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[STORE](#)

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[EDUCATION](#)

[NEWS](#)

[BREWERY TOURS](#)

[BEST-OF LISTS](#)

[BLOGS](#)

[EVENTS CALENDAR](#)

15 Unique US Ale Trails

07/09/2018 | By: [Bryan Richards](#)

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Five years ago, an ale trail was a novelty. You might visit some breweries, collect stamps in a brewery- , tourism board- or Brewers Guild-sanctioned Passport, and come home with a t-shirt or some other trinket showing that you completed said trail. Today, it seems like every city, state, or region boasting more than one brewery has an ale trail. With so many options as everyone vies for your beercation dollars, it's hard to discern which are worthy of your PTO hours and which aren't.

Thankfully, competition sparks creativity and innovation. Organizers are now moving beyond the "go here and have a flight" mantra of the ale trail trend in its infancy, and are hopping up their beer destination offerings through technology - such as apps and interactive maps - and by including local attractions and food hotspots. From coast to coast, here are 15 unique U.S. Ale Trails.



South Sound Craft Crawl in Tacoma, Washington

Nothing sells an ale trail better than the ability to visit breweries car-free. “You can make the journey part of your Craft Crawl experience with the free Link light rail train in downtown Tacoma,” says Matt Wakefield, Travel Tacoma communications manager. Seven of the breweries on the [South Sound Craft Crawl](#) are within walking distance of “rail to ale” stops. During the summer, a weekend trolley extends the car-free experience to several breweries with restaurants on the scenic waterfront.

“Our breweries love to play with decidedly different flavor creations,” says Moira Davin, director of marketing and communications for Experience Olympia & Beyond. “Whether it’s a beer made with rhubarb, basil or farm-fresh local cucumbers or strawberries, our brewers are always thinking outside the box.” A local favorite is [Engine House No. 9’s Wild Tacoma Bing Cherry Wild Ale](#) brewed with Central Washington cherries. *(Photo Courtesy Engine House No. 9)*

Bend Ale Trail in Bend, Oregon

There are so many reasons to trek the [Bend Ale Trail](#). First, Bend is one of the original cities in the country to blaze an ale trail. Second, Bend has more breweries per capita than any other city in Oregon, and two-thirds of those breweries are within walking distance of each other. Third, the city has been named Beer Town, USA how many times?

Highlights on the Bend Ale Trail include [Deschutes Brewery Pub](#), where the famed brewery got its start; [Immersion Brewing](#), where you can learn to homebrew and actually take home beer that day with the brewery’s pay-it-forward program; and the [McMenamins Old St. Francis Pub, Hotel and Brewery](#), a 1930s school that has been transformed (and also includes a movie theater and soaking pool).

Flagstaff-Grand Canyon Ale Trail in Arizona High Country

Flagstaff is an example of an already popular destination augmenting its vacation experience with local breweries via the [Flagstaff-Grand Canyon Ale Trail](#), which runs through Flagstaff, Williams and Sedona. The area draws tourists with its natural beauty, abundance of outdoor activities and proximity to the Grand Canyon. Cap your day of rock climbing in Red Rock State Park with a roasty and hearty Nut Brown Ale from [Oak Creek Brewing Co.](#)

The Flagstaff-Grand Canyon Ale Trail passport costs around \$6 with proceeds helping fund Quality Connections, a nonprofit dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities obtain job training and employment opportunities.



North Lake Tahoe Ale Trail in Lake Tahoe, Nevada

In planning the [North Lake Tahoe Ale Trail](#), “we wanted to ensure a strong link to North Lake Tahoe by connecting the various hiking, biking and paddling trails found throughout the region to various brewpubs and restaurants, capturing what makes this area unique,” says Andy Chapman, president and CEO of the Incline Village Crystal Bay Visitors Bureau. “In a sense, we have connected the best watering holes at the end of the dusty trail.”

The interactive map highlights various trails and routes to follow - including difficulty level - with nearby libation hotspots to help refresh you when the adventure is over (or you just need a break). Celebrate biking the Tahoe Rim Trail with a Hop Song West Coast IPA brewed with a rye kick at [Tahoe Mountain Brewing](#), wrap up paddle boarding with drinks on a floating bar at [Pier 111](#), or kick back after kayaking on Lake Tahoe’s clear blue water with a tart and funky Strawberry Funkmobile Saison at [Alibi Ale Works](#). *(Photo by Ryan Salm)*

Las Cruces Ale Trail and the Green Chile Walk of Flame in Las Cruces, New Mexico

Things get hot along the [Las Cruces Ale Trail](#) in New Mexico – especially when you pair the beer trail with the flaming heat of the [Green Chile Walk of Flame](#). Locals take pride in the natively grown green hatch chile and find inventive ways to work it into everything from the sweet and spicy Green Chile Sundae at Caliche’s Frozen Custard to the fruity yet fiery Chile ‘Rita Margarita at La Posta to the eyebrow-raising Green Chile Meat Lasagna at Lorenzo’s Italian Restaurant.

