

Plan a weekend exploring the northeast beer trail

By Lauren Chattman Special to Newsday Updated October 30, 2019 10:40 AM

If you are a craft beer enthusiast, or thinking of becoming one, design a weekend getaway that will allow you to sample multiple artisan brews in a fun and beautiful setting. Many great microbreweries have established themselves in vacation-worthy locations within driving distance of Long Island. Choose one of the following destinations to combine r&r, tourism, and plenty of ale, lager, malt, and stout imbibed right where they were made.

Burlington, Vermont: For density of craft breweries you can't do better than Burlington, which boasts dozens of them, from the tiny Simple Roots (simplerootsbrewing.com), to the craft behemoth, Magic Hat (magichat.net) Stay at the centrally located, hip Hotel Vermont (hotelvt.com), which offers a convenient downtown location, rustic-modern décor, a massage room, and a Vermont Teddy Bear delivered to your room on request. Visit Queen City Brewery (queencitybrewery.net) in Burlington's arty/industrial South End to sample styles from around the world, which might include a Munich Dunkel, a Vienna Lager, and a Yorkshire Porter on any given day. At Foam Brewers (foambrewers.com), seasonal beers are described in terms more often heard at wineries: The tasting notes for Random Rules, a fruited sour, are "peach bellini, starfruit, tart." Years of Refusal, a Bohemian Pilsner, is described as "crisp, lemon, and floral." True beer fanatics will want to make a pilgrimage to The Alchemist (alchemistbeer.com), 40 miles east in Stowe, where IPAs like Heady Topper and Focal Banger are produced in such limited quantities and are in such demand that customers are only allowed to purchase four to six 4-packs per visit. On your downtime, sample farmhouse Cheddar cheese (shelburnefarms.org), tour a chocolate factory (lakechamplainchocolates.com), and shop for maple syrup (dakinfarm.com). Outdoor activities, weather permitting, include hiking the Green Mountains, cycling, and sailing on Lake Champlain.

Southern Maine: A drive up the scenic coast of southern Maine can include a half-dozen beer stops. Start at Tributary Brewing (tributarybrewingcompany.com) in Kittery, where master brewer Tod Mot adds oysters to the boil to give his stout a mineral character. At SoMe (somebrewingco.com) in nearby York, father and son Dave and David Rowland produce locally inspired beers like their Whoopie Pie Stout, aged on cocoa nibs and vanilla beans. Hidden Cove Brewing (hiddencovebrewingcompany.com) in Wells offers several beers you won't find anywhere else, like their Jali, a wheat/pilsner aged in Tequila barrels with charred jalapeños, dried apricots, and agave nectar. At the end of the day, head to Portland for dinner at a James Beard Award-winning restaurant like Eventide Oyster (eventideoysterco.com). Check into the Press Hotel (thepresshotel.com) (expensive and cool, in the former Portland Press Herald Building) or the Black Elephant Hostel (blackelephanthostel.com) (hip budget choice for the young and young at heart). Portland breweries include Oxbow Blending and Bottling (oxbowbeer.com), which has its own acclaimed restaurant. The Little Tap House (littletaphouse.com) is a restaurant that also offers 14 rotating Maine microwbrews on tap. Shop at the Bier Cellar (biercellar.com) for an impressive selection of beer, cider, mead, and wine.

Make one last stop on the way back home, at Barreled Souls Brewing (barreledsouls.com) in Saco, where more than a dozen beers including sours, stouts, and barleywines are fermented in oak barrels and available on tap.

