



Travel Thursday: Tapping the Seattle Tours for the Best the City Has to Offer.

March 21, 2019
Instinct
By: Adam Dupuis

We fell in love with the Pacific Northwest about 4 years ago, but we didn't know what we were doing during our first visit to Seattle. Yes, I can plan a great vacation for me and my friends with a variety of activities and sites to see, but sometimes you need to hand the planning over to a local and tap their expertise. So when it came time to return to a place where we would move to in a heartbeat, we let the experts of Seattle handle it all. I think we struck gold, four times over.

Before I begin, I would like to say that the people of the Northwest have to be some of the best people I have ever met, anywhere. Yes, I understand that the people that are running tours are focused on pleasing the customer and ensuring return business, but these four companies I will mention were absolutely amazing and I would do every single tour again.



1 – Seattle Brewery Walking Tours

Since it was December when I was visiting, it's only fitting to start with a tour that was hosted by none other than Santa Claus. There was something devilish, exciting, and jovial about drinking a bunch of beers with ol' Saint Nick.

Tim Lorang manages and runs Seattle Brewery Walking Tours. He was the first tour I booked and he introduced me to Seattle hospitality even before we met. Sending me welcome emails and then picking up the phone when I called for a quick question instead of letting it go to voicemail went a long way with me to realize I chose the right tour guide. "I'm just about to head off to an event where I'll be Saint Nick for 2 hours, but I'd love to answer any questions you may have" was his response in so many words or less. He then told me a little about the Old Ballard Brewery Tour, one of the four he offered and the one I chose for myself and my friend to attend.

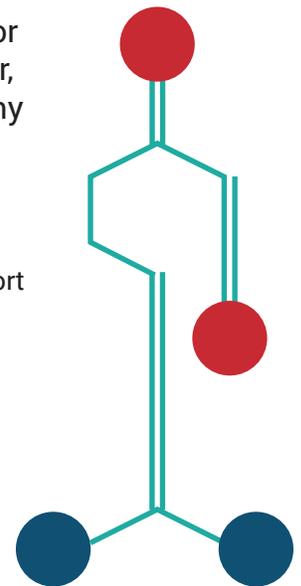
The Old Ballard Brewery Tour includes visiting three breweries. At only 860 feet, this is our shortest tour, but you will not find more great beer in a two-block area of any city in the country. Our tour starts and ends just a few short blocks from Old Ballard's Historic District.

The tour includes:

- Four beer tastings at each location, this is equal to about 1 full pint of beer at each location
- Beer and Food Guide
- Beer tasting score sheet
- Souvenir bottle opener

We met Tim and yes, he was Santa. But he was more than that. He was a wealth of knowledge about not just the beers we drank but as well the history of the types, names, makings of, everything you wanted to know, but was presented in a non-beer snobbery way. You were learning about the history of brewing from across the world ... during one of the shortest distanced beer tours out there. We spend an hour at each of the three breweries, Reuben's Brews, Obec Brewing, and Stoup Brewing. We had a great chat with the head brewer and owner at Obec and also was able to bend the ear of Lara Zahaba, co-owner of Stoup, where we ended our night amongst live music on the first floor and trivia night upstairs. We'll definitely be back Lara.

Oh and those phone calls as well as Tim being Santa, he gets a feel of what beers you are interested in trying and meet with the owners and staff of the breweries to get the flights he offers you just right, but he is very accommodating if you have a special request. Tim/Santa will become your friend and it is not just because of his doppelgänger, it's because he loves what he does.





2 – Seattle Craft Cider Tour

We did beer with Santa, how about cider with a Mercedes? I've been on a cider kick of recent and what better place to do a cider tour than in the state that is known as the apple capital of the world. I've had some good ciders, but they've been ones that some distributor has chosen for mass consumption in some bar USA. Let's go find the real stuff.

Join us on Seattle's original craft hard cider tasting tour! On this small-group tour limited to 10 people, you will visit 3 Seattle area locales that are dedicated to the art of brewing up America's original hard beverage, cider! At each stop on the tour, you will enjoy 3 to 5 4oz. pours each of hard cider. You'll learn what you're drinking from the cider makers, and you'll gain insight into the hard cider making process.

You'll travel door-to-door in a comfortable high-roof, extended length van with your guide and designated driver at the wheel. This is not a brewery tour that happens to offer a few lonely ciders! This tour is a dedicated cider circuit! If you love brewed craft beverages with deep local roots then you will love this tasting tour. If you've already welcomed hard cider into your life, then this tour is not to be missed!

Tour experience:

- 4.5 Hour tour, 11:45am to 4:15pm
- 3 Full Cider Flights Included (3-5 4oz pours!)
- 3 Authentic Seattle Craft Cider Makers
- Gourmet cheese pairings during tour
- Full Time Designated Driver & our High-Roof Van
- Meet cider makers & learn the essentials
- Small groups of 4-10 adults



So, once again, the communication from the tour organizer and us was off the charts insanely good. We walked out of our Airbnb and boom! There was Michael and his Mercedes passenger van. We were going to be riding in style. Little did we know, that we would need the van, not just to get around, but to as well stay up right. Yes, the cider tour was not your simple grocery store cider as we would learn at our first stop, Brownrigg Hard Cider, where Chris the owner had a heavy hand and would lose count in a good way as to how many we were served. With ciders that are infused with fig, ginger, passionfruit, cherries, basil, and so many other original flavors to cider, we didn't want to leave. The presentation he provided us in his small cozy cider house took us from dry to seasonal to sweets to everywhere we wanted to go and didn't know we should be going to. Chris at Brownrigg is a must see as part of this tour or not. Memorize his hours and go see him, bring a thirst and leave with some for later.

