



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

Today we are going to talk about how to get a spot on a group fam or press trip. In the last couple weeks we have looked at the fundamental of what are the different kinds of trips and we have talked about how to set up your own individual trip and now we are going to look at what is out there. In term of things that have already been set up by CVB's which are tourism boards and PR firms to represent their clients and how you get on those.

I think you know now I have talked to a lot of different people via these webinars as well as just people I talk to on the road doing these classes. That there is a perception that most trips are actually group trips that we are going to talk about but a lot of people are out there setting up their own individual trips. If you are new to this, however if you are new to travel writing or you are new to asking for free travel, a group trip can be a good way to start. And not just because it's "easier" and it's not always and we are going to look at that in a little bit. But because you will get to see how other established writers go about taking these trips and learn that way. So if you are new to sponsored travel this can be a really great place to start.

Specifically what we are going to talk about today...the main...like the key to unlocking the lock on these trips. It is very very very simple and I think a lot of people forget and we touched a little bit last week but it is even more important on group trips that you are applying for than when you try to set up an individual trip. And then we are going to talk about where these trips live, so to say as in where you can find them online, how can you find out they are happening, how can you get in the loop. In some cases that is setting yourself up to have them come to you. The majority of trips just like the majority jobs or writing gigs are never listed online they are filled by people reaching out to individuals to get them on that trip. Especially small boutique shops differentiate themselves saying they do everything by hand and what this means for a PR person is that they are going out and checking the writers sites and checking out writers clips and inviting on an individual one to one basis writers onto trips based on the research they have already done on that person.

We are going to talk about how to make sure you get found for those, and then we are going to look at I have pulled up three different trips. Trips that I have been invited on, so like the ones that come in through email, ones that come from conference listing, just because you are going to the conference. If you are new this is the best one to get on to, then I have pulled up trips that have been advertised on sites if you are a writer you can get on and look at these sites.

So I have pulled three different trips for each of these types and I am going to go through these quickly when we get to that part of the call but then I would love to hear from folks who are here what ones they would like to look at more in depth. So as we get to the actual listing that I have taken verbatim of these different trips let me know what you are most interested in and we will take a look at.



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

I myself have been on—I don't, I actually travel on my own but over the course of writing especially for magazines I write for when I need to go or do a lot of research in a specific area—I have been on quite a few trips over the years, but I have never had a request to go on a trip be turned down. It is more often that I turn them down. So we are going to look at how you become one of those people to get those tourism boards or the PR boards to say yes to your requests.

Okay before we get this train moving why do people get no's or why do people think it is hard to get on a press trip in the first place.

I think that one of the things I hear from people a lot is that they don't have published clips yet, and this I think is kind of out there—well how can you, who would even care about you to go on a trip if you haven't written anywhere. The simple answer is that you need to go get some clips but it is more complicated than that because the thing is that, if you are a writer who has been published in a different vertical, for instance we had some folks at our workshops over the weekend who are science writers or who different types of writing. If you have a publications track record that still ticks that box for a PR person even if you don't have a publication track record in travel specifically. But the other thing is, if you line up an assignment that aligns up with the press trip, it doesn't matter if you have been published before because you are going to publish something from this trip.

Other folks on here have been saying they have blogs and their blog isn't large enough. I started going on press trips when I was primarily a blogger actually and had my own blog that was small but then what I did was I had several other blogs I wrote for then I also pitched magazines.

Next week we are going to look specifically how to put together a really robust portfolio of places that you are going to pitch for one specific trip but the thing is that if you have a blog that is new or small don't be discouraged because you can aggregate that you are going to write for several places. That adds up to a larger audience some other things that folks are saying, "the market is flooded and super competitive."

I really love this, I think often folks don't apply whether it's for a trip or pitching a magazine or to a writing gig because they think that there are so many people out there who are better than them—and we have a whole chapter on this in the Six Figure Travel Writing Road Map—but the really stark reality right now (and I have seen this myself personally trying to find writers for the database) the number of people who are great, who get their work done, who get it done well, who don't spend too much time asking questions, who just do it is very very small. And even if you don't feel that you are that person yet, you can become that type



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

of person. When I started, I got this question a lot, people say “oh well I don’t have a journalism background.” I don’t have a degree in journalism, my degree is in literature and not English literature, my degree is in Italian Language Literature, I didn’t even go to school in English my entire University career was Italian, Germany, and Spanish. I barely even wrote in English.

Just because you think you don’t have that background doesn’t mean you can’t position yourself as the type of person who gets these things. Alright so let’s look at what exactly people are looking for to put you on a press trip. So if you read a description of a press trip (and we are going to look at some of these later if you have never seen them before) if you read a description of a press trip and you say, “WOW, that is a trip that is so perfect for me, for my audience, for the places that I write for, whatever it is perfect I have to go on this trip or I have to apply for this trip.” It is clear you feel that moment of shhhhwoop. That perfect glove fit. The thing is that PR people also feel that, if you write to the person who is organizing the trip and you check all the boxes it is very easy for them to say yes to you.

What we want to do, our goal is to make the people setting up these trips feel the same thing we feel when we read that perfect trip. We want to make them read your application, your email and say “Oh yes, of course this person should be on the trip I am just going to put them on the list right away.” The reason for this is that if you get on the category of maybe it can get very difficult to get out and we have looked before at this quote that I just love from this fellow Peter Fish who is an editor at large, or was at the time when he said this at *Sunset*. Somebody asked him at a conference, how long does it take you to respond to pitches? They didn’t ask him specifically they asked the whole panel of editors and everyone kind of looked sideways at each other, he very vigilantly took the microphone and said, “if it’s a yes, 15 minutes and if it’s a no, 30 minutes and if it’s a maybe, then indefinitely.”

