

WEEKEND EXTRA

Raise a glass to World Cup mania

Match your palate and fuel your passion at these official, soccer-savvy support groups

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Every four years, soccer mania grips the world. From the ardent Argentine fan to the casual Canuck, the World Cup is the universal sport, averaging 188.4 million viewers per match in 2010. From June 12 to July 13, no other event, sporting or non-sporting, will matter. From the favelas of Brazil — host country this year — to the boroughs of Vancouver, restaurants, pubs, and culture centres will welcome all soccer fans — from passive to possessed — to watch the drama and grandeur of the beautiful game in its superlative format.

Can't make it to Brazil to rally your team on? Well, you could sit at home and watch alone on your TV or tablet. Or you could hook up with your fellow soccer-savvy supporters at one of these official fan houses. Mirror the live experience from one of Vancouver's 11 best soccer hot spots. Just be careful what colours you wear in some places.

Here is our guide to the best venues for World Cup soccer action in Vancouver.

OFFICIAL SUPPORT HOUSES THE STARTING 11

Moose's Down Under

830 West Pender Street
Home for: Australia

Not all of the 32 nations on display in Brazil can lay claim to a fervent fan base in Vancouver. (Bosnia-Herzegovina anyone?) Fans of the plucky Australian squad, the Soccerroos, are in luck. They can descend on Moose's, headquarters for all of Australia's sporting endeavors, to cheer on studly Tim Cahill's team. Casual fans who like underdogs or need a reprieve from MLB tedium, should hit Moose's up for a pint of Fosters and some Soccerroos action. The engaging atmosphere and the sheer ecstasy of any Aussie on hand will make up for what is expected to be a brief Cup appearance for that most lovable of continents.

Reservations: Recommended.
Seating capacity: 176.

Kyung Bok Palace

#720-5300 No. 3 Rd., Richmond
Home for: Korea Republic

Since a shocking fourth-place finish at the 2002 World Cup — where they co-hosted with political rivals Japan — the South Korean side has won over even the crustiest of soccer souls. Korea may be under-represented in terms of fan houses, but I'll wager the enthusiasm level will be equal to that of their European counterparts. Kyung Bok Palace (hosting their first World Cup since moving to Richmond from North Vancouver) is the unofficial home for Korean fans in the Vancouver area. Head on over for some Korean barbecue as this team looks to play spoiler again. First round matches against Russia and Belgium could go either way, so Kyung Bok and local Korean fans could be some of the Cup's biggest winners.

Reservations: Not required.
Seating Capacity: 250-300.

The Butcher and Bullock

911 West Pender
Home for: Brazil

The popular Donnelly Group-owned spot will support the bulk of Brazilian fans as they bid for a record sixth cup. A veteran on this list, The Butcher & Bullock has a proven record of showing patrons how to host an event. With a prodigious beer and wine list, this comfortable and modern spot is the perfect default hub for soccer viewing. Memories of a dismal 2010 campaign, deaths associated with construction of



Ready for action, fans Yan Angha, left, Maral Angha and Cyrus Angha are being served by waitress Samantha Thomas, right, Thursday, at North Vancouver's The Narrows Pub: 'The Official Iranian House' for World Cup.



Corina Aquino, above, will be serving up Aussie brew at Moose's Down Under in downtown Vancouver, the ideal viewing house for Australia's matches.



German football fans Lisa Hinschberger, Wayne Lee, Patrick Buehrmann, Nina Beier and Mass Abedi, left to right, prepare for the World Cup at the Alpen Club.

new stadiums (some still unfinished), and protests over the \$11 billion Brazil spent to host the games have cast a pall over what promises to be one of the most engaging and energetic sides. All the negatives aside, Brazil's squad has speed, creativity, and Neymar da Silva. Local fans expect nothing less than pure on-field dynamite.

Reservations: Recommended as this is a first come first serve venue.

Seating capacity: 180.

Portuguese Club of Vancouver

1144 Commercial Drive
Home For: Portugal

Just one of the many nations to call Commercial Drive their home, the Portuguese Club is the unopposed home for Portugal. As part of "The Group of Death," Portugal — lead by FIFA's resident sex symbol, Cristiano Ronaldo — has tough matches against inconsistent USA and clockwork German sides. So, the Club will play host to more than its share of drama and heartache. (All on the pitch, of course). As polarizing a figure as Ronaldo is, his supporters will not find a more welcoming and hospitable venue as he looks to stake his claim as an equal to Maradona and Pelé. Be advised: club members will gain entrance before the public. Expect lineups one to two hours before game time.

Reservations: Suggested.
Seating capacity: 100.

Croatian Cultural Centre

3250 Commercial Drive
Home for: Croatia

The hearty supporters of Croatia have their cultural centre ready for the opening tilt of the whole tourney, even if the stadium itself remains half-done. Sure, they're facing the disproportionately favoured Brazil, but Croatians like a challenge. Will Croatia play David to the South American Goliath? Hard to say, but win or lose, the cold comfort of overflowing beer and gracious Croatian camaraderie will foster a genuine party vibe. The unpretentious, unique surroundings will make for a raucous non-pub atmosphere. Enjoy Croatia's time in the spotlight with some of the best drinkers Europe has ever produced. And if Croatia upsets Brazil, the celebration will be heard all the way to Zagreb.

Reservations: First come.
Seating capacity: 400.

