



July 2023



Interview with Vinescapes Graduate Trainee, Sarah Stott

Why did you apply for the Vinescapes graduate scheme?

Graduating from Plumpton with no clear future prospects was a genuine concern for me. Without extensive experience or qualifications, it felt daunting to walk into a head winemaking or vineyard manager position. The thought of starting from the bottom and working my way up seemed overwhelming and unnerving.

However, when I discovered the Vinescapes graduate scheme, I saw it as a unique opportunity to merge my passion for wine with my aspirations to work in a dynamic and innovative industry. Vinescapes' stellar reputation in the viticulture and oenology consultancy field, along with their strong commitment to sustainable and regenerative practices, immediately caught my attention.

The prospect of learning directly from industry experts and gaining hands-on experience in all facets of the wine production process was incredibly appealing to me. I knew that by joining the Vinescapes graduate scheme, I would lay a solid foundation for a successful career in the wine industry.

Having visited and worked in established wine regions worldwide, I believe that this is a pivotal moment for the UK. It is essential to further develop our identity and purpose from the ground up. Collaborative efforts are needed to establish the unique characteristics of the UK wine industry and the immense potential it holds.



Vinescapes' dedication to sustainable and regenerative practices aligns perfectly with my vision for the future of the UK wine industry. I am excited to contribute to this transformative journey and play my part in shaping the UK's distinctive position within the global wine community.

The Vinescapes graduate scheme represents an exceptional opportunity for me to gain the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience to make a meaningful impact. I am ready to embrace the challenges, learn from the best in the field, and actively contribute to the growth and success of both Vinescapes and the UK wine industry as a whole.

What are you most excited to learn about in your graduate training programme?

I am truly excited about the diverse range of topics and skills that I will have the opportunity to explore during my graduate training programme. Some areas that I am particularly looking forward to include:

Training Courses: I am thrilled to participate in pruning courses, where I can refine my techniques and learn about different approaches to vine pruning. Additionally, I am eager to gain knowledge and hands-on experience in spraying techniques and agronomy courses, which will provide me with a deeper understanding of vineyard management practices.

Regenerative Viticulture Approaches and Methods: The concept of regenerative viticulture is immensely compelling to me, and I am excited to dive into this area of study. Learning about regenerative practices, such as cover cropping, soil health management, and biodiversity enhancement, will enable me to contribute to the development of sustainable and resilient vineyards.

Site Preparation and Assessments: Understanding the importance of site selection and preparation is fundamental to successful vineyard establishment. I am enthusiastic about learning how to conduct geological and climatic surveys using Geographic Information System (GIS) tools. This knowledge will allow me to make informed decisions about site suitability and maximize the potential of each vineyard location.

Research and Development: The wine industry is continuously evolving, and I am eager to engage in research and development initiatives that push the boundaries of Viticulture and Oenology. Participating in innovative projects



and staying up to date with emerging trends will enable me to contribute to the advancement of the industry and make meaningful contributions.

By gaining knowledge and practical experience in these areas, I will develop a well-rounded understanding of vineyard management, wine production, and the broader aspects of the wine industry. This comprehensive approach will not only facilitate my personal growth but also equip me with the skills needed to contribute effectively to Vinescapes and the wine industry as a whole.

I am truly grateful for the opportunity to embark on this journey of exploration and learning. The excitement and enthusiasm I feel towards these areas of study will undoubtedly fuel my passion for the wine industry and inspire me to make a positive impact in my future career.

What have been your highlights so far?

Although I am still in the early stages of my graduate training programme, I have already had some remarkable highlights that have enriched my experience. One of the most exciting aspects has been the opportunity to work closely with clients on future projects. Collaborating with vineyard owners and winemakers to explore sustainable practices and find innovative ways to adapt their vineyards and wineries has been truly inspiring. For example, I have been involved in researching and implementing sustainable approaches, such as addressing winery wastewater management. Recognizing the importance of this often overlooked aspect, we have explored ways to optimize and harness the value of winery wastewater, ensuring that it is managed effectively and sustainably.

Another highlight has been engaging in decision-making processes for planting new vineyards. From clonal selection to rootstock choices, every step is carefully considered in relation to site location and soil types. It has been immensely satisfying to contribute to these crucial decisions, taking into account the unique characteristics of each site and the desired outcomes for the vineyard. These experiences have deepened my understanding of the intricacies involved in vineyard establishment and the long-term impact it has on wine production.

Attending industry conferences and events, such as the Groundswell agriculture show, has also been a significant highlight. These gatherings have provided invaluable opportunities to learn from experts, explore cutting-edge advancements in viticulture, and connect with like-minded individuals passionate about regenerative agriculture. These experiences have further fuelled my enthusiasm for sustainable and regenerative practices and have reinforced the importance of integrating these approaches into vineyard management and winemaking.