This same thing applies to press trips, if you are absolutely a fit they know and if you are absolutely not a fit then they know, and if they are not quite sure, then it is absolutely going to take forever because they are going to see if there is someone who is better that comes along.

Our job when we want to get on these trips is to show them that there is not someone better. What happens is that when they are filling these trips often trips are posted some number of weeks that you can count on one or two hands before the trip goes out so if you get on that maybe category by the time they have decided exactly who the clear yes’s are and are deciding on the maybes and get around to asking you it might be too late for you to go on that trip.



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

We have Lenora with a follow-up over here, “what about setting up individual trips after being on a group trip? So many destinations have encouraged me to return any time but I have been afraid to reach out.”

We’re going to talk later about negotiating for extra days on your trip, but in terms of setting up individual trips after a group trip I would go back to the webinar we did last week about setting up individual trips cause I think that comes under the valley of setting up an individual trip unless you are just going to tack on extra days which we are going to talk about.

We don’t want to be in the maybe category, we have decided on that. So how do we make sure we are in the clear yes area, alright, there is only one thing you need to do. That is to make sure that you are exactly what they are looking for. Oh yeah, well how do I do that? Right, we are going to talk specifically about how.

This is literally it, when I was new and I had a blog and I hadn’t written many places, I started going on press trips and I couldn’t believe how easy it was, because I had figured out what they needed, what they wanted, what kind of coverage they were looking for, what would make them say yes and I just did exactly that. It can sound like “Oh well, that seems simple, but how do you actually do it?” The fact of the matter is that the only thing you need to know—there is no golden key—if you write for the *New York Times* you are going to get accepted on every press trip. Obviously if you write for the *New York Times* you shouldn’t be going on press trips. There is no golden name that you can drop; there is no specific strategy that works every time except for this.

We are going to look at some ways to do that. Here is the questions, what can you do if you aren’t what they are looking for? Now I find this to be the position more people get into. So you look at the trip, and again we will look at some trips in a little bit, but you look at a trip and they say, I am going to reference that I posted and sent out in the news letter that I sent out recently that looked fascinating it was nearly a week long or more—which is practically unheard of these days. It was a really great trip practically all of Texas and some really interesting high-level things a great diversity of topic areas, and I couldn’t go. So I sent it out to my email list to see if there were some other people but before I did that I asked that the gentlemen tell me exactly what we are looking for so I can send it to our list so they know. He said a design writer or maybe people who have a meetings background. He didn’t say it needed to be a specific publication or a confirmed assignment, but he said some topic areas.

What happens if your background isn’t exactly what they are looking for? You make a pitching plan that fits that trip, you don’t talk about your background you just talk about the



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

placements you are going to work on securing that relates to this trip. The golden rule of thumb here—and I am going to give you a checklist of what should and shouldn't be in your pitch letter—the golden rule of thumb here is that if it doesn't matter for this trip it should not be in your pitch letter. If your writing is primarily about local music around the US and traveling in an RV but you want to go on a trip that is in Yurts in Canada. What do you do? Do you say, “Hey I am a writer and I live here and I write about this this and this and here are some clips about that you can find. And I saw that you have this trip and I am interested on going on it.” No, you don't tell them all this stuff that you do that isn't related to the pitch of this trip. You say that I saw that you have this trip covering this this and this I would love to cover that trip in XYZ places. I am a published writer if you would like to see some clips let me know and I can send them. But we only tell them the things that they want to hear that they want to hear that are relevant to the trip at hand.

What if in that trip the initial email or the initial posting they didn't say who they are looking for? So remember I said with the person who sent this really long itinerary to me the other day, he sent it to me but I wanted to send it to other people. So essentially I had to get from him what he was looking for. That little paragraph that says we want design writers we want people who are going to get a national magazine placement, we want someone with a social media following over 10,000, that paragraph is not always there, and you are going to see that later when we look at individual postings.

How do you find out more than what is there, about what is going to be your secret key to help you get on that trip? Here are some of my little spy work things that I do, first of all if it is sent out by a tourism board, a PR firm, even by a hotel, you can go to their page on their website where they list coverage and see what kind of things they highlight. Then you can do two things, you can say okay they are most proud of this type of clip, their most proud of clips in magazines within the region that are major magazines. They are most proud of clips that are long. They are most proud of clips that are in national magazines. So that is the one piece of research you do. The other piece of research is you see what is missing. If that's the stuff they are mostly interested in, is there a hole there? Have they been covered in *Midwest Living* and *Minnesota Monthly* but not *Milwaukee Magazine* or *Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine*? You look for an area that is missing; you can also do this in a much wider area. So they are looking for national clips, so they have a lot of US national clips. So you say okay, folks often visit this region from Asia or from folks from the UK or folks from Ireland or folks from Australia and I don't see they have any mentions in Australian, British, Asian print publications. That's the hole!

The next thing you can do, this is really great for any time you are doing something with a tourism board especially, but the next thing you can do is figure out what are their objectives that they have publicly committed to in terms of secured media coverage. For instance, say



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

you have been invited by a tourism board also known as a CVB or convention visitors bureau and that CVB has a website, on their website if you dig through their About page, you will see who is the staff, what is the mission for the entire CVB. Then you are also going to find some reports or annual objectives. Because these types of organization, because they are typically governmental or non-profit, they need to publicly state for the people who are invested in them, whether it is the government that is providing money or if it's a non-profit they have donors and they also get funding from other areas. They need to declare what their objectives are and typically in the annual report of that CVB or tourism board they are going to say what their media objectives are and if they have met them and what type of coverage they have gotten in the past. This is pay dirt, it is handed to you on a silver platter exactly what they are looking for in terms of securing media coverage and then you do the same subtraction trick we did with the clips page.

