

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Illinois Valley Wine Trail Builds Momentum, Completing a Wine Trail Presence Across the Rogue Valley's Three Valleys

**Following a milestone gathering of all four Illinois Valley wineries, the new Wine Trail launches a Founding Tourism Partner program to connect wine visitors with the broader Illinois Valley experience**

**CAVE JUNCTION, Ore. — August 2026** — Less than two months after its official launch, the Illinois Valley Wine Trail is already moving into its next chapter: building a broader tourism network designed to connect wine visitors with the businesses, attractions and experiences that make the Illinois Valley a destination.

The Illinois Valley Wine Trail officially launched June 20, bringing together four wineries: Augustino Estate & Vineyards, Bridgeview Vineyards & Winery, Deer Creek Vineyards and Foris Vineyards.

Its creation also fills an important geographic piece of the larger Rogue Valley wine story.

The Rogue Valley American Viticultural Area encompasses approximately 1.14 million acres and is defined by three distinct valleys associated with the Bear Creek, Applegate and Illinois river systems. With established wine-tourism organizations serving the Rogue and Applegate areas, the creation of the Illinois Valley Wine Trail gives the Illinois Valley its own organized wine-tourism presence and creates a compelling regional story: **a wine trail experience in each of the Rogue Valley's three valleys.**

"From the beginning, I felt the Illinois Valley was a missing piece of the Rogue Valley wine tourism story," said **Mercy Bordeaux, Founder and Executive Director of the Illinois Valley Wine Trail**. "We have remarkable wineries here, but we hadn't yet connected them into a visitor experience that represented the Illinois Valley as a destination. Now we have the opportunity not only to do that, but to connect our valley more intentionally to the larger Rogue Valley wine region."

## Blackberry Nights Marks a First for Illinois Valley Wineries

That collaboration reached a new milestone on August 8 during **Blackberry Nights**, the Illinois Valley Wine Trail's first signature wine-and-food event, held at Pappy T's Pub & Grub in Cave Junction.

For the first time, representatives of **all four Illinois Valley Wine Trail wineries gathered in the same room**, pouring their wines as part of one shared Illinois Valley experience.

The evening paired wines from Augustino Estate & Vineyards, Bridgeview Vineyards & Winery, Deer Creek Vineyards and Foris Vineyards with a multi-course dinner, while local artists, makers and musicians helped demonstrate the larger vision behind the Trail.

"That moment was bigger than an event," Bordeaux said. "For the first time, all four wineries were together under one roof, not as separate businesses, but as part of one destination. That is exactly what the Wine Trail was created to do."

Blackberry Nights also provided an early glimpse of what Bordeaux sees as the Trail's larger economic-development opportunity: using wine as an invitation for visitors to discover more of the Illinois Valley.

## From a Wine Trail to a Visitor Experience

This week, the Illinois Valley Wine Trail announced the next phase of that strategy with the launch of its **2026 Founding Tourism Partner Program**.

The program invites lodging properties, restaurants and food businesses, recreation and experience providers, retailers, artists, makers and other visitor-serving businesses to become part of the destination network being built around the Wine Trail.

"Wine gets someone through the door, but it doesn't have to be the end of their visit," Bordeaux said. "They need somewhere to eat. Somewhere to stay. They may want to hike, shop, explore the Oregon Caves, discover local art or take something home that reminds them of the Illinois Valley. Every one of those experiences creates another opportunity for visitor spending to stay in our community."

Participating businesses will receive destination-marketing benefits based on their partnership level, including opportunities for website visibility, social media promotion, storytelling, event promotion, visitor referrals and participation in future Illinois Valley Wine Trail visitor programs.

Beginning in 2027, qualifying Tourism, Destination and Founding Presenting Partners will also have the opportunity to participate in the expanded Illinois Valley Wine Trail Passport by offering

an exclusive visitor perk designed to encourage Passport holders to explore beyond the wineries.

The Trail also plans to provide reporting to help partners understand visitor engagement, promotional exposure and, beginning with the expanded Passport program, perk redemptions.

## **Building the Destination Together**

At the highest level of the new program, four **Founding Presenting Partner** positions will represent major components of the visitor experience: lodging; food and beverage; recreation and experiences; and shopping, arts and community.

Founding Presenting Partners will also be invited to participate on the **Illinois Valley Wine Trail Advisory Council**, providing business and community perspectives as the Trail develops its long-term tourism strategy.

For Bordeaux, the expansion reflects a philosophy that has guided the project from the beginning.

“We don’t compete for the visitor,” she said. “Together, we complete the experience. If someone comes here for wine and discovers a restaurant, stays overnight, visits a local shop and finds another reason to return, everybody benefits. That is how we begin turning visitors passing through the Illinois Valley into visitors who actually experience it.”

The 2026 Founding Tourism Partner program is now accepting businesses, with introductory founding partner rates available during the Trail’s inaugural year.

Businesses can learn about partnership levels, benefits and the Founding Tourism Partner Handbook through the Illinois Valley Wine Trail partnership page:

[Illinois Valley Wine Trail Tourism Partnerships](#)

## **About the Illinois Valley Wine Trail**

The Illinois Valley Wine Trail is a collaborative destination-marketing initiative connecting visitors with the wineries, businesses and authentic experiences of Southern Oregon’s Illinois Valley. Founded in 2026, the Trail currently brings together Augustino Estate & Vineyards, Bridgeview Vineyards & Winery, Deer Creek Vineyards and Foris Vineyards while developing visitor programs, events and partnerships designed to encourage travelers to explore more, stay longer and spend locally.

**Wine is the invitation. The Illinois Valley is the experience.**

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