

LAKE PLACID NY

Let's face it. 2020 been a tough decade for all of us. (well, it feels like a decade!) As Covid-19 continues to pluck away at our population, it has also stunted us from doing many of our favorite things and enjoying some of the finer things in life. Heck, I didn't realize until September that the summer of 2020 was the first time in more than 35 years that I was not going to see live music. It was also the first time in more than 10 years that I did not attend the Great American Beer Fest in Denver, Tap NY at Hunter Mountain, or Oktoberfest down at Wolff's Biergarten in Albany. Simply put – it sucks!

That said, the effects and limitations of Covid have not been *all* negative. They have forced to find new and creative ways to have fun. We have explored more hiking trails, gotten out on the bike more, and

Fuel up for any adventure at one of Lake Placid's three brewpubs; they're all perfectly splendid.

discovered new ways to have a socially-distant happy hour with our friends.

Covid has also changed the way that we enjoy our beer. We went months without going into our favorite local brewery to soak up their atmosphere, friendships, and beer. Instead, we still supported our them as much as possible by ordering beer (and food) to go, picking up growlers, crowlers, and cans. While the beer was still great, the experience of savoring it certainly shifted.

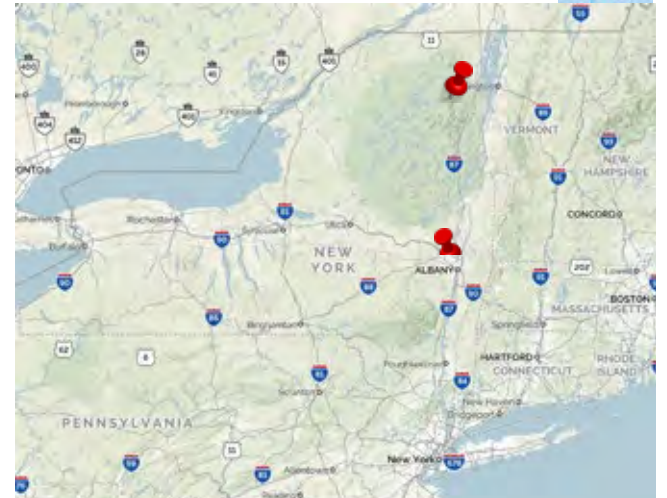
As restrictions have lifted and our brewery taprooms reopened, we eagerly

got back out to support them. And while the experience has shifted indeed, our breweries have reopened with safety and precaution in mind to ensure a sterile environment for their customers. The strict restrictions make getting to your table a slightly different experience, but once you've got your butt in your seat and a beer in your hand, it's just like the good ole days! (10 months ago)

Another change that most of us have experienced is a difference on how we take our vacations. This winter, trips to sunny Florida, snowy Colorado, or a condo and Cali are mostly off of the table. Instead, many of us are keeping it close to home. For Capital Region craft beer lovers that like to wrap in visiting locally breweries into their vacation itinerary, look no further than Lake Placid, New York!

Just a 2 ½ hour drive from Albany, Lake Placid presents a wide array of outdoor winter activities and a great local beer scene. The I (HEART) NY website sums it up perfectly:

"Lake Placid is truly one of New York's great escapes. From world-class skiing in winter to epic paddling in summer to incredible fall foliage, this postcard-perfect village is an ideal year-round destination. It also happens to be a two-time host to the Winter Olympic Games. Experience the thrill of bobsledding or skiing at the original 1980 Olympic venues, and so



much more! Lake Placid is an opportunity to enjoy fresh, mountain air and majestic views. Winter brings out the frozen beauty of the landscape: snow-capped peaks, valleys with awe-inspiring natural ice sculptures, and vistas that will leave you speechless. Nature is never far from downtown. The region is home to hundreds of miles of trails that are perfect for a quiet snowshoe or walk in the woods or a relaxing cross-country ski. "

Lake Placid has 3 brewpubs offering unique beers, great food, and a total Adirondack experience. My wife, TBM recipe writer Karen Logan, and I celebrated our anniversary recently and made the trek up Lake Placid to enjoy the town, visit each of those brewpubs, drink their beer, and to discuss how they are handling Covid and how the craft beer experience might be a bit different this year. After checking into our hotel, we took a five minute stroll through downtown to hit our first brewery.