And yes, green chilies even work their way into beer. [Pecan Grill & Brewery](#) works roasted chiles into their D’s Green Chile Lager for a libation that produces heavy pepper notes without too much spice. Don’t worry, there are plenty of non-chile beers as well. Expect lots of wheats, pale ales and pilsners to match the desert climate.



Colorado Springs Crafts and Drafts Passport in Colorado Springs, Colorado

[Colorado Springs Crafts and Drafts Passport](#) combines your traditional passport stamps for a prize with digital coupons redeemable at 24 different stops along the trail. Those stops include not only breweries, but also a whiskey producer, coffee roaster and vodka distiller.

“Many of our stops have patios with impeccable views,” says Chelsy Offutt, director of communications for Colorado Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Owners are often onsite and happy to talk about their passion for craft beverages, and it’s an easy way to discover a new favorite place.” The trail is an education into craft beverages as much as it is a way to enjoy Colorado Springs’ scenery. And did we mention free beer? A number of participating locations include BOGO offers or a free beer with a minimal purchase. *(Photo Courtesy VisitCOS.com)*

Beer City Brewsader Passport in Grand Rapids, Michigan

In Grand Rapids, you’re not just another beer tourist; you become a Brewsader through their Beer City Brewsader Passport. Collect eight stamps in your passport or eight check-ins via their mobile app from a choice of more than 35 breweries to redeem for a commemorative t-shirt.

Along the way, experience a who’s-who of fabled craft breweries such as New Holland, Founders, Atwater and Brewery Vivant. Be sure to stray off the trodden path, though, and see what new discoveries you can find like [Rockford Brewing](#), which walked away from the 2017 Great American Beer Festival with three awards: Small Brewpub and Small Brewpub Brewer of the Year, a silver for their Sheehan’s Stout (an Irish Dry Stout) and a bronze for their Rogue River Brown.



Route 33 Brew Trail in Fairfield County, Ohio

While Cincinnati, Columbus and Cleveland are urban meccas for beer lovers, the [Route 33 Brew Trail](#) – spanning the stretch of highway that connects Columbus to Athens – takes beerconnoisseurs on a scenic road trip through Southern Ohio's Fairfield County.

"The allure of the trail is that you will sample tasty craft beers in unforgettable locations," says Jonett Haberfield, executive director of Visit Fairfield County.

Highlights along highway include experimental brews at [BrewDog USA's](#) ultra-modern and eco-friendly brewery, Wallonia-inspired beers at [Rockmill Brewery's](#) horse farm-turned-brewery, and unfiltered, hop-forward beers at [Loose Rail Brewing's](#) former rail substation. *(Photo by Cris Zaragoza)*



Susquehanna Ale Trail in York County, Pennsylvania

"The Central Pennsylvania area has long been a place where independent artisans of all types could find a home and thrive," says Chrissy Tobias, Communications Specialist for the York County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

That pride in local makers and growers can be experienced at breweries along the [Susquehanna Ale Trail](#) like [Collusion Tap Works](#). Head Brewer Jared Barnes traveled the world for both his brewing education and experience before returning home to open his own brewery. Another unique stop is [Bube's Brewery](#). The original Bube's opened in 1876, closed during the dark days of Prohibition, and re-opened in its original location in 2001. *(Photo Courtesy Bube's Brewery)*

Philadelphia Craft Beer Trail in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Philadelphia's history overflows with beer. The taverns found within the City of Brotherly Love are where our Founding Fathers birthed this great nation, and prior to Prohibition, the city was considered by many to be the cradle of American libations. Today, Philadelphia upholds that reputation with over 60 breweries in the region, all navigable via the [Philadelphia Craft Beer Trails' interactive map](#).

To properly experience the Philadelphia beer scene, be sure to blend a mix of time-honored favorites like [Dock Street Brewery](#) and [Yards Brewing](#) as well as revolutionary newcomers like [Tired Hands Brewing](#) and [Forest & Main Brewing Co.](#)

