



# Dream of Travel Writing

## How to Get Work Done When You're On the Road

Today we're going to be talking about how to get work done when we're on the road and actually it's a little ironic because I travel probably 80-85% of the year but this was actually one of the hardest webinars that I ever put together for you guys and I'm actually probably going to add some things from my notes that aren't on the slides as we go through because it's such a big topic and it's probably something that I should have done in a couple different webinars but it's not quite so central to travel writing and your income so I wanted to try and do it all in one stretch.

Specifically, what I want to talk about today is sort of the psychology behind where people get tripped up in the first place when trying to work from the road because it's not necessarily as simple as you think. It often comes from a lot of ways where we over estimate ourselves and our capabilities or underestimate what we really want to be spending our time on. And then I want to look at three different parts of your life as a travel writer who is traveling, who is a travel writer on the road that you need to get control of to make sure that you're actually able to meet your deadlines and your expectations for yourself of what you're going to get done while traveling. And then we're going to look, as much as time allows, at a lot of different little hacks that I use and have developed over the last ten years or so, of doing this to make sure that I do get my work done.

Before we get into specific tactics, I want to look at why people struggle so much with this in the first place. And the reason that I say people struggle so much is not necessarily that nobody's doing this because obviously there are a lot of people who are nomads and who work from the road 100% of the time or who do have a home base but travel quite regularly and I'm one of those people. I have a home base kind of in theory but I'm really there very, very infrequently and in some ways, I find that can actually be harder because when you do live somewhere, when you travel it's a completely different routine. And what that means – it's two-fold. On the one hand, it's kind of exciting and even if you know you're traveling for work you're sort of in this vacation mode of "Oh – I'm traveling," but on the flip side it also means that you are getting out of your usual routine and that you need to establish a new one, and I think that's one of the places that some people who don't travel full time or haven't been doing this job for a long time get tripped up, is not establishing that new routine, or not having a routine for when they're on the road, or not knowing how to change that routine to different circumstances, whether those circumstances are a press trip versus when you're traveling by yourself, or when you're traveling on your own as a solo traveler, versus traveling with your family, which is very different in terms of time requirements.

I'd love for you guys to drop over here in the chat box and let me know if when you're traveling, you're typically traveling by yourself or with family or other travel writers, and if you're typically traveling in a way that is self-funded, or if you're typically traveling on sponsored trips, because I'm going to look at how all of these different factors can affect how



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you get your work done and I'd love to hear from some of you about what your experience is and how you typically travel so that can inform what we're talking about. Because I know for instance, for myself and Amanda – who I don't think is on the call today – but Amanda had done a really nice piece about this a while ago. So she lives in Morocco now where her husband's family is from and when she first moved there, it was very difficult to get her work done in a way that didn't create friction with her family because they all lived in one central sort of housing compound I believe around a courtyard, and each family – so like her husband's sister and so on – had a different floor and what that meant was that when she was upstairs during the day working, the rest of the females in the family were downstairs cooking, taking care of the kids and so on, and so it seemed like she was trying to get away from them and I myself run into this a lot when I'm working in India where my husband's family is because it's even more exacerbated by the fact that when we're there he's on vacation, he is there to hang out with family but I can't just go to India for a month and not work so I'm still doing work.

I noticed that we've got some people on the call... a lot of folks travel with their husband, sometimes on their own, most travel self-funded, that's great. So I was going to talk about press trips but I'll talk more about traveling when you're doing it yourself, which is when you have more control over your own schedule, which honestly I recommend. Great. Ok.

The thing is for, for people who are traveling with somebody when you're traveling, everything that I'm going to talk about later about guilt particularly, in the press trip setting, you can transpose that to thinking about the guilt that you have about working versus sending time with your significant other. So, I love, love, love this quote, I heard this at a literary conference a couple years back, but I think it really especially applies to us as travel writers. So, Elissa Schappell is the editor of a very – I guess important is a good word to use here – but a very prominent and well respected literary magazine and she's also written several full-length books and is generally just a very sassy, cool, interesting lady. And she in addition to running this magazine and being a published author, she also has children and she has a husband who himself is also a co-editor of the same literary magazine as her and he's also very big in the literary world so he's got a big job and she's got a big job and they also have a family.

She says you can sleep, have a social life, or you can write. You can pick two of these things. Now, what I really like about this in the travel writing context, I haven't even touched the sleep one, but I think when we are in our "on the road mode" as travel writers, it's a little bit more like this: You can travel, as in you can be out and doing things and experiencing the destination, you can work or write which we typically think of as being in our rooms and not out experiencing the destination, or you can have a life. Ok. And I'm going to get in a second to what I mean by having a life, as a travel writer when you are traveling because it's not the



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same as having a life at home, but what this really means is you can be traveling and working, right. You can be traveling and enjoying yourself. Or you can not travel and you can be at home and get your work done and have a life. So, on the road having a life can take a lot of different forms. And it's not the same as at home when you're going out with your friends or you're talking to your mom on the phone or maybe you're watching TV. It can mean socializing with your host, whether that is a host of a sponsored trip like your press trip, or the host of your Airbnb or some other apartment that you're in. Or socializing with other people who are on the trip with you, whether it's a press trip or other travelers that you meet on your trip. It can mean calling home if you're traveling by yourself and not traveling with your significant other or it can mean having dinner with your significant other and having conversation and hanging out with them as opposed to doing work over dinner.

It can mean when you're on your laptop, hanging out on Facebook or Twitter or even catching up on emails that are of a more personal nature, watching TV, I know a lot of us, myself included, do this on the road as we relax at the end of the day. But it can also mean doing non-essential research online or otherwise. And when I say online or otherwise what I mean is that sometimes you're on a trip and it's somewhere you really wanted to go for a very long time and you're really fascinated with it and you end up spending a lot of time on the laptop reading about what you're going to do in the place. How many of you guys have fallen victim to this? I call it the research rabbit hole. Especially when we're talking about pitches but I feel like when you're researching a destination it's almost, the travel writing crack in a way. Even if we're somewhere we just can't help researching all the things there are to do, all the restaurants. Seriously on my laptop right now, I just closed Firefox to make sure I had good bandwidth for this call but I think I have like seventy-five tabs open of restaurants and stuff in Tel Aviv to try to check out while I'm here. And part of it is because I want to know everything about them before making a decision, but part of it is also that's why we're here, is to find all the different things. But the online research can definitely hit a point of diminishing returns where you end up looking at more things than you could ever possibly use and the thing is that this can also happen in person when you're out on the road and there's a line between the research that you're doing that you might be able to do something in a story capacity with verses the "research" that you're doing which is really just enjoying a destination as a traveler but won't inform any of your stories.

