



RATHFINNY

RATHFINNY WINE ESTATE UNVEILS MAJOR EXPANSION OF LUXURY VINEYARD ACCOMMODATION IN THE SOUTH DOWNS



July 2026 // Rathfinny Wine Estate, one of England's pioneering sparkling wine producers and a leading destination for wine tourism, has announced a significant expansion of its guest accommodation following unanimous planning approval from the South Downs National Park Authority.

The ambitious development marks the next chapter in Rathfinny's vision to establish the South Downs as a world-class wine tourism destination, responding to growing demand from UK and international visitors eager to experience the Sussex Winelands.

Nestled within a 600-acre wine estate in the heart of the Sussex countryside, Rathfinny has welcomed guests for over a decade, offering immersive vineyard stays alongside award-winning dining, guided tours, tastings and Cellar Door shopping experiences. The expansion will create a range of new luxury accommodation options, allowing more visitors to stay among the vines and discover the origin of Sussex Sparkling.

The approved plans will introduce six, luxury 'Grape Pickers' Huts' in the old quarry overlooking the vineyard, alongside a new Stable Block featuring four guest bedrooms with private terraces offering views across the South Downs landscape. The popular Flint Barns accommodation and dining space will also be enhanced, with the addition of a new dining room and vineyard-facing terrace and extensive refurbishment of its existing guest rooms to create larger, more luxurious spaces.



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The approval represents a major vote of confidence in both Rathfinny's long-term vision and the growing importance of English wine tourism. During the planning process, councillors praised the high quality of the architectural designs as well as the estate's thoughtful and sustainable approach to development. As a certified B Corp business, Rathfinny has consistently championed responsible growth, balancing exceptional visitor experiences with environmental stewardship.

The investment comes at a pivotal moment for English wine. Over the past decade, Sussex has emerged as one of the world's most exciting cool-climate wine regions, with the Sussex Winelands attracting increasing numbers of visitors from around the globe, particularly from Scandinavia and North America. Yet despite this growing international profile, accommodation within the South Downs National Park remains limited, creating a significant opportunity for high-quality hospitality experiences within the region.

Beyond enhancing visitor experiences, the expansion will bring new employment opportunities to East Sussex, supporting Rathfinny's growing hospitality operation and creating exciting career pathways within the UK's fast-growing wine tourism sector. Recruitment is already underway for several new roles, including a Flint Barns Manager and additional Food & Beverage supervisors.

Mark Driver, Rathfinny Co-owner and Co-Founder, said: *"When we planted our first vines, we always dreamed of creating far more than a vineyard. We wanted Rathfinny to be a place where people could stay, dine, tour and discover the remarkable quality of Sussex Sparkling wine."*

"This investment allows us to welcome more guests than ever before to the estate and to share everything that makes Sussex such a special place to visit. We're incredibly grateful for the support of the South Downs National Park Authority and excited to bring these exceptional new accommodation spaces to life."

"English wine tourism is entering a new era. Visitors from around the world are discovering Sussex as one of the most exciting wine destinations anywhere, and we're proud to be helping shape that future while creating new opportunities for hospitality careers in the region."

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For press enquires please contact nickt@rathfinnyestate.com

ABOUT RATHFINNY

Established in 2010 by husband-and-wife team Mark and Sarah Driver, Rathfinny Wine Estate is dedicated to producing some of the world's finest vintage Sussex Sparkling wines from a single-site vineyard in the South Downs of Sussex, England. Crafted using the traditional method and guided by a low-intervention philosophy, Rathfinny's fresh and characterful wines are a true expression of place. In 2022, Sussex Sparkling became the first English wine region to achieve Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status, recognising the exceptional quality and provenance of wines produced in the county. Sustainability has been central to Rathfinny since its founding, culminating in B Corp certification in 2023. Today, Rathfinny has become a leading wine tourism destination, welcoming guests to stay, dine, tour, taste and shop at its stunning vineyard. www.rathfinnyestate.com



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WINE TOURISM OFFERING

The RIBA-nominated Winery is home to the Cellar Door shop, open daily throughout the year, where guests can enjoy vineyard tours and guided Sussex wine tastings. From March to October, Rathfinny's alfresco wine bar, The Hut, welcomes visitors to enjoy Rathfinny wines alongside panoramic vineyard views and estate-prepared sweet and savoury deli items. During the summer months, vineyard picnics are available to enjoy in the picnic area amongst the vines.

The Flint Barns, nestled in the heart of the estate, offers a 'home-away-from-home' bed and breakfast accommodation and is the perfect base from which to explore everything the estate and surrounding area has to offer. There is also Rathfinny Cottage, a self-catered retreat with interiors that marry country chic with clean, contemporary touches, open year-round.

In the Flint Barns Dining Room, chefs prepare unpretentious, produce-driven dishes in a relaxed atmosphere. Inspired by their location - where coast meets countryside - and shaped by the rhythm of the seasons, the seasonal menus are a celebration of Sussex and local produce, responsibly grown, caught and gathered. The restaurant is open for evening meals to residents and visitors from Wednesday to Saturday, as well as Sunday lunch. During the summer months, the Flint Barns also hosts alfresco dining events in its flint-walled courtyard.

Rathfinny encourage walkers to visit the estate and have worked with the National Trust and the South Downs National Park Authority to open the 'Rathfinny Trail', a permissive path along Cradle Valley and through the Vineyard. Maps can be collected from the Cellar Door during opening hours.