

Transcript of Podcast 063: Have A Beer With The Barefoot Backpacker

{Intro:

CLAIRE: I can't decide if my beer decisions are made through smart decisions or pure luck. I guess it's a mixture of both really.

}

{intro music - jaunty, bouncy}

{{Intro standard announcement:

Hello. Thank you for tuning in. You're listening to Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure, a podcast looking at unfamiliar places across the world, and aspects of travelling you may never have thought of. I'm your host, The Barefoot Backpacker, a middle-aged Enby with a passion for offbeat travel, history, culture, and the 'whys' behind travel itself. So join me as we venture ... beyond the brochure.}

{Music fades. Podcast begins}

Hello :)

Yes, it's only been a week since my last podcast. Don't get excited, this isn't going to be a regular thing for the new series; as I mention later, it's just because I had a lot of content so decided to split it over two episodes. Like I did for London last year. Sometimes when I draw up a podcast I find I have a lot more content than I expected, and writing it is a breeze. Sometimes that ... does not happen. As you know.

November's been a weird month for me. My bank card disintegrated while I was in London, on the last evening before my return home. By disintegrated I mean, the chip on it which I've today found out is called an EMV chip, fell off. While I was trying to pay for something, I may add - beer, obviously. Fortunately I had enough cash on me at the time, and double-fortunately, I'd topped up my Oyster (London travelcard) only half an hour before, so I wasn't in trouble getting back to the hotel (on the exact opposite side of London - it's an hour from Harrow to Barking). Also fortunately, past me had booked Business Class for my flight back from London to Glasgow, so that took care of food on the Tuesday evening, and then, even more fortunately, an old friend from my Birmingham days, Tracey, was working in Glasgow and had ended up having to stay an extra night because of train issues, so we met up on the Wednesday and had food and drink. On her expense account. All of which makes me sound posh. I am not posh.

It was nice to meet up with her again - it'd been quite a few years since we'd last met I think. She's moved around the country as much as I have in that time, albeit mainly because of her work rather than on a whim like me.

My replacement bankcard arrived on the following Tuesday, which was almost exactly the right amount of time I needed to have eaten everything in my freezer. I still had some cash I could have bought stuff with but if it had come a couple of days later it might have been a bit edgy. No, I don't have any paying apps on my phone; this is because I like to separate out my stuff so if I lose one thing, it doesn't affect everything. Though I might have had to have looked into it by that point. Or just constantly be buying takeaways, which would not have been good for my bank account or my fitness.

Speaking of fitness, I'm still doing Parkrun, and I'm getting quicker. I've re-started to use the weights I bought, plus I'm going out for more daytime jogs. It's a little too damp and autumnal to be running barefoot, given there's a lot of trees around here, but that one of the pairs of minimalist running sock things I have are now quite worn through means it's almost the same thing these days. I've also started channelling my long-hidden cross-country running training vibes, and doing hillwork. I mean, the Parkrun I do has hills on it, severe hills for a parkrun, so it makes sense I should take advantage of them, right?

But back to socialising. I've also been out twice in the past week to events organised by one of the LGBTQIA+ organisations here in Glasgow; firstly again to the specific non-binary group that meets monthly, and this time

after the meet a group of us decamped to a local pub, which was a nice change – usually we just wend our separate ways after the meeting ends. Then, a couple of days ago, I was at a very casual music quiz in a broader rainbow-community evening. It's still early days, but I'd like to think that slowly, I'm finding a community up here that suits my style. I mean, I do chat with people in the church cafe after Parkrun, but it's not quite the same somehow. And no I haven't joined a running group, mainly I think because it would be too much ... pressure? I was reminded a couple of days ago though to re-connect with the local community radio station, so there's possibly that too. We'll see. Now I'm pretty sure I'll be in Glasgow for the foreseeable future anyway.

So, to this week's podcast I guess. Now, as an aside, when I was editing one of my podcasts from late summer, there were a couple of moments where I sounded slightly drunk, where I was slightly slurring or else being less than coherent. While I often write my podcasts under the influence of alcohol (and this one is no exception), I very rarely record them with beer. In fact, all the research I've done suggests you shouldn't even record after milk. One thing I will say though is I edited out all the hiccups and other throaty noises. I'd had a home-made curry earlier that day and it seems to have still been in my system.

Beer, though. When I was originally musing what to do for upcoming episodes a couple of months back, my friend V wondered if I'd talked about beer much, because it was something that seems to be quite a common thing in my everyday life. And while I have already done a podcast about beer, that was prompted primarily by a blog post I wrote about beer in the USA, when I found out that American beer was more than just mass-produced lager and was, in reality, actually pretty good. It was also released two years ago and I've drunk more beer since then. Self-evidently, if you're a regular listener to my pod. And re blog posts, while I have done a couple about beer, they've been quite specific - beer in the USA, beer in Germany, that kind of thing, rather than about beer as a concept.

Part of the reason for this is that I'm not a travel blogger. By which I mean, if I were, it would be fairly simple, bordering on obligatory, for me to do lots of beer posts, talking about 'best beers in ...', or 'good breweries from ...', and of course 'twelve best pubs in ...'. Not gonna lie, I do need to write a blog post about the city of Birmingham, and despite being the UK's largest city admin area (terms and conditions apply, don't @ me, I might do a pod on 'the UK's cities' actually given for some reason we've just created a few (Milton Keynes? Really?)), and then rant about definitions and the absurdities of Kirklees, Cornwall, Rochester, and Inverness), yes, anyway, the thing with Birmingham is there's not an awful lot of reason to go there. Except beer. Some very good pubs in the centre of Birmingham. But that's not the point, or at least not my main point, The thing is, pubs close. Even breweries close (when I was originally typing this podcast intro, I'd not long earlier heard one of the breweries in Sheffield, the Kelham Island brewery, announced its closure. I quite liked them). And I don't really like having the admin of having to keep my web pages up to date, Battles in 1461 will always have happened in 1461; the beers of Birmingham will be forever changing. So I've never really thought about talking about specific beers and breweries, at least in the context of 'you must go here' and 'you must try this'.

What I can talk about though is beer in general. About different beer styles. About where my interest came from. And about quirky experiences and unusual beers I've had in my life around and about.

My original plan for this subject now though had been to do one large pod on beer covering everything, but when I was collating my information on, and writing about, my Press Trip to Plzen where I drank beer for 3½ days, I realised I had enough content on that trip alone to warrant its own podcast. It also made sense to separate it out since it was a separate trip with a specific audience interested in it; meaning this pod could be a bit more generic.

With hindsight that was just as well; no-one's ready for a two-hour podcast from me. Least of all me.