And this is what I really want to hit home about because I think this is the crux of what a lot of travel writers struggle with, especially when they're first starting out but we all struggle with this, especially when you go to a destination that are your particularly interested in or that you've always wanted to go to or maybe it's a beach and it's just really cold and snowy at home and you just really can't help but get out there and get some sun. So, this concept of exploring a destination in ways that are personally verses professionally gratifying, is one of the biggest areas where we have to watch out in terms of making sure that we have time to get the real work done when we're on the road. Because the thing is that there's different



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types of work that can be done when you're on the road. I know a lot of you on the call and I know a lot of you have blogs that you need to maintain, but also if you have a blog to maintain obviously you have to be doing your posts and your Twitter and at least having things scheduled and keeping an eye on them while you're on the road, but you should also be pitching from the road. And I don't say this probably as often as I should but pitching from the road is incredibly valuable. If you can write to an editor sometimes even an editor you don't have a relationship especially ones you do, but you can definitely use this on new to you editors, if you can write to an editor and say "Hey, I found this great thing. I'm in this destination right now. Would you like a story on it? I can do any research or pictures you want, I'm already here." That is super powerful, that's a great, great way to get clips. And that is the type of work in addition to doing work for regular ongoing gigs, that I would love for you all to have more time for on the road, but what I often see and there's a couple of you on here that have been in my workshops or classes that I've done and so you've probably heard me say this before but what I often see is that when people are traveling, even if they have their own travel blog and they're new to writing for magazines, what they see when they're traveling, what they research, what they spend their time on is not sale-able. It's not something that they can turn into an article for an editor.

In last week's call we looked at how to come up with ideas while you're traveling and in particular we talked about how to create a pocket magazine cheat sheet. I've got a post about this on the blog, it's just [dreamoftravelwriting.com/pocket-idea-cheatsheet](http://dreamoftravelwriting.com/pocket-idea-cheatsheet), but you can find it there very easily. And this is something that allows you to know what magazine sections in the magazines you want to pitch are going to be easy to find ideas for and essentially walk around a city with that and plug in different things. And what happens, I find, is that people who aren't used to traveling to look for magazine ideas tend to go experience various things and then come back and feel bummed because now they start looking at magazines and now they realize that the stuff that they did on the trip is not really going to fit into any of the places that they want to pitch. So, whenever I talk about doing non-essential "research" I'm talking about things like this, I'm talking about things that are very, very fun and that you enjoy while you're doing them during your trip but are not necessarily related either to currently assigned work or work that you could potentially be doing in the future.

I often hear people that I know, and I even hear this from people who are accomplished magazine writers who have even been magazine editors and who have really been working in print for a long time. I often hear them say that they simply can't write/work while they're on the road. And that they do all of their work in advance of their trip so that they don't have to work when they're traveling. But to me, that really strikes me as meaning that they see their trips more a little bit as a vacation than as a trip for work and I don't say this necessarily as a negative way but if you saw the blog post or the newsletter that went out about the webinar today, people who have been in this industry for a long time often have been doing this since before you could be working very easily from the road, before you could be doing your



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email, before you could be working your blog, before you could be filing stories, before you could be doing all this stuff while on a different trip, but the fact of the matter is, if you are literally spending all of your waking thinking working hours while you are traveling just in that destination, just experiencing that in one way or another, you're doing yourself a disservice because you're cutting into hours in the day that don't need to be used for that, time that you do need to be at home recharging, that you could be using getting work done in one way or another. And so, I often find that the people who tell me that they don't work when they're traveling are either enjoying their trip the aspects of their trip quite a lot and a more personally gratifying capacity, or doing research that they're calling research that's not going to turn into an article. Or they actually are working but they're just working more on creating stories, editing photos related to the trip at hand, during the trip they're on rather than when they get home.

Now, just a small aside about that – there's nothing wrong with that. I know a lot of people who will go to a place, get their articles done basically while they're there, come home, file them, and then they're off to the next place and the next story. But the problem that I see with this set up and what I've often heard from people who have a sort of feast or famine cycle of going from trip to trip to trip and feeling like if they don't have another trip lined up they don't have anything to write about, is that when you essentially, in a very heady, quick fashion, immerse yourself in a place and then wash your hands of it, what often happens is that on the one hand you're missing out on a lot of opportunities to pitch that same destination to other magazines that you didn't think about right away, that you didn't have access to when you were on the road, or that you didn't know about at the time, that if you gave yourself a little bit of time at home to dig up additional story angles and story placements you could really get a lot more juice, a lot more income out of that one trip. But also, I feel like when you do this, you're sacrificing some of the best stories that can come out of that trip.

When I'm working on my laptop somewhere often like in a cafe or a hotel lobby or somewhere like that and someone finds out that I'm a travel writer, and then they ask me what I'm working on, which is always the logical next question, they want to know what you're writing about the destination, I pretty much always say that I'm writing about somewhere else, not to lie to them or something like that but I just usually am. Like when I am in one destination, I'm typically writing about a different one and filing a story from a past trip that I took some number of months ago and the reason for that is I really feel like as I said, even just one week of digging through magazines can help you think of more story ideas but the distance from the trip allows you to just see the little details that you're going to put into your postcard piece or your narrative feature that you already knew you were going to write before the trip but it allows these greater messages, the real epiphany moments that you had over your trip to become more and more clear to you.



