Business class to Hong Kong

19 Feb 2013 by Jancis Robinson

I'm intrigued by this fine-wine air freight service from Bordeaux and London to Hong Kong that is now being targeted at individuals. Apparently, they have been running one a month to HK for the last nine months or so, a development of the previous strategy of doing bespoke orders by air and sea and presumably a reflection of the development of the fine-wine market in HK. I'm not convinced Vine is a particularly distinctive name for it, but apparently it is snappier than its old name Vine International.

I asked for feedback from those who had used Vine in the past and had a few responses, including a favourable one from Liv-ex, which is hardly surprising since Vine is now owned by them. James Miles of Liv-ex told me, 'Liv-ex bought Vine International from Tony Evans in 2007. Traditionally they used to provide a consolidation, strip labelling and freight forwarding service to mostly US merchants buying in the UK and Europe.

'The business was founded by Tony Evans in Manchester. In 1977 he started a business called EMS Cargo with his brother and other partners. An early customer was wine merchant and shipper Whitwhams, which had a strong franchise selling fine wine to the US. They suggested that Tony start a company offering consolidation services (ie storage and transport) to American wine merchants.The business started life at Manchester airport until it moved to Aylesford in Kent in 2001 and then to London City Bond in Tilbury [see Professional wine storage in the UK] in 2003. Liv-ex purchased the goodwill (and the customers) of the business because Tony wanted to retire and, with many customers in common, we saw obvious synergies between what he had and what we wanted to become.

'Since then we have grown the business considerably and invested in new processes and systems and changed the focus and business model from transport to storage and from the USA to global. We have shortened the trademark to Vine, because that is what everyone has always called it. Ask any fine-wine trader (who has been around for more than five minutes) and they will remember getting calls from Tony chasing up stocks for his US customers... 'Hello, it's Tony from Vine' in his distinctive Mancunian accent!

'The business has changed since we took it on, reflecting the waning importance of the US as a fine-wine buyer. It has become more global and storage/verification-focused. Vine also handles all Liv-ex-related logistics. Our main hub is at LCB Tilbury, where we have built a temperature-controlled chamber. We are opening a new facility with Octavian in April and also have warehouse hubs with Jebsen in Hong Kong and Grand Cru Storage in Bordeaux (all temp controlled). We have also shortened the trade name to Vine - as this is what everybody has always called it.'

Another respondee told me that they were very efficient but that quite a lot of paperwork was involved - but then perhaps that is hardly surprising. It does sound potentially of interest to the fine-wine enthusiast based in Honkers.

Here in italics are the details:

Next departure: ***1 March 2013***

- ***Fine-wine handling:*** *all bottles are photographed and verified by trained wine specialists. Photos are available free of charge online.*
- ***Temperature controlled:*** *in both the UK and Hong Kong warehouses, and deliveries in Hong Kong*
- ***Door to door service:*** *includes delivery from our warehouse to your desired address in Hong Kong*

Tariff from Tilbury, UK

- *1-9 cases £55 per case (no minimum charge)*
- *10-19 cases £45 per case*

- *20-50 cases £35 per case*
- *50 cases and more £25 per case*
  NB: *Wines need to be with us by* ***25 Feb***

Insurance: *available on request.*

To arrange a shipment, or for more information, contact basile@vineinternational.com or direct line: +44 (0)20 7062 8757.

Then come the footnotes which I love for the local colour:

NB: *Delivery charges to outlying islands (Discovery Bay, Ma Wan, Tung Chung, etc) may incur an extra charge. In addition, temperature-controlled delivery cannot be guaranteed when delivering to outlying islands. Staircase charges might apply starting from the second floor onwards. Normal parking, tunnel fees, gate pass and registration fees will be charged on an actual basis.*

Terms of storage: *All storage services provided by Vine are handled under and subject to United Kingdom Warehouse Association terms and conditions. A copy of these terms is available from www.ukwa.org.uk or upon written request.*
Terms of transport*: All transport services provided by Vine are handled under and subject to British International Freight Association terms and conditions. A copy of these terms is available from www.bifa.org or upon written request.*