



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Break Your Trips into the Maximum Number of Article Pitches

This week I've got a lot of slides for you. I went a little crazy on slides. It's because I find this to be one of the most important topics in terms of pitches. What I find is often that people they're having trouble coming up with ideas or rather they don't say that they're having trouble coming up with ideas. They say that they don't pitch or that they don't have enough work. When I dig into why, it's typically because they aren't pitching enough of the right ideas. They tend to pitch a trip as if a trip is a story and I know we've talked on past webinars about how one trip is a home for many stories and some different ways to look at your trips and some different ways to look at pitching. I want to really dive in today about how we parcel out those trips into different very thin slices of angles and why we need to do that.

If you saw the email reminder today about the webinar, you saw the story about a travel writer that I had chatted with recently when I was in London for World Travel Market and he's a former PR person. He's not scared or shying away from pitching like a lot of people do, but I was still really impressed by the number of stories that he gets from every trip. So he told me that he aims to have ten to twelve stories from each trip that he writes when he first gets home, not even eventually down the line, but right away. I'm going to talk about the numeric reasons why you really need to be doing that and how many pitches you need to send to do that in order to be a sustainable freelancer. Then we're going to talk about three different ways to break down your trips and then I'm going to take three trips that are all from if you have my book there are itineraries in the back of the book and you can also get the handouts in the handout section and we're going to go through those.

So it always boggles my mind when people tell me that you can't earn money freelancing because my answer is essentially "well I've tried and I've earned money, so have you tried?" It's always the people who haven't tried because they've just been told that you can't earn money or they've been trying sort of the wrong things. So on all of our webinars we love to talk about how to do things differently. Now I'm not going to say the "right" way because right is different for everyone, but how to do things in a way that I've seen for myself and for other people that leads to sustainable travel writing income.

What does sustainable travel writing income mean? In my book I have (and I've just pulled these right out of the book, so if you have my book you've already seen these) I have three different ways depending on what is important to you to earn six figures as a travel writer. So six figures breaks down into \$8,333.33 and so on and so forth per month. For the purposes of these breakdowns I've rounded that up to \$8500 a month, which seems like so much if you just look at it as this big round number. The thing is that when you break that down into a number of things, like a number of tasks completed, a number of projects pitched, it doesn't actually seem so bad as long as you're keeping your rate for all of those things pretty high.



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That does seem like a little bit of a road block to anybody who's used to earning \$25 a blog post or something like that and you can reference the first webinar that we did on six figure or high income travel writing for some more ways to boost your travel writing income if that's something you're struggling with. For right now, we're going to assume, or rather I have data on this, but we're going to go off of the notion that it is possible to get paid well for your travel writing and these are some ways to do it. If you want to earn a high income, you value your freedom, then it's good to have different copywriting projects or content management projects that you've booked in advance that you can do on your own schedule. If you're really interested in trips, you can do that with a mix of content marketing, doing things for a tour company, as well as articles. Now we're getting into articles, which is what we're going to talk about today.

If you want to earn six figures and you're writing primarily for small publications, you'll see that you still need to do seven articles for \$500 a month, including this other type of content work. Now if you only want to get published in magazines, you have to do higher income articles because otherwise, the time that you spend writing and researching articles and pitching just doesn't work out. So obviously, in order to get these big numbers, and in order to have this many clients on retainer if you're doing content marketing, or in the case of articles, to have this many articles every month, you have to really hustle. That means two things.

On the one hand, you have to be confident. People who hustle, who pitch regularly, who put themselves out there, know that what they're doing has value to the person that they're trying to sell it to. This is something that a lot of people struggle with when they're starting out. Either they are offering something inferior. For instance, you think that you have the perfect article idea for this magazine, but it really wouldn't fit anywhere in that magazine and so you have a confidence problem in that you have an inferior product that you're too enthusiastic about offering. Whereas what I've noticed a lot of people do is they have great ideas and they're very astute and very observant and have done great research for their trips, but they don't really think that the magazine would buy it, even if it's perfect for the magazine. Especially this time of year when people are doing annual reviews and things like that (and we're going to cover that on the blog next week) this is a really great time to figure out where you are on the spectrum. Are you too under confident in your hustling, or are you over confident about pitches that might be off the mark? Because these are two things that can contribute to you not getting the number of pitches accepted that you'd like.

If you want to be like this gentleman in London that I mentioned and have a really solid number of articles that you're assigned for every trip, you need to have a pitch pipe line. What this means is that you need to go backwards. What I showed you



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earlier were some breakdowns that said how you can hit six figures with your travel writing through different types of writing. The thing is that, depending on who you are and what type of writing you want to do and what type of magazines you want to be writing for, you're going to have different numbers in those numbers of course. Those are just very very general calculations. I'm going to go through a couple different breakdowns depending on pitch success rates and different types of desired incomes and show you approximately how many pitches you need to be sending for different types of articles in terms of price range in order to hit your numbers.

Here is, for example, I'm assuming somebody sort of new. They've done their homework, they've learned about pitching, they know a little bit about magazines, but not so much that they have a lot of clips. So we're going to say that they have a 25% success rate. Before you tell me that seems really high, I've seen a lot of new people have a higher rate than this if they're pitching properly and not because they've pitched before, but just because they've learned the process. So we're going to say a 25% success rate and this person is new and they are just trying to replace their income from their previous job they worked in a second or third chair market and a sort of soft position so like marketing or advertising or something like that. So they're looking to get \$4,000 per month.

When you do the math of what you need to aim at if that is your success rate and that's the income you want to earn, it means you need to be pitching at and you need to be aiming your pitches at this type of income in order to hit your desired income with the percentage success rate you have. So you need to pitch at \$16,000 which sounds super scary, but the reason I'm showing you this is to go back to that hustle point that you can think like "Oh I'm pitching enough", but the thing is you really aren't. If this is your success rate, this is what you need to be aiming for in order to hit your desired income. Of course if you hit more, that's fantastic, but this is what you need to aim at. So if you're new and that's your success rate, if you are only pitching \$100 assignments, and I'm totally discounting the \$50 and \$25 blog posts here because obviously they're not going to help you make your income if you look at this. So you need to be pitching 160 pitches at a \$100 rate to hit this goal. Or, \$300 which is a very normal rate for small niche magazines or regional magazines that are quite small for their features and correspondingly these also have a higher assignment rate. You need to be pitching 53 of those.

If you're pitching a \$500 article which would be like a department or front of book column in a larger magazine, you need to be pitching 32 of those. If you're pitching \$1,000 articles which could also be a department that's a bit longer. So you know those sections in the front of a magazine—they're profiling a restaurant—those sort



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of things in a large magazine that would be about \$1 per word for 1,000 words, so that's \$1,000. You need to be sending 16 of those pitches.

If you have a 40% success rate, this is somebody who's mid-career, they've been traveling for a little while, maybe they're doing it full time, but they're not at the income that they'd like yet. Then you need to be doing, and your goal for this is \$5,000 per month. You need to be pitching at \$12,500. You'll see that this is quite a decrease from our last slide with the new person who had to be pitching at \$16,000. As your success rate of pitching goes up (which is what we're going to talk about when we talk about breaking down ideas) as your pitch success rate goes up, you need to be aiming at a much lower number in terms of the income. If you're trying to get \$5,000, which is more than the last slide, but you have a better pitch success rate, you're pitching at a lower dollar amount. It's very cool how this works out. I promise I double checked this math. In this case, you need to be pitching at 42 of these \$300 features for regional magazines or niche magazines or 25 \$500 assignments or only 12.5 so say 13 pitches for \$1,000 assignments. So now this is starting to look a lot more feasible.

