

Since Cilurzo's innovation in 1994, San Diego has grown into one of the country's premier beer-producing markets. Though Cilurzo now brews at Northern California's excellent Russian River Brewing Company, San Diego brewers such as Greg Koch (Stone), Peter Zien (AleSmith) and Tomme Arthur (Pizza Port) have carried on his legacy, stretching the boundaries of traditional Belgian styles and I.P.A.s.

Tasty beers with a high alcohol content (up to 11 percent) have made **Stone Brewing Company** a San Diego success story, aided by the masterful marketing of the brewery's signature **Arrogant Bastard Ale**, which has the words "You're Not Worthy" printed right on the bottle. Bottles of Stone's **Vertical Epic** limited series fetch hundred of dollars on eBay, and you can grab a Stone just about anywhere in the country.

Keeping things San Diego-centric, Stone decided to expand its local offerings by opening the **Stone World Bistro and Gardens** in Escondido. The restaurant

gives Stone-lovers an off-the-beaten-path gastronomic adventure to go along with a **Levitation Ale** or a **Ruination I.P.A.** The menu runs the gamut from **BBQ Duck Tacos** to **Chicken Tikka Masala**. Surrounded by lush gardens, koi ponds and **Adirondack** chairs, the relaxed outdoor seating stands in contrast to the steel girders and sleek industrial feel of the restaurant's interior.

For a more informal experience, head to **Pizza Port**, where brewers Tomme Arthur and Jeff Bagby combine for a one-two punch of San Diego brewing knowledge. Bagby holds down the fort at **Pizza Port Carlsbad**, home to three top-notch annual events: the **San Diego Strong Ale Festival** (in December), **San Diego Real Ale Festival** (in June) and the **12-Hour Belgian Beer Party** (in March). **Pizza Port's** three locations—**Solana Beach**, **Carlsbad** and **San Clemente**—fit right in with the **North County** beach communities they call home: shorts, flip-flops and a laid-back attitude are the norm.

When **Pizza Port** took over Stone's old production facility in **San Marcos** and began bottling its beer in earnest, Arthur, a longtime **Pizza Port** innovator, started brewing under the name **Lost Abbey**. This branch of **Pizza Port** offers a full line of **Belgian-style** brews, a sub-genre of beer pioneered by monks in **Trappist** breweries along **Belgium's** border with **France**. Arthur is passionate about his **Belgian** recipes, and it shows in his beer.

Stashed away behind fast-food drive-thrus and Chinese food joints near **Qualcomm Stadium**, **San Diego Brewing Company** provides a relaxed pub atmosphere and great beer brewed in-house. The pub also boasts an impressive rotating selection of out-of-town taps such as **Russian River** and **Avery**. The food is simple and solid, a small step above regular pub food (burgers, fries and pizzas). Brewer **Dean Rouleau** also hosts monthly cask nights, wherein he discusses his naturally conditioned beer and serves it up using an old-fashioned carbonation technique that yields a more rounded taste.

As evidence that beer is moving up in the beverage world, the high-end market of **Coronado** boasts its own brewery. The restaurant covers the basics (pizza, burgers), but also features a pasta menu along with soups and salads. Not surprisingly, the beer is the draw at the **Coronado Brewing Company**. While the brewery offers a full line of beer, from the light,

crisp **Islandweizen** to the balanced, dark **Outlet Stout**, hops rules the day in **Coronado**. **Idiot I.P.A.** and **Islander Pale Ale (I.P.A.)** live on the beer menu most of the time, but if you get a chance to taste the interesting specialty **Hoppy Friar** (a blend of I.P.A. and **Belgian** styles), you'll be in beer heaven.

A handful of breweries skip the restaurant rat race and keep the focus on brewing beer. Tours of production facilities such as **AleSmith** in **Miramar** provide a glimpse into the daily workings of a brewery. Surrounded by large, stainless steel fermenters and sweet smell of stewing, malted barley, visitors can sample the goods in mini bars called tasting rooms. Despite all the hype and hoopla surrounding Stone, **AleSmith** is a hidden gem in the local brewery scene. Owner **Peter Zien**, along with brewers **Tod Fitzsimmons** and **Bill Batten**, churn out some of the best across-the-board beer in town, from low-octane brews (**AleSmith X** extra pale ale, **Anvil ESB** and **Nautical Nut Brown**) to high-test

selections (**Old Numbskull** barleywine, the **Belgian Grand Cru** or the mammoth **Speedway Stout**, at 12 percent alcohol). Though it's only open at select times, the brewery is must-visit destination for beer lovers, so call ahead.

Doubling as a homebrew supply store, the **Ballast Point Brewery** and tasting room in **Linda Vista** is

a bastion of brewing know-how and makes excellent beer to boot. The tasting room lies behind barrels of grain and refrigerators stocked with test tubes of yeast and bags of hops; there, visitors can get a taste of the brewery's specialty selections: the citrus hops of **Dorado I.P.A.**, the malty **Piper Down** scotch ale and the strong **Tongue Buckler** red ale. **Yellowtail**—a light, summery **German Kolsch**-style beer—is the label's best seller and is widely available throughout **San Diego**. ☐

## where

Only a few breweries have regularly scheduled tours, but most of those mentioned below will accommodate one. Call ahead or just ask in person—and don't leave without raising a pint of these signature brews.

**Stone Brewing Company**, 1999 Citricado Parkway, Escondido, 760.471.4999  
Top of the hops: Stone **Ruination I.P.A.**, hoppy goodness in a bottle.

**Pizza Port**: 135 N. Highway 101, Solana Beach, 858.481.7332, and 571 Carlsbad Village Drive, Carlsbad, 760.720.7007  
Top of the hops: Hop Suey, a thick, classic **San Diego** double I.P.A.

**Lost Abbey**: 155 Mata Way #104, San Marcos, 800.918.6816  
Top of the hops: The hefty **Judgment Day**

**San Diego Brewing Company**, 10450-L Friars Road, Mission Valley, 619.284.2739  
Top of the hops: Choco-Latte Porter, a deliciously creamy, sweet coffee porter

**Coronado Brewing Company**, 170 Orange Ave., Coronado, 619.437.4452  
Top of the hops: Any of the abundant I.P.A.s, particularly the **Hoppy Friar** (if available)

**AleSmith Brewing Company**, 9368 Cabot Drive, Miramar, 858.549.9888  
Tours are given on the last Saturday of the month at 1 p.m. The tasting room is open Friday 3-5 p.m. and Saturday 1-4 p.m.  
Top of the hops: **Old Numbskull** barleywine

**Ballast Point Brewing Company**, 5401 Linda Vista Road, #406, Linda Vista 619.298.2337  
Top of the hops: **Tongue Buckler**, one of the best reds in **San Diego**