



Overview



thebeergeek.com is a beer travel site that chronicles the beer adventures of husband and wife team Chris Nelson and Merideth Canham-Nelson.

Launched in 2005, the website documents their travels throughout the world as they visit brewpubs, breweries, beer bars, halls and gardens. On their beer journeys, they meet the locals and learn about different cultures. Their beer travels have taken them throughout North America, Europe and Australia.

thebeergeek.com aims not only to reach the dedicated craft beer drinker, but also the average person looking to add some adventure to their travels. From hardcore beer travels, like driving hours out of their way to visit a single brewery, to helpful advice for the brewery novice, thebeergeek.com tries to cater to all levels of interest.

The couple's beer travels are recounted in travelogues and video episodes on beergeek.TV. There are currently over 50 episodes of *One Pint at a Time*.

In 2008, Chris and Merideth embarked on the Year in Beer, a beer geek's dream year. Traveling to a major beer event or destination every month, their journey took them to the beer capitals of North America and Europe. Whether at a pub, in a beer hall or at a festival, they enjoyed the local brew, culture and made many new friends. Merideth recently completed the manuscript *Teachings from the Tap*, a chronicle of the couple's beer adventures during the Year in Beer. She is currently seeking a publisher.

When not traveling, Chris Nelson runs his web design business, as well as raises the couple's two dachshunds Porter and Stout. In 2007, Chris, out of 7,800 applicants from 31 countries, was a final four candidate for Four Points by Sheraton's coveted position of Chief Beer Officer. A beer traveler for 20 years, Chris has visited over 700 breweries throughout the world.

Merideth Canham-Nelson's appreciation of beer developed in 1992 while working at a multi-tap pub in Oakland, California. She wanted to be knowledgeable about the beer she was serving and the best way to do it was to visit the breweries themselves. Merideth is also over the 700 brewery milestone in her beer travels. When she is not traveling, Merideth works as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.



Who We Are - Chris' Story



People say that beer is an acquired taste that one does not intrinsically like the first time they drink. However, I can honestly say that I have loved the taste of beer since day one. Here is the short story of how I transitioned from someone who likes the taste of beer into becoming a beer geek.

In the late 80's Merideth and I lived in Oakland. We were already moving away from the big beer conglomerates, but our taste for beer was not yet refined. My first beer epiphany (second if you count my very first beer, a Budweiser, as my first) came when a friend started working at the newly opened Raleigh's Pub in Berkeley. I remember having my first Ironhorse Alt from Devil Mountain Brewery and being intrigued by the incredible flavor.

In 1991, a pub with nothing but craft beer opened right in our neighborhood. We were regular customers from the beginning and came to know the owner Gene and all the waitresses quite well. We also joined the beer club, which helped introduce us to beers we'd never heard of before. At that time, it was a big deal to reach 100 beers and I was the 12th person to accomplish that great feat. If you go to Barclay's, look above the bar to see my name (first panel on the left, bottom of the second column).

Before long, Merideth became a waitress at Barclay's and from then on I was in beer heaven. Every Sunday I spent Merideth's entire shift outside on the patio drinking beer and watching life in Rockridge go by.

Our interest in beer continued to grow and Merideth had a personal philosophy that she should know about the beer she served. In the beginning, we didn't have much money and started small. We planned day trips and weekend getaways to visit breweries so Merideth could learn more about the beer. This, of course, led to our travel obsession and the development of The List—a record of our brewery visits.

As our college days got further away and we became "adults," our funds and aspirations grew. We expanded our trips from within driving distance of our house to out-of-state and eventually international travel. Now all of our trips are centered on beer and The List tops 700.

In 2007, out of 7,800 applicants from 31 countries, I was a final four candidate for Four Points by Sheraton's coveted position of Chief Beer Officer. I didn't get the position, but it started the latest chapter in my beer life—an interest in sharing my beer travel experiences and encouraging others to find their own beer adventure; the start of thebeergeek.com.

Chris can be contacted at chris@thebeergeek.com



Who We Are - Merideth's Story



Since a love of craft beer is something that Chris and I developed together, my story is very much the same as his. But here I'll add a few more details about my experience of becoming a girl beer geek.

My interest in beer started in the late 1980s when a pub called Raleigh's opened up in Berkeley. I was not yet legal drinking age, but even so the craft beers served at Raleigh's piqued my interest. At that time, Chris and I were already moving away from mass produced beer and Sierra Nevada—complete with yeast at the bottom of the bottle—was frequently found in our fridge at home.

