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From the Phoenix Business Journal:

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What's on tap: 'Craft-curious' clients hop on board for brewery tours

🔑 **SUBSCRIBER CONTENT:** Aug 14, 2015, 3:00am MST

John Alvarado is making a living as an Arizona tour guide with a decidedly "designated driver" bent.

Alvarado is the owner of Arizona Brewery Tours, one of a handful of operators benefiting from the growth of the brewery scene in the Valley and across the state.

"We get a lot of what I like to call 'craft curious,'" he said.

Alvarado's tour company launched in 2012, offering public and private tours as well as shuttle services to beer events. Business has increased along with the number of breweries.

"Craft beer is growing, and people want to get to know their local breweries," Alvarado said.

His company offers public tours that stop at three breweries and last four to five hours. The stops rotate among 13 different breweries, depending on the tour's needs and time constraints. The cost of a tour is \$99; if the attendee isn't drinking, it's \$79.

The key to Alvarado's success has been his connections in the local brewing scene. As a result, he said his company's revenue has almost doubled every year.

Road Dog Tours also has found success in the Phoenix beer market because new breweries seem to pop up every week.

"Arizona is truly the wild, wild West for beer," said Dustin Boast, owner and operator of Road Dog Tours.

Boast said he sees a new brewery open every month, and he is trying to build his business around



JIM POULIN | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

John Alvarado runs an Arizona beer tour company. He drives his customers on his buses and exposes locals to craft beers brewed in the valley.

the growing industry.

Originally from Seattle, he expanded his tour company to Phoenix when he saw a “beer boom” emerging in Arizona, much as it has across the U.S.

Road Dog Tours provides three stops among a rotation of nine breweries for \$79.

Both tour companies noted their services aren’t “booze cruises,” but rather tours focused on beer education and supporting local businesses.

Alvarado said breweries adjusted and welcomed his business to the industry.

“When I started, I approached breweries and asked if I could bring people to them,” he said. “Now I have breweries approaching me and calling, asking about designs for allowing tours.”

For breweries to be considered for a tour, Alvarado said the quality of beer is paramount, but atmosphere and food also are factors.

Road Dog Tours considers any brewery with a tasting room for its tours.

Alvarado said tours are a great way to expose both locals and out-of-state tourists to the Arizona beer community and encourage repeat business for the breweries.

“Our goal is to keep them coming back,” he said.

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