



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

Let's get into what we're going to talk about today: how to prepare your press trips. Last week, we spoke about what to expect on press trips, and also beforehand in terms of things to look out for to make sure you're not blindsided for, and how to kinda make sure that you make the most of your trip. But we didn't look at how to make the most of your trip in terms of a financial sense, in terms of how to get the most pitches. We looked more in terms of just as a person being sane. But this week we're gonna look at how to prepare your work, yourself, your pitches, and so on for your upcoming trip.

We did a webinar in our last series on press trips, just specifically about how to get on press trips. We did a webinar that specifically on how to create a pitch portfolio to help get yourself on a trip, so in that pre-phase. And that was where you're going based on very limited information, and you're explaining to the person, who is filling the slots on the trip, what type of things you would pitch if accepted – which is different necessarily than going and actually putting together the pitches, and doing more due diligence to figure out if you're doing is the right thing for the trip and will actually sell. And that's more what we're going to be talking about this week. So, let's get started. And another thing that I think I might've mentioned when you weren't able to hear me, is that we have been having trouble for the last few weeks – you may have noticed – with our go-to webinar not playing very nicely with PowerPoint. So, instead this week I'll be using Adobe Acrobat. So, you'll be seeing the little Adobe symbols up, but hopefully this will work much better. So, that's what we'll be doing this week in terms of the viewing area.

As usual if you don't see something moving forward, or like you couldn't hear me just now, definitely let me know. But I'm hoping this will be more useful for us in terms of us and what we're trying to do with the webinar viewing. So, let's go ahead and go to the first slide. So, you should be seeing the slides changing now. If not, please do let me know. This week what we're going to be talking about specifically, is we're gonna start with not necessarily recapping, but I want to start with some questions that people submitted for other webinars that were more appropriate for this trip. And I'll ask some questions that I hear a lot from people about how to go about pitching these stories from press trips. Then I'm going to walk through a process, and also a way to kind of reorient your viewpoint on pitching stories from press trips to make sure the ideas that you have before you go on the trip, as you're preparing for the trip, are ideas for stories that can actually sell, that actually do have homes.

Then, we're going to talk about how to match those things to specific sections of magazines to make sure you get the right research done when you're on the ground. And that's what we're going to talk about next week. So, that's going to be a little intro, and then next week we'll go really more in depth about how to do that research on the ground on your trip.



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

So, I have sometimes noticed when I'm on press trips, that there is an interesting lack of knowledge about where we are going on the trip, let alone what's even on the itinerary. Have any of you guys been on a press trip where you felt like people don't even know what country they're in, or what language is spoken in that country? Or just a general lack of understanding of where they are that belies not having done any additional research before they went on the trip? I think that this might be a little more common – somebody's got a really funny response to that – but yeah, it does happen. Yeah, some of you are chiming in that you've seen it. And I think that it might be a little more common, and I'm not throwing stones, but with influencer trips rather than rater trips because you're not preparing a whole story based on the destination. You know, you're taking photos and you're sharing in-country exactly what's happening as you experience it.

It's less crucial to your promised product delivery to be doing that research, and in fact even just now in this session that I was discussing with Tourism Australia, he was saying that he doesn't necessarily like to work with influencers for this reason: because they were somewhere else yesterday, and they're going somewhere else tomorrow, and it's the last of the highlight on his destination. So, if you've been on press trips you may have noticed this. If not, it's something that happens. And so, not only will you set yourself apart from the other people on the trip in the eyes of the organizer, and the venues you're visiting, and the tour guides by doing research, but it is absolutely crucial in terms of leaving your press trip being able to sell things.