The Manchester Public Eatery

1941 West Broadway
Home for: The Netherlands

Located in Kits, The Manchester Pub is pure soccer heaven. Though many nations will find support here, no where else in town is the Netherlands so welcome. Be warned, novice: your senses may be fried by an over-abundance of techno-coloured orange outfits. Second-place finishers in 2010, the Netherlands is expecting another long run for the Cup. So too is the

Manchester Pub. Long lines, crowded tables, and a boisterous atmosphere will be de rigeur. This "home" is just one of many the Jennings Group are sponsoring. The Manchester Pub will be absolute bananas for the duration of the Cup, so good luck getting a seat. Even Pub staff might have a hard time getting in on game days. If all else fails, ask organizer Dan Tanner if they need more coat check muscle.

Reservations: No. Tickets online.
Seating capacity: 250.

The Pint

455 Abbot Street
Home For: Belgium

A dark horse team needs a dark horse pub. The upstart Belgians will find their official home in The Pint, the token rookie on the list. Another soccer-mad watering hole, this is the joint for the Belgian Proud. Dine on Pint Perogies and Beefshires or drink your weight in Guldun Draak as Eden Hazard attempts to upset Messi, Ronaldo, and Neymar as the superstar of Brazil 2014. Will this World Cup cement The Pint as the new soccer hub in Vancouver? Could happen. With ample butt room to cater to a younger demographic, The Pint will appeal to many younger neutrals who are dipping their toes into World Cup waters for the first time.

Reservations: No. Tickets at the door.
Seating: 450.

The London Pub

700 Main Street
Home for: England

Ah, the English. Creators of a game they no longer master and originators of fine neighbourhood pubs. Few things mesh together as lithely as soccer and English-style pubs. As the official house sponsor of The Three Lions, get there early as this place will be engorged with boisterous and vocal Brits well before kickoff. A pub-crawl prior to England's match against Italy on June 14th will set the tone for the English contingent. The Club, much like that marquee game, promises to be a right beauty of a venue all Cup long. Opposition fans are welcome but can expect some friendly lip from the English faithful.

Reservations: No. Advanced tickets available online.
Seating capacity: 180.

Vancouver Alpen Club

4875 Victoria Drive
Home for: Germany

The spiritual home of all things German in Vancouver. (Well, the good things, anyway): Curry Wurst, commemorative beer steins, weisswurst, pretzels, and Die Deutsche Nationalmannschaft. Behold Germany on the 17-foot projection screen from the spacious Alpen ballroom or the quainter-but-no-less-raucous restaurant area. A spirited environment for any soccer fan to break pretzel bread in. German fans are loyal, knowledgeable, and passionate, but most of all, they are welcoming. Don't be put off by the lines, either. These seasoned hosts run a tight, efficient ship. Just what you'd expect from the longest-serving German Haus in town. Though The Pint will be competing for the attention of the German fans, purists will continue to flock to the Alpen in droves.

Reservations: None. \$5 admission.
Seating capacity: 500.

Libra Room Cafe

1608 Commercial Drive
Home for: Spain

Every team claims to have the "most passionate fans," national squads included. But when it comes to Spain, there is no doubt they have reserves of passion their Euro-based peers can only wish they possessed. The Libra Room, home base for the defending Cup champs, will need a platoon of custodians to keep the passion from overflowing into the streets. After years of international failure, The Red Fury parlayed continental success into a mastery of their opponents in 2010. The Libra Room will try to do the same against its own gastro opposition. Four new 60" televisions have been recruited to better serve Vancouver's own Spanish Armada. An essential Cup-viewing venue.

Reservations: First come, first served.
Seating capacity: 102.

Commercial Drive

Home for: Italy

The heartbeat of Vancouver's soccer community is none other than "The Drive." Home to the Italian faithful, among others (See Portugal, Germany, and Croatia), this is the undisputed hot spot for all World Cup action. Will Italy's La Squadra Azzurra win it all or crash out early as they did in 2010? Talk tactics inside Federico's Supper Club. Probe the mysteries of Balotelli over vermicchio at Arriva. Or lose yourself to the experience of World Cup spectacle on Commercial Drive. The vibrant, colourful strip will hit overdrive as the homing signals of all soccer fans send them to party central all month. Post-game victory laps along Commercial with mates and strangers alike are everything a sporting fan dreams about.

THE BENCH | ALTERNATE VIEWING HUBS

Jack's Public House

9082 152 St., Surrey
Home for: England

Reservations: Yes. Tickets available online
Seating capacity: 150

Townhall

33720 S. Fraser Way, Abbotsford
Co-Home for: England and The Netherlands

Reservations: Yes. Tickets available online

Seating capacity: 300

Red Card Sports Bar

560 Smithe Street
Home For: Neutrals

Reservations: Recommended
Seating capacity: 150

Narrows Pub

1970 Spicer Road, North Vancouver
Home for: Iran

Reservations: Yes. Tickets available online

Reservations: Reservations accepted
Seating capacity: 150

The London Pub

700 Main Street
Home for: Colombia

Reservations: Yes. Tickets available online
Seating capacity: 180

The Blarney Stone

216 Carrall Street

Home for: Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and, er, England.

Reservations: Recommended
Seating capacity: 300
Note: 20 foot screen, heralded as the biggest in the city.

Scandinavian Community Centre

6540 Thomas Street, Burnaby
Home for: Bosnia-Herzegovina

Reservations: No
Seating capacity: 160

Cinnamon Bear Bar Grille & Grille

4050 Whistler Way, Whistler
Home for: Neutral site but with a large local Australia and Japan following

Reservations: Not required
Seating capacity: 128

Note: only games starting after 11:30 will be shown in the bar; the lounge area will show the 9 a.m. games.