

For the cocktail curious and lovers of elevated street food.



Opium
If you dare

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Nordic snacks and sophisticated cocktails like the Saffron Sour are Scandinavian staples at Portland Hunt + Alpine Club.



AROUND THE WORLD

IN EIGHT DRINKS

Raise a glass and taste the **flavors of the world**—all from the radius of downtown Portland.

BY MADISON ANDREWS

WHETHER IT'S THE EXCESS of holiday cheer, everlasting visits from relatives, or the short winter days, we all need a little escape from the marathon of December. If you find yourself dreaming of tropical getaways or romantic excursions to Europe, test the international waters of downtown Portland before booking the next flight out. With its diverse collection of globally inspired bars, you just may find the vacation you've been yearning for.

THE HEART IS NOT A LONELY HUNTER AT JÄGER

Though I've missed Oktoberfest by several months, I set out with a friend in search of a hoppy **Bavarian** brew on a recent Thursday night. **Jäger** on 41 Wharf Street pres-

ents a welcome relief from the rowdy late-night crowd. Leaving the cobblestone alley and entering the rathskeller through the *Antike* brick arch, we travel 3,750 miles (the distance from Portland to Munich) as we take a seat at the bar and peruse the menu. "Our drafts change all the time," says Nick, the bartender. "But we always have Spaten Münchner Hell, a premium lager. It's our most popular German beer on tap." In the spirit of my mission, and all the more venturesome with the discovery that we're sitting beside the "old Falmouth sea wall which was once the Portland waterfront," we let him show the way (\$4). The lager introduces a hoppy bitter flavor, but finishes with a honey-like sweetness. Through a Black Forest of rich, enticing smells of wienerschnitzel and sausage floating in from

the kitchen, it's hard not to dream of pairings. After all, Jäger means "Hunter." We track down a bratwurst (\$7), and Nick successfully tempts us with a soft pretzel (\$3). While we wait, we notice discreet nods to Deutschland in the shape of a German flag and collections of unique steins tucked into shelves. With its relaxed yet intimate atmo-





Top left: Guinness is the classic Irish choice at Rí Rá. Bottom left: Taco Escobarr delivers Mexican spice. Right: Enjoy kitsch tropical-themed refreshments at Rhum.

sphere and ample offering of beer, Jäger is Portland's hidden German gem. *Prost!*

SCANDIMANIA

Our next stop moves us across the map to uncharted territory. **Portland Hunt + Alpine Club** boasts an excellent menu rooted in **Scandinavian** influences. "Scandinavian food is good drinking food," says owner Andrew Volk, whose wife and partner, Briana Volk, is half-Finnish. "Since Briana and I wanted to focus on cocktails, we feature flavors that pair well with spirits." We elect to sit at the steel-gray bar, where we get to spy on the skillful bartenders, and are quickly presented with leather-bound cocktail menus and a folded, wrinkled map listing food specials. The menu options dare to tweak: "Late Night at OOB #3" lists "shame" as its third ingredient. It's hard to choose just one drink. I gamble on "The Norseman," a combination of brown butter-washed aquavit (a Scandinavian spirit), and bitters (\$11). It's caramel-colored, served in a short, frosted glass, with three Granny Smith apple wedges and a large square ice cube melting in the middle. As we're halfway through our drinks, someone dims the lights. Though the space is loud and full, it never feels crowded. Now

a fan of aquavit, I'll return to this Scandinavian sanctuary. Considering the hanging lights, saloon doors, and mounted wire animal heads, I would've come back for the unusual decor alone.

