



# Dream of Travel Writing

## How to Increase Your Pitch Success Rate by Analyzing Magazines

If you go to this link right here [dreamoftravelwriting.com/10mags](https://dreamoftravelwriting.com/10mags), there you can download a PDF that has it's actually got eleven breakdowns of magazines that show exactly how we do it in the database. Let's go ahead and get started. Like I said, today we're going to talk about how to get more assignments by analyzing magazines.

I actually am a former magazine editor. I used to work with an online magazine, so I've been on both sides of the table, both a freelancer and an editor, and that gives me a lens about what editors are looking for, but especially what they aren't looking for, what they really have time for, and what makes them think that you aren't worth their time, which is one of the reasons we're going to talk about looking in magazines and I'm going to share some quotes with you today from other magazine editors about what they look for in all writers, but especially new writers.

The three main things that we're going to cover today are how the process of pitching can really improve your travel writing income, when you do it regularly and accurately. Here's the thing, I've found that a lot of travel writers complain, and not just travel writers, a lot of freelancers of all types complain up and down about how they don't earn as much money as they would like. The thing is that they're not really doing anything to change that. You know they might be applying to gigs online or perhaps they're going on press trips, but they aren't sitting down and systematically sending out pitches, seeing how that goes, tweaking the process, and sending out more pitches. What I've found is that making that a regular practice and practice is the main word here, something that you are doing and improving over time is one of the best and easiest ways to increase your travel writing income and I'll talk more about that in a bit.

Secondly, we're going to cover why editors respond best to pitches when you demonstrate knowledge of their publication and you know the things is I think that a lot of use think that when we write a pitch, we're really offering the editor something, but we don't always sit back and check our assumptions at the door and make sure that we are in fact giving the Editor something that they would like, rather than just something that we would like to provide for them. So we're going to talk a bit more about that.

Then we're going to go through how to breakdown a magazine in detail and that at the end of the call we're going to talk from that breakdown about five specific things that you can include in your pitch to show the editor that you are familiar with their publication.

On the topic of pitching and how that can really improve your income, I saw something in a private Facebook group that I'm part of the other day that even I found heartening and really



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really impressive. Somebody who, I believe she's a slightly new writer—but she just has a lot of chutzpa-said to everybody, “Just a friendly reminder to keep pitching. I have more than \$7,000 worth of stories in October because of pitches I sent in September.” What's really really amazing about this quote and one of the reasons that I want to draw your attention to it, is that not everybody talks about how they just don't get responses to their pitches.

We talked in our webinar last week and I'll cover more about this later, but getting a response where there's a yes or a no—and no can be for the best at times—but just getting that response can be the most important thing for pitching. You want to keep away from having editors never respond to your pitches. So the thing that I love about this quote and this writer, is that not only did she send a bunch of pitches, but she sent enough pitches that the ones that people got back to her about (and not just the ones that people got back to her ever) but the ones that people got back to her positively, netted her \$7,000 worth of stories the following month.

One of the ways that you can get editors to get back to you faster is to put a time peg to show them that you have a story that needs to run in their magazine very soon. But another way to get an editor to get back to you, even if they're not going to assign you the story, is to show that you're someone that they want to work with. And that's what we're going to talk about today is how to show the editor that you are that person that they want to work with, even if this first pitch that you have sent them isn't the right pitch, because editors are really strapped on time and they have so many emails that have nothing to do with writers. They have so many emails from production, from their publisher, from other people on their team who might be writing stories. And to get them to respond to your email is actually getting them to give you an invitation to write back to them. Because when an editor doesn't respond to an email, a lot of people just never write them again. Some people who are very sort of pushy will write them over and over again with more pitches, but the majority of people if they just have no response, won't pitch again.

If an editor has taken the time to give you a no, that has more information than just no, whether it's “we've already run that story, we have a story like that coming up soon, I've covered that destination too much recently,” what they're actually saying is “I am opening a door, please write me again.” So we're going to go into how to start getting those emails.

First, I want to talk to you a little bit more about what editors are and aren't looking for. Now Geoff Van Dyke, who's currently the editor-in-chief of Denver's city magazine 5280 Magazine and also a former editor at Men's Journal is just one of my favorite examples of the space that is available in the travel writing market for new freelancers. After Geoff was at



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Men's Journal, he took a turn as a freelancer for a while and part of that is because of this quote right here, which is something he mentioned at a writing workshop that he spoke at. "One of the epiphanies I had at Men's Journal was that there are not that many great freelance writers out there because my job became rewriting people who were professional writers."