Joining me on the PressTrip was my friend Dave, who blogs and drinks over at Man Vs Globe. He also used to work for a brewery, so has been very helpful with some of the technical details later in this pod. But at the end of the PressTrip, on our way back to Prague, we sat on the train and had a long conversation about beer (excuse the train background noise), which I recorded with these podcasts in mind. The full chat I'm going to put on my Patreon, but throughout this pod I'll be taking extracts from it to punctuate my talking.

So, why don't you settle down, open a beer (I will accept non-alcoholic ones though curiously I've never found a non-alcoholic beer I've liked. The last one was some German beer that tasted and smelt of feet that had gone off. And I'm not into that kind of thing), kick back, and listen to tales of ales.

{section separation jingle}

But let's start at the beginning: where does this love of beer come from? For me, I'd say it's been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. My parents have told tales of me as a toddler who, if anyone had put a beer glass on the the floor, would crawl across the carpet to pick it up and try to drink it. I grew up with my grandparents and my uncle; my grandfather apparently brewed his own beer and my uncle had several stints of taking it up as a hobby, and when I became old enough to know what it was all about, he left me help out with making it and obviously that involved drinking it. (I've tried home-brewing since myself, but it's just far too much admin and requires too much planning - it's a lot of effort and there are far easier things to do in life. Like pay someone else to make it for me in the same way I don't do my own plumbing or handle my own Pinterest account). I can't remember when my first beer was, but I know I was certainly comfortable enough around it for it not to be a shock to the system when I was a mid-teen and it was the 'in' thing to do. What I can tell you is I got my 'A'-Level results on my 18th Birthday, and my first legal pint was clearly not my first ever pint.

For some reason, by this point I'd discovered cider, and I had a couple of ... 'incidents' with it that we will not talk about, but cider stayed my preferred drink of choice until partway through my first year at university, in Birmingham. The student bars had subsidised prices, but even so I was having to watch my finances, and I noticed that mild was incredibly cheap relative to everything else. And thus began my preference for darker beers.

Someone who's less clear on how they got into beer is Haydy, who you'll hear more from later in this pod. She's someone I know online as Squibbvicious; a blog name based on her maiden name that, honestly, took me over a year to get the pun contained therein. She wanted me to tell you she also runs a beer-focussed account called Squibbert Brews with her partner Michael; Squibbert being a merge of both their surnames.

{HAYDY - Q1}

So, my love of beer is quite a new-found love - I was always quite a wine-lover growing up. I spent a lot of my childhood in vineyards in Rioja with my parents. I mean, my dad's even built a wine cellar underneath their house, that's how much they love wine. So then I moved into cider, as I sort of turned 18 and started going to music festivals, and I just felt that cider was quite a nice thing to drink whilst sat outside listening to good music in the sunshine. And then for some unknown reason I just really got into beers. I don't mean popping to my local pub and having a pint of Stella in an unmatched glass, I'm talking about real ales, craft beers, what I would deem as the good stuff, that sweet sweet nectar, but yeh I don't really know how it came into my life, I just sort of hopped on to this craft beer bandwagon I guess, and I have zero regrets for doing so. I bloody love trying new beers, and I'm finding it a really exciting journey to be on.

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{section separation jingle}

But where does beer come from? The short answer is: Germany. The long answer is:

The oldest evidence for brewing in Europe in the archaeological record is a big pot with a flavoured form of weissbier, found in the grave of a Celtic chieftain near Kulmbach is what is now northern Bavaria, in around 800 BC. This makes Bavarian (German) beer older than Rome, which is quite a legacy. Brewing seems to have become, and remained, a mainstay of the Germanic tribes, and both their foes and their descendants. There's evidence, for example, of the Roman Empire taking to brewing when they occupied part of the area around Regensburg - this, remember, is a civilisation more noted for its reliance on wine.

As to why Bavaria specifically, it may partly be because the climate and agriculture favours the growth of barley and other flavourings. It's interesting to note that while beer didn't originally have to be made with hops, the first recorded incidence of hops being used for beer was in the 8th century, in what is now south-central Bavaria. The region (Hallertau) is reported to grow just over a quarter (26.66%) of the entire world hop crop.

Another aspect is religious. Bavaria is home to a large number of monasteries, and, just like the famous ones in Belgium, monks have been brewing beer for over a thousand years. Indeed two breweries that claim to be the worlds oldest continuously operating ones are both Bavarian monasteries: at Weihenstephan and Weltenburg.

And you might well ask - why are monks noted for producing beer across Europe? Well, it's a twofold reason. Firstly, daily monkish life wasn't all prayer and sleep. Much of their daytime would have been spent gardening, for want of a better word. Remember monasteries would have been largely self-sufficient affairs so they consumed what they grew, So it makes sense that, with lots of free time in an enclosed space, they would have taken to experimentation and making use of what was available in a variety of ways, if only to make their mealtimes more exciting. Secondly, remember that one of the duties of a monk was to give back to the community, so much of the excess of what they grew, what they made, would have been traded in the local area. So monks brewed beer to drink themselves or sell, but they also produced lots of other consumables, like cheese, bread, and clothing.

Obviously a combination of trade and military expansion in the first millennium of the common era, coupled with the exploits of monkish Christianity not long after, meant that not only was beer knowledge transferred around the world, but also the raw materials, the hops and barley, came with them and found new places to grow and thrive.

{section separation jingle}

I suppose at this point I should probably talk about what kinds of beer are out there. Many people (well, so many countries, even) have a very particular and limited view about what 'beer' means. So, you already know Pilsner. Or at least I hope you do because you'll've heard my previous podcast episode. Here's a few more:

Lager, ah lager, the most common of all forms of beer, and the one you're most likely to get if you ask for a 'beer'. Pilsner is a form of lager, but then so is Carling, and they taste very different. Modern, mass-produced lager I tend to find very 'industrial' in taste, it's a bit too crisp for my liking and often has a weird metallic aftertaste, for reasons unknown, but the existence of German beers (which I'll talk about shortly) and of course Pilsner itself, proves that lager can be drinkable. Technically, the difference between lager and other types of ale is in the fermentations. The two styles are 'cold-fermenting' (lager) and 'warm-fermenting' (ale). While the nature of brewing itself is beyond the scope of this pod (and beyond the scope of this podder, let's be honest; the smell of hops to me smells exactly the smell of cannabis, so while I said earlier I've very briefly made my own beer, it's possible you're glad you never tasted it. Although there's a brewery in Andorra which brews beer with hemp, so ymmv), the most obvious effect is one of time: in 'warm-fermented' beers, fermentation is pretty quick (a couple of weeks), while for 'cold-fermented' beers the yeast ferments over a much longer period (often several months), which is *why* everyone in Plsen stored their barrels in the underground cellars and covered them with ice. Unrelated; lager is best served colder than ale, which is possibly why it works better when served from keg dispensers or cans.

