

ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

For **Sirromet Wines**, a strategic location between Queensland's Gold Coast and Brisbane City is a key factor in attracting the international tour market. The creation of a world-class resort style facility situated on 500 acres overlooking vineyards and natural vegetation with distant sea views helps too.



But even more important is the strategic approach to identifying and working with key tourism attractions and tour operators to create packages that appeal directly to the target markets.

Jason Thomas is Sirromet's Tourism Development Manager, and while he's the first to admit that catering to international visitors is a "constant learning curve", he's done his research and observed some major differences between the domestic and international visitor.

"International visitors wish to experience 'Australiana' via wildlife or nature experiences, adventure activities and even Australian wine and food. Often, these are elements Aussies take for granted and so do we as tourism operators. While we don't want to dilute the international visitor's Australian experience, we must pay particular attention to how we accommodate their expectations. An easy mistake to make is to attempt to service international tourists the same way we do domestic visitors."

International visitors are often pressed for time and getting things like menu selections right can require considerable effort. Promotions in cellar door to encourage spend by offering an assortment of product (including non-wine merchandise), wine sales, delivery logistics and even tendering of foreign currency all play a major role in Sirromet's evolution to provide the visitor with the best possible wine and food experience.

Partnering for Success

Selecting key tourism partners has been a major factor in Sirromet's outstanding success in penetrating the international market.

"Since working with the already established and respected international tourism export products of Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort and Dreamworld (to a much lesser degree) Sirromet's penetration of the international tourism markets of Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan has been fast tracked. What would have taken years of research and gradual establishment of trust in the market took months thanks to Tangalooma's Director of Sales, by introducing Sirromet to key operators. This led to itinerary inclusion in several programs."

"Before considering this kind of alliance, it is most important to understand the tour patterns and desired experiences of the various international groups. In our case, we have a great geographical advantage complemented by a wine tourism facility of the highest quality."

Going to Market

Jason believes it is equally important to form alliances and whenever possible leverage sales and marketing initiatives with your Regional, State and National tourism authorities.

"At Sirromet we work with Tourism Queensland, Gold Coast Tourism, Brisbane Marketing, Redlands Tourism, Japan Tourism Association of Queensland and even Tourism Australia. They all have a roll-on effect as they maintain an ongoing presence in markets that are traditionally difficult to stay front-of-mind in."

There are financial advantages in working closely with these organisations too. "Partially subsidised sales missions are offered, but more importantly, these tourism bodies are likely to recommend your product for meaningful media visits or tourism industry familiarisations. Sales missions coordinated Tourism Queensland and Gold Coast Tourism has proven to be an efficient way of obtaining a foothold in the marketplace. As well as the subsidies, they completely organise meetings and travel schedules leaving us to focus on what we are there to do - promote our particular product while adding to the overall appeal of the destination."

Now if you're planning an overseas jaunt, consider Jason's advice: "On any of these overseas sales missions, an open mind to unfamiliar customs is crucial as hosts are generally very proud of their way of life. Enjoy it. You might find yourself eating jellyfish or other sea creatures that are still showing signs of life or become embroiled in excessive "toasting" to "prosperity and *good* health" - despite how you're likely to awaken in the morning. In fact, it's how you back up the day after that can have a profound effect on the level of respect you earn from both your peers (especially potential alliances) and those you are seeking to build a profitable future with!"

Of course, you don't always have to travel overseas to meet the inbound tour operators. Sirromet is a regular at Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) held annually in Australia and hosted by Tourism Australia.

Tour Operator Itineraries

Sirromet offer a range of day and charter tours to domestic and international tour operators. Following are three examples designed for the international market.

Operator: JTB Australia (Japanese Wholesaler)

"Lifestyle Package Tour" available in main JTB brochure, booked in Japan

A high-end package tour that incorporates an overnight visit to the Gold Coast Hinterland followed by a wine and food experience at Sirromet (lunch, tour, tasting) that then proceeds to Tangalooma Wild Dolphin Resort for a further night.