Our growing taste for craft beer received a boost when, in 1991, Barclay's Pub & Restaurant opened in our Oakland neighborhood. Thirty craft brews on tap all within walking distance of our apartment! And lucky for me, I was now legal drinking age.

We immediately became regulars and spent several evenings a week in Barclay's. It was (and still is) a neighborhood pub where neighbors gathered for a relaxing good time. It brought our community closer together. Within two years, I started working as a waitress at Barclay's. As a novice craft beer drinker, I soon realized that knowing 30 different rotating beers was a difficult task. I wanted to be knowledgeable about beer and able to make recommendations when customers asked. Chris and I decided that the best way for me to get to know the beers was to go to the source—the breweries themselves. That's when the beer travel started and we haven't looked back since.

In the early 1990's, few people were craft beer experts. Practically everyone was a student learning about this new thing we called "microbrews." At that time, women craft beer drinkers were a very small minority and the prevailing assumption was that women didn't know anything about beer. As females, we weren't expected to. Craft beer was a man's drink. I felt I had a lot to prove in those early years to show that I was a real beer drinker. Over time, females have become more and more integrated into the craft brew culture as brewers, judges, critics, and of course, drinkers. Today, there are a whole host of women out there with loads of beer and brewing knowledge and I no longer feel the need to prove myself. I may not know as much as some women, but I know of no other female (and only a handful of men) who has the experience of visiting over 700 breweries. I consider myself much more than a craft beer drinker. I am a beer traveler.

Merideth can be contacted at merideth@thebeergeek.com



Frequently Asked Questions

How long have you been a couple?

We were married in 1989 and we dated two years prior to that.

What is beer travel?

Visiting pubs, breweries, craft breweries and brewpubs is the essence of being a beer traveler. But it's more than that. Beer travel is using beer as a conduit to meet interesting people, make new friends and experience other cultures.

How did you get into beer travel?

Merideth was working at a pub and wanted to be knowledgeable about the beer she was serving. We once saw a waitress give some totally erroneous information about beer and Merideth decided she never wanted to sound like an idiot. We thought the best way to get to know the beer would be to go to the breweries themselves. We had no idea that it would turn into such a huge hobby!

What is your favorite place you have visited?

We have many "favorites." But, that's just because there are so many cool places out there and it's hard to choose. It kind of depends on the time of year. Munich is our favorite city and the biergartens are especially enjoyable during the warm weather in Spring and Summer. We also love the West of Ireland, where it's great to drink an Irish craft beer in a pub during the cold, rainy months.

What is your favorite beer?

That's a hard question for both of us. Chris pretty much likes all styles of beer and has many favorites. A self-professed "hophead," Chris gravitates towards IPAs. Merideth's taste also runs the gamut, from German style helles all the way to stouts and porters. She proudly calls herself a "lager girl."

How did you come up with the Year in Beer?

Both of us love travel shows and it was originally conceived as a TV show. After hitting some dead ends with the TV stuff, we decided to do it anyway and write it as a book. We still dream of having our own travel show, but in the meantime, we have *One Pint at a Time* episodes.

Do you guys have real jobs?

Yes! Chris is self-employed as a web designer and works from home. It's not uncommon for Chris to do work while on our trips. He also works as a beertender at Post No Bills Craft Beer House in Sand City, California. Merideth works as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

How do you afford all the travel?

That's a good question! Somehow it works out. So far, we have paid for all of our travel on our own, with no sponsors. We would welcome any assistance and we're currently looking for sponsors with products and services that match well with our philosophy.

We don't have children and we really don't spend our money on anything other than beer stuff, but of course, our finances are not infinite. We also take advantage of frequent traveler perks.

What do you do with the dogs when you're gone?

We have a great house sitter who comes to stay at the house. She takes care of the dogs, as well as our two birds. Chris's parents also help out by watching the dogs during the day. The dogs think of Chris's parent's house as the spa. At least that's where we tell them they are going when we drop them off.

With all the beer drinking, how do you avoid being over weight?

Well, it's hard, but we try to work out regularly. We also like getting in as much physical activity as we can on our trips. It's usually hiking or at the very least, walking everywhere we can.

Do you plan to do the Year in Beer again in the future?

We have plenty of beer travel ideas, but it probably won't be as extensive as the Year in Beer.