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DOUG MILLER PHOTOGRAPHY

The human-powered Cycle Pub passes the Deschutes Brewery pub in downtown Bend. Passengers can sip beer while they pedal the vehicle, which stops at craft breweries around town.

Awash in beer in Bend

BY BRIAN J. CANTWELL
Seattle Times Travel staff

BEND, Ore. — It was when the 20-something guest-of-honor in a beer-saturated bachelor party aboard the Cycle Pub mooned a passing limo that Bend really proved that, if anything, it's not boring.

WHEN SKIERS AND ROCK JOCKS WORKED UP A THIRST, LIFE CHANGED IN CENTRAL OREGON



BRIAN J. CANTWELL / SEATTLE TIMES
Beer glasses and growlers in Bend's Boneyard Beer tasting room.

WEB EXTRAS

- Video of the Cycle Pub.
 - Gallery of more photos.
- Link from this article at seattletimes.com/travel

If there's any doubt that this Central Oregon city of 81,000 has become the ultimate destination for combining outdoor recreation with beer tourism, the Cycle Pub should cinch it.

This common sight around downtown Bend combines the elements of a bicycle and — yes — a pub. Six bike seats, each with a set of pedals, face inward on each side of a bar counter. There's a big tire at each corner, a canopy overhead and a non-drinking driver. Bike meets beer.

Cycle Pub builder James Watts, a Bend local, saw a similar contraption in Germany two years ago, and "I just knew the minute I saw it, it was a perfect cultural match for Bend."

Among cities in beer-crazy Oregon, Bend now has the most craft breweries per capita. Some locals have started calling this "Beer City USA." More breweries are opening soon. What

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TRAVEL WISE

MAKING THINGS RIGHT WHEN YOUR JOURNEY GOES WRONG

BY CAROL PUCCI
Seattle Times travel writer

Things were going almost too smoothly on a two-week trip I took to Cuba in November.

The trip was legal, so there were no government hassles. We weren't ripped off or scammed. The Cubans we met were warm and welcoming, and the private homes we picked as our lodgings for the last few nights lived up to the good reviews.

The taxi got us to the airport in Havana in plenty of time for our flight to Cancún, Mexico, where we planned to spend the night before catching a Delta flight to Seattle the next day.

What happened next had the makings of a disaster. A few hours before takeoff, Cubana Airlines canceled our flight and several others. No explanation.

Flashing through my mind was the prospect of paying Delta \$600 in change fees to rebook my husband, Tom, and I, on new flights. Our cellphones weren't working and the airport had no Internet.

How could we contact Delta or get in touch with the condo we had rented for the night in Puerto Morelos near Cancún? And how would we pay for another night in Havana? We were almost out of cash, and American credit and ATM cards are useless in Cuba.

We would have survived, but it's a scary feeling when the tourist bubble bursts, and you're suddenly on your own in a place where communication is difficult and the rules are different.

As it turned out, we had almost no hassles. Everyone — the airlines, the condo owner and the people in Cuba — made things right even when things were going wrong.

Like you, I've run up against what seems like a "tough luck" attitude on the part of

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BYRON ROE PHOTOGRAPHY

Bill Casler, right, a tour guide at Bend's Deschutes Brewery, pours samples for visitors. Founded 24 years ago, Deschutes is now the nation's fifth-largest craft brewer.

DEAR READER

Tell us about your summer events

The Seattle Times is collecting listings for its **Summer Guide**, coming May 20. If you're in charge of a festival, event or special outing planned for late May through Labor Day, tell the world about it. Deadline for submissions is **April 4**. We need dates, hours, addresses, costs, a Web address (if you have one) and a phone number that readers may call. How to tell us:

- **Best way:** Use the form at seattletimes.com/submitlistings
- Email us at summerguide@seattletimes.com
- Mail to Seattle Times Summer Guide, c/o Doug Knoop, P.O. Box 70, Seattle, WA 98111.

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better way to visit a few?

"We had a blast," said Ian Berg, organizer of the bachelor party, which pedaled the town with AC-DC tunes blaring on the "Pub's" stereo in between stops to refill glass jugs — "growlers," as they're known in the trade — at some of the town's nine breweries.

And, hey, nobody fell off.

Cool brews in the desert

After Gary Fish opened Deschutes Brewery in a downtown storefront in 1988, brewing erupted here like the lava domes that formed this pretty high-desert country.