Bitter is the mainstay of traditional brewing in the UK. It's kind of synonymous with the vague term 'pale ale', which are beers with less roasted malts so tended to look 'paler' than other types of ale (specifically 'mild', which we'll come onto in a little bit). They're usually in the low-mid range of single figure alcoholic %ages, and are quite hoppy, with a 'bitter' aftertaste. If you're buying a beer from a pub in the UK, and it's not lager, there's a strong chance it's some variety of bitter.

One specific variety of 'bitter' is known more by its acronym. IPA, or India Pale Ale, is a very common style of beer. Its name comes from the 19th Century, when a couple of British brewers exported pale ales to India. They tend to be much more hoppy than even other types of bitter. These days there are many different sub-styles of IPA; it's very popular in the USA where there's a tendency to add as many hops to the mix as taste allows, leading to some very juicy and citric flavours that often feel like they need a bit longer resting time - these days they also tend to be quite strong for beer, in the high single-figure % of alcohol. Although quite watery, their hoppiness and juiciness taste tends to make them harder to drink than a typical bitter.

You may also see APA around. This is American Pale Ale, similar to IPA but tends to be slightly slower in alcohol content, and slightly darker. Their name comes from their primarily using American-cultivated hops rather than those grown worldwide, tho of course it's a beer style not a geographic restriction.

At the other end of the taste/colour line is Mild. My research has suggested this is style very particular to the UK; I know it mostly from my time in the Birmingham/Black Country area. These days it tends to be similar in strength to bitter, but much darker, with more of a malty than a hoppy taste. They also tend to be quite smooth. Some of the malts used tend to be known as 'chocolate malts' due to their colour and flavour when roasted, and this often comes out in the taste. They are very easy to drink, having the texture of, not quite milk but also something more interesting than water.

Also dark, but quite different, are Porters and Stouts. I'll be quite honest here with you and say I've never really known what the difference is between the two. Stouts came first, having been brewed since the late 1600s; Porters followed later (originally known as 'Stout Porters'), and were originally centred on London (apparently popular among, well, actual porters, hence the epithet). That said, the most famous example now of either is Guinness, which when younger had a habit of making me sneeze. They're often quite textured and rich, as opposed to the more watery bitters, again quite malty rather than hoppy, and are often used as the base for fruity flavours - plum porter in particular is quite common. In Central and Eastern Europe they're commonly quite strong; Baltic and Russian Imperial Stouts regularly reach into the 10-12% alcohol mark.

Also strong are a variety of beers with names such as 'old ale', 'strong ale', 'barley wine', and anything calling itself 'barrel-aged'. These beers, by their nature, are left to mature for longer ('aged', in beer parlance) - this makes them more robust, with both stronger and sweeter flavours and more alcohol - 8% at the low end up to, well, I've seen 14% beers before now. Some are 'aged' in barrels previously used for spirits like bourbon and whisky, and the flavours of those spirits seep into the beer. What you end up with are beers that taste exactly as strong as they say on the label - I love them but you can't really have more than one of them at any one time.

The other common style, especially in the USA and Belgium, are the sours, the gozes, the lambics, and the wild beers. I've never been terribly fond of them, as I don't see the appeal in drinking a beer that has the same effect on my face and tastebuds as those sour sweets you had as a kid. They're made through interesting application of yeast. With most beers, the yeasts you use are strictly controlled, but with sours and wild beers, yeasts are allowed to spontaneously occur, almost in a case of 'oh we haven't closed the lid properly, let's see what happens'. Think of them as the Chaotic Neutral of beers. The idea is to increase the acidity of the beer, making them more tart and sweet in flavour. It's common to add fruit to the brewing process too, especially citrus fruit - orange, lemon, lime, and grapefruit are regular additions.

Here's Dave and I talking about sour beers we sampled on the PressTrip.

{Extract with Dave

DAVE: and it's nice that there are enough craft breweries here doing different things as well, like Raven for example.

ME: yeh, absolutely

DAVE: which was, what did they have

ME: mostly sours

DAVE: a lot of sours, the mandarin sour, the lime sour

ME: lemon cheesecake wasn't it?

DAVE: the lemon cheesecake was a bit of a weird one

ME: it wasn't them, it was Proud that had the yuzu?

DAVE: yeh yuzu because they said it was a trendy fruit to put in

ME: yes

DAVE: I still don't know what a yuzu is

ME: I don't know what a yuzu is. I've heard of it, I've seen it in beers, but I've no idea what it is

DAVE: well I just know that the beer tasted nice

ME: but the ones we had at Raven weren't too bad. They were sour and they were fruity but they weren't ... they didn't make my face contort in a fruity face

DAVE: we tried his sour base that he was still fermenting when he kindly took some out of the tap for us, and yeh it just tasted slightly sour, like lemon juice type sour, and that was before he fruited it. Yeh in the US I found a mix of the really hopped, like, what are they called, 'hop bombs'? Or like your fruit sours. I did a trip to Florida and it was all Florida Orange sours everywhere, which was kinda nice, but if you're not into sours then it's not nice

{giggling}

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There's a few other styles you might have come across that were originally specific to Germany, though they're of course brewed worldwide now; a few of these include:

Marzen, from German for 'March' - the month it's traditionally brewed. It tends to be more hoppy, malty, and stronger (in the 5-6% range) - this is all so that it was able to be kept fresher while being stored over the summer. It's the traditional beer served at Oktoberfest.

Bock, German for 'goat' (but may be a case of purposeful mishearing the town of Einbeck), originally brewed in Saxony. It's sweet, clear, strong (up to 7.5%), and pretty easy to drink. There is also Doppelbock which is the same but 'more' - darker, sweeter, and much stronger. - here we may even reach into double figure strengths. This is not a style to be downed-in-one.

Rauchbier, another German style, meaning 'smoked beer'. The name comes from literal smoke being used in production. When making beer, the barley malt needs to be dried. Usually these days this will be done in an oven; the temperature and length changing the colour and the taste of the malt produced. In more ancient times the barley may simply be left to dry in the sunshine. However, for Rauchbier, the malt is dried over an open flame, similar to how smoked fish is produced. The smell of the smoke (and presumably the wood used to start the fire) flavours the barley to produce a smokey-tasting malt. What you end up with is a beer that tastes faintly of smoked pork sausage.

Weissbier, or 'white beer', is beer brewed with wheat rather than barley. Indeed its name derives from 'wheat', because wheat is white, compared with most barley malts that are brown, but that doesn't mean you can't get darker-coloured variations of it. It tends to be softer, more ephemeral when drinking it, sweeter, and, most bizarrely, having an overall sense of banana. This comes from the types of yeasts used.

