

DAYS TO COME

A travel magazine by **tourradar**

Travel Writing 101



Contents

Introduction	4
Meet your teachers	5
Unit 1: What is travel writing and why does it get under our skin?	6
Unit 2: Where does inspiration come from?	8
Unit 3: Different types of travel writing	12
Unit 4: Different types of travel articles	14
Unit 5: Writing your first travel story	18
Unit 6: Structuring your story and finding your voice	22
Unit 7: The art of pitching	26
Unit 8: Essential editorial skills in a digital age	30
Unit 9: The importance of having your own blog	34
Unit 10: Building a portfolio of work	40
Unit 11: Building a personal brand and leveraging social media	44
Tips to help you stand out from the crowd	50
Free resources for travel writers	54
Inspiration for travel writers	56



Introduction

Whether your dream is to become a travel writer, or you're just curious about this profession or simply a passionate traveller, hello and welcome! We're so glad you're here. Travel Writing 101 — an online course by [Days to Come](#) — was crafted to accomplish one objective: to help beginners like you break into the world of travel writing.

If you're looking to hone your storytelling skills, launch a travel blog, or learn to pitch publications like a pro, you'll find the tools, resources, and — most importantly — the expert advice you need to make that happen. Think of this course as your own personal mentor on all things travel writing.

Before we dive into the first module, here's a little background about Days to Come, the experts behind the course, and all the knowledge you can expect to come away with once you've completed the course.

Days to Come is an online travel magazine powered by TourRadar — the world's largest online marketplace for multi-day travel experiences. Our editors and writers create stories about everything from solo and independent travel to group tours, destinations and lifestyle pieces.

In 2019, thanks to the efforts led by our in-house editorial team and freelancer writers, Days to Come was able to publish more than 250 stories written by women. Cultivating a platform for writers to share their life-enriching experiences is at the heart of what we do.

Now, we're giving you the opportunity to learn more about the same principles and tools that we apply every single day to publish travel stories from all over the world. If you've always wanted to learn more about travel writing, this course will give

you valuable insight into one of the most coveted professions in the world.

Throughout the course, we'll share our knowledge, put you through your paces with reading and written assignments that will help you understand what defines travel writing, show you how to create pitches that editors will want to read, and most important of all, give you tools and tips to write your first travel article. As a bonus, we've also asked our Social Media Manager and Head of Public Relations to share their insider knowledge on how to leverage social media as a travel writer and give you tips on becoming your own publicist.

This is truly an exciting moment, you've decided to embark on a journey that will enrich you in so many ways. In the introduction of Lonely Planet's Guide to Travel Writing, Don George imparts some really valuable advice that every traveller-come-writer should embrace. It is perhaps the most important thing to remember.

George says, "you don't have to get paid full-time or even part-time to profit from your travel writing. Whatever your goals as a traveller and writer, the rewards of travel writing — and of approaching travel with the travel writer's mindset — are numerous. First and foremost, you become a better traveller. You arrive at your destination having already learned something of its history, culture, and important sites, making you far better able to explore and appreciate what it has to offer."

Throughout this course, you will find quotes from the following two books: Lonely Planet Travel Writers Book and Big Magic. While you don't need to purchase them, they are incredible resources for budding travel writers.

Meet your teachers



Sahar Aman

Sahar Aman is the Editor-in-Chief of Days to Come and TourRadar's Content Lead. She has written for some of the world's leading print and online publications including Dawn — Pakistan's oldest, and most widely read English-language newspaper, Express Tribune, Globe and Mail, and Culture Trip.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts from Queen Mary School of English and Drama, Sahar immediately went on to complete a Masters of Fine Arts in Feature Film Screenwriting from Royal Holloway, the University of London. Passionate about telling meaningful stories, she moved to Karachi, Pakistan in 2007 to pursue a career in broadcast and print journalism. In 2013, Sahar moved to Canada where she established a successful blog and worked as a content creator for brands like American Airlines, Deciem, Avocados from Mexico, Living DNA, and more.

Having shaped narratives in a digital era for over a decade, if there is one thing that Sahar believes in, it's the power of a good story.



Sama Abdi

As the Global Social Media Manager, Sama oversees TourRadar's organic social media for various channels, influencer strategy and social content campaigns. Prior to joining the team, Sama studied Corporation Communications and Public Relations before honing her skills in the NGO and corporate environment. When she isn't diving into new digital trends, you can find Sama attempting to make the perfect tiramisu.



Ashley Nitransky

It was a love of travel and the power of the written word that led Ashley to her role as a Content Editor for Days to Come. After graduating with a certificate in Tourism Management and Public Relations, Ashley travelled to 40+ countries, built a successful freelance career, and launched a personal travel blog — which was ultimately the catalyst for her current career path.

While living abroad in Scotland between 2015 and 2017, she worked for an SEO agency where she learned to master the art of writing for people and optimising for Google. Ashley has crafted content for high-profile brands across a range of industries, including Skyscanner, Visit Britain, and Tesco.



Cameron Papp

As Head of Public Relations, Cameron is responsible for growing awareness of TourRadar's brand and protecting its reputation. Along with talking journalists' ears off and building relationships with media outlets and publications, he coordinates with earned, paid, organic and social channels to tell TourRadar's story.

Over the course of his career, Cameron has been a communications manager for StubHub, the world's largest online ticket marketplace, a grant writer for a non-profit, and a campaign manager for a mayoral candidate.

With over ten years of experience in marketing and communications and a proven track record of crafting and executing strategic public relations, Cameron knows a thing or two about crafting your story in a way that editors will want to hear about.

What is travel writing and why does it get under our skin?



The need to record our travels in some shape or form has existed since the earliest days of exploration. Herodotus, a Greek historian is considered to have written the first travel book – History of the Persian Wars. Although travel writing is ancient, it first began to garner attention in the 1980s.

In an introduction to New Directions in Travel Writing Studies, Julia Kuehn and Paul Smethurst – both Associate Professors of English at Hong Kong University – explain that the main reason travel writing gained popularity in the 1980s is because there was an interest and demand for alternative voices in humanities.

Thanks to the nature of its content and critical storytelling components – for cultural historians, geographers, and those in literary professions – travel literature emerged as a valuable resource in antiquity and culture.

Although we all understand to some extent what travel writing is, it resists an easy definition. In the next section you'll learn more about different types of travel writing, but, essentially travel writing is a form of storytelling where a narrator explores a destination and shares their encounter through a piece of content. These tales of pursuits in far-flung corners of the world, when done well, are able to capture our attention, spark our interest and propel readers on an emotional (and sometimes physical) journey.

Over the course of the 20th century, travel writing became a genre of its own and as the world has progressed digitally in the 21st century, it has continued to evolve. Today, travel writers are not just limited to words when they recount their extraordinary adventures, they have evolved into vloggers, bloggers and content creators.

Thanks to the resources like podcasting, YouTube and WordPress, travel writers can create content freely and don't just have to rely on magazines, newspapers and editors to publish their work. Having said that, nothing beats the kick you get from seeing your name appear in print for the first time in a by-line.

While we'll highlight some different avenues you can take for creating travel content, Travel Writing 101 will focus mostly on travel writing in the traditional sense. We'll share the tools we use every day when trying to write stories to inspire our readers and community.

The most important thing to remember is regardless of where stories are shared and their medium, ultimately travel writing is all about the connection a writer has with their subject. When a travel writer has an encounter that gets inside their system and proves to be life-enriching, and are able to share that experience with the rest of the world, it has a magical way of getting under our skin.

Reading assignment

These two articles will give you a little more insight into why travel writing gets under our skin.

- [How Great Travel Writing Inspires Us](#) – One of our editors explores how great travel writing leads to life-enriching experiences.
- [Why \(and How\) Travel Writing Moves Us](#) – Don George, author of the Lonely Planet Guide to Travel Writing explains why this genre has such an appeal.

Writing assignment

The best way to learn about travel writing is to read as much travel content as you can.

Think back intently over the last few months, were there any travel articles that really resonated with you? They could have been published online or in print. Dig up those articles again, read them again if you like, and then do this written assignment for at least two of the articles.

- Write three things that you liked about the article
- Dive deeper and list all the reasons why you think this article presents a successful story. (Did the author share a personal experience that you could relate to? Was it written in a way that pulled you in and painted a detailed picture of a specific destination? Did the article feature beautiful language and poetic prose?)

Where does inspiration come from?



It's important to reinforce statements like everyone can sing, and everyone can dance. It reminds us that our bodies and voices are only as limited as the story we feed ourselves. Likewise, inspiration is truly limitless and available to everyone, and the most important thing to remember is that it can be found everywhere.

Our editorial team has weekly and monthly brainstorming sessions where we shoot the s*** with other team members. Some of our best ideas come out of those sessions. The idea of those sessions is that we bring things that have been inspiring us or getting our attention to the table and talk about them.

Our Social Media Manager who does a lot of qualitative listening online will share insights and creative TikTok stories, and our Public Relations Manager understands the kind of things people are talking about and why, and their knowledge is incredibly valuable to us as editors and writers.

Before we had access to these resources, we had to rely on our own wits to tap into the endless supply of inspiration that can be found in our world, and it's something we still do, even to this day. You too have access to many of the same resources as us.

Inspiration is still sitting there right beside me, and it is trying. Inspiration is trying to send me messages in every form it can—through dreams, through portents, through clues, through coincidences, through déjà vu, through kismet, through surprising waves of attraction and reaction, through the chills that run up my arms, through the hair that stands up on the back of my neck, through the pleasure of something new and surprising, through stubborn ideas that keep me awake all night long . . . whatever works. Inspiration is always trying to work with me.

Elizabeth Gilbert
[Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear](#)

Your inbox, your Instagram feed, your daily routine to and from work, your down time over the weekend, your pets, co-workers, acquaintances, friends and families – your entire life is a conduit for inspiration. If you keep your eyes and ears peeled, you'll find ideas for stories and inspiration everywhere. In this section you will learn more about ways to observe the world and find inspiration.

There's no one way to find inspiration for articles, but there are of course some tools we can share to help facilitate the process of finding it.

It's easy to be dismissive of some of these ideas as they seem obvious, they don't work their magic immediately, but stick to them consistently and over time you will see the impact of them on your imagination.

Being disciplined in some of these practices will also serve you as a writer. Many of them are important tools that we fall back on time and time again.

People watching but not in the way you think

We don't just mean grabbing a cup of coffee and watching the world go by. What are the people around you reading? What do they look at while they wait for the train? What kind of conversations are they having around you?

Read as much as you can

Reading travel articles to understand the craft of travel writing is important, but it's also important to read a whole host of different things. As editors we have to stay on top of trends and news, so we read everything from The New York Times, Guardian, Vogue and the Economist to Reddit, Trip Advisor and even Google Reviews. You'd be surprised at how many of the stories out of the hundreds of ideas pitched that make it to our content calendar are inspired by Reddit.

Documentaries

While you can't always get out and observe the world as much as you would like, documentaries are a wonderful resource for writers when it comes to learning about the history, culture and geography of our world.

Keeping a journal or scrapbook of ideas

Keeping track of ideas, strange dreams, random quotes, songs, pictures, articles, or things that capture your attention is a must. How you manage that journal and what you put in it is entirely up to you, but start from this moment onwards. You can use Pinterest, a sketchbook or even a Google Spreadsheet, the point is to start curating the journal of ideas.

Learn more about the things you're interested in

In her book, *Big Magic*, Elizabeth Gilbert stresses the importance of spending more time with the things you are interested in. It could be five minutes a day, one hour a week, but it's important to dedicate time to learning more about the things you are interested in and be consistent about it.

This could be anything. Maybe you want to learn about the history of the Ottoman Empire, or know the name of every single active volcano that exists in our world, perhaps you want to learn how to code or understand exactly how Tupperware is manufactured – the wilder it is, the better.

Creative hobbies

The same can be said for creative hobbies. They don't need to have anything to do with writing but creative hobbies have absolutely everything to do with inspiring us. For example, taking a dance class may lead you to a piece of music that ends up inspiring a travel story. As we mentioned before, there's no sure-fire way to find inspiration for travel stories, but pursuing passions in your spare time can certainly help.

Travel, have more adventures and explore with intention

This goes without saying, but exploring the world you want to write about will definitely help to inspire you. That doesn't have to mean spending a fortune and travelling to the other side of the world every month. You can also travel a little closer to home by taking day trips or weekend trips.