Now what I really really love about this is not just, you know, here's an editor telling you that all of the people you're intimidated by—people who are getting assignments instead of you—that these people are not that different than you, that what they are pitching and what they are offering to editors might not be the same as the final product that you're actually seeing in the magazine. What they might be sending is something that's not quite on par with what you're sending, except they managed to get the editor to give them an assignment. Now the great thing about this is that, when there's a hole, when editors feel that they aren't that happy with the people they're already working with, you have the opportunity to send them a pitch out of the blue, as someone who has no connection to them whatsoever, and not only get an assignment, but to get an ongoing relationship going with that editor by proving to them that you are somebody that they don't have to rewrite and somebody that does have great ideas.

Now let's look at another editor. Jordan Heller, who is the editor-in-chief of Hemispheres, which is the United Airlines magazine, had this great quote, "I once had a guy call me up. He gave me a one-word pitch. He said, 'Macau.' And that's not really a pitch, is it? It's not a narrative. It's just a place."

And I've got another quote after this. This is from Anne McSilver, the editor of AAA's Via and AAA. Though it is the Auto Insurance Association of America, they also have about twenty three different travel related titles all over the states and they cover international as well as domestic coverage. And, what she said is "I get pitches that say, 'I want to do a story on Salt Lake City.' That's not going to cut it. There has to be something specific going on in that city—trends, attractions." She takes a little bit further than Jordan, but I think what they both show in these quotes is people are not pitching them a story, but not even just that people aren't pitching them a story, that people aren't even pitching them a story for their magazine. So editors are getting so many pitches that aren't even a story, let alone tailored to their magazines. When you get past these steps, when you not only send the editor something they can work with, but something they can work with that's tailored for their publication, you're a step ahead 99% at least of the pitches that they are getting.

We're back to Jordan Heller because he is just—despite the fact that he runs a large magazine that works with a lot of writers and is very well respected—he really cares about nurturing



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new writers. And so what he said is “What I am most interested in is a good idea, and a good idea can come from anywhere. It can come from someone who’s never published before, and it can come from somebody who’s published in every major national title.”

I hope this is really reassuring because we’ve talked about how a lot of the editors, a lot of the pitches that editors are getting are not that great, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that they’re going to work with new people, but that might mean that they’re jaded and they’re sort of done reading unsolicited pitches from new people. But the thing is that, editors are still reading those unsolicited pitches and we have to ask ourselves, why? And that’s because they need ideas. They need to fill the many many pages of their magazine every month and part of the way they do that is by getting ideas from people that they don’t already know, that they haven’t already heard from. So let’s talk about how you can be the one to give editors those ideas. Let’s look at how to break down a magazine.

Now, when we breakdown a magazine, we do want to look at the cover, but we’re actually going to come back to that. So for now, what we’re going to do is we’re going to skip past the advertisements, which of course are at the beginning of every single magazine and we are going to go to the table of contents.

Now the table of contents tells us a couple of different things. First of all, it tells us what is important to the editor. What that means is what the editor thinks is important to its readers. So you’ll see here the features are first. Now in some magazines what you might actually see, is that rather than the features being first, a selection of interesting articles from all over the magazine are first. In this American Way issue, you see that it’s the features.

So the table of contents is typically spread over several pages. So here you see it has the features, but here’s another page and they call it regulars. Regulars are sections that recur in every single issue of the magazine, but they typically have different names. Some people in the UK for instance, they’re called columns, but in the States a column is typically something that’s written by the same person every month, and so we call these regular recurring sections departments, but just for the purposes of this call, I’m going to call them departments.

Alright so in here in this section of regulars, we see departments and between these two things this page up here with the features and the departments, this is going to be pretty much everything in the magazine. Some issues of large magazines will have multiple pages of contents and sometimes they won’t necessarily list everything in there and in this case it seems like they’ve listed most of the pages, but see there’s a jump between page fifteen and



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page thirty. So there's some things in here that they don't have listed, but this is going to be good for our purposes today.