Having long-since added a big brewery overlooking its namesake river, Deschutes is now the fifth-largest craft brewer in the nation. But its beers retain local names, such as Mirror Pond Pale Ale, after Bend's little midtown lake, and Red Chair, commemorating a ski lift at nearby Mount Bachelor (and named "World's Best Beer" in the 2010 World Beer Awards). You get to see these places when you visit, beer hounds. Get psyched.

Visitors will also find a thriving downtown with busy shops and restaurants, including the brewhouses that serve food (go for fish 'n' chips at Bend Brewing Co., crawfish cakes at 10 Barrel, or a great \$10 Reuben at Cascade Lakes Brewery).

At the town's center is the 72-year-old, neon-bedizened Tower Theatre, renovated in 2004, offering bills such as a one-man show on Groucho Marx or a recent Leo Kottke concert. There's more shopping, too, at the Old Mill District (www.theoldmill.com), a renovated lumber-mill site just south of downtown with high-end shops and riverfront trails.

Nature came first

Before happiness was measured by hoppy-ness here, visitors came for skiing, river sports, hiking and mountain biking in nearby Deschutes National Forest, or rock climbing on world-famous Smith Rock, just up Highway 97.

Maybe it was natural that a town full of extreme skiers, crazy paddlers and rock jocks would take to beer.

"People are here to celebrate life, and in doing that everything is strenuous and physical ... and at the end of that experience, you want a beer!" said Larry Sidor, 62, who recently left after eight years as the brewmaster at Deschutes to start his own craft brewery, expected to open here in June (see www.yettobenamedbrewery.com).

"We're so accustomed to the spandex-clad outdoors person who's here to bike or ski," said Doug LaPlaca, president of Visit Bend, the tourism bureau. But since launching a promotional effort dubbed the Bend Ale Trail in 2010, "We've found the beer tourist looks very different — people with patches all over their vests, to show what breweries they've visited."

"I've had three couples come for their honeymoon, from places like Arizona, just to do the Ale Trail," said David Bafford, innkeeper at Bend's Mill Inn.

Don't know much about beer? In this town of Triple IPAs, India Brown Ales, Northwest Pale Ales, and porters and stouts and everything malty and hoppy —



BYRON ROE PHOTOGRAPHY

Patrons fill the tasting room and look over a Bend Ale Trail map at Boneyard Beer, which takes its name from the fact that it started on a shoestring with used equipment from other breweries. In only its second year, it can barely keep up with demand.



BYRON ROE PHOTOGRAPHY

Friends share a sample tray of beer on the patio at Bend Brewing Co., fronting on Mirror Pond in downtown Bend.



BRIAN J. CANTWELL / THE SEATTLE TIMES

The 72-year-old Tower Theatre, renovated in 2004, is a landmark in downtown Bend.

chances are, you'll learn before you leave.

A training ground

Through its growing years, Sidor said, Deschutes has acted as a de facto training ground for local brewers. Several went on to open their own craft breweries, such as the popular, off-kilter Boneyard brewery (www.boneyardbeer.com).

Housed in an old auto shop (37 N.W. Lake Place), it's called "Boneyard" because it started with used equipment from other brewers. A skull-and-crossbones logo helps set the snowboard-bum, biker-bar vibe, along with beers with names such as "Skunkape."

"It is dramatically opposite what most people think of in a craft brewery," LaPlaca said. "It's all tattoos and

trucker hats."

Open just over a year, Boneyard had planned to start canning its beer by now, but delayed that because it can't keep up with demand for keg beer, said Maddy Wasserman, self-described "Beer Wench Extraordinaire," who shows visitors around. (Most brewers offer tours and tasting.)

Such wild popularity is typical for the newer generation of Bend's brewers. The 5-year-old 10 Barrel brewery has just expanded to a new 50-barrel brewhouse.

A happy place

One thing was evident among Bend's brewers: These are happy people.

"It's a very friendly, com-

patriot type of environment," said 28-year-old Ty Barnett, a former home brewer who is a partner in GoodLife Brewing (www.goodlifebrewing.com), which launched last year in a room-to-grow warehouse (with authentic German-style beer garden) at 70 S.W. Century Drive, on the road to Mount Bachelor.

"We grew up on Mirror Pond (ale). We grew up on the guys who started it all: Deschutes, Widmer, Sierra Nevada ... A dozen or so paved the way."

His crowd is helping to push beer lovers to the next horizon, paying greater attention to flavors and aromas. Visitors to GoodLife learn all about "hop bursting," a technique for extracting citrusy hop flavors without lemon-peel bitterness. Stop in at 10 Barrel and they talk about beer and food pairing ("We don't employ a cook, we employ a chef").