Now we're going to look at the experienced successful sustainable freelancers. I've put this even higher than a base six figure income. This person is looking to earn \$10,000 per month from their travel writing. Now most people would say that's just insane, but it's really not. In fact when you look at these numbers, you'll see that if you have a high pitch success rate, even though I've doubled the desired income from the last slide, they still need to pitch less than the last slide to make the percentage.

This is why making your pitches more accurate is simply the most important thing you can do to grow your travel writing income. For this person they only need to be pitching at \$11,111 of assignments. That can be done with 37 pitches for these \$300 assignments, but I'm assuming somebody with this income and this success rate is not pitching at those. So if they're pitching at \$500 assignments, they need to try 23 pitches. If they're pitching at \$1,000 assignments they need 11 pitches, but these people are probably pitching at \$2,000 and \$3,000 assignments, so they're actually not writing that many pitches per month, which is the interesting conundrum, that when we do our travel writer focus groups and when I chat with travel writers, you often find that the more experienced people are, they're pitching less and not just because they're better at it but often because they have the confidence. Like I said earlier, it's about confidence to pitch for these higher level assignments.

How on earth do we come up with (11 in the case of our 90% success rate experienced freelancer to 160 in the low-end case of our newbie) solid pitch ideas



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every month? There's three ways that I like to do this. Now I know I told you that I was going to explain three different ways to do this and I'm going to go through each of these the first two a bit quickly and the last one is the method that we are going to use to do our full breakdowns later on.

Again, if you haven't already downloaded the handouts on this, make sure you grab those because we're going to get to those soon. The on-the-road pitch specific note taking thing, I'm going to show you a picture of what mine looks like in the next slide. This is when you're already on a trip and as you go around and you see things that look interesting you either put them in an Evernote file or you email to yourself or you just jot them down in your notebook to say I think this is an article idea.

The second one is post-trip mind mapping and this happens post-trip when you get home, but you can also do it a little bit pre-trip. Mind mapping around each activity on your trip all of the different ways that you can pitch it. You'll see the difference in these two is that the on the road pitch is specific note taking you're doing in a way that focuses you on one avenue, one format, one audience per idea. The point of the mind mapping is to take each experience from your trip and blow it up into as many different places you could send that one experience as possible.

Now the third one that we're going to go through together is—I don't have a good name for this so I called it the chronological itinerary breakdown—and this is where you walk through activity by activity, stop-by-stop through your whole trip and write every single place you could possibly pitch each of those moments.

This is a screenshot of a service that I'm using and I just started, but if I like it I'll tell you guys about it more later, but essentially what you can do is you can email from your email account to this service which is called Ray and you can tag it a certain way and it organizes your ideas for you. You can put a date on it if you want to remind yourself to pitch a certain day. You can also tag it to go to a certain magazine or things like this. So this very random list of stuff is just the ideas that I sent myself when I was on my last trip. So just a bunch of random notes and inside the notes they also have sometimes quotations or I've also started writing the introduction or some additional notes on magazines that I might send it to. So this is the on-the-road note taking method.

The pro of this is that when you do it in an unstructured format like this it's more of just a capture than the very strict spacing of the mind map that we're going to look at next. There's a lot of room to write notes and quotes like I talked about and even just to start writing your whole story. I do this sometimes with essays. When I have an



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idea for an essay, I'll just be literally like walking across the street and I'll just start typing an essay on my phone and then when I hit a snag like I'm just not sure what to write anymore, I stop and I email to myself for later.

The cons of this are—and this is why I told you if I like this Ray tool that I'm using, I'll tell you about it later—that it's hard to organize these notes if you just have them in Evernote or in your email or something like that. You can tag them and so on and so forth, but getting them to be lined up with a particular magazine or just this is profile versus this is a service or how-to piece, it's not quite so easy in this sort of ad-hoc note fashion because note taking tools aren't pitching tools. They're note taking tools. They're not organized in a fashion to make us know on a certain date when this magazine is ready for pitches and we need to go and pull up this pitch and send it to that magazine.

I said that we're working on a solution on here because if any of you were with us on some of our focus groups, we've talked a couple times about something that we've playfully called the Pitch-O-Matic which my Editorial Director has told me we absolutely cannot use that name. The concept of the Pitch-O-Matic is that you take these notes while you're on your trip and you email them to the Pitch-O-Matic, and then when you get home you, at a pre-determined date, you say I won't be ready to pitch these until two weeks after I get back. You start getting your idea that you wrote up matched with magazines in your inbox with a partially written pitch for you to fill out. So that's something that we're working on and we hope to have available for you in the near future. In the meantime, if I like this other service I will let you know because it's a bit expensive, so I wouldn't recommend it unless I know it really works.

The next option, this is actually from, this is a photo. It's horrible because I took it from my cell phone, but this is a mind map that somebody made during our Pitchapalooza retreat at the Catskills Retreat Center in November. So for this breakdown, Kathy had gone on a trip to Cape Cod.

Note: I'm going to also include in the handouts another file which had this breakdown in here. Actually I'll just send it to you after the call because it's easier to do that.

These breakdown your trip sheets. Essentially what you do is a version of what we're going to do in the chronological breakdown later. You take every experience from your trip and you write it in the middle. In this case an experience might be the



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amazing dinner that you had with a host family, it might be a hotel that you stayed at. It might be a desert safari. So experience is a very broad category in this case. It's anything that can be broken down into further slices for your pitching. You write this experience in the middle and then all around the sides you write different slices of that.

In this case, Kathy put a destination. That's why her mind map is very full because she even has if you look straight down in the middle, she has a number of reasons and then she starts to tick them off here. Her mind map is very full because she didn't put a thin enough slice here in the beginning. If instead of Cape Cod, she had put afternoon at the beach café or something, then she could have coming off of this like a personal essay about watching her kids play in the sand and thinking about when she was playing in that same sand when she was young. She could have a round-up of the best beach cafes on Cape Cod to spend the afternoon. She could have a service piece of how to make sure you get the waterside table at the beach café and so on and so forth. So when you do this mind map, you take one experience, one location, one moment, and you blow it up. The pros of this are the mind map (which is the point of all my maps) forces you to take one already somewhat narrow idea and break it into many many other related ideas, which is the whole point of what we're talking about today in terms of slicing your articles.

This is one of the reasons I really like mind mapping. If you just sit there, and I've heard in many writing seminars that you should always make yourself sit for ten minutes because if you just go for one minute or two minutes or three minutes, and you think it's full, you're going to miss out on some of the really great ideas that come at minute seven. So you'll sit there for three minutes and write down a bunch of stuff, then you'll sort of mull over it and you won't write anything for a little while. Then after a little bit you'll suddenly start writing again and that's when you'll often get some of the really great ideas from minute seven through ten. When you do these, really force yourself to sit with each mind map page or mind map for a little while.

The cons of this—though like I said in the case of Kathy's breakdown that I just showed you—is that space can be a factor. If you write down something in the middle of your mind map that is too broad, then you're not only going to find yourself running out of space, you're going to find your thinking limited by the fact that you've run out of space. That means it's really easy also to get pigeon-holed into overthinking one part of your trip and not thinking about other ones.

