

# Michael Cervin

## Featured Journalist

By Maralyn D. Hill



**M**ichael Cervin and I met in 2009 while attending a conference. We have since been on several press trips and conferences and have served together on a board. So, interviewing Michael is more like interviewing a longtime business friend than a new acquaintance. He's an accomplished author and wine writer, diligent about getting his thoughts down while they are fresh, working out, and having fun.

**Maralyn: How did you discover your love of wine, which led to travel?**

**Michael:** Curiously, I discovered my love of wine when I moved to Santa Barbara and ended up working weekends at a wine tasting room. The winemaker was available and helpful to me, and I ended up giving winery tours and became fascinated by the process of grapes turning into wine. As for travel, I had no concept I'd end up writing travel books. I was heading to Germany on a wine-specific trip and I asked the newspaper I wrote for if they would want a wine-travel article. To my surprise, they said yes, and everything literally snowballed from there. The point being, you never know where the path will take you. But as long as you are willing to take step after step on an uncertain road,

you might find yourself in territory you never expected.

**Maralyn: Are you more passionate about writing or photography?**

**Michael:** Whereas I started writing early. I received my first check when I was just 14 years old for a poem I wrote before I ever picked up a camera. Of late, the challenge, patience and often immediacy of photography have captivated me. The old proverb of a picture being worth a thousand words is absolutely true. But for me, you can't have one without the other; a camera and a pen are a mighty combination.

**Maralyn: What is your writing process?**

**Michael:** Mornings are most productive for me. I aim to be at my desk by 6 a.m. After a few hours, I'll work out (run, cycle or power-walk). Then it's back to my desk until noon-ish. After a lunch break, it's back to work until around dinner time, when I make dinner for my wife (which also provides a creative outlet). My wife works evenings, so it's often back to the desk until 9 p.m. or so. Throughout the day, I take about four 10-minute breaks, where I get outside and walk and stretch. And I routinely consume two liters of

water each day, which helps with mental acuity.

**Maralyn: Where is your favorite place to travel?**

**Michael:** Though I'll travel anywhere in the U.S., I adore New Mexico because of its food and amazing history and the Columbia River Gorge outside of Portland for its sheer diversity and beauty. Internationally, I am in love with Switzerland and Austria. Fortunately, I get sent to places I never expected, and any new place we travel to means a new learning opportunity.

**Maralyn: If you could be anyone else, who would it be?**

**Michael:** Not to sound trite, but I have no interest in being someone else. Being me is already a fulltime job, and I still have so much to learn to become a better version of myself all the time.

**Maralyn: What motivates you to be a luxury journalist?**

**Michael:** Much of that motivation comes from the desire to let people know some of the places they may not have ever thought of in their travel plans. Not everyone has the means to travel, nor to travel at the luxury level, and travel writing and

photography should inspire people to explore far beyond their boundaries.

**Maralyn: What is one of your favorite experiences while traveling?**

**Michael:** I was fortunate to visit the Great Wall of China. I was a guest of the Chinese government, and so my guides were always with me. But when we arrived at a portion of the Wall, about two hours outside of Beijing, they let me roam free. As I ascended the wall, the throngs of people were intense. To my right was the popular part, and a literal wall of people were slowly moving in that direction. To my left was less crowded, but steep and uneven, though still crowded. I went left and walked and walked and walked. Eventually, I was one of only a few people on a desolate portion of the Wall. Alone and nearly isolated, it was a memorable experience, as I could see portions of the wall snaking out across the mountains, away from the throngs of tourists. Alone with my thoughts, I was able to get into a groove, a subject I later recounted on my global travel blog.

**Maralyn: Tell us about a favorite dish from your travels.**

**Michael:** I don't usually have a favorite anything. But I vividly



that the majority of what I do – wine, food and travel – is already like a vacation. I am so fortunate to do what I love, and therefore my “hobbies” are actually what I love to do: visit places and write about them. I simply cannot go without working. For example, my wife was speaking on a cruise to the Bahamas, and I went along to support her. We visited several ports during what was vacation time. But being me, when in Nassau, I ended up visiting several properties for Forbes Travel. Work? Kind of, but not really. I sincerely love my job, and the thought of “working” while on a cruise seems perfectly logical to me.

