having an agency-based tasting of food and wine from New Zealand (or any destination you wish to feature) is a form of relationship engagement as you mind-map the destination and impart a lasting impression on the client's travel thoughts. Short of organizing an entire evening, keep a few bottles of wine from various countries on hand and provide tastes when the appropriate circumstances arise.

New Zealand's zeal for promoting wine tourism is a \$2 billion dollar (NZ and CDN) a year industry and growing.

Through coverage in wine and dining magazines, Food TV and public tastings, New Zealand is going for the WOW factor in educating travellers to explore other facets of the country. It's all about quenching the thirst for more than just hobbits and gob-smacking scenery. Middle-Earth certainly seems like the place to be travelling these days.





Steve Gillick

A tireless promoter of "infectious enthusiasm about travel", Steve delivers his wisdom once a month in his column *The Travel Coach*.

[Read more from Steve Gillick](#)

Comments for this thread are now closed

Important Update

When you log in with Disqus, we process personal data to facilitate your authentication and posting of comments. We also store the comments you post and those comments are immediately viewable and searchable by anyone around the world.

- I agree to Disqus' Terms of Service
- I agree to Disqus' processing of email and IP address, and the use of cookies, to facilitate my authentication and posting of comments, explained further in the Privacy Policy

Proceed