When you're breaking down a magazine is you start on these table of content pages and particularly you want to start with this regulars section, so if it's not broken out, you might just have to look at the table of contents and look for a column or department or something like that. But here, we've been handily handed this regulars page. What's great about this is that this is a list, a guiding list for us. It is exactly which sections of the magazine occur every single month.

Now I'm sure you don't all have magazines at home that you're following along with, but when you do this at home, what I recommend you do is that you rip out these pages, the table of contents, of course don't do this if you're in Barnes and Noble unless of course you already bought the magazine. Rip out the table of contents and then also rip out this page here. This is the mast head.

The mast head does something very important, almost more so than the table of contents. What the mast head does is it tells us who works for the magazine. So we've got the main editor, the managing editor, the senior editor, the associate editor, and the assistant editor. These are all of the people that work for the magazine that might potentially write a section. The reason that we want to hold on to this is that we're going to take these names and then the very first step in analyzing a magazine, is to take these names and then go through and see what sections of the magazine have been written by the people who work for the magazine.

We're going to go through, and again, these sections in the very front sometimes are worth looking at, but typically they're just things like we saw up here "Air Mail" which is letters from readers or more ads. Here we've got the letter from the editor and things like that.

I'm going to keep scrolling down until we find an actual section.

Here we go. POV, point of view. This is one of their recurring sections as they called regulars and we're going to call departments and you'll see that it opens here with a photo and then it's got the text on the next page. Now this one is an interview and as we'll see here on the side it says photo is by somebody and there's Ken Wysocki. I hope he's not on this call listening to me butcher his name, but Ken has written this. Now if we go back to our mast head, I don't remember seeing Ken's name and as you'll see here Ken is not on here. So that



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means that that section is written by someone who is not a member of staff, who is a freelancer.

As we keep going through the magazine, we're back to the point of view. Another point of view section, this is by Adam Pitluk. He is the editor, so this means that this section is written in house. Over here we've got another point of view written by Savannah Dickson. She's not on staff, so this means this is open to freelancers. We've got a short section down here by Brain Reeseman and he's not on staff so that means this section is open to freelancers.

What you want to do when you're analyzing a magazine, is you want to take your table of contents in one hand and your mast head in the other and look through and check all these bylines. If something is written in house, you can just cross it right off in your magazine. If it's written by a freelancer, you can circle it or just make a note.

Now I want to take a second look at this section. So this here in the point of view, Operation Turkey Swap is a food-related column where they're interviewing or they're highlighting chefs from around the world and their takes on a different dish. So this is something that's open for freelancers and it has a very specific style. Now this is one of the best things that you can highlight in your pitches as a freelancer. If you want to pitch a section like this, one of the best ways to show an editor that you're familiar with their publication, is to take a section like this and say I would like to pitch your food-related section and I know that you typically feature four chefs and I would like to, for instance this one is for the November issue, so it's about turkey, but let's say we're looking at the February issue for Valentine's Day and we want to talk about chocolate cake and you say that I was hoping for your February issue that we could highlight chocolate cake, you know perhaps a flourless chocolate mousse cake, something like that is appropriate for Valentine's Day. And I've got these four chefs lined up who are willing to speak with me about this.

This is one of the ways that you can show an editor that you've read the magazine and it's not only to target a specific section in the magazine, but also to explain to them that you know that they need four chefs and that they need a specific dish and offer them that in your pitch.

As we keep going through the publication you'll see sometimes on the side here is actually where they list the bylines and sometimes it's going to be down here at the end of the piece and sometimes it's going to be at the top as we saw earlier on. This is good to know because I've often had people in classes that I'm teaching (see here's one up at the top) I've often had people in classes that I'm teaching tell me that oh the whole magazine is written by editors



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because we couldn't find any bylines, but sometimes they're just hiding. Sometimes they're over here. So as you go through the magazine—see we're still at the front of the book with the point of view sections and the front of many magazines which is called the front of the book. This is an area where there's a lot of these short little things like we're seeing. You see like Christy Alpert and Abby Kissinger have both written two tiny little things that go on the same page here and this front of book area is where there's a lot of opportunity for freelancers.

However, a lot of times when freelancers are pitching a magazine, they haven't packaged up their story into something that fits nicely into one of these front of book sections like I was talking about we can do with that food swap section. As you're looking through the magazine, what you want to do is take note on how these sections are organized in terms of the type of specific rubric I was talking about.