One of our favourite ways to break out of routine is the microadventure movement pioneered by Alistar Humphreys. In his own words [“a microadventure is an adventure that is short, simple, local, cheap – yet still fun, exciting, challenging, refreshing and rewarding.”](#)

In fact, Humphreys was crowned as National Geographic Adventurer of the Year for his dedication to microadventures. He stipulates that “you do not need to fly to the other side of the planet to undertake an expedition. You do not need to be an elite athlete, expertly trained or rich to have an adventure. Adventure is a state of mind.”

Workshops, classes and conferences

Workshops, classes and conferences are wonderful ways to get inspired. The circulation of ideas from people that are considered thought leaders in their field can trigger our own imagination.

Although worth the money and investment, workshops, classes and conferences can be pricey. Don't worry if it's not in the budget, these days you will find lots of resources for free workshops and classes online. Join Facebook Groups for writers in your area, people frequently post about things that are happening on them. Writers frequently do workshops on Instagram, so follow your favourite ones, keep tabs of publications on LinkedIn. Keep your eyes and ears peeled!

At the end of this course, you'll find a list of free resources for writers.

Recharge your batteries

We are constantly being overstimulated with information and churning it, while this is true for us – as editors we spend over 40 hours a week writing and editing non-stop – feeling mentally drained at the end of the week is true for anyone with a pulse in this day-and-age. It can be hard to feel inspired when you have no mental space or clarity.

One of the most important things we practice is taking out some time to recharge our batteries at the end of the day and over the weekend. There are a number of ways to do this, sometimes just switching off all distractions and watching

reruns of your favourite show for the 100th time can help. Yoga and meditation are other things you can do.

Cooking can also help. One of our team members likes to pick a dish to cook, and then spend hours in food markets or grocery stores looking for ingredients. The point is you're not writing or editing, you're just doing something pleasurable that helps you to wind down and recharge your batteries.

Conversations

Some of our best travel stories have come from throwaway comments that friends, family or people we've just met have said. When you have conversations with people, try to be totally present and listen to everything they say, because you never know where the next incredible idea for a story is going to come from, and usually it's from the world around you.

Reading assignment

The following articles will give you more context for this week's writing exercises.

- [36 hours in... Wherever You Are](#)
- [Microadventures Are Everywhere](#)
- [Fear is Boring, and Other Tips For a Creative Life](#)

Writing assignment

This week we will give you little exercises and prompts for observing the world around you.

First decide how you are going to curate a journal of ideas. Will it be a notebook, a spreadsheet, a Google Doc? This will be where you record the thoughts and observations that come your way.

- The next time you are in a grocery store, make a mental note of the kinds of things the people around you are buying. In your journal when you come home, write a story about the person and the things they bought. What did they look like? Where might they have been coming from?
- Find some travel threads on Reddit. What kind of things are people talking about?
- The next time you are in a coffee shop, eavesdrop on some conversations that are happening around you. Make a note of any interesting things people say on your phone, and then later transfer them into your journal.
- Pick something simple that you've always wanted to learn about and spend one hour this week with it. This shouldn't cost you any money, it's just an exercise where you start researching and learning more about something. This doesn't mean just Googling, you could watch a documentary about it for example, or talk to a friend who has knowledge of what you're interested in. It could be ballet, the Avengers, or chocolate-making. Just think long and hard about what it is you want to learn more about and pick something that really matters to you. Research things like its history, what country it originated in, have there been any new developments recently? Record anything that sparks your interest in your journal.

- Spend time doing something creative this week.
- Plan a microadventure that allows you to explore something close to home in a different way and explore with total awareness and intention, taking lots of notes along the way. Use these as starters: Who did you talk to? What did you eat? What did you see? Did you buy a coffee? What did the barista look like? What was the most interesting thing you observed on your microadventure?

Different types of travel writing

Travel writing can be found in almost every publication. Even if a magazine or publication isn't purely focused on travel, they may have a lifestyle section or category for it. For example, Forbes is predominantly a business magazine but they publish a lot of travel content.

Here are some places that you might be familiar with seeing different types travel writing both in print and online:

- Travel sections in newspapers, normally published on weekends
- Travel sections in lifestyle magazines
- Travel magazines
- In-flight magazines
- Travel literature
- Guidebooks
- Memoirs
- Travelogues

In the early years of the Internet, many print publications added a component of digital publishing to their roster of content. However over the last two decades, many newspapers and magazines had to expand their online content to answer the demand and to keep up with media-savvy publishers that were born of the Internet. Some magazines have even shifted to a purely online model, print isn't exactly dead, but technology has definitely changed the landscape of journalism and the travel writing game.

While we value and treasure the print medium, we'll stick to the positive outcomes of this media evolution. Thanks to all this development, there are so many more opportunities for travel writers to create and share content. This is not just limited to individuals being able to self-publish on blogs and create videos themselves, but publications are able to publish a lot more content now than ever before. Creating content online still takes time and resources, but publications aren't limited by things like the physical space on a page.

Travel writing is no longer limited to articles, guidebooks and literature, it has branched out into visual mediums and social media. Even if you want to be more of a traditional travel writer, it's still worth exploring content options outside of printed and online editions of newspapers, magazines, travel literature and guidebooks. Video, audio, photo captions, and other travel-related copy are all ways to flex your adventurous writing skills.

Here are some additional publishing opportunities worth considering:

- Blogging
- Podcasting
- Vlogging
- Travel scripts for visual guides
- Travel-related copywriting for trade news, brochures, photo websites and media agencies

Reading assignment

This reading assignment will help you to understand the different types of travel writing that exist which you can use as research for the writing assignment.

- Vlog: [Travelling India on Tour: The Golden Triangle](#)

- Travel script: [India Travel Guide: The Golden Triangle](#)
- Online article: [Around the World in 60 Egg Dishes](#)
- Online publication: [Culture Trip](#)
- In-flight magazine: [enRoute](#)
- Online travel guide: [Norway Travel Guide](#)
- Podcast: [Touring the World With Jessica Husson](#)

Writing assignment

If you want to be a travel writer, you'll need to give some thought into the kind of content you want to create, and where that content might be published.

- Consider the different types of content you might be interested in creating.
- Practice finding story ideas — choose a destination and write out a list of 10 potential ideas for a story.

Different types of travel articles

Throughout this course we're going to give you insight into some of the tools you'll need to write your first draft. One of the most important components of any kind of writing – be it articles, novels, or scripts – is structure.

Think of your words like water, and the thing you pour those words into as the structure. Water is great, but if you can't hold it, it can be hard to drink, so you need something. A glass, a reusable water bottle, or even your hand, these are all things that can hold water. Likewise, your words need a vessel, and structure is what will serve them best. In this section we'll show you how to choose the right shape.

Here are some styles of travel articles that you might be familiar with:

Destination articles

These articles are often told from a first-person perspective, but the story isn't about the writer, the destination is the star of the show. These kinds of articles showcase a destination from many different angles, touching on elements such as culture, history, hidden gems, experiences and encounters. When done well, destination articles will entice a reader to visit.

Example:

- [Travelling The Silk Road by Overland: Exploring a History the Length of the World](#)

Personal travel essay

Usually reflective pieces, this kind of article captures the journey or discovery the writer personally experienced while travelling. The writer's feelings and perceptions form the heart of the story, and live alongside the travel narrative.

Example:

- [Tears, Toilets, and the Top of the World](#)

How-to guides

Days to Come publishes a lot of these, and while they are often published in print, how-to guides form a big part of online travel content. They are a great resource for readers looking for travel advice. These articles require a lot of research and it's important that the writer imparts useful information to the reader. There are so many different ways to write one of these articles and they can cover lots of different topics.

Examples:

- [How to Spend Two Weeks in Vietnam: A Quintessential South to North Itinerary](#)
- [Tips for How to Travel Like a Local](#)
- [How to Choose the Right Safari For You](#)
- [How to Spend a Week in Israel if You Are An Adventure Lover](#)

The weekender article

These kinds of articles focus on highlighting a destination over a couple of days. The most famous example would be the New

York Times' 36-Hours In series, which covers an adventure in one spot from Friday to Sunday. These articles can also be about two-day adventures, or the perfect day trip, but the central theme is that they focus on making the most of your time or the experience in one place.

Example:

- [Exploring the Four Quarters of Israel](#) – shows people how they can spend a couple of days exploring one of the most famous regions in the world.

News peg

This kind of travel writing focuses or pegs itself on current events or the political climate as the context for the narrative. These articles don't have to be sombre, but they must be sensitive or considerate.

Examples:

- [From World-Travellers to At-Home Cooks: Paying Homage to Quarantine Cuisine](#) – explores a timely subject during a global pandemic.
- [Jordan is spectacular, safe and friendly, so where are all the tourists?](#)

Listicles

Also known as round-ups or best of lists, these are one of the most popular travel articles. They do particularly well online and are a quick and valuable resource for readers. Round-up articles or listicles normally focus on a topic with a common thread, after a couple of introductory paragraphs, the writer just dives into the subject matter.

Being able to find unique topics and cool ideas for this type of article is a great way to build your portfolio as a travel writer. On Days to Come, these are some of our best performing articles because for the most part they do really well on Google and are the kind of evergreen content that readers often look for.

Examples:

- [The Best Street Food in Istanbul: 10 Dishes You Need to Try](#)
- [The Best Travel Yoga Mats](#)
- [10 of the Best Mountaineering Films](#)
- [Amazing Travel Experiences in the Norwegian Fjords](#)

Special interest articles

As the name would suggest, this kind of article usually focuses on a topic or niche more in-depth and explores a destination with the subject matter as the peg. For example, chilli farming in Bolivia, potato dishes in Peru, or discovering modern art in Kenya.

Examples:

- [A Journey to the Homeland of Hot Sauce](#)
- [Are Yoga Retreats Really a Life-Changing Experience?](#)
- [Backpacking With Your Dog in Europe](#)

Holidays and special events

In this instance too, as the name suggests, these stories focus on holidays and special events. They cover everything from festivals and holidays to different countries and even world-wide events. Some of the things travel writers cover for these articles may include global sporting events, renowned fashion weeks, cultural celebrations like Ramadan and Oktoberfest and even things like solar eclipses. They can be written prior to the occasion or in retrospect.

Example:

- [Celebrating Midsummer in Finland](#)

Travel blogging

While there has been some structure given to travel blogs over the years, and many popular publications may even have started as more of a travel blog, travel blogs are mostly run under the banner of a personal brand: Nomadic Matt and The Planet D are great examples of this. If you really want to write and make sure your articles are published, a travel blog is the best way.

Well-known blogs may have a small team to help with the day-to-day running. Some travel companies will also include a travel blogging component to their business, World Nomads is a great example of this. Having a travel blog is one way to build up a portfolio of articles when you are just starting out as a travel writer.

Examples:

- [Nomadic Matt](#)
- [World Nomads Travel Stories](#)

Itineraries

Being able to write detailed itineraries in a way that's exciting and enticing is a valuable skill. These itinerary articles can be anywhere from 24-hours to three-months long.

Not only will you showcase an entire city, country or continent in detail, but you will build on writing techniques like researching and note-taking and add to your authority on destinations.

It can also help you to niche down, for example, your style could be budget three-day itineraries for cities. Write enough of them around one topic and people will know to come to you for whenever they need a low-cost three-day trip, for example!

Examples:

- See the different types of travel itineraries we publish on Days to Come: [Itineraries](#)
- See examples of itineraries Lonely Planet publishes: [Europe in Detail](#)

Food and travel

Food and travel have become one of the most popular subjects in recent history. Our insatiable appetite for exploring rich world

history and culture through our taste buds has led to an influx of travel content – written, visual and audio. Culinary travel stories normally explore traditions related to cooking and eating and celebrate a country or region's cuisine.

Examples:

- [Food Stories on Days to Come](#)
- [Gordon Ramsay's Uncharted on National Geographic](#)

Side-trip or spin-off

Sometimes within a larger feature story, you might find a small snippet that suggests an additional trip or experience. In many ways, these side stories allow you to tap into some new aspect of the destination, and take you a little off-piste. An unexpected day trip or unusual adventure. For example, a travel writer might be in Cuzco on their way to Machu Picchu, and stop off to spend time with the local community based on a tip someone shared with them.

Side pieces must detail essential information like how to get to a place, hours of opening and other things a reader will need to know when attempting the side trip.

Journey

These travel articles often have a strong personal voice and as the name would suggest focus on getting somewhere instead of the destination itself. For example, a road trip story or an article that details a special journey.

