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The Wine Route in Argentina: History, Culture and Sustainable Contributions to the Economy and the Environment

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ABSTRACT

The Mendoza Wine Route can be conceived as a Latin American benchmark for the articulation of history, oenology, and culture, which embodies SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) in several of its goals. From a historical and heritage perspective, the network of irrigation ditches and public trees protects and manages an urban-productive oasis landscape that makes the Andean desert habitable and constitutes a natural and cultural asset in line with target 11.4 to protect cultural and natural heritage. This green and water-based fabric supports both the city (tree-lined streets, plazas, waterways) and the winemaking foundation that gave rise to the Wine Route. Mendoza (Argentina), is the heart of the South American wine industry because of its natural elements, production tradition, and the strength derived from distinct stages of the sector's growth. The Wine Route, running through the province's grape-growing districts, benefits the region's economy, society, and environment. Popular festivals and traditional uses of wine and grapes in gastronomy are expressions of this integration. Yet, economic and social development cannot be detached from environmental preservation. Hence, sustainable wine tourism routes organize wine areas to protect the biodiversity of productive systems and satisfy growing visitor interest.

Keywords: Wine Route; SDG 11; Mendoza (Argentina); Urban and Rural Areas; Sustainable Economy

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1. Introduction

Wine is one of humanity's oldest fermented beverages, with archaeological evidence dating back approximately 6,000–8,000 years in regions of the Caucasus and Mesopotamia ^[1]. Its relevance transcends the food dimension, extending to the cultural, religious, social, and economic realms, making it a symbol of collective identity and shared heritage on a global scale. Throughout history, wine has accompanied the evolution of Mediterranean societies and later colonial contexts in the Americas, Oceania, and South Africa. In Greece and Rome, it was integrated into daily life and philosophical thought, being considered a civilizing element ^[2]. Today, regions such as Bordeaux, Tuscany, and Mendoza consolidate the notion of wine as part of intangible cultural heritage, linked to traditional agricultural practices and grape harvest celebrations ^[3].

Wine plays a role in sociability, hospitality, and bonding. Various food anthropology studies highlight its function in rituals of coexistence and in the significance of life events ^[4]. In contemporary wine tourism, it is redefined as a cultural experience, integrating territory, gastronomy, and memory ^[5]. Wine is central to various religious traditions. In Christianity, it represents the blood of Christ in the Eucharist ^[6]; in Judaism, the Kiddush consecrates it as a symbol of blessing and sanctification ^[7]. In classical antiquity, Dionysus/Bacchus embodied it as a metaphor for fertility, pleasure, and ecstasy. As a universal symbol, wine reflects the transformation and transience of life. Contemporary viticulture is an economic engine for numerous regions. According to the International Organization of Vine and Wine ^[8], more than 7.3 million hectares are dedicated to grape cultivation worldwide, with an annual production of approximately 260 million hectoliters. This sector not only generates exports but also employment, tourism, and sustainable territorial development ^[9]. Wine has been interpreted as a bridge between nature and culture. Philosophers such as Hegel and Bachelard associate it with processes of transformation and the dialectic between the earthly and the spiritual ^[10]. Likewise, in literature, painting, and music, it has embodied metaphors of joy, passion, melancholy, and spirituality. Wine transcends its status as an agricultural product to become a multidimensional symbol, articulating history, culture, religion, economics, and

art. As such, it stands as an element of shared cultural heritage and as a vector of sustainable development within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities), linking territory, memory and global projection ^[11].

Symbolically, Mendoza wine represented the identity of the Cuyo region (Mendoza, Argentina) and the hospitality of its people, values that reinforced the collective spirit surrounding General Don José de San Martín's freedom drive. Today, cultural and wine tourism rescues this memory: traveling the Wine Route not only involves a sensory and gastronomic experience, but also a historical journey, where wineries and wine-growing landscapes overlap with the traces of San Martín's epic journey to the Andes and South American independence ^[12].

1.1. Relationship between the Wine Route and the General José de San Martín Campaign

The Mendoza Wine Route, now consolidated as one of Argentina's main wine tourism routes, not only refers to contemporary winemaking practices but also to a historical and cultural past deeply linked to General Don José de San Martín and the Liberation Campaign (1817). When General San Martín assumed the position of Governor-Intendant of Cuyo in 1814, the wine-producing region already played a strategic role in the local economy. The vineyards, introduced in the 16th century, provided not only wine for consumption and trade, but also derivatives (alcohol, vinegar) used in food preservation, home medicine, and military logistics ^[13]. During the preparation of the Army of the Andes, the coordination of the territory was key. The wineries, farms, and roads linked to winemaking were integrated into the supply system for mules, horses, food, and beverages. Wine and its derivatives were stored in clay jars and leather skins that accompanied the caravans heading for the Andes Mountains ^[14]. The basis of the army's diet was the "Valdivian": a base of crushed dried meat (charqui), fat, slices of raw onion, garlic, and boiling water. Very high in calories. Onion and garlic counteract altitude sickness. They could be carried in backpacks. They did not gain weight. They also served as food for mules and horses ^[15]. The army mules transported 113,000 of Mendoza wine. 1,113 mules carried 101 of wine each, in two 51 Bordeaux

cups on each side. Plus an average of 30 kg of other provisions, forming part of the basic diet of soldiers and officers.

To grasp the magnitude of what San Martín's liberating army accomplished, it's worth comparing it with Napoleon's feat of crossing the Alps. There are no intermediate towns between Mendoza and Chacabuco (Chile). It is an arid area, devoid of any resources, and the highest trails San Martín's army traveled are only 1 m wide. It crosses five mountain ranges, with heights of up to 4,500 m, and cannot carry carts or vehicles. It must cross a mountain range 350 km wide. Meanwhile, Napoleon crossed a mountain range 100 km wide, with maximum heights of 2,500 m, along regular roads, alongside towns, which allowed them to carry almost no supplies and transport everything on vehicles. Napoleon's crossing lasted only five days. Napoleon pursued an imperial and conquering objective. San Martín pursued a liberating objective ^[16-19]. The routes known today as the Wine Route in Mendoza, which include passes such as Uspallata, Portillo and Los Patos coincide with the historic routes used by the Army of the Andes to cross into Chile. These routes, now valued as

tourist attractions, were once strategic supply corridors and military advances ^[12].