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I remember when I was at the Book Passage, Travel Writers, and Photographers conference that Don George runs in California a few years ago, I think it was Tim Cahill but I've heard a lot of people say this since, but I'm pretty sure at the time Tim Cahill said this thing that when he writes a piece, so first of all when he goes on a trip he takes copious notes, he takes so many notes, he takes tons of notes and I do the same thing, but when he writes the piece, he sits down and maybe he'll read over his notes and maybe organize them and everything, but when he writes a piece he doesn't look at his notes. He just writes from the impressions, he writes from what stood out for him, from the feelings. He writes up his first draft in that way and then he goes back and fills in the details.

And what I think is so important about this in terms of giving yourself some time between your trip and when you write about this that Tim really elucidated is that those things that are the thread, the current of the important things that run through your trip, don't live in the details, they live in your greater memories and what sticks out to you. And so, while you are on a trip if you can manage to by having other work lined up, I really advocate letting yourself experience the parts of that trip that you think will turn into a story later but not forcing yourself to write them up right away and giving yourself some distance to maybe be writing about that destination a month or two later when you're in another destination, so that it can all coalesce in your mind and the really important parts can stand out.

The short version of what of all the things we're just talking about is that when you're on a trip, I want you to not say no to everything of course because otherwise we're not going to plan the stories, right? But I want you to think about saying 'yes' to opportunity as in opportunities to find a story but 'no' to distraction. So, in some cases that distraction might be in the form of going and checking out some attraction or joining somebody for a drink or something like that. But in other cases that distraction might be more obvious, right? It might be hanging out on Facebook when you get back to your room at the end of the night. It might be turning on the TV when you know if you do that you won't get any work done. Things like that. So, think about saying yes to opportunity but no to distraction and knowing what the difference is between the two. Now, other things you want to say no to are guilt and obligation and I'm going to get to that in a minute. But again, if you're just joining us we asked earlier do you typically travel by yourself or with family or in a press trip capacity, and do you typically travel on sponsored trips or self-funded trips because that will help especially in the next couple of slides for us to center the topic accordingly.

The guilt and obligation tend to come up when you are traveling with other people primarily but it can also come up when you're traveling on your own because sometimes you'll be traveling on your own and think "I have to do this thing." Either because it's the thing that everybody does—and I'm hoping you're not doing too many of those in your travels—or you have to do it because it just seems really interesting (and chime in in the chat box if this has



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happened to you) but I know that often I'll be somewhere and I'll be so tired and I just know that I really need to do some work so that I can stop stressing out about that or I really need to have a walk or have a good meal or something. But I'm so torn because there's some thing that I really wanted to check out that I know is supposed to be really cool or that I had read a lot about or something like that and I feel guilty because I feel like I don't know when I'm going to be here again I should go check out that thing. So chime in in the chat box if that's happened to you because that's another type of guilt or obligation that we can be subject to when were on the road that's really hard to disentangle whether it's an opportunity or a distraction.

Now I want to look at three steps to getting in control of your work time when you're on the road. The first one that I want to look at is where you stay. Since a lot of you are in the position where you're staying in a self-funded capacity, I'd love for you to chime in over here in the chat box, if you are primarily staying in apartments, Airbnb's, hotels, staying with people you know, stuff like that. Because as I mentioned earlier in the call, staying with people you know can really, really affect how you work but the thing is that you can often have just as much of a negative effect in terms of the pressure on your work time when you stay with people that you don't know as when you stay with people you know. Because depending on who they are obviously not your in-laws or your grandmother, when you stay with people you know, you can say "Hey, listen. I need to work now. You need to leave me alone." and to a varying degree, they'll respect that. But when you stay in settings like couch surfing or Airbnb or things like that you can often get into the case where you don't really have the ability to say that and it would kind of be wrong if you did. And this is even true if you're staying in, for instance, somebody has mentioned over here that they stayed in small BnB's. Yes, Stacey said she stays in same bed and breakfasts' and I've had this happen a lot the same thing that I mentioned earlier in the call of like Amanda's relatives, or my Indian relatives kind of expecting to spend meals or spend time with you. Some of the biggest time sucks I have ever had from an accommodation standpoint are staying in bed and breakfasts' and oh my god, it's so hard because in a bed and breakfast, everybody goes to breakfast together right? Sometime there will be separate tables but there's often just the one big table and the breakfast is a feature of the BnB and you certainly want to take advantage of it and write about it if you're writing about the place so you want to go but wow can those conversations really, really drag on and on and it's incredibly rude to not take part in them if everyone's sitting in a big table and especially to take your laptop out. I'm going to talk a little later about a tactic that I use in the breakfast situation but for now I just want to emphasize and for some people it seems like a lot of you are really managing well where you stay, but for some people this might be a little bit of a shock.

But traveling for work does not mean the following: it does not mean couch surfing, it does not mean staying in a shared room in a hostel, it does not mean staying in a shared BnB, it does not mean doing work exchange. I've run into not a lot of people lately, but I've run into



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people over the course of doing workshops in different places who tell me that they're going to travel for a year and write and that they're doing work exchange or something and I have done that myself, I did it actually quite a bit when I first started travel writing. I would not do WorkExchange, but I would WWOOF which is where you stay on a farm, and I did it with the eye that I was going to write a story about it but I wasn't necessarily writing when I was there. It wasn't a complete waste of time to be doing the work, but what tends to happen in those situations where they're some sort of work exchange involved is that the work takes up considerably more time that you thought it would and then you get into this same meal situation that we talked about, staying in a BnB.

On the couch-surfing angle, I just want to relay a little anecdote. I was at the re-launch of Nomadic Matt's book, it was the updated version or something of I think his book is how to travel the world on \$50 a day or something like that and people were asking Nomadic Matt about where he stays and he had to pony up and I know him and I'm good friends with his old roommate so I know very well where he stays when he's traveling but he had to sort of publicly come out and say he doesn't couch surf anymore and what he said was – and I think this is quite poignant right now for this situation that a lot of us find ourselves in – what he says that when I'm couch surfing, if the host wants to get a beer I should go get a beer with them. They are hosting couch-surfers likely because they want to socialize and they want to meet people and so that's part of the deal you might be staying for free but you're paying with your socializing time and as somebody who runs a business and has things that I just need to get done on the laptop I can't tell them "I'm sorry I really need to work for a couple hours." I especially can't tell them "Can you be quiet, I really need to work for a couple hours." And so, I had somebody that I coach recently get into a situation like this recently where she was staying, I don't think she got it through Airbnb but I think it was through VRBO which, it's an apartment rental website, it's one of the older apartment rental websites and it really doesn't have the same socialization expectation that something like an Airbnb would. But she got into this situation where her host was very sort of involved in their lives and almost demanding in a certain way of the two of them doing yard work or various things for her and I guess the apartment that they were staying in was above where the woman lived and she would keep the door open all day and so the apartment was absolutely freezing and the person I coach couldn't get her work done because she was cold and the person was always in there asking her questions and things.