- [On Board the Trans-Siberian Railway for a Centenary Ride](#)
- [What an Epic Canadian Train Trip Can Teach You About Kindness](#)
- [How Many Kilometres Does it Take to Change a Stereotype?](#)

Reading assignment

What's nice about structure is it gives all types of writing a strong foundation. In the Travel Writer's Handbook, Jacqueline Harmon Butler and Louise Purwin Zobel explain that almost all of these popular travel articles fall under one of four categories and follow one or another of 12 patterns, with some overlap. They suggest using these patterns when planning or looking for a travel story. You'll see them in the table below.

Read as many of the article examples as possible and start thinking about which style of storytelling and narrative you like most.

1. Travel articles from your own experience: these are stories that can only be written by you.
 - Personal - an article from your own experience: [The Truth About Travel Writing at 4500m Above Sea Level](#)
 - Advice - articles that offer advice based on personal experience: [1 Woman, 12 Months, 52 Places - The New York Times](#)
 - Humour - funny articles based on your experiences: [7 Things Women Are Sick of Hearing When They Travel Solo](#)

2. Travel articles for a specific audience: articles aimed at readers interested in particular kind of travel or experience in the destination.
 - Who - stories that cater to an audience in mind, for example, senior travellers: [Retirees Share Their Biggest Travel Mistakes and Lessons Learned](#)
 - How - guided stories: [How to Experience Marrakesh Like a Travel Writer](#)
 - What - for travellers that will be interested in things to see and do on a trip: [Three Months in Thailand: Where to Go and What to Do](#)

3. Travel articles that take people on a journey and inspire them to follow in your footsteps: these articles truly make people feel like booking a trip as soon as they finish reading the article, or at the very least, add the destination to their bucket list.
 - Flavour - makes readers feel as if they are right there with you: [A Journey to The Homeland of Hot Sauce](#)
 - Destination - gives your readers comprehensive insight into a destination through your knowledge and must be well-researched: [Discover Why This Stunning Region is Spain's Best-Kept Secret](#)
 - Gimmick - a niche topic or gimmick travel article, for example, see Ireland the Game of Thrones way: [The Old Order Mennonite Village Minutes Away From Ontario's Tech Capital](#)

4. Articles with natural pegs: these are often the easiest to write and can be found anywhere.

- Roundup - a list of points of interest based on a theme: [13 Places You Can Find Middle-Earth on Earth \(That Aren't in New Zealand\)](#)
- Current affairs - using the current climate as context for your story: During the COVID-19 pandemic, the New York Times took their iconic travel series and pegged it on the times: [36 Hours in... Wherever You Are](#)
- Historical - these stories examine culture, heritage and a destination from a historical point of view: [Turkey's Forgotten Georgian Kingdom](#)

Writing assignment

Think about some adventures you have experienced in the last couple of years. What are some things that interested you or stories and experiences from your trip that you shared with family and friends over and over again?

Now using this same table format, and all the different types of articles we've shared, jot down some ideas in each section about a story you could write. You can do it in a spreadsheet or in your journal, just use the same headings for structure. See the example below. Make sure you write at least three.

Example:

Roundup A list of points of interest based on a theme
A travel blog about some of my favourite markets in the world in Bogota, Bologna, Kathmandu, Los Angeles, Vancouver
Current affairs Using the current climate as context for your story
An article that shows readers why more people are exploring Pakistan almost 20 years after 9/11
Historical These stories examine culture, heritage and a destination from a historical point of view:
A food and travel article that explores the history of tortellini in Bologna from the perspective of someone that grew up in a family that overcooks pasta.

Writing your first travel story

Years ago, one of our editors came across a quote that has stayed with her. It went something like this; “that even when I’m sitting under the duvet eating peanuts, I’m still writing.”

This is so exciting, you’re going to write a travel article. Sitting down to write a story about a real-life adventure you got to experience is one of the best feelings in the world. Even after writing all these years, we still get a kick out of it – nothing is more satisfying, not even peanut butter.

Our first tip? As long as you’re not allergic, stock up on peanut butter, you’re going to need it. Especially for when you hunker down to type out your story, there’s something about writing and peanut butter.

Before you get to the point where you can write your travel article, there are some things to keep in mind. The most important thing is committing to the travel writer’s state of mind, if you’re going to tell a travel story about any trip, before you even set foot in your destination, the writing process has already begun.

Remember the Don George quote we shared in the introduction? Having a travel writer’s mindset starts at home, even when you’re under the duvet eating peanuts.

Are you reading enough?

We can’t stress the importance of reading as many travel articles as you possibly can. If you’re aren’t already obsessed with reading travel writing daily, it’s time to start.

Will you have enough of a story?

Simply taking a vacation does not amount to a travel article. You need to throw readers in the heart and soul of an experience, so thinking you’ll write about the good weather and delicious food isn’t going to cut the mustard. Like any good story, even one that is 1200 words, we need things like conflict, resolution, escapism, and a little more magic than we’re used to.

Here are some tips on how to ensure you have enough of a story for when you finally sit down to write!

Choosing a destination

Unless you’ve been commissioned by an editor to go somewhere and write a story, chances are, you’ll be picking a destination to write a story about. Don’t write a travel article about somewhere you’ve already been unless you feel like you have enough meat to tell an incredibly descriptive story.

Pick a place or experience that you are naturally curious about. If you feel strongly about your destination, then that connection will come through in your writing. This really could be anything, from hunting down an unusual dish in a remote village and visiting as many shrines as possible in Thailand to perfecting a headstand at a yoga retreat in Nepal. Your imagination is the limit. Remember, ideas can come from anywhere.

Or pick a place you’ve never wanted to visit, that might make for a more interesting experience than a destination that’s top of your wishlist.

Remember, as travellers, writers, editors and readers, we all tend to enjoy those far-flung adventures that show us the hidden corners of the world, or expose us to something that will no doubt induce a serious dose of wanderlust. So when picking a destination or experience, it can help to keep that in mind.

If you already have a trip coming up, and are thinking you’d like to write a story about that, that’s also fine. Here’s how you gear up as a travel writer from home.

Research

This is where your journey as a travel writer begins. Before going anywhere, travel writers do insane amounts of research. While that includes what to see, eat and do, it also covers a city or country’s geography and culture to its politics and current affairs.

Learn as much as you possibly can about a destination before stepping foot on the plane. In case your story has a focus or angle, based on the country’s art, history, or food, for example, do as much reading as possible on that too. It might also help to look at what other travel journalists have covered, this will help you to create a story that’s original.

Pick elements of interest to you, and this will be a fun project. Arriving at your destination with insight and knowledge, makes visiting somewhere all more exciting and a little more familiar, but in a good way.

As well as reading articles and guidebooks; some travel writers will also read novels, academic papers and history books. We recommend watching documentaries or movies too. Also, check to see if there are any local cultural events happening in your city or if any museums have relevant exhibitions you can visit. You may even bump into people there that have visited before who can share insider tips or put you in touch with locals.

What’s your angle?

As a travel writer you will tell a story about your destination from a unique point of view. You may not have a story right now, but you have an edge, you have your own passions and you need to bring those into play. They can be a good place to start if you’re looking for a story angle.

Maybe you have a knack for finding the best restaurants whenever you travel. Or maybe you experience travel in a unique way based on physical or personality traits. We all have our small superpowers and they shape the way we experience our world, and it’s important to be aware of them as writers and to use them. Remember, just because a specific place or topic has been covered before, that doesn’t mean you can’t bring your own unique viewpoint to write about it from a fresh perspective.

To give you a better idea of what this would look like in the real world, here are two different two story angles on the topic of yoga in India.

Story Angle One: Muslims Need a Little Om Too - A travel story that explores my first experience of doing yoga in India as a Pakistani Muslim.

Story Angle Two: Why My Lululemon Leggings Are Total Outsiders in India - A story that explores how yoga differs in India compared to what we label as yoga in the West. Spoiler: packing a pair of Lululemon leggings didn't help!

Even when you're considering a topic that's been written about before — like yoga in India — you can draw from your personal experiences (story angle one) or analyse your cultural lens (story angle two) to find a unique perspective from which to craft your story. Ultimately, the way you experience the world — your thoughts, opinions, interpretations, and interactions — acts as a huge source of inspiration to help uncover different story angles.

Boots on the ground

Travel writers need to be immersed in a destination to write about it; having local connections helps with that. You need to learn where the locals like to spend time, seek them out and build meaningful connections with them. They are the ones who will breathe life and colour into the story you are trying to flesh out.

While it goes without saying that their insight and knowledge are invaluable, it's a two way street. They aren't just there as a prop for your story, be mindful of how you treat your relationship with them.

Your trip is not a vacation

The transition of crossing over into the realm of travel writing lies in the mind. Don't go on vacation and think you'll write a story at the end of it. Your sole purpose for being in this destination of choosing is to write a story and that is how you must approach it.

You are not there to relax and enjoy yourself in the traditional holiday sense, instead you are there to investigate, report, interview and experience as many things as possible that are relevant to your story.

This is travel like you've never known it before, deep, immersive and it's a different kind of fun. You'll take copious notes, listen to everything (who knows when you'll hear the all important one-liner), and examine everything more closely and carefully. If you're lucky, you'll even get to go behind the scenes at sites and attractions and meet characters and experts that tourists and regular travellers won't.

You will veer off-the-beaten-path without even trying. You'll hear of a hot tip and follow it, at times what lies at the end of the end of that path will leave you bewildered and at other times it will disappoint you. No matter what happens, whether you get published or not, you get to experience our incredible world fully. That is the real reward of being a travel writer.

Travel writer story assignment pointers:

- What is the story you want to tell? Jot down a few ideas before you arrive at your destination to help you prepare for the writing to come. This will help you focus on crucial moments and places that you want featured in your story.
- Think about what destinations or experiences will help

further the overall narrative and help bring the story to life.

- Having these key elements of your story in mind will help you plan your trip. Time will matter, for example, you may need to spend more time in certain places, and it's important to have photo or filming permits, interviews, and visits you might need in place. This is why the research element of your journey is vital.
- While you'll likely take notes on the go, it's also important to write a summary of your day each night. As editors we do this in a number of ways. Recording voice notes or writing things down on our phones, but writing out paragraphs on our laptops or in a journal at the end of each day.
- Take photographs. Not only because photos can transport you back and allow you to relive your trip and recount details that you may have forgotten, but it will help to sell your story. Avoid just taking pictures of beautiful landscapes and sunsets, take pictures with action in them. People, animals, life, and colour.

Think of your punchline. What do you want your audience to get out of your story? What is the one line, anecdote or feeling that you want your readers to remember from your piece. Let this be the thread that guides your story and helps bring it together.

Structuring your story and finding your voice



Okay, so you've taken your trip. You've organised all your notes, interviews, and photos. Now here comes the moment it's all been for. At long last, it's time to sit down and write your very first travel article. In this section we're going to share how to structure your story and start finding your voice.

Finding the thread that pieces your whole story together

Most stories have a beginning, middle and end. That doesn't mean your article starts with day one of your trip and ends with the moment you arrive home.

You need to create a narrative or thread that will flow through the entire story. An outline can help with that. Think of your punchline. What do you want your audience to get out of your story? What is the point you want to make or that feeling that you want your readers to take away?

This is what links the beginning of your article to end, let this be the thread that guides your story and helps bring it together. You don't need to write about your trip in chronological order, instead, choose and write about the moments, experiences and anecdotes that form as part of this narrative best.

The hook

All travel stories start with something – a spark – the moment that defined your journey. It's the hook you want to introduce right at the start of the article. It's this magic one-liner that makes your reader want to go on with you, and something you will touch upon through the story. That's how you can begin finding the right voice and narrative to tell each particular story.

Check out these one-liners from the following stories.

- [The Art of Getting Lost in the City of Light](#) - "Yet unlike the panic that sets in elsewhere, getting lost in Paris is one of my purest pleasures."
- [Northern Pakistan Isn't Just For Mountain Climbers Anymore](#) - "Adam Khan wishes it would remain hidden in this way, but knows it won't be long before word gets out. "These places are so raw and untouched, but the world has already descended on Hunza Valley, and it won't be long before they discover the rest of Pakistan's north."
- [A Journey to the Homeland of Hot Sauce](#) - "Combining the two, she adds chopped onions, stirs in some water, and tastes her latest batch of Bolivian llajwa (YA-hua), the hot sauce that seems to power this landlocked nation in the heart of South America—and the object of my quest."

Things to avoid while writing

Bucket lists, hidden gems, and bustling markets have no place in your story. Avoid clichés. Likewise, instead of relying on adjectives to describe things, try instead to paint a picture of them. Use as much detail as you possibly can, that's what makes for a good travel writer. You have to make the reader feel like you can see everything you are.