Say that you made a mind map, not like Kathy did for all of Cape Cod, but like I suggested for this afternoon at the beach café. If you had made a mind map just for



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that afternoon at the beach café and you really got a lot of ideas from that, you spend ten minutes on that, then you might think “ok I’m good. I don’t need to do anymore now” and that’s a shame because we really want to get as many ideas from our trip as possible. So because mind mapping is a bit intensive, you can sort of feel not just like ok I’m done I don’t want to do anymore, but also like I’ve got a lot of ideas about this already and I don’t need to think about any more things on my trip. Like I said, one of my favorite things to do is combine different methods of these three.

This next one, the chronological itinerary breakdown is something that I like to do almost as a check step or as something before the mind map that I talked about. The process that I use is that I use this chronological itinerary breakdown that we’re going to go through now before I go on the trip, especially if it’s a press trip I’ve been invited to and I’m thinking about accepting it, and then again after the trip. From there I make a list of things either to my map or just sort of informally make article ideas on and then in addition while I’m on my trip, I’ll use that on-the-road note taking method.

When I do my post-trip itinerary breakdown, I’ll match up those things that I wrote down on the trip to the itinerary and then make sure that I’m also putting them through a process like the mind mapping to break them down into as many things as possible. The one issue with the chronological itinerary breakdown is that like mind mapping, but in a different way, it can be time consuming because you have to really create a moment where you can go back in time. I’m often asked what I’m writing about when I’m traveling and I’m almost invariably writing about somewhere else. It’s very rare that while I’m in a place the writing work that I’m doing is related to that place because you need a bit of time to think and digest about what you’ve seen before you write about it to have the best results.

I really like to do this while I’m on the airplane, do the chronological itinerary breakdown. I’ll sit there and almost diary style, I’ll go through what happened to me on the trip and a particularly effervescent experience that really just stands out, especially the ones that involve people that I don’t typically capture on the itinerary. I’ll list them all. The thing is that I love doing that on the airplane because you don’t have email, you don’t have phone calls, you don’t have anything else that you’re doing and so you can really do that time travel step, where you go through your itinerary and you relive it in your mind and make sure that you’re really capturing every single opportunity. Of course the pro of that is like I just said, you make sure that you capture every single opportunity, but in order to really do that effectively, you need to give yourself the mental space to do that time traveling completely because if you try to rush it, then you’re going to miss out on things.



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Like I said, I like to do a combination of these, but I think that for newer writers or for writers who feel like they aren't publishing as much as they would like, this is a really fundamental tool that should be the one that you focus on. Like I said, it's time consuming, but it's time consuming because it gives us more ideas.

Note: Let's start now to go through, if you haven't downloaded your handouts, grab those now. I just want to say in the meantime while you guys are pulling those up a couple things. While you are, hold on I think I might have missed a slide, oh yes ok.

When you are trying to find the maximum number of article ideas, it really really helps to know what magazines are looking for. What that means is that if you are not reading magazines regularly, you're going to have a very hard time doing this and you might think that you've come up with some good ideas, but the thing is those ideas will not be publishable. They'll be blog posts. They'll be something that doesn't have a home.

I always encourage people, especially newer writers, but really everybody, to not think that they have an article idea if it doesn't have a home because the thing is this —if you pitch something that doesn't have a specific section of a magazine that it belongs to, even if it's a wonderful idea and it's a really interesting story, you're going to get a no from the editor. I've had a ton of really lovely no's, not a ton, but a handful of really lovely no's when I was starting. They're kind of nice because the editor will write you back and they say they'd love to see the story later, but they're always kind of sad because the story's not getting published. So it's great that the editor wants to see the story later, but you need another editor to buy it, right? In order to save yourself from those pleasant no's and get an even more pleasant no where the editor says "Oh my God that's such a great idea, I just assigned that to somebody else. What else do you have for me?"

You have to make sure that the idea fits into the magazine. To do that, if you're not already reading regularly, then you need to either start reading more magazines regularly or start reading a resource like our Travel Magazine Database or like some of the other things out there that tell you what magazines are available to get yourself a wider mindset on what magazines publish. I've pulled out some things and these are all from entries on the Travel Magazine Database that we featured in I think about the last three weeks or so. I'm just going to quickly run through these so that you can hear some of the interesting (and perhaps things that you hadn't thought of before) types of things that magazine editors not just are looking for, but really need to find every single month, something that fits in this very very specific



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category. These are the kind of things that if you don't know in advance, you won't look for them when you're on the road, and then you won't be able to pitch that story.

This one I found very cool. This is a British magazine I believe and they take 1,000 word articles, so a really great length about the home or hotel of a notable person that you can stay in. These are the kind of things that are super easy to double check for in every town that you're visiting.

Here's another one quite general, *Trendwatch*, which is about recent trends in the travel industry, 500 word article, but this is for *Conde Nast Traveler UK*, so that's going to be \$1 or \$2 a word so that's great. There's cannabis tourism in the United States. We all know about that, so there's these types of ones are super easy to look out for.

Here's another one that I thought was really cool that was from *Conde Nast Traveler: Snapshot*, it's a first-person description of an encounter with a person in an international location. So all of those little tiny moments that you have, like the family that invited you home for dinner when you met them in their shop or something like that, are great for this Snapshot.

Gourmet travels, this is in *Food and Travel*, which is a British publication. So this is two articles that have a bunch of side bars about different food or a region. Like how many of us can't come up with these when we're traveling somewhere with a great food heritage?

Another one, now we moved on to another food specific publication this is from *Saveur*, so Eat the World, this had a bunch of different small sections. Some of them are not so small. I think 1,200 words is a really great length. They're about sort of unusual foods, so ice cream in Cuba or I think beer in Brooklyn is kind of a known thing, but he does it in a very specific way. Long Form, this is another thing in *Saveur*, offers a lot of opportunity. This is five to six great length articles that look at something quirky about a food that we know well and love. In the one that we've highlighted here "In Cod We Trust" this is about Cape Cod, so it would be a great fit for Kathy's breakdown that I showed you guys earlier. You know another one is the best gin from a Finnish distillery.

These are a lot of things that you can get ideas from even if not from the itinerary from the press trip, but from press releases on the tourism website of the city that



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you're visiting. You know I think a lot of us don't like press releases or we find them annoying when they come in our inbox, but when you're going somewhere it really pays to hop on the tourism board's website and see what's new. A lot of places to put together a monthly things telling you what's open and I've found some really really great new original article ideas from there. I found one that I want to say it was Minnesota. There was a distillery that was aiming to have everything from 100 miles nearby and they were making gin which needs things like citrus and different botanicals. So to replace the citrus they found that spruce tree tips, like the buds of the spruce tree create the same taste as oranges in the gin. So like you really never know what you're going to find and what gems are hiding in between the lines in those press releases.

Once you've become familiar with things like this, you know the previous one Snapshot and the one at the bottom of the page A Meal to Remember, those types of things are going to be completely based on what you find on your trip, but a lot of things like this long form that I talked about, are things that you can find out about in advance and pitch as a peg both financial and to help you get things set up on your trip in advance. Just a couple more here.