If this is what they say this is what they are looking for, what do you not see on their clips page? What is missing? What have they promised their investors whoever they are that they are going to deliver, that they haven't yet? With a hotel or with other for profits institutions they don't necessarily need to be as transparent about this, but there are still some ways to check and so depending on what type of hotel or attraction is sponsoring the trip. Depending on what they are they still probably have some type of annual report that goes out, that you can find. It might not be easily listed on their website, if it's a large one hotel in a large chain it might be on their parent website. You can look around for things like that, but it works really well when it's for the local tourism board. The thing is that often these for profit institutions are working with the local tourism board, whether its to set up in a financial setting like the tourism board is contributing some money, or they just work with them on a regular basis. So even if you have been invited by a hotel or invited by a festival you can still circle back to what the greater tourism board is looking at. I am just back from the Food and Travel Association conference in Portland where I was speaking, and one of the other speakers was this woman who runs this event called Feast Portland, she said that their media coverage, even though the trips are essentially for the Feast Portland event, is set up by the CVB.

What if you cannot find any of these things and you see a trip listed on a conference webpage or on a website that lists press trips, what if you see a trip some where but it is not clear who they are aiming for? You get the email of the contact person that you apply to for the trip and you write them and you ask. This is really great for a couple reasons this asking not only allows you to find out what they are looking for but you even get a smaller slice, you get what they are looking for that they haven't gotten an application for yet. So this can be something really useful to do anytime because they are going to tell you "we are looking for this this and that or we are looking for someone for blah." They are going to tell you exactly what they need to fill out that trip.



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

If you have questions make sure you drop them in the side over here. So the order of operations for how these trips go is the following. I have included some steps that won't happen every time but I want to discuss them with you so you know just in case they come up with you. So when a press trip is announced, that announcement can be via emails that are individually sent to people who have been compiled to invite to the list, it can be posting to a website where these press trips are posted. That can be a lot of different places.

But when a trip is announced that starts phase one, so this is the initial application period. So for you as the writer, this is when you are going to put your name in the hat. Even if you are invited individually by email, you still typically need to fill out some information for them. A lot of the time in order to go on the trip, this is typically when you are putting together the application.

Now the next thing I mentioned, if you are somehow in that maybe bucket, if they see you and you are not an automatic shoe in, then you are going to get into this holding pattern and one of the best ways to get that spot if you're in the maybe category is to follow up with them regularly like once a week. What happens is that they would rather have someone who is really interested on the trip than someone who is not. Even if the person has potentially better placements because PR people are all about relationships, they want to work with somebody who is going to be placing the trip multiple times. They want the best return on their investment, they want to work with you if you have a clear interest.

If you write them and you don't hear anything back in a week, make sure you are following up and you are following up regularly and you are being helpful. You ask them if there is anything else that you can get them to help them with the decision, you are asking you know if they are interested in you pitching a story based on this aspect of the trip.

In the follow-ups you are giving them something to work with. Now the next type of follow up that can come from their end is asking for more information on what you have mentioned in your application email. These days this takes a form of them asking for circulation numbers on different outlets you have mentioned, this can be on your own blog or even magazines you are writing for. I have noticed these days PR people have gotten lazy but rather than themselves go to the publications which very clearly has media kits online, they are going to the writers and saying hey can you tell us what the circulation of this this and that place that we don't know about. So be prepared if you have pitched some names that they don't know, which is pretty common if you are putting together a diverse portfolio of placements to provide that information for them. Try not to say I don't know.



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

Now the next step and sometimes this is going to come with the initial application but very rarely you will see that when we look at the press trip announcements in a minute. The next thing is that the itinerary is released okay so sometimes this is going to happen before you are confirmed on the trip and sometimes it's going to happen after. I personally don't put into apply for a trip unless the itinerary isn't out, I know there are some other people who have been burned by itinerary's that have been changed or get crummy at the last minute. I really recommend if possible if you are not super new and have some leverage, somewhat established, in the beginning, before negotiations or information even starts exchanging hands ask for the itinerary. They might tell you we don't have it or we will have it by blah. I often find that you need to push them to get the itinerary in a reasonable amount of time before the trip, so the earliest you can start asking them for the itinerary the better. As soon as the itinerary comes out, and not before you need to start pitching trips, pitching trip articles based on that itinerary. But the second thing is that once that itinerary comes out this is also time for you to give feedback on it.

So if you are already confirmed on the trip you can ask for changes, if you are not confirmed on the trip you can say "Oh well, this looks interesting, the trip would be a better fit for me if it included this this and that, or if we had more time here." Again, that leverage of saying I would be more likely to consider your trip if this works better if you are more established. If you are already confirmed on the trip though this is where you can say, its going to be very hard for me to get my story if we only have this much time in this place or if this piece is currently on the itinerary doesn't make it into the final itinerary. So you want to look at these itineraries really closely and keep in mind that until the day of the trip like literally the morning you are going out on an activity, that itinerary is not set in stone. This is really important if you need to have a firm assignment to get on the trip because in those cases if you don't do the thing that you have been assigned to cover, you are going to get into a bad situation both with your editor which is more important and with the PR people.

