

## LV Style Guides: English IPA

*If there's one beer style that has defined the meteoric rise in popularity of American craft beer, it's the IPA. Bold, occasionally brash, and free to express itself in all colors of the malty rainbow, IPA is just so darn American. Its spirit animal? The bald eagle. But like the country that so loves it, IPA has its roots buried deep in English soil. We've all heard the story: IPA was invented to survive the rugged ocean journey from England to India, wherein British troops were thirsty for unspoiled beer. The high content of both hops and alcohol in this newfangled beer style made it extra capable of handling the journey unscathed. This story? Hogwash! For the most part...*

### Some Background

It's true. The hops and alcohol in IPA helped it survive the journey from England to India. But the style wasn't *invented* for this purpose, nor was it the first hoppy and strong beer to be exported to the British colony. The consensus these days is that IPA sprung from a type of beer referred to as "October beers," which were similarly sturdy English ales that were fit for export. Strong, pale, hoppy beers like these existed in England and in India well before the names India pale ale or IPA were adopted to describe them.

Hodgson's, a London-based brewery, exported their pale ale to India, and was the first company to find big success there. Their beer, then referred to simply by the common catchall term "pale ale," was tailored to the tastes of the hot, thirsty residents of India. The beer was very pale, hoppy, and way more refreshing than porters and other imported styles. It became popular in both India and in England. A competing brewery, Allsopp's, found Indian success in Hodgson's wake by replicating their proto-IPA and leveraging powerful trade deals with the East India Company. By the early 1800s, the term India pale ale was finally being used to describe these beers.

Eventually, lager supplanted IPA as the unofficial beer of India, and higher taxes for stronger beers in England made strong IPAs unattractive to brewers and cost-conscious drinkers alike. The beer was losing popularity.

Perhaps unexpectedly, English IPA found life in the United States in the mid-1800s with the introduction of Ballantine's IPA. It managed to weather Prohibition and continued to be drunk until the 1990s, laying a foundation for the bright, American-hopped beers it inspired. The tastes of the American public have largely moved on to ultra-citrusy, super-dry hop bombs, but there are still English-style IPAs being made world wide.

### The Style Today

English IPA lives on as a strong, hoppy style. It's made with floral, earthy, lemony, or grassy English hop varieties and has a toasty, bready, or lightly caramelly malt character. It's hoppy, sure, but there's a malt-hop balance here that may be absent from American IPAs. English yeast strains will often impart a gentle fruitiness as they ferment the beer to around 5-7% ABV. These beers are fairly uncommon in the US these days, but find yourself a well-made example, and you'll find a tasty and drinkable piece of history.