



Grape Expectations for Expansion in the Greater Bay Area

Wine & Spirit Education Trust sees a field ripe for harvest ahead in its endeavour to enrich regional alcoholic beverage knowledge.

Lifestyle pursuits have gained enormous popularity as the Asia Pacific region enters a new phase of maturity. One of the most popular sectors to arise is the wine and spirit industry. Although some markets are well established, Mainland China and Southeast Asia are poised for expansion. That is where Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) sets itself apart.

WSET offers half a century of educational expertise in wine, spirit and sake for professionals such as sommeliers and consumer enthusiasts. In 2016, it opened its office in Hong Kong after considering factors such as business climate, ease of set up, and maintenance of its charitable status. "Hong Kong ticked all the boxes," explained Jude Mullins, Managing Director of WSET Asia Pacific Limited. "In addition, Hong Kong had been offering WSET courses at all levels since the late 1990s."

Growing Bigger and Stronger

In the past four years, WSET Asia Pacific has blossomed. From two people overseeing business development and quality

assurance, it has grown to a 12-strong business with finance, sales and marketing teams to support an increasingly wider geographical market. "We have more than 39 Approved Programme Providers in Hong Kong offering all of our courses in a range of formats," Mullins stated. "WSET's first ever Wine Education Week took place in September last year. It illustrated consumers' appetite for learning about wine, with more than 500 events in 52 countries—and more than a third of these in the Asia Pacific region. The feedback we have across the region is that there is a demand for more wine classes."

All signs are positive towards maintaining WSET's position as Asia Pacific's leading provider of wine, spirits and sake qualifications. "Last academic year, WSET's Asia Pacific business grew by 17 percent," she revealed. "We are expecting similar growth during our current academic year. We have just created another two business development roles, and one of them is dedicated to the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area."

Mullins found InvestHK's support invaluable when she first set up WSET Asia Pacific. "InvestHK gave us contacts with trusted suppliers such as estate agents and lawyers, and practical guidance including basics like how much we should expect to pay for electricity," she recalled. "We also participated in the first Hong Kong International Wine & Spirits Fair event in 2008 – and have been taking part every year since."

Furthermore, the Hong Kong-based Mullins loves the city's hardworking work ethic; efficient public transport system; and great pool of talent for recruitment. "And, on a personal note, The Peak hiking trail is very close to my home and heart," she said.

Wine & Spirit Education Trust Asia Pacific

- Established in 1969 in London, the Wine & Spirit Education Trust (WSET) opened its Asia Pacific office in Hong Kong in 2016 and has expanded from originally covering China market to currently overseeing the Asia Pacific region
- With 280 Approved Programme Providers in Asia Pacific, WSET's markets are on and off-trade professionals in the wine, spirits and sake industries as well as consumer enthusiasts

 wsetglobal.com

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Jude Mullins
Managing Director

Wine & Spirit Education Trust Asia Pacific