This is from *Eurowings*, which is a European airline magazine. This one is really quirky and I just love it. The questions of the month and there's several of these about sort of interesting thought provoking trends. Why does my mobile phone always land facedown? This is my personal favorite: How much work do digital nomads really do between coffee? What do Cuban cigar rollers listen to as they roll? These are again you could potentially find out in advance you could find out about them and decide to research them when you land or you could find out about them when you're there and then pitch them afterwards. Get some business cards so that you can make some phone calls and follow up with people to do additional research after you get back.

I can't remember where this next one is from *Notes From a Farm*. This one is a great thing to do, I mean this one is US based, but you follow an ingredient all the way from farm to plate and if you are on a press trip that's agri-tourism related, this is a great thing.

The next one *Best*, this is very general and this is the kind of thing that you can easily find somewhere in a press release in advance or in an itinerary and pitch.



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Now that we've looked at some of these sort of unconventional or very specific rubrics that magazines have, let's start to go through some itineraries.

Again, I hope you have your handouts ready. We're going to start with the very first one, which is the Northern Japan itinerary. I've copied the whole thing in here because this one is a little shorter I could actually do that. The thing about this trip is it was quite long. I think it was two and half weeks and I actually don't have a detailed itinerary because our person never gave us one. So this is an incredibly perfect example of why it is very very dangerous to pitch article ideas in advance of your trip. From a financial perspective, it seems great to pitch article ideas in advance of your trip. You know what income you're going to have after your trip, at least a base, so you know if it makes sense financially for you to go on that trip. However, the problem is you never really know what is going to happen when you go on a trip. I don't mean that in terms of there could be a natural disaster. I mean that in terms of having complete faith in the people who are organizing your trip, in whatever fashion that may be, that what they have promised you will actually come to pass in order for you to get that story. So it's incredibly common on press trips, and this was not a press trip, this was actually a private tour company, which you would think would be a little more reliable, but no matter what the setting is it's incredibly common for an individual stop on the itinerary to be altered or even more so for something that the person planning the tour thought would be of interest to you, to not really be cool enough to work out as an article.

Because of what we're talking about today as how to break out the maximum number of ideas that you can turn into articles, I want to really draw your attention to this because you might look at an itinerary and see a lot of things that look cool in the same way that when you come up with an idea it sounds like a great idea to you, but to an editor it just looks like a blog post. If that idea, if the Penis Festival, I did take that from the slide so anyone who's not looking at the slide, if the Penis Festival isn't actually as cool and intriguing as you thought it would be in advance, that's not going to make a great magazine article. So one of the things that we're going to look at as we go through each of the itineraries is not just does this sound like a cool place/activity/meal, but is this a magazine article?

I've highlighted some things on here and as we go to the next slide you'll see some of the ones I've pulled out. First, not just because it's salacious, but because it's first on the itinerary, there was the Penis Festival and then another one that I had highlighted was the Tsukiji fish market, which is the big famous fish market in Japan and it's supposed to be closing and moving to a new location. Another thing that we were promised on the itinerary was to sample regional Japanese specialties in Tokyo, to picnic under the cherry blossom trees, and then we were going to move to a different location and go to this ridiculous festival in which people ride, for lack of a



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better word, a 40-60 feet long tree trunk downhill very dangerously. Then there's the renowned bathing snow monkeys, the town of Sendai, which is known to be one of the culinary capitals of Japan, local distilleries and breweries in Sendai, and how the local residents there are recovering from the disaster—that was the area that had the tsunami and the nuclear I guess disaster nuclear spill.

And so to sort of the “untrained eye” each of these sounds like it could be an interesting article. The problem is that these aren't articles. These are just topics. Let's talk about what really happened here.

The Penis Festival, I have to say, was really not that interesting. It was more or less just a parade of some you know giant phallus sculptures and some rather sillily dressed people. So would I recommend people go to this? I'm not actually sure. This is one of the things that you can get into. If you've pitched something in advance, and you go and it's just not that cool, you find yourself questioning, do I really want to write about this? This is something that I've heard a lot of experience writers complain about, that they kind of wish they didn't have to write because they pitched something in advance. Here are some ways you can spin that: If you go to something that seems like it's really interesting, as in people will probably want to read about it just for the name...you know shock value like Penis Festival, you can write the sort of contrarian article like is it worth it to go to Japan's Penis Festival? You can also turn it into a service piece which is more like how to go to Japan's Penis Festival and actually have a “good time” because it's not quite as cool as it seems or something like that. So if you have an experience that you've pitched in advance, you can sort of turn it in some of these ways to sort of save face, so to say.

Now in a similar somewhat disappointing note, the world famous Tsukiji fish market, in order to visit that, you have to essentially stay up all night on a very cold and wet concrete floor where you wait for like five or six hours in the cold. Not the most pleasant experience and certainly not the exclusive tour experience that most people would imagine. Then when you do go in, no one translates for you, nothing is in English, and you only get to be there for fifteen minutes and they pretty much discourage you to take photos because the main claim of the fish market is for people to sell the fish, not for tourism because they don't charge you. So yet in here you could write is it really worth it to go to this, but I think with something like this, it's more important to take the experience and take it away from the visitor perspective and turn it into more of a human interest or informational piece. So in these cases, you know you wouldn't really know this in advance.

This is back to why it's difficult to pitch things in advance, but after the fact, you could take this experience and you could pitch it as a longer form piece about the



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men who do these auctions and what you know—what their life is like, based on the experience of what you had with all this time sitting there. You can talk about the conditions and you can talk about the frenetic pace and things like that. You can also turn it more into an atmosphere postcard piece. This is a really great thing to do if you don't really want to have a service element, service things how-to, because it's not technically something you want to recommend to people. You can essentially make it an armchair travel piece. You can write it as a postcard that's quite short where you show somebody what the experience is like so that they don't have to go there themselves.

Another one on here, sampling regional specialties in Tokyo. So I'm not quite sure that this worked out as the tour operator hoped, but if I were to pitch this in advance, I would do my own research and I would go around and I would see what are all the different regions in Japan that are represented in Tokyo and how you could pitch this as a roundup of fifteen places to have take-out all around Japan within Tokyo. You could pitch like what I was talking about in *Saveur*, they have those food pieces that are not too short. They're like 1,500 words I think. And you could pitch this as how Tokyo represents all of Japan through its cuisine. So you can take a couple different tacks on this. But even if something like this didn't work out in the end, it's broad enough and you're able to do your own research enough that you could fill that in.

Now picnicking under the cherry blossom trees. This is the kind of thing that if you see something like this that's very very experiential on an itinerary in advance, you have to naturally think of it like what I was describing as an atmospheric postcard piece, or a feature or something like that. You can also do this as an interview. You can think about finding somebody while you're on the ground that's done this every year for 25 years or something like that and interview them about their experience. You can profile the guy who sells, you wouldn't know this until you got there and looked at the pictures, but in order to picnic in the cherry blossoms, the Japanese have these elaborate tarps that they put on the ground to sit on as they have their picnics. So you could profile the person who sells the tarps and how he got into this business and you know, what he's seen over the years and the most extravagant cherry blossom picnics and things like this.

