

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Description



Montenegro on Frequently Asked Questions

**We answer your most frequently asked questions**

## 1. How did you decide to start a blog?

Ryan came up with the idea several years ago after our third trip to Europe. Joelle was initially less than enthusiastic, but he wore her down over time.

Travel was something Ryan had always dreamed of but never in his wildest imagination thought would occur. It was life-changing for him and one of his greatest joys after his son.

Joelle, a first-generation American born to French immigrants, had traveled much of her life. Travel fueled her soul, and she could never get enough. She had planned to fly somewhere at least once a month and maintained that for many years. Most trips (often business trips) were in the US, with at least once a year overseas.

Over the years, Ryan joined Joelle on family vacations or local trips when she was on his side of the country for business. Our first trip to Europe was only going to be a one-time thing. After leaving the active-duty Army, Ryan had a rough road and had turned things around. He had saved money for the trip, and Joelle was anxious to return to Europe. The timing worked perfectly.

### An Unlikely Travel Duo

An unlikely travel duo was born as we learned we shared similar travel styles and interests on that trip. Ryan, with his youth, brought energy, unbridled curiosity, and enthusiasm. His appreciation of history and culture was invaluable. With her years of travel experience, Joelle brought a mindset that made travel seem effortless. That, along with her love of adventure and the unexpected. We both learned that we shared quite an obsession with castles, too. Each with our unique strengths and weaknesses when we traveled, we balanced out nicely. Our trip taught us to think outside the box and open our hearts to unforeseen gifts for ourselves and others.

As a disabled veteran and still serving as an Army Reservist, Ryan had this crazy idea that a blog could help other Veterans like himself find the joys of travel. He wanted to help them discover what he had discovered and how traveling could positively and meaningfully impact their lives. It was the selling point to get Joelle on board. He found her weak spot.

The process wasn't easy as neither of us had ever done anything like this or were tech-savvy. The learning curve was massive; there were many moments of doubt and some anger, but we stuck with it. We believed in our dream and committed to making it a reality.

### Time to Launch

A launch date of March 2020 was set. But it wasn't meant to be. The very same month of our scheduled launch, the COVID-19 pandemic took hold in the world. Our hearts broke as we watched the devastation that came with it. We put the blog launch on hold. This was a valuable time to learn the ins

and outs of our platform and blogging. We discovered wonderful resources for new bloggers, and during this time, we took classes, read extensively, and studied hard! We would be prepared when the world was ready to reopen to travel!

At the beginning of 2021, the world began to see the light at the end of the tunnel after a challenging year. With that hope, people started making travel plans. It was the ideal time to provide a resource to guide them in making those plans.

In March 2021, we launched Wanderers Compass.

We were ready this time. Learning will be a never-ending process as the blog grows, but we now have the tools to adapt.

Welcome to our journey. We are thrilled you are joining us.

If you would like to read more about our story and learn more about each of us other than the Frequently Asked Questions, *click here to go to our [About Us](#) page.*

## ***2. How did you come up with that name, and does it have a special meaning?***

Finding a name for our blog was a months-long feat. Whenever we had an idea we both agreed on when we searched, it was already in use in some form. Or maybe the website was available but not Facebook or Instagram. A quote Joelle gave Ryan for Christmas to put on his wall led us to Wanderers Compass. We both adored the word Wanderlust. Many variations of the definition exist, but our favorite was:

” A very strong or irresistible impulse to travel or wander.”

That spoke to us. We work hard to plan our daily itinerary but always allow time for spontaneity and wandering. Those have been our most memorable experiences, off that beaten path where tourists rarely go.

Two of us co-founded this blog, so the plural Wanderers fit well. The compass fell into place as it guided us in our travels. We are the Wanderers who will guide you in using your compass to discover your next great adventure. Allowing the needle of the compass is your guide to exciting destinations while opening your heart to life-changing experiences.



Ryan in Iceland Frequently Asked Questions

### ***3. What is your favorite place to travel?***

That is a tough one and almost impossible to answer. As the number of countries we visit grows, we develop new favorites. For Joelle, France will always hold a special place in her heart, as her parents are French immigrants, French is her first language, and she still has a lot of her French family.

There is rarely a country that we don't love something about. Recent trips to Portugal and Croatia rose to the top of our list. Ireland was love at first sight and remains a favorite. Italy was amazing. Spain is fascinating. Scotland was breathtaking. Hungary was captivating. The Nordic countries are

striking—Iceland is spectacular. Luxembourg, Belgium, Netherlands, and Germany are lovely. England, oh, the castles! Morocco was mind-blowing. Faroe Islands' raw nature is at its best. Easter Island stole our hearts. You will always find magic if you visit everywhere with an open mind, heart, and eyes, absorbing the culture and the people. It might not be what you expected, but it shouldn't be because you are in their world, and it is there for your discovery.

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Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy Frequently Asked Questions

#### **4. What are some aspects of your partnership that surprise you?**

It still surprises us that, though we are the most unlikely of business and travel partners, it works well. We live on different coasts, so it is sometimes challenging and a struggle. Throw in the time zone difference and how busy Ryan is, and we still pull it off. What helps is that Joelle doesn't work full time anymore and can come East as needed. Ryan comes West once a year with his son to visit Joelle and her family. As we embark on the westward parts of the world, Ryan will come out West more often.

We are also astonished that we have identical travel styles despite our very different travel histories and age differences. Neither of us ever expected that, but here we are living it. It is an absolute joy and has taught us to keep our minds open to experiences.

We share some hobbies and interests other than travel. We both enjoy wine and microbrews and seek those out on our trips. Our families are the center of our lives. We love Rick Steves and his travel series and enjoy lots of the same music.

