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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **WSWA ISSUES TRAVEL GUIDANCE ON HOW TO SPOT FAKE ALCOHOL**

*The Four Ps That Can Save Your Life: Place, Product, Price and Packaging*

**WASHINGTON, D.C., 6/16/2021** – With more than 45% of Americans having received at least their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine and CDC guidance clearing air travel as low risk for vaccinated individuals, tourism is picking up globally. As Americans emerge from over a year of stay-at-home orders, millions are making summer travel plans to explore other countries, and many are planning to consume alcohol during their stay abroad.

If you or someone in your travel party intends on having a few drinks in another country, you should be aware not all countries have a well-regulated beverage alcohol system like the U.S. This can result in wine and spirits containing toxic substances like methanol, jet fuel and various narcotics that can cause illness, organ failure or even death.

Here are a few general tips to follow when enjoying wine and spirits abroad, as well as the “Four Ps” of spotting counterfeit beverage alcohol:

**PLACE:** Always purchase wine and spirits from a bar, restaurant or retailer in the main shopping or business district. Avoid remote or “off the beaten path” locations. When you walk into the liquor store, bar or restaurant, consider the mix of the other patrons you see. Seeing that both locals and tourists are shopping, dining or drinking is a sign that the establishment is serving responsibly.

**PRODUCT:** Stick with brands you recognize and avoid the ones you do not. And when possible, do not purchase mixed drinks.

**PACKAGING:** When ordering in a bar or restaurant, ask that your drink be made in front of you so you can watch the product be poured from its bottle. If possible, check the bottle for poor labeling, misspelled words, and torn labels and seals.

**PRICE:** If the price seems too good to be true, it probably is. Be mindful of cheap, discount products.

Given the hardships of the global pandemic, many popular vacation destinations for Americans have seen governments shut down breweries and distilleries because they were deemed “non-essential.” This gave birth to a thriving black market that has resulted in increased amounts of illicit alcohol entering these marketplaces. Recent incidents of Americans falling ill, and in some cases dying, have caused an increase in public awareness and media coverage as Americans emerging from COVID-19 lockdowns resume travel to these popular vacation destinations:

#### **Travel Advisory — Mexico**

According to Mexican authorities, more than [100 people have died of tainted alcohol](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic, with methanol being the suspected culprit in the illegal alcohol that has been seized. The Mexican government forced breweries to shut down production as part of their COVID-19 lockdown measures, giving rise to a substantial black market. The U.S. State Department [warns travelers](#) of the dangers of unregulated alcohol in Mexico and urges visitors to report suspicious product to the Comisión Federal para la Protección contra Riesgos Sanitarios (COFEPRIS), the U.S. embassy or the nearest consulate.

#### **Travel Advisory — Costa Rica**

There is an ongoing health alert in Costa Rica for the sale of alcoholic beverages adulterated with methanol that involves 14 products. This year alone, authorities have inspected 464 sites, seized 1,164 products and reported 31 suspected cases resulting in 15 deaths. The U.S. State Department [warns travelers](#) that “Costa Rica’s Ministry of Health has advised any persons presenting health issues after consuming alcohol, such as severe vomiting, agitation, disorientation, blindness, or any other adverse reactions, to immediately call 911.”

#### **Caution — Dominican Republic**

Last month, the Ministry of Public Health in the Dominican Republic reported [26 deaths due to adulterated, illegal alcohol](#) and warned citizens that some bottles of recognized brands were found to have been refilled with product containing methanol. This comes in the waning months of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which 369 cases, including 277 deaths, were reported. The U.S. State Department has not issued specific guidance on the dangers of consuming unregulated alcohol in the Dominican Republic.

#### **About Wine & Spirits Wholesalers of America**

WSWA is the national trade association representing the distribution tier of the wine and spirits industry, dedicated to advancing the interests and independence of distributors and brokers of wine and spirits. Founded in 1943, WSWA has more than 380 member companies in 50 states and the District of Columbia, and its members distribute more than 80 percent of all wine and spirits sold at wholesale in the United States.

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