

Plenty of booze for Oly visitors So-called 'daffy liquor laws' haven't slowed the flow

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Bottom's up.

After all the angst, all the wondering, all the circumspection that no one would be able to find a drop of alcohol in the teetotaling state of Zion, visitors say they've had no trouble getting their hands on libations during the first week of the 2002 Winter Games.

"Do I look like I've had trouble finding a drink?" asked Jamie Weston, 38, Dallas, Texas. He takes a tug at his lower eyelid to show their bloodshot condition. "I didn't think so."

"We've been here since 5 (p.m.), and the bottles haven't stopped coming," said Travis Barney, who made his first visit to Utah with Weston.

In local restaurants and bars, at Olympic venues and in the country houses so popular with athletes and anyone else who can get in, the alcohol is flowing.

Long live Zipfer beer, said Stephan Ebenhauer, who stepped out of Austria House one night last week to let in some new friends. "We love the party," he says. "It's true we love the beer, and we are loving Utah, too."

Austria House, which has taken over the restaurant Absolute, 52 W. 200 South, negotiated for months with the Utah government officials to bring 924 gallons of beer, cases of wine and lots of liqueurs to its party palace.

Regular Utah restaurants have also made accommodations.

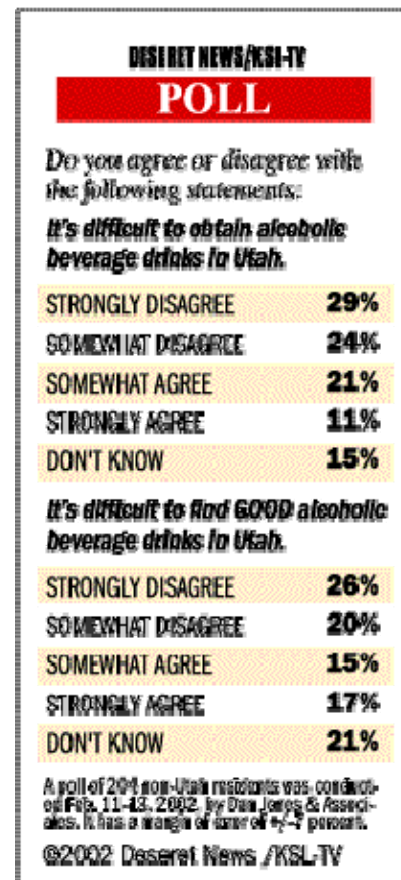
And most clubs — where a membership is required — have stationed a member at the door to act as sponsors to anyone who needs one.

Utah officials have gone about as far out on a limb as ever to reassure visitors that there are plenty of places to belly up to the bar during the Games.

Gov. Mike Leavitt told Time magazine there are 1,305 places to buy a drink within the confines of the Olympic area — twice as many watering holes as in the previous two Winter Games.

National newspaper and magazine articles printed since the Games began Feb. 8 show national reporters acknowledging their misconceptions about drinking in Utah.

"No matter what you've heard, it's almost as easy to get a drink here as anywhere else," writes a reporter for the Wall Street Journal for a story last week titled "Winter Olympics



2002: The Games Wet; the Laws Peculiar."

San Francisco Chronicle reporter Michael Dougan wrote that Utah's "daffy liquor laws are enough to drive you to drink."

But "booze does flow freely in brew pubs and bars throughout the state, but it helps to learn the rules before you become thirsty," he writes.

Results of a new poll confirm the majority of Utah visitors are finding their way to the spigot.

More than half of people surveyed by Dan Jones & Associates for a Deseret News/KSL-TV poll disagreed that it was difficult to obtain alcoholic beverages in Utah — while 32 percent agreed alcohol was tough to get. Fifteen percent didn't know.

Beyond that, 32 percent of people from outside Utah agreed it was difficult to find a "good" drink in Utah, while 46 percent disagreed with that statement. More than 20 percent of people didn't know how to answer the question.

Throughout downtown, businesses are working hard to promise parties and lure passers-by.

At Marmot Mesa Brewery and Ale House on Pierpont Avenue, a huge yellow and red banner offers simply, "BEER."

Budweiser, in addition to being an official Olympic sponsor, is everywhere. A big, red, rolling Bud billboard wove its way through downtown one afternoon last week. A few revelers, getting an early start on their evening, hollered and waved their accolades to the advertisement.

Even at the Utah Olympic Park in Park City, journalists can buy a \$5 beer in the media center, then sit down to hammer out their stories.

"It really has been one big party," said Patty Williams, Sandy. She's 22 and has been downtown every night. "Yes, people are totally drinking, but I think everyone is being pretty cool. Salt Lake has just never seen anything like this," she said. "A lot of the people I've met are staying downtown, so everyone just crashes at their hotel."

But the partying seems to have had little public safety consequences to date.

The Salt Lake City Police Department logs, released to the media every day, have had few alcohol-related entries. Logs did include one public intoxication arrest last Tuesday.

"We've got plenty of drunks," said Salt Lake Police Sgt. Dwayne Baird. The Tuesday log arrest has been the exception, not the rule, however.

"We've had calls on drunks downtown, but it isn't an extraordinary amount — and whether they're with the Olympic family or not, that's hard to say," Baird said. "People are apparently finding their way around and drinking all they want but not getting into trouble for it."

But people have had some weird questions about the laws, say some bar and pub workers. "Someone asked, 'Do you guys sell alcohol?' and someone else asked, 'Do you only sell non-alcoholic beer?' " said a waitress at Red Rock Brewery in Salt Lake City. "It's funny what people think."