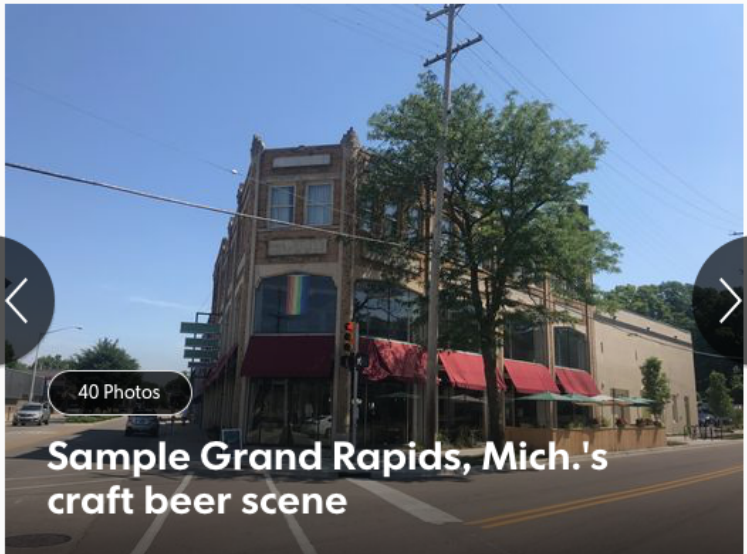


Follow the Furniture City beer trail

Jerry Soverinsky, Special for USA TODAY Published 6:50 a.m. ET July 18, 2017 | Updated 10:55 a.m. ET July 18, 2017



40 Photos
Sample Grand Rapids, Mich.'s craft beer scene



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(Photo: Jerry Soverinsky)

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There's a renaissance taking place in Grand Rapids, Mich. The Midwest's office furniture-making capital, with its bustling downtown and revitalized surrounding neighborhoods, has leveraged an infusion of creative 20- and 30-somethings to become a focal point for healthcare, information technology, and more recently, craft

beer production.

While not releasing its century-old Furniture City moniker, Grand Rapids has more prominently embraced and promoted its designation as Beer City USA by Examiner.com, now a ubiquitous local tagline that unites a lineup of roughly three dozen area craft breweries.

Not bad for Michigan's second largest city, which sits roughly three hours northeast of Chicago (by car) and is getting used to poaching visitors to the Windy City who seek hoppy excellence in a condensed and eminently walkable area.

Indeed, a study commissioned by Experience GR, the city's tourism department, revealed that roughly 30% of the city's 42,000 annual beer tourists come from outside Michigan, a testament to the city's craft beer allure.

A citywide Brewers Guild, established in 2016, formally sets strategic goals and events for its membership, which includes both professional and home brewers who work together to elevate the city's beer scene.

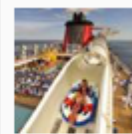
"It's very collaborative," says Jackson Van Dyke, president of the guild and co-owner of Harmony Brewing Company. "If somebody needs grain, we're there to help. And it's that kind of support that has made us a true craft beer destination."

The guild recently launched its Beer City Pro-Am Competition, one of more than a dozen celebrations of craft beer spaced throughout the year, and the first to feature home brewers. "The eagerness of the breweries and home brewers to work together for this competition speaks volumes to the ever-growing craft beer scene in Grand Rapids," says Kate Herron, director of marketing for Experience Grand Rapids.

As incentive for those seeking to sample the area's ales, lagers, porters and Belgian varieties, Grand Rapids offers its Beer City Brewsader Passport program, a pocket guide that neatly ties together the city's beer scene with a detailed map of area facilities along with space to document personal visits. Accumulate just eight stamps and a comfy "Beer City USA" t-shirt can be yours. In the program's first two years, the city has distributed more than 6,000 shirts to an ever-growing field of dispersed Brewsaders (2,000 non-Michiganders, 100 foreigners).

For craft beer fans, it's a calling card for conversation among fellow aficionados, a growing breed in this part of the Midwest and beyond.

Browse the photo gallery above for a sneak peek inside Grand Rapids craft breweries, and see more Michigan beer destinations below.



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