

Where to Drink Craft Beer in Christchurch, New Zealand



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As their earthquake-damaged city rebuilds, talented brewers are making Christchurch a craft beer destination.

On February 22, 2011, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake hit Christchurch, the second largest city in New Zealand. The earthquake came only six months after a magnitude 7.1 earthquake rattled the same area; the loss of life and property was immense. One casualty of the quake was the Nathan Lion Canterbury Brewery at the corner of Antigua and St. Asaph streets. The site of a working brewery for over one hundred years, the warren of buildings was so heavily damaged that Lion decided to demolish the remains and move their operations elsewhere.

Lion produced beers like Speight's and Steinlager, two examples of New Zealand's then-ubiquitous beer style: lager. "We were all drinking the same stuff," says Ralph Bungard, owner of Three Boys Brewery. "It was all a brown, sweet style lager."

Times have changed. Though construction around town attests to the ongoing process of rebuilding the city, the craft beer scene in Christchurch is thriving. Breweries like Three Boys use local ingredients—including those which brought Lion to town in the first place, Canterbury's high quality barley and pure mountain spring water—but they don't limit themselves to lagers. The breweries here are producing every style of beer, from fruit-infused Berliners to American-style pale ales inspired by the craft breweries of California.

So if you want to do as the locals do, go "tramping" along one of Christchurch's beautiful hiking trails, then reward yourself with a beer. Here's a selection of the best places to try the local brews, from cozy craft beer bars to working breweries.

The Cassels & Sons Brewery



With both a large open-air patio and a restaurant housed inside the brewery, Cassels & Sons is a good place to sit with a beer, no matter what's happening with the unpredictable Christchurch weather. In addition to the Cassels beers brewed on site, like the English-style Best Bitter or creamy Milk Stout, a good choice of other local brews is always on tap. You can try up to six in a self-designed tasting flight (4 beers for \$16NZ or 6 for \$20NZ). The menu offers fresh or fried oysters and thin crust pizzas made in their wood-fired ovens.

casselsbrewery.co.nz

Three Boys Brewery

After returning to New Zealand from the UK in 2004, Ralph Bungard decided to leave his job as a scientist and start brewing beer. Now, more than ten years later, his brewery Three Boys is one of the stalwarts of the local scene. Three Boys may be best known for its zesty Belgian-style Wheat Beer, but keep an eye out for the Oyster Stout, which is only made from March through September with Bluff oysters from the Foveaux Strait. If you're not in a rush, take your pint upstairs to the seating area that overlooks the working brewery and watch the beer get made. threeboysbrewery.co.nz

Pomeroy's Old Brewery Inn



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Built in the 1800s as Ward's Brewery, this large red brick building has the look and feel of a traditional English pub. The bar serves two lines of beer that are brewed on site, Pomeroy's and Beer Baroness. The house beers are actually just a few of the whopping thirty-one taps, and this is a good place to try craft beer from other areas of New Zealand, such as the popular Wellington-based breweries Garage Project and Panhead. A menu of pub food is available to accompany the generously sized beer flights (four beers for \$17NZ.)

pomspub.co.nz

Two Thumb Brewing Co.

New Zealand is devoted to sustainability, so it's not surprising that every brewery in Christchurch offers to fill up reusable growlers (or "riggers"). In addition to getting your growler filled at Two Thumb Brewing Co., you can sample "pilot beers." Just be ready to weigh in; owner Clayton Wallwork takes the most popular pilot beers and makes them into full batches. twothumb.com

Volstead Trading Company



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Nestled behind Eagle Brewery, Volstead Trading Company is a cozy Prohibition-themed bar outfitted with low-slung couches and deep arm chairs. Volstead offers a wide selection of Christchurch craft beers, but a special draw are the eight hand pulled cask ales, also called British style “real” ales. A four-beer sampler is \$20NZ. volstead.co.nz

The Beer Library

Garth Peterson started the Beer Library after moving from Chicago to Christchurch in 2014. His shop has the largest selection of beer in the city, offering over 300 bottles, including some local spirits and wine. You can sample the selection of beers on tap, or better yet, check their calendar; the Beer Library hosts frequent tastings, brewer talks, and pairing events with local food companies. thebeerlibrary.co.nz