Overall, the highlights of my journey in the Vinescapes graduate training programme have been marked by hands-on involvement with clients, conducting research on sustainable practices, participating in decision-making processes for vineyard establishment, and engaging with industry events. These experiences have not only deepened my knowledge and passion for the wine production industry but have also broadened my perspective on the transformative possibilities that sustainable viticulture holds. I am excited to continue this journey of growth and exploration, eager to make meaningful contributions to Vinescapes and the wine industry as a whole.

What attracted you to the wine production industry in the first place?

The wine production industry has always held a special allure for me. I am captivated by the rich history, culture, and artistry behind winemaking. Wine is not just a beverage; it is a sensory experience that transcends boundaries, connecting people and cultures across the globe. I was initially drawn to the wine industry because of my fascination with the intricate relationship between the terroir, the vine and winemaking, and the role they each have in making the experience of drinking an immaculate glass of wine.

Having worked with wine throughout my career in the hospitality industry, I gradually developed a deeper interest in the production side of things. I found myself increasingly drawn to the process of crafting wines, from the cultivation of grapes to the transformation into exquisite beverages. This hands-on approach, combined with my passion for experimentation and developing drinks, sparked a desire to explore the wine production industry further.

The world of wine offers endless opportunities for learning, exploration, and creativity. It merges science, nature, and human craftsmanship into a harmonious blend that results in a product capable of evoking emotion and creating shared experiences. The prospect of working with nature, nurturing vineyards, and witnessing the remarkable journey of grapes from vine to bottle is something that I couldn't resist.

Furthermore, the wine industry provides a platform for continuous growth and learning. It presents the opportunity to delve into various disciplines, including viticulture, oenology, sensory analysis, and wine marketing. This multifaceted nature of the industry allows for constant discovery and the ability to deepen my knowledge and expertise.

The wine production industry not only satisfies my thirst for creativity and exploration but also resonates with my



passion for sustainability and environmental consciousness. The focus on sustainable practices, regenerative viticulture, and preserving the integrity of the land aligns with my personal values. I am excited to contribute to the industry's ongoing efforts to cultivate vineyards and produce wines in a way that respects the environment and nurtures the long-term viability of the land.

In summary, the allure of the wine production industry lies in its rich history, culture, and artistry, as well as the opportunity to work closely with nature, nurture vineyards, and witness the transformation of grapes into impeccable wines. My background in the hospitality industry, coupled with a passion for experimentation and development, has fuelled my desire to delve deeper into the fascinating world of wine. The endless possibilities for learning, exploration, and creativity within the industry make it an incredibly vibrant and dynamic field that I am privileged to be a part of.

What would you say to anyone applying for the graduate programme?

For anyone applying for the Vinescapes graduate programme or any similar opportunities in the wine industry, I would highly encourage you to embrace the journey with an open mind, curiosity, and a genuine passion for wine. This programme offers an incredible chance to learn from experts, gain practical experience, and develop a deep understanding of the complexities of the wine industry. Be prepared to work hard, be proactive in seeking knowledge, and be open to stepping out of your comfort zone. Take advantage of every opportunity to network, attend industry events, and build relationships within the wine community. Most importantly, never lose sight of your passion and love for wine, as it will be the driving force behind your growth and success. Enjoy the journey, embrace the challenges, and savour the experiences that will shape your future in the wine industry.

Additionally, I would highly recommend aspiring wine professionals to consider traveling and working vintages across the globe in different countries. This experience provides invaluable insights into winemaking practices, regional nuances, and diverse terroirs. By immersing yourself in different wine regions, you will gain a broader perspective and a deeper understanding of winemaking as a whole.

Working vintages abroad exposes you to new winemaking techniques, grape varieties, and cultural traditions. It allows you to witness firsthand the unique challenges and triumphs faced by winemakers in different climates and regions. This exposure will broaden your palate, deepen your understanding of winemaking philosophies, and shape your own winemaking style.

Moreover, working in different countries exposes you to a variety of approaches to viticulture and winery management. You'll witness how winemakers adapt to their specific terroir, climate, and cultural influences, further enhancing your knowledge and appreciation for the art and science of winemaking.

Beyond the technical aspects, working vintages abroad provides an opportunity to embrace new cultures, forge

VINESCAPES

— VINEYARD & WINERY CONSULTANTS —



Vinescapes Limited
Unit 5, Dunley Hill Court,
Dorking, Surrey RH5 6SX

info@vinescapes.com
www.vinescapes.com
+44 (0) 1306 733960

lifelong friendships, and develop a global network within the wine community.

These connections can be invaluable throughout your career, providing support, collaboration opportunities, and a deeper understanding of the global wine industry.

So, to anyone considering a career in the wine industry, I wholeheartedly encourage you to embrace the adventure of working vintages abroad. Immerse yourself in different winemaking cultures, learn from diverse perspectives,

and let the world of wine unfold before you. It is through these experiences that you will gain a profound understanding of winemaking's true essence and discover your own unique path within the industry.

Ends

Details of the Vinescapes' Graduate Training Programme are available on the website:

<https://www.vinescapes.com/graduate-scheme/> or email: graduate@vinescapes.com