



**Special Edition Dish Trip:  
Beer in Asheville, North Carolina  
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DishTrip.com**

Just as Philly was about to kick off their Beer Week this summer, Asheville, North Carolina was in full swing with theirs, and I brought Town Dish's Editor-in-Chief Amy Strauss back to my home turf to learn how we do beer week in the south. Growing up in North Carolina, I can honestly say that I am a true southern girl at heart and bringing my Pennsylvania Dutch-y friend on this brew-infused adventure, I knew it would be nothing but fun.

Before Amy arrived, I hit up a local brewery close to where I am from — Heintelmännchen Brewery, located in Sylva, NC. Although our southern beer week celebration was entitled "Asheville Beer Week," it stretched for most of Western North Carolina, including such local breweries as Heintelmännchen and Nantahala Brewery (in Bryson City).

Heintelmännchen is a microbrewery, in every sense of the word—it's a tiny, tiny place that oozes charm. Standing in the middle of the room is the tour, with the kegs on one side, and a fridge on the other, with a small selection of taps. Specializing in German-style beers, I tried several and would recommend the Black Forest Stout, or Gnarly Gnome that was on tap that day.

But, once Amy arrived in my native turf, I made sure our first stop on the trip was to one of my absolute favorite places to eat, Laughing Seed. Located on Wall Street in downtown Asheville, it is one of the most popular places to snag a craft beer and enjoy one of their many unique, completely-vegetarian dishes. The great thing about the restaurant to me—besides the local sourcing of food—are the characters that you see inside.

It isn't just a "vegan-hippie" hang-out, and not everyone is sitting around munching on carrot sticks. Customers of all sorts—old, young, business suits and yeah, a few hippie skirts—drive into town for such favorites as sushi, reubens and sloppy joes (all of which are completely vegetarian!).

After enjoying a delicious meal (and feeling pretty good about it), we headed out towards Black Mountain, NC, for the furthest of the area-wide craft breweries.

Pisgah Brewing, tucked down some back roads and off the beaten path, is well worth the journey. Crafting only organic beer, this was one of my favorite spots

(and, it also fares well as a follow-up to our visit to Laughing Seed). It was casual, laid back, and visitors wandered from the inside warehouse setting to the picnic benches in the sun. My favorite beer here had to be the organic Blueberry Wheat. It has such a lovely color, with pink hues, and was the antithesis of what fruit beers are usually, filled with artificial syrups and additives. This wheat beer exploded across our taste buds with the captured sweetness of summer blueberries, picked straight from the bush.

After grabbing a growler of the blueberry wheat to-go, Amy and I headed back into Asheville, eager to taste more of what the scene had to offer.

We next visited Highland Brewery, where the craft brewing revolution really started. To me, this is one of the most well-known breweries in the area, and you can find varieties of it at the local grocery stores. I know I can usually count on there being a bottle or two at my parent's house. The two of us opted for a pint instead of the tour, as we had been on many a tour at this time. I enjoyed the Razor Wit Belgian Wheat while we waited for a sudden southern rainstorm to pass.

Post rainstorm, we headed to check into our hotel, and took a shuttle into town. The thing I love so much about Asheville is the variety of people that live there and their openness to share things. On our way to our next stop, the man carting us downtown decided to show us the "hot spot" to hang out on a Friday night — the local drum circle! Sure enough, as we passed by, the drummers were just starting to set up, and we were assured that we could join, dance or drum if we wanted to. Amy and I politely said we might join up later... but, silly me had forgotten my drum! Next time!

The next stop was the Oyster House Brewing Company, which operated out of the Lobster Trap. Now, we had heard about the Moonstone Stout that was brewed with actual oysters, and we couldn't wait to try the unique beer! We paired it with a dozen oysters each, and dug in. The stout itself was so smooth and creamy, and the minerals off the shells of the oysters gave the stout a fantastic flavor. Plus, the oysters themselves were excellent. We were bummed in hindsight that we didn't get a growler of this for home, but we just didn't know how it would travel after coming off of nitro.

We ventured from here to Lexington Avenue Brewing, or known to the locals as "Lab." With several beers on tap, we decided to go for a flight to get the most of the experience. We paired the Chorizo Nachos with our flights, and they were amazing! They came with house-made pork chorizo, smoky red beans, house cheese sauce, jalapeno sour cream, and cilantro (which I happily picked off, to anyone that knows my dislike of said herb). Lab provided a solid flight, and we decided on a growler of the Belgian White Ale to take home with us.

Checking Twitter, Amy and I got word there was a sour beer on tap at Barley's Taproom & Pizzeria, so we made a quick detour to check out the Tart Lychee by

New Belgium Brewing. On the way, we spied a gathering of locals huddled around a folky gang of young street performers, jamming away. You never know what you will find around any corner in Asheville, which is why I love it so.

Calculating our time left for the evening, we decided to jump straight to Asheville Brewing Company, where there was a party in full swing! Brewers from all over mingled and tasted sips of the hearty lineup (remember, it's Asheville Beer Week—everybody's in town!).

I grabbed a pint of the District 12 wheat, a nod to The Hunger Games movie—which happened to be filmed in Asheville. I also tried a smaller portion of Fire Escape Ale, made with 127 pounds of smoked jalapenos. What a kick at the end! I grabbed a growler of this to bring back to PA, as that flavor was one that had to be shared. We ended the night noshing on some tots (on the menu as “Gimme-Your-Tots”), and a delightfully strange pizza with walnuts encrusted on the top.

Before we headed back up north to our home turf of Pennsylvania, we made one more stop—one of my favorite places in the world. Deep Creek National Park is located within the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, and is an absolute haven in the hot summer months (and great following a day of endless beer imbibing). I took Amy and some cousins of mine down for a swim—done country-style, in the creek. After playing in the very icy cold water for a few hours, we headed to a local brewery for a final taste of North Carolina Beer. Amy and I opted for the Dirty Girl Blonde, which was touted as crisp and refreshing, with a snap of hop bitterness in the finish. Grabbing a growler to go, it was the perfect way to end a trip home.

Book your own Asheville Beer Adventure (by clicking [here](#)) or repeat ours above! With Asheville's incredible craft beer enthusiasm, as well as their endless brewery tours, tastings, beer stores, and brewpubs, it's true that this dear North Carolina city is worthy of their three-time title “Beer City USA.”

Learn even more about Asheville, North Carolina by visiting [exploreasheville.com](http://exploreasheville.com).