**Maralyn: What are your thoughts on the luxury travel market?**

**Michael:** Luxury travel is indeed changing, and as I see it, a higher level of travel is opening up to many people who could not otherwise afford it. And that is a positive thing. Of course, there is always that ultra luxury travel experience that most of us will never get to, but more and more, hotel and tour operators are offering a better level of concierge service to “average” travelers, and I support that.

**Maralyn: If you were stranded on an island, name one person and three items you would bring.**

**Michael:** As obvious as it sounds, I would have to be with my wife. Not only is she my best friend and laughs at my jokes, but we travel exceptionally well together.

- My smart phone—not because I’d be calling anyone (though I would want to get off the island), but because there are so many photos and videos of friends, family and my highly adored cats on it, and those memories are powerful things.

- Leaves of Grass, by Walt Whitman – This collection of poems speaks to me on a very tangible and sensory level.

- My camera – To be able to document moments of time (I shoot with a Canon Rebel Eos T3 – pretty basic but immensely powerful) is a luxury and near duty to me. Life passes quickly, and I find that still images slow us down, give us pause and help us recall the things we truly find important.

**Maralyn: If we came to your hometown of Santa Barbara, what would we do?**

**Michael:** Living in Santa Barbara and having penned five travel books on the region, I’m the best person to ask, and I have a long list. But to keep it manageable: My favorite restaurants include Toma (terrific

Italian food), The Shop Café (a small diner-type place with killer, fun food), Paloma (excellent Mexican and South American food).

Santa Barbara has a wealth of things to see and do, but often overlooked is a visit to our County Courthouse – literally one of the most beautiful public buildings in America, with Moorish and classic Spanish detailing.

A visit to the Channel Islands is a must; it’s a step back into time, and the majority of the islands are pristine land. While there, you can hike and scuba dive as I have done – and snorkel and kayak around the gorgeous volcanic islands.

**Maralyn: What are three necessities you won’t travel without?**

**Michael:**

- Lip balm - perhaps an odd thing to mention, but cracked dry lips, regardless of where you are, is never a good thing.

- Water – this might seem obvious, but often, we can get stranded without water. I recall a flight back from Europe where they announced on the flight as we were mid way over the Atlantic Ocean that they had run out of water on board. The moan from the passengers was nearly deafening. I had my (filled) water bottle with me, so I was good. But it’s also important to know that many of us experience the beginnings of dehydration without actually noticing it. Water can help quickly refresh us and also fight fatigue.

- Yes, plastic baggies, mainly for food, leftovers, to keep something fresh, to store food along the way, whatever. It’s been a great thing to have in case you need it. Plus, it can act as a waterproof bag should you need one.

**Maralyn: What does Luxe Beat Magazine mean to you?**

**Michael:** The fantastic thing about Luxe Beat is that it puts travel and related content within reach for everyone. It doesn’t cater to just the wealthy, it caters to anyone who has a desire to travel, try new things, see new places and evolve as a citizen of the planet. With such a breadth of seasoned travel writers, the magazine provides a stunning array of opportunities to explore.

It is certainly a pleasure having Michael represent *Luxe Beat Magazine*.

remember being in Germany and visiting a small winery where the winemaker’s wife made spundakas – literally spoon cheese - fairly common in Germany. However, her iteration of it was amazing. It was one of those stunning moments of eating something so simple, but so unique and original to exactly where you are at that moment that made it so special. I obtained her recipe, but

have lost it along the way (never a good thing), but to this day I recall the fresh, potent flavors; dipping chewy pretzels into the spundakas, generally making a pig of myself, and being fascinated by my environment.

**Maralyn: How do you enjoy spending your free time?**

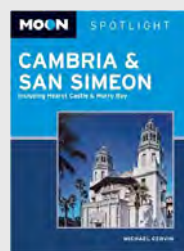
**Michael:** It may sound odd, but I don’t really vacation. By this, I mean

## Books by Michael Cervin



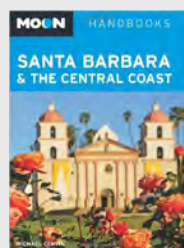
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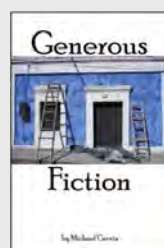
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