You don't need words and words to do this. Lonely Planet does an incredible job of personifying cities and countries in just a few words. For example, they describe South Africa as a safari superpower on their website, it's such a vivid description. They describe Nepal as a curtain of fluttering prayer flags and Wales as hills that make the heart sing. You will of course have a lot more room to play with than five words, but be economical, and don't waste precious space.

Check your facts and sources

Double and triple check everything!

Creating an outline of your story

Use this table to help you create an outline for your story. This will help you to organize all your thoughts.

Beginning
Lede, where, when, who
Get the reader's attention with a snappy opening and set the scene for them. What was the most memorable or exciting part of the journey for you? Begin with that. If there's an experience or moment that really got under our skin, it's a good starting point for your story. Introduce the main thread and narrative of your story here.
Middle
Why is the writer on this trip, how is their trip unfolding, what is happening on this trip
This is the meat of your story, this is where most of the action happens. This is where the people you meet, the quotes, anecdotes, facts and all those juicy and colourful details come into play. Everything in this middle section must propel your story forward but continue to feed into your thread and overarching narrative.
End
Wraps up the article and leaves the reader wanting a little bit more
The ending goes back to the beginning but shows how the writer has moved forward in some way and touches on the opening sentiment with a renewed feeling. There may be a lingering question, the end could probe at something that remains undiscovered, suggest a reason to come back, or perhaps there's some unfinished business – the journey never ends.

Finding your voice

You know what we're going to say, but finding your voice takes time, patience and practice. The more you write, the more you'll learn about your voice. The most important thing really is to be yourself. There's no point in trying to write like Elizabeth Gilbert or Gregory Roberts, because that's not you. Write as you are.

Reading assignment

In this section we're going to break down a few elements from a Days to Come story to give you more insight into the structure of it.

- Read the following story and see our notes below: [Tears, Toilets, and the Top of the World](#)

Beginning

In the first two paragraphs, the writer sets the tone for the piece. The main thread is in blue, you'll see how the writer returns to it throughout the article.

1. Notice that this story begins halfway through the writer's trek to Everest Base Camp – not the start of the trip.
2. Notice how the writer explains what Dingboche is and where it is to give geographical context to the story.
3. Notice how the writer introduces the main characters of the story pretty quickly.
4. Notice how the writer introduces conflict through the element of not being able to reach their final destination.

Lede: Peering into the damp cupboard-sized washroom I saw a toilet devoid of a flush and seat. Beside it was a large barrel of water with a plastic bottle. I paced up and down the corridor, looking at all the other washrooms in search of a toilet that wouldn't require me to pour jugs of water into it to get rid of... well, you know what I mean.

Where: It had been a rough day. Understandable. Hiking to Dingboche — a Sherpa village at 4410m in Nepal — with Khumbu cough isn't the easiest. I was on day six of a 14-day trek to Everest Base Camp and Kala Patthar with Ace the Himalaya. Not relishing the thought of peeing into this morbid looking toilet I started crying for the first time on this trip, and definitely not the last.

Who: My husband, Ahmed, pulled me into our room. Both of us have a penchant for tough love and he sat me down on the bed and said: "Will you let me give you some advice?" Seeing my nodding head he continued on and spoke the words I needed to hear. "Okay, you have to get your head straight right now. This is an important moment. None of this stuff matters, the toilet, the room."

Hook: "Forget about what's inside, look outside, you've been dreaming of these places and villages for months. If you let this stuff get to you now, you won't make it to the top of Kala Patthar."

Middle

In the middle section, the writer returns to the main thread a number of times, but in this paragraph the story has moved forward while feeding the main narrative.

For other things, there are no words. Like, the first time you see a 360-degree view of the Himalayas with your own eyes. This happened during our second acclimatisation hike from Dingboche to Chhukung. This time, my tears were ones of joy.

End

At the end of the article the writer returns to the narrative introduced at the beginning of the story in Dingboche.

For me, this experience came together in Dingboche, when I decided nothing was going to stop me seeing Mount Everest with my own eyes from Kala Patthar. But I remember something else from Miss Diamond's history class all too well. A poster on the wall bearing the words of a Chinese proverb: "there are many paths to the top of a mountain, but the view is always the same."

There are many paths, however in the end, only one of them can take you to a view unlike anything else on earth: one that quite literally takes your breath away. It sits at 8848m, and I'll be damned if some part of me doesn't want to bawl my eyes out from there someday.

Writing assignment

- It's time to start exploring your voice. Start by writing out your introduction in two or three different ways. For example, write it in a way that you find silly, or write it angrily, or write it in a way that makes you feel sad. Experiment with different ways to start your story.
- Now go and write that first draft, you're ready!

The art of pitching

WRITE
WITHOUT
FEAR.

EDIT
WITHOUT
MERCY.

What is a pitch? This is basically an email you will send to editors of publications which outlines the travel story you want to write. There's no perfect formula for writing the perfect pitch, every writer has their own tried and tested way, but there are certain tips we can share with you.

It can be nerve-racking to put your ideas out there, especially in front of an editor, but pitching is an essential part of a freelance travel writer's life. To put things into perspective, even as editors you have to send out pitches to different people, and our pitches don't always get accepted.

Learning how to craft thoughtful pitches to communicate your story idea to an editor in order to land an article is a really important skill. A lot of good stories get turned down because the pitch didn't strike the right chord, but the good news is, the more you pitch, the better you'll get at it.

In this section we'll show you the most important things to keep in mind for when you are ready to approach an editor with your big idea. By the way, that's awesome! Once you learn how to pitch, you can pave the way for creating a portfolio that will help you shine.

Cold emailing editors: how to do it, when to do it and dos and don'ts

Do your homework

The good news is that many publications do accept pitches online from first-time writers. To make the process of submission easier, almost all publications have contributor guidelines listed on their websites. Before you even think about shooting them an email with your idea, read up extensively on exactly what the process is for the publication you want to pitch.

The first thing to consider is whether your story idea is the right match for the publication. While travel is a niche, your idea might not be suitable for every travel publication, as they all publish different styles of content.

A lot of publications will go as far as sharing exactly what kind of content they accept; in order to maximise the chances of consideration for your pitch, follow their guidelines.

For example, at Days to Come, we're big on multi-day travel experiences. We don't normally publish stories about day trips. If you were pitching a story to Days to Come with a story about a trip to the Eiffel Tower, unless it was something absolutely groundbreaking, that wouldn't be the kind of thing we'd publish. However, something like that might be more suited to an outlet like Culture Trip, for example.

You don't want to pitch the wrong editor or section, because it will show you haven't done your homework.

Do make sure your idea is original

Your idea is probably awesome, but there is a chance that the publication has already published something similar. So you need to check through to make sure that you're pitching them something that has a unique angle. The best way to do this is by running a search through Google with your story keywords

and the name of the outlet you're pitching. Whatever you do, don't pitch previously published articles from your blog or Medium.

Don't write generic pitches

Editors know when you've sent out a blast pitch. It's okay to pitch a few publications with the same story, but it's imperative that you tailor each pitch to the publication you want to write for. Our advice is to give your dream publication the chance to consider it first, if you don't hear back, you can send it out to a few others.

Don't pitch a topic, pitch a story

Editors don't want to hear about topics you're interested in writing about, you've got to get their attention with an idea for a story. Topics cover a subject, whereas stories have a setting, a narrative, and an angle or focus that can easily be conveyed.

Examples of topics:

- One year after trekking to Everest Base Camp
- My first adventure travel in Peru
- Exploring Marrakesh for the first time as a travel writer

Examples of stories:

After dreaming about seeing the Himalayan mountains for years, last year I took the plunge and decided to trek Everest Base Camp – not knowing that the spring climbing season of 2019 was to become one of its deadliest.

I wanted to be an adventure writer and set off for Peru as part of a group tour travelling to Machu Picchu, but was hit with a bad case of altitude sickness and writer's block. I learned the truth about what writing 4,500 metres above sea level is really like.

I want to write a story that will show people how to explore Marrakech like a travel writer by sharing exactly how I prepped for the trip and what I did.

Here are a couple of articles that will help you to understand how to make your pitch stand out with a story:

- [How to Know if you Have a Story or a Topic](#)
- [What Makes a Good Pitch? NPR Editors Weigh in](#)

Do show why the story needs to be told

Why is this story particularly important now? Is it timely? In your pitch, you need to tell the editor why it's important for their publication to share this story with their readers.

And why you're the one to write it

This is your audition and you need to be very clear about why you're the only person in the world who can tell this story. Do you have special insight or contact at the heart of this story? Is this something you've got a lot of experience in or knowledge about. Either way, there's a reason why this story needs to be written by you and you need to sell yourself as a writer and show the editor why you can tell this epic travel story.

Do follow up with editors (within reason)

If you haven't heard back, follow up a few days later. We normally follow up twice, but if you don't hear back after that, chances are your pitch wasn't the right fit this time round.

Don't let fear of rejection hold you back

You will get rejected, but you will prevail if you don't give up! Learning how to write a good pitch is a skill that takes a lot of patience and time, but you will crack it eventually.

How to write and structure your pitch

Ideally your pitch should have three parts. The lead or lede is where you grab the editor's attention with why your story is so amazing, an outline that tells the editor exactly what your piece will be about, how it fits with their publication and the mic drop: why you're the only person in the world who can write this story.

1. Lead: Who are you and why should the editor care? What's your story? Use something interesting here or colourful to highlight what makes this story so unique. This is the hook.
2. Outline: Define the story here. Is it a round-up or a feature? Which section do you see the article fitting in? What kind of things will you touch on?
3. Mic drop: You only need a couple of sentences here. First sentence is why you are the right person for this article, the second sentence simply states where you've been published.

Try to keep your pitches below 500 hundred words. Your pitch needs to grab an editor's attention and leave them wanting more – this is your first opportunity to show off your skills as a writer.

Pitch checklist

- An engaging subject line, be more creative than "Hello"
- Introduce the story idea and your angle
- Show why this article is timely or newsworthy and why it might be of value to the audience
- Show why you're the right person to write the piece and demonstrate any expertise you might have
- Disclose any personal conflicts
- Propose a deadline
- Include a link to your portfolio or personal blog if you have one

Exposure won't pay the bills but it can help to get your foot in the door, so when should you write for free?

Want to know something funny? The publications for whom you would happily write for free are actually the ones that will pay you. So that's something worth keeping in mind. We don't really believe writers should ever do anything for free, and publications should pay their writers. If anyone ever tells you to write for exposure, head for the hills.

Reading assignment

There are lots of places to find examples of pitches online. To learn more about the art of pitching, you need to read as many of them as possible. Although these successful pitches aren't exclusively for travel articles, you can read them to learn more about this pivotal skill.

- [Here Are a Load of Successful Journalism Pitches to Help You With Yours](#)
- [Pitch Database: The Open Notebook](#) (Has lots of different feature pitches from different writers for various outlets)
- [Query Letter Samples for Travel Writers](#) (Writer shares a before and after of a pitch)

Writing assignment

Ready to write your first pitch? Here we go.

- Shortlist three dream publications for whom you want to write a freelance travel article.
- Research on the publication websites to learn more about their pitching process and study their guidelines carefully.
- Now, go back to that list of ideas you jotted down during Unit 2: Different Types of Travel Writing and Travel Articles.
- Using those three ideas, think about whether any of them match your dream publications. Can you tweak them to create a story that will fit with the outlet's style and readership?
- Using the tips we've shared, craft three different pitches for three different publications based on your ideas.

Being able to pitch successfully is an essential editorial skill. In the next section we're going to teach you other skills you'll need as a travel writer.

Essential editorial skills in a digital age

In the following sections, we're going to cover three crucial components of travel writing: copy-editing, content editing, and proofreading.

Now, we know you might be thinking: aren't copy-editing and content editing the same thing?

Not exactly. Though these terms do overlap in some instances and people use them interchangeably, copy editing and content editing are two different — but equally important — revision stages.

Copy-editing

Think of copy-editing as the first step in the editing process. This is where you want to be on the lookout for spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, and anything else that could impact the readability of the content. In other words, copy editing is focused on correcting the language of the text.

Along with more obvious errors like spelling and punctuation, you should also be checking for:

- Verb tenses
- Sentence structure
- Continuity
- Word choice
- Missed words
- Repetitive words
- Unnecessary phrases (“that” or “the” can often be removed)
- Style guide rules (AP vs CMS)
- Regional spelling (American English vs British English)
- Run-on sentences
- Passive voice misuse

You should go one layer deeper, too, looking for specific word choices depending on the audience you're targeting (like using slang or specific colloquialisms for a younger audience, for example).

Certain sections may need to be rewritten at this stage, especially if there are issues with things like transitions or wordiness.