For the Onbashira festival, this is the one I was talking about where the people ride the tree down the hills, if I looked at when I looked at the itinerary in advance, I definitely thought that would be one of the richest areas of article ideas and it was, but not necessarily for the reason that you think. So the festival is very crazy and you can easily pitch an atmosphere piece, a long narrative about why they do this from a historical perspective, a narrative about your own first-person experience doing it, a narrative that's more service oriented, but long explaining in a second-



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person way how to do it. You can do a round up about other festivals like this that only happen every six years around Japan. You can do a roundup of other festivals to do in that area if you're coming a year when the Onbashira festival isn't working. You can do a food oriented round up on the places to eat at the Onbashira festival. You can do an interview with someone who has organized a stall selling food at the Onbashira festival for the last or I guess four five instances in the six years of the festival about their experiences. But there are so many different places that you can take this.

I found when we were on the ground, that I would never have thought to pitch in advance, is that it's next to impossible to get into this thing. So despite the fact that we had a tour guide who had planned this in advance, we didn't get in the first day. Thankfully the festival goes for three days and we were able to go the next couple days, but the first day we just sort of got pushed out of the door. Not because you need tickets, but they have somewhat of an arbitrary tracking system of how many people they allow in and so this led to a more advice oriented piece about how to make sure you get in to the Onbashira festival.

Then the second thing that I would not have known until we got there, is that it's also very very difficult/next to impossible to actually see the thing, the thing being the part where they actually ride the tree down the hill. There's quite a lot of other stuff going on at the festival. They carry the tree trunk with this elaborate pulley system pulled by hundreds of people down the less steep slopes of the hill before they get there and in the end, it takes three or four hours for them to actually push the tree trunk over the ledge for the actually very dangerous sliding down part, and so during the many hours in advance of where the tree actually reaches the ledge, people fight over these coveted couple of little spots to see the actual final tree push.

You can write a service piece that's oriented around how to get the perfect photo for a photography magazine, or how to have the best seats in the house, or what I would not have known in advance. And this is the kind of thing you would have to do in post-trip pitching: is you can write about how to ride on top of the tree trunk. When I was there, I was just trying to take pictures, actually I was trying to take a video of the people pulling the tree trunk from very far down low and a guy grabbed me and put me on top of the tree trunk and let me ride it for like five minutes and it's actually not that hard to do. I saw a lot of people do this later, getting on top and taking photos because during the part where it's moving very slowly, they're very happy to let you hop on top. So there's often how-to things that you don't know until afterwards and with how-to stories, I really recommend holding off on pitching those until after the fact, because unless you know in advance (like if I had done more research I might have understood that it would be hard to get in to the festival) unless you've done really deep amount of research, and you know in advance that



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there's something tricky or that you need insider knowledge for the experience you're about to have, the best how-to material really comes during the trip and that makes sense to pitch later.

For this next one, this is a bit general, right? Sendai being the culinary capital of Japan. We talked before in the sampling Japanese in Tokyo part about some different ways that you can spin food stories and so the reason I have both of these in here is that I really found some amazing experience in Sendai that are not the type of things that would be in any guide books. We went to this sushi bar every day for breakfast in the train station, where people wait in line for like an hour and a half and you have this guy make sushi in front of you. It was the quality of some of the top sushi restaurants in Tokyo for a third a fifth the price, but it's standing out just in a train station sushi bar.

Another one was a whiskey bar that we went to where they only let in about six people at a time, no large groups, and the owner has a stock of incredibly rare hard to find whiskeys from the Royal Scottish Whiskey Society that he not only lets you taste, but he'll just give you free shots of things that he thinks fits you. So you'll end up having three to five shots of whiskey for essentially 15 US dollars and remember Japan is not a cheap country. Often in an area that's less well-known, so for instance Tokyo I could have done a lot of research in advance and pre-pitched some things about the Japanese specialties, but if you're in area that you've sort of heard anecdotally is really great for food, that's the kind of thing where you often want to wait and do your research on the ground and then you can spin out these stories. You can do atmosphere stories of the two places that I just mentioned. You can do round ups of the best under the radar spots. You can do narrative pieces. So food in general is a really great specialty within travel to have, but it's also very very rich even if you don't specialize in it because you know we all have to eat one two three, however busy you are meals a day when we're on the road and that's the kind of thing where you can do sometimes a little research in advance, but often times the best stories come from finding people on the street or asking tour guides or asking taxi drivers where to eat.

The next one—local distilleries and breweries—Sendai is an area known for having a lot of these Japanese whiskeys that have become really famous over the years and we went to one of the breweries and this was actually something that I thought about pitching in advance and I'm really glad that I didn't because tastings, as in like when you go to winery and you have like a tasting, in Japan function very differently than in the US. So we expected to go there and be able to taste very rare things that you couldn't find anywhere else and probably even buy some bottles, but they don't have that much in stock. It ended up being a sort of a poor tasting experience and also pretty poor purchasing experience and so I'm not sure that I would recommend



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people go there for that. However, the distillery tour itself was quite interesting, and so I could write a narrative walking people through, again for the armchair travel angle, the tour of the distillery.

Now in terms of how the local residents are recovering from the disaster, this was another thing that I really wanted to pitch in advance and I'm glad that I didn't because what I found out is that people are very tight-lipped about it and people talk a lot about how the Japanese government has really controlled the news about the nuclear disaster, and whether it's still an issue and so on and so forth. Even if you're trying to get the Japanese people to talk about it, they themselves are very tight-lipped. So you know I could have written an essay about why that is and how it's a cultural thing and so on and so forth, but it wouldn't have had the angle that I originally had in mind.

We're getting close to our time, so I just want to go through this next couple of slides quickly. So as I went through step by step on the different points of interest in this itinerary, I talked about a couple different articles ideas. So I spent a little bit of time on this, I mean not a little, I spent a while on this last night trying to make sure that I had really covered a lot of different formats because the thing is that when you look at a lot of lists of different magazine ideas, they tend to tell you things like human interest story, food story, as if that's a different article format. The thing is there's not really so many different article formats.

You can write a profile, which can be hopefully...but doesn't have to be...based on interviews about a business or a person.

You can write a postcard which is this atmospheric short that I was talking about, which is kind of like a mini version of the armchair travel experience where you focus more on creating a sensation on what that experience was like than necessarily giving a lot of details.

The narrative feature would be the longer version of the postcard. You talk about several different anecdotes of your experience that add up to a point about it. For instance, if I was going to write something like I was saying about the nuclear disaster how people don't talk about it, I would have a couple different experiences where I had tried to talk to Japanese people about it, especially if I had encountered some of the effects. I would have three of those and at the end I would sum up with this point about how we'll never know how deep this disaster has hit people, or something like that.



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A service piece, like I said, that's a how-to thing that explains how to do something and it's really best from a publication stand point, like I said earlier, to pick something that has a snag, that has a challenge because when you're trying to pitch these to magazines, there's many fewer how to sections in magazines that there used to be because a lot of information is found online. So if you're going to pitch a service piece, it has to be something fresh, something new and original. It helps if it's linked either to a specific trend that's something up and coming that people are asking about or to a specific destination.

A round-up, you can use these in a lot of settings. You can use these for activities, you can use them for hotels, for places, for restaurants, and editors love them. I've talked on previous calls about how a lot of editors call them "baskets of kittens" because they should be composed of a lot of different things that on their own are very interesting and useful, but when put together are irresistible.

