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TAHOE

BY TERRA BREEDEN



Charlie Wiedenhoft pours German beer in huge servings at Himmel Haus.
PHOTO/TERRA BREEDEN

Plunge in South Lake dive bars

South Lake Tahoe is synonymous with entertainment and nightlife. The Heavenly gondola whisks guests to the top of the mountain. The Village buzzes with shops and bars and high-rise casinos cater to those feeling lucky. But negotiating throngs of tourists (and finding parking) can put a damper on any winter getaway—and the ritzy Village doesn't have that "peel off your ski boots and order a shot of whiskey" kind of ambiance.

After a day on the slopes, there's nothing more satisfying than a stiff drink in a cozy tavern and, luckily, South Lake Tahoe has no shortage of local watering holes. Check out these dive bars for an authentic *après* ski experience with live music, cheap drinks and eats.

Nestled in a residential neighborhood near Heavenly's California Base, Himmel Haus, 3819 Saddle Road, is an authentic German beer hall known for its laid-back vibe and impressive beer selection. With over 50 varieties of German and Belgian beers, the hardest part is choosing whether you want an imported bottle or a massive, three-liter "das boot" glass. *Après* ski food and drink specials are served Monday through Friday between 2 and 4 p.m. Don't miss trivia night on Wednesdays, starting at 9 p.m., for a brain game that gets harder with every stein. Teams of up to six players compete for beer prizes, and tie-breakers are decided the old-fashioned way—with a dance-off or stein-hold contest.

Rojo's Tavern, 3091 Harrison Ave., has been a South Lake fixture since 1975—and not much has changed in the years since. Voted the 2018 Best Dive Bar in Tahoe, this rustic bar is frequented by locals who come for the hearty food,

strong drinks and friendly staff. Karaoke nights are a favorite, which Rojo's hosts four nights a week on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, from 10 p.m. to close. If you can't carry a tune, try Wii Bowling on the big-screen TV, Cards Against Humanity or Giant Jenga on Monday game nights, also from 10 p.m. to close.

When it comes to Whiskey Dicks, 2660 Lake Tahoe Blvd., the name says it all. This uncouth establishment's motto is "at least our drinks are stiff." Visitors will find a large bar, dance floor, shuffleboard, Ping-Pong, a pool table and an enviable collection of '50s pin-up posters. On Saturday nights, Whiskey Dicks hosts free shows featuring live bands and a dance party. With a daily happy hour between 4 and 8 p.m., just don't expect to leave standing upright.

With a whopping seven, full-sized pool tables, Classic Cue, 1965 Lake Tahoe Blvd., isn't just popular for being the only billiard hall in town, or even for the eclectic crowd you'll find there at any given hour. This dive bar is famous for its Monday \$1.50 fish tacos and beer specials, which lure ski bums from all over town. On Thursdays, Classic Cue ups the ante with an open mic night starting at 9 p.m. that draws local musicians and is open to all newcomers.

If you can classify a dive bar as "charming," then Emerald Bay Bar and Grill, 888 Emerald Bay Road, fits the bill. This small establishment is dog-friendly. It has an outdoor fire pit, and the low-key vibe is perfect for meeting new friends and spurring intimate conversations. It has daily food and drink specials and serves some of the best bar food in town. The kitchen stays open until 11 p.m. for late-night diners. Check out the free live music on Friday nights, when homegrown bluegrass bands hold jam sessions and keep the crowd strutting and stomping 'til midnight. □