

2008 Brews Cruise: Seattle to Alaska



Beer and Brewing Site

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Celebrator Beer News Brews Cruise to Alaska

Immediate visuals come to mind with the word *glacier*, or in its more descriptive Savoy dialect, *glacière*. Our imagination conjures up a slowly moving mass of ice, dotted with exotic white wolves or enhanced by the sunlit glitter of its massive crags. Hubbard Glacier in Alaska holds the record as the largest tidewater glacier in North America, 75 miles long and rising into the sky as a 300 foot wall of ice. Unlike most glaciers of the world, records for Hubbard Glacier have documented its continuous thickening since 1895 as it advances toward the Gulf of Alaska.

Even with this promise of such magnificence, choosing a premium “*themed*” Alaskan cruise presents exponentially greater rewards, particularly when that cruise is *beer-centric*. In late August 2008, Tom Dalldorf of Celebrator Beer News sponsored the *Celebrator Beer News 9th Annual Brews Cruise* on a sumptuously accented excursion to Alaska. This eight-day, seven-night cruise aboard Celebrity Cruise Ship *Infinity* hosted a band of thirty-five adventurers who were awed, not only by nature, but by some of the world’s most sublime beers.



The launch from Seattle Washington included a pre-cruise evening at Pike Pub & Brewery, hosted by the gracious Charles and Rose Ann Finkel, who continued their hospitality at an on-ship launch party the following day, joined by Elysian, Pyramid and an opulent cache of International treasures.

Michael Weil of *Magic Happens Travel & Cruises* structured the tour along Alaska's Inside Passage that included stops in Sitka, a remote Alaskan village, formerly a possession of Tsarist Russia; Hubbard Glacier; Juneau, the capital of Alaska and center of

Alaskan Brewing Company's award-winning beers; Ketchikan, salmon capital of the world; and Victoria, home to a host of breweries and brewpubs awaiting exploration.

Tom Dalldorf hosted an abundant menu of beer events and seminars to engage attending beer enthusiasts. Whether introducing *Elysian The Wise ESB* in Beer 101 or *de Proef Saison Imperial* as a historical accent, Dalldorf created something for everyone.



Donna Platou from Castro Valley California, was so impressed by her experience on the Celebrator Beer News Brews Cruise that she contacted me. She had met the famous Judy Ashworth (<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art57944.asp>), and could not hold back her enthusiasm. The following is our dialogue about the event:

Beer Fox: Who did you go on this cruise with, and why did you choose to go?

Donna Platou: We saw an ad for the Brews Cruise in the Celebrator and thought it would be a good fit for us. My husband and I both enjoy beer, we've never been to Alaska and we both know that when Tom is involved, it is going to be a top notch affair. Also, my husband, Ted had never cruised before and this was a perfect excuse.

BF: Are you a beer enthusiast?

DP: Ted & I are both enthusiasts. We attend various beer functions at the Bistro in Hayward, have been to a beer dinner hosted by Bruce Paton and attended the Celebrator's Beerapalooza event. Basically, any chance we get to try different beers or have a beer experience, we'll attend whenever possible.

BF: You said you met Judy Ashworth and said, "She is one amazing woman!" What impressed you about her?

DP: What impressed me about Judy is her fearlessness. Of course, you know her history. That's impressive enough. And, her knowledge of beers is amazing.

But, the fact that if there is something she wants to do, she does it. Did you know that at 60 years old, she is now a personal trainer? Not only is she a successful single mother, but she is gracious as well.

BF: How did you like the beer-centric themes?

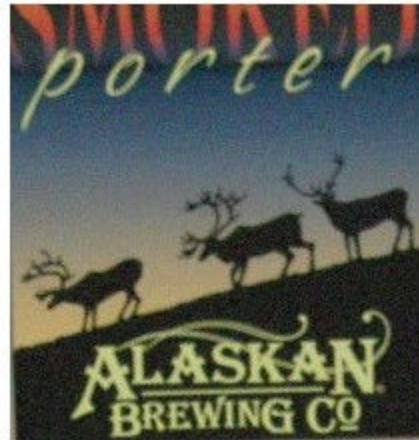
DP: The beer-centric themes were great. The night before we boarded ship, we all met at

Pike's Brewery for a "get to know you" tour and tasting. The owners of Pike's are a lovely couple who are extremely knowledgeable about beer. They have a fabulous beer museum within their pub. Once on board ship, we had an awesome mixer. Tom and Michael had several vendors (including Elysian and Pike) serving us beers. It was a great sendoff and another chance to get to know everyone.

