

Jul 15, 2013, 2:04pm PDT

Columbia Hospitality taps craft breweries as partners



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Corporate meetings or retreats might not be your idea of fun, but Seattle-based Columbia Hospitality has an idea that could make them go down a little easier.

It's beer. Locally produced craft beer.

Columbia Hospitality has added craft brewery partners at three of its conference centers. The brewers will help develop meeting and retreat packages to include things such as tastings, appearances by brewmasters and off-site brewery tours.

The pairings are Pike Place Brewing Co. with Bell Harbor International on Seattle's waterfront; Hilliard's Beer of Ballard with Talaris, near Seattle's University Village; and Silver City Brewing of Silverdale with Kitsap Conference Center in Bremerton.

The breweries were chosen for their proximity to those conference centers, and as a way to introduce meeting goers to the state's booming beer scene, said Alan Stephens, Columbia Hospitality's director of operational excellence.



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Bell Harbor International

Columbia Hospitality will bring in brewery partners to produce tastings and other events at Bell Harbor International Conference Center at Pier 66 on the downtown Seattle waterfront, as well as two other conference centers.

"It's no secret that Washington is a great place for craft breweries. We wanted to take the seriousness of a conference center and add some experiential aspect that's fun," he said.

Columbia Hospitality manages eight properties in Washington, including Salish Lodge in Snoqualmie and the Inn at Langley on Whidbey Island. It also has properties in California, Montana and Idaho.

Until now it has had no brewery or winery partners involved as a regular part of its meeting and corporate retreat packages, Stephens said. The company will promote the new options on its website and through email and social media.

According to the Brewers Association, a national trade group, Washington had 158 craft breweries in 2012, second among states to California, which has 316.