2. Results

2.1. Entrance and Route to the Wine Route

National Route 7 "Libertador General San Martín Highway" (Decree No. 115,261/1942) ^[20] is an Argentine highway that connects the provinces of Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Córdoba, San Luis, and Mendoza. It is part of the country's most important bioceanic corridor and is a branch of the Pan-American Highway. It has a total length of 1,224 km. The route crosses Argentine territory from east to west, from the city of Buenos Aires to the Andes, which means it is a highway with high traffic for cars and trucks. In fact, the route is Argentina's main international connection and is also used to transport significant quantities of cargo by land to or from Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. **Figure 1** shows the elevation (0–3,500 m.a.s.l. (meters above sea level)) of the road within the province of Mendoza from 900 to 1200 km.

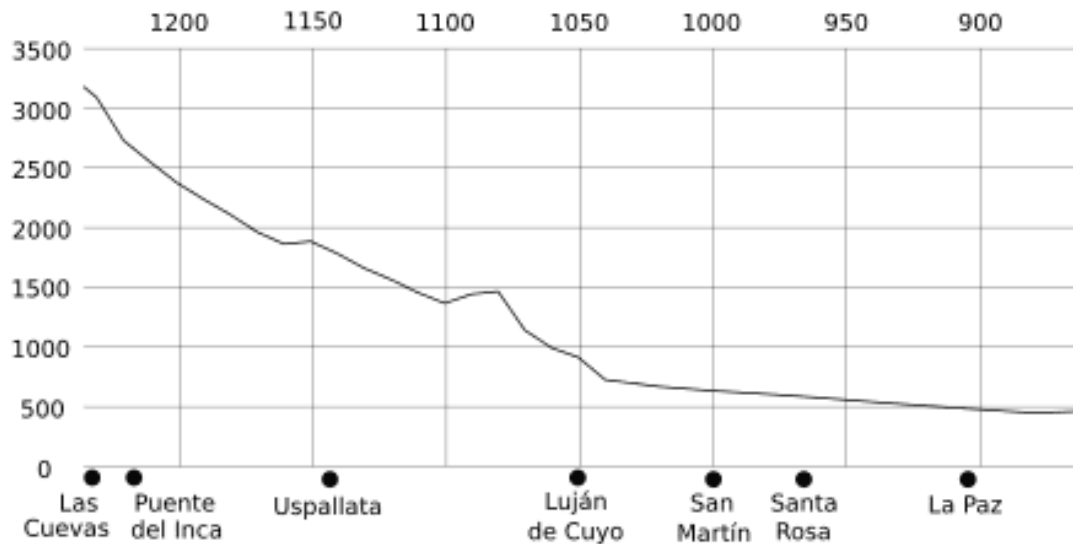


Figure 1. National Route 7 within the province of Mendoza

900-1200 km (upper x-axis).

Places: La Paz to Las Cuevas (lower x-axis)

0–3,500 meters above sea level (y-axis).

Route 7 enters the province of Mendoza through the department of La Paz. However, within the province, the most important department in the eastern part of the prov-

ince is San Martín (**Figure 2**) due to its history linked to General San Martín's Liberation Campaign. Las Bóvedas (**Figure 2**) is one of the architectural and urban heritage

sites still standing in the Cuyo region. It also features the fact that it stands on land connected to the life of General San Martín and also constitutes the core of an early 20th-century agricultural and commercial operation. Lo-

cated in the Chacra Sanmartiniana (San Martín Farm), it was declared a “Historic Site” on December 1941, according to Decree 107,512 of the Ministry of Justice and Public Education of the Nation.



Figure 2. (a) Location diagram of the General San Martín Department; (b) National Route 7; (c) Las Bóvedas Museum Historic Site at the entrance to said Department. (from left to right)

2.2. Grape Growing Regions of Argentina

To the west of the province, the route runs through the Main and Frontal mountain ranges, passing just 18 km south of Mount Aconcagua, the highest peak in America. This peak can be seen from the viewpoint located at km 1,222. Mount Aconcagua is a mountain in the Las Heras department, in the province of Mendoza, in western Argentina, near the border with Chile. It is part of the Main Mountain Range, a component of the Andes mountain range. At 6,960.8 m above sea level^[21], it is the highest peak in the southern and western hemispheres, the highest on Earth after the Himalayan system^[22] and the Pamir mountain range^[23] in Tajikistan (both mountain ranges in Asia), and therefore the highest in America.

Argentina is the 8th world's largest producer and exporter and is the 11th world largest consumer of wine. You hear Argentina and wine, you then think about their world known grapes of Malbec and Torrontes and the wines they produce from these grapes. Less heard of but very popular in Argentina is the traditional grape variety of Bonarda. It is the second most planted red variety in Argentina. The vineyards are located in semi-arid areas where the rainfall

ranges from 6 to 16 inches annually. This dry climate promotes vineyard health by not inviting pests and creating fungus loving environments. Also, the vineyards are being irrigated with the pure waters from the melting snow of the Andes Mountains. With less need for pesticides, here it is easy for the winemakers to produce organic wines^[24].

The grapes that represent the history of Argentina and the present Argentina are Malbec, Bonarda and Torrontes. However, Argentina also produces the following international red grape varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Merlot, Tempranillo, Sangiovese, and Pinot Noir in this order of production.

For the white grape varieties Argentina also produces: Pedro Gimenez, Chardonnay, Chennin, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon and Viognier in this order of production. The grape growing regions in Argentina stretch from latitude 22 degrees south to 42 degree south^[24] (refer **Figure 3**).