GREAT ADIRONDACK BREWING COMPANY

Great Adirondack Brewing Company is located at 2442 Main Street and is one of the region's oldest breweries. The Kane family has been running what is widely considered one of Lake Placid's best restaurants for more than 30 years. The restaurant/brewery which overlooks scenic Mirror Lake, opened in 1996 and was originally located in Plattsburgh and was called Lake City Brewing Company. Just a year later they moved to Lake Placid and became known as Great Adirondack Steak & Seafood until 2018. At that point, their on-site craft brewing program had grown so much that they remodeled and relaunched themselves as Great Adirondack Brewing Company.

The remodeled brewery has an immediate Adirondack cottage feel to it. It is spacious and, even with the capacity restrictions due to Covid, there is still plenty of table seating and room at the bar. The restaurant, which prides itself on great beer, excellent steak, seafood, and comfort food, has made noticeable changes to keep its patrons safe.

Founder, Robert Kane explains, "All customers are temp-checked as they come in the door. Of course, our staff are all wearing masks and customers must do so as well until they are seated. There are plexiglass dividers secured to the bar that allow patrons to speak freely without having to worry about cross contaminating a neighboring couple. We also carefully sanitize everything that our customers might come in contact with."

Outside of the brewery they have moved a few things around. In front, there is a perfectly placed fire pit surrounded with Adirondack chairs. Beyond that is a large hard-shelled, heated tent that offers

plenty of seating and see through walls, so customers can still enjoy the view of Mirror Lake.

Serving brunch, lunch and dinner (and, of course, their famous prime rib), the restaurant is great for family dining, groups looking for an event space in Lake Placid, or a couple looking for a romantic escape.

As for the craft beer lovers, the on-site brewery is housed behind the restaurant. It's a seven-barrel stainless steel brew system that produces about 350 barrels (10,850 gallons) of beer every year — equivalent to 86,800 pints! They produce a wide range of ales and lagers that are fresh and delicious. A noticeable quality about each of their beers is that they are brewed true-to-style.

"Our commitment to quality, consistency, and continued brewing knowledge has garnered us several awards through the years," says Kane, "and it's evident in the final product—the fresh pint drawn from our taps and served to you not even 50 yards from where it's made, right here in Lake Placid."

While we were there, we enjoyed a flight of 7 beers, delicious Calamari with a sweet chili sauce, and shrimp tacos. All of the beer and food was fresh, perfectly prepared, and delicious! Great Adirondack Brewery is a must-hit for any craft beer lover visiting Lake Placid.



LAKE PLACID PUB AND BREWERY

Lake Placid Pub and Brewery, located just a block off of Main Street at 813 Mirror Lake Drive, sits across the street from Mirror Lake and is widely considered an Adirondack institution. It's only about a 10 minute walk from Great Adirondack Brewing Company. Brewing since 1996, Lake Placid Pub & Brewery is one of the region's largest breweries. You wouldn't know it though as you walk up to it. It feels more like an Adirondack lodge/restaurant than a large brewery.

Lake Placid Pub & Brewery began, like many microbreweries, with a homebrew kit and a love of beer. Founder/Brewmaster Chris Ericson possessed not just a love of drinking beer but a real respect for the craft, the history, the art, and the industry, as well as a passion for the brewing process itself. Today, the Lake Placid Pub & Brewery has been brewing award-winning ales and lagers for more than 24 years and has expanded rapidly due to its popularity and quality, earning the respect of the brewing community and national media attention. Over the years they have brewed up almost 150 different styles of beer and brew almost 350,000 pints of beer annually, placing them in the top 7% of brewpubs nationwide.

