



Great Wine Capitals names its 2026/2027 Research Grant recipients

BORDEAUX, 14 September 2026 — The Great Wine Capitals Global Network has awarded its 2026/2027 International Research Grant to Rongrong Huang of Macao University of Tourism and Dr Matthew Coyne of Oklahoma State University. The two projects were picked from a field of 31 applications.

The Network established the grant four years ago on a straightforward premise: decisions about wine tourism in its member regions should rest on evidence rather than instinct. Each year, the grant funds two projects by students and early-career researchers, selected by an academic committee including representatives from each Great Wine Capital. The criteria weigh what a study can do for member regions and the application's academic merit. Recipients report back over the course of the year and present their results to members in person during the following Great Wine Capitals Annual Conference.

Rongrong Huang will build a profile of the Chinese outbound wine tourist. Chinese visitors already account for a sizeable share of cellar door traffic and spending in wine regions around the world, and what they want from a visit is changing quickly. Her study uses a mixed-methods design, grounded in established consumer behaviour theory, to examine the motivations, expectations and spending of Chinese travellers in Great Wine Capitals regions. The intended outcome is something member wineries can act on: how to position what they offer, lift visitor spending and satisfaction, and keep that custom over the long term.

"I am deeply honoured to receive the 2026/2027 Great Wine Capitals International Research Grant, and I look forward to serving as a bridge, connecting the evolving demand of Chinese wine tourists to the Great Wine Capitals." – says Ms Rongrong.

Dr Matthew Coyne will investigate what makes a visit memorable from another direction. Wine tasting may be the reason people come, but a winery visit also takes in the view over the vines, the garden, the walk between buildings and, often enough, the resident dog. Working from biophilia, the idea that people respond to contact with the natural world, and from the design thinking that has grown out of it, he will carry out fieldwork in two Great Wine Capitals, Napa Valley and Mendoza: Interviews with winery owners and managers, conversations with visitors, and observation of tastings as they happen. The result is meant to be a practical typology, setting out which natural features visitors find most meaningful and how wineries might use what they already have on the property to design experiences that are more restorative and harder for anyone else to copy.

"I am grateful to receive the GWC 2026/2027 International Research Grant. Nature is inherent to the winery experience, whether through untouched scenery or carefully cultivated vineyard landscapes. This project will identify which natural elements most

effectively enhance guest well-being, with the goal of informing wellness-based winery hospitality design.” – says Dr Coyne.

“Thirty-one applications tell us how much appetite there is among researchers to work on wine tourism, and it made the decision a difficult one,” said Catherine Leparmentier, Managing Director of the Great Wine Capitals Global Network. “Both of these projects answer questions our members are asking right now: who is coming through the cellar door, and what makes them stay longer and come back.”

Dr Irma Dupuis Day, International Research Grant Coordinator, said: “One of these projects looks outward, at a market moving faster than most wineries can track. The other looks very closely at the visit itself. Between them, they cover a lot of ground, and both should hand our regions something they can use.”

Ms Huang and Dr Coyne will report to the network during the year and present their findings at the Great Wine Capitals Annual Conference and AGM in 2027.

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About Great Wine Capitals

The Great Wine Capitals Global Network is an international alliance of renowned wine regions and their cities, founded in Bordeaux in 1999. It brings together leading destinations where wine and wine tourism shape culture, economy, and community life, offering a unique platform for cooperation, innovation, and global promotion. Through joint projects and shared values, the Network showcases the excellence of its members and strengthens the visibility and competitiveness of great wine regions worldwide.

The Network currently consists of 11 world renowned wine regions from the northern and southern hemispheres, spanning the old and new worlds of wine including: Adelaide, South Australia; Bilbao-Rioja, Spain; Bordeaux, France; Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, Lausanne, Switzerland; Mainz-Rheinhessen, Germany; Mendoza, Argentina; Porto, Portugal; San Francisco-Napa Valley, USA; Valparaiso-Casablanca Valley, Chile and Verona, Italy.

For more information about the GWC Global Network's involvement in upcoming events, visit www.greatwinecapitals.com. Also follow them on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and subscribe to their [YouTube](#) channel.

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