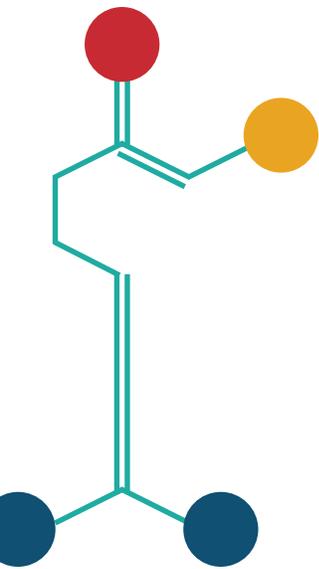
Rejoicing that Michael and the Mercedes were there to cart us away, we were off to our second location, Schillings, which was more of a bar chain in Seattle that specialized in local and their own ciders. Michael had a surprise in the Mercedes and brought out a cheese, nut, fruit plate for us to enjoy at Schilling Cider House. I did feel bad for Schilling for Brownrigg would be a hard experience to beat, the girl on staff at Schilling had an issue with the company that she openly shared with us over and over, and the flavors were just not as vibrant as we were desiring. They were some of the safe bet ciders.

Back into the Mercedes the 6 of us went (we should have named our transportation) and off to our next stop, Capitol Cider. As they prepared for their New Year's Eve celebration, we were led downstairs to an amazing space where we would enjoy once again many more than three tastings. Brownrigg gave us from their home taps, Schilling did as well, Capitol Cider hat taps and fancy bottles they were serving from. The knowledge of the art was there, reminding us of Tim/Santa.

Look for Capitol Cider when you're walking around on Capitol Hill. It's close to the gay establishments.

I do not want to set Michael up so he and the cider houses have to deliver like they did with us on that day, but if you go on this tour, you will learn to appreciate cider, appreciate the history and craft, and appreciate that you get to relax afterward and reflect upon all you tasted and learned.

Nature Nuts Travel is the name of the company that provided us with the Cider Tour. Check out their website for more adventurous explorations involving helicopters and mountains!





3 – Savor Seattle – Booze N’ Bites Tour

In choosing the tours we did, we wanted a couple that would bring us away from Pike Place Market area and a couple that would educate us more about the offerings near that area, where we had our Airbnb. We were immediately drawn to Booze N Bites, not only because of the name but for what it had to offer.

Highlights Include:

- 5 cocktails – including a Montana Mule and a craft beer flight
- Visit a bar that was once a speakeasy and brothel
- Learn about the local man who shaped Seattle’s cocktail scene and became America’s best bartender
- Understand how alcohol influenced Seattle’s early history and how the police handled Prohibition

Our tour guide was young, cute, knowledgeable and all the other people on our tour were fun likable attractive funny men from Washington state. It was in the cards that we were going to have a great time and we did. From Rachel’s Ginger Beer and our fresh ginger beer Montana Mules we walked to Cantina de San Patrio to have a spicy seasonal margarita & carne asada tacos to Long Provincial for a flavorful lemongrass martini & caramelized shrimp spring rolls. Off to the The Diller Room, a blue collar bar for their Diller Daiquiri & house muffaletta, then we ended our tour at Pike Brewing Company for artisan craft beers paired with a homemade Pike Pretzel.

The Booze N’ Bites tour was the perfect amount of peripheral activities to the Pike Place Market, places we pass often as well go to and from, but never stopped in before.

4 – Eat Seattle – Chef Guided Food Tour of Pike Place Market

Who better to give a food tour of the market than professional chefs that scour the market to supply their kitchens and restaurants.

The Chef/Tour Guide was able to give us some great access to some of the culinary high points and variety of Pike Place Market.

The Eat Seattle chef food tour takes you on a journey through the Pacific Northwest by tasting Seattle's best artisan vendors in the famous Pike Place Market. Get the inside scoop on where chefs shop and locals hang out. As with all of our tours, we explore through our eyes and stomach – uncovering hidden gems and interacting with local vendors all while indulging in many delicious treats from our carefully selected stops. We look forward to you joining us for a morning filled with education, food, and fun!

Chef's Tour: Though many tourists are attracted to the famous Pike Place Market every year, local chefs also selectively choose their seasonal produce and proteins daily from the market. This tour gives us a taste of the vendors that supply the best chefs in town with their organic produce and sustainable seafood.

Chef's Perspective: Our tours are run by chefs who contribute a culinary perspective, telling the story of the Northwest through its food.

Local Taste: We strategically choose our partners to ensure the best quality products of the Northwest are represented.

Small Groups: We keep group-size to 10 people and under to provide a more intimate, less touristy experience. This also creates a better dynamic to ask questions, absorb the information and connect with the other group members.

The small group was perfect for navigating Pike Market Place, but every so often a person wanted to join in our group, learn from the chef, and have the samples we were receiving. It was good to once again have a local give us recommendations as to which places they choose products and produce from and why. It made us stop into stores and meet the vendors and get to know them as people who love work there and provide a service as opposed to those people behind that counter.

Thanks again to the amazing hospitality that oozed from our Seattle tour guides. I am not usually one for tours since they are often too lengthy, boring, or there's an app for that. But meeting these individuals, especially Tim from the walking tours and Michael from the cider tour, they started these businesses themselves and are making a go at offering quality tours to interested parties. All four were great and very enjoyable for this picky traveler.