I want to go back to a question that someone sent me in advance about what to do if the amount of press that you drum up after the trip does not correspond with what they were interested in. Now the rule of thumb is that you going on the trip does not guarantee publication, it does not guarantee placement. Good PR people should know this; all good PR people with their clients are also drumming in that there is no such thing as guaranteed press. However, there are a lot of not good PR people or people who are not PR people who are in the business of setting up press trips. This is very important to understand that some people that are setting up these trips, are in the position where they are assuming, pushing, annoying you that a story needs to go out or needs to be published the day you are back from a press trip, even when you are still on a press trip. Now if you have a blog and you are in the position to be putting things up that soon you still need to manage this expectation because if you want to place articles about a trip in print and also put that information on your blog you need to make sure that those things don't cross over so you can post things on your blog right



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

away. You need to make sure that you are pitching stories to editors and working on those print stories, and then only posting what doesn't overlap on your blog because otherwise you are going to have a copy write issue and you are going to piss off the editor. So unless you are going on a trip only to write about on your blog, it is very important to manage expectations, so on this itinerary negotiations time I find that this can be one of the best places to manage those expectations about what will be published.

What if you don't have things yet set up to write about the trip? When do you start pitching those? Once the itinerary is out and once you have said to them, "How firm is this? I'd like to write about XYZ. Are they definitely going to be on the itinerary?" That is when you bust your butt to get the stories place. Now I so often see people say (and this goes back to what we said at the beginning of the call) what if I don't have any experience or what if I don't have any published clips or I don't write for that many places. It doesn't matter you can still have 10 stories come out of your press trip if you bust your butt and pitch it. Okay this is why we set up the travel magazine in the first place because when I started writing I would find all sorts of random magazines that people didn't know about. I would do a story about all of the things in the area from magazine to private pilots that publish destination guides. There are so many different magazines that you can do destination guides for, for a little slice of an audience that don't overlap. You can also do different profiles for businesses you can write about the teahouses in the area for *Tea Time Magazine*. You can write about the gardens in the area for *Birds and Blooms* there are so many magazines out there that you can make little slices of your trip go into. So once you have that itinerary it is time to work on those things no matter what you promised in your initial email, because like I said PR people like diversity.

Going back to the timeline... once the itinerary is out, that is typically when they are going to start talking to you about booking flights, if that is included. I see increasingly fewer trips having flights included these days, although they still do and this is the time when we want to talk about days before or after the main trip on our own. You shouldn't expect them to cover your accommodation on these days sometimes they will offer but this is how you make sure you get your stories done. If you especially have low confidence they are going to stick to their schedule, they haven't actually given you the schedule yet. Really push unless you have to negotiate with your spouse to watch the kids and they also have to travel a lot. Push as hard as you can to have a day or two in the destination after your trip because this is how you make sure you get your stories done if the time on the trip does not align very closely to the publish itinerary, if things get cut out, or if you are just to exhausted to do a good job with your reporting on your trip, or anything of these things. Make sure you have that day to sweep up in destination to do's that didn't get done yet. You can also go in advance and try to get the things related to your story done but I find it better if you use the time in advance that day to get acclimatized to the destination or maybe do some research that's going to help you



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

get other stories, but the day at the end is really where you have time to pick up the things that didn't get done yet.

Now some trips are going to have a call, a conference call with everyone that is going to be on the trip to provide background information about the different places that are going to be featured there. If they have this, do try to go to it, I often find that they announce little tiny changes in this call and then they don't send out the actual itinerary until later. So this can be a really good way to know if those things are happening or know if the focus in the certain destination is not what you think it's going to be, because often when the itinerary does come out it will say you are visiting X place. But it won't say you are visiting this place and you have X tour and interview then time on your own to explore. One or all of those things may be what you need but it won't be captured on the itinerary. So when the final itinerary comes out, you need to do two things. You need to ask questions like what I just said, "Are we going to be touring this place because I'm going to be writing a first person narrative story and I really would like to have the tour experience so I can write about that for my audience." So you are checking that what you need to have in order to get your stories is on your itinerary.

Then there is a second check that you need to do and this is super important and I just want to read a question or sort of a comment I got just before the call that is really relevant. Some one that has been travel writing for a really long time has said, "In general I hate group press trips with a few exceptions, I have been so exhausted and or ticked off upon exiting one that I was not motivated to write about them."

This is the thing, press trip itineraries (and we have looked at them on some other calls) are often bonkers. Last week we looked at one where we were scheduled to be somewhere every 10 minutes with no travel time in between. It was just poorly thought out, I have also mentioned a trip that we were on in which we were scheduled to be arriving back for more evening activities around 2AM and be on the bus the next day at 8AM having checked out, eaten breakfast, showered, and slept to go somewhere else. These things are not uncommon and they are there for a reason, these people are trying to maximize the money they have invested to get you to this place. It totally makes sense and that is their MO so you need to as much as possible manage expectations and push your MO, which is to get a story, which is what they should actually respect, as much as possible.

If you see that one-day on an itinerary is just undoable it is just crazy, take a look at it. See what you are definitely not going to write about and then write a very nice email saying, "I just want to let you know this day of the itinerary looks like too much for me to handle. I don't want to negatively impact my ability to report and research the things that I do need to cover on the trip. I see that there is this portion that we will be touring this museum that isn't



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

a good fit for my coverage area. Would it be okay for me to sit that out and work on reviewing my notes and preparing for other parts of the trip? “

I see people do this quite often and it's much better if you discuss that in advance than if you bail out in the middle of the trip which I have also seen happen when people are just too exhausted and they need to stay back for some amount of time. It is much better to know yourself and communicate upfront where these things happen and preferably change it if possible. So even if a trip itinerary is crazy it doesn't mean you shouldn't duck out or not consider it, there is this loophole or exit valve where you can ask to just sit out one part that doesn't apply to you, to make sure that you are fresh for other parts.