Now, there's a couple of terms that have been used a couple of times already in this pod - "craft beer" and "real ale". The latter is more of a modern marketing term employed by the Campaign For Real Ale (CAMRA) in the UK to describe traditionally made and traditionally poured beers (I'll come on to the latter part of that later), but essentially both originally meant 'beer that isn't industrially mass-produced'; beer from smaller or more independent brewers rather than the major conglomerates. Except that's not always true any more as some of the smaller brewers have got big (is Brewdog craft beer?), and others have been taken over by larger firms, even if they've been allowed to operate independently (Beavertown Brewery, a reasonably-sized craft brewer in London, is largely owned by Heineken, which explains why I see their beers everywhere!). In addition, brewers like Pilsner Urquell create 'craft' subsidiaries in order to produce more experimental, 'craft'ed beers that would be off-brand on their main account, as it were.

Here's another extract from my chat with Dave where we talk about these differences.

{Extract with Dave}

ME: I think one of the issues I have with Britain is we have a very limited and very narrow view of what beer is. We tend to favour the bitters and the ales. We don't like experimenting, I think that's partly the issue

DAVE: I think things are changing with what they call the craft beer revolution I suppose when all the craft breweries popped up, and some of them can produce crazy and wild stuff, and sometimes specifically wild beers

ME: well yeh. I don't like sours so I won't touch the wild beers at all, but yeh, I've mentioned before that I had a Chocolate, Caramel, and Peanut Butter Stout from Neon Raptor that was 14% and gorgeous but you wouldn't have more than one of them because you ... couldn't

DAVE: Well that's the thing, you think of Nottingham as having mostly traditional pubs, but you've got Ye Olde Trip To Jerusalem, which is the oldest pub, or one of

ME: it's got Ye Olde Trip To Jerusalem which is the oldest pub in England, it's got The Bell, which is the oldest pub in England, and it's got Ye Olde Salutation which is the oldest pub in England

DAVE: but then it's got craft breweries as well so there is like the traditional side of it and then the more modern craft beer side of it

ME: But I think there's a difference between, and this may, I think this is something I've been confused about for years and I think I'm not getting it, the difference between craft beer and real ale. Because a lot of those pubs sell real ale but not necessarily craft beer, and by that I think what I mean is, you've got traditional brewers brewing good quality traditional beers, whereas they're not experimenting, whereas you've got a lot of craft beers now that, craft breweries that experiment and are liable to do strange things, and you wouldn't expect, so one of the biggest breweries in Nottingham is Castle Rock, they're huge, they do really good beer, but you wouldn't expect them to do like a peanut butter and gooseberry stout

DAVE: {giggles} no, you wouldn't

ME: but then if Neon Raptor did a peanut butter and gooseberry stout, I wouldn't even raise an eyebrow

DAVE: well I suppose that's one definition of craft beer but it depends how you view it. So I'd view a small producer of real ale as a craft brewer cos they may be independent. For me independence is what craft beer is, but that would mean that Proud, who we visited in Pilsen isn't craft beer, but it kinda is because it's very experimental. So I don't think there's one true definition really.

ME: yeh it's a tricky one isn't it

DAVE: and there's a lot of people who wouldn't touch Proud because they're owned by a large company

ME: yes, even if they made decent beers

DAVE: and they do. They definitely do. Yeh it's a strange one

ME: And I've certainly had some independent breweries whose beers have been a bit naff

DAVE: I have, but I'm not going to name any names while I'm being recorded

ME: I'm not gonna name any names either but a couple of them have since gone bust

DAVE: okay. {giggling} but that might be why

ME: yes, very much so

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{section separation jingle}

Anyway. Another thing that changes the taste of beer, regardless of the type of beer it is, is the way it's served up. I don't mean like you heard in the last episode when I spoke about the four ways the Czechs tap (not pour, tap) their Pilsners, although that is part of it. Rather I mean something a bit more generic – how the beer gets into your glass in the first place. If at all, though that's much easier for some methods than others, and I'm absolutely not suggesting you go behind a bar and stick your mouth over the beer pump. Even if you are a student and think to yourself that's exactly what "your friend Phil" did last night.

In the UK, at least, there's two main ways you get beer at a pub, and I'm going to call them cask and keg, although this is a bit of an oversimplification. They're both forms of draught beer; that is, beer that's served by the use of hand pumps to 'draw' (the origin of the two words is the same – from the Old English 'dragan', 'to pull') the beer from a barrel through a pipe and up to the bar into the glass.

The difference between cask and keg is firstly in the nature of the barrel, and secondly in the nature of the beer itself. Casks are traditionally made of wood, and in the old days beer would have been dispensed from them by gravity alone, although these days it's mostly done via the pump from the cellars – the mechanism being similar to an old-fashioned fire engine hose. Some beers stored in casks are still 'live', that is, with the yeast still fermenting in the barrel so the beer you get in the glass is unfiltered. This also means they retain the natural 'fizziness' the yeasts give them, tho equally they do go flat if left undrank.

Kegs, on the other hand, tend to be metal containers, and pressurised. The beer inside also tends to have been filtered of yeast, making it 'dead'. Both these aspects make the beer last longer, and easier to handle, but some would say this is at the detriment of the taste and mouthfeel of the beer. This process also makes the beer 'flat'. Due to the keg being pressurised, the beer is forced out at a higher pressure; this, and the addition of 'gas' to 'sparkle' or 'froth' the beer up with (usually Carbon Dioxide, Nitrogen, or a mix of both) make the resulting beer foamy and very smooth. Keg ale also tends to be served colder than cask ale; the latter tends to be at room temperature or cellar temperature, whereas kegged beers tend to be more like fridge temperature.

One of the things I have noticed too is beers on keg tend to be more expensive than beers on cask. This is especially notable on the few times I've been to pubs where the same beer has been available at the same time in both methods. Dave, who you hear from throughout this pod, suggests this is either because kegs are generally smaller so you lose out on advantages of scale (and need more kegs), and the kegs themselves tend to

be outsourced, or, more likely, because as stated above, keg beer needs to be carbonated after filtration, and carbonating gases are quite expensive.

However, they only work if you're drinking on-site. Or you're making your own. For a more flexible approach, beer is also available in bottles and cans. And boxes, growlers, crowlers, and bags, but they're all a bit less common in the UK; I have a couple of times bought boxes of beer, but generally only straight from the brewery itself, with advanced notice.

Canning is very similar to Kegging, indeed Dave tells me in the brewery he worked in for a while, both processes would often take place at the same time. Beer is carbonated in the large beer tanks on-site, and the tank pressure pushes it through the lines to either the canning line or the fill-heads for kegging, so essentially canned beer should taste and feel the same as kegged beer. All the canning line does is fill the cans, then adds a lid, washes the can, and attaches a label.