Content editing

While copy editing drills down into the language, content editing hones in on — as the name suggests — the actual content itself.

This means digging into the meat of the content and fact-checking for accuracy, considering the flow of the piece as a whole, and auditing the on-page SEO components (namely title tags, headers, alt-text, and meta descriptions).

You'll also need to consider clarity and the overall structure of the content at this stage. Here are a few questions to keep in mind when tackling these two components:

Overall structure:

- Is there a relevant introduction and conclusion?
- Is it clear how each paragraph is related to the topic/theme of the article?

- Is all of the information relevant to the ultimate goal of the article?
- Are there clear transitions between paragraphs?

Clarity:

- Is the meaning of each sentence clear?
- Are there any terms that may not be immediately clear to the reader?

Another important aspect of content editing is scrutinising the copy and tone to ensure it aligns with the brand voice (be it your company's brand voice, your client's brand voice, or your blog's brand voice). Even the slightest changes in word choice can have a massive impact on the overall message you're trying to convey.

Proofreading

Once an article has been thoroughly edited for grammar, spelling, readability, flow, structure, and accuracy, it's time to give it a final proofread.

Most major edits have been made by this stage, so it's only a matter of checking over a final draft for minor text or formatting errors.

Here are a few things to look out for when giving an article a final proofread:

- Consistency (i.e. are some subtitles sentence case while others are title case)
- Issues with formatting
- Broken links

As this is typically the final step before publishing, it's important to be careful and thorough. The following tips will help to ensure you catch every last error:

- Find a quiet place to proofread. This is key to making sure you can concentrate and avoid distractions.
- Try reading out loud. It's easier to hear how the words sound together when you read aloud.
- Proofread backwards. This technique is particularly helpful when looking for spelling errors as it forces you to focus on each individual word.
- Change the format of your document. Playing around with the font size, spacing, or style may offer a different perspective on what you're reading (which is especially important if you're proofreading your own work).
- Don't proofread something immediately after writing. It's very difficult to edit an article you've just written, so be sure to put it aside for at least a few hours or days before giving it a final look-over.
- Use Grammarly to check your own work. This online grammar checker is a life-saver when you need to proofread your own content.

Reading assignment

Make sure you have the basics covered and start honing your editorial skills with the following article:

- [25 Editing Tips for Tightening Your Copy](#)

Writing assignment

Just like any other skill, the best way to become a more proficient editor is to practice. If you want to practice editing someone else's work, try the following process:

- Download and read through [this draft](#) once and then go back and look for ways in which it can be improved.
- On your second read-through, put your editorial hat on and look out for things we've highlighted above, such as unnecessary words, confusing points, inconsistent formatting, grammatical errors, or large blocks of text.
- Copy and paste the text into a text editor so you can practice highlighting errors, rewriting certain sections, and making notes on which areas need improvement.

Editorial know-how is fundamental to a successful travel writing career, but we'll be touching on another vital skill you need to know in the current digital landscape next: blogging.

The importance of having your own blog

There are dozens of compelling reasons to start your own blog or website, but the following three are especially important if you want to get a foothold in the travel writing industry:

1. Having a blog positions you as an expert - Writing about topics that you're passionate about and that are relevant to your niche establishes you as an authority.
2. It can help you become a better writer - Just like any other skill, writing improves with practice. What's more, writing regularly will help you hone your unique voice and style as a writer — something that's crucial to stand out from the crowd.
3. Blogging can lead to other opportunities - Be it self-growth, freelance writing gigs, or your dream job, having a blog opens the door to endless opportunities in your personal and professional life.

Of course, starting a blog is a personal choice. Is blogging essential to succeeding in the world of travel writing? Not necessarily. Does it have the power to position you as an expert, amplify your creativity, showcase your writing skills, and strengthen your online brand? Absolutely.

Editor's note: Ashley is a big advocate for having your own blog. Ultimately, starting a travel blog was the catalyst that led to her current career path as a Content Editor.

- Recommended reading: [How to Start a Travel Blog in 2020](#)

Defining goals for your blog

Before you even think about choosing a domain name or installing WordPress, you need to consider the what and why of your blog.

Blogging is like a journey — and in order to succeed on that journey, you need an idea of where you're going and how you'll get there. You wouldn't just show up at the airport without knowing your flight number and final destination, right? Think of your blogging journey in the same way.

If you want to create content that's focused and impactful, you'll need both direction and intent. This is where defining your blog's purpose comes in.

But before we dive into goal setting, it's important to understand your own motivation for blogging. So, ask yourself the following questions: Why do I want to start blogging? What do I want to gain from blogging?

Do you want to hone your writing skills? Do you want to create a sense of community and connect with like-minded people? Do you want to generate income?

There's no right or wrong answer; what matters most is that you know the answer to these questions.

Now that you have a clearer idea of your motivations, it's time to move onto your blog goals. Your objectives will likely change over time, but the following are a few important goals to strive for when you're starting out:

1. Build your brand. The easiest way to start building your brand through your blog? Use your personality to create a unique brand voice. Hundreds of bloggers can write about the same topic, but the blogger who injects their personality into their writing will be the one to stand out. You'll learn more about building your brand later in the course.
2. Grow your blog traffic. Start to increase your blog's traffic by: publishing content your target audience wants to read, encouraging social sharing, promoting your blog on social media channels, networking with other bloggers, and contributing guest posts in your niche.
3. Establish authority. Having high-quality content that engages your audience, answers their most pressing questions, and makes them want to share it with their friends is the best way to start building authority in your niche.

Getting clear on why you want to start blogging and what goals you hope to achieve will not only help keep you motivated, but it will also help shape the foundation of your blog, from the design to the content and everything in between.

Getting started with WordPress

With the advent of online travel publications and the competitive nature of the industry, travel writers of today are expected to have a toolkit of digital skills — and that includes knowledge of WordPress.

This content management system (CMS) is the most dominant platform on the market, so it's likely you'll be using it to build your personal blog. And since many top publications also use WordPress to power their blogs, there's a good chance you'll see "knowledge of WordPress" listed as a prerequisite on travel writing job ads, too.

You don't need to be a full-fledged WordPress developer to build a blog from scratch, but knowing the basics is certainly essential in this field.

We'll briefly touch on the three major stages you need to get your WordPress website up and running here, and then you're welcome to dive deeper into the platform with [WordPress' tutorials for beginners](#).

Stage 1: Lay the groundwork for your website

The first step in getting your website off the ground is to [choose a WordPress plan](#), set up your domain name, and select a hosting provider. (Your domain name is the address of your website and a hosting provider is where your website is actually stored.)

There are hundreds of third-party hosting providers available, each of which offers various monthly plans that include a range of different features. [Bluehost](#), [GoDaddy](#), and [HostGator](#) are a few affordable hosting providers ideal for beginners.

Once your hosting server is ready, you'll need to install WordPress to connect your new domain to your website. The process is fairly straightforward, but you can always contact your hosting server's support team to install it for you.

Stage 2: Choose your theme

Next, it's time to start thinking about the design and functionality of your website by exploring different themes.

Similar to the wide variety of hosting providers available, there are also hundreds of themes and templates to choose from. When it comes to customising your website, you have two options: install a theme from the [official WordPress store](#), or purchase a theme from a third-party website like [ThemeForest](#). Depending on your specific needs, you can choose from basic free themes, or paid themes that come with advanced features (and more options for customisation).

After you've found The One, simply follow the step-by-step installation guide to begin customising it to your heart's content.

Stage 3: Install plug-ins

Plug-ins are similar to the apps on your smartphone; just like an iPhone application will give your device features it wouldn't normally have, every WordPress plug-in brings added functionality to your website. The majority of plug-ins are free, although some premium plug-ins charge.

As a new travel blogger, here are a few of the best plug-ins to install:

- [Yoast SEO](#) - This is the go-to plug-in to help you master on-page SEO.
- [Contact Form 7](#) - This reputable plug-in makes it easy for anyone to contact you through your website.
- [DiggDigg](#) - Displays social media sharing buttons on a floating sidebar so your content is easily shareable.
- [Akismet](#) - This plug-in is designed to automatically remove spam comments.
- [reSmush.it](#) - This is one of the top plug-ins for image optimisation to ensure your website has optimal speed and performance.

When these three stages are complete, you can then start to create your homepage and about me page, and begin publishing your first blog posts.

Building a content calendar

One of the biggest challenges when starting a blog is creating outstanding content on a regular basis. Sticking to a regular publishing schedule may sound simple in theory, but unless you have a solid strategy in place, it's all too easy to let your blog fall by the wayside.

Having a pre-planned content strategy all in one place is the key to staying organised, consistent, and productive.

To begin planning your content calendar, carve out some time to sit down and brainstorm what you want to write about for the upcoming month (or however far ahead you'd like to plan). Get the ball rolling with questions like:

- What questions, topics, or events are top of mind with my target audience right now?
- What keywords do I want to target this month?
- What's trending in the news right now?

- Are there any upcoming industry events or major holidays coming up?
- What stories do I want to share?

Once you have a month's worth of topics you plan to tackle, think about how frequently you want to be publishing. (As a general rule, try to aim to post at least two to three times per week if you want to increase traffic to your blog when you're starting out).

And lastly, fill in your content calendar. Simply search and download a free editorial calendar template, or put together a basic spreadsheet with the following columns:

- Blog title
- Content/details
- Keywords
- Article type (personal essay, how-to guide, round-up post)
- Deadline
- Publish date



Making your own content calendar can be as simple as making a spreadsheet like this example

That's it! Now you're ready to start creating that content, hitting those deadlines, and smashing those goals.

Downloads: [Free Editorial Calendar Templates](#)

Optimising your content

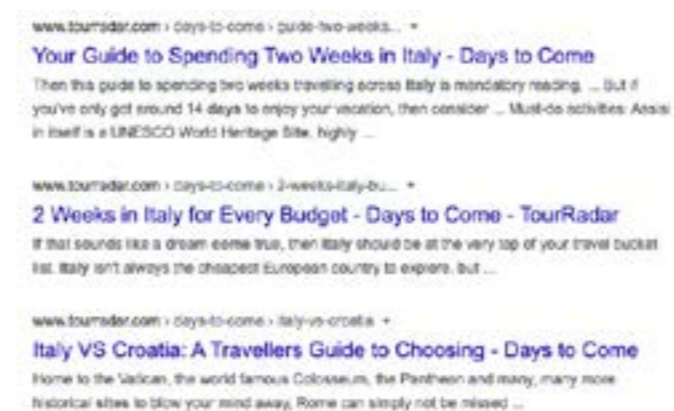
Understanding the basics of Search Engine Optimisation (AKA SEO) is a must for anyone who's thinking of starting a blog or entering into the field of online travel writing.

Though SEO is a broad topic, we're going to focus on one area that's of significant importance when it comes to online content: on-page SEO. If you're not familiar with this term, on-page SEO refers to the practice of optimising web pages to help improve their search engine rankings, and ultimately, increase organic traffic.

We'll cover a brief overview of the main on-page SEO elements here, but you can dive deeper into this topic with our list of recommended reading at the end of this section.

1. Title tags

Title tags let both search engines and visitors know what a page is about, and what they can find on the corresponding page. The title tag is not your page's primary headline — it's the text that appears at the top of your browser and in the search engine results pages (SERPs).



You can see three examples of title tags displayed in the SERPs above (the clickable headlines)

In order to ensure your content ranks for the proper intent, always include the focus keyword for each page in the title (and be sure to incorporate the keyword as naturally as possible). Additionally, you want to keep your title tag under 70 characters in length so it's not cut off in the SERPs.

2. Meta descriptions

A meta description (sometimes called a meta tag) is a 160-character snippet placed in the HTML of a webpage that's used to summarise its content. This snippet of text typically appears in the search engine results right below your page's URL (however, search engines sometimes pull text from the main body copy of the page instead).



The meta description appears directly beneath title tags in the SERPs

Ultimately, the purpose of a meta description is to encourage users to click on your link when they're performing a search query on Google. A well-written and enticing meta description can help to increase your click-through rate, which means more people click on your link and see your content.

If you want to write a stellar meta description, follow this checklist:

- Include your targeted keyword (but never keyword stuff)
- Make it compelling and write in an active voice (think of the meta description as an advertisement for your page)
- Add a call to action (i.e. learn more or get it now)
- Ensure every meta description is unique
- Try to keep your description between 135 and 160 characters in length

3. Header tags

Header tags have two main purposes: to structure the page for readability (which benefits the reader) and to help communicate what a page is about (which is beneficial to search engines).

You can think of your header tags as a way to create an outline of your article, using sections and subsections to divide your body content into scannable blocks.



