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#### MILWAUKEE: ALL AMERICAN BEER + BIKES

If beer, sausage and polka are the first things that come to mind when you think of Milwaukee, think again.

"Milwaukee is an extremely multiethnic city today. It's a true melting pot—and it's also a very healthy city," says Rick D'Aloia, managing partner of DMC **Destination Wisconsin**. "Around our lakefront we have sports for all four seasons."

However, for all its untapped charms, Milwaukee's beer legacy is still very much a part of the group experience. Many have posited theories for why the city became such a brewing boomtown, from the readily available ice from Lake Michigan to the proximity of Chicago's large beer-consuming population. Regardless of the reasons, the Pabsts, Schlitzes, Millers and Blatzes rose to be America's 19<sup>th</sup> century kings of beer.

An event at the stately **Captain Frederick Pabst Mansion** puts their influence into context. Much like in Newport, the 1892 Flemish Renaissance Revival mansion represents the height of elegance in the Gilded Age. The home can host up to 250-person gatherings for \$1,000 for three hours. What makes the mansion especially unique, the German Captain was an avid philanthropist and patron of the arts, so docents are on hand for group tours during receptions.

Beer in Milwaukee is like chocolate in Brussels or wine in France. People want to learn the history and sample the product in an iconic milieu related to that product. For them, a variety of boutique breweries offer guided tours, such as Lakefront Brewery and Sprecher. "They make their own [beer] recipes and have attracted passionate followings. We do

a pub crawl that ends with lunch or dinner," says D'Aloia. MillerCoors—where you can see an operation that packages almost ¼ million beer cases daily—offers group tours, too.

The other great all-American offspring from Milwaukee is Harley-Davidson Motor Company, one of the great corporate turnarounds in recent memory. The legendary bike company opened the 130,000-sf **Harley-Davidson Museum** six months ago to honor its place as an American legend.

"Harley-Davidson is synonymous with Milwaukee," says spokesperson Amanda Lee. "The museum tells the history of America through the lens of Harley-Davidson and there are many layers to that experience."

Museum-goers can take behind-the-scenes tours, watch videos of vintage rides, nosh on Midwestern cuisine classics, and even experience the weekly rally that attracts up to 12,000 bikes in warm weather months. "The party experience is authentic, you can walk around listening to music, eat grilled food and look at everybody's bikes," says Lee.

#### IRON HORSES + ROYAL FLUSHES

Two bikers walk into a bar. One says, 'Lets build a hotel with florals, candles and chic vintage decor. We'll do lots of exposed ductwork, raw brick and heavy timbers. Something, you know, Julian Schnabel-y!'

That was the thinking behind **The Iron Horse Hotel**—an upscale property designed with serious bikers in mind, as well as corporate planners seeking a progressive design sensibility, lots of attitude and 12,000 sf of meeting space. The 100

Creativity is your best friend when C-level execs are clamping down on meeting spend and demanding more ROI. So how do you build “oomph” into your events to create dramatic programs for your groups? The following domestic and international cities offer highly memorable experiences and great values that just might surprise you and your attendees. Let's get creative...

### MEET THE VANDERBILTS

Along the granite and cobalt-colored New England coastline, a batch of small cities quintessentially capture the American entrepreneurial spirit. It was here where the country's most moneyed tycoons in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century escaped to Gilded Age mansions in places like the **Bellevue Avenue Historic District** in Newport, Rhode Island. This was one of the area's most well-heeled enclaves, lined with summer homes built by leading architects of the day for the Astors, Belmonts and Vanderbilts. These magnificent Beaux-Arts homes were designed for entertaining high society with lavish soirees, and they're still a *really* nice place to throw a party.

“Using a national historic landmark for your event makes a statement,” says Ivan S. Colon, corporate sales manager for the **Preservation Society of Newport County**. “They represent the Golden Era of industrial barons, bluebloods and aristocracy, and guests really enjoy these rentals because monies go back into the restorations, so companies are giving back. That's an important part of our mission.”

The largest ballroom is at **Rosecliff** mansion built in 1902 for Theresa Fair Oelrichs, heir to the Comstock silver lode. It

looks like a big fancy white wedding cake, modeled after the Grand Trianon at Versailles, and it photographs well having been used in Robert Redford's *The Great Gatsby* and Steven Spielberg's *Amistad*. Dinner capacity is 350.

Also look at **The Marble House**, which when it was built for William Vanderbilt in 1892 was considered the most elegant residence in America. The Terrace seats 200; the Gold Ballroom with 24 carat gold leaf seats 120.

“They're less expensive than large venues in other big cities,” advises Colon, saying the \$5,000-\$10,000 price tag “for a one-of-a-kind facility is very favorable.” He adds, “What is so special is the element of accessibility so close to New York, Providence and Boston.”

Among the properties maintained by the Preservation Society, **The Breakers** is the largest and most opulent.

“If you only have time to visit one mansion, this is the one,” says Laurie Stroll, CMP/DMCP, president of **DMC Newport Hospitality**. The property just introduced an audio tour that required nearly 10 years to collect all the interviews.

“The Newport area also has a number of private clubs that offer a very exclusive atmosphere and gorgeous water views, like the New York Yacht Club,” she says. “One of the most unique teambuilding activities Newport offers is the ability to charter 12-meter America's Cup boats for informal races and your own America's Cup-style regatta. We are very fortunate to have 10 of the boats, for groups of all sizes.”

### NEW ENGLAND CLAMBAKE

According to Stroll, a traditional clambake is a slam dunk for engaging group events. “People are mesmerized by it,” she says. An old-fashioned clambake begins with digging a hole in the ground and building a fire. The chef heats up lobsters, mussels, crabs, sausage, onions, corn on the cob and other fixin's covered with cheese cloth and a canvas top. Once it's all cooked, the chef rings a bell and pulls back the covers.

“Everyone oohs and aahs when the rush of steam comes out. It's a great meal and a great experience.”

You can create an elegant rooftop clambake and book smaller groups at the 66-room **Hotel Viking**, located right on Bellevue Avenue. John Harrison, SMP, director of national accounts, says, “The mansion owners were having such elaborate parties they didn't have enough space for all of their guests to stay, so they sold shares and built the hotel.” He says Viking's chefs often put together rooftop meals and sunset cocktails—the clambake being one of the most popular—as well as Iron Chef-style competitions pairing local wines with fine cheese and wild game.