The next one is interviews, which are different than profiles in that like I said you have to actually to have to access for the source for this one whereas in profiles you don't. The thing about interviews is that you should always keep in mind that when you're interviewing someone you shouldn't just ask them generic out of the box questions unless they are dictated by the magazine. This is one of the things that came up during the Pitchapalooza retreat. We had somebody who had found a really wonderful person, a BBC photographer who had discovered an animal that people thought were extinct off of this beautiful island in the Philippines. She was really jazzed about interviewing him, but she hadn't necessarily thought about what type of interview to do and she kind of had some ideas related to his project, but the thing is that a lot of magazines do have a format and sometimes that format is the esoteric.

So we found one magazine that seemed like it would be a great fit for this interview, but a lot of their questions are really about how a person travels. I've seen a lot of food related interviews where there have very specific stock questions about that person's favorite restaurants in other cities or that person's favorite dish to cook at home and things like that. So when you're doing an interview, you might think when you're on the road you can just ask questions and then write that up later, but this is a case where it's really important to go through the different magazines like I was talking about and see what their interview formats are and what questions they ask and maybe make a list of the different couple questions of the places that you hope to place the story and make sure that you ask all of those so that you have them just in case.



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Now the news brief, this is something that you can technically write without going there, but if you can write the news brief without going there, the editor can probably write it without assigning it to you. So it's really best to pitch news briefs about very exclusive news that you have information about.

Similarly, a short is somewhere between a news brief and a postcard and it can even be a short round-up or short service piece. Shorts are these articles that are incredibly succinct and detail-filled at the same time. They have them in the front of magazines like *Travel and Leisure*. That can be a really great place to look to insert things that happened on your trip that were interesting that you think that people might want to check out, but that don't have a full story with an arc and a point around it. We have a lot of coverage of those on the Database, but the way to find those on your own is to grab the magazines you have lying around or go to the bookstore and flip through just the very first pages after the table of contents and the mast head and see which one of those are not written by staff and those are the places you can pitch these shorts to. And again, there are some different specific formats that different magazines use for shorts. Sometimes they're going to be a comparison.

I just saw one in a magazine that one of our writers is working on which has sort of like three different ways to do destination. There's an adventure travel focus, a foodie focus, and a history focus. So often these shorts have a rubric. This is again where it comes in handy to familiarize yourself in advance, but you can also do this during the post-trip pitching phase. If you just go through the magazines with your mind map in mind, you'll see where the places that you're interested in fit in.

On the previous slide, I talked about how you can do profiles, or postcards, or narrative features. They're all a bit related or some postcards and narrative features are a bit related. The thing is that a postcard is very atmospheric, right? So if you're writing a postcard for an independent traveler about what they'll experience, that would be different than a group traveler. Likewise, if you're talking to an adventure-seeker versus a family, the type of details that you would highlight are different and you need to have those in mind when you're doing your research on the ground, but you also need to hold those distinctions in mind when you're writing your pieces and when you're pitching. What this means is that you might have the experience like the meal that you had when the family invited you to eat at their home, but you can actually write a different, and therefore things you can sell multiple times, articles for these different audiences, even if you're writing it as a postcard for each of these things. You can use different details and a different tone to write that same postcard piece for all of these different magazines.



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Alright, ok so if you've got your worksheets, we're going to go now to the next one which is Terre De L'Ebre, I can never say this right it is such a Spanish tongue twister. Ok so that itinerary which is really done in a quite lovely way and I have to say this is one of the few press trips I've been on where we actually went to every single thing on the itinerary and spent an appropriate amount of time there. It was very enticing in the beginning, and it's funny because even now as I look back through it, it doesn't—there's nothing on it really that specifically stands out, except for the tuna that I have up here at the very top. There's just not a lot of sort of showy type of experiences on there, but they were just really lovely experiences. That made this trip a little difficult because when you look at something and you know that it has potential for some great atmospheric or narrative or profile pieces, but you don't have a lot of information about them, then you typically can't pitch in advance, which was the case with this story or this trip.

The swimming in the water with the largest tuna in the world. I have to say that was pretty cool. I don't know that I would say that it was the most standout adventure sports experience ever or anything like that, but it's definitely something that you can do a how-to piece, you can do, it's quite controversial actually to swim with the tuna. So you can also do an essay or a sort of pros and cons piece angle and that's also something you can have pitched in advance and do some interviews on the ground with people to support that. You can do a profile of the person who runs the eco-friendly company. You can do like I said a service piece about the best way to swim with tuna or the way to make sure that you get the best video and photos. You can do an atmosphere piece, postcard about what it's like to swim with the tuna and you can do a narrative that goes to this whole experience of when you get on the boat and you're swimming with the tuna and how it feels and how you felt afterwards and incorporate the history of the tuna fishing profession in the south of Spain, and the environmental controversy. So there's a lot of different angles that you can take with this experience. In part, because it's kind of got that flash like when you see it you're like oh my God swim with the largest tuna in the world, and so that naturally lends itself to a lot of angles.

Let's look at the next part, which doesn't seem like it naturally lends itself to a lot of angles. This is really just like a straight destination. When you look at it on the itinerary, you just see the Ebro Delta and they describe some of the geographic attributes. Now this is a place that, in all my years of traveling to Spain, I had never heard of and I never really knew anything about it, but my God, not only was it stunning, but it was very unique. In travel writing, I think that especially people who are moving over from blogging for themselves, to blogging and writing articles for pay, this question of what is unique is not always appropriately answered. You have to really think about not just what is unique to you, in comparison to the travels that



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you have been on, whether they are a lot or not so many, but also what is unique to a reader and especially to the readers of the publication that you're pitching.

So I can't tell you how many times I've been on a trip and especially an eco-focused trip where they really wanted to show us a mountain or a waterfall or something like that and we got there and it was just not that outstanding. So I'm kind of like what am I supposed to do with this? I have a picture, but you know not even super usable and I wouldn't want to write about this. But this is one of these cases where we went and the pictures of course are amazing, but it's the kind of place that I really want to tell people about. So because this is something that I would really want to tell people about, and they don't already know about it, that lends itself to some interesting articles because there's not so much coverage on this already, which obviously gives you space to write about it, but also it means that you have to be specific. Just because it's a big area that has a lot of interesting things, doesn't necessarily mean that you should just write a general article about it. You still need to slice into the sand dunes and how to visit them or the lagoons and how to take the best pictures of them, or the bays and how to do the best nature spying there. You can't just take the whole area and write this massive inclusive article about everything there because you're going to lose the reader.

So when you find an area that's off the beaten path, but very interesting, it's really important to still keep this slice mentality in mind, because just because it's got a lot going on, doesn't mean that all of that is of interest to every reader. So this goes back to what we were talking about before about the different audiences and to make sure that when you're slicing your articles, you're slicing them by audience. So in this case, like I said before you can do something from a photography perspective, you can do something from a nature perspective, you can do something from a history perspective. It's really important to have these different audiences in mind when you look at a destination, especially if you're looking at a destination and thinking that the destination itself is the idea.

This next one I thought was going to be really cool. It's a place located over mussel and oyster farms and the thing was is that they didn't really allow us to experience it when we were there which was really a shame because I've never been to a mussel farm before and I would've really liked to know more about how it worked and things like that besides just in the tasting. In advance, I thought that we were going to have more of an immersive experience here and so if I had pitched something in that vein like how a mussel farm really works, then I would have been screwed. So thankfully, like I said I didn't pitch things in advance for this trip because I didn't really know what it would be like and so I ended up with some really great photos and I was able to ask a couple questions and sort of extrapolate about how the mussel farm worked



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to create sort of an atmospheric piece, but in advance, I would have struggled with this.