This is part of the reason that I'm really careful when I stay in Airbnb's about getting a situation that is actually a private apartment. I remember one time I was in Portland, Oregon not Maine, and I had an Airbnb and it was built as an apartment but I think it was a room in the house that they had added a separate entrance for, or something like that but it also had a door that went into the main apartment so there was definitely a sound leakage thing. And I had maybe four or five friends for dinner one night and I could not believe the number of text messages and emails that I got from this woman but the thing is that when it goes both ways





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in that case she felt that we were being loud but I had an Airbnb in D.C. maybe two or three weeks ago for a conference and at 6 o'clock every morning their toddler was dropping things on the floor right over my head because again it was kind of like the basement of the house that they had built as a separate apartment but really was very much connected to the main house.

When you're traveling for work and you know that you need to be working on the road, one of the most important things that you can do and WIFI—I haven't even mentioned that at the moment—but is to make sure that your workspace is a place where you can actually get work done. And I don't know about you guys but I've been doing this for years so there's no exact formula for getting it right. For instance, this Airbnb that I'm in right now in Tel Aviv, all the windows are kind of blocked out or have some sort of curtains over them and I totally understand that's because it gets very, very hot here part of the year and so it would make sense to keep it as dark as possible, but I don't want to work in a room that's totally dark all day so it's been very frustrating for me, but I wouldn't have been able to tell this from the photos. So one of the things that I really recommend is whether you're staying in an apartment, a hotel or anything like that, to look out for the things that you personally need to get your work done, so if you prefer to sit on a couch rather than to sit in a chair with a desk, make sure that it has a couch and that it's comfy and that it's facing a window if that's important to you and if you need a chair with a desk, make sure the chair with the desk likewise is in a good position that it's not in a corner that it's not facing a wall that it doesn't feel drab because all of these things despite your best intentions no matter how great the Wi-Fi seems or how opportune the location is, can completely snowball your chance of getting any work done in this place and they are things that you often don't remember to look for until it's too late, until you've had too many bad experiences and even then you might forget one place that you had that had blacked out windows and in two years forget to look for that again.

What I really recommend is that when you are looking for your accommodations, as much as possible, take a little personal survey of what you need to get your work done from a physical perspective. For me I like to have a kitchen so that I can make tea and have a snack if I'm up late working at night, something like that. Take a little personal survey of all of the things that you find critical to being comfortable. I'm probably not the only one who likes to have a little hot drink next to them when working and have that with you every time you look at a place to stay. Because the thing is that obviously finding a place that ticks all the boxes seems like it can be more expensive but it's much more expensive to not get work done and this is one of the reasons actually, that I recommend having a regular ongoing gig that you do even if it's not super interesting that is some type of travel writing that you have to do every week you have to file a couple stories or couple blog posts. Because having those things besides just having a regular income, that gives you a bit of security, can give you that buffer that you know that you'll have enough money to pay for the place that is blah that's like a little, a



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higher floor or that has more space or whatever, because it will allow you to concentrate and earn X which is getting the work done for this gig that you have. And I've found that especially in terms of apartments, there's some pretty easy trade-offs that you can make but one of the ones that's most useful is staying a little bit further from the city center and one of the things about staying further from the city center is that this works for apartments but it doesn't work so much for hotels.

I know some of you guys have mentioned that you stay in hotels and that's one thing that I would actually recommend not doing. I don't recommend staying in hotels when you're traveling for work as a travel writer. And there's a couple reasons for that, but one of them is that hotel Wi-Fi today tends to not be as good as apartment WI-FI and so you're much more likely to find yourself in the situation where it's hard for you to get work done at a reasonable speed whether that's research or uploading or whatever, in a hotel than in an apartment. But the second reason is the sound one that I talked about earlier. Hotels, if they're not super, super top of the line, don't tend to have the best sound proofing, particularly not as good as apartments do. And so that's the case where if you're working on something and you really need to concentrate you're more likely to be bothered by the family in the next room, or the maid in the next room, especially the vacuum cleaners going at like 8 in the morning or 9 in the morning or something like that. So whenever possible especially if you're going to be in place for two or three nights, I really recommend trying to get yourself an apartment, a private apartment of course because having also the difference of space verses the desk, the couch, if you like to work in bed, that can also help when you're feeling stuck whereas unless you're in a really nice hotel suite, you're not as likely to have those opportunities. The one thing that a hotel will afford you that you don't necessarily have in an apartment is the opportunity to go work in the lobby and so if you're someone who travels with a significant other or friend or something like that, in that case I actually recommend that you do look at hotels and I use this a lot when I'm traveling with another travel writer or something because that way if one person wants to go to bed, needs to go to bed, is feeling sick or whatever you can take your laptop and you can go down and work in the lobby. And so also in the lobby, the WI-FI tends to be better, then you don't have control over the temperature and the lighting and some of the things like this but if you're somebody who typically travels with a significant other this can make a really big difference because then especially if they're there on vacation and you're not, you're not going to be disturbing their enjoyment or their catching up on sleep or whatever it is.

Step two in terms of taking control of your travel work time when traveling, is your schedule. So, I know a couple of you mentioned press trips, there are a lot of comments I'm having trouble keeping up with them, but I know a couple of you mentioned press trips that you've been on. And this can be really, really hard on press trips. How many of you have been on a press trip where you didn't have the full schedule, the actual final including everything schedule until you arrived or sometime after the trip had officially started? Just pop over here



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in the chat box, just go ahead and say 'yes' if that's the case. I have a couple of press trips schedules that I'm going to pull them and share with you in a second and I would have given you handouts for these but I just pulled a little bit out of them so I don't think it will be too much of a problem. Someone mentioned a great one over here "Or it's changed halfway." I've had a lot of press trips where they change halfway and often it's because we as the writers realize that it's not going to work out the way they wrote it, there's just not enough time so it has to change. Or it changed halfway because they didn't really put enough time in there to get done everything that they wanted to do.

