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From dark and smooth stouts to light and crisp lagers, you'll find Iowa has a brew for every palate. Using just barley, hops, yeast and water, brewers in the state are creating beers that taste as diverse as the people who drink them. In many cases the unique brews are winning awards and attracting the attention of craft beer connoisseurs all across the country. To date there are more than 50 breweries in Iowa – located in communities big and small – that range from small, 100-gallon operations to mass distribution producers. So pour a pint (or a few) and savor Iowa's perfectly fermented flavors.



1 Toppling Goliath

Decorah

Makers of the best beer in the world – (seriously, ask RateBeer!). Plan a trip to their taproom to taste their world famous Kentucky Brunch stout. On a mission to save people from boring beer, they also have a series of aggressively hopped IPAs crafted to highlight individual hop varieties or complex blends.



2 Backpocket

Coralville

Iowa's largest craft brewery boasts a 15,000-square-foot facility with a large tap room and public beer garden. Their line-up includes five core styles of German-inspired and hand-crafted beers as well as seasonal and experimental brews. The tap room, located in the brewery (no walls, no glass between the two), features a brick fired pizza oven.



3 Lion Bridge Brewing Company

Cedar Rapids

A 10-barrel brewery located in the Czech Village of Cedar Rapids offering eight-12 beers brewed on-site ranging from existing styles to avant-garde. There is also space for three-five "guest" taps and artisan sodas. They took home gold for their Workman's Compensation beer in the 2014 Great American Beer Festival.



4 515 Brewing Company

Des Moines

What started as a home-brewing hobby turned into a nano-brewery that promises to take "taste buds on a beer adventure." Ten beers on tap plus three changing guest taps that always feature all Iowa brews. Located on the north side of the Greenbelt Trail, it is an ideal spot to cool off with a great brew after a run, walk or bike ride.



5 Firetrucker Brewery

Ankeny

A renovated fire station serves as the home for a brewhouse and tap room. The beers play homage to the building's history with names such as Steam Engine, Burnout Brown and 2 Alarm Red. The popular High Trestle Trail passes right by, offering bikers a great chance to pause and enjoy a cold drink.



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6 Peace Tree Brewing

Knoxville

Since opening in 2010, they have expanded to distribution in Iowa as well as Nebraska, Kansas and Minnesota. They earned a gold medal at the 2014 World Beer Cup Awards for their pale ale called Blonde Fatale. The tap room always has three brews on tap as well as their root beer. No food is served on site, but takeout menus from local restaurants are available and many deliver to the tap room.



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7 Millstream Brewing Company

Amana Colonies

Established in 1985, they are Iowa's oldest microbrewery. They sell most of their beer through retail, but also maintain a vibrant, outdoor, hop-covered beer garden.



8 Twisted Vine Brewery

St. Charles

Opened in the Madison County Winery in 2011 after Iowa law changed to allow both types of businesses to operate in the same location. The close proximity allows them to experiment with new flavors including the use of grape juice in the brewing process to develop new beer recipes with a winery twist.



9 West O

Okoboji

Hand-made beer brewed in small batches so it can be tweaked along the way. Their CoCo Stout took home gold in the 2014 Great American Beer Festival. The tap room is lake-friendly and visitors are encouraged to drop in before or after a day on the water – swimsuit and all – to enjoy a cold one.



10 Mason City Brewing

Mason City

A Kickstarter campaign helped raise the funds to open the first brewery in Mason City in more than 130 years. Located in a historic building (with original maple plank flooring and tin ceilings) in the downtown area, they have eight taps with standard beers and seasonal brews.



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For more information on these and other Travel Iowa stories contact:

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