

Bar Hoppin' With Hops

The Keep On Hoppin' Tour
Hops MacBarley's Ongoing
Key West Bar Boondoggle

Bar #278:

Island Safari Rentals

408 Greene Street

Sunday, 26 November 2017, 4:00 PM

Sierra Nevada Pale Ale (bottle) \$3.00

Don't laugh. Yes, it's an apparel shop. Yes, they rent all kinds of island fun stuff. But this was not as much of a stretch as you're thinking.

Just as #277 fit within the OTDB (Official Tour Definition of a Bar), this one, too, stayed within the required parameters.

From the beginning, a "bar" has had to be a raised counter where a keeper would pass the beverage to the customer. Seats were not required, though certainly preferred. Low counters, such as at a diner (like Denny's) do not count. [As we look towards 300, though, who knows what the committee may decide.]

Plucking a bev off the shelf of a cooler and bringing it to the counter to buy it does not qualify. That's a *store* you're in, not a bar. And that's what I expected when we came here.

See, we -- that would be B&J & I -- had just completed Hop #258 at Castaways, and were looking to add #278 before catching sunset on the Sunset Deck (#158). Yes, dazzling numbers for sure; 258 and 278 are not consecutive numbers, you're right, Dwight. Castaways had been "unfinished business" for quite a while and we simply polished it off. (See [#258](#) for the full explanation.)

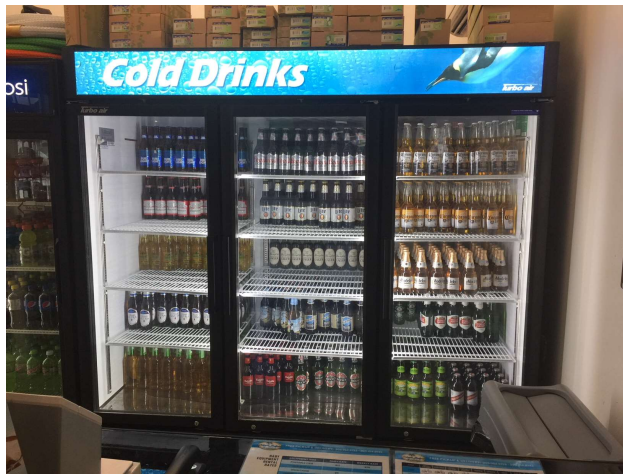
So, anyway, on our way to where we thought we were going, a sign caught my eye. Kudos to the signmaker; that's what signs are supposed to do. It was secured to a white picket fence in front of a house-ish building. There was a pretty picture of a pouring beer, appealing prices displayed, and the underlying caption: *Come On In For A Beer!*



My immediate thought was, *where the hell did this new bar come from??* Then I saw the business sign on the house-ish building: *Island Safari Rentals*. WT-effing-F. Are they going to *rent* me a beer? This had to be checked out.

I gestured in that direction and got “Huh? There??” kind of looks from my stalwart co-hoppers. But I was clearly hearing the sirens’ call and would not be deterred. They’d seen that before (i.e., Ambrosia (#161)), and, with a shrug, crossed the street to join ISR for a beer.

Upon entering, we were struck by a vivid array of colors and styles of shirts and hats, all hanging from a floorful of metal racks. Yup, clothing store, all right. BUT, in the back of the room, there was a familiar glow: the glow of a glass-doored refrigerated beverage cooler. The illuminated top panel had the words “COLD DRINKS” and a picture of a diving penguin. And, as we saw as we drew closer, the frig was filled with shelf-over-shelf of neatly-aligned bottles of beer – four shelves per section.



With very few exceptions, every label faced straight forward towards us. Presentation, baby. When I was barbacking in that Irish bar outside

Boston back in my college days, I would *always* make sure the labels faced forward – and we didn’t have windows on the cooler doors, so only the barkeep would see them.

And I *packed* that cooler. Instead of lining them in straight columns as well as straight rows, I staggered the columns. This minimizes the empty space between bottles and gave me an extra row or two by the time I reached the front. It wasn’t just about having a snazzy-looking cooler; it was practical too. You need to restock less often when the cooler holds 60 bottles rather than 48. The barkeeps always knew at first glance who was barbacking tonight.

So, the ISR coolers were visually appealing. Great. But then came the good part. They were set back against the wall, and there was a counter in front of them. A fairly young, good-looking guy came over to wait on us. Still, we were in limbo. If he handed the unopened bottles to us, took money and bid us good day, it would be hard to count this as a bar. BUT, once we told him what we wanted, he grabbed Brian’s \$2 Coors Light, and my \$3 SNPA,

opened them, and poured them into cups for us. He was, now, officially, our *bartender!* Ching-ching, chalk up *Bar Hop #278!*

Being good bar patrons, we did not just grab-n-go. There were no seats to plant on and linger, but we did our lingering by meandering about the shop, perusing t-shirts and watching Jan try on hats. We chatted with our barkeep, who had moved to the store's main cashier desk – probably to keep a better eye on us. He may have been a manager, I don't know, but by the way he boasted of what the store carried and what they rented, he was certainly deserving of managerial status. We informed him of the Tour and ISR's inclusion in it, and he was humbled. Or horrified. Not sure which. Such a fine line.

We wished him well and headed off to sunset. Given what we would end up paying at the Deck, we should have gotten a traveler here.

Next time. ;]