WordPress makes it easy to choose the appropriate header tag throughout your article

Header tags typically indicate hierarchical levels of information, starting with the H1 followed by H2, H3, and so on. The H1 should always be the title of your post, and as you write your content, you can use H2 and H3 headings to introduce different sections.

Following this hierarchy, here's an example of how you would structure an article about tips for travelling in Europe:

- H1 (article title): 30 days in Europe: travel tips & itinerary ideas
- H2: Tips for planning your itinerary
- H3: Pick your top destinations and interests
- H3: Consider transit time and seasons
- H3: Don't try to see everything in one go

4. Image alt-text

Image alt-text is essentially like an SEO description for your photos. It lets search engines know what your images are about, which is valuable from both an SEO and an accessibility standpoint.

Keep the following in mind when adding alt-text to your images:

- Include your keyword if it makes sense and fits in a natural way
- Make sure the text is specific and descriptive

5. Body content

Above all, search engines like Google are looking for content that's authoritative, trustworthy, and original. Web pages that feature high-quality content are rewarded with higher search engine rankings, while low-quality content gets less visibility. Follow these best practices if you want to consistently craft high-quality page content:

- Make sure your content is engaging and answers the questions searchers are asking
- Incorporate target keywords as naturally as possible
- Write for a specific audience
- Create content people will want to share and link to
- Keep paragraphs small and use bold text and bullet points to break up large blocks of text and ensure the content is scannable
- Choose relevant keywords and topics

Recommended reading:

- [SEO Basics: Complete Beginner's Guide to Search Engine Optimisation](#)
- [The Ultimate Guide to On-Page SEO in 2020](#)

How to use keyword research to your advantage

Keyword research is the process of finding the terms and queries people are searching for around a specific topic. By analysing these search terms, you can get a better understanding of your target audience and the type of content they want to read. In other words, keyword research is the best way to inform your blog content strategy and create high-quality articles that show up in the top Google search results.

You can conduct keyword research using a range of tools — whether it's free idea generators like [Google Trends](#) or paid platforms like [Ahrefs](#) — but the ultimate goal is to find the ideal search terms that align with your blog's content and audience.

To kick off the keyword research process, start thinking about the topics you want to write about and that you want to rank for. Maybe it's something like solo female travel or insider tips for travelling around Europe. Once you have a list of five to ten topics, it's time to drill down even further to come up with specific keywords.

You can start brainstorming some questions or phrases you think people are searching for (like "solo female travel in India"), or use a tool like [Keyword Sheeter](#) to generate a list of keywords for you.

Then it's time to take those keywords and put them into a tool like [Google Keyword Planner](#) to start analysing monthly search volumes and competitiveness. (If a term has a higher search volume, it's typically more competitive and thus harder to rank for). Finding keywords with medium to high monthly search volumes and low competition is key to increasing your chances of ranking for a particular term.

Recommended reading:

- [Keyword Research for SEO: The Definitive Guide](#)
- [Holy Grail SEO: High Volume, Low Competition Keywords](#)
- [10 Free Keyword Research Tools](#)

Another compelling reason to start a blog? It's an easy way to begin growing your portfolio when you're just starting out in the travel writing world. With or without a blog, having a strong portfolio is a key component to securing writing gigs — and that's the topic we'll be covering in the next module.

Building a portfolio of work



If you want to succeed in the world of travel writing, having a solid portfolio is crucial. This will help you establish an online presence, increase your credibility, and attract potential clients and would-be employers.

Though you likely won't make much money from your first writing gigs (especially if you're guest blogging), taking advantage of beginner-friendly opportunities is part and parcel when you're just starting out in the industry. Once your foot is firmly in the door, you'll be better equipped to pitch esteemed publications and travel businesses that pay more.

Building a portfolio may seem daunting when you're a travel writing newbie, but there's no need to feel intimidated. We'll show you how to find publications that are looking for content from writers just like you, and how to land guest posts like a boss.

How to find publications that accept guest posts

Once you have a blog or website that showcases your writing skills, it's time to break into the industry, gain experience, and bolster your portfolio with writing samples that will help you (eventually) land paid gigs — and writing for publications like the ones we've listed below will help you do just that.

So many publications — from blogs to online magazines — are on the lookout for original and engaging content from writers with a unique voice and stellar storytelling skills.

The easiest way to find publications that accept guest posts is to type the following into Google: travel + "write for us." You'll instantly get a list of websites that are open to pitches and actively seeking unique and engaging content.

Take some time to browse through the search results to get a feel for the type of content they're after, and how closely they align with your skills and niche. Some blogs might be looking for detailed travel guides, while a publication like SUITCASE Magazine might be after narrative, first-person stories.

Regardless of the publication, be sure to read all submission guidelines carefully. The more closely you follow these guidelines, the higher your chance of getting your pitch commissioned.

To save you time and help you get your content in front of a larger audience ASAP, the following are some of the best blogs, websites, and publications to consider.

Publications for newbie travel writers:

[Matador Network](#)
[Wanderful](#)
[Wanderlust](#)
[Backpacker](#)
[The Blonde Abroad](#)
[World Nomads](#)
[six-two by Contiki](#)
[Hostel Geeks](#)
[Expedia Viewfinder](#)
[The Planet D](#)
[JourneyWoman](#)
[The Culture-ist](#)

[The Expeditioner](#)
[Travel Pulse](#)

Publications to pitch when you've built up your portfolio:

[WestJet Magazine](#)
[Verge Magazine](#)
[Los Angeles Times Travel](#)
[Delta Sky Magazine](#)
[Lonely Planet](#)
[National Geographic Travel](#)
[SUITCASE Magazine](#)
[Travel + Leisure](#)
[AFAR Magazine](#)
[Conde Nast Traveler](#)
[Travel Noire](#)

Of course, as we've shown you earlier, travel writing isn't only limited to travel-specific publications or websites. There are a whole host of lifestyle, regional, and special-interest publications looking for travel content, whether it's a story about a far-flung destination or a restaurant that's right in your backyard. Explore news websites, lifestyle blogs, and food magazines for more pitching opportunities.

Another way to find guest post writing opportunities is by joining Facebook groups for writers. Not only are these groups a fantastic place to find freelance gigs, but they also act as a supportive space where you can connect with like-minded people, ask questions, and glean advice from experienced writers.

Get started with these Facebook groups:

[The Write Life](#)
[Writers Helping Writers](#)
[The Copywriter Club](#)
[Female Travel Bloggers](#)

Using freelance websites to find work and add to your portfolio

While you're building up your blog content and pitching publications, you can also add to your portfolio using freelance job sites like [Upwork](#). This global freelance platform offers thousands of writing opportunities across a wide range of topics, including travel.

If you're looking to dip your toes into the world of freelancing and gain real-world writing experience in the process, Upwork is a great place to start. Once your account is approved, you can start tackling smaller jobs before bidding on larger, more desirable projects.

One thing to note with Upwork is that — due to the sheer volume of job postings — not all jobs are high-quality. Always look for clients that have a verified payment method and at least a handful of reviews from past freelancers.

• Further reading: [How to Land Your First Job on Upwork](#)

How niching down can help you build a portfolio quicker

Along with impeccable writing skills, publications are looking for writers who are an authority on specific topics. While travel is technically a niche, there are many different sub-niches within it — think cruises, hiking, luxury hotels, restaurants in NYC, etc. — and these are the areas you want to hone in on.

The easiest way to identify your area(s) of expertise is to ask yourself the following questions:

- What do I know the most about?
- What area do I have above-average knowledge or experience in?
- What am I passionate about?

Your niche could be anything from a specific destination (perhaps you've spent a lot of time travelling through Southeast Asia) to a skill (do you know a lot about photography?) or a style of travel (i.e. adventure travel or wellness retreats).

Don't forget to consider your style of writing, too. Do you have a knack for writing long-form narrative pieces or insanely detailed how-to guides? Whatever style of writing you excel at could be an area you end up specialising in.

Focusing on a specific niche is beneficial for several reasons: it can help you better search for jobs/opportunities that align with your skillset, and it gives you a leg up on the competition. This means you can score more writing opportunities and, ultimately, build a portfolio faster.

Showcasing your work

Last but certainly not least, you'll want to make sure your portfolio looks professional and stands out from the crowd. There are several tools you can use to showcase your work, from free platforms like [Contently](#) to paid services like [Pressfolios](#). Alternatively, you can also add a portfolio page to your personal blog or website. Play around with a few different tools and formats to see which one suits you best.

One way you can begin paving the way towards building a portfolio is by cultivating a personal brand. In the next module, we're going to show you.

Building a personal brand and leveraging social media



As a travel writer you need to be your own publicist, know how to work social media to your advantage and have a clear idea of your own personal brand. All of this can help you land more gigs, carve out your personal voice and help to build authority as a travel writer. In this section, we will share how you can begin to go about all of the above.

In this module we'll explore two essential pillars that will ensure your success as a travel writer on social media and out in the public eye:

- What is your brand: Understanding your personal brand is the most important thing you can do for yourself as a content creator. Find out what your overall mission and tone of voice are, and stick to it. Audiences will respond well to people and brands who are clear and what they are and what they want.
- Nail down your niche: What do you want to talk about for the rest of your life and who is your ideal audience. Knowing this will not only help you make content that resonates, but will help you build your following.

How to be your own publicist

Whether you're looking to get more eyeballs on your writing, land more freelance opportunities, or score your next job, promoting yourself goes a long way. The more visible you are and the more connections you make, the more likely people are to pay attention to you.

The first step to becoming your own publicist is to figure out what your personal brand is. Now, you might be thinking, what does branding have to do with travel writing?

As a travel writer, your goal is to create original and engaging stories. Your brand is simply the story of you. And the reason it's so important is because branding helps your audience and prospective clients better understand what you do, why you do it, and who you do it for. Think of it as a mix of your skills, values, beliefs, and passions reflected through your writing. Let's use Matt Kepnes from Nomadic Matt as an example. By living and breathing budget travel — and writing about it prolifically — Matt has managed to build a personal brand around this topic. Early on, he defined his what (budget travel), his why (helping people travel better for less), and his audience, or who (backpackers). People know exactly what they're getting when they visit Matt's website, and in turn, he's able to bring immense value to his readers.

Branding is all about knowing who you are and what you want, and using this insight to stand out from the competition.

Are you ready to nail down your personal brand? Here are some tips to get you started.

Define your personal brand in four steps

If you want to define your personal brand, start thinking about your expertise, your vision, and your purpose. It's not enough to just have a vague idea of these key elements — you need to be able to communicate them to others, too.

Don't worry if you're having trouble defining them — the

following exercise will help you uncover your personal brand in a few simple steps. So, grab a pen and a piece of paper and see what answers you come up with!

Step 1: Clarify your core values and writing goals

Take some time to do a little soul-searching to define what you do and why you do it. Ideally, this self-analysis should happen before you even think about starting a blog or pitching publications.

Knowing the answers to the following questions will allow you to map out the vision of your writing career and how to position yourself in the travel writing field:

- How do you want to be known and perceived? What ideas, concepts, or feelings do you want to be associated with? What do you stand for?
- Why are you interested in becoming a writer? Why do you write what you write?
- What is your idea of success?
- Who is your audience? What are they looking for in the things they read?
- What can your readers expect from you? What problems do you solve for your readers?
- How do your values and the values of your audience overlap?

Step 2: Write down three to five personal character strengths

This could include anything from creativity to humour and kindness. If you're having trouble with this, ask a friend or family member and see what they think your characteristics are. You can also take a free test that will help you find your top strengths [here](#).

Step 3: Figure out what you're most passionate about

Write down three to five things you are either passionate about or know a lot about. You can start with something broad but it's also good to get specific. Yes, your passion is probably travelling. But why? Maybe you have a passion for learning about other cultures or connecting with diverse people.

Step 4: Piece together the key elements of your brand

Using the answers and insights gleaned from steps one through three, you can now start informing the key elements of your brand. If you could be known as a leading expert on a specific topic, what would it be?

- Your brand mission: What is your purpose and what do you want to accomplish?
- Your brand message: What is the one key message you want to communicate through your writing?
- Your brand personality: What personality traits do you want to portray through your writing? Do you want to be known as someone who's funny and sarcastic or professional and intelligent?
- Your target audience: Define their demographics (age, gender, education), pain points (what questions do they have?), and their desires (what are their dreams and goals?)

Congrats! You have a personal brand! Now you know how to present yourself to your network. You can also use this to create a bio for your website, a media kit, or social media channels.

Next up, we'll touch on another factor that helps to bolster your personal brand: your niche.