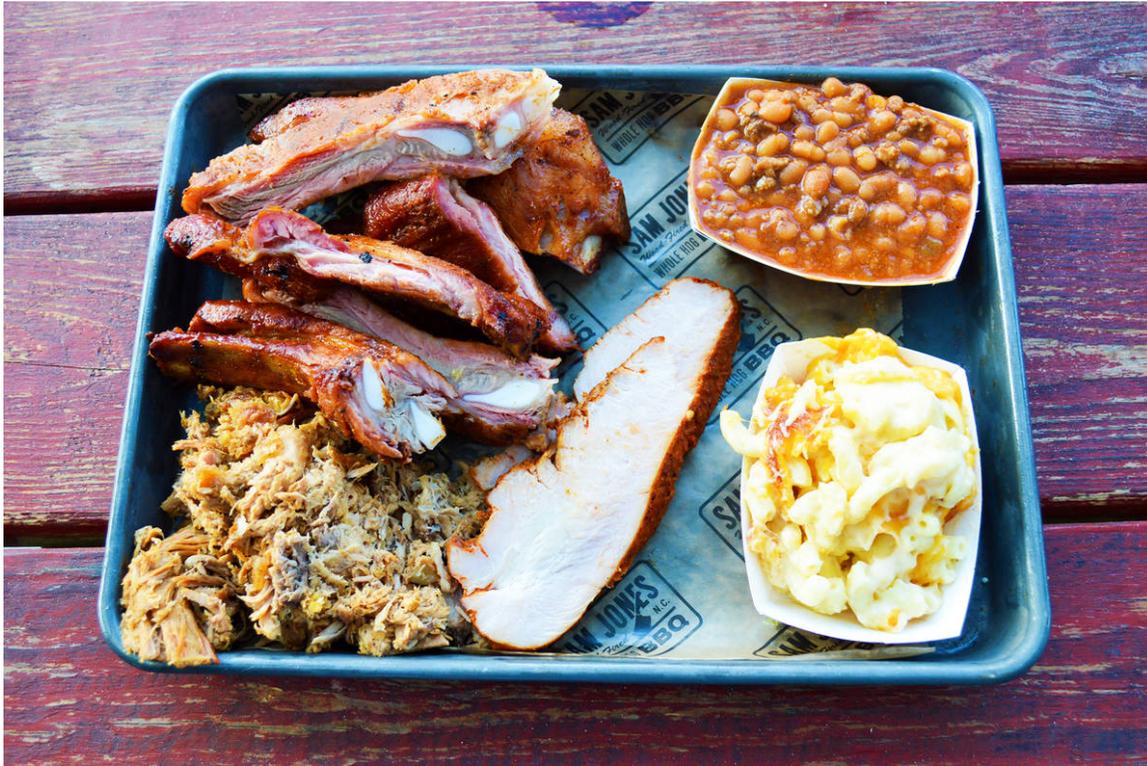


Brewgrass Trail in Lexington, Kentucky

Take a break from the Kentucky Bourbon Trail on Lexington's [Brewgrass Trail](#). Even though you're on an ale trail, local brewers pay homage to the colorful bourbon heritage of their region. With such close proximity to distilleries, almost all of the breweries showcase a beer or two aged in bourbon barrels.

At [Ethereal Brewing](#), sip on rich, barrel-aged Belgian Dubbels in what used to be the historic James Pepper Distillery. Or, stop into [West Sixth Brewing](#) for a rare taste of their Snakes in a Barrel Imperial Stout in their speakeasy-esque Barrel Room.

Last, be sure to visit [Alltech Lexington Brewing & Distilling](#) for a tour of both the brewery and the distillery. The tour does offer a taste of their barrel-forward ales like the summertime favorite Kentucky Peach Barrel Wheat Ale, but it doesn't operate as a standard taproom. Instead, most of their wares can be found at bars and restaurants throughout TOWN. *(Photo by Sarah Jane Sanders)*



Brew and 'Cue Trail in Pitt County, North Carolina

What goes better together than hops and malts than beer and BBQ? Yeah, I couldn't think of anything, either. Pitt County – considered by many to be the epicenter of Eastern North Carolina BBQ – combines the two with their new [Brew and 'Cue Trail](#). To the uninformed, Eastern North Carolina is whole-hog BBQ smoked for 12 hours or more and finished with a vinegary sauce laced with red pepper flakes or Texas Pete hot sauce.

Here's the catch: Other than Sam Jones BBQ – which is run by 2018 James Beard semi-finalist Samuel Jones – these are old-school BBQ joints that don't serve beer. But all of the breweries on the trail do allow outside food. So, stand in line at Jack Cobb & Son Barbecue to place a to-go order to enjoy at nearby [Duck-Rabbit Craft Brewery](#), which specializes in dark beers. Or pick up an order from Bum's Restaurant, where the smoke and spice levels are ratcheted up a notch or two, to enjoy with deceptively flavorful Billy Beer light lager from [Uptown Brewing](#). *(Photo by Bryan Richards)*



Shenandoah Beerwerks Trail in Virginia

Most of the trails on this list can easily be knocked out on a long weekend – not so with the [Shenandoah Beerwerks Trail](#). Spend a week traversing the trail from Harrisonburg in the north to Lexington in the south. Along the way, experience the history, natural beauty and farm-to-fork cuisine in a region dubbed the Breadbasket of the Confederacy for its role in supplying Southern forces with food.

