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Media Only

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Virginia Earns High Marks as National Food and Wine Destination

RICHMOND, Va. – For years people have traveled to places like California and New York in search of great food and wine, but a recent national travel study indicates that Virginia is among the top culinary travel destinations in the country. The first-ever national culinary tourism report from the Travel Industry Association (TIA) rates Virginia 8th for wine tourism and 15th for food-related travel.

Culinary tourism is a growing travel trend according to TIA, with 27 million travelers, or 17 percent of American leisure travelers, engaged in culinary or wine-related activities while traveling within the past three years. The new TIA report surveyed more than 2,300 U.S. leisure travelers.

The TIA study ranked Virginia 8th for wine-related travel visited by the U.S. respondents in the survey. Wine travelers spend, on average, \$973 per trip, with about one-fourth (23% or \$219) of their travel budget going towards wine-specific activities, according to TIA.

Wine travel is a fast-growing tourism trend for Virginia. The state is home to nearly 120 wineries and is fifth in the nation for number of wine producers. Wine tourism is so important that the state designates October as Virginia Wine Month each year and celebrates with special events, tastings and tours. Virginia's picturesque wine trails across the state make visiting wineries easy and fun. All Virginia wineries that are open to the public are marked from the road with a designated Virginia Wine Tour road sign.

“The beauty of the Virginia wine experience is its diversity,” said Ann Heidig, president of the Virginia Wine Association. “Travelers can find excellent wineries in every region of the state, with award-winning varietals and tasting rooms where guests can savor the Virginia wine experience.”

Virginia ranked 15th for food-related travel. On average, food travelers spend \$1,194 per trip, with over one-third (36% or \$425) of their travel budget going towards food-related activities, according to TIA.

“Virginia is uniquely positioned to capitalize on the increased appetite for food and wine travel,” said Alisa Bailey, president and CEO of the Virginia Tourism Corporation. “Our wineries and locally-owned restaurants are unique travel destinations in their own right and are gaining a national reputation for excellence.”



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The survey's top rankings for wine tourism are as follows: California (31%), New York (10%), Missouri (5%), North Carolina (5%), Oregon (5%), Pennsylvania (5%), Washington (4%), Virginia (4%), Texas (4%), Florida (2%), Michigan (2%), Ohio (2%).

The survey's top rankings for food-related travel are as follows: California (14%), Florida (10%), New York (7%), Texas (6%), North Carolina (4%), Georgia (4%), Louisiana (3%), Illinois (3%), Nevada (3%), Pennsylvania (3%), Washington (3%), Hawaii (3%), Michigan (2%), Arizona (2%), Virginia (2%).

For more information about the TIA culinary tourism report, go to www.tia.org or call 202-218-3630. To plan a trip to Virginia to experience the state's restaurants, wineries, food festival and cooking schools, go to www.Virginia.org or call 1-800-932-5827.

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