This is the kind of thing where if you're in an off the beaten path destination, where they're not accustomed to tourism, you have to be very careful about what you expect, and so this is one of those times where, no matter how interesting the things are, you want to a) really check your expectations and b) do some research yourself in advance so that when you're on the ground, you know the questions to ask, so if your tour guide isn't forthcoming with the information, then you know what to press and not what buttons to push, but you know what questions to say "no no no, I can't leave quite yet.

Can someone please explain to me how to do such and such?" When I first started taking a lot of press trips, I really noticed a lot of the experience journalists, like the people who write regularly for major national newspapers would do this sort of thing. The tour guide would give their spiel and it would be very cursory because the tour guide wasn't experienced and then the person would say "ok sorry can you answer a couple questions?" and they would ask all of the questions that all of us really wanted and needed to know that our tour guide wasn't actually talking about. Especially if you're on a trip with a group and the tour guide isn't really doing their job. Don't be afraid to dig in and ask those questions, whether you're doing it in a group setting or you take them aside and do it later.

Now the other thing that we had on that itinerary in the first place that I thought was pretty interesting, but they didn't do a very good job describing it, was this olive orchard so to say for a lack of a better word. This they called, it was really poorly translated, but I think they call it the Centennial Orchard or something like that and it ended up that these trees were all a thousand years old and it was a little hard to get the photos because these old craggily olive trees can be aesthetically pleasing or not. I have to say that getting the stories from people who live there and talking about how the olive trees have changed over time ended up being some really rich material that could translate into, again atmosphere pieces. You can profile the family that keeps up the trees. You can talk about their new tourism initiatives in a news brief. So there's a lot of different avenues in terms of formats that you can get out of things like this that are unique and not very well-known outside of the area, but again, you have to make sure that if you don't have a good tour guide that you're digging in and getting those questions answered.

Now, after I went on this trip, there were a couple things that seemed really interesting that I didn't know about in advance. So the tuna that we talked about before, obviously that's got some great story material.



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Something that I didn't have on the first list was the Apiarian Center. That means a beekeeping center. So I was kind of like "Oh bees, people know about bees. You can visit a beekeeping place in the US. What's so special about this?" They really had an amazing interactive interpretation center that really taught you a lot about different types of honey, why there's different types of honey, what the different types of honey taste like, what the propolis is, what the royal jelly, what the queen eats is made of and why the queen becomes a queen is in fact the royal jelly.

This is something that I actually used in my book as an example of to break a trip into multiple story ideas or how to break an experience into multiple story ideas because at this particular Apiarian Center, I had the opportunity to ask the staff their favorite recipes for cooking with honey, to get as I said information about the different types of honey, why there are different types, I was able to talk about the experience of visiting the bees themselves and how to do that safely with your kids and all sorts of different things like that. So it's really hit or miss if you go to something like a museum what stories that you can get out of it and I have to say not every museum or interpretation center like this is going to hand feed you all of these great story ideas. So this is the kind of place where doing some research in advance or knowing the topic area can really help you extract some more stories, but also just digging when you're on site, like really taking the time to go through the exhibits. If they're good, or to ask questions of the staff, can help you come up with a variety of different angles, whether it's profiles, round-ups, recipes, you know service pieces, different interesting facts that can go in a news brief, something like that.

We've talked about the Delta and the mussel farm, but another thing that really struck me on this trip, which didn't seem super interesting at first, was the basket weaving museum. What really made this place stand out was that it was a community initiative that was absolutely thriving that was trying to preserve these ancient basket weaving techniques, and again interpretation at this museum was just fabulous. They had in addition to people showing us how to do the weaving, they had demonstrations and they had videos that had the I don't know the right to say it but the Elders of the city talking about how they weave their baskets and different types of baskets they made and what they use for with translations. They had newer designs that they were making to be more marketable and they were explaining how they were interpreting the ancient techniques in these newer designs.

So there's a lot of different topics there and you could even take that as a style sort of piece. You could even talk about the jewelry from the newer designs, you can use it for more of a human interest story to talk about how they're reviving the tradition and so again like I was talking about with the Apiarian Interpretation Center, this is one of those places that could go either way. Museums can be a total bust. They can



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talk about things that you can learn anywhere. They can have rather poor exhibits that again, don't really give you a picture of the location, or if they have an appropriate interpretive experience that can really give you a lot of article ideas.

Now, again we talked already about the olive trees, but the Temps de Terra is another place like this. It was listed on our itinerary just as a lunch, and so obviously you know you could think in advance well I can pitch that as a restaurant, but they had described it as a very special agricultural collective. Now, I do a lot of agriculture coverage and so again like I said, when you know an area well, you have to think about the experience of the readers and what's going to be special for them, and so in this case I kind of was thinking ok well it will be cool, but I didn't know if it was going to be very very special. When we got there, they had a wooden oven, outdoor stove, that they had set up that they were using to cook all of the food and my friend who runs a food tour company and I just spent like probably half of the meal over there just shooting video of them cooking the food because it was a style of cooking that you don't see very often anymore. You don't see it in the US because it's not allowed, but you don't even see it in Europe that often because it's hard to scale.

This place had no importance on scale or pricing or what have you. They were just keeping things the way that they had been for a very long time for the joy of it, for the taste of it. For the importance of revitalizing these traditions and they had a packed house every weekend for their brunches and their lunches and you know it really showed in their success. What that means is that a place like this can really lend itself to talking with the chefs for recipes or doing profiles, for doing a round-up of other places like this that also exist in Spain and around the world, but it also lends itself to business-oriented stories. I know that we, most travel writers don't think of themselves as business writers, but the fact is that whenever you are profiling a hotel, or a tour company, or a restaurant, you're writing about a business.

So once you have the experience and the chops and the eye for detail to write these business profile oriented stories, you don't have to only write them for travel magazines. You can also write them for business magazines. You can write them for the magazines in the vertical, the industry in the thing that you're writing about. You can also write them for the business edition, sort of the business class magazine for a lot of airlines as well. Whenever you see a business like this, that's in the tourism area and doing something a bit different and doing it successfully, it's always worth digging into whether you can turn that into a more business-oriented story.

I just want to quickly go through this Dubai trip because I didn't actually go on it and even when I looked through the itinerary to set up these slides for you, I was like "Oh it looks kind of fabulous. Why didn't I go?" This goes back to what we were talking



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about why an editor will accept a story and it has to be something special, as in something that other people haven't already done, something else, but also something special in terms of that you can add something special to the story. So if it's a destination that you haven't gone to before, that you don't have a lot of background knowledge about, you have to really ask yourself "If I just experience this once, even if I do a bunch of research and you have to ask yourself how much time do I have to devote to that research, what can I bring to the story that someone who's already been to this destination that specializes in this destination hasn't already done?"

For the Dubai trip, one of the first things that really struck me, now add that this was over Thanksgiving and I would've had to miss Thanksgiving to go on it. There was essentially two and half days of this rather short activity that didn't have anything involved. To me, that's usually a really big red flag that the person organizing that trip is not super concerned with optimizing your time getting stories. This is the kind of thing that you can sort of correct yourself by adding in some other activities to do on your own, but you never know if you're going to land and then people are going to spring things on you randomly. So if you're looking at an itinerary and deciding whether or not to go, or to add some buffer time of your own to research your story, this is a really great thing to notice.

