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# RAILS TO ALES BEER-CATION

## *in Tacoma, Washington*

BY BRANDON FRALIC

### AMTRAK CASCADES HAS BROKEN NEW GROUND FOR BEER LOVERS IN TACOMA.

Yes, you read that correctly. Amtrak's brand-new Tacoma station is bound to attract beer travelers by the trainload. As of December 2017, Amtrak Cascades' Freighthouse Square station conveniently connects to the Tacoma Link light rail. And by hopping on the light rail, thirsty enthusiasts can easily access seven downtown breweries—making Tacoma an essential stop for craft beer and train enthusiasts between Vancouver, B.C., and Eugene, Oregon.

With trains as your designated driver, there's no navigation, traffic or parking to worry about. So, pack an overnight bag. Ride the rails to ales. Here are five brewery highlights—from south to north—along Tacoma's light rail route.

#### WINGMAN BREWERS, [wingmanbrewers.com](http://wingmanbrewers.com)

Aviation-themed Wingman Brewers operates a tiny taproom near Tacoma Dome Station. Experimental, full-flavored beers are the focus here, and they are exceptionally well executed. With only two “regular” beers on tap, securing a flight is the best way to take your taste buds on tour. Don't miss the chance to sample Stratofortress if it's on tap. A Belgian beer aged on rum-soaked cedar, this B-52 brew is simply the bomb.

#### 7 SEAS BREWING, [7seasbrewing.com](http://7seasbrewing.com)

A quick walk up the hill from Union Station, 7 Seas' Tacoma brewery is enormous. The tasting room alone occupies 2,400 square feet, and ascending the stairs to it feels like entering an industrial-chic beer factory. Inside, 7 Seas crafts an ocean of brews. Seek out Hop Prophet—a 100-percent wet hop ale brewed with freshly harvested Yakima hops. An independent, on-site restaurant called *zuilt* complements 7 Seas beers with fresh oysters, charcuterie and arguably the best sandwiches in town. Not to mention the rooftop patio slated to open in summer 2018—where you'll soon be able to sip sours and IPAs with Tacoma waterfront views.

#### HARMON BREWING, [harmonbrewingco.com](http://harmonbrewingco.com)

A local favorite since 1997, Harmon is Tacoma's flagship craft brewery. Their Pacific Avenue brewpub couldn't be more conveniently located downtown—lying just steps south of Union Station and the famed Chihuly Bridge of Glass. With beers named after South Sound icons—like Puget Sound Porter and Point Defiance IPA—you owe it to yourself to sample them all. Not convinced? Tasters are served on a

### WHEN YOU GO

- >> Getting There: Amtrak Cascades, [amtrakcascades.com](http://amtrakcascades.com)
- >> Planning: Travel Tacoma, [traveltacoma.com](http://traveltacoma.com)
- >> Lodging: Hotel Murano, [hotelmuranotacoma.com](http://hotelmuranotacoma.com). This modern, glass art-inspired hotel provides a centrally-located place to call home, just one block off the light rail line.
- >> Dining: The Rhein Haus Tacoma, [rheinhaustacoma.com](http://rheinhaustacoma.com). Walk through Wright Park to reach this German restaurant for brats, bier, bocce and excellent service.
- >> Museum District: Get off at the Tacoma LINK Union Station stop to visit the Washington State History Museum, Museum of Glass and Tacoma Art Museum.

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## SUMMER

ski handle. The extensive pub-grub menu offers beer-pairing suggestions. And for those seeking something different, the Harmon Tap Room on St. Helens Ave. offers 20 taps, including experimental exclusives.

### **ODD OTTER BREWING,** *oddotterbrewing.com*

Veteran-owned Odd Otter keeps it odd and interesting. Think yoga in the brewery, karaoke and trivia nights among “otter” things. Ride the light rail to its northern Theater District terminus, and walk around the block to Odd Otter’s Pac Ave. entrance to enter their cheery blue holt. Beers here of the IPA and pale ale varieties are dank and tropical. But dark and mysterious brews are where Odd Otter truly shines. The Rye Barrel Aged Comrade—an imperial chocolate stout aged in rye whiskey barrels—is an absolute must-try. Oh, and it’s always “Otter Hour” for military, veterans, first responders and spouses at Odd Otter.