Someone's mentioned they are not lucky enough to have a press trip. As you'll find, press trips are not necessarily very lucky and you're better off traveling by yourself and we're going to get to that. But here's the thing with managing your schedule – when it is not your own. This can also happen when you are traveling with family or a significant other or something like that. I've had times where my best friend is an architect in a very small firm and she only gets a couple weeks off a year to travel. And that's really tough for her because she's a very avid traveler and we met in Italy actually and so she really wants to maximize them and she'll go to South Africa or she'll go to Tonga in the South Pacific or she'll go to India with me or something like that. And so, with her it's very important that she's getting everything possible out of her day because this is her only vacation during the year. Whereas for me, it's really important for me to spend half the day working and so even if you're not on a press trip, there can be a lot of factors that push your schedule to not be your own.

When you are on a trip whether it is a press trip or a trip with family or a trip when you are on your own, just say yes over here in the chat box if you have ever participated in a meal or activity out of sheer guilt. Not necessarily because you wanted to do it, perhaps you had something else you felt you should have been doing, but you just felt like you should spend time with that person or you should do the thing because it's on the schedule or something like that. Just put a 'yeah' over there in the chat box. Yes, someone's mentioned the bed and breakfast again, I know, I know I had the saddest experience. I have to say though on the bed and breakfast note, it was actually a little redeeming. I was in this bed and breakfast and I was there for a conference – which don't ever stay in a bed and breakfast to go to a conference. But they had screwed up my booking at the conference hotel and I ended up at this bed and breakfast and I was missing the morning session that my friend was giving and then one of the other guests dropped this amazing tidbit. He was a curator from the British Museum who was visiting this random town in Virginia to set up an exhibit that was on loan from the British Museum and then he started talking about all this interesting stuff about the British Museum and I was happy I'd stayed. So sometimes you can turn it around if the other guests are interesting.



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Alright, next question: Here's the hard one. How many times have you been on a trip and done something like going to the beach is a very frequent candidate here, that was on the schedule or not, just because it was something that you really wanted to do, but it wasn't necessarily something that you needed to do for work or maybe it was on the schedule of the press trip but it was optional and you could of not done it and gone back to your room and done work instead but bungee jumping just sounded like something you couldn't possibly pass up? Pop a 'yeah' over there in the chat box if that's happened to you. So, the thing with taking control of your schedule on your trips is that there's two different poles, right, there's the negative pole the guilt pole, and that guilt like I said can be about people but can also be about places, it can be about things that you feel like you heard about and they're going to be interesting and they're going to make a great story and you really want to go there, but it can also be the positive pole. It can be that little devil on your shoulder saying I know that you have social media updates to write, but look at how beautiful it is out. Shouldn't you go out right now? It's very easy to let your control over your schedule go.

Another one of these things that's the sort of happy devil is at the end of the day, when you've told yourself that you're actually going to work when you get back to the hotel or to your apartment at the end of the day, and you are just so freaking tired and you absolutely need to either go right to bed or just zone out with the TV and not really do anything interesting, or work relatedly interesting at least. Balancing these two devils on your shoulder, neither of which is a good one, makes it even harder to make sure that you're actually getting work done on your computer while you're on a trip.

What I like to do in this case to make sure that you have control over your schedule is to start by knowing your own personal work needs as well as possible. We talked before about picking where you stay, knowing your physical work needs, but in terms of managing your schedule I find something called energy mapping which you can also find on our blog, but I'll mention a little about it, to also be really important. So, we all know this kind of concept of being a morning person or being a night owl, right? And I'm sure you all know which one you are and maybe it's changed over the course of your life. But I think that we don't think more granularly about what is the exact time at which we are best at writing or we are best at writing creatively from scratch verses focusing and polishing something that we already have notes on. Or the times that we are best at doing brainless tasks like pulling up a bunch of research or editing photos or something like that is not creating from scratch. There's different times in your day when you are best at doing these different types of tasks and that all these different energies and so for those of you who are lucky enough to be planning your own trips so that you have control over the timeline, it's especially important to have mapped out how your energy falls in the day and to plan your travel time accordingly.



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For instance, I'm not a super morning person, I don't necessarily like to be up in the morning and I don't necessarily write very creatively in the morning but I can if I need to. But the thing that I found is that if I'm on a trip and I don't do any writing until four or five pm, which is actually when I write the best, I kind of get this—I don't know if it's guilt or writer's bock or whatever—but I kind of get this I haven't done it yet and now I can't do it anymore thing. So, I know that when I'm traveling it's really important even though I'm not a morning person to just get something done in the morning so that I've at least made a dent in my list and my writing so when I come back in the afternoon it's not so much of a boulder that I need to push back up the hill.

Now some people might know I've travelled with somebody like this, in the evening they are just just crap, they are not good for anything. They are grumpy, they can't think straight, they're like not themselves whatsoever and they absolutely cannot make important decisions whatsoever and so those are the kind of people that again whether they're morning people or not, know that when they're on a trip, that important work needs to be done in the morning before they leave.

I'm going to look at a couple different press trip itineraries here and we're going to look at how you would fit work into the spots on these itineraries. I'm going to use these to talk about a couple different tactics that I use to get work done on the road. This is a Hawaii press trip and this is Day Two but I think Day One was really just the flight. So, they have it set up interestingly here when you just look at it, they say half day program and what that really means is that starting at this time they don't really know what we're doing but the Pacific Islands Institute is in charge of it. So, just glancing at this schedule, it doesn't, on the one hand it doesn't look like a super full day, on the other hand the fact that even the people sending the itinerary don't know what going on in the middle of the day means something's probably going to go wrong and the schedule is going to change. Any of us who have been on a press trip can see those warning signs. Looking at this itinerary and this is a trip that I've already been on, looking at this itinerary, there's a couple things that I notice. I notice that it appears that there's a gap between this Hawaii-style lunch and this site visit. And then I think ok well they didn't include transportation. It says on here that it's going to take 20 min to get from this place to this place so if you extrapolate then you think we're probably going to be back by 2 o'clock. This press trip was actually a bit of a shit show and I think that they completely, completely screwed up the schedule so I'm going to go off of a slightly idealized version here and they know that used the time to leave to be a little earlier.

