

## **Pittsburgh – Not Just Ironbrew**

It seems like I am heading to lots of exotic locals lately, first Salt Lake and now Pittsburgh. But wait! Don't wince just yet, for those of you that haven't been there don't shy away from going, because with a little research (and cab time) you can seek out some really spectacular places in the three rivers area. Downtown Pittsburgh is situated between two of those rivers making it a peninsula similar to Manhattan, but there the similarity ends. Unlike Manhattan, Pittsburgh is not very easy to navigate as streets twist in every direction and head over numerous bridges. Cab service in Pittsburgh sucks, plain and simple, maybe because the place seems deserted like a bad Romero movie at night. Call about 30 to 40 minutes before you need to be picked up and keep drinking until they are outside. I called one big cab company on a Tuesday night only to be told it would take them over an hour to get us because they only had two cabs on duty (for all of Pittsburgh!).

There aren't many brewpubs downtown, but the two most easily reached include the Church Brew Works on Liberty and Penn Brewery on Vinial (which are a long walk apart, so I suggest cabbing). Penn is a true German brewhouse in an older brewery building with red brick, ivy and a spectacular setting overlooking downtown and the Heinz Factory complex. They make only German lagers with mostly German ingredients using very impressive small batch German equipment. They had a Weizen, Pilsner, Dunkel, and a Helles on tap. They can sell six packs to the public (which as I will explain is a plus). Other seasonal beers include a Dopple Bock which they didn't have. Their beers are very clean and well regarded by Michael Jackson (the beery one) among others. Back across the river on the edge of downtown is Church Works, which is a must see even for wives or friends that don't appreciate good beer. It's an impressive structure with lots of the interior preserved including wood floors, altars, mummified choir boys, etc. Just remember it is a ways out on Liberty so call well ahead for a cab and tell them your name so you aren't fighting with others for it later. They had several beers on tap, all ales I believe including an IPA, ESB, Stout, Golden Ale, and a Belgian Golden. They had one handpump serving a Pale that wasn't overly impressive, but people seemed to like the others. They too can sell six packs, as well as 22oz bottles of higher alcohol brews and five liter aluminum mini kegs. Another micro with taps we didn't get to was the East End brewery off Susquehanna that carry a Wit, Session, IPA, Brown and Stout among others. Farther away from downtown you can find one of the Rock Bottom chains in Homestead and the John Harvard chains in Monroeville. We chose to remain downtown and continue crawling within a more confined area so we headed to The Sharp Edge Beer Emporium in Friendship. This seemed like the place to go with over 400 bottles, a huge tap list of only good stuff including lots of local imperial stouts and IPAs (Old Dominion, Troegs, Stoudts) as well as a big Belgian contingent (Bucaneer, Kasteel and Karmeliet Triples). They also routinely have one or two handpumps working. A second location is located at Creekside and both offer a full menu (they also usually feature one six pack available to go at a reasonable price –more on this later). Although you could spend the rest of the night at Sharp Edge another good beer selection awaits a few blocks away at Kelly's Bar and Lounge on Penn Circle South. The place is small and eclectic but they serve food as well. Their tap selection isn't huge at around 15, but they include some biggies from East End with a double hop special, Greenflash's barleywine and others. If you are heading back downtown again and need a third good tap location the Market Street Alehouse at Market Square is another excellent choice with about 20 taps of mainly local micros and a good bottle selection (Dogfish World Wide Stout for only \$10!). For another bar crawl you might try going to East Carson street south of downtown. We were told Fatheads, Piper's Pub and others on the same strip all have good selections as well. After pub crawling you might be tempted to bring some beer back home, but package laws in Pittsburgh are well, a bit different. Most liquor or beer stores can only sell full cases of beer, so the only option if you can't check in more than 50

lbs or so on the plane is to get one case of mixed beers from a single brewery (luckily most locals package mixed cases). Your second option is to buy six packs or singles from the breweries I mentioned. A third option is to buy from bars themselves, although most will charge the going in house rate per bottle (how about a \$21 six pack of Harpoon IPA?). The last option is to find one of the new "six pack" stores popping up around the city that somehow are able to sell six packs and in many instances single bottles. Dees Six Packs is one of the oldest on South Braddock, but others are springing up. Expect to pay a premium for singles and six packs, but going to these does afford more choices. On another note for those traveling these days and looking to bring back beer I found a case weighs in around 50lbs.

- Brother Gavin McBeerstalker