Bottling is similar, except with glass bottles, except you can get bottle-conditioned beer. This is the equivalent to cask ale, in that it's unfiltered and fermentation continues in the bottle. Again this means you have a 'live' product, which gives it a different feel, plus in terms of storage although bottle-conditioned beer lasts longer than casked ale, it still has a shorter life expectancy than canned beer, and can be more affected by changes in temperature, sunlight, and environmental conditions.

I have a tendency to drink both cans and bottles at room temperature, because I'm just used to drinking beer from cask at room temperature. It's a British thing, I think - people in Europe disparage this as 'warm beer', but it's really only as warm as the day you're drinking it. Most people keep both in the fridge. This is especially true of mass-produced lagers where it's often the case that drinking it cold hides the true taste of it. Side note, a friend of mine from years ago took a crate of cans of Fosters Lager to a party. It was only after he drank three that we noticed the best before date on them was 11 months previously; you genuinely couldn't tell. I don't know what that says about either Fosters or best before dates, but you'd be hard-pushed to get away with it for many craft ales.

{section separation jingle}

Now that we know what sorts of beers there are, and how we can be served them, the next question we face is: with so much choice, how do we decide which ones we try, and work out which ones we like.

The simple answer is, of course, trying them to find out. And you don't have to try every single beer for this; if you, for example, sample a taste of five different IPAs and find you hated all five, there's a fair chance IPAs are not for you.

But before I talk about my experiences, I've done a bit too much speaking in these past few minutes so I'll bring in a very beer-minded friend of mine. This is Claire, who blogs at Curious Claire; she's another travel-ish blogger and I've weirdly only ever met her in pubs (in Manchester, Hackney Wick, and Sheffield). She buys a lot of her beer online, and she told me what she looks for when she chooses a beer.

{CLAIRE:

So there's usually a couple of factors I consider when picking which beers to buy. After years of sampling beers from around the country and the world, I know what breweries I like, and which ones I really like. Most of my beer order will be made up of beers from breweries I know I love. Which beers I buy will depend on which ones are available and what styles they have. I'm very open-minded when it comes to beer styles, I like pretty much everything, except sours. I don't like to drink the same styles each time so I usually end up buying a selection. Stouts are probably my favourite style. But it was only when I started my monthly beer round-ups that I noticed I drink a lot of hazy IPAs so I guess I like them more than I realised.

While most of my beer delivery will contain beers from breweries I know, I do try to throw in a couple I've never had before. I do like to sample a mixture of craft beers, so I want to try new breweries as well as the ones I know I love. I don't want to be closed-minded and only buy from a select few breweries. I want to sample beers from as many breweries as I can.

Another important factor in my decision making process is recommendations. I get most of my beers from a place called Craft Metropolis. They have a huge selection of beers available, you can get them delivered straight to your door, and if you spend more than £60 you get free delivery which is great. I love picking my beers from their online shop. and I know these guys know their beers. So when they mention a beer in their newsletters and say it's great and it will sell out quickly, I know they mean it. I'm never disappointed with their beer recommendations. Actually I just visited a New York taproom of a Brooklyn brewery just yesterday because it was one of their recommendations. I got myself a couple of cans because of them. I loved them so much that a visit to this brewery had to be on my US trip agenda.

}

If you're out and about though, you may want something a little smaller than a can, just in case you end up stuck in a pub on your own with a large glass of beer you're not fussed on. Fortunately there's a couple of ways around this.

Beer in the UK is served in pints (568ml, larger than the US pint which is ... about 473ml), but you can also get them in half pints, and often third and two-third pints (the latter appear to be called Schooners, at least up in Glasgow, and there's a pub up here that has a few beers on keg that are *only* available in that size, which is a weird business choice if you ask me). Half pints are a great way to sample beers since you know if you don't like it, you've not wasted much. Thirds are even better since you can just quickly down it without too much hassle, unless it's a juicy Double IPA and then you'll be hiccuping or burping all evening.

Many craft beer bars, less so traditional pubs, do 'flights' - these tend to be a bit more expensive but they offer a number of small glasses of beer (usually between 3 and 6, and somewhere between 100 and 200ml, so around a quarter to a third of a pint) for a set price, and you can choose whichever of the beers on offer to make it up with. This is a great way of sampling different beers that you might not otherwise know, and provide you with a good way of varying your beers. It also means you can get to taste some of the stronger ones without knocking yourself about a bit for the rest of the day.

Another way of sampling different beers is to go to a beer festival. These days many pubs market themselves as having 'beer festivals' where they buy in a number of beers for a weekend or so and replace them as they run out, but it's not quite the same vibe as a proper beer festival. These take place in large areas, often a community centre, village hall, marquee, or tourist attraction (I've been to them at both ruined castles and railway museums) where many breweries (solidly in double-figures) will send a cask or box or two of beers; this means that there might be anywhere between, say, 50 and a few hundred beers (depending on the size of the event) that people can walk around and sample. Usually they're served in half-pint glasses and at the ones organised by CAMRA, many of the glasses themselves are branded specifically for that beer festival, and you can buy them as a keepsake (well, you pay a deposit to use one in the first place but if you want to keep it it just means you don't get your deposit back).

The other nice thing about craft beer bars, micropubs, and especially taprooms, as well as beer festivals actually, is that you know the people working there have a love for beer and are very knowledgeable about it. It's not like you might find at a chain pub (where people view it more as a job) or even a suburban local pub (where people view it more as a community centre). This means you can walk in to them and speak to the barstaff, asking them what they recommend or what they have on offer that suits your preferences.

Haydy is fond of visiting breweries, partly for that reason.

{

HAYDY: Q5

We're big fans of North Brew Co and Northern Monk, so we spent time in their taprooms, in their brewery, we actually had a bit of a tour around the Northern Monk brewery which was great. The staff in both places are really open to chatting to you, teaching you about their beers, what they're up to, and what's in the pipeline for their breweries, so it's really exciting to hear things from people who actually work there and learn more about their breweries whilst travelling, and obviously doing a hell of a lot of drinking, it's great.

}

There is also, of course, Untappd. I've been making notes about the beers I've been drinking for years, but Untappd is a way to do this electronically. It's an app, on the phone, where people can make notes on the beers they drink, where they drank them, and rate the beer out of 5. And you can add a beer if you come across one that isn't listed - I've done this a couple of times with very new or quite obscure beers. The benefit this has is you see a beer available, be it in a pub, a shop, or at a festival, and you don't know if you'd like it, you can look it up on the app and see what other people have said about it and how much they rate it, so you can get a feel about how it's, er, gone down in general. You can also use the app to seek out beers and check pubs; while not often updated, it can give a sense as to what beers have been drunk recently in a particular place so you can tell if it's likely the sort of pub you'd want to go to.