The Lake Placid Pub & Brewery offers great beers and delicious food in a comfortable atmosphere. "Since the start of the pandemic we had a great tented outdoor area right out in front of the brewery," explains Ericson. "It allowed us to space our guests out so that they could safely enjoy a great meal and a craft beer, as well as the beautiful weather. That's come down now, the weather has changed, and we are completely back inside. So, when you approach the brewery this year, you'll find the usual snowy Adirondack chairs out front."

Luckily, the brewery has three floors for dining, allowing them to spread their patrons out in a safe and relaxing manner.



"We have moved things around inside and many tables have been pulled out on the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd floors. We completely renovated the 1st floor bar during Covid. What started out as 'hey, let's change some light fixtures and move some things,' turned into a full remodel from the floor to the ceiling including the bar and bar flow. We removed the bar and built the new one to be rectangular. Turns out we have more room than we did before, and the seating and flow is improved."

On the second floor you can experience what Skiing magazine calls "a top-quality brewpub. Ericson explains, "We have spread things out to accommodate all Covid-19 safety protocols. Here we want our guests to experience a great meal, enjoy an award-winning beer, and just sit in front of the stone fireplace and relax."

Ask a local where to find the best food in Lake Placid and most will steer you to the Lake Placid Pub & Brewery. Their menu features pub classics including an assortment of flatbreads, cheeseburgers, BBQ ribs, and "the best wings this side of Buffalo".

In late-October, Chef Greg Sherman introduced a new menu. "I'd describe it as an elevated Pub menu," says Ericson. "We had about a 50% changeover to our offerings. The new menu much more farm-to-table, we look to keep things fresh."

Karen and I split an order of medium buffalo wings and each had a pint of UBU Ale. The wings were meaty, fresh, and perfectly crispy. Very tasty. The beer? Awesome! Ubu Ale has been LP P&B's flagship beer for more than 25 years. It's a 7% ABV English-style Strong Ale. With flavors of dark fruit and roasted malt, it pairs perfectly with our wings. Fun Fact: The beer was named for a legendary chocolate lab that had an uncanny nose for good beer!





The cozy pub has a large, horseshoe shaped bar, that splits the dining room into two different sections. At the bar you'll find plexiglass dividers to keep you safe. The staff is masked up and all surfaces are continually sanitized. It feels safe. Beyond the dining room you can see the brewing operation behind the glass, reminding you that you are dining in a true American brewpub.

The 3rd floor called 'The Hop Loft', opened in February of 2013 and features a spacious outdoor deck overlooking the lake, another bar and seating area, as well as a kids room featuring activities to keep the toddlers busy while you enjoy your time at the Pub.

Now, as for the beer. This is where the rubber meets the road for Lake Placid Pub & Brewing. Over the years their beer has won scores of awards from regional, national, and international beer competitions and is highly respected by fellow breweries. The brewery itself has also claimed many awards including Best Brewery in the Hudson Valley and Best Brewery in New York State at the coveted Tap NY Beer Festival.

"During the remodel, we also put in a brand new, state-of-the-art tap system," says Ericson. "At the pub we had been using our 6 draft line system since 1996. That was a lot of draft lines back then! The new system now allows us to feature 12 beers on tap. Now you will find an extended array of our beers and there will almost always be two sours on tap."

You will always find fan-favorite Ubu Ale on tap at the Pub, and frequently will find other favorites such as Moose Island Ale, 46'er Pale

Ale, and Lake Placid IPA. They also feature many rotating seasonal beers such as Leaping Cow ESB, Twice Bitten Barleywine, Ectoberfest Lager, Maibock, High Peaks Hefeweizen, and Dr. Fogg's Oatmeal Stout.

Be sure to stop Lake Placid Pub & Brewery on your craft beer road trip. Fresh beer, delicious food, and three stories of fun!