Mendoza is the main winemaking are of Argentina and more than 80% of Argentina wine is produced in Mendoza which includes 154.67 hectares of vineyards. Mendoza is broken up into five areas (refer **Figure 3**):

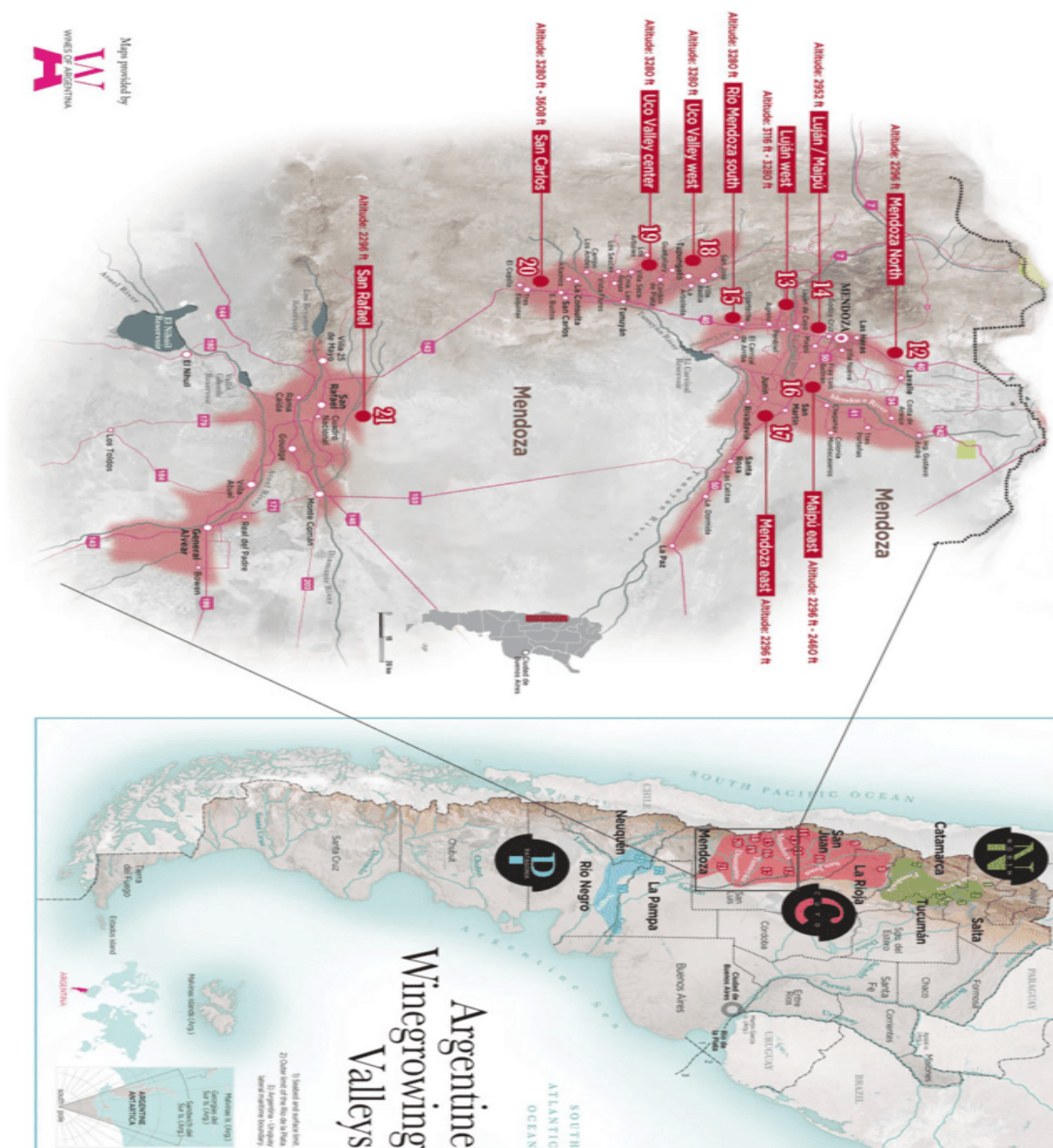


Figure 3. Grape Growing Regions of Cuyo: La Rioja (8); San Juan (9–11) and Mendoza (12–21).

1) *Mendoza Province – Northern Region*

The northern region has the lowest altitude ranges of 600 and 800 m above sea level with mild slopes. The soils are predominately fine sand. The region can grow such white wines such as Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin, Ugni Blanc and Torrontés, and for reds like Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Bonarda and Malbec.

2) *Mendoza Province- East*

The East of Mendoza has altitudes of 700 m above sea level. This sub region comprises the departments of Rivadavia, San Martín, La Paz and Santa Rosa. All the grape varieties grown in Argentina are found in the East, but Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin, Torrontés and Viognier stand out among the whites, and Sangiovese,

Syrah, Bonarda and Tempranillo stand out among the reds.

3) *Mendoza Province- Center*

This region covers the departments of Luján de Cuyo and Maipú and is known as the “premium winemaking area. It is located south of the city and at altitudes of 700 to 1,200 m above sea level. The region most popular grape is Malbec. Other red varieties found here include Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Syrah. Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc stand out among the whites.

4) *Uco Valley*

The Uco Valley comprises the Tupungato, Tunuyán and San Carlos departments. At 2,000 m above sea level, this sub-region has the highest altitude vineyards in the province. This area produces red and white grapes with the greatest aging ability. The traditional varieties here are the Malbec, Merlot and Pinot Noir of La Consulta district. White varieties grown in the area include Chardonnay and Semillon.

5) *Mendoza Province-South*

It comprises the San Rafael and General Alvear departments. The altitude of this region is 3,500 m above sea level. It is the main producer of Chenin. Other whites and reds are produced in this area, among which stand out Chardonnay, Malbec, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon.

2.3. Description of the Vineyards by Region and Subregion on the Wine Route

The description by region and sub region is as follows ^[25,26].