These guys sound a bit like, well, wine snobs — but with a sense of humor. GoodLife's brew list includes the higher-alcohol "Pass Stout." (Say it fast.)

IF YOU GO**Bend's Ale Trail****Where**

Bend is on U.S. Highway 97 in Central Oregon, about 6½ hours by car from Seattle. Horizon Air, United Express, Delta and Allegiant fly to nearby Redmond, 20 minutes north of Bend.

Bend Ale Trail

To tour and taste at Bend craft breweries, pick up a brochure from the downtown Bend Visitor Center, or see www.visitbend.com/Bend_Oregon_Activities_Recreation/Bend-Ale-Trail (which includes a link to a free Ale Trail app).

Cycle Pub

Bend's **Cycle Pub** offers two-hour tours for up to 14 people: \$300 for a group rental. Coming soon to the Seattle area. 541-678-5051 or www.cyclepub.com.

Lodging

If you want to walk to breweries, consider these downtown hotels:

- Phoenix Inn Suites, 300 N.W. Franklin Ave.; www.phoenixinn.com/bend.
- McMenamins Old St. Francis School Hotel (and brewery), 700 N.W. Bond St., www.mcmenamins.com/oldstfrancis.
- Oxford Hotel, 10 Minnesota Ave., www.oxfordhotelbend.com.

More choices: www.visitbend.com/Discover_Bend_Oregon

More information

Visit Bend tourism bureau: 877-245-8484 or www.visitbend.com.

Another factor sets the grinning beer drinker apart from the cuff-shooting wine connoisseur, and makes a Bend getaway more affordable than Napa: "I can buy the most expensive bottle of beer in the world for \$20," Barnett said with a smile.

Premium beers are easy to find here. Most supermarkets feature a cooler of ales like you won't find many places in the world. The take-home prize from my visit:

bottles of The Abyss stout, a Larry Sidor creation from Deschutes that's aged in Kentucky bourbon barrels and flavored with licorice and molasses. At around \$12 for a 22-ounce bottle, it's a bit like drinking alcoholic sipping chocolate.

It's also a souvenir that will go really nicely with pulled pork. You can't say that about a T-shirt.

Brian J. Cantwell: 206-748-5724 or bcantwell@seattletimes.com

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WHERE WE STAYED

BRIAN J. CANTWELL

A chandelier lights the Mt. Bachelor Room.

Mill Inn bed-and-breakfast, 642 N.W. Colorado Ave., Bend; www.millinn.com or 877-748-1200.

RATES: \$30 (for shared "Backpacker Room") to \$120 for King's Suite; all include full breakfast. Our \$80 "Mt. Bachelor Room" (pictured) shared bathrooms down the hall.

PROS: Good prices for clean, comfortable rooms with fun, colorful décor (heavy on the chandeliers) and a nice list of amenities in a central location. Seven-course breakfast includes made-to-order dishes prepared by the friendly innkeeper.

CONS: Ten units are shoehorned into this relatively small, 100-year-old (but fully renovated) boarding-house, and walls are thin, so noise from traffic and other rooms can be an issue. (Bring earplugs.)

WOULD WE STAY THERE AGAIN? Yes, for the good value and excellent breakfasts.

WHERE DO YOU STAY? Got a favorite place in Bend? Comment on this story at seattletimes.com/travel.

— Brian J. Cantwell, *The Seattle Times*

Times writers pay for all lodging at rates available to the public, and book rooms without identifying themselves as journalists.

Sipping and tripping on the Brew Bus

Tour the town's brew houses on your own with a copy of the Bend Ale Trail map, or — if the Cycle Pub is too daunting — sign up for a \$45 guided tour and let the **Bend Brew Bus** be your designated driver.

The Brew Bus is a good way to spend a pleasant, beer-blurred afternoon as it visits four of the town's craft breweries. Included are tasting, appetizers and expanded tours, not just what the average tourist gets.

At Silver Moon Brewing, my group got a personal show-around from owner Tyler Reichert, who got his start as a beer maker when he was a forester at a remote post in Vermont "where skiing in and out with beer bottles got old fast."

At Deschutes Brewery, we crushed whole, sticky hop flowers in our fingers to sniff the lemon-zest aroma and gawked at the forest of 12,000-gallon fermentation tanks.

Some tour-goers came out of curiosity, some for education.

"It's *completely* different from home brewing," laughed home brewer Kenneth Toomey, 31, of San Diego. Added his brewing partner, Stephen Reasoner, 27, of Los Angeles, "We're working out of food containers and 5-gallon carboys!"

More info: 800-962-2862 or www.wanderlusttours.com
— Brian Cantwell

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