Where do we find these trips? The pre-established trips that people are being invited on, like I said there are three types of ways. They go out on a one to one basis and send emails to people; they are posted to sites like Media Kitty and then travel writing associations. We talked a little bit last week about these so IFWTWA (International Food and Wine Travel Writers Association), NATJA (North American Travel Journalist Association), SATW (Society of American Travel Writers), and there are some in other markets as well. There's the British Travel Writers Guild and there are some other ones in Australia, I can't remember the ones in Canada, there are some regional ones as well. There are ones in the bay area and ones in the Midwest. So Media Kitty is not a travel writers' association that you have to apply and it will give you credentials, but it is a membership site for journalists and anybody can get on this. So if any of you guys on the call are not already on Media Kitty make sure you guys go and sign up. So this site I mentioned here at the beginning will have regular listings of press trips that you can apply to. Particularly IFWTWA in its newsletter puts out a very healthy number of these so if you are really interested in going on pre-established trips, Media Kitty and IFWTWA are the two I would really recommend.

Other places you can also find press trips mentioned are in various groups on Linked In and Facebook; Facebook has ones that are particularly for PR people. The ones on Linked In you have to often dig around to find. So these are more places where people are saying, “Hey we are putting a trip together for X. Do you know somebody who could be a fit?” I have gone on press things that I have gotten through Linked In; they are typically more one on one things, they are saying, “if there are any journalists who would like to experience our hotel let us know.” But there are group trips sometimes.

Another place to find these trips is attached to different conferences, now TBEX always has them, in my opinion that is the highlight of the conference though it depends on the destination. All of these associations also have conferences that also have trips however, if you join one of these associations, you will not only see listings for trips but when you go to their association conference you will also have the option to go on pre and post, often both



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

trips as well. Also, Travel and Words is another conference that is about travel writing. Unlike TBEX it is about print travel writing and that also has trips after the event. The International Food Bloggers Conference has also starting adding tours, they are more single day tours and also the Women in Travel Conference has a couple. But again they are shorter tours, for a proper multi-day press trip these are really the place to look guys.

Now if you want to get trips to come to you, there's three main ways. So I very rarely touch my personal individual writer's site so I don't have a ton of my clips on there but I do have something up there that I wrote for *Dallas Morning News* and maybe something vibrant for *USA Today*. I get people all the time coming to me because of that one clip and like these clips are old and people still come to me about them. If you get one high profile, household name brand clip and you put it on your website the PR people are looking for these and they will find you that way.

But the other thing is that you can work on your SEO, we are often Googling for travel writers for various reasons ourselves within Dream of Travel Writing and I can tell you that the people who come up on the first few pages I see them on the first few pages of every results that has to do with travel writers we have a lot of different search queries that we use. It's not even the best sites; it's not the ones that have the greatest and most up-to-date bells and whistles. They are often ones that put up in 1999 and in many cases they were and they don't have 5,000 clips. Like I said I don't have a ton of clips on my website, but they are optimized for certain key words. So if you write about travel and you live in Utah, you want to make sure that your website is optimized for that. Unless you live in Utah but you write about travel in Italy, then you want to have your website optimized as travel writer Italy, Italian travel writer, travel writer about Italy. You want to think about these things because this is how those people send out the majority of press trips invites via email to people who have identified. That is how they are going to find you.

The third one is probably the easiest one on here, networking with PR people and CVB's. Now we talked last week about how you can just walk right into the office of the tourism board and walk around and introduce yourself and get to know them that way. If you were in a destination, just for a weekend with your spouse or they wouldn't be there on the weekend. But if you are there for a different reason you can network and set it up yourself, you don't need to be going to conferences, you don't need to be going to networking events for this to happen. But the other thing that you can do without going in person, you can look at the place that you want to go and you can look at some of the hotels in the area or the tourism board or some restaurants in the area and you put those names into Google along with PR and see which PR firms covers those places. Then you write the PR firm and you say, "Hey, I'm X and I write about this. I am going to be going to the area in the near future. Can you put me on the list for any press opportunities in that destination?" They will, they might ask



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

you some questions but they will at least put you on the list. That is how you find out about these trips that aren't publicized.

Let's look at some real press trip invitations. So like I said, you need to do a little show of hands over in the chat box about which of these invitations interest you. First I am going to just go through the three different categories and the three different ones that I have for each one. Then you let me know which ones we should workshop.

The first three are from Media Kitty and these are the same ones that I put out in our newsletter and on our blog today. So you might have already seen some of these. I take it back these are from my email not from Media Kitty. Okay so this one I received that she had written to somebody else and that person wasn't able to go and recommended that she invite me instead. This happens, okay and like the one I sent out in our newsletter recently is a good indication of this. So if you have other friends who are bloggers or travel writers create a little network like just write eight or ten people and say, "Hey guys, why don't we pass around the trip invitations that we get that were not able to go on." So this one is in Puerto Rico and it is a hotel trip the hotel was recently renovated. Here is another one, this is a culinary trip in Colorado, and it is a multi-day trip focused on celebrity chefs. The next one is hard to read, I hope if you are on your laptop you can read it though. This was a really interesting long one that I got via email. She said there is one more slot left, so great you are saying that you're reaching out to me because you need a spot to fill and because people on your original trip didn't go. That makes me super likely to go, but this likewise is a very hotel oriented trip, it's around the Marriott collection.

Okay, here are some trips from conference. So we have one coming from NATJA, the next one is from the Travel and Words trip in Oregon.

Now Media Kitty ones, so these are the ones I sent out in the blog today. We've got one in Montreal on the occasion of the 375th anniversary. We've got one that is hotel specific trip for a single hotel, not a hotel chain that also includes a rodeo and livestock show. Then we've got one for Walk Japan and they don't say if they include flights on here, which is very interesting because they are reaching out to North American people to go to Japan.