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| <p>a) Luján de Cuyo: Known as the First Zone, it is one of the areas with the greatest tradition, the one that gave rise to Malbec. It comprises the departments of Luján de Cuyo and Maipú. Most of the vineyards are old and are irrigated with groundwater. The soils are alluvial, deep, and predominantly composed of silt and clay. The highest districts are Vistalba, Las Compuertas, and Perdriel, all in the west of the Luján de Cuyo Department. These are the coolest and most sought-after areas for the production of fine wines of greater elegance. As we move eastward, the altitude drops rapidly while temperatures rise, forming distinct terroirs over a distance of about 20 km. Wines</p> | <p>from these three areas are full-bodied, with high natural acidity and more intense colors, conditions that diminish as we move eastward.</p> <p>a. 1) Barrancas: The name comes from the large cliffs along the Mendoza River. These cliffs feature numerous dry rivers where rainwater flows, forming cliffs and ravines. These cliffs are known as Huayquerías and are located 114 km from the city of Mendoza. They are sand and clay cliffs carved by water for centuries, and in some cases, exceed 50 m in height ^[27]. This was an important Huarpe settlement. This entire area, along with Cruz de Piedra and Lunlunta, was where the Spanish settled and began to develop agriculture, growing vines, olives, and wheat. Lunlunta: its name means “falling stone or sound of underground water.” It is located on the northern bank of the Mendoza River. Its streets are dirt, and the houses are made of adobe. It has hot, dry summers.</p> <p>a. 2) Perdriel: Located on the southern bank of the Mendoza River, in an elongated east-west strip in the department of Luján de Cuyo, just 20 minutes from the provincial capital. It is one of the bastions of Argentine winemaking. It has terraced levels with the stone visible on the surface. It is subject to frost. Agrelo is a 30 km by 10 km rectangle with mountain ranges. It is one of the classic areas for Argentine Malbec. It produces succulent and juicy wines, with clayey soils and a wide temperature range.</p> <p>b) The Eastern Zone is the largest wine-producing region in the province. It is crossed by the Mendoza River and the lower course of the Tunuyán River. It is comprised of the departments of La Paz, Santa Rosa, Junín, Rivadavia and San Martín. It is a plain home to a large variety of grape varieties. The climate is temperate, with a 210-day period of over 2,200 h of sunshine, favorable for vegetative development. The soils are generally of aeolian origin, with a sandy loam and silty sand texture, rich in potassium. Other soils are stony, with pebbles mixed with coarse sand and some silt, and some are saline. This is the bulk wine sub region and is home to the</p> |
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country's largest wineries. The main destination for grapes from the eastern region is the production of wines and musts. Tempranillo, Sangiovese, Barbera, Malbec, Bonarda, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chenin Blanc, Moscatel Rosado, Pedro Ximénez, and Chardonnay are grown.

- b. 1) Rivadavia: Deep soils, ranging from sandy to clayey. It is crossed by the Tunuyán River. It has approximately 15,542 hectares of vineyards. The varieties grown in rosé are called Cereza.
- b. 2) Junín: There is a winery training center that began to develop when the Enology Technician's Degree was established in the department. It emerges as an oasis, 93% of which is cultivated.
- b. 3) San Martín: At 600 meters above sea level, there are several vineyards. With sandy soils, in a hot, desert-like area. In addition to grapes, there is a strong production of plums and peaches.
- b. 4) Medrano: This is the coldest area in the east. Wines made from Bonarda and Sangiovese grapes are produced here. The wines from this region are fresh, fluid, fruity, and full-bodied.
- c) The Northern Zone is one of the lowest areas above sea level and is irrigated by the Mendoza River, encompassing the departments of Lavalle, and parts

of the departments of Guaymallén, Las Heras, and San Martín, and the lowest part of Maipú. The wines express low natural acidity and little color. This area produces white grapes for bulk wines such as Chenin, Pedro Giménez, Ugni Blanc, and Torrontés from Mendoza. Syrah and Bonarda are produced for red wines.

- c. 1) The Canota Valley is approximately 30 km from the city of Mendoza. The National Institute of Viticulture has approved the Geographical Indication for a production area of almost 17,000 hectares. It is bordered to the west by the Villavicencio Hotel (**Figure 4**) and to the east by Cerro Colorado. Among the red varieties planted are Malbec, Merlot; Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah; Pinot Noir, Canari; Pinot Meunier; Tannat; Lambrusco Maestri; Barbera; Sangiovese; Bonarda; Tempranillo; Cinsaut; Carignan; and Petit Verdot. White and rosé varieties such as Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay; Chenin; Sauvignon Blanc, Semillon, and Viognier are also planted.
- c. 2) Uspallata Valley: This valley extends south-north from the Mendoza town of the same name to western La Rioja, passing through San Juan. It has soils with sandstone, a sedimentary rock brought by alluvium. Its climate features wide temperature ranges and minimal rainfall (**Figure 4**).



Figure 4. Gran Hotel Villavicencio and Gran Hotel Uspallata. (photograph: N.G.) (from left to right)

- d) The Uco Valley is located between the 33rd and 34th parallels south. It is a valley formed by the Frontal Mountain Range and the Huayquerías region, with altitudes ranging from 900 m above sea level in the city of Tunuyán to 1,250 m above sea level in Tupungato, the foothills of the Andes Mountains. Winters are harsh and summers are warm, with mild days and very cold nights. The daily temperature range is around 15°C, which favors excellent color and tannin production in the grapes. The valley is approximately 110 km long and approximately 30 km wide.
- d. 1) Gualtallary in the north of the Uco Valley, Tupungato Department. The soils are alluvial, sandy, with a stony base and calcium carbonate sediments. Here lies the Monastery of Cristo Orante, founded in 1988. The temple is surrounded by a park and has an annex where products made by the monks, including the famous Malbec wine of Cristo Orante, are sold.
- d. 2) La Arboleda. A beautiful place for its poplar path, coupled with its Huarpe and Jesuit history. Vineyards and orchards frame the landscape.
- d. 3) Villa Bastías is the lower area of Tupungato. It mainly produces wines, apples, cherries, and walnut trees.
- d. 4) Vista Flores is located on an alluvial plain. It is a warm area where grapes have no problem reaching ripeness. It has loamy and stony soils along the coast of the Tunuyán River, west of Provincial Route 92.
- d. 5) Paraje Altamira, in the heart of the alluvial cone of the Tunuyán River, in the foothills of the Andes, is one of the most historic places in the valley, where vineyards over 100 years old can be found.
- d. 6) Pampa El Cepillo, south of Paraje Altamira, with a northwest-southeast slope and southeast exposure, is a fairly cold region of San Carlos. It has about twenty grape and wine producers who work specifically to highlight the more floral and fresh profile of the wines. It is a plain that slopes to the south and has soils composed of sand, caliche, and rounded stones. It is adjacent to the frontal mountain range, a very cool area that tends to freeze.
- e) Southern Zone
- e. 1) San Rafael is located 230 km from the city of Mendoza. Along with General Alvear and Malargüe, it is known as the southern oasis of the province. This area has a continental climate and marked temperature variations between day and night, contributing to the balanced and consistent ripeness of the fruit. The sandy-clay soils, rich in alluvial sediments, are rich in organic matter and calcium. The abundant snowfall in the mountains provides a greater flow of healthy and pure irrigation water.
- e. 2) In General Alvear, there is a winery with over thirty years of experience producing wines. The grapes from this region benefit from a wide range of temperatures, giving the wines intense colors, exquisite aromas, and freshness. The environment favors plant health, so the vineyards are treated twice a year. The soils are poor in organic matter and have a high mineral content, thanks to irrigation provided by the Atuel and Diamante rivers.