TRIP TO THE TROPICS

Though "Tiki culture" may be an American invention, **Rhum's** take on the **Polyneesian**-inspired theme makes for an amusing getaway. Established by the Fifth Food Group and situated on Cross Street, Rhum is a playful blend of sultry lounge and upbeat bar, occasionally accompanied by a live band. The space is dominated by a giant bar in the center of the room, adorned

with palm thatch and multi-colored string lights. Octopus tentacles as door handles and Tiki torches as light fixtures add to the tropical ambiance. Feeling a bit out of my wheelhouse, I order the house daiquiri (\$8), which arrives in a black, fish-shaped glass. It's strong but sweet. I watch as a group of women congregates around a giant "fishbowl" cocktail, which has just been set aflame. I get the sense that crowds assemble here mainly for the fun, somewhat flashy, environment—us, too. "Tiki is really about escapism," Trevin Hutchins, the bar manager, tells us. "Maine has such long and cold winters that we want to offer an escape from that." After one drink, we're on our way.

"Tiki is about escapism. Maine has such long and cold winters..."

—Trevin Hutchins, Rhum



Drinks at Opium in the Danforth Inn transport you to the Far East. Here the bartender prepares the Jakarta cocktail by capturing the smoke from smoldering Chinese five spice in an upturned absinthe-rinsed glass.



SIP THE EMERALD ISLE

Still craving a diversion from our usual scene, we ponder where Portland can take us next. We decide the antidote to our Polynesian detour is **Ireland**. Ordering a pint of Guinness at an Irish bar—cliché? Perhaps. But cheerfully indulgent? Always, and especially at **Rí Rá**. The pub, located on Commercial Street, offers an expert pour of your favorite Irish beer or whiskey. We settle into a little alcove next to a window. The flickering candle atop our table lights up the red-and-gold wallpaper. I order a Guinness (\$6.50) and observe a lively mix of young and old conversing animatedly. The dark wood of the tables and bar, the leather-cushioned seats, and the collection of black-and-white prints of Ireland pull together to deliver the homey pub atmosphere found overseas. True authenticity is delivered by the patinated bar and snug, which were shipped to Maine from an pub in Annagassan, Ireland. Though at times Portland may feel small, drop into the right places, and you'll feel halfway across the world.

BOTTLE POPPING, GLOBE TROTTING

Of the several **Mexican** joints in downtown Portland, **Taco Escobarr** stands out as a

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PORTLAND AFTER DARK

welcoming excursion to a warmer climate. Basking under the rainbow ceiling of colorful jalapeño string lights, amp up your classic margarita with one of the bar's house-made infused tequilas, like pineapple poblano or cucumber (\$9). Better yet, stop by during Happy Hour for a cocktail with free chips and salsa and enjoy your \$5 trip south of the border.

BATAVIA BOUND

Though it's tucked inside Tempo Dulu, with its sui generis craft cocktail menu and Asian-inspired small plates, **Opium** holds its own. "The owners are Dutch, and as Indonesia was once a Dutch colony, there are ties between the two cultures," bar manager Alexa Doyer says. "The idea for Opium is to feel transported out of Portland." For an **Indonesian**-inspired cocktail, try the award-winning Jakarta, an expert blend of Chinese five-spice, coastal root bitters, and absinthe (\$15). "It's essentially a smoked Manhattan, and it won Star Chef's Best New Cocktail in 2015." Pair with an order of pork belly dumplings (\$12) and snag a seat in the relaxed, purple-hued lounge to round out your sojourn to Southeast Asia.

GREAT BRITISH GETAWAY



With Maine's winter chill seeping in, consider seeking shelter underground. Quicker than a trip across the Pond, descend the short staircase underground into **Maps**. Take advantage of their can special (\$7) and spring for the English grilled cheese (\$8). Owner Vikki Walker is a globetrotting Brit who landed in Portland to fulfill her dream of opening a bar. Her influence is clear in the cartography-inspired décor (maps line the walls and ceiling) and **British** charm (an out-of-order jukebox sports a sign that reads "Piss Off! We're Closed"). Like Vikki, you'll find **Maps** the ideal home-away-from-home.

LA BELLA FIGURA



Warm oak floors, exposed brickwork, and a polished copper bar—stepping into **Solo Italiano** feels like a charming detour in itself. Top that off with artfully-plated dishes of true **Genovese** cuisine, and you've got your trip to Italy arranged. Simply slip into a seat at the bar and order a crisp Aperol Spritz (\$8). Just like the real place, you'll never want to leave. ■

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