Once we were on our way, instead of having us all gather to just drink/taste beer, the beers were broken out into different styles. The "history of beer" night gave us an opportunity to taste beer that I would never have purchased or had the opportunity to purchase. Also the opportunity to tour Pike's Brewery with the owners as well as Alaska Brewing Company was priceless. I've done a few brewery tours before, but these two tours were specialized in that we had a much closer look and much more intimate information of the brewing process.

BF: What was your favorite event? IPA night? The vertical tasting of Smoked Porter at Alaskan Brewing? Big beers? Seminars?

DP: Tough to pick an event that was the highlight. It would be easy for me to say the IPA night, since I am a self proclaimed hophead. The vertical tasting of the Smoked Porter at Alaskan Brewing Co was an eye opener. I had no idea you could store a Smoked Porter for 6 years and have it taste so good! That event definitely expanded my knowledge of beers. And, what can I say about the Big Beer seminar. Fantastic, as well. Those were beers that I normally would not purchase or drink so it was a wonderful way to get to taste them. I guess if I had to pick one seminar it would have been the "history of beer."



BF: Was Tom Dalldorf entertaining and knowledgeable? What impressed you?

DP: All of Tom's seminars were great! Tom is knowledgeable and engaging. He realized that there was a wide range of attendees - those who brew beer and those who only drink beer once in a while. Tom was able to make it interesting for those who had a high degree of knowledge and was able to bring their experiences into the mix. Tom was also able to give beer information to those who were novices without being pretentious. It seemed his goal was to make sure everyone was comfortable with their level of beer experience and to help them expand their horizons.

BF: Did you meet other famous beer personalities on this cruise?

DP: Let's see. Don Younger from HorseBrass Brewpub in Portland was in our group. And, Phil Farrell (who was runner up in Beer Drinker of the Year) was also part of our group. Don is a character and Phil's knowledge of beer, brewing and history is amazing.

BF: Did you forge any beer-related friendships?

DP: Everyone in our group of 35 got along so well and we had great synergy together. I think we all forged a bond, although it is definitely easier keeping in contact with a few from the Bay Area. Those of us in the Bay Area are planning a get together at a brew pub in the near future. And, we are all sharing our photos in a group room in Snapfish.

BF: Do you brew?

DP: My husband, Ted used to be a home brewer. He even won 3rd place in our hometown county fair for his honey pale ale. We hope to get back into brewing when the kids get into high school. Right now, we are too busy with their sports and scouting events. And, since I've never brewed, I am looking forward to it.

BF: What did you learn that you didn't know?

DP: I learned about top fermentation versus bottom fermentation. I learned that true beer has no adjuncts. The flavor all comes from a brewer's particular yeast. And the yeast from one brewer is different from another brewer's.

BF: What port did you enjoy the most?

DP: I enjoyed Sitka the most. It seemed to be the least "touristy." We did some sea kayaking and walked around the town a little bit. And, the weather was good.

BF: Did the long daylight bother you? When was sunrise & sunset?

DP: The daylight and evening hours seemed to be pretty much the same as what we have here in California. I'd say it got dark around 9. I think the sun came up around 6. The weather was very cold and rainy/drizzly. Not much sunshine.

BF: How were your accommodations?

DP: Our room was an outside cabin with a balcony. It was roomier than expected. The service was top notch. And, it was great having the balcony. We could sit outside and watch the glacier in private without having to crowd on deck. And, Frank & Emily from our group were right next door. They also live the bay area. So, that made it even more enjoyable to sit on the deck with them right next door - enjoying each other's company.

BF: Were you able to get good beer throughout the cruise?

DP: I would personally say that you cannot get "good" beer on a cruise ship. That was the beauty of the Brews Cruise. Tom and Michael Weil made sure the beers were available for us to purchase at one of the bars onboard. They were also available to us at dinner. And, our seminar room was generally open to us after dinner in the event we wanted to go back for some more beers.

BF: What did you like least?

DP: I guess the only thing I liked least was the weather - although there is nothing you can do about that. Just make the best of it - which we did.

BF: Did you bring any beer home?

DP: Yes, we did bring some beer back. Elysian Brewing Company in Seattle totally won my heart with their hoppy and creative beers - so their bottles came home with us. Unfortunately, we cannot yet get their beers here in our home town.

BF: Would you go on another, and to where?

DP: We will always keep our eye open for other beer opportunities. Perhaps some day, a tour of German monastic breweries.

Cheers!

Photos are (from top): Twilight in Alaska; King Salmon Fishing in Ketchikan; Alaskan Smoked Porter