So typically in these cases, if I had gone on a trip like this, what I would have done is I would have researched some other things that I was interested in doing that I thought would be good story angles and I would tell the PR person "Hey I notice that you don't have anything in these places, do you mind if I do these things, can you help me set them up?" If you're looking at an itinerary that looks a little light on the type of things that you cover, that can be a really great way to make sure that you have some stories and these are things that you can pitch in advance because these are things that you're going to do research and know that they're going to happen and will definitely come out of that trip.

The next thing on here was the desert safari, that sounds kind of cool and a private dinner at a desert camp, definitely like the fodder of honeymoon magazines. Then the Madinat Souk in the city and the fort with the Dubai museum that has a great pearl diving exhibit, and I've actually written about pearl diving in the Emirates several times before. Then crossing the creek by traditional boats. That could be a very cool atmospheric piece and then visiting the gold souk.

Do we have another slide on this? Yes ok, so what would I pre-pitch here? I could probably pre-pitch the desert safari, I think, but I would really need some more details on it. I would need to know from them specifically what we would be



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expecting to see on the desert safari. If you've ever been on a safari, they're typically very careful about what they promise you you're going to see. In this instance, I would want to get a very very clear spelled out expectation from them about what I would see, so that I would know what types of promises I could in turn make to an editor. I would definitely, if I was pre-pitching this, I would definitely say that I could write some sort of atmospheric or narrative piece about the desert safari even if it didn't work out that we saw anything because you know like I said that's often the case with safaris. It would be a true tale of how to still make the most out of your safari even though we didn't see anything. That's something that I could pitch to an editor, but with that caveat.

Now the private dinner and desert camp. This is the kind of thing that goes back to what I said about this Dubai trip is that what can I add to here? What is special? A private dinner in a desert camp is again totally honeymoon magazine fodder, but how much has it been covered? If I wanted to pitch this, I would have to do some digging to see is this done to death? Have people already written about having private dinners in desert camps in Dubai? It seems like it's probably a pretty common add-on that a lot of luxury publications and luxury hotels would offer. I would need to look around and see is this something new? Is this something special? What kind of magazines have covered it before? Have they covered it too much?

I had, for instance, a really wonderful experience, not in Tuscany, in a very un-visited part of Italy called Le Marche that was a truffle-centric trip and this is an area where you can get truffles for something like a fifth of the cost in most parts of Italy. They really just give you so much truffle oil in all of your pasta and it's really the kind of experience that somebody who wants to eat truffles, that's where they should go. They shouldn't go to the other places that people typically go to and yet when I went to pitch it to editors, even though it was a twist on the truffle experience, what I heard from a lot of people was oh we've already done truffles too much recently because this is the thing that happens with editors. Even though you think your story is different, not just think, but you know that it's different, their hands are tied in certain ways. If the magazine has covered desert safaris in other destinations in the last year and a half to two years, they probably aren't interested in covering this desert safari in Dubai, even if it's new. I'm sorry, not the desert safari, the private dinner in a desert camp. So this is the kind of thing where, if you want to pitch it in advance successfully without having the unique atmospheric or profile oriented or service oriented information that you'll get after having gone on the trip, you really really need to dig in and dig around and see what's been covered in the past.

This is especially the case with this souk that they mentioned to me, in fact both souks, the gold souk and the Madinat Souk. These are the kind of things that I bet



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every single person who goes to Dubai who is not there just to visit the palms is going to do. They're going to go to these souks. In these cases, you would have to really dig around and look for what I was talking about before for service pieces with a hook. Look for that challenging hook that made it difficult for people to experience these places. Look for the thing that a lot of travelers ran into as a difficulty and then pitch a service piece about how to overcome that difficulty. Again, if you're pitching a service piece like that in advance, you have to know that you're going to be able to figure out how to surmount that difficulty. This is the kind of thing where you're going to need to line up interviews in advance, according to your assigned article to make sure that that happens.

Now the next one, the Fahidi Fort, which houses the Dubai Museum is the kind of thing to go back to what I was talking about the Spain trip. It can be really wonderful, but it's hard to know that before you get there. Now if you want to pitch this in advance, there's a lot of great ways now, especially for a museum like this which I imagine is quite large and very well-photographed to dig around online and look through photographs of the exhibit and see how extensive, detailed, interesting, and unique they are. So if you're going to pitch something like this which is a single destination attraction in advance, which is a museum, which is purported by tourism people to have very interesting attributes, this is how you want to go about it.

Go on TripAdvisor, go on their own website, go on the tourism board's website, do a Google image search and look and see with your own eyes as if you were there, how good it really looks. Then make your pitches accordingly. If I had gone on this trip, this is the type of pre-research that I would've done to validate these type of pitches about these activities before I sent them to Editors. Then, once I had done that pre-validation, I would go through this process that we talked about before. I would look at it in terms of different article formats, and in terms of different audiences and then I would go back through something like the Travel Magazine Database or just through my own pile of magazines and I would see what are the specific formats that the ideas that I've now generated could fit in to? Then I would hone the idea further into precisely fitting that format. So when you have one that I just talked about that has a city through three different perspectives, the adventure seeker, and the foodie, and the family, then I would take you know for instance, the souk and I would talk about in my pitch how I will find different aspects that fit each of those travelers, but I'll have to find a couple in advance to tell the Editor. So that's stuff that I will either do by circling back with the PR person, or just by doing some internet searching.

Alright, so I've gotten through now the end of my slides finally thankfully. I'm so sorry that this went too long. I won't make so many of these slides next time, but I really appreciated that pretty much all of you have bared with me through this. So, again



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fore-knowledge, going through the magazines or the Database, or something like that in advance of the different types of very specific types of angles and rubrics that magazines are looking for makes all of the difference in these pre-trip breakdowns or post-trip breakdowns, because otherwise you're going to end up with an idea that's more of a topic, that might be something that an Editor has already written something too closely in the past or that they could never publish in their magazine. It's incredibly important that you don't just rely on what ideas you think are cool or interesting or fun from your trip, but you really double down on what magazines are actually publishing about trips like the one you've gone on.

To be prepared to pitch, make sure, as much as you can, that your trip will follow the established itinerary, whether it's a trip that you are planning by doing extra due diligence using all of these you know train connections and visiting a place on Sunday, that all of these things are actually possible. Then if you're going on a trip that's been planned by somebody else, make sure that you really do that digging that I was just talking about on the Dubai trip, to make sure, not just like I said that things are possible, that they're interesting and to find what the interesting angles are in advance, so that you can make sure that you see them while you're there, that you talk to the right people while you're there, and also to make sure that, for instance, you're doing an interview that follows a specific rubric, you've done the research of what those questions are so you can ask those while you're on the ground. This goes back to researching magazines and specific formats, but not only when you're trying to pitch in advance or you're doing your post-pitching, but while you are there you are on the lookout for as many details that fit as many magazines as possible.

If you have any questions about this or anything else or if you thought of some ideas while we were going through the call today and you want to check with me if they sound like a good idea or if I know some magazines that might be a good fit, or something like that, send us an email at questions@dreamoftravelwriting.com and I'm so glad to have had another webinar with you guys after the long delay and I hope that you've enjoyed as much as I did. Ok have a great night everybody.