#### **We differ a lot, too**

In other aspects, we differ a lot. Ryan is passionate about his Harley and Indian motorcycles, and you will never find Joelle on a motorcycle in her life. Ryan is very artistic, with many talents, such as ceramics, woodwork, drawing, photography, and mosaics. He makes Mead and writes poetry, short stories, and music lyrics. Ryan worked as an engineer on active duty, resulting in some impressive construction projects. His dream is to own a fully restored Old-style Wagoneer. He has one sitting in the garage that needs a lot of love, but the time or the funds are not there.

Joelle loves photography, but other than that can barely draw a stick figure. She loves cooking due to her French roots and has belonged to a gourmet cooking club for over 30 years. Landscaping and home design have always been fun hobbies. She and her husband built the home where they raised their family. Having worked as a Registered Nurse, she is passionate about healthcare issues, patient advocacy, and education. Joelle did extensive public speaking during her career. Her career was primarily focused on oncology in clinical and research settings. She keeps her hands in it, volunteering on committees and auditing.

#### **5. Is the photography on this site your own?**

Joelle was initially the photographer on this blog team. Ryan, though, has grown to be a great photographer and often now takes more photos with Joelle's Nikon than she does. Mostly, all the photos on the blog are our own. In some countries we visited long ago, the images were lost (Australia) or are not useable anymore (Bermuda). We will credit the site and photographer if we use stock photos.

We are passionate about photography and spend a lot of time on it. An average trip might have 10,000 images on the Nikon and iPhone; after all, it is said and done. The tedious part is examining all of them. It is an art and pure enjoyment in the end. We hope you enjoy our photography, and as we

enhance the site and write posts, many more photos will come. Joelle's collection from travel is over 750,000 photos.

## ***6. How do you juggle travel and life at home?***

That answer is very different for each of us. Joelle is married and is a grandma to four sweet grandbabies. She worked as an RN in the Oncology field her whole career and retired earlier than she planned due to health reasons. Volunteering on committees keeps her engaged on the local and national levels and her mind active. She has both her kids living near her and her four grandchildren.

Along with her husband, they help watch the grandkids when they can. Over Joelle's career, she often traveled for business and will now continue to visit with friends and family throughout the US and have business meetings with Ryan. International travel is usually at least three times a year, with hopes to have more than that soon. With so much flexibility, Joelle can juggle it all pretty efficiently.

### **Lots on his plate**

Ryan is a single dad to a sweet and active young son. He keeps Ryan on his toes but adores every moment with him. In 2024, Ryan returned to full-time school. He is also a Master Sgt in the Army Reserves. He is a very busy man!

On top of that, maintaining his home, property, art projects, and finding time to ride his Harley and Indian motorcycles, he doesn't get much downtime. Due to some of his disabilities from his military service, he has some days that can be painful. He is juggling lots of balls in the air. His vacation time is reserved for our blog trips or to visit family in nearby states.

The blog is a very shared effort, and since some parts can be challenging, we each take on specific tasks that suit us best. As we live on different coasts, many work conversations are on the phone or by text. We try to meet in person every two months. There is a lot of team effort and unique challenges due to distance, time zone differences, and being in very different life stages. We make it work, and we have lots of support as well.





Joelle and Ryan in Buenos Aires Frequently Asked Questions

## **7. Do either of you have any travel phobias that would astonish us?**

Joelle hates flying, as in she hates flying. She has a long history of being a terrified flier. Add some claustrophobia to that to add to the misery. Over 1.5 million miles later, it remains a love-hate relationship. Ultimately, her love of travel has won out her fear of flying. It was a battle hard fought. A worthy opponent that lost in the end.

The flight that broke the camel's back was to San Francisco. Due to severe weather, the plane had to circle for an hour in severe turbulence. It was terrifying. It was the closest to an anxiety attack Joelle had ever experienced, and an hour later, her heart rate was still 180. Her physician recommended Ativan for flight anxiety. It was magic. The medication assists the mind and body to disconnect; she fully knows that flying sucks, but the body feels calm. It is never far from her reach when flying but acts more like a security blanket as she hasn't taken any in a long while. Knowing alone that she has that option is all that is needed now.

### **Each of us has issues**

Ryan is fearful and anxious in situations he can't control. He doesn't like the unknown, big cities, and large crowds. A visit to New York City once triggered symptoms of an anxiety attack. Going to a foreign country where you don't speak or read the language, you would expect it to be accentuated tenfold. Add to that the fact that people often drive the roads with different traffic rules and signs that don't make sense, and they even go on the other side of the road. His first overseas trip was overwhelming, but he was okay with patience and sensitivity. He handled Paris as if he wandered it daily. He drove on the left side of the UK road and learned to drive a stick shift in France. Before you knew it, he was a natural; nothing overwhelmed him anymore.

### **Conquering barriers**

Fear of the unknown scares many travelers from taking the trip, planning their journey, or traveling independently. Taking ownership of the trip and planning puts you back in control and removes much of the unknown. Ryan does all our itinerary and planning. It also adds to the adventure and provides confidence in areas he felt vulnerable. The excitement that comes with planning. Reduces those vulnerabilities. Ryan thrives when traveling. His stature, confidence, demeanor, and smile are much greater overseas. It remains with him long after he returns home.

How did we overcome these barriers to travel? Refuse to let it win and not be afraid to ask for help. We are learning ways to recognize and manage problems when they arise. Everyone can overcome their travel phobias with determination and sometimes a little help from a friend. It might not be easy, and there will be bumps in the road, but we are fully confident of your ability to do so.

Joelle will write more on this and other health barriers when traveling.

***Do you have any questions you would like answered? Comment below, and we will add them to this page.***



Vernazza, Cinque Terra, Italy Frequently Asked Questions

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