

## Inside St Hugo's New Home for Luxury in the Barossa Valley - The Adelaide Review

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"We've been working on this project now for five years, and the last 18 months of that have been construction," says Greg Stirling, Head of Brand Sites and Visitation at Pernod Ricard.

"What we set out to do was create a home for St Hugo, and home for the brand, as well as build a more premium wine and food destination for the luxury traveller." Of Pernod Ricard's stable, the St Hugo brand is synonymous with top quality red wines, most notably its Cabernet Sauvignon releases.

Now, with this new luxurious cellar door and set of private wine experiences, the St Hugo name cements that high-end reputation. The cellar door is much more than your standard stop, pour, sniff and quaff cellar door. St Hugo's team strive to provide a consummate wine experience for visitors. Of course, there is the option to simply sit and taste a few outstanding wines on the way through the region, but for those with deeper pockets, the options are considerably more enticing.



Three of the major 'experiences' offered are as follows. The Legacy Wine Experience (\$5000) offers an eight-course wine-matched meal, personal private tastings, luxury transfers to and from the cellar door and a helicopter flight over the region.

The Prestige Wine Experience (\$15,000) ups the ante a bit, with similar inclusions, a wine-blending session with a St Hugo winemaker, plus luxury accommodation included in Adelaide and the Barossa.

But it is the \$150,000 Sainthood Experience that blows the mind. This all-inclusive luxury package includes chartered plane flights to and from the Coonawarra, where clients name a row of vines and set about making wine from them.

The wine-blending session bears more fruit in this package too, with the final product being stored and aged for three years, then personally delivered to your door.

"There are high-net-worth individuals where that three-day experience is a whole immersion," says Stirling.

“It’s about going down to the Coonawarra, it’s about getting involved in blending wine. You can’t just buy that off the shelf and walk away. You have to be here and talk to winemakers, talk to the team.”



Integral to providing this experience is the design of the building itself. Minimal and sleek in its design, St Hugo engaged JBG Architects for its redevelopment. Maintaining the texture of the original 170 year-old gravity-fed winery edifice it inhabits, the building pays homage to the Barossa’s rustic character, but is also fitted for comfort and involvement.



“Some of the building design was embedded so we could actually do those sorts of experiences,” explains Stirling.

This is evident when one peruses St Hugo's downstairs area, including The Hugo Gramp Room fitted for tastings and mixings, and a gold-plated safe room, complete with finger print identification, that stores client's ageing blends.



The philosophy of involvement continues throughout the St Hugo cellar door. Another offering is the Chef's Table Experience, where diners get an intimate insight into the rationale and workings of the kitchen.

"It's about engaging with the team, asking questions, just seeing what they're doing and why they think the flavours work," says Stirling.

Where matching wine with food is common-place these days, St Hugo takes it a step further, with the food matched to the wine by Executive Chef Mark McNamara.



"There's a really strong focus on the wine first," says Stirling. "We select the wine first, and we match the food to that." St Hugo doesn't provide its own accommodation for guests, and prefers to focus on what it does best – wine. Stirling says this was a deliberate choice in the development stage of this new home, and emphasises their cooperation with local accommodation providers.

"We work really closely with Louise and Kingsford Estate and the Novotel. It's about us collaborating across the board to build the region."