Caveat: I am a beer snob.

Finally, there's the sheer power of marketing. In pubs, beer is usually displayed with a 'pump clip', a badge which tells you what the beer's called, who makes it, how strong it is, and sometimes what sort of beer it is, along with a logo of the brewer and some kind of fancy picture/design to make it stand out. At beer festivals everything's packaged more blandly, but instead there's usually a booklet produced that lists the beers, along with some tasting notes from proper beer experts so you have more of an indication what it actually tastes of (because sometimes, just saying 'it's an IPA' doesn't tell you a lot about the beer, the flavours the hops give, or how likely it is to suck the moisture out of your mouth).

Thing is, while pump clips are traditional, it is also a form of advertising. Labels, and indeed names, jump out at you going 'drink me'. It must also be said that breweries often have a very dry sense of humour, and will often use comedy to sell you beers. There's a whole host of beers, and indeed breweries, with very punny or satirical names; I've recently had beers called 'Winona Ryeder' (a stout made with rye rather than barley), 'Moo-Lin Rouge' (a red ale whose beer clip has cows dancing the can-can), and 'Pacific Gravity' (a pun on 'Specific Gravity', a measure of alcohol in beer, coupled with 'Pacific Quay', a post-industrial site by the river in Glasgow near where the brewery who makes it is).

In addition, while the pump clip images can be quite fun (I did once have a beer called 'Aromantica', because of both the name and the design on the pump clip - of a barefoot woman holding a glass of beer - what do you mean 'doubly relatable'), marketing really comes out on the labels on cans and bottles, with all manner of bright colours, cartoon-like imagery, good landscapes, creepy skulls, pretty much everything and anything. Deya and Merakai breweries are particularly fond of this, with bright and colourful designs and names like 'Drinking Cos My Mouth Is Lonely', 'I'm Your Biggest Fan', 'Can We Get A New Aircraft', and 'Put The Kettle On'; the designs relating to the names ('I'm Your Biggest Fan' having lots of people in some kind of 1960s trippy hippie rainbow environment all dancing and holding beer reverentially).

Like me, Curious Claire is someone who's easily dragged in to this side of things.

{CLAIRE:

I don't know if I should admit this or not but can designs and beer names play a big role in my beer selection process. I just love cute can designs and funny beer names so I'll usually pick those over the beers with standard designs and names. If they're actually any good it's down to pure luck.

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Sometimes of course what you get is completely unexpected and unlike anything you've drank before.

{Extract with Dave

ME: what's the weirdest thing you've ever had in a beer?

DAVE: Oooh. Well the weirdest beer I've ever had was the one we had last night when we had that non-alcoholic beer that was just overly malty. It tasted like you'd got the spent grain out of a tank and just chewed on it for ten minutes. {laughter} I think it's probably the worst beer I've ever had. {more laughter} And it was actually really unusual

ME: it was supremely unusual, I couldn't drink it, and it was only 100ml, I couldn't ...

DAVE: it was disgusting

{laughter}

DAVE: even though it was a really good brewery, but that beer, I wonder if it was a mistake {laughter} and the brewer just tried to get away with his error. Cos I've no idea how you would even do that.

{more laughter}

DAVE: but other than that I don't even know what the weirdest one was

ME: I had one that tasted of cardboard once

DAVE: was that on purpose, or

ME: I think so? It was an experimental craft beer somewhere in Birmingham, and I ... again it was another one of those trips with a couple of friends of mine and we just go around all the real ales, and we were making notes, in the same style as you would do on Untappd, and we were making marks out of 5 as to how we thought of it, and we described that one as the square root of minus Garfield. We couldn't work out how to describe it. It just wasn't ... if you've got a line of good beer to bad beer, this was sort of up there somewhere, it was kind of off the scale, but not off the scale in either direction, it was off the scale upwards

DAVE: it was just a weird one

ME: yeh, we don't know how to categorise this beer

DAVE: Well I had one from a North Yorkshire brewery a couple of weeks ago, someone came round and they'd been driving through North Yorkshire and they'd picked up some beers en route to my house and it was meant to be just a regular pale ale but it tasted like a smoked beer, but not in what you'd expect from a German smoked beer, it just tasted like someone had poured an ashtray into it

ME: oh god

DAVE: I was kind of, I was thinking, either they've, I don't know how you would do that by accident, unless someone did actually drop a fag into the vat and the whole thing just tasted of cigarette smoke

ME: I have had a beer from a West Yorkshire brewery, somewhere like, I can't remember if it was Wakefield or Barnsley, but it was on that sort of West Yorkshire / South Yorkshire border

DAVE: the Rhubarb Triangle

{giggles}

ME: The Rhubarb Triangle. That tasted like a Working Men's Club circa 1973. It tasted like Rugby League. It tasted like ...

DAVE: Rugby League and racist comedy

ME: yes. It tasted like bitter mixed with cigarette smoke. It just tasted like it was ...

DAVE: was that in a nostalgic way, or was it in an 'it wasn't great' kind of way?

ME: It wasn't the best beer I've had but it was drinkable, but it was drinkable partly because of nostalgia

DAVE: yeh, that's good though. Maybe sometimes you just need beer to invoke a feeling in you rather than just tasting good

ME: What it actually brought to mind is 'why don't companies like John Player' actually produce beer, because that's what they would, that is, that would be, if John Player produced beer, it would taste like that

DAVE: I don't know if they'd get around the advertising rules. Maybe they'd have to have one of those blank labels that just has a warning on it with the tumour in someone's mouth or whatever they do now

{laughter}

}

This leads into a quick side-musing about my favourite beers. It's something I've touched on across this pod, but, my favourite beer is Pannepot, from de Struisse brewery in Belgium, because it's strong (10½%), dark, rich, and chocolatey. It's a bit like drinking an alcoholic chocolate mousse. My favourite British beer is from a brewery in the Black Country, Sarah Hughes, and it's a 6% mild called "Dark Ruby", and has won awards before now so I'm not the only one who appreciates it. My local micropub in Kirkby-in-Ashfield had a cask of it on once; it lasted 6 hours and several people had to get their partners in to escort them home after a couple of pints of it (I ended up with a free one cos the poor chap couldn't face any more of it!). You can tell I like the darker beers, but I'll drink more or less anything, tho I do irk at mass-produced lagers, sour beers, and American poly-hopped IPAs that make me feel they're just doing it for the bitterness kudos.

Here's another extract of my conversation with Dave, about his favourite beers.