In this case, if you were on this trip, if I were on this trip, here's how I would approach it. It looks from the timing here that we're going to get back early in the evening. Now given this is a press trip I would actually not trust that whatsoever, just like I would not trust there would be time to work in the middle of the day. So, what does that mean? That means that it



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looks like from this schedule that we're probably going to be leaving around 9 o'clock and I would say arriving home at 9 or 9:30 and probably being very very tired. So, what that would mean to me is that breakfast is not happening, or perhaps I'm going to get there at like 8:30 but I'm going to essentially try to take as much time to myself to get work done before I show up to the group as possible. Because the whole rest of the day is not my own.

Now the second thing is that we clearly have to drive somewhere, so what I would do is I would cue up on my laptop some tabs of things to do in the bus on the way to this place. Now cueing up tabs is something that I don't see a lot of people do, and I wish more people would do it. So what cueing up tabs means is that if you have work that you need you do that involves some sort of research you open all of those tabs that you're going to need in advance on your laptop whether you use Chrome or Safari or Firefox or whatever. For instance, if I have to edit posts for the travel magazine database, what I do is that I open up the preview of the post in WordPress so that I can see the final version. I also open up the edit post tab and then as I'm going through and reading and editing the post and putting the post in the edit post tab, and as soon as my computer gets back online, it's going to auto save a version of the post and then I can hit save on the changes.

In this case on a day like this, that's absolutely packed and you know that you might get back a little earlier in the evening but you're going to be a little bit tired, what that means is that you know you're going to have time in the evening to do unimportant tasks. Tasks that don't require a lot of energy so what that means is that in the morning, I'm not going to do anything that does not require maximum creativity. I am not going to do social media updates. I'm not going to read things, read newsletters, I'm not going to do research for the day or for articles or anything. The only thing I'm going to do in the morning is write because I know that in the evening I'll have time to do more low attention tasks. And that there will probably be some time in between these various things that I'll have some minutes on my phone where I can do that as well.

Now the other thing I want to say about phones – I'm a T Mobile fanatic because it's an absolute game changer to have internet no matter where you are, I was literally walking on the beach today, not on the beach, because I wouldn't go on the beach with my laptop and my phone, but I was walking along the beach today and somebody requested a trial of the Travel Magazine Database and I went into WordPress and I set up a new user and I set up trials for them from my phone, from the beach in Tel Aviv today. Now, seven years ago that would have meant that I would have had to find time to go home or go somewhere with internet and get that done, but really if you don't already have it, having T Mobile is the cheapest solution to having International Wi-Fi and you can also tether it to your laptop when you need to.



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But in general, I really recommend getting used to when you're at home doing tasks on your phone that you might not think you can do, whether that's working on word documents or working on WordPress or whatever, I think a lot of us get very attached to doing certain things on our laptops but when we're traveling there's a lot of work that we can get done on our phone especially during little moments here and there and one of the things that I'm going to talk about later but I'll mention now is if you are traveling by yourself, to go out for dinner so that you can experience the local culture, flavor, cuisine, atmosphere, but to work on your phone the whole time while you're at the restaurant and it won't look to people like you're working, it will look to people like you're just reading or doing your email or something but you can actually be writing articles, writing blog posts, researching your next stay if you have internet, making lists of what you're going to do when you're at home, editing, there is so many different things that you can be doing on your phone over that meal, while not feeling guilty and not making that choice between doing something in the destination verses working.

Here's another itinerary of a trip that was probably even more of a crazy time than the Hawaii trip. In this case something that's not mentioned on here is I think we had to leave at about 8:30 in the morning from New York. Taking that into account, looking at this stay it means that we're leaving at 8:30 and we're not arriving until 10 so what that means is that there is a big chunk of time in here that is in transit, so in this case I was in America so it wasn't a big issue to be working over Wi-Fi tethered from my phone to my laptop in the car but I didn't know I was going to have Wi-Fi and you should never assume that you're going to have Wi-Fi even on your phone, if you're in the US because when driving you can have zones where it cuts out. So, in this case, I had cued up a bunch of things to do but then I ran into the inevitable problem that since this is Day 1 and we were all meeting on the bus, everybody's being a bit chatty on the bus so what that means again is not that you should ignore everybody on the trip but that you set some clear limits, and any time you're on a group trip, whether that's a tour of a press trip tour, or a public tour, I really recommend setting a professional line and what means is being perfectly clear with everybody that you're interested in them but that when you're on your laptop and working, that you're not.

There's a little bit of a sfumatura as we say in Italian or a small shade of how to do that without seeming arrogant or like a bitch, but the way to do that is to be perfectly nice but professional. This is a really important thing, is I've seen a lot of people especially on press trips be more friendly with the other people on the trip than you would with a professional colleague in an office setting. You might think "Oh well we're not professional colleagues in an office setting" but really you are. If you're two travel writers on a press trip together, you are two colleagues in an office setting, that's really what's going on. But I think a lot of people like I said, earlier about the way that we get into these traps of not getting work done on the road is that they feel like it's a vacation and that might not be you but it might be someone else. We always say there's always that person that girl on the trip the annoying



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person who talks to everybody and that one is a little harder to deal with but in general, the way to keep people from talking to you when you're on bus rides and things like that when you have work to do, is to just make it very clear that you are here for work and that you're working now.

In this trip, you've got a nice chunk of time here in the morning to do work, now it's tour, tour, tour, it doesn't even say when lunch is, tour, get to the hotel. Looking at the craziness that is this scheduling you're getting to this museum and presumably touring the museum then driving to this place an hour and fifteen minutes, they're totally going to eat up this freshen up time. There's no way that that's going to happen. And so, anytime you've reviewing a press trip itinerary I recommend you don't just say "Oh good look there's some time to work here: but you look at all of the stuff that comes before that and say is there really going to be time to work or is this a sort of rookie/over optimistic PR person who is going to eat into that time?" And in this case, not only did we eat up into this time, but they got so late with all of this stuff and this took longer than they said they pushed back we didn't end up going here and I think we didn't even leave for the hotel until like 10 o'clock.