Peruse the Harrisburg Farmer's Market with a stop after at Pale Fire Brewing for their Salad Days American Saison, which won both a GABF and World Beer Cup medal; hike a portion of the Appalachian Trail and then celebrate your accomplishment with any of the refreshing hop-forward ales at Waynesboro's [Basic City Beer Co.](#); visit Natural Bridge State Park – once owned by Thomas Jefferson – and finish the day with a rewarding Belgian Tripel aged in wine barrels at [Great Valley Farm Brewery](#). *(Photo by Chris Weisler)*



Gulp Coast: St. Pete/Clearwater Craft Beer Trail in St. Petersburg, Florida

The [Gulp Coast: St. Pete/Clearwater Craft Beer Trail](#) combines the fun of a beach vacation with all the variety you could hope to find in craft beer. Along the trail are 30 unique breweries covering everything from traditional beers at [Dunedin Brewing](#) – Florida’s oldest craft brewery – to farmhouse-inspired ales at [Saint Somewhere Brewing](#).

While you’re collecting stamps in your passport, take notes on the different variants you’ll find of the regional beer style, Florida Weisse. Area breweries developed the style based on the refreshingly tart Berliner Weisse but with local terroir via fruit infusions. Each brewery adds their own twist based on what’s seasonally available, such as the Mango Berliner Weisse at [de Bine Brewing](#), Strawbarb with strawberry and rhubarb at [Stilt House Brewing](#), or Sauer-Roggen with pomme fruit at [Flying Boat Brewing](#). (Photo Courtesy Visit St. Pete/Clearwater)



Drink Your Way Up the Coast of Maine

In Maine, we depart the traditional tourism board-planned itinerary and explore breweries via Inns Along the Coast's [Drink Your Way Up the Coast of Maine](#) trail.

"When it comes to the inside scoop on great places to eat and the story behind the best microbreweries in Maine, your innkeepers at Inns Along the Coast are there to offer great suggestions," says said Cheryl Michaelsen, co-owner of the Berry Manor Inn in Rockland, Maine. "No need to figure out on your own where to go and where to say along the way, we've done all the planning for you."

Stand-out stops include breweries like [Maine Beer Co.](#) for their highly coveted Dinner Double IPA, and the remote [Oxbow Brewing](#) for a rural farmhouse brewery experience. *(Photo by PJ Walter Photography)*

Brooklyn Beer Trail

Because hipsters and craft beer (or craft anything, for that matter) go hand-in-hand, we couldn't have an ale trail list without the [Brooklyn Ale Trail](#). The New York City borough boasts over 20 craft beverage makers, with more than half of those brewing beer.

The trail includes some of the greatest hits of New York beer with nationally recognized breweries like [Brooklyn Brewery](#) and [Sixpoint Brewery](#). Sure, you may know their offerings that grace your local grocery store shelves, but have you tried some of their limited releases like Sixpoint's Tequila Barrel-Aged OJ Jammer Imperial Gose with orange peel? The Brooklyn Ale Trail also boasts hot new breweries like [Other Half Brewing](#). Check out one of their many collaboration beers, such as Oh... That's Trill IPA with Trillium Brewing.

Whether you seek history, outdoor adventure or culinary conquests, there's an ale trail out there for you. So, pack your suitcase, dust off your growler, and get ready to go on the ultimate beercation!

COMMENTS

new



Submitted by BeerMe180 on Wed, 2018-07-11 07:42

Wow. 2 Maine breweries out of over 100... That's disappointing.

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Table of Contents

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[Help](#) | [Letters to the Editor](#) | [Subscriber Services](#)

[Home Page](#)

[Advertisers Index](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[From the Editor](#)

[Industry News](#)

FIRST RUNNINGS

[The Almighty Trappist Ale](#)

[Where on Earth is the Best Water for Brewing?](#)

[The Stunning Lack of Diversity in Craft Brewing](#)

FEATURES

[What is Craft Beer?](#)

[How to Trade Beer Online](#)

[What Determines the Color of Beer?](#)

INDUSTRY & TRENDS

[15 Unique US Ale Trails](#)

[The Business of Tasting Rooms](#)

[Are There Too Many Craft Breweries?](#)

REVIEWS

[Official Review](#)

[Brewer Q & A](#)

[Read All Editions](#)

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[Top 93 Dark Beers](#)

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[Top 25 Lawnmower Beers](#)

[World's Top 20 Beer Festivals](#)