{Extract with Dave}

ME: What I wanted to ask you was about your favourite beers I guess. Like, favourite styles of beer, any types of beer you don't like, regions that you like
DAVE: well I'm a very bland man
ME: you're not a bland man
DAVE: in terms of beer
ME: I mean you're wearing ecru, but
DAVE: Yeh, I'm wearing {too indistinct, can't make it out}. Yeh, in terms of what I will drink at home in the UK, I'll tend to go for a big hoppy powerful IPA, double IPA, triple IPA, so {long pause - I think it was the ticket inspector}
DAVE: as I was saying, before I was rudely interrupted!
ME: big hoppy IPAs
DAVE: Yeh so big hoppy IPAs. Double, triple, the more danker the better I suppose. But I do have my preferred hops, stuff like Idaho 7, things like that
ME: how do you feel about the American style of making it as hoppy as possible, cos I tend to find it just makes it taste like it's still being brewed
DAVE: controversially I really like that, which is why when I say I'm bland, I'm just like that ... and luckily it's quite fashionable still so everyone's doing it all the time
ME: quadruple IPAs
DAVE: brewers make it cos it's what sells
ME: yep
DAVE: and it sells because people like me lap it up {giggling}
DAVE: but I will happily have a pint of mild or something like that, but that's maybe the Northerner in me. I like a good bitter, something like that. Even like a John Smiths or something
ME: aw, I haven't had a John Smiths for ages
DAVE: there's nothing better than sitting in an old man pub
ME: that isn't a Wetherspoons
DAVE: that looks like if you walk in you might get killed, and then sitting down to a pint of bitter
ME: there's many a pub like that in Glasgow, near where I live. I suppose they all drink, like, Tennants, but
DAVE: See, it's a bit different doing it in a city that you don't know, cos you never know if you're going to walk into the wrong pub. There's pubs in Leeds I wouldn't go in - The Three Legs, which is a notoriously dangerous pub, but it depends, so I don't think there's really any styles I don't like, it's like you, I don't necessarily like sours, I'll have them if they're not too sour, which is a pain if you're travelling cos in some places, like the US, they want to make a lot of sours
ME: they're very fond of very sour beers in my experience

}

{section separation jingle}

So, I've mentioned them quite a lot in this pod, but I wanted to talk specifically about them now. One of the things that I've really liked over the last decade or so is the rise of micropubs. When I was younger, pubs tended to be either sports bars/pseudo-clubs (places like 'Walkabout'), or old buildings filled with older people, mainly men. The former concentrated on mass-produced populist beers like Carling and Guinness, and whilst the latter often had real ale, or at least a bitter or two on tap, their selection was quite limited relative to their size.

What micropubs seem to have done is provide a small, cafe-like, environment in which to drink beer. Now there's no real sense of definition of 'micropub' but in the UK at least there is a Micropub Association, founded in 2012, which defines itself as "a small freehouse which listens to its customers, mainly serves cask ales, promotes conversation, shuns all forms of electronic entertainment and dabbles in traditional pub snacks". It appears the first one was set up in 2005 in Kent, and many many more have followed since.

When I lived in Kirkby-in-Ashfield, my local micropub was called The Dandy Cock. Originally one small room with two big and two small tables (and a few stools near the bar) on the site of a barbers (and, prior to that, half a print shop), it later expanded to a similar-sized second room at the back - you could apparently fit up to 50-60 people in the whole place but I've no idea how. It served a rolling selection of four local real ales on cask, and six ciders. And over 260 gins. The most popular of which, they said, was rhubarb. They definitely

served traditional pub snacks, including nuts, pork scratchings, and the rather niche foodstuff that is the pickled egg, found generally only in English pubs and amongst the Pennsylvania Dutch. I've never had one, because, why. Regarding electronic entertainment, they did have WiFi but as I used it as a place to escape my house and focus on blogging and podcast writing, I told them to refuse to tell me the password. There was also a minor mumble of malcontent when they started playing music through the speakers, tho they did occasionally have live guitar folk bands playing. As for conversation, it very much had a kind of 'regulars' scene and the owners and bar staff knew most people who came through the door after only a couple of visits. Very homely.

Obviously I've not been there since 2020 because I've not spent any time in the area. In Glasgow now I have a place close to where I live called 'Curious Liquids' which is a similar size but very different in vibe. The main one being that it's not, technically, a pub; rather it's a beer & wine shop with tables you can sit at. It's attached to Philly's, a larger, more bar-like, place that's behind it, that sells a variety of craft beer on keg, and occasionally has some weird music going on (like a German-style oompah band doing covers of modern pop hits, or a band-aoke; karaoke with a live band rather than recorded music). And an awful lot of pub quizzes. But Curious Liquids itself, I don't know if it qualifies as a 'micropub' in the strictest definition, as it only sells beer in bottles and cans, has low-volume music, and the pub snacks include nuts, olives, and small cheeseboards. But I'm counting it as such as I treat it in the same way.

Related to micropubs are brewery taphouses. Some, like the Neon Raptor brewtap in Nottingham, are small open spaces contained within their brewery warehouse, and have a kind of minimal industrial vibe. Others, like the Shilling Brewery in Glasgow or the Lincoln Green Brewery in Hucknall are actual pubs that they run. What's great about them is you not only get to try most of the beers that that brewery makes, but also a good selection of local and regional beers that they've brought in.

Some breweries own & operate a series of pubs with a similar vibe, and these are more traditional-looking English pubs but with a much stronger emphasis on the beer selection than pubs tended to be a few years back. The one that springs to mind most is the Castle Rock brewery in Nottingham who operate several pubs across the city, each of which is a good place to stop and spend an evening drinking through their offerings - The Lincolnshire Poacher on Mansfield Road in the city often had up to 13 beers on tap, which made it a great place to hang out waiting for a bus home. I mean, this is a much smaller number than the bars I was in in the USA which had upwards of 50 beers all lined up, but that's the USA and they like to do things much bigger. Anyway they were keg rather than cask.

Haydy also likes her local micropub, as she talks about here.

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HAYDY - Q4:

We do also visit our local micropub at least once a week. Last week we were there twice. I have plans to visit again this week. And we've been at least once a week since they reopened after lockdown, and we've learned so much of our beer knowledge from the wonderful owners, it's called 'The Hop Inn', and that's in Hornchurch, and yeh we've just learned so much about beer whilst being in there, not only from the owners but from the people that we've made friends with whilst drinking there. The beer scene has a really incredible community that we're really glad we've become part of. Obviously I feel like I've got a million things I still need to learn about beer, but nobody seems to judge you on that, nobody feels like you need to be an expert. We put up little reviews on our Instagram of the beers we've drunk, whether it's in the Hop Inn or a brewery we've been to, or just something we've picked up online, and people don't judge, people just enjoy that you're enjoying your beer, and that's a really wholesome thing, considering the world isn't an entirely great place at the moment, and the beer community's very wholesome and we're just really happy to be part of it at the moment I think.

