

Cheers to Michigan Beer!



Have you heard? Michigan is The Great Beer State, and with good reason! Currently, the **Michigan Brewers Guild** represents 150 member breweries (and counting) throughout the state's two peninsulas (and ranking Michigan #5 nationally for the overall number of breweries per state).

Beer tourism is on the rise around the country, and especially here in Michigan where agri- and culinary-tourism have been building momentum for some time. Beer-cations are among the most popular itineraries in Michigan.

Calhoun County Visitor's Bureau offers a Brew Bus which takes visitors to **Arcadia Ales**, **Bell's Production Brewery** and **Dark Horse Brewing**. You'll get a behind-the-scenes look at how your favorite brew is crafted, talk to the brew masters about their award-winning beers and of course, do some sampling. Hotel packages are also available. Several area destinations and attractions also host beer events throughout the year, so check with the Visitor's Bureau for a current list. Kalamazoo is home to Michigan's largest and oldest brewery: **Bell's Brewing & Eccentric Cafe**, along with a dozen other establishments serving up fine craft beer. Visitors can find hotel packages, tap takeovers at area restaurants and pubs and even driving or walking tours around the area. In 2013, Kalamazoo was rated #4 Beer City in America based on a national online poll, and it takes its role seriously—while still having plenty of fun!

Traverse City Tourism is actively promoting the rich beer culture of this northern Michigan town. Visitors will find nearly a dozen breweries, pub pedal operators, beer-themed tall ship sails and paddling events down the Boardman River, as well as two major festivals organized by Porterhouse Productions (**Summer and Winter Microbrew & Music**, both at The Village at Grand Traverse Commons). **Grand Traverse Resort and Spa** offers up beer-themed packages, as do several other area lodging properties.

Experience GR is one of the largest supporters of the Beer City USA campaign, which has drawn national attention on this West Michigan community over the past few years. Home to more than a dozen breweries (and growing), this town knows how to embrace its craft culture. Beer finds its way into many of the Grand Rapids annual events, including **ArtPrize**, Restaurant Week, **BrewtoberFest** and Cold Brews & Hot Eats—which leads into the Michigan Winter Beer Festival in February. For something totally unique, check out the Brew & Renew spa packages at the **JW Marriott**, downtown.

Communities, such as Manistee, Benton Harbor, Mackinaw City, Cadillac, Marne, Frankfort and Glen Arbor, put their own spin on craft beer festivals. Resorts, like **Boyne Mountain**, **Boyne Highlands**, **Shanty Creek**, **Grand Traverse Resort** and **Crystal Mountain** have been celebrating the craft beer culture for years, hosting a variety of special events—in the summer, fall AND winter!

Group tours and activities focused on locally-crafted brews are also becoming more and more popular, especially for wedding parties, class reunions, family gatherings and corporate outings. **Great Lakes Pub Cruiser** offers a unique way to visit the breweries in downtown Grand Rapids, while burning off calories along the way. This 15-person party bike is totally powered by pedals and is recognized as the only "Green Pub" of Michigan.

Live Eventfully offers Hop Farm to Table Tours, including trolley transportation, for groups of 18 to 30 people. The tour includes private beer tastings with specialists from **Rockford Brewing**. **West Michigan Beer Tours** is your connection to some of the best breweries in Michigan, offering behind-the-scenes experiences which show you the process, the people and the pride behind Michigan beer. Tours are offered throughout the year, and include the small batch breweries as well as the state's largest operations.

The **Michigan Brewers Guild** hosts four official MiBeer festivals each year. Next on the schedule is the wildly popular Winter Beer Festival at Fifth-Third Ballpark in Comstock Park, just north of downtown Grand Rapids (which is expanding to a two-day event in 2015, Friday Feb. 27 and Saturday, February 28). Other 2015 Guild events include the 18th Annual Summer Beer Festival, July 24-25 in Ypsilanti; UP Fall Beer Festival, September 12 in Marquette; and Detroit Fall Beer Festival, October 23-24 at Eastern Market in Detroit.

Whether heading out to visit the 150+ brewpubs and breweries around the state, ordering up your favorite craft beer at a local restaurant or bar, or picking up a growler or six pack for sharing at home with family and friends, Michigan has more than a handful of options available from coast to coast to coast. For more about Michigan's thriving craft beer scene, including a statewide list of breweries, information on pairing beer with food, and more, visit MiBeer.com.

Story by Dianna Stampfler, Michigan Brewers Guild