2.4. Sustainability of the Wine Route

The Mendoza Wine Route can be conceived as a Latin American reference for the articulation of history, oenology and culture, which embodies SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) in several of its goals^[28]. On a historical-heritage level, the network of irrigation ditches and public trees, with pre-Hispanic antecedents and consolidated by pioneering water management since the General Water Law of 1884 and the General Department of Irrigation, protects and manages an urban-productive oasis landscape that makes the Andean desert habitable and constitutes a natural and cultural asset protected by provincial legislation (Law 7874 on Public Trees), in line with goal 11.4 to protect cultural and natural heritage^[29,30]. This green-water fabric supports both the city (tree-lined streets, squares, water corridors) and the wine-growing base that gave rise to the Mendoza Wine Route origin of the Wine Route^[31]. In a complementary manner, in the sociocultural and ter-

ritorial dimension, wine tourism articulates traditional and contemporary wineries with gastronomic proposals, celebrations and cultural circuits, dynamizing local economies, favoring the generation of public spaces and accessible layouts (target 11.7) and promoting participatory and integrated planning processes between urban and rural areas (target 11.3) ^[32]. Recent research developed in Mendoza shows positive impacts of this activity on the economic, social and environmental levels ^[33], while sectoral policies, such as the PEVI 2030 sustainability guidelines, guide development towards parameters of responsible competitiveness and sustainability ^[34].

In this framework, heritage valorization (irrigation channels, trees, century-old wineries) together with productive innovation (irrigation technologies, environmental management, design of tourist experiences) converges in the construction of more sustainable, resilient and culturally dynamic communities, fully aligned with the framework and goals of SDG 11.

2.5. Tools for Measuring the Carbon Footprint and Global Code of Ethics for Tourism in the Wine Industry

Wines of Argentina, the organization responsible for promoting Argentine wine in global markets, reaffirmed its commitment to sustainability by developing the Catalog of Tools for Measuring the Carbon Footprint in the Wine Industry ^[35]. This initiative is part of the Red Sustenta Vitis Project, co-financed by the European Union, and seeks to support the sector on its journey toward more responsible and globally competitive practices. The carbon footprint is consolidated as a fundamental strategic indicator that not

only quantifies the environmental impact of winemaking activities but also boosts reputation, operational efficiency, and access to new markets. This indicator covers all greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions covered by the Kyoto Protocol, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O), generated throughout the entire product life cycle, from the vineyard to the final consumer. Its precise measurement, expressed in tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂ eq), allows wineries to identify critical points in their processes, optimize resources, manage risks, and meet the expectations of consumers, distributors, and regulatory frameworks ^[35].

As a fundamental frame of reference for responsible and sustainable tourism, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) (refer **Figure 5**) is a comprehensive set of principles designed to guide key-players in tourism development. Addressed to governments, the travel industry, communities and tourists alike, it aims to help maximise the sector's benefits while minimising its potentially negative impact on the environment, cultural heritage and societies across the globe. Adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization, its acknowledgement by the United Nations two years later expressly encouraged UN Tourism to promote the effective follow-up of its provisions. Although not legally binding, the Code features a voluntary implementation mechanism through its recognition of the role of the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) ^[36] to which stakeholders may refer matters concerning the application and interpretation of the document. The Code's 10 articles amply cover the economic, social, cultural and environmental components of travel and tourism ^[36]:



- 1) Tourism's contribution to mutual understanding and respect between individuals and societies
- 2) Tourism, an instrument of personal and collective development
- 3) Tourism, a factor in sustainable development
- 4) Tourism, a factor in leveraging and enriching humanity's cultural heritage
- 5) Tourism, an activity beneficial to destination countries and communities
- 6) Obligations of tourism development stakeholders
- 7) The right to tourism
- 8) Freedom of tourist movement
- 9) Rights of workers and entrepreneurs in the tourism sector
- 10) Application of the principles of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

Figure 5. Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

2.6. Protocol for the Sustainable Development of Argentine Viticulture

Self-Assessment Protocol for the Sustainable Development of Argentine Viticulture (hereinafter Protocol for the Sustainable Development of Argentine Viticulture) ^[37]. This Protocol is a tool to promote sustainable development in establishments that are part of the wine value chain: farms and vineyards, wineries, bottling units, warehouses, and offices in public and private organizations in the Argentine wine sector.

Providing a credential that highlights those sites where sustainability is integrated into daily operations, it is an innovative initiative designed to guide and promote sustainable practices in the wine industry. Sustainable development is one of the normative principles of development policies and was first defined in the 1987 report of the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, entitled “Our Common Future,” after which it received wide recognition. In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ^[38], and since then, the definition of sustainable development has been based on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Goals are not achieved solely through public policies ^[39], private organizations and companies must also be involved. The wine sector must play this role in achieving sustainability goals by implementing initiatives that take into account its specific characteristics:

- It maintains a close relationship with the territory, as well as with its history, culture, and customs
- It is based on agricultural production, which cannot be relocated, requiring specific professional skills and generating employment in rural areas at all levels, from agricultural workers to managers
- It produces products with high added value and significant export potential
- It utilizes endogenous resources from the genetic diversity of the vine (ancestral varieties, new varieties, genotypic diversity within vine varieties), which contributes to its appreciation and conservation
- It plays an essential role in the creation and conservation of the landscape

- It is the main factor identifying regions and has great potential for tourism development
- It is affected by the impacts of climate change and social changes
- It is open to technological innovations
- It prioritizes sectoral organizations, which is why the Protocol for the development of Sustainable Viticulture in Argentina enables the development and implementation of collective strategies.
- Assumes its responsibility in achieving the sustainable development goals set by the United Nations.

