

Beer drinkers want some exercise while imbibing

By Brad Tuttle, Time

Beer tends to be paired with burgers, not bicycles. But around the country, a new recipe in tourism mixes craft-beer tastings with cycling, running and rafting. Think of it as a sweaty spin-off of the foodie craze.

While the clientele tends to be fit, the physical demands of these brew tours are not all that daunting. John Stevens launched Port City Running Tours in his hometown of Portland, Maine, in 2012 and now offers 3-mile jogs on Saturdays with samplings at three breweries.



OARS offers a variety of beer-rafting adventures. Photo/OARS

“The longest stretch is just under a mile,” he says. “Anyone can run that, especially if there’s beer at the end.”

Last year alone, more than 400 new breweries opened in the U.S., as sales of craft beer increased by a whopping 17 percent. Not surprisingly, beerercise expeditions have been popping up in areas with high concentrations of craft breweries and active residents. There’s no national count of

such tours, but Portland, home to no fewer than 35 breweries, has at least three beer-focused cycling tours – including the funky Brewcycle, a jointly pedal-powered contraption that fits 15 riders.

And in Fort Collins, Colo. – 145,000 residents, nine breweries. Bob Williams launched Beer and Bike Tours last year, offering scenic day tours and multiday rides in the Rockies with ample brewery breaks. This autumn, the company is peddling beer-bike-foliage tours in Vermont, which has the most craft breweries per capita of any state in the country.

Beer-themed rafting trips have become a big draw for the California outfitter OARS, where in addition to the usual adventure equipment – tents, life jackets and sleeping bags – beer tours require an extra raft just to carry 10 or 11 5-gallon kegs.

“We try to put the kegs down on the bottom of the raft, near the water, to keep them cool,” explains Scott Saulsbury, head brewer for Southern Oregon Brewing Co., who has accompanied OARS on multiday trips down Oregon’s Rogue River for the past two summers.

As for what kind of beer goes best with rafting and cycling, there’s no consensus.

“Some people like porters regardless of what they’re doing, or if it’s 110 degrees,” says Saulsbury. Doctors might suggest water as the best post-aerobics beverage, but don’t tell that to craft-brew aficionados. “Beer is just a terrific reward,” says Evan Ross, founder of Oregon’s Cycle Portland Bike Tours. “After working hard, that great feeling you get from beer is your body’s way of saying thank you.”