So this Walk Japan. So for this trip I found this today on Media Kitty and I think it is actually live, they are still accepting people so this is a great one to go through and I am glad you are interested in this. So let's look at some important little pieces here that jump out to me. So



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

they keep saying qualified then they say what qualified writers are, I have worked with the Japanese government in the past to set up trips. I know some things about Japan and I worked with them about docs checking but they also have no idea how it works here. The fact that they say they want qualified US journalists then they say what that means is really interesting because they clearly are the person organizing this trip. Walk Japan has talked to somebody about what kind of coverage they want and they have set up this specific thing. If you don't fall into what they have declared as qualified then there is no point of even writing to them. Okay there is no amount of talking them into or conjuring that will work here they're really clear about what they want. So lets look a little more about the trip then I am going to look at this paragraph about qualified writers and really talk about what they want, oh it does say they have airfare, great!

Okay so they say they want US journalists with targeted outlets for their upcoming trip, they want healthy active journalist, high distribution city or national distribution. So this is interesting right, they say they want high circulation but that doesn't necessarily have to be national magazines. So this is great, this means that you can be doing a *Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine* or a *Midwest Living* magazine or a *Los Angeles Magazine* or a *5282 Denver Magazine*, this doesn't mean that you need to be fighting off the hordes to be getting a clip in *Travel and Leisure*. Okay you can go to places, which are much easier. They have an active international traveler in mind, 35+, and they are going to be booking like I said direct flight to Japan cities. So how do you figure this out? There are all sorts of airlines that might have direct flights to Japan.

What I would do in this case, I would go on Kayak; it is my favorite search engine. I would search, what? Right, how do you make sure like it's going to certain cities? So whatever city magazine you are thinking about doing or regional magazine I would put that city in and put Tokyo, all the flights go to Tokyo. I would search on Kayak, and I would click non-stop only. So this is only if you have a specific city in mind. But what if you don't? Then I would go and I would open up United, American, Delta, A&A, JAL, these are the 4 main airlines that are going to be flying direct routes. I would open up all 5 of those websites, I would go to their route maps and I would click Tokyo. Then I would see what little arrows they have that go to other cities, those are the cities that they are going to care about. All right? Then I would take those cities and see what the high circulation magazines are and I would see who would potentially cover a trip like this. Who is going to do a first person article? Who is going to do a round up? Who is potentially taking a story about this kind of trip? Then I would look in here again. They say with their targeted outlets on upcoming press trip to Simon Stories will represent high circulation, high end outlets with reliable syndication. Preferences given to those with confirmed assignments for airline magazines or large daily papers or magazines.



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

They are saying preference is given for confirmed assignments, but they are not saying they will only take you for confirmed assignments. So what I would do to apply on this trip is that I would make my little list of the regional magazines and newspapers. Then the airlines magazines, like I said go through and figure out which ones would actually take this story and then that's going to be my hit list. I am then going to write to them and say that I am so and so I personally have experience with Japan. I am going to say that I have covered Japan in various ways and forms for 10 years. I noticed that you had this trip up, but I don't currently have an assignment connected with this story because I cannot get a confirmed assignment until I am confirmed on this trip. But I would be looking to pitch stories on this trip to, and then I would put in my list of places.

We've talked in the past about the confirmed story conundrum. That they want you want to have the confirmed story, how can you get a confirmed story because before you get on this trip you look for things like this that don't require a confirmed story and you give them a list of places that you are thinking about pitching.

Next week we are going to spend more time in detail this portfolio of different places that you are going to pitch but I did one you know, how to do it for this trip. I am going to send them my list of the places that I am thinking about pitching and then they say send pitches, queries, and links to clips. Now I didn't know what pitches and queries means so what I might do is send the email as I said and then at the bottom put some links to other places that I have written about Japan. Then say you also requested pitches and queries, I am not quite sure what you were looking for in that way. Please let me know what else I can send you to help facilitate getting me set up on this trip. So that is how I would apply to this trip.

Okay let me look at some other ones, Japan wants high end, high circulation what if you are just getting started Jill asks. It doesn't matter if you are just getting started, somebody in the Pitchapalooza class who also came to the Ideafest workshop doesn't have travel clips and she is working with Delta on a piece. It doesn't matter if you are just getting started, you can still get these placements. The other thing like I said is that they say they want high end, high circulation but they also say they want regional, right. So regional high end, high circulation is very different then you know Travel and Leisure.

Okay so somebody wants hotel trips, hotel trips to San Antonio, Colorado, Munich, and Japan. Okay so I am going to go do one of the hotel trips, this is Montreal. Let's do this one, I know it is a little hard to read but it has more information. So she is reaching out on behalf of the Marriott convention and resort network, they are doing a press trip in Hawaii to preview four of the hotels located on different islands to give media a first hand experience of how those hotels execute and facilitate meetings. So let me just give a caveat, I do and have done for many years a lot of stories on meeting magazines on destinations specifically for



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

meetings travelers and group meetings. That is why I have this meeting oriented one, so she said we have one spot left please let us know soon as possible if you are interested in joining. She has said assigning someone to join the trip on behalf of the media outlets you contribute to. This automatically signals that they're looking for exposure, okay they are not necessarily looking for a specific story to come out of this. This is really a straight fam as in a familiarization trip this is something where they just want to get in with somebody that writes regularly for meetings or meeting outlets and show us something. Then she's got a list okay, she lists the different things, she's got team building activities on surfboards or paddle boards, so this very active. Then she's got a brand new spa, then we've got the resort has a recently opened restaurant, then she is saying that there are different types of events that they can do. She is also talking about technology for digital scavenger hunts, she is talking about a beachside juice bar, she is talking about fitness activities, she is talking about again visiting local farms and markets with the chef from the hotel, she is talking about taking your meetings outside then it has gotten cut off on the bottom. But there is one about doing coffee tastings so Kauai coffee, so like I said in this context she has invited me because I already have a meetings magazine background.