Likewise, the main challenges facing the wine sector regarding the adaptation of the sustainability strategy are worth highlighting:

- Maintaining a sustainable market that meets social expectations both within and outside the organization, in addition to supporting a competitive economic and productive fabric.
- Promoting public trust in winemaking farms through the implementation of the sustainability strategy.
- Stimulating sustainable viticulture, taking into account two objectives: preventing negative environmental impacts and adapting to climate change, through the adaptation of production practices.

This guide is part of COVIAR’s Strategic Viticulture Plan (PEVI) ^[40] and is designed to help winemaking organizations maintain economic viability and build trust in their operations through the implementation of sustainability strategies. The guide is based on OIV-CST Resolution 518-2016 ^[41] and was updated as of November 26, 2020.

2.6.1. Objectives of the Guide

For more information on the Cooperative Viticulture Sustainability Protocol, please consult the COVIAR Guide, which offers a practical guide for self-assessment of social responsibility and sustainability practices in the wine sector. As a management tool, it seeks to support organizations in incorporating sustainability and social responsibility into their business strategies. As a self-assessment instrument for their Social Responsibility and Sustainability practices and results, it focuses on compre-

hensiveness and accessibility to facilitate its application to all types and sizes of winemaking organizations, especially smaller ones, as a basis for communicating results to the public. Additionally, it aims to instill and promote Social Responsibility and Sustainability criteria in the selection, traceability, and control processes of the value chain.

2.7. Sustainable Wine Tourism

Sustainable wine tourism is a fascinating way to travel and explore the world of wine. It has become a growing trend in recent years. As more people seek authentic and meaningful experiences on their travels, wine tourism offers a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture, history, and, of course, the wines of different regions. However, as this industry grows, so does the need to address sustainability in wine tourism^[42]. Sustainable Wine Tourism is a practice that combines the appreciation and enjoyment of wine with a firm commitment to environmental sustainability and support for local communities. It focuses on promoting tourism to wineries and wine-producing regions that adopt environmentally friendly practices, such as organic farming and efficient water and energy management^[43]. From a winemaking perspective, the Mendoza region can be subdivided into four large regions, each with well-defined orographic and hydrographic characteristics: North, East, Center, and South. In each of Mendoza's Wine Oases, the winery offering is among the most comprehensive, offering options ranging from regular tours to more personalized sensory journeys. In Mendoza's four Wine Oases, the large concentration of wineries open to tourism allows for truly integrative tours, exploring museums, wine cellars, estates and old mansions, mountain ranches, large wineries, premium wineries, or family-run wineries, often run directly by their owners. All the landscapes are especially suitable for combining winery tours with adventure and rural tourism, encompassing snow, rivers, mountains, lagoons, caves, deserts, flora and fauna reserves, picturesque cities, and important museums. The various activities related to wine tourism have been defined based on the criterion of almost fully covering the diverse tourist experiences offered by wineries.

This scope or area of application is detailed below:

- Restaurant and gastronomy located at the winery
- Accommodation located at the winery
- Experiences offered in the vineyard and at the winery
- Sightseeing and tasting
- Talks
- Tasting with companions (cheese, preserves, chocolate, etc.)
- Aromatic descriptors
- Vineyard tours
- Pruning - harvesting - pitting
- Artistic activities, shows, performances, etc.
- Astrotourism
- Art galleries
- Community engagement in terms of the integration of the host community with the winery, through shows or integrative events
- Photo safaris

Figure 6 presents three locations:

- a) Tour of the Salentein Winery, located in the heart of the Uco Valley, Mendoza. Salentein is a global icon in the wine world for the excellence of its wine.
- b) Las Vegas is a small town 13 km from Potrerillos and 82 km from the city of Mendoza along Route 7, with a privileged location in the middle of a valley. There is also a small ecological reserve called "Divisadero del Plata," covering 5 hectares, created to preserve the region's native flora and fauna. Within the reserve, you can take a circular walking tour that borders the Cerro de la Virgen Mountain.
- c) El Manzano Histórico is a site with significant water resources and glacial masses, and is also the headwaters of several rivers and streams. This nature reserve is located in the department of Tunuyán, 120 km from the city of Mendoza. This area, located in a valley with an arid climate, surrounded by snow-capped peaks, ravines and prominent vegetation, was the place chosen by General José de San Martín to rest upon his return from the Liberation Campaign.

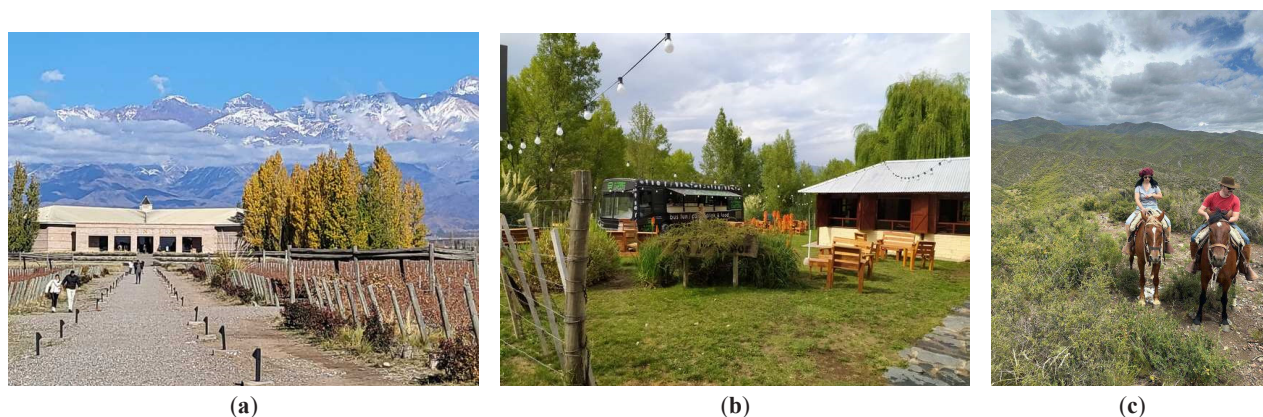


Figure 6. (a) Salentein Winery in the Uco Valley; (b) a country restaurant in Las Vegas (past Potrerillos); and (c) a horseback ride at the Manzano Historic (Tunuyan). (photograph: N.G.) (from left to right)