Operator: Bonza Australia (Japanese Wholesaler)

Daily, Japanese optional tour

The tour departs Surfers Paradise and visits North Stradbroke Island via ferry returning to Sirromet Wines for a two-course fine dining experience at Restaurant Lurleen's followed by a comprehensive wine tasting session.

Operator: Escape Holidays (New Zealand Wholesaler)

Tailored for NZ self-drive market to S.E. Queensland

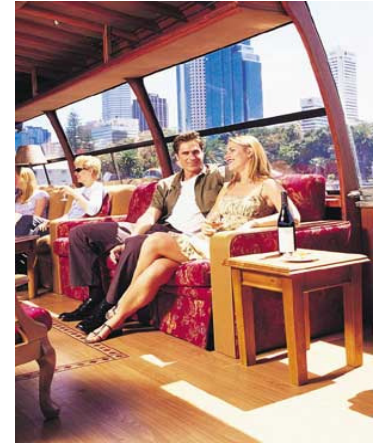
Available for pre-purchase from several NZ retail travel agents, it includes a visit to Sirromet's Restaurant Lurleen's for a two-course fine dining experience followed by an informative winery tour and tasting session. Visitors also receive a souvenir tasting glass.

Creating Post-Visit Sales

The demand for wine sales from the Japanese visitor market has become so strong that in March 2004 Sirromet established a wine division in Japan called Classic Wine Co. This distribution arm of Sirromet provides Japanese visitors with an opportunity to have wine delivered anywhere in Japan within 48 hours of the order being placed. Order forms are supplied at the winery (in Japanese) for visitors. The system alleviates the need for the traditional carry-on-board wine packs and the associated duty conditions.

Sandalford Wines is one of Western Australia's oldest and largest privately-owned wineries. In June 2005 it was awarded 'Best Wine Tourism Facility' by the WA Wine Industry. The company has made great in-roads selling to the overseas market, particularly in Asia and Europe. CEO Grant Brinklow talks about the operation.

"I think our entire wine tourism operation sets us apart. It's regarded as one of the finest in Australia. We have over 100,000 tourists coming through our winery on the banks of the Swan River; on any given day there's a group of tour buses sitting outside, plus an event or function of some sort. Today, for instance, Massey Ferguson is having a field day."



The experiences at Sandalford are unique. They include a bilingual winery tour, a gold plate restaurant, wine appreciation classes, function facilities, a gift emporium, custom-built theatre and a premium river cruise that takes visitors from Perth up the Swan River to the winery.

Sandalford also hosts concerts, including the annual "Symphony at Sandalford", which this year featured Harry Connick Jr and the 100-piece West Australian Symphony Orchestra.

"We work with tourism bodies to attract international visitors, mainly from Asia – Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and now India – and Europe. We also have a partnership with the JTB (Japanese Tourist Board) and cater to a lot of tourists from Japan, so our Japanese language tours are a big point of difference for us. We've considered installing other languages as part of the tour, specifically European languages and Chinese, but most Europeans speak English these days and the demand isn't yet sufficient to offer Chinese – although it's only a matter of time."

"It's important that we maintain a presence at tourism industry events. This year we were the only WA winery at the Australian Tourism Exchange in Perth, and only one of a handful from across Australia. However, tourism accounts for not less than a third of our revenues."

"We treat our wine-making and tourism as separate enterprises, but there's obviously a lot of cross-over. We want to ensure our wines are regarded as among the finest premium wines both domestically and overseas, and wine tourism is helping us achieve that. We've ensured our tourism products reflect the standing of our wines. For instance, we're building new accommodation – a day spa and gourmet retreat – and that's very much at the premium end of the market."

"Our wines are regarded highly by critics in the wine industry, and now our wine tourism is being recognised highly by critics among the hospitality and tourism industry."