Here's another one on food, but this one's a bit longer than the previous one. This is their food and drink section and these ones are set up more, and this one's got, this one is a profile of several different locations. This one is more reported style, it's full of quotes. So as you note these different sections down as you're walking through a magazine and you're taking notes either on paper or your phone or on your laptop, write down not only that this is written by Terry Ward, so it's open for freelancers, but that this section, the second part of food and drink is a reported section on one specific chef or one specific food location. Then as you go through, here's another one that's got a specific side bar in the middle. Here's another one that's got a very specific layout. Here's one that's specifically done as a list, but unlike a list that you would see in an online article, each section of the list is broken down.

As you're going through a magazine, and again this magazine is a pretty big magazine, so it's larger than most, just keep taking notes on which sections are open to freelancers and then every time you find one that's open to freelancers, how is that organized?

We're into the feature well now, so you can see that every feature has the name of the writer on the first page, and again this one is written by a freelancer. It starts with pictures, so you're going to know they need pictures. So if you were to pitch a feature to this magazine, you would need to mention to them that you were either traveling with a photographer, that you were available to take pictures or something like that addressing the fact that their features are very photo heavy. Then you'll see this feature starts with a story. This feature starts with a first-person story that puts you right in the middle of the scene. This is important to note because while it seems like features are always narrative stories or always include a



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reported element, in many magazines features have a specific tone. Let's take a look at this one.

This one is a historic feature and again, it starts with "we". It starts with a writer putting someone in the middle of the scene. Now some magazines, especially if it's more of a trade magazine, they're not going to start with a first-person lede. Lede is the first section of the magazine. They're going to start with a lede that's more of a statistic or more of an anecdote that's relayed in the third person, or perhaps something a little bit more encyclopedic giving an interesting point of history about a place. Here in American Way, they really focus on storytelling in their features and so this is another thing that you're going to want to take in your notes.

Now as we remember from the table of contents, there's four features in this issue of American Way. I think we're on the fourth one now and you'll see again, "Motoring out into the Rio Negro, I cruise down one of the world's great aquatic super highways." So here again they've got that first person lede and this should wrap up the features in this issue.

Now we're getting back to departments, which are these shorter things that have a very specific style. This is a department that's written by a freelancer and it's about sports, so it's not necessarily our bailiwick. Here we've got business. Often in these airline magazines, you'll see that the departments that come after the features tend to be less travel-related. These are more for the people who are business travelers or very seriously sitting on planes often and have very little else to do, they'll flip through a magazine. Then there's also going to be a lot of ads and the crossword and then if we kept scrolling down we would get into the airline specific information because this is an airline magazine.

I want to go back up to the top here and I'm going to dive a little bit more into what we do now that we have this information.

Now once we've broken down the magazine and we've seen what sections are open to freelancers, that's when we want to take a look at that information that we've collected on what type of things they cover in a section and how they cover it. We're going to go back to our table of contents here. So, even though here on the table of contents the POV section is just listed as one thing, as is the food and drink, we know that those are actually several sections. What that means is that if you were to pitch an editor—let's go back to this food one that we pulled out of the beginning of the POV section—if you were to pitch an editor on this Operation Turkey Swap, what you are going to do in your pitch is that you are going to tell the editor that you are pitching something in the front of book. And again, the three





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sections of the magazine which are the front of the book which I described, the feature well, which is the middle section where the features are, and the back of the book, which is the departments that take place after the feature well.

You are going to tell the editor that you are looking to pitch them something in the front of the book, and you are looking to pitch...here it doesn't have a name, so we'll just call it the ingredient swap section. Or if you were to pitch this one up here that started off the POV section, you would say that you're pitching them the chef interview section. Then what we want to do, one of the ways that helps editors see that you're really very familiar with the magazine is to take, for instance this section...the interview section, and figure out about how many words are in it. You can do this by going to the magazine's website, if they also have the number of words listed on the website, or you can cut and paste this into Word and check. If we were going to be pitching this interview related food point of view section, I would say I would like to pitch you a story for the food, for the chef interview in the point of view section. I know it usually runs approximately this many words and I've already secured the interview and I can complete it in the next two or three weeks. That's how you show them that you understand how this section is set up.

I'm just going to pop over for a second and take Terri's question. Terri says "what if you don't have access to a skilled photographer and can't take good ones? Is it ok for a front of book to request them from your source? For example, from a featured restaurant or other destination?"

Now that's a great question Terri because the thing is that, especially as you've mentioned for that front of book section. In those cases, the editors are rarely expecting you to travel with a photographer, nor would they assign you one because those are short pieces for the editor, they're much lower budget than a feature, and in those cases it's perfectly acceptable to get the photos from the venue. In this case, because it's a longer part, they may have sent a photographer out to take pictures of the chef. If we look at the some of the shorter ones like this one about snowboarding or skiing rather, they might have got these photos from the venue. I doubt that they sent out a chef to do that. This turkey one, as you can see is clearly stock as is this one below. So any time you're looking at the front of book sections, there's not a huge emphasis on either you taking the photos or them sending out a photographer for that. They're going to figure out in-house how to get those images

The other thing is that, I've had questions, and I don't know if anybody specifically asked that here, but I've had questions in the past about should I tell them that I also take photos if I shoot photos because (and I'm quoting here) "I heard that that's a big turn-off to editors



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because they don't want you to shoot your own photos" and honestly, I've heard people say "should I tell the editor if I can shoot photos or not because I heard that editors these days only buy a story if you have photos to go with it."

The thing is, both of these situations are true and so it's a little confusing because on the one hand, there's editors who would balk at the idea of using your photos unless you've demonstrated to them that you're also a professional photographer because they are glossy newsstand magazines and they use photos that they have commissioned from photographers. However, a lot of magazines (and I would call these the magazines that pay let's say five or seven hundred dollars a feature down) a lot of other magazines either rely on or expect their writers to provide photos to them. Whereas if you have an interesting festival or location or something out of the way that you want to cover, they're going to tell you "I love your story, but I can't run it unless you have the photos as well."

So the thing about that is I tell everybody that I know that you should always be shooting photos wherever you are, whether it's as notes for yourself, in case you don't remember those vivid details about exactly what the layout in the room where you were invited for tea in Iran was or if the editor wants to use them because you're pitching a publication that simply is not going to be able to send somebody to get those photos. So as a travel writer today, I think it's very very paramount to learn some very very basics of photography, such as the rule of thirds, and just how to use your camera and it doesn't have to be a fancy camera. I in fact travel with a high-end point and shoot myself and I've used that, and I've even used my cell phone, which takes very large photos to take photos for magazines because the thing is that, take a look at this shot of turkey right here, like this is a great example. This is not an awesome photograph guys. This is like something that you could have taken at your own Thanksgiving dinner. The lighting isn't awesome. If you look here at these greens and over on the side there's quite a bit of glare. This is not a fabulous photo. Once you keep an eye out for it, you'll notice that a lot of magazines don't feature fabulous photos all the time.

I'm going to go back down to the feature because I always find this to be one of sort of turning points for writers and realizing what their photography needs to look like. It's studying features in newsstand magazines is a great way to get a sense of the type of photos that you should shoot. So see here this one: This photo is something that somebody could have just taken on their cell phone while watching their kids play, as is this one, even this one is not a big deal as far as photos go. This one you might have had to get in front of the horse, but as you see he's got his hat down. This is probably not a posed photo. If you want to improve quickly with your photography and be able to offer that to editors as well, I would highly recommend just taking some time, just go to Barnes and Noble or Borders, whichever one didn't close, Barnes and Noble I guess, and flipping through some magazines and just



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take a look at what they need because by and large these are photos (I take this photo on my cell phone all the time) that you could easily be getting and once you just start to look for them, you can take those along when you're traveling and have that to offer to editors as well.

Now let's go back to what we were saying before about how to put together a pitch based on what you see in a magazine. So let's take this feature for instance. We talked about the availability of photos, so let's look at this feature. So this feature is somebody who used to live in Dallas, moved away it seems, and has now come back to see what there is going on and if it's worth traveling to from far away and he seems to think the answer is yes. So, like I said, the features in this magazine start in first-person and as we'll see, in the very beginning of this sentence, he's not showing you what it said up there. He's not showing you, he or she sorry I didn't check who the writer was. The writer isn't showing you what is great about Fort Worth and Dallas yet. They are showing you that they used to be there, they are showing you a little bit about the scene. But even though it's a pretty long lead, it's quite narrative. They're really starting to lay out what's going to be a long story. And as we go through here, we'll see that despite the fact that there are quite a few pages of photos, this story, the text of it, continues now onto four pages. So I would say that this is probably a 1500-2000 word story.

When you're pitching the editor and if you want to pitch this editor a feature, you're going to keep that in mind. You're going to keep in mind the length, and you're going to keep in mind the first-person tone, and you're going to keep in mind that the editor likes people who have a voice. I mean here they're shouting in all caps in their story. They're saying I got a lift back to down town. This is not a hoity toity academic story here. This is a person on the ground just like you and me telling a story and that makes sense for an airline magazine because their readership is very general and they never really know who is going to be picking up that issue.

If you are to pitch a feature for this publication, you're going to say I would like to pitch you a feature on, I'll take an example of my own, that's just like this. I used to live in Italy and I worked as a journalist covering Italy for many years, but I'm embarrassed to say that it wasn't until a recent trip that I finally rented my own car to drive around the countryside and really hang out where the Italians live and it changed my life and it changed my view of Italy, and I would like to propose to you a 2,000 word feature on my experience driving through the Italian back roads to see its often missed festivals, the cities that aren't in the guide book, and the agri-tourism where you can get a seven course meal, with alcohol, for 35 euros maximum a person. So in that set up, I'm using a tone that's very personal and not just to



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show that this is an experience I have, but to show that I have a person on the ground, down to earth style, just like in the narrative here.

Now that we've flipped through the issue a little bit, I'm going to flip back over to my slides.

I wanted to let you know that this can be a lot of work, especially to go through and list all of the different sections covered by freelancers or what's covered in-house and the style of each one. So while this is something that is definitely useful and we'll circle back again on how to show editors that you've done that work, it's not something that you need to do on your own, or there's times when you can't get a hold of a magazine.

In the Travel Magazine Database we do all of this work for you and specifically for magazines that are going to be hard for you to get. So this means magazines that are in English language, but they're from Asia, or airline magazines that aren't available online, or simply you know interesting independent magazines, and this is a really great opportunity for features. I've had a lot of people that tell me they want to write a long narrative story, and perhaps they do have a writing background and they totally have the chops to write the story, but they just don't know who to pitch it to because they've heard that you should pitch features to editors you haven't worked with, or that there's just not that many people running long form magazines anymore. We've got a whole bunch of those going up on the database this week that you'll see when you log in.

When you get the magazine database, this is what you're going to be greeted with. You're going to see a screen here on the right and on the left what you're seeing, this is the zoomed out of version of this screen. So when you log in, you've got some suggestions on how to navigate the database by geographic area and also by topical area, but then you can also just scroll down and see what's been added recently. Like I said, if you go on this week you're going to see a bunch of independent magazines that we were delighted to recently get to share with you.

Then once you decide on a certain entry, there's several different ways that you can use to navigate either to find that entry. So say you know that you want to pitch an independent magazine that's based in Europe. What you can do is you can go by category—and all the categories, as you see here, are going to be listed at the bottom of the page—or you can go by tabs.



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For instance, here is a magazine, which is actually a custom magazine, which means it's made by a company for its customers. So this is a custom magazine that's made by a hotel group that's based in Berlin, and they feature a very heavy front of book, and also features with a strong focus on the Netherlands and German-speaking parts of Europe. So say you lit upon this one and it's not quite what you're looking for. You can look through the other categories and tabs that are associated with it.

You can look for other European magazines, you can go through here and find other ones in Belgium, or Amsterdam and Frankfurt and flip through that way. So once you click to an entry, you're going to see a couple different things. One of the first things that we didn't cover, when you click through into the magazine, you're going to see four different tabs and one of the first ones I suggest you check out is the demographics tab. On the demographics tab, this is where we talk about who the audience of the magazine is. So if you have gone a trip, that was perhaps a press trip, or perhaps something you did on your own but it was very family-oriented. You stayed a family-oriented resort and you're looking for a place to put that trip. You might find that the magazine that you thought would be a good fit because it's got the right topic, is not because it's got the target audience right here is backpackers and business travelers, and only a small bit families. I recommend when you click into a magazine if you already have an idea in mind to start with this tab here.

The next thing to check out is the magazine description, and this is where we talk about the sort of nitty gritty nuts and bolts part of the magazine. So how much of the magazine is travel content, how frequently does the magazine come out? If you want to pitch a feature, but the magazine only comes out four times a year, that means they're only realistically publishing twelve features and it's not going to be something they buy a lot of. You might be better off trying to find a place, a shorter section of that magazine to stick that article into and then they've also got the editorial positioning in the words of the magazine. So whether that's in their media kit or on their website, or from the letter to the editor of the magazine, this is what the magazine itself, what their editor, what their publisher, what their sales staff, what they think their magazine is about. This is really important because one of the key things about analyzing a magazine and looking at the magazine (and I recommend you do this when you analyze magazines on your own) is to make sure that what you are pitching them, the article that you are trying to sell them, is not based on your own idea of what the magazine is about, but is grounded in what the magazine itself believes and what they sell. Because otherwise you're going to have a really hard time getting an editor to buy your article, to assign you that article because you're trying to shoehorn it in. We want to make our pitches not be shoehorn, we want to make our pitches be so clear and so tailored that that editor sees not only where the article would fit in their publication, but that you understand their publication and that means that they're going to want to work with you more.



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After the description tab, the contact tab is going to be another section where we've got more sort of overview information, but overview information that's very important. This is where we talk about all the different people who might be assigning articles in that issue and exactly how to get in touch with them. We always use the email format because editors change, and so we give you an email format that you can plug the first and last name into to figure out how to give them a direct email because those black hole info at emails, you never want to use them. I have had magazines that assign me an article, but after I pitched their black hole emails six months ago and finally found the direct email for the editor. So always email editors directly whenever you have the opportunity.

Now this is a bit fuzzy because it's a long section and I had to do a little cut and paste, but in the how to pitch section in the Travel Magazine Database, this is where we do what you all and I just did right now with the magazine. We go through and look at the table of contents, and we tell you each section that's in the magazine, and then we also tell you how many freelancers are used every issue because that gives you a sense of how much competition you have, right?

We tell you which sections are open to freelancers, and then we break through everything that I went through with you right now. We go through how many sections are in there, for instance in this publication Out & About is similar POV section that we just saw in American Way, it's composed of multiple different sections, and we tell you how long they are, what they cover, and then we also give you some examples of things that have been covered in there recently.

When you sit down to write your pitch, I know that a lot of people spend, I don't want to say inordinate, but a lot of people get really sucked in to this research process and someone just posted in a Facebook group that I'm in the other day, "How many hours should I really spend researching a publication before I pitch?" I think that's a really great question because you know you could sit there and you could read four or five back issues of the magazine, and if you're not reading it properly, you could come up with no ideas and we don't want that.

What I really recommend you do, to both streamline your pitching time and also your research time, is to make sure that as you're going through the magazine as we did before, you know as we have here in the magazine database, as you're going through and finding each of these sections, that you're not just jotting down what they cover, but you're also jotting down some ideas. I would prioritize your research time, and this will help make your pitch time shorter, but prioritize your research time to focus on what tangible things you need



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to know and demonstrate to the editor to pitch that section and what ideas exactly fit that section.

I talked a couple minutes ago about shoehorning. Avoid trying to take an idea that you've had and mold the section of the magazine around it. You need to take your idea and you need to slice it, format it, add a couple of new pieces of research that you didn't have before to make it a round-up. You need to take your idea and change it to fit the shape of the magazine section. Now here are some of the ways that we can do that and we can show an editor that we've done that. As we were going through the magazine we saw a couple things, I want to say with the Operation Turkey Swap. We saw some headlines and they were a bit interesting, you know they showed the style of this magazine.

So when you sit down to pitch an editor, the very very first thing that you want to do is (because this has the largest impact on whether your pitch is read) is you want to write a headline for your story. So this means what the headline of the story would be if it appeared in the magazine. So you want to think about your story idea and then you want to look at the magazine and see the style of headline that they use, and especially the style of headline they use for the section that you'd like to pitch and write your own headline accordingly. Then you're going to take your email pitch to the editor, and in the subject line you're going to write pitch: and the headline that you've created.

When we were going through the magazine, especially in the features, we talked a lot about the type of lede, the beginning that their stories have. So when you write your pitch, the very first section of that pitch after dear editor's name, is actually going to be a lede. You're not going to say I'm so and so and I would like to pitch you a story for this section. That comes later. What you're going to have in the beginning of your pitch is essentially what would be the first couple sentences of that article if you were to write it.

When we looked at those features, we talked about how they start with a scene from their story, they start in the first-person, and they start by creating a description that sets the scene for the reader. So that's how you want to start your story or your pitch rather. In this case, say we were talking about that chef/restauranteur that began the POV section. In that case, the lede might be an interesting quote from that person if you've already interviewed them, or an interesting factoid about that person. Something that's attention-grabbing is what you need to start with, something about the story you're going to write and nothing about yourself. Start your pitch with something that grabs the editor's attention just like you would start the article.



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Now after your attention-grabbing lede, the second part of your pitch is going to be where you tell the editor what you are pitching them. So you've peaked their curiosity and you've sort of teased them a bit, and now you're going to draw it out. You're going to tell them, not the rest of the story, but you're going to tell them what you would pitch them, what you would write. If they want to hear the rest of that story, they need to respond back to you.

In the second paragraph of your pitch, this is where you're going to use what I was saying earlier, "I would like to pitch you an interview with Mario Batali for your chef interview section and I have access to him already and I know that this section is typically 1,000 words, I've secured the opportunity to speak with him for an hour to gather that much information."

In the second section of your pitch, you're going to mention the part of the section of the magazine, but you're also going to mention these facts that we collected about what goes into that magazine to show the editor that you have done your homework about what needs to be in there. Again, this is where we show that we are not shoehorning our idea into that section, but that we are serving the editor an idea that perfectly fits it.

Another thing that you can add in the second paragraph are some samples of stories that that editor has run before that are related to, but different than your story. So this means you know if we had just read this issue, the November issue of American Way, we might mention I know you recently featured so and so, who's also a restaurateur in New York. And then you're going to say though importantly how what you are pitching is different than the similar thing that came before. This is especially important if you're pitching a destination.

There's a rule of thumb that's a bit fuzzy about how often a magazine will cover the same place and a lot of people say the rule of thumb is a year and a half, but that's not really true. If it's Florence, or Rome, or Paris, or London, these things get a lot more coverage, but they need to be different. Every single time that it is covered in the magazine it needs to be different than the previous time.

If you're trying to get a story on something very very out of the way into a magazine, I would make sure that they haven't covered it in five years, that's the rule of thumb for more unusual things. If you're trying to cover something that's a bit more evergreen, say as a destination or a topic, just feel free to choose another time that they've mentioned it or something like that and tell the editor why it's different. You don't want them to come back and say well we just covered that. You want to show them that you know they've just covered that and here's how your story is different than the one they ran before.





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A very quick way to tell if an editor has already covered or a magazine has already covered a destination, like the specific place that you want to pitch is to go into Google and write the URL of the magazine. For instance, Travel&Leisure.com, colon and then a word. That restricts Google to search only on that specific magazine. The other thing that's an advanced trick here, and it wouldn't work for the American Way that I showed you, so you'll see this is why you can't quite do it all the time, is that a lot of publications will have a page where they show contributors to that issue and they have a little bio about them. It's not going to be a full bio. It's going to be something interesting about where they've travelled or where they researched that story or something like that. This is a gold mine because if your publication has this, that is a perfect delivery mechanism to you about how you should write the third paragraph of your pitch.

This third paragraph is where you say not only who you are, but why you should be writing the story and that can be something related to your travel background and your specific experience with subject area or your writing background. I would recommend and I always say don't put anything in that third paragraph that doesn't specifically have to do with why you should write this article. So if you have a blog that has nothing to do with this article, don't mention it unless you have had one post that did particularly well that was on a similar subject. If you have been writing for fifteen years, but not as a journalist or not in travel, I don't know that I would put that. Put something that is related to this story and if you can find the contributors bios in the magazine, look at how they're structured and try to copy that structure.

We're getting close to the end of our time and I know I've had a couple questions come up in the chat window throughout.

It was such a pleasure to chat with you and share with you my favorite technique about how to really show an editor you understand their publication, so they're more likely not only to give you an assignment, but to respond to you even if that idea is not the right idea for them, so that you can build a relationship for later.

Again such a pleasure, and I really appreciate you all joining me today and all of you who weren't here live on the call and are joining us for the replay. Have a great afternoon and a great weekend. I know it's a holiday tomorrow, so some people might even be off. Enjoy your weekend folks. Bye Bye.