BIG SLIDE BREWERY & PUBLIC HOUSE

Big Slide Brewery is the newest brewery in Lake Placid and located at 5686 Cascade Road, just south of downtown Lake Placid. We stopped at Big Slide the next day as he headed out of town. You'll find it near the Olympic Ski Jump Complex and the John Brown Farm State Historic Site. This brewery is also owned by Chris Ericson, though Big Slide features totally different beers from its Lake Placid sister brewery. Opened in 2016, the brewery has already won many awards both locally and in state-wide competitions.

Right smack dab in the center of their space sits a hybrid 3.5/5 barrel brew-house. The space also features a concrete-topped bar, a comfortable dining room, a beautiful (dog-friendly) patio, and a semi-open kitchen.

Big Slide offers 10 house beers on tap, with a wide variety of styles from Sours and Golden to Pale Ales, IPAs, Porters, Stouts, and Belgian beers. "There are always some new and exciting beers available like a Chili Pepper Pale Ale or a Brett Biere de Garde," explains Ericson. "In addition, we have a separate fermentation room, which we call The Funk Room, designed specifically for sour and wild-fermented beers such as Berliner Weisse, Gose, and Lambic beers. Here, we like to push the envelope of beer styles."





In the middle of the bar, you will see a wall of wooden barrels which is Big Slide's extensive barrel-aging program at work. They use bourbon, red wine, and fresh oak barrels to age their brews.

Executive Chef Greg Sherman (yes, the same Executive Chef from LP P&B) sources most of their ingredients locally, and they offer the freshest food in the area. "This is not your typical pub grub, but it is approachable and delicious," explains Sherman. "Our menu features snacks, salads, sandwiches, brick-oven pizzas and delicious entrees. Many of our ingredients are farm-to-table and we also feature plenty of vegetarian, vegan, or gluten-free dishes for those with special dietary needs."

Surprised to see a Lobster Roll on the menu, I felt compelled to order it. Karen went with the Korean-style Chicken Sammich. For beers, I went with the Berliner Weisse and Karen ordered the Hot Pepper Pale Ale, which I also had to try. It's a 5.1% ABV, 34 IPU Pale Ale that is brewed with poblanos & jalapenos. The beer is crisp and spicy, yet well balanced with a slight malt backbone. Really good! I noted that it was going to pair perfectly with her Korean-style chicken sandwich. She later agreed that it did and exclaimed that her sandwich was "mouth-wateringly good." For the record, the Lobster Roll was fresh and tasty, and the Berliner Weisse was everything that a Berliner Weisse is supposed to be: wheaty, sour, and tart.

The beer selection changes every month, and restaurant guests can watch the brewing process unfold from every table since the brewery is located inside the restaurant. "A 5-barrel system may seem small," Ericson eludes, but don't let our size fool you. We could brew over 1400 barrels if we ran around the clock! Our aim is to offer our guests 10 interesting and world-class beers on tap at all times. From light ales to the darkest stouts, and everything in between, we will challenge your palette and try to offer you something which you have never had before at any other brewery."



In the winter, the Big Slide outdoor beer garden is immensely popular as weary hikers and skiers make their way down from the mountains. It's a great place to sit outside in winter sun and enjoy a beer after a hard day at play.

"How would you sum up Big Slide to anyone that has yet to visit the brewery?" I ask Ericson as we head out.

"Great beer, great food, and great service in a dynamite atmosphere. That's Big Slide Brewery & Public House!" he replies.

We all know it's going to be a cold, tough winter this year. But we do get to finally say "GOOD RIDDANCE" to 2020. That said, just because we flip the calendar does not mean that we get to flip the switch on the pandemic and the restrictions that come along with it. And while flying off to sunny Florida may seem inviting, taking a local staycation and enjoying our wonderful beer culture may be a smarter move. We recommend that you stay closer to home this winter. Stay safe, support local craft beer - and take The Craft Beer Road Trip - to Lake Placid.

Cheers!