If I were to just look at this I would say, "I look in the evening I'm going to have time." But this is where you really have to think, if the day is very busy, one of two things is going to happen. Either you're going to be too tired, or the schedule's going to get screwed up or you're not going to have time in the evening. So anytime you see a day like this, where there's more than three things in here, even if it says you're going to get to the hotel at 8 o'clock, don't presume that you're going to be able to work in the evening.

Now, this next trip I picked really crazy, crazy trips I apologize. This next trip was one of these cases where as I mentioned earlier when we were talking about itineraries changing, sometimes the itineraries change because you're sitting there looking at things and you realize it's just not possible for all of the things in there to fit into the amount of time described. So, in this case, over dinner the previous day on Day One, we had realized that this place Kalamata, was two hours away from where we were staying. So what that meant was that we were going to leave and get there at 8, we were going to tour the city, presume that takes half hour or an hour, so now maybe it's 9 o'clock and we're going to have dinner. It's Greece so that means two, two and half hours and there's going to be drinks we are probably not going to leaving until midnight or something and then it takes another two hours to get back. Even if we had stuck to this schedule, and we left at 11pm, that puts us back at our hotel at 1 am and we need to be on the bus at 8am or something like that the next day.

These are the kind of things that whenever you get a schedule from somebody, you want to double check because what they put on here might be quite light or might be quite extensive





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but there's nearly always something missing sometimes that thing that's missing is that you have to have a guided tour and that's going to take an hour and half and while that might be perfectly good scheduling-wise, as in everything adds up, there might be something else that you would have preferred to do with that hour and a half, and that's where we get into the concept of distraction vs. opportunity.

It is the case especially where if you're on your own and you're doing a self-guided trip and you see a visit to a museum for an hour and half, don't feel like you have to go to that museum that you have to do that guided tour because they set it up for you. Don't back out of it the day that you're there but talk to them in advance about what we did here, about how those actually fit together and whether they're necessary.

In the case of this itinerary, we actually talked to them about whether we could leave earlier, why we have to have these three hours at leisure before we do this thing, and we actually ended up going to a different city. We still got back quite late but that's a whole other story. So, if I were looking at this schedule, I would say "Huh, there's not too much stuff here, that doesn't sound that bad." But again, it doesn't say what time we're leaving in the morning so you don't know if to visit this open-air water power museum you actually need to be leaving at 8 to get to this place. And given when this picnic is, and when it says we're going to return, it might be that it is like an hour away so these are the types of questions that you can ask and also the things that you should plan for when you don't have that information.

What that would mean is that seeing that this is what time the visit starts and it doesn't say what time we're going to leave, I wouldn't expect to have a lot of time in the morning that day. However, I would expect that we're probably going to have a decent amount of time in the car. The problem being though that there's hiking, so do you want to take your laptop and leave it in the car in this situation? Again, this is where you can circle back with the people organizing the trip in advance and say "Look, I'd like to bring my laptop to work in the car, but I know we're going to be hiking. Is somebody going to be watching the car during this time?" I myself am just used to hiking with my laptop, so I do it all the time and I would just hike with my laptop anyway but if you want to keep your stuff in the car and work on the way there, this is the kind of thing that you can set up in advance.

Now, apart from what I said about how this became a little bit of a cluster-fuck in the end, it looks like if you were to work in the car here, work in the car here, and work during these hours you can get a solid five hours of working done in this day. So, this could be a pretty good day in terms of doing a neat amount of things outside and still getting your work done. I wouldn't say quite the ideal day because it ends quite late, but this is the kind of day that can really work out.



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If you're traveling by yourself, this is kind of a version of what I would recommend. What I usually do is that I work in my own room or whatever for a little bit in the morning, maybe like an hour or something like that, depending on how much work you have it can be a little longer. And then I try to go out. Sometimes I'll go out with my laptop and I'll work for a little but longer, but I usually try to work and then go out for a while. And this can be a visit to a museum, but I might do it more as a walk, or what I find really effective is if you're staying in one place, you take a bus or train to go somewhere else and then you get to work during that train time, so you're using that time to do something of a day trip capacity, but you're also using the time on the way there as well as the way back to get work done. And then, I would typically (similar to this) aim to come back around 2-3 o'clock because when I'm in Europe, that's when the US is getting up, and then work for a few hours before leaving probably more like 7 o'clock to go out and have dinner.

Now I'm going to get back to a couple more specific strategies about how to tackle itineraries like this one in a second but we're a bit over time so I just want to get one more point in. I mentioned earlier energy mapping and the thing about energy mapping is that it is really useful as well when you're at home. In addition to knowing when are the times that you can really get effective work done, one of the things that you really need to be conscious of on the road is your habits. What that means is do you tend to sit down and spend maybe ten or fifteen minutes looking at random things online before you start doing actual work? And I don't say this in an accusatory way I have phases where I do that too but being conscious of the manner in which you organize your work time is crucial to making that time effective on the road. Because what happens is that all these habits that you have of not actually doing work when you're on your computer to do work, when you're working in little bits and spurts on the road, which is primarily how you work, all of those edges that are eaten up by non-work become the bulk of your time. If you think about it, if you only have a half hour here and a half hour there and you usually spend 15-20 minutes doing email when you first sit down or reading about Trump or whatever it is, then you only end up with five or ten minutes of work time at the end of that batch.

Whatever your habits are you need to both know them, and have different rhythm have a different set of habit, a different schedule for when you're on the road. And like I said I really recommend the schedule that all of those little things that are not strictly working or that are not creative working that you usually do, you bundle them up and you put them at a time when your brain really can't do anything else. That might be in the morning, it might be on the bus, it might be that you're not very good at working when you are on the bus, it might be at the end of the day. Taking stock of those habits before you leave allows you to keep yourself from falling into these traps when you're on the road. At the same time you can still course correct.