2.8. The Mendoza Wine Route

The Mendoza Wine Route was born as a tourism and cultural project based on the province's historical wine-making identity. Its origins can be understood in three stages:

1. *Historical Background (16th–19th Centuries)*

Vineyards arrived in Mendoza in the 16th century with Spanish colonizers and missionaries, who planted the first vines brought from Chile. In the 19th century, Italian and Spanish immigration boosted the expansion of vineyards, along with the construction of the railroad and irrigation systems based on ditches inherited from the Huarpe people. Mendoza consolidated its position as Argentina's main winemaking hub, especially after the arrival of French varieties such as Malbec.

2. *The Emergence of the Wine Route (1990s)*

In the 1990s, the Argentine wine sector reoriented itself toward quality and export. From there, the Wine Route was created as an organized tourist circuit, inspired by European models (France, Spain, and Italy), with the aim of showcasing the diversity of wineries (historic, family-run and modern), integrating gastronomy, culture, history, and landscapes with the wine experience, and promoting sustainable wine tourism. Thus, Mendoza was a pioneer in Argentina and soon became a Latin American benchmark.

3. *Consolidation and Present*

Today, the Wine Route encompasses more than 1,200 wineries, with around 200 open to tourism, distributed in Luján de Cuyo, Maipú, the Uco Valley, the Eastern Zone, and the Southern Zone (San Rafael). It is combined with

other experiences: signature cuisine, rural tourism, boutique accommodations, festivities such as the Fiesta Nacional de la Vendimia, and mountain activities. It is internationally recognized as a top-tier wine tourism destination.

4. *Variety of grapes*

The most widely grown in the province are Malbec, Barbera, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Merlot. Excellent white varieties are also grown, such as Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. The hectares of Malbec in Argentina are becoming a “national variety”, to the point where it is itself identified with Argentine wine. Michel Pouget^[44] settled in Mendoza in 1853, planting numerous grape varieties native to his native country, including Malbec, a strain that was very popular with the old winegrowers for its high yield, its health and the good color of its wines. It is currently the most widely planted red grape in the country (red grape (Malbec)). Numerous grape diversities^[45] are grown along the Mendoza Wine Route, both red and white, which give identity to Mendoza wines (**Figure 7**).

The red varieties (predominant in Mendoza, refer (**Figure 8**) are: **Malbec** is Argentina's emblematic grape, originating in Cahors (France). In Mendoza, it achieves great expression, with notes of red fruits, violets, and soft tannins. The **Cabernet Sauvignon** provides structure, firm tannins, and spicy notes and **Cabernet Franc** is increasingly valued, with herbaceous and elegant profiles. Furthermore, **Syrah** adapts well to dry climates, producing spicy and fruity wines. Meanwhile, **Bonarda**, the second most widely planted red grape variety in Argentina, produces pleasant, fruity wines with good acidity. **Merlot** is less widespread but performs well in cool areas, along

with **Tempranillo**, a traditional Spanish variety, producing full-bodied wines with good aging potential. Finally, **Pinot Noir** thrives in cool, high-altitude areas.

The white grapes (predominant in Mendoza) are: **Chardonnay**, which is widely distributed in the province, with fresh, fruity styles in high-altitude areas. It has great potential for complex wines. **Torrontés** is an Argentine

white grape variety, typical of the Northwest, but also present in Mendoza (particularly in the east). **Sauvignon Blanc**, meanwhile, is found in cool, high-altitude climates, with freshness and herbaceous notes. **Viognier** is grown on a smaller scale and produces aromatic wines. Finally, **Sémillon**, historically a regional variety, is now being revived and used for fresh, sweet wines.

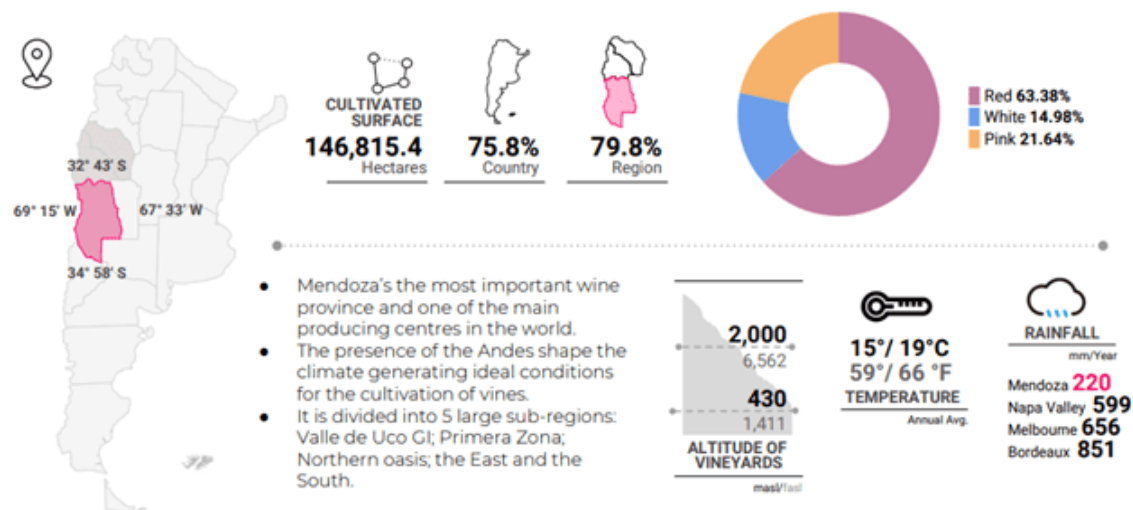
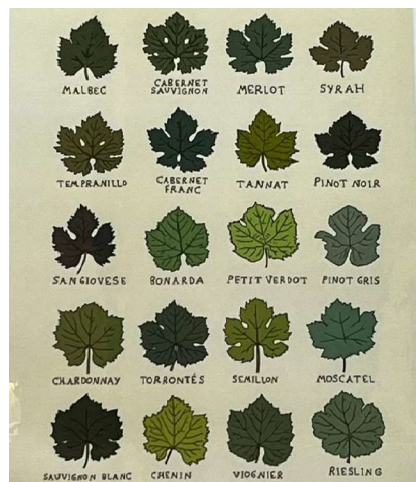