Carve out your niche

In a saturated market like travel writing, it's becoming increasingly difficult to gain traction and engagement if you choose to write about anything and everything. The more you can establish yourself as an expert in one area, the more likely you are to stand out from the crowd, drive traffic to your blog, and attract prospective clients. Plus, the best personal brands are specific.

So, rather than choosing to write about a broad topic like travel, you'll want to focus on a specialised area within that topic. For example, a specific region (like Eastern Europe) or style of travel (such as wellness tourism) are niches within the topic of travel.

A simple way to find your niche is to consider your interests and passions, and what you know best. If a niche doesn't immediately come to mind, start jotting down some potential ideas, whether it's a subject you love talking about or a place you know like the back of your hand.

Another thing to consider is your character strengths and expertise. This will help you understand what's really unique about you. Now, write down a quick summary of that niche, and then carve a niche within your niche. Just one to three sentences will do.

Once you've narrowed it down to a specific topic, ask yourself: is this something I'd enjoy writing about for years to come? Is there an audience for this niche? How competitive is this niche?

Do your research to ensure there's enough interest in this niche, and that your personal level of interest also has staying power.

Optional Reading:

- [10 Golden Rules of Personal Branding](#)
- [The Complete Guide to Building Your Personal Brand](#)
- [3 Examples of Great Personal Branding](#)

The who, what, when, why and how of sharing content

So you've written your first piece of content. But what's next? The mini masterpiece you've just created deserves to be shared with your network, and here's how to do it.

Like with most things in this course, building a following and engaged community takes time, dedication and patience. You may think that you need thousands of followers, but that's not always the case. More than all of that, you need to create content of value, a personal brand, and harness your niche. Focus on these things over amassing followers and you'll cultivate an engaged audience that is really interested in

what you have to say.

You don't need to be an influencer, you can just use social media to have an online presence and as a touch point for editors and as a place to showcase your travel writing.

Each social media channel has its own persona and purpose and should be treated as such. What you share on Instagram, for example, will likely be very different to what you share on LinkedIn. Understanding each channel's purpose is important in determining what you'll post where and when.

Take a good look at your audience, their likes, dislikes, needs and wants, and create a brand voice for yourself around that. Are they quirky? Or do they prefer their copy without fluff? Do they like images over videos or vice versa? Does your audience skew more on the younger side or are they established professionals looking to connect? If you're wondering how to do this, there are a few tools available online to help make the process easier, like [this](#). The more you tailor content to your audience, the higher chances of success you will have.

The rule of thumb is generally to treat LinkedIn and Twitter as your running resume or portfolio, the work you share here should reflect the time and effort you've put into creating your content, but should also help solidify you as a force to be reckoned with in your given field. While you can share the same content on Instagram and Facebook, most creatives choose to use these channels for light-hearted content promotion that allows them to showcase their personality a bit more.

Here are three practices to keep in mind across all social media channels.

- Determine who your audience is: You cannot build an engaged community on social media strategy without determining your audience. It's a two-way relationship. While you will attract an audience that is interested in your travel writing and your ideas, you'll also have to create content that is of value to them and not just based on your tastes and likes.
- Follow and connect: Consider your overall social strategy like a house, if you have a strong foundation, your house won't fall. In this case, your house is your network - follow and genuinely engage with people you admire in your niche. This will help you down the line when the content you share performs well. Remember authenticity always wins.
- Timing is everything: Though understanding who your audience is important, determining when they're the most active is equally as important. A quick Google search will tell you what the best times to post on each channel are, but it's always good to run some tests yourself by sharing your content at different times on the same days and see which pieces get engaged with the most. From there, you'll be able to determine when to post your work.

In the following sections, we're going to give you three best practices for Instagram, Facebook and Twitter to consider when you're starting out.

Telling your story on Instagram: best practices for travel writers

You don't need us to tell you how valuable Instagram is when it comes to fuelling wanderlust and sharing beautifully edited photos from our travels. There's more to it than shots of sunsets and using #blessed.

1. Profile Bio: Unlike LinkedIn, your bio can be a little more fun on Instagram. Let everyone know you're a travel writer, where you are in the world with a little flag and if you've got any trips coming up. If you have a personal blog, you can add a link to it here as well.
2. The beauty of Instagram is that you can use tags and mentions to amplify your presence. Don't be afraid to tag tourism boards and travel brands that you want to connect with in your pictures and stories. User-generated content is a treasure trove for them.
3. A lot of travel writers and travel bloggers share images that link to posts and content they have written. If you are sharing images with the hopes that people will head to the link in your bio, you need a really strong hook. Don't just rely on inspiring landscapes and passages about trees, you need a strong call to action. Grab their attention with something meaty and substantial. Get really good at writing Instagram captions. Try to keep in mind that your image and caption are also part of telling your travel story, so make it engaging and interesting, instead of long winded and self-indulgent.

As you dive deeper into the world of travel writing, if you decide to cultivate and grow your personal brand through social media, you can use Instagram as a platform to start defining your personal voice more with select colours in your images, filters, hashtags and lots more. While every picture will tell its own story, all of it will feed into the larger picture of your brand as a travel writer.

How to use Facebook as a travel writer: building a community that cares

Whether you have a personal blog or you're looking for a space for where you can share freelance articles you have written, having a Facebook page or group is a good way to do it.

First things first, should you pick a page or group or both? Facebook Groups have been around before pages, think of a page as more of a public profile for your brand. When Facebook Pages first launched, the use of groups fell a little to the wayside, but they've had a bit of a comeback recently.

A Facebook Group is more community-oriented, a space where people can discuss things and share their thoughts and recommendations - this is a good place to begin if you're just getting started. Join relevant pages and engage with creators like yourself.

While a Facebook Page is a great way to share and promote your travel writing, it's also a great touch point for editors and tourism boards and might be a better option if this is what you're hoping to get out of this social media channel. This page can serve as your "live" portfolio, a place where editors

and publishers alike can see your content and how well it was engaged with. However, if you really want to build a community then a Facebook Group might be a better option for you.

1. Share other people's content! While it might be tempting to use Facebook to constantly share your personal content, you also need to share other content that your audience or community will find valuable. Videos, memes, content written by other writers should also be a big part of what you post. When you do this authentically, you also build ties and relationships with other writers and editors in your community, and they'll also be more interested in what you're doing.
2. Have a consistent posting schedule. You don't need to post five times a day every day, but having a content calendar is important. What you post when will likely be informed by your audience. Maybe they look forward to cocktail recipes inspired by famous beaches on a Thursday before the weekend, and like motivational articles at the beginning of the week - test this out, but eventually you'll create the right posting schedule and make sure you stick to it!
3. Join other groups and like other pages on Facebook and be an active member. You don't have to spend your entire day on social media, but putting an hour of quality time engaging with other travel writers and travel bloggers and their communities will make you feel part of the community.

What the Tweet? Learn how to use Twitter as a travel writer

When Twitter first launched it was a platform for individuals from all walks of life to engage with each other in a way that other apps didn't offer at the time. As the app grew, it began to dominate the social networking space as the great connector - brands to creators, fans to their favourite celebrities. If you're hoping to take your skills to the next level, land some freelance work or just get on your favourite editors' and publishers' radars, here are some simple tips to incorporate.

1. Get personal! You're likely already aware that all important conversations on social media take place in the DMs (direct messages), and the same goes for any professional conversations on social media. If there's a publisher you want to befriend, the best way is to shoot them a direct message. Be authentic and share something that you think they will genuinely enjoy (or better yet, something that their audience will enjoy). However, be careful. Though your favourite editor may have a Twitter account, they might only use it to share their work and may not necessarily appreciate unsolicited pitches, make sure to read their bio carefully and see if it's something they're open to before proceeding.
2. Hashtags are your best friends. Take a moment and do some research on what hashtags your fellow writers, editors and publishers are using. Find a few that align with your tone and content, and begin to use those when you post a piece of work. But just like your best friends IRL (in real life), you want to spread love and not just spend your time with one friend, so make sure to constantly switch up the hashtags that you use and research what is trending in your niche. Remember to have fun too, but if there is one

thing you should not do, ever, is use a hashtag just because it's trending. Note: Twitter has increased its character limit to 280!

3. Dive in and join the conversation! If Instagram is about images, Twitter is all about conversations, so don't be shy and join in! If you see a point that you agree with, jump in and share your perspective. Twitter is all about sharing your thoughts and expertise, so if the opportunity presents itself, join the conversation. If you want to take it a step further, you can even host a Twitter chat with a few members of your community. Most importantly, be yourself and use your discretion, after all, we're talking about your brand!

Engaging with editors and publishers on social media

Picture this, you've just finished adding the final touches to your piece of content and you decide that you'd like to share this with your favourite editor or publisher.

Except you've never actually engaged with them online (outside of following them). Though you may get lucky and get a response, chances are your work may never get seen. Unless you build a relationship with them. Much like dating, you need to get to know someone before you hit them with a request. Though following your favourite editors is the first step, it's certainly not the last.

React to the content they share (like, retweet etc. aka the works) but do so authentically, if you genuinely cannot relate to what they're saying, don't react. After all, no one likes a faker. When you feel you have confidently set the foundation (and that you've done your research), send them your work.

Top tips:

- Share only where it makes sense to: Marshall McLuhan said it best when he said that "the medium is the message". Where you share your content is just as important as how you share it. Some editors and publishers prefer being emailed, while others will likely respond to an Instagram and Twitter direct message (this is where building a relationship and doing your research comes into play).
- Play it cool: Though you may be excited to share every article you write with editors and publishers you have connected successfully with, just don't do it! Avoid becoming an annoyance by sharing select work you think them (and their audiences) will truly enjoy.

How to create and leverage your LinkedIn profile

LinkedIn operates the world's largest professional network on the Internet with over 600 million members in over 200 countries and territories.

Think of LinkedIn as a portfolio of your professional self. The platform can be used as a powerful tool to showcase your work, make valuable connections, and land your next opportunity. What happens when an editor, recruiter or networking acquaintance googles your name? Chances are, your LinkedIn profile will be a top-five result.

If you're new to LinkedIn or have thrown up a profile but haven't done much with it, don't worry. It's easy to get up to speed quickly and leverage it.

Creating or enhancing your profile

Visuals

- Profile Photo: it's important to have a professional profile photo so when someone searches for you, maybe after you meet him or her at an event, they recognize your face. You can use a professional head shot if you have one but it's not necessary. Just make sure the photo is of you only and is of high quality.
- Background Banner Photo: this is optional but is recommended to help highlight who you are and visually support the written portion of your profile. Use one of your favourite travel photos or something unique that brings out your personality. Here are a couple of examples: [Mia Taylor](#), [Nina Ruggiero](#).

Content

- Headline: this is a quick blurb about what you do. If you don't put anything here, it defaults to your current professional position. That's fine if you have one but often writers have multiple roles and skills that you will want to highlight. For example, you could write: "Freelance Writer, Photographer, and Social Media Strategist."
- About: this is your chance to give a quick overview of who you are. Take a few minutes before writing this to think of your strengths you want to highlight and the message you want to get across. Be concise. If you're struggling with this, take a look at the below section on how to craft your personal brand.
- Work experience/education/volunteer experience: This is where you include info similar to as you would in your resume. If you're a freelance writer, you can post your work experience as one position and list the outlets you have contributed to. If you've worked in-house somewhere, you will want to separate this out into a separate role.

Extras

- Skills & Endorsements: This is where you can add a set of skills like editing, blogging, social media, etc. People in your network who you've worked with can then endorse these skills, adding some validity to your profile. This can help you show up more often in search results by recruiters.
- Recommendations: This is where you can ask people from your network to write a short endorsement for you. It's a good idea to have a few of these in your profile to show that people enjoy working with you. Through the platform, you can request an endorsement from former managers or colleagues. You can also write a recommendation for someone else.
- Featured: This is a good place to include any media outlet you may have been quoted in. You can also use this section to link back to your website, blog, or photo portfolio.

- Accomplishments: Here, you can add any awards, certifications, or courses you may have completed.

How to leverage LinkedIn

After you've completed your profile, you can start to leverage LinkedIn to showcase your work and find new opportunities. Here are some tips:

- Build your network by connecting with others: this is really important. The more connections you have, the more people see your work. If you're thinking about applying to a position or reaching out to someone, LinkedIn will show you all the people you have a shared connection with. Maybe a good friend or former colleague has a connection to an editor or a job posting you're interested in. You can leverage this to ask for an intro.
- Keep your profile updated.
- Follow media outlets and companies that you are interested in.
- Join an alumni association or professional networking group.
- Job search. LinkedIn has become one of the largest platforms for job postings.
- Be active! Post your latest blog post and ask your network what they think. Comment on other people's posts, share your perspective and show support. This is how connections are made.