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A couple of you mentioned you haven't been doing this very long, or you haven't been doing it very much. These are really useful important things that you're going to learn when you start traveling. I mentioned that the coaching client of mine who had the apartment host who leaves the door open all day and asked them to help with gardening and all these things. She's pretty good at setting boundaries, however, she travels with her boyfriend, who is not. So, this is the type of thing where no matter how great her boundaries are, she has to learn and plan around the fact that he's going to say "yes, I can help you with gardening," or "yes, we'll join you for lunch" or something like that without talking to her and so if you travel with a significant other it's not just your habits that you have to keep in mind, it's also going to be your significant other's.

Like my husband is the worst about reading on screens before he goes to bed and I used to be really good at that but I've picked that up from him and were both really bad sleepers and now we're both on our screens until the cows come home and so this is the kind of thing where when we're traveling and we have to get up really early the next day or we're really tired or something, I have to tell him "Ok, we're doing this, put the phone away, we're going to read books or whatever."

All of the habits that you have that you can get away with at home, like we talked about earlier with the quote from Elissa, "you can write, have a social life, or you can sleep." If you don't get rid of those habits when you're on the road, you're probably going to find that you're either sleeping less, or you're working less and neither of those are very good.

Some of the common culprits in terms of your habits are tiredness, not knowing that you get really tired at the end of the day. Facebook I've mentioned, there are other social media networks but I think Facebook is the one that we tend to go on with either completely transparent personal reasons or flimsy business one. The other one is busy work. Carol Tice who also runs the website about writing, I remember she was in a cabin or something in Washington with her family and she said she couldn't believe that she got all of the normal work that she does done in two hours every day at her cabin. It's because she stopped doing all this busywork. So, if you run your own website, there might be a lot of things you think—checking your analytics, checking your stats—doing things like that throughout the day that you don't actually need to be doing and you could particularly cut when you're on the road. And also planning. I talked about how we can spend a lot of time over researching our destination and that's one of those things again that is a type of hanging out online that when you're traveling is going to either eat into your sleep, into your work, or into your travel.

A couple of quick productivity hacks—and I know that we're over, so anybody who needs to go, thank you so much for joining us and I'll try to get through these in the next five minutes or so.



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So battery life is absolutely paramount, and I'm sure a lot of you know this. But – it's not just paramount to taking pictures, and notes, it's paramount to getting other work done when you're on the road. So, I highly recommend, I'm sure you all already carry one extra battery pack with you, but carry two. My mom taught me when I was young, carry a twenty-dollar bill hidden in your wallet somewhere for an absolute emergency. Carry another extra battery, that's always charged like the use you use every day, you don't have to think about re-charging. For that time that you forget to recharge your main extra battery pack. And like I was saying, get used to working on your phone because I think that there's a lot of things that people just don't do on their phone because they just don't think about it like working on their WordPress sites and things like this, writing entire essays or articles. But one of the good ways to do that I mentioned opening up tabs on your laptop so you can use them when you're not online, but I actually put a lot of information in my email and then I make sure that my email downloads to my phone. That way if I need my notes from an interview for an article, I can go pull them out of my email on my phone completely offline and get a whole article written without having the internet and without having my laptop because my laptop's dead.

We talk about opening tabs in advance. Now another thing that I think a lot of us don't think about especially if we're a little tight on money is the ROI of various travel amenities. I, these days, always get extra legroom on the plane and it's not just because I have a bad back or I have a bad knee it's because I can't open my laptop enough to work if I don't have an extra legroom seat, because inevitably somebody will put their seat back so far that it's practically touching my nose and there's just no humanly way possible to open my laptop. So, depending on the airline, it's going to cost like \$15-\$100 depending on the airline and the length of the flight, but if it costs \$100 and it's going to mean that you can write another 2, 3, 5, 6, blog posts that cost \$100 each, that is completely worth it.

Another thing here is trains verses busses. I know some people get car sick, I've started getting car sick and I never used to when I was young and so what that means is that it may be worth it for you to take the train which costs a little more rather than taking the bus because that price difference of \$35 is going to mean five extra hours of work that you just wouldn't have if you were on the bus.

I've also talked earlier in the call about having an ongoing gig that can seem like oh no, it's like an extra thing I have to do on the road, but one of the nice thing about having an ongoing gig that you do have to do when your traveling is that means that it's going to give you an automatic routine of the work that you do for that client that will help you establish your work routine while you're on the road.



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We talked a little about breakfast, we talked about the breakfast at B&B's or when you're staying with people and things like this but when you are on a press trip, as much as possible, even if you are a breakfast person, I really recommend skipping breakfast with the rest of the people in your group and if you can't because you really want to eat breakfast, I recommend showing up the last 15 or 20 minutes. You don't really need more than 15-20 minutes to eat breakfast, you might need more than 15 or 20 minutes to read the news and blah blah blah and do all these things while you're eating breakfast but to actually eat breakfast you don't need much more time than that. So, I really recommend if that is going to be the only time you have in the day, whether because you're traveling with family or significant other on a press trip or something, to be very, very mindful of guarding that time because it's going to be your best creative time before you get out on the road and you get really tired.

Another one that I also mentioned is if you're traveling by yourself obviously it's really tempting to just sit down and get a bunch of work done in the evening but that's also really important time to soak up the flavor of the place that you're in, to overhear conversations, to talk to random people and things like this and so I really, recommend like I said, getting used to working on your phone, having that extra battery and heading out in the evening to have dinner by yourself but get work done on your phone during that time. And that's also the way that if you're in one of these Mediterranean countries where it takes you 45 minutes to get the bill, or like in Greece for instance, you ask for the bill and then they bring you a free dessert that's on the house, that you just have to eat, this is what keeps you from feeling upset, guilty, robbed of time when those meals go on too long. If your phone fully stocked with all sorts of work for you to be doing during that time, you can enjoy your meal soak up the atmosphere and not feel guilty that you're not getting things done.

Thanks so much for participating and telling me all this great information about how you guys travel and if you have any questions you can follow up with us at [questions@DreamofTravelWriting.com](mailto:questions@DreamofTravelWriting.com)

Thanks so much for bearing with us for the long call, and have a great weekend guys.