Lets pretend I forwarded this to one of you, to say hey I can't go on this trip but would you be interested? So what I would do in this case, is I would look over and see what are the themes are, so she has this board meeting things about activities on paddle boards surfing, she has got a lot about activities that people can take while they are having a meeting or while they are doing a corporate event. There's a lot of outdoor stuff, then there is also food stuff, there's either food classes or coffee tasting or visiting local farms and markets.

What I am going to do, somebody that is not already writing for all these meeting magazines but who wants to go on this trip, I am going to say okay, I need to find a magazine or multiple magazines that would be interested in a story about active meetings like outside or food focused meetings. Then I am going to go online and there are only so many meeting magazines. So I am going to say who has covered active meetings or food centric meetings already, but hasn't covered Hawaii. I am going to say what are the big meeting magazines? I am going to get those names. I am going to go into Google and put in the name or the website specifically of each of those magazines, then I am going to search Hawaii. I am going to see what they have covered for Hawaii and I am going to search active meetings. Then I am going to see what they've covered for active meetings and then I am going to look for where is the hole. Who is interested in food centric meetings or active meetings that hasn't covered Hawaii? Then I am going to say, "Hi I am a writer based in blah, blah, blah. I often cover active vacations and food trips I would be looking at pitching this story to this, this and this meeting magazine. You know this about this hotel thing and this about these hotels. Would this be of interest to you for this press trip?" So that is how I would angel the pitch for this particular one.



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

All right, we are right at 4:30 I am going to just do one more just a short hotel one. If I can find it, then I am going to go through the rest of the slides. But if you have to go you can catch the rest in the replay lets look quickly at the St. Anthony Hotel this is one that has passed it was in February of this year.

But it was also from Media Kitty, okay so this is what often comes when I get hotel trip invitations. It is very brief and it is very unclear what they are covering. So she has given me a bit about the hotel, she say they have a press fam trip around the festival which is the rodeo and the livestock show. The hotel is one of the main sponsors; they will also have other activities during the weekend. But they won't let us know until weekend, so what does that mean? That means that there is different people paying for this trip, were not 100% sure who all of those people are.

I assume the rodeo and livestock show has thrown in some money and the hotel has thrown in some money and then I would go check who this PR person represents and does she represent the CVB or does she represent only the hotel or does she represent some of these other parties as well? So then I am going to say, whose back needs to be scratched here? For her it's the hotel but she also clearly is trying to get other people in on this so you can write her and say what other activities do you think will be on the trip? Hopefully she will get back to you but she might not.

But then what you can do is you can go to this hotel's website and you can see what other activities they recommend in the area, you can see where it's located, she says it's historical. You can look into the history of San Antonio and how you can pitch a story that fits the hotel into the history even if it's just about the hotel. Then you take that little list of story ideas, then you go into the travel magazine database or you go into Google and start searching who would be interested in that story.

Then you put together that little list of the places you are going to pitch, you write her and say, "I understand the press trip itinerary isn't 100% confirmed thus I can't be getting 100% confirmed assignments for these things but I am interested in this trip and these are the pitches that I would look at placing for this itinerary.

Let's look very quickly at what to have and what not to have in your pitch. So you'll see the first thing I have is brevity that is for a reason because there is a huge impulse that I see in people either writing pitches or writing pitches to go on press trips to include a lot of other information that is not relevant to the person reviewing this thing to get you on the trip. You need to cut that out because it does two things, first of all it clouds the sharpness of purpose of what you really need to tell them to get on that trip. Secondly, it also makes you look



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

unprofessional and makes them less likely to want you on that trip and that's even more important.

Now the other thing I don't see so many of these outlining in a very clear skim-able form like bullet points, exactly what they are looking for placing. Especially people for blogs tend to put a lot about what their blog audience is and their readers are like this and their readers are like that. But the PR person doesn't really need to know that much, if you have a food blog that also covers travel in the Southeastern US that's all they need to know about it. Along with your numbers, okay.

Those are the two things. If you are pitching for publication then you don't need to be putting the numbers in there, but it might help to put it in there up front if it's a place they haven't heard of. Then you need to make sure that there is clear indication of whether you already have an assignment which I have already said is hard/you shouldn't if you aren't on the trip yet versus if you are going to be pitching. We talked about the right way to couch that if you are pitching and I gave you some scripts on how to do that. Another thing that you can do is say that you regularly contribute somewhere and thus are likely able to place the story. And that is very valuable, to say that you regularly contribute to publications on X, Y & Z.

Then like I said you want to give them a very clear plan on what types of stories and this is really important as they are putting together the itinerary they don't do anything that you need to get your stories done. Then this is the real kicker that people don't put and if you put it you are absolutely out of the maybe and into the yes category, you want to mention in the past I went on a trip to blah, blah blah and make it as similar to this one as you can and here are some examples of the coverage that came out of the trip. So you are not just giving them some of your clips to look at but you are saying that this is the type of story I produce from a press trip, that to them is gold. It helps to paint a picture to them about what you will do with your trip. So if you haven't been on trips before, obviously you won't have that in there but if you have whether it was for your blog or publications make sure you have that in there.