Resources:

- [Rock Your LinkedIn Profile](#)

Reading assignment

As you start building your personal brand, there's one more thing you'll need to add to your travel writer's arsenal: an author bio. Although you only need to craft a brief paragraph, this snippet is important because it gives readers a sense of who you are, what you're about, and why you have the authority/expertise to be writing about a particular topic.

To help you get a better idea of how to write a stellar author bio check out this article:


- [About the Author: How to Write a Quality Author Bio](#)

Writing assignment

- After you've read the article above, take a shot at crafting your own author bio.
- Remember to always write in third person, mention your credentials, and be sure to inject your unique voice into the writing.

- Don't just write one bio and then call it a day! Try writing at least five different versions to see what you come up with and which iteration is most impactful.

Having a personal brand, building on your social media savvy and carving out a niche are tried and tested ways to stand out from the crowd. In the next module, we'll impart more ways you can learn to thrive as a travel writer.



Tips to help you stand out from the crowd

We've touched on various ways to stand out as a travel writer throughout this course, but we're breaking this topic down even further. Given the competitive nature of the travel writing industry, setting yourself apart is absolutely vital in this field.

After publishing countless articles across a wide range of publications, we've learned a thing or two about what it takes to ensure your content rises above the noise — and that's what we'll be sharing in this section.

Create next-level content

We've mentioned this before, but it bears repeating: exceptional content is crucial to building authority, and of course, standing out from other writers.

But what does "next-level content" really mean? There's no one-size-fits-all answer to this question, but the following factors are key to creating high-quality content.

It's original. You can't rehash the same content that already exists online and call it high-quality. If you want people to take a few minutes out of their day to read something you wrote, you must ensure the copy you're sharing is unique.

It adds value to the reader. There are various ways your content can add value to your audience, whether it demystifies a complex topic, teaches the reader something new, inspires them to visit a destination, or answers a question.

It's better than the competition. If you want to outshine your competition, you have to analyse what your competition is publishing. While scoping out their content, ask yourself: How long is the content? Have they missed any important points or related information? Are people asking additional questions in the comments? From there, you can then figure out how to craft your copy in a way that outshines your competition.

It achieves a specific objective. Before you hit "publish," you need to think about a specific goal you'd like to achieve with your content, be it generating traffic to your blog, ranking on the first page of Google, or sparking a conversation with readers in the comments section. If it achieves that goal, you can rest assured knowing it's a quality piece of content.

In short, you'll know you're on the right track if you're creating original content that engages your audience, answers readers' questions, and stands out from a sea of competitors.

Hone your unique writer's voice

Another thing that sets you apart is your distinctive writer's voice. When we say "writer's voice," we mean everything that gives you a unique flair as a writer — from your tone to your style, your personality and your perspective.

Your writer's voice is essentially the fullest expression of you that comes through your writing. It shapes your storytelling, gives life to your content, and helps you connect with your readers on a deeper level.

Your writer's voice is something that will develop and improve naturally over time. It's very much a process; the more you read

and the more you write, the more your unique voice will begin to take centre stage.

Draw from personal experience

So much travel content gets lost in the noise because the subject or angle has already been done to death. Echoing stories that have been shared a thousand times over doesn't work because people love fresh, original content; they want to read something they've never read before.

The easiest way to consistently create unique travel content is to start by writing about what you know. Even if you've only travelled to places that have been written about extensively, no one has experienced that destination like you; no one has met the people you met and had the conversations you had. You bring a one-of-a-kind perspective to everything you write, and that's exactly what sets it apart.

Drawing on personal experience automatically gives you a unique angle that hasn't been covered before. The world doesn't necessarily need another listicle about the top 10 things to do in Bali, but there will always be a demand for genuine stories inspired by real events, real people, and real emotions.

We all have a story to tell — think about what makes yours worth reading.

Network

Not only is networking a powerful way to connect with industry peers and professionals, but it's also a great tactic to increase your visibility, uncover writing opportunities, and ultimately, build your authority.

If you prefer to start with virtual networking, join Facebook groups like [The Write Life Community](#) and [The Aspiring Travel Writer](#) to find other writers and peers in your niche. Travel blogging groups also act as an excellent means to forge connections that may lead to collaborations or job prospects.

When you head to an industry event or conference, be sure to arrive with specific goals in mind — namely who you want to meet and why you want to connect with them. Some event platforms (like Eventbrite) display the attendee list, so you can scan it and do some research before attempting to strike up a conversation in person.

Rather than talking to high-level professionals exclusively, make it your primary goal to be friendly and open instead. Forge connections with people who may be able to help you, and also with people you can help. Having the willingness to help and speak to everyone is a special quality that people will remember.

Create a newsletter

If you're creating content, get it out to people! Start small. Write down a list of a few contacts who might be interested in seeing your latest content or updates. [TinyLetter](#) is one tool you could use for this. [Here](#) is an example.

Info calls and mentorship

Reach out to people who are where you want to be. Ask them if they would be willing to hop on a brief info call to pick their brain and give advice. LinkedIn is a good place to search for these people. You would be surprised how many are willing to connect.

Donate your time

Sometimes it just comes down to this: give in order to receive. Find places to volunteer your services or pay it forward by offering advice to more junior writers.

Apply for speaking engagements and thought leadership opportunities

Once you have built up a portfolio, you can start pitching yourself as an expert in your area. Conference and meetup organisers are often looking for experts willing to provide their perspective on specific topics. [HARO](#) (free) and [Profnet](#) (monthly fee) newsletters are good resources to use to find opportunities for media commentary. You can also reach out to local news producers when there is a media story that you have particular expertise on.



Free resources for travel writers

As you get started in the world of travel writing, look to these tools, websites, resources, and communities to help you navigate this exciting industry.

Travel writing websites

[Travel Writers Exchange](#) - Featuring articles from a community of travel writers, bloggers, and journalists, this is a great place to find information on a wide range of industry-related topics.

[Rolf Potts](#) - Travel writer and author of the well-known book *Vagabonding*, Rolf Potts' website is brimming with travel stories and insightful interviews with travel writers.

Websites to improve your writing

[The Write Life](#) - Discover advice on blogging, pitching ideas, guest posting, and more.

[Daily Writing Tips](#) - Find simple yet effective tips on everything from grammar, punctuation, style, and much more.

[Writing Prompts](#) - Featuring new writing prompts posted daily, this site offers plenty of inspiration to get the creative juices flowing and break through writer's block.

[Grammar Girl](#) - If you have a grammar-related question, you'll likely find the answer on this website.

Writing tools

[Grammarly](#) - When you need a second set of eyes on your work, this app will do the editing for you.

[Hemingway Editor](#) - Designed to analyse grammar, sentence structure, and fluency, Hemingway is another great editing tool.

[Capitalize My Title](#) - Confused about capitalisation? This tool has you covered.

[Visuwords](#) - This visual dictionary lets you look up words to find their meanings and associations with other words.

[Noisli](#) - Choose your own custom mix of ambient noise when you need to focus with this app.

[Cold Turkey](#) - Block distracting websites and apps and boost your productivity with Cold Turkey.

[Cliché Finder](#) - This handy tool highlights clichés so you can recognize them and remove them.

[Clippings.me](#) - Create an online portfolio and showcase your work.

Blogging tools and resources

[Google Analytics](#) - Dig into the data behind your blog posts, including insight about your audience and how your content is performing.

[Google Trends](#) - Inspire your blog content with ideas from the world's top trending phrases and topics.

[AnswerThePublic](#) - Harvesting auto-complete data from Google and other search engines, this tool lets you search for questions and phrases people are searching around specific keywords and topics.

[Keyword Sheeter](#) - Use this tool to generate a list of keyword ideas quickly and easily.

[Google Keyword Planner](#) - Google's premier keyword tool offers valuable keyword data, from monthly search volumes to related keywords and more.

[Headline Analyzer](#) - By breaking down length, word choice, and several other factors, this tool can help you create more impactful headlines.

[Branding for Writers ebook](#) - Learn how to define your vision, voice, and value with tips from travel writer and illustrator Candace Rose Rardon.

Facebook groups

[The Aspiring Travel Writer](#) - Connect with like-minded people and find answers to your most pressing questions about travel writing.

[The Write Life](#) - Become a better writer and learn from the experts.

[Female Travel Bloggers](#) - This is a great place to share your content, find guest post opportunities, and learn about travel blogging.

Job boards and leads

[Matador Marketplace](#)

[Upwork](#)

[ProBlogger Job Board](#)

[Behance](#)

[Freelance Writing Jobs](#)

[Who Pays Writers?](#)

Inspiration for travel writers

Documentaries

Ugly Delicious - Explore the cultural, sociological, and culinary history of a popular food around the world with this docuseries.

Salt Fat Acid Heat - What makes food delicious? That's the question chef and food writer Samin Nosrat sets out to answer as she travels around the world in this docuseries.

Exit Through the Gift Shop - This documentary tells the story of a French shopkeeper turned documentary maker as he attempts to locate and befriend Banksy.

Floyd Norman: An Animated Life - A feature documentary about 80-year-old Disney legend Floyd Norman, the first African-American animator at Disney Studios.

Jane's Journey - Travel across several continents and take an in-depth look at the life and work of Jane Goodall in this documentary.

Maidentrip - Maidentrip chronicles the story of 14-year-old Laura Dekker as she pursues her dream to be the youngest person ever to sail around the world alone.

Chef's Table - Each episode of Chef's Table focuses on a renowned international chef, including a snapshot of their lives, talents, and passions.

Abstract: The Art of Design - This series offers an insightful glimpse into different types of processes and inspirations as portrayed by designers in various fields.

Ai Weiwei: Never Sorry - Get a behind-the-scenes look at the life of Ai Weiwei — an acclaimed Chinese artist and activist — as he prepares for major museum exhibitions and clashes with the Chinese government.

Street Food - From Thailand to India to South Korea and Vietnam, this documentary dives deep into the tradition of street food.

The Eagle Huntress - Follow the story of thirteen-year-old Aisholpan as she trains to become the first female in twelve generations of her nomad family to become an eagle huntress.

Reading list

Travel Writing by Don George - This is a must-read for any aspiring travel writer.

The Travel Writer's Handbook: How to Write and Sell Your Own Travel Experiences by Louise Purwin Zobel and Jacqueline Harmon Butler - Hone your skills and dive deeper into the topic of travel writing with this helpful book.

Unlikely Destinations: The Lonely Planet Story by Tony Wheeler and Maureen Wheeler - Learn more about the founders of one of the most impactful travel publishing companies on the planet.

Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria by Noo Saro-Wiwa - Uncover the essence of Nigeria from a local's

perspective in this eye-opening travelogue.

Journeys of a Lifetime by National Geographic - Embark on a journey across the world's most famous and lesser-known locales as told by National Geographic's travel writers.

A Small Place by Jamaica Kincaid - Drawing on the author's upbringing in Antigua, this book explores the impact of colonisation and tourism on this ten-by-twelve-mile island.

Dark Star Safari by Paul Theroux - Paul Theroux takes readers on an overland journey from Cairo to Cape Town in this rich and insightful book.

Questions of Travel by Michelle de Kretser - This thought-provoking book explores travel and tourism, work and leisure, and the nuances of modern life through two characters with wildly different lives.

On the Road by Jack Kerouac - This classic novel chronicles Jack Kerouac's years travelling the North American continent in a quest for self-knowledge.

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini - Afghanistan is the backdrop for this heart-wrenching book that tells a story of friendship, love, family, and childhood trauma.

Microadventures by Alastair Humphreys - This guide explores the art of the microadventure, a short, cheap, and close-to-home adventure that's accessible to just about anyone and everyone.

The Art of Travel by Alain de Botton - Brimming with intelligence and charm, this book delves into the how and why of travel.

Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found by Suketu Mehta - Mehta gives readers an insider's view of Bombay and the people who call it home, from Bollywood stars to gang members and more.

In Patagonia by Bruce Chatwin - Filled with exquisite storytelling, In Patagonia follows Bruce Chatwin's journey across the southern tip of South America.

Full Tilt: Ireland to India with a Bicycle by Dervla Murphy - Read the diary of Dervla Murphy as she chronicles her incredible cycling trek across Europe, through Iran and Afghanistan, over the Himalayas to Pakistan and India.

Around the World in 80 Trains by Monisha Rajesh - Rajesh offers a wonderfully vivid account of life, history, and culture — and the romance of rail travel — in this funny and captivating memoir.

