



Travels with Barley: A Journey Through Beer Culture in America (Wall Street Journal Book)

Ken Wells

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Do beer yeast rustlers really exist? Who patented the Beer Goddess? How can you tell a Beer Geek from a Beer Nazi? Where exactly is Beervana? Does Big Beer hate Little Beer? Ken Wells, a novelist, Pulitzer Prize finalist, and longtime Wall Street Journal writer, answers these questions and more by bringing a keen eye and prodigious reportage to the people and passions that have propelled beer into America's favorite alcoholic beverage and the beer industry into a \$75 billion commercial juggernaut, not to mention a potent force in American culture. "Travels with Barley" is a lively, literate tour through the precincts of the beer makers, sellers, drinkers, and thinkers who collectively drive the mighty River of Beer onward. The heart of the book is a journey along the Mississippi River, from Minnesota to Louisiana, in a quixotic search for the Perfect Beer Joint -- a journey that turns out to be the perfect pretext for viewing America through the prism of a beer glass. Along the river, you'll visit the beer bar once owned by the brewer Al Capone, glide by The World's Largest Six Pack, and check into Elvis Presley's Heartbreak Hotel to plumb the surprisingly controversial question of whether Elvis actually drank beer. But the trip also includes numerous detours up quirky tributaries, among them: a visit to an Extreme Beer maker in Delaware with ambitions to make 50-proof brew, a look at the murky world of beer yeast rustlers in California, and a journey to the portals of ultimate beer power at the Anheuser-Busch plant in St. Louis, where making the grade as a Clydesdale draft horse is harder than you might imagine. Entertaining, enlightening, and written with Wells's trademark verve, "Travels with Barley" is a perfect gift -- not just for America's 84 million beer enthusiasts, but for all discerning readers of flavorful nonfiction.

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