Newport, Rhode Island: With beautiful Newport as your base, explore Aquidneck Island's lively brewery culture. Taprooms include relative newcomer Ragged Island Brewing (raggedislandbrewing.com) in nearby Portsmouth (also home to picturesque St. Georges boarding school); Taproot Brewing (taprootbeer.com) in Middletown, where a local farming family makes beer and runs a farm-to-table restaurant; and Newport Craft Brewing and Distilling Co. (newportcraft.com), run by 20-year industry veterans, in Newport itself. Proud locals, they named their New England IPA "Rhode Trip," and their double IPA "Rhode Rage." Across the bridge in Kingston there is Shaidzon Beer Co. (shaidzonbeer.com), where American pale ale is brewed with local hops, and sage petals from a nearby flower farm are used in the Lowland Villager Saison. The fast-growing Whalers Brewing Company (<https://whalers.com>) in Wakefield specializes in lighter session beers, and has taken home prestigious prizes, winning Best American-Style Pale Ale at the World Beer awards. For a change of pace, enjoy a tour and tasting at Sons of Liberty Spirits in South Kingstown for local whiskies and gin. Hotel choices in Newport include full-service resorts like Gurney's Newport (gurneysresorts.com), boutique hotels like the former Victorian mansion playfully named Gilded (gildedhotel.com), and the romantic Castle Hill Inn (castlehillinn.com). During non-drinking hours, tour a Newport cottage (newportretoration.org) and visit the International Tennis Hall of Fame (tennisfame.com).

Manchester, New Hampshire: Sure, Merrimack is home to the Anheuser-Busch Brewery (budweisertours.com), where you can taste America's bestselling beer and admire the company's trademark Clydesdale horses. But head to nearby Manchester if you want to explore New Hampshire's craft brewing scene. Hidden away in an old building that's part of the city's historic mill yard, Aigean Ales calls itself a nano-brewery. With just a couple of seats and a half-dozen taps, it serves a limited selection of intriguing handcrafted brews at any one time. Recent offerings have included a French farmhouse ale, an experimental strong ale, and a blackberry wild ale. A bit bigger, but still small and family-run, Great Northern Ale Works pours its three core beers — a dry-hopped pale ale, a robust vanilla porter, and an IPA — all year-round in addition to seasonal offerings and special releases. Long Blue Cat (longbluecat.com) serves casual food like chicken wings and flatbread pizzas to go with their Klementine Klosch and Maple Brown Ale. The yearling Candia Road Brewing Company (untappd.com) brings a youthful attitude to its business, with beers called Motivational Sneaker (a cranberry-lime Berliner weisse) and a stout called Neighbors Night Terrors and Nitrogen Bombs. For a side of culture with your beer, visit the Currier Museum of Art (currier.org), which mounts exhibitions like this fall's The Shakers and the Modern World. Or tour Frank Lloyd Wright's Zimmerman House, now under the stewardship of the Currier. It is the only Wright home in New England that offers visitor access. Stay in town at the quaint Ash Street Inn (ashstreetinn.com) or at the historic Kent House in Chester (kenthouseofchester.com).

Litchfield County, Connecticut: Combine a weekend of antiquing (plaingoods.com for cool curated furniture and vintage clothing; privethouse.com for vintage George Jensen tabletop items at great prices), leaf peeping, and hiking (a section of the Appalachian Trail runs through the area) with a tour of local breweries in northwestern Connecticut. Stay at the White Hart (whitehartinn.com) in Salisbury, a classic but fabulously renovated 19th-century inn, or at Legends on Farmington

(legendsbnb.com), an old-fashioned lodge on the Farmington River where you can try your hand at fly fishing when you're not bellying up to a bar. Tap rooms to visit: Kent Falls Brewing (kentfallsbrewing.com) sits on a 50-acre farm that includes an acre of hops used for beers like Awkward Hug IPA and Modern Posture Wheat Beer. Great Falls Brewing Company (greatfallsbrews.com) in Canaan has a lively tap room featuring live music, trivia nights, and darts tournaments, where you can sample Happy Camper S'mores Stout or Blackberry River Ale to name a few. Lasting Brass Brewing (lastingbrass.com) is named for the historic brass factory building where it resides. Unique beers here include a sour wheat ale conditioned on pineapple and passionfruit called Weisse Words and a double milk stout conditioned on toasted coconut and coffee beans called Brass Monkey. Stop at the Litchfield Distillery (litchfelddistillery.com) to sample local barrel-finished gin and cask-strength bourbon. Highly rated restaurants in the area include Zaragoza (zaragozarestaurant.com) in New Milford for modern tapas, and Arethusa al Tavolo (arethusaaltavolo.com) in Bantam for sophisticated farm-to-table fare.

By Lauren Chattman Special to Newsday