**Grape Train Escape - Great Train, Great Taste**

**Wines from Around the World Debut on Verde Canyon Railroad**

*Pop the cork!* A scenic sunset rail journey, accompanied by a variety of specially-chosen vintages, awaits passengers aboard Verde Canyon Railroad’s celebrated **Grape Train Escape** this summer.

The romantic call of a train whistle echoes throughout the Canyon as the setting sun drapes the towering red rock cliffs in dramatic shadows. Night blankets the high desert, sprinkling the sky with stars sparkling so radiantly that they almost seem touchable. The locomotive’s oscillating headlight cascading off of the rocks adds a dash of rail romance to Mother Nature’s timeless artistry. This moonlit wilderness setting is second to none for leisurely sipping wine to the rhythm of the rails.

On select Saturday evening Starlight Tours, from 5:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m., Verde Canyon Railroad will highlight different grape-growing regions from around the globe. This summer the spotlight will be on wines from Australia and New Zealand, South America, Washington State and Italy. The premiere Grape Train Escape will feature Verde Canyon Railroad’s own private-labeled wines produced in California. During the evening, a tasting flight of five wines, accompanied by hors d’oeuvres to complement each selection, will be served throughout the rail journey.

Since its inception in 2003, Verde Canyon Railroad’s popular Grape Train Escape has taken center stage on many of the summer’s Starlight Tours. *Mark your calendars!* This year’s Starlight Tours are scheduled for May 30, June 27, July 25, August 29 and September 12, 2015.

The seasonkicks off on May 30 with Verde Canyon Railroad’s collection of private wines bottled by California’s Weibel Vineyards. The labels all depict different facets of railroading with names like *All Aboard* Chardonnay, *Locomotive 1512* Cabernet, *Engine, Engine* Merlot, *Route Red* Pinot Noir and *Escape* Sparkling Wine*.* While the train winds its way through the scenic Sedona-area landscape and rare riparian wilderness, cares fade along with the summer temperature as it dramatically drops in the dwindling daylight. As the sun wanes and the Canyon’s nocturnal life awakens, the magic of the route is further enhanced by a glass of wine in hand.

Dave Durbano, owner of Verde Canyon Railroad, believes that life is about the journey. “The quality of life’s journey is dependent on the experiences we have along the way and the attitude we develop with each segment of the journey,” explains Durbano. “Our well-crafted wines, like a well-crafted life, feature lovely structure and substance. On Verde Canyon Railroad’s Grape Train Escape, our goal is to respect *nature*, serve exceptional wine and enjoy life's journey.”

In addition to the wine-tasting events on Starlight Tour evenings, the **Tequila Sunset Limited** tequila-tasting excursion is another first-class upgrade available to passengers. To celebrate this beloved Mexican spirit, a selection of three exceptionally smooth and complex flavors from Tequila Don Julio will be served, bearing witness that the agave-distilled liquor is well-suited to any snifter. This tequila-tasting event, paired with sophisticated Southwestern appetizers, will make an excellent accompaniment to the fantastic summer sunset scenery.

Starlight Tours also offer standard coach- and first-class seating, and both have wine available for purchase during the four-hour rail adventure. In fact, wine may be enjoyed during any season and *for any reason* while aboard the train, year-round.

Passengers can’t help but raise their glasses to the wild scenery, big western sky and the cool caress of a canyon breeze. Whether sipping a favorite libation in the surround of 360-degree views on an open-air viewing car, or raising a toast to family and friends in the comfort of a luxurious rail car, a starlight trip aboard Verde Canyon Railroad will surely echo the train’s motto about the ride, and perhaps about life itself: “It’s not the destination, it’s the journey.”

In addition to being served on the train, Verde Canyon Railroad’s private-label libations may be purchased packaged to take home from the *Whistle Stop at Milepost 38* shop located at the depot. What a grand way to celebrate Verde Canyon Railroad’s 25th anniversary!