}

{section separation jingle}

I suppose I ought to tie this whole pod together and talk about travelling for beer. In truth it's not something I've really done. This may surprise you. However, with me it's more a case of 'I like to travel, and while I'm

there it's a cool idea to sample local beers'. It's just that quite often I visit places that aren't really big on beer culture - Vanuatu has Tusker lager (and Tusker with lemon, which was marginally better), while Bangladesh ... I did see a huge billboard for Tiger beer at one point but I never found anywhere that sold it, not that I was expecting to.

That said, it's always nice to come across local beer and I'll certainly make a beeline for it if I know it's there. I've been to Sherpa Brewing, which advertised itself as the only craft brewer in Nepal (it's in Pokhara, in the west of the country), and I've been to the Palaweño Brewery in Philippines, notable also for being entirely female-run. The only two times I've travelled with the specific intent for beer though have been my recent PressTrip to Plsen, and, about ten years ago, my first visit to Belgium - and even then I wasn't going *just* for the beer, but it was more the case that beer was one of the reasons I went there, then. I even set off with a huge backpack, half-full (because I don't take a lot on holidays anyway, especially not a 5-day trip in summer) so I could fill it all with beer before catching the train back.

Haydy has a similar lifegoal.

{

HAYDY: Q6:

And yes, we will continue to travel for beer. We are planning to jump on the Eurostar and head into Bruges, well head into Brussels and then jump on the train down to Bruges, and spend some time there drinking Belgian beers as that's something we've not really drunk a lot of, but we're very interested after talking to friends who have been and recommended it.

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Dave also agrees with the love for Belgian beer.

{Extract from Dave

DAVE: well, I think Belgium do make the best beer in the world

ME: yes I agree

DAVE: and specifically the Trappist breweries

ME: I do think there's a bit of a pretentiousness about the Trappist breweries

DAVE: there is, because there's one where you can only order six bottles a year and you have to go and pick it up from the brewery

ME: Westvleteren. Yep, yep, and it's considered to be the best beer in the world, but that's just because it's so exclusive. I have had it, I don't know if it was Westvleteren 12 or Westvleteren 10, but there was a, one of the bars in Brussels I had it in, it was the most expensive beer on the menu, but I figured, I'm never going to have this again, I might as well have it

DAVE: yeh, cos you're never going to go to the brewery yourself and pick it up

ME: Yeh I'm never gonna go to Westvleteren brewery. I'm not going to say it was the best beer I've ever had, but I'm gonna tell you it was pretty good. I'm not saying it was worth the hype, but I'm saying it was hype-able

DAVE: Well it's an experience anyway cos you've probably been building up to having that at some point, and then you finally found it so you got the excitement of finding it, so at the end of the day it doesn't really matter, so long as it wasn't terrible

ME: yes

DAVE: so it doesn't actually matter

ME: yeh, if it had been hyped up to that and then I'd tasted it and it'd been a weird watered-down bitter or something, then I would have been a bit disappointed. But it wasn't

}

Also, while I've travelled around the UK visiting places because of beer festivals, these were places I may not have previously been to, so took the opportunity to explore the town while I was there.

Haydy also does this, as you'll hear now

{Haydy - Q2:

More recently, since having got into beers, myself and my boyfriend Mike, who I share my Squibbert Brews Instagram account with, have begun travelling for beer. Most recently we went on what we would like to call a Brewgrimage, to Tiny Rebel, which was probably my gateway beer. I know lots of people aren't big fans, or have stuff to say about them, but I really enjoy them, they haven't, you know, brewed a beer I've not enjoyed yet, I just quite enjoy their experimental drops, I just think they're a bit of fresh air. And we drove 3 and a half hours from our home in Essex to Newport in Wales, and we spent a few hours in the brewery drinking, sadly there were no brewery tours, and then we dropped our stuff off at our hotel and walked round the corner to the Tiny Rebel Newport bar., So we spent probably about six hours drinking in Tiny Rebel based establishments, which was divine. We had a really great time. We actually took two of our neighbours with us and they really enjoyed it. They are both new to beers and since lockdown we've introduced them into the beer world, and they're really enjoying it too, which is great, and it gives us more people to drink with, I guess.

Q3:

Aside from taking a trip to Newport for Tiny Rebel, we do spend a lot of time in Shropshire, and there are a lot of incredible breweries that we've done brewery tours around, including Ludlow Brewery, and the Three Tuns Brewery which is in Bishop's Castle - that's one of the oldest known breweries in the UK and it's set up like a Victorian style brewery on three floors, so we find it really interesting to go to craft beer breweries where everything's quite quirky, very shiny, and then going to more traditional breweries, which in my head is how beer should be brewed. We've also done local tours of Brentwood Brewery, that's our most local brewery. So yeh, we don't have to travel 3 and a half hours into Wales to find a brewery that we like, we've got plenty on our doorstep that we like. So I don't know if that counts as travelling, but we do have to drive about 25 minutes to get to Brentwood Brewery, and we always stay in Bishop's Castle in Shropshire every year, and each time we go we do find a different brewery to visit. So I don't know if that counts as travelling for beer as we stay in these places anyway, but they do happen to have absolutely banging breweries there, which we really enjoy touring, we love to see how people make their beer, how they brew their beer, and just meeting the people behind the drinks we drink, and obviously when we visit these breweries we buy beer on site, we've got growlers we fill up, we buy bottles, we bring back gifts for friends, so we do really love supporting small local breweries.

}

I do like Tiny Rebel. As well as being a brewery close to where my office is located, one of their beers, Stay Puft, is regularly available in the 'cheap section' of Curious Liquids and I'll always grab it. It's a marshmallow porter, so it's a bit like drinking a 'smore, with a weirdly similar texture too.

So what have we learned this week? Beer seems to have begun in Germany but quickly made its way around the world. There's many different types of beer, available in several different ways, but all of them are basically hops, malted barley, yeast, and water, except for the weird ones that contain fruit. And peanut butter. There's no right or wrong way to serve or drink beer, nor a restriction on how little you have. And there's a large beer community out there to help you along your journey.

But probably best not to walk into a bar in Belgium or Plsen and ask if they've got Carling on tap.

{end main body podcast jingle}

Well, that's about all for this episode. Join me next time for another adventure beyond the brochure. Until then, don't do what me and a friend did once at the Bristol Beer Festival and only drink beers above 6%, because that way a very short afternoon lies, and if you're feeling off colour, keep on getting better.

{Outro theme tune, same as intro, just a different bit of it}

{Outro voiceover:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Travel Tales From Beyond The Brochure. I hope you enjoyed it; if you did, don't forget to leave a review on your podcast site of choice.

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Until next time, have safe journeys. Bye for now.}