Figure 7. Variety of grapes in Mendoza.



(a)



(b)



(c)

Figure 8. (a) Types of leaves from different wines; (b) Vineyards covered due to possible weather damage; (c) bunches of grapes. (photograph: N.G.) (from left to right)

2.9. The Main Wineries on the Wine Route

While significant progress is being made worldwide towards achieving the 17 SDGs, overall, measures are still lacking in scale and speed. For this reason, in 2020 the United Nations called for a Decade of Action to accelerate

sustainable solutions to humanity's major challenges^[46]. In this context, this Wine Tourism Sustainability Self-Assessment Guide^[43] is a new initiative by the Argentine Wine Corporation to contribute to the development of socially responsible and sustainable wine tourism. Its purpose is to provide criteria and principles of good wine tourism prac-

tices to assess the sustainability performance of a winery open to tourism ^[47]. The document aims to be a practical, expandable and improvable support material for future editions, serving as an instrument for self-assessment and reflection on the general principles of sustainability applied to wine tourism. Evaluation based on measurements and indicators is undoubtedly a starting point for improving the management of an organization committed to a more just and equitable future for people while protecting the environment. The Mendoza Wine Route (Argentina) brings together historic and modern wineries distributed in three large wine-growing oases: Luján de Cuyo, Maipú and the Uco Valley, as well as areas ^[48,49].

a) Wineries in Luján de Cuyo: the birthplace of Malbec

Catena Zapata: a pioneer in the internationalization of Malbec, with iconic pyramid-shaped architecture.
Luigi Bosca: one of the most traditional, founded in 1901.

Chandon Argentina: a specialist in sparkling wines, a subsidiary of the French house Moët & Chandon.

Susana Balbo Wines: a leading winemaker, recognized for innovation and excellent wine tourism.

Norton: a century-old winery with a broad wine portfolio.

b) Wineries in Maipú: history and tradition

Trapiche: one of the largest and most award-winning wineries in the country.

López: a family-run winery with over 120 years of history, an icon of Argentine classics.

Familia Zuccardi (*Santa Julia*) – a strong commitment to sustainability and organic wines.

Domiciano: known for its night harvests.

Bodegas Carina E: a boutique project with a strong Malbec identity.

c) Uco Valley: Altitude and Modernity

Zuccardi Uco Valley (*Piedra Infinita*): considered one of the best wineries in the world for its architecture and wines.

Salentein: a wine tourism complex with an art gallery and high-altitude wines.

Andeluna: renowned for its high-altitude Malbec and Cabernet Franc.

Domaine Bousquet: specializing in organic and bio-

dynamic wines.

The Vines of Mendoza: a model of private vineyards with a high-end winery.

d) Emerging Areas

San Rafael: Bodega Bianchi: tradition and family wine tourism.

Lavalle: projects focused on the recovery of native varieties.

San Martín and East Mendoza: wineries with a strong focus on volume and export wines.

These wineries not only produce world-renowned wines but also offer wine tourism experiences.

3. Conclusion

Espacios, formas y tramas del Oasis Norte de Mendoza - Historia, presente y futuro de este territorio desértico humanizado, is the title of the book recently presented by Mendoza architect Roberto Dabul ^[50], who for years has dedicated himself to issues related to urban planning and the environment. According to the author: “There are motivations that transcend provincial boundaries. They relate to the way of carrying out projects that generate controversy, conflicts of interest, and contradictory interpretations of the local habitat in times of global problems that require consensus policies. They point to the interpretation of complex problems and how to address them. These are the problems that today’s society must face anywhere in the world.” All of this has allowed him to build a bridge and cross from the technical to the aesthetic, returning and giving a greater dimension to the environmental.

Vineyards teach us that from the moment the grape is harvested until the bottle arrives on the supermarket shelf, several years can pass. In between, obstacles and difficulties must be dealt with, from drought to hail. But those first immigrants knew: the fundamental thing is not time, but the right direction. If we look at Mendoza, with its innovative and excellent Wine Route, we’ll know where we’re headed.

To close this very Mendoza-inspired article, I’d like to share with you a tune that’s present on every Wine Route tour. A tonada is a poetic or lyrical composition intended to be sung, which can refer to both the lyrics and the accompanying melody. It is a folk musical genre

consisting of a set of melodies and songs, characterized by not being danced and emphasizing the lyrics. A toast is always offered after the end. The act of raising wine glasses represents a ritual expression of communion, celebration, and a shared desire for well-being. From an anthropological perspective, participants reaffirm social ties, seal agreements, or express gratitude and collective hope^[51,52]. The sound of the clinking of glasses (**Figure 9**), according to later symbolic interpretations, alludes to the sensorial and spiritual harmony of the act of sharing, integrating sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing into a communal experience^[53]. In oenological practice, wine also acts as a cultural mediator that condenses values of identity, territory, and memory. In short, toasting with wine glasses is not merely a festive gesture, but a social act laden with meaning^[4,10].



Figure 9. Toasting with wine glasses.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, P.V.; methodology, P.V.; investigation, P.V.; resources, P.V. and N.G.; writing—original draft preparation, P.V.; writing—review and editing, P.V.; visualization, N.G.; supervision, project administration, P.V.; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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