### **DYSTOPIAN STATE BREWING,** *dystopianstate.com*

Ten minutes by foot from the Theater District station, Dystopian State is worth the walk. Housed in a lofty former showroom space overlooking Commencement Bay, this edgy brewery is warm and welcoming. Take a seat at the bar to watch the brewing team at work. Sip from the extensive beer lineup—mostly classic styles with a Northwest flair—while admiring Dystopian State’s uniquely sci-fi-inspired label art. Owner and head brewer Shane McElwrath focuses on balance and complexity in his beers, achieving clean, flavorful results. Try the flagship Red Queen—a ruby-hued rye IPA with big hop character, a malty backbone and a warning label: “When the Queen arrives, heads roll.” 🍷

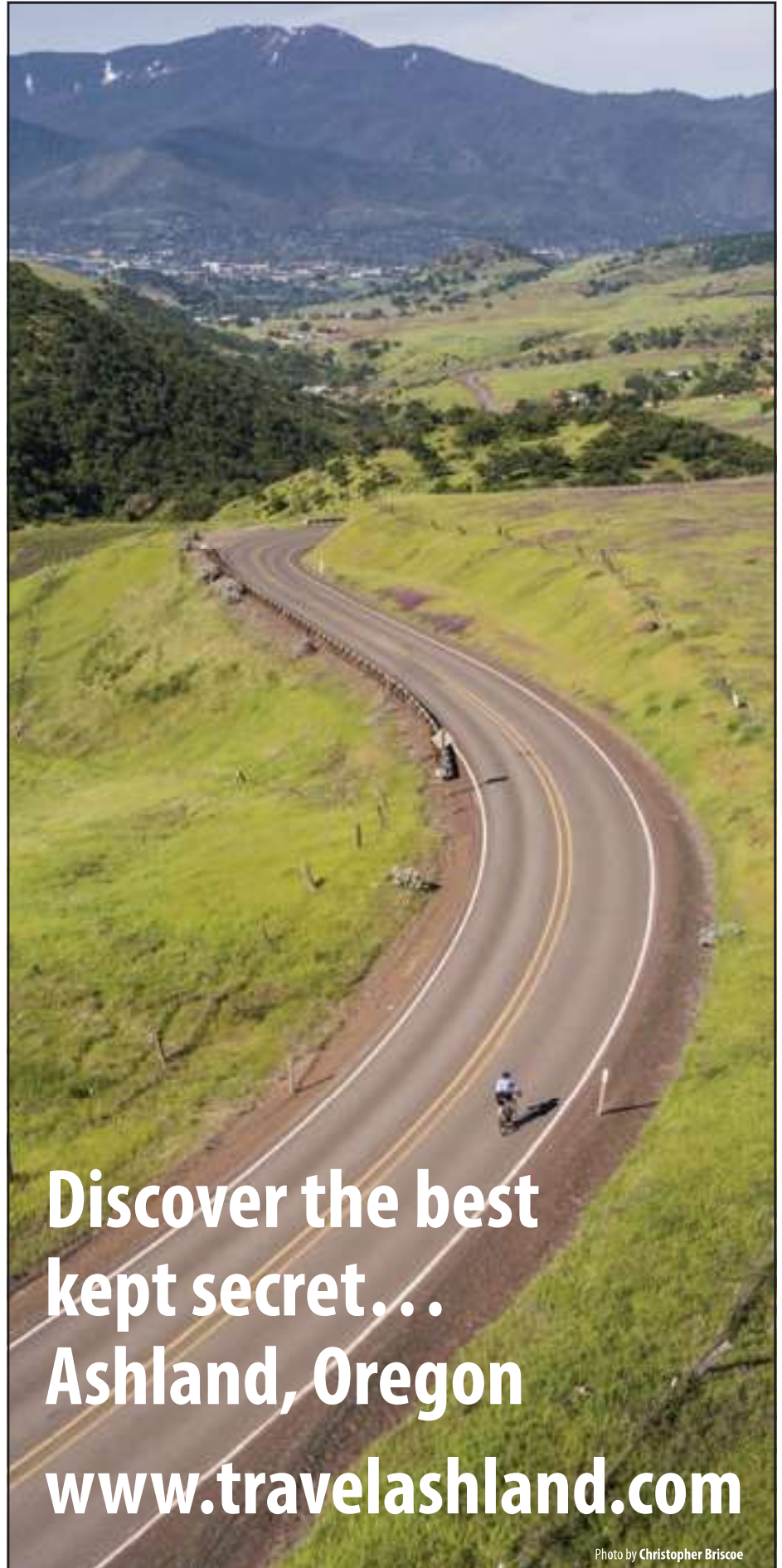


Photo by Christopher Briscoe