Now when you are writing that little letter, that little email, I am going to emphasize little, you want to check as many boxes as you can, that you are a good topical match for this trip. Sometimes that topic can mean destination, in the case of Japan I was saying I had a background in Japan and I would put that in there to help them see that I can get a lot out of this trip because I already have a grounding in the subject matter, in the history and geography of the place. You are going to put your track record of previous coverage, this might be that you contribute regularly to blah blah blah, blah blah blah, and I run a blog with this readership have published my past work. This is where you show them that you are professional and people might say, well what if I don't have this or don't have that. You are really going to use this paragraph or this sentence to show them that you are not an amateur



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

that you have editorial experience, and if you don't, don't say that you don't. Don't put that paragraph in there; don't put that sentence in there.

Now another box to check if you can is guaranteed coverage, like I said it is hard to confirm an assignment if you're not confirmed for the trip. So one of the best ways to do that is to say you write for somewhere regularly and you will be able to find a place for that story and also high profile coverage we look at this Japan trip, which says it, wanted it specifically. But a lot of times they don't, a lot of times it's a small boutique hotel and they would love to have that but they are not going to only accept people who do that. But if you can mention that or name drop that you will be pitching or that you have previously written for a place that is going to go for a lot to put you in the automatic yes category.

Now also we are going to talk about this more next week, diversity of coverage is very important especially for smaller places because for them it is a huge bang for their buck to get one person who is going to do multiple stories whether than one person who is going to do one story. So they will pick you over the one person automatically.

Now does social matter, this is a great question that someone asked. I am not always sure that it does. So if a PR firm or destination is looking for people for a trip and they say they are looking for journalists, that's what they are looking for. If they were looking for influencers or looking for people to be tweeting and posting to Instagram and posting to Facebook they would go out and look for that. So they have decided they want journalists, they want print coverage, so in that case I would mention it only at the end as an I can also make sure that I am blah blah blah posting to my 80,000 Facebook followers. However if it were a smaller place, I would mention it because to them it can make a difference. Similarly to how large publications don't want your images because they have professionals doing that, a PR firm that is reaching out to journalists want the journalists working on their stories because they have other people coming to do that.

I have a big long list of questions from Minora, I am going to start and go through them one by one. What if it takes two years after your press trip to send the links to your publication person, to the PR person, like what if things don't come out or you haven't gotten around to writing them?

Actually PR people, some of them really push you to get some links to them and some of them don't, some of them just expect that it will or it won't go up. I definitely wouldn't worry about it being two years before you post something and I would still send the links to the person in that case.



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

What about if the PR person you work for worked with on the trip is no longer with the company?

Then I would send it to the person who is handling that account now or somebody who is directly who is actually at the destination.

What do you do if you are on a trip where the host lack experience/common sense and is over committed and ends up dragging you from pillow to post for two days?

I talked about a couple examples of this, it is great when you can ask in advanced if we can do fewer things on this day or can we make some decisions so we actually get to visit places on this afternoon instead of just rushing through. What do you do when it's just crazy on the trip? I try to rally the troops, then to at least go around the crazy PR person to the person above them to explain that there is an issue here and that we are not getting as much out of this trip as we have been brought to do. So there is two things you can do, if you are on the trip and it is crazy. Talk to some other people on the trip, everybody else on the trip if you can, get everybody together to chime in and say, "I really need to see this." "I really need to see this." "I really need to see this." Then you look at the schedule for the next day and collectively decide what to cut then you go to the PR person with this cut. You say, "Look we are not able to get good stories right now, so tomorrow we need to take this thing out in order to spend more time with the places where we do need to be which is X, Y & Z." If the person is just intractable and thinks they are doing fine, doesn't understand what the problem is, then you go back and look at who else has been cc'ed about the trip and find someone above them. It might be that you are being shepherded around by a PR person but the convention visitor bureau has been looped in. Then you go to them and I typically would send these emails in the evening, so that they can get it and work on a solution for the next day. Then I explain to them that it is not just me, I have talked to other people on the trip and we just really need this to be handled better to get more and better coverage. You always want to circle back to the quality of the coverage because that is what you are there for. I would say, "Can you have someone from your office join us and help to manage our stop so we can stay on our time table?" or something like that.

I used to get a pretty continuous stream of unsolicited invitations to press trips but the flow has changed in the last couple years. One factor I believe is that with so many people basing their business off models on free and sponsored travel perks in exchange for mediocre coverage. Are you seeing the same trend? I typically pay for my own travel so that I can follow my own drummer, but how can we get back to going on these press trips?



Dream of Travel Writing

Getting a Spot on a Group Fam or Press Trip

I think that I do get a lot of invitations and I always have, but this is a good point that there are fewer invitations these days in a way. The ones that I do get seem to be coming closer to the times when the trips are departing and I think that circles back to what I was saying earlier though. I think a lot of people are going on more individual trips than group trips. I think in a way that is a good thing, but it also has something to do with the fact that I said, there are separate trips for bloggers now. There are separate trips for people who are tweeting and posting to Instagram and posting on Facebook rather than people who are journalists. You can get invited on both, but they are handled separately. For instances, if you want to get on trips as a blogger you can go on Blogger Bridge, there are a lot of trips listed there for bloggers and they are very clear what they are looking for. The professional bloggers association also handles some and you will see them attached to conferences such as TBEX. The fact of the matter is that the main thing that I see is more trips these days have become familiarization trips rather than clear press trips whether than clear press trips with an assignment attached which is great for people like Lisa if you don't have clips, if you can show them a clear pitching plan and approach them like a professional it is much easier to get on the trips that do exist now simply because people have switched taking individual trips. So I know that might not have been a complete answer to your trip question. I hope that sort of answered it.

Okay so I don't see any more questions, but I will stay on for a couple more minutes. Thank you guys so much for joining us today!