I say this because even those of you who are going on blogs, I know a lot of people who came to me recently who have quite big blogs following me saying that, you know they've been at this for a while and they are allowed to put together a big post for their blog really isn't there. And while they do want to keep their blog up, they also want to be selling stories because now they feel good about writing stories, and creating stories for other outlets. So, even if you are on a trip to be posting on your social profiles, or to be posting on your blog, it is very important to keep an eye as well on collecting research that can turn into stories for other outlets. So, on the one hand it's important to do research about the other outlets that you want to pitch to. But on the other hand, if you don't dig into the places on the itinerary, the destination itself, and find what people often refer to as angles – but I like to think of them more as story ideas – then when you're there what happens is on the one hand, you might spend time that you could've spent before learning things that are new, rather than asking the deeper questions to find out things that aren't readily available online, on the website of the venue, or other pieces of basic information.

In a way your time on the ground on the trip is being wasted because you could be getting better information than what you're getting, but you're only getting basic information because that's the level that you need to understand what you're seeing. But the second part,



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

and the more insidious and sucky part I think, is that if you haven't done the prep beforehand, and you're just kind of getting it spoon fed to you, or just something that's basic, you might leave the trip with nothing you can sell, nothing that is new, nothing that looks good in publication, and nothing will actually earn you money from this time that you invested in going on this trip.

For those of you that read the email newsletter or the blog post about today's webinar, I was surprised to learn when I first started travel writing, that a lot of experienced travel writers recommended not traveling very often because the time spent outside of the office didn't make sense because even if you're featured in a glossy magazine for a dollar a word, that's 2,000 words. And while wouldn't we all love to have those, if you have to spend two weeks researching and writing up that trip, which you know I'm sure for a lot of you it would feel like it would take you a while to write a feature and that might be conservative. But if you spent two weeks of doing the research, doing the travel days there and back writing up the trip, that's not gonna make sense. Two thousand dollars for two weeks of work is actually not a really great hourly rate, especially if you're putting in quite a lot of hours.

One of the reasons that we need to make sure to do research is because even if we have one story that we know that we can get, one story is very rarely/never enough to pay for that time that we are spending physically on the ground doing the research because you may have heard me really harp everybody about hourly rates before, but this is really the only way to become a well, if not decently, paid travel writer is to make sure that what you're earning every hour is not \$5 or \$10, but it's more like \$100. And if you are going to be spending even two or three days away from your desk, and say your rate isn't \$100/hour. Say it's \$50/hour, but if you're spending two or three days away from your desk, and then you're spending two or three days of travel time to get to and from this destination, and then you're spending time writing up those stories, even if your hourly rate is \$50/hour, two or three days of travel, you know that's \$400-500 of lost income a day. That's \$1500, and then add in travel days, you know \$2500 of income that you need to replace because you weren't working on those days that you were traveling on that trip.

We need to make sure that we're getting more than that one coveted, glossy feature story to cover that time that we're away, and you know to come out on top in terms of the days we're investing to the writing and the research of these trips. So, we want to be double dipping, we want to be doing multiple stories off the same research. So, what that means is you need to be keenly aware on what to look for on the ground, so that every time you're on a tour, you're visiting a museum, you're walking around you are picking up the tidbits of information you need to put together more than one story So, let's do a couple questions that are related to what we're gonna talk about today, that I have either received directly from some of you guys in advance on a call, or that I have heard a lot on coaching calls and in workshops.



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

I first wanted to do a couple quick recap questions on applying because I know we did the series of webinars on applying for press trips quite a few months back. And so, some of you may have not been around for those, some of you may have missed them, and I just wanted to catch up on a couple things. So, how do you handle applying for a trip when you don't have a confirmed assignment? This goes back to that pitch portfolio concept I talked about. If you want to apply for a trip, and you don't have a confirmed assignment and they say, "Well, where are you gonna put the stories from this thing?" What you do is you get the itinerary – make sure you have an itinerary – or the description of the trip you received from the PR person, as much as you can get, and you look at what stories you could be pitching.

Then you look at what markets, what magazines, what websites you could be placing those stories into, and in order to get on the trip it's important to be conservative on those pitches, right? Like you don't want to say, "Well, you guys have a unique lodge, and I know that National Geographic Traveler has a section on unique lodges. So, this is one of the stories that I'm telling you that I'm planning to pitch or place after the trip. You want to you know, line up with magazines/websites that are relatively comfortable pitching targets for you, and that's gonna be different for all of us, so that you're not overselling yourself and getting in trouble with the PR person later. But what we're gonna talk about today is where you don't need to be conservative. Where you're thinking about what you can pitch and researching it, so that you have that material to put together after your trip. And here you should be pitching things that are comfortable, things that are a little out of your range, and things that are very much out of your range in order to make sure, like I said, that you get the most money, the most income – oh dear! – out of the days that you are spending on this trip. Okay. Let's see if we can get back to the slide that we were on. Okay great.

Another pitch pre-acceptance related question that I got was: "Should you apply for or accept..." Oh sorry, I cut and pasted that from the question. It looks like a typo from the email. "...or accept a press trip even if you don't have a story lined up?" And this particular question came from somebody who is a regular contributor to a very big name publication, which is distributed nationally but it's like a major local newspaper. So, in this case she is used to having stories where she knows where she's gonna place the story. And she was asking as somebody who is a regular contributor, if it's ethical, if it really makes sense to accept a trip if you don't know where you're gonna place it. And I know that this situation is the reverse of the one a lot of you find yourself in, which is that you don't have a regular outlet that you contribute to, and instead you are working on placing stories around that trip.

I just wanted to put that context in as I answered this question. So, in this case, as somebody who's a regular contributor – this is a situation I've been in a lot – is that for the last two or three years I had quite a few magazines that I wrote for regularly. I had my beat, so to say, the areas I covered frequently, and I would often go there not necessarily having a specific



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

assignment for that area lined up but knowing that I could probably place it, if not with one of my regular magazines but somewhere else down the line. And again, this is a situation where I had regular things and so even if I didn't have an assignment right now, I could probably work that trip into another story later. So, if that's your situation I think you should have a degree of confidence in yourself that if somebody, somewhere is currently paying you for work that you do have the ability to place other trips that you're going on.

Like I said you...we'll go back to the previous slide...if you don't have a confirmed assignment, but you're willing to bust your butt and get one, that's one situation and you should definitely go ahead and apply for that trip. But make sure that you have made that contract, that covenant that you are gonna pitch that trip, okay? But if you do regularly write for an outlet and this isn't a fit for them right now, or you don't have an assignment for it right now, or it's just not a fit for them period, have the confidence in yourself that you can find another home for it.

Now that ties directly into another question. I'm just gonna skip ahead for a second, and this is from that same person. What if you go on a trip expecting to pitch post trip and none of your pitches are accepted? And this is really important because I think a lot of us get down when we don't hear back, especially if we don't hear back. But even if we do hear back, and you've heard me say over and over again that a "no" is good and you should come back with another story idea. Either way if you're not getting accepted because you're getting radio silence or because you're not getting acceptances, but you're at least getting emails back from the editor and they're encouraging those – it's still a no, and that can still wear down on you over time. But I want to say in response to this question, and to that general sentiment: you need to keep pitching, and you need to have that contract with yourself that this story will find a home.

If I've pitched enough and it's not finding a home, I will change the idea. I will change the tactic. I will change my audience. I will keep changing it until this destination, this story, finds a home; and in that vein I had done a Monday mail bag with somebody a few weeks back who was looking at pitching more literary essays, and wondering about outlets for that. He told me he had a story he had been pitching around, I wanna say it was two years. I don't know, it was a while, and I don't have that number off the top of my head. But he just told me he found a home for it on a great, really prestigious website. And I'm sure you've heard a thousand times things about Mark Twain getting 57 rejection letters, and J.K. Rowling who was kind of on her last hope when she got her book published – all of those types of things.

Just because you haven't gotten a yes yet doesn't mean you're not going to get one, but it does mean that you need to take a moment and step back and look at what is going wrong with your pitch. Are you sending it to the wrong magazines? Is it not targeting a specific



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

section? Do you not have a clear idea? Is the story kind of unpublishable, and you're essentially asking the editor to help you work it into a story? So, if you have gone on a trip – so this is kind of moving forward – but it's important to know in advance. If you're gonna go on a trip and you don't have a confirmed assignment you can place a story, but you do need to work at it. You do need to have the mindset that you will pitch until that story is accepted. Okay.

Let's go back to this question, which is from somebody else. Is it safe for you to pre-pitch stories about a destination that you've never visited, based on what a PR person says? I love this question because in my opinion, it's very scary to have no guarantee that the thing that I might be pitching based on the itinerary is interesting. And I think this is a little bit of an evolved – or not exactly a first-world problem – but it's not something that hits you until you've gotten burned by going on a trip, or something on the itinerary just looked awesome when in reality it was next to a parking lot that was overgrown with weeds, and had a gross chain fence around it. And on the other side was supposed to be the waterfront, but it's not a waterfront in the modern “we've redone the waterfront way.” It's a waterfront in the kind of way you know, concrete barrier and some trash thrown on the rocks way, and there's no walkway there to kind of make it something that you could do. And it's 10 minutes away from downtown, and there's no way to get there by public transit, and it just wasn't gonna be something that interesting.

I've had these things happen. I'm sure some of you will have these things happen, if they haven't happened to you already. But a PR person's job is to make something sound attractive, and there's times when you know, they do their job so well that they really only told you 2% of what's going on with that thing, and the rest of it is just not that interesting and you really don't think you can sell it. And this is the situation that I never want, or would want any of you to be in about something that you have already pitched – something that has already been assigned, and you're now on the hook to deliver. So, I really recommend and even if you're experienced you can still get caught with this. You know, like I said PR people can do wonders, good PR people can do wonders.

I really recommend if you don't know the destination, if you have no ability to get pictures, trip advisor reviews, any other validation that the thing is as fantastic as you are now selling it to the editor you're pitching as, wait until after you have been to pitch. And in fact, I typically like to wait to pitch most things until after I travel for this reason. I typically pitch things in advance, only when they're just so clear like it's a round up, and all the venues exist, and of course the round up can happen. And even then, sometimes one or two things close or won't be around next season, but you can swap something else in because you still have 3-4. So, those are typically the only times when I will with confidence pre-pitch a story. If you have a relationship with an editor, and they're kind of saying, “Oh, like okay yeah, go



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

to this place and write a story for us,” that’s different because it’s not a specific story that you’re on the hook for because you can find a story based on what’s there. So, that’s my quick two cents about pre-pitching stories before you actually go on the trip.

As we get into talking more about what kind of stories you can pitch, whether you pitch them before or after the trip depends on you, it depends on the description, it depends on what you’re pitching. So, all the things that we’re going to talk about now are things that you could be pitching before the trip or after, but you want to be doing that research and doing that thinking before you go, so that you can pick up the information, do the research on the ground to be able to write the pitch when you get back, if you haven’t pitched in advance. Okay, so let’s see if we can get the slide to go forward. Yay!

Let’s talk about how to reframe your research to make sure you have solid pitch ideas. So, what research are you doing before you go on a trip? Whether it’s a trip that you’ve accepted, or it’s a trip that you’re kind of planning for yourself. There’s no shame, no judgment here. I just kind of want to see what you guys are already doing, so that I can incorporate that into what I’m gonna say. I wouldn’t say I’m famous for not doing research, because I do do research before I actually go outside, but when I’m traveling by myself and not in an organized press trip — especially if I have a lot of other stuff going on at the time, I might not know what I’m doing before I get there apart from having chose the venues, the destinations for specific reasons. But then I’ll spend like an hour and a half in bed making you know, a whole list of all the things I want to do and why and reading every single article, and everything that’s been written about the destination.

I think one of the things, and I’m seeing some of you guys drop this in on the questions area on the side, is what’s new? And I’m so glad to hear that, because what’s new in an area is a really tricky subject. And as I was thinking about what we were gonna talk about in today’s webinar, I was thinking about this kind of catch 22 of what’s new... Oh my gosh Donna I love you. So, Donna has just said she prints out info maps/sidenotes, and the average is about 20 pages. Before I even did this job, I used to make elaborate packets like that about places and everything like that, so I love that if you have the time and the wherewithal to make your own little dossier about a destination I highly recommend it. But in terms of what’s new, this is a difficult situation because what’s new might not be interesting enough to print. It might not actually be new enough, and it might be something that’s already been covered in the places that would cover it because just as you’re finding out that it’s new, the people who cover that area regularly have also used those methods and found out in that way.

I think that this is something that we need to be particularly careful about when we are thinking about what we are going to pitch, and what we’re going to research when we’re on the ground because it can be very, you know, alluring to walk around a “new museum,” or a



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

new museum exhibit is a more dangerous one, and take lots of notes, get lots of information, and then have trouble pitching it because the museum opened like five months ago, and everyone who's gonna "cover" the opening has already done so. Or the exhibit may have opened when you were there, but it's only open for a couple months and so print just couldn't do it. The timeline isn't there. So, I think that we have to be very careful when we're talking about what's new.

Let's get into talking more specifically about ways to reframe your mindset as you're thinking pitches. And as we do that, I'm going to give you some pieces of advice, you know like rather than imagine this, let's imagine that. And that involves some different types of articles. So, I want to go over some different article types, and these are really the major types articles in terms of format. So, first I just wanted to make sure we're all on the same page in terms of concepts and words.

Take a little look over this, and I'm just gonna go quickly through what each of these mean. So, a news brief is the type of thing you would write about without actually traveling to the destination typically, because that is something you would write based on a phone interview, or based on a press release. And these are the kind of things that would appear in the very, very front of the magazine where the very short sections are kept. And a lot of the smaller magazines in terms of distribution – these shorter articles in the front will all be written in-house, but with larger magazines like a Conde, and Master Travel & Leisure, or even a lot of the larger regional magazines – like I know we recently put the Indianapolis Monthly, and what was the other one? I know that we have Chicago, we have Portland, we have a lot of regional magazines. And in the regional magazines as well, those news briefs are often written by freelancers.

Now, interviews, I think we're all pretty familiar with interviews, but I've separated interviews out from profiles because an interview in this case, I'm talking about something that's a more published Q&A style piece. Where as a profile is something that would be more akin to the editorial equivalent of a case study. So, you have interviewed somebody. So, you have gathered information by talking about them, by talking about some people related to them, by talking to other businesses, or other people who have knowledge of them, and getting opinions. Then you can put all of that together into an article about that business, or about that person.

Then a round up can happen in a couple different ways. So, I talk a lot about baskets of kittens, and if you haven't heard me use that term it's where you have one thing that's great, like a kitten that's adorable on its own. But then, you take five or seven, however many kittens, who are all slightly different. They all look a little different. They all act a little different. So, for a round up they might be things that are you know, all restaurants that are



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

doing molecular gastronomy in one city, in one state, in one country, or in one world. And that is you basket of kittens, which is even cuter than one on its own, and how can an editor resist that?

Your basket of kittens can be, like I said, a lot of things that are related in one way but not related in others. But a round up might also be a destination guide. It might be a round up of things to do in the destination that are different. So, it might be a round up that includes where to stay, what to do, where to eat, where to walk, what to see, best festivals. So, round ups can take these two different forms. Then, we've got features. Okay? But I've only got narrative features on here because all of these other things up here: the interview, the business profile, the person profile, the round up – those can also take the forms of features in terms of length. So, right here we're really just talking about format.

A narrative feature is the kind of thing that you should hopefully not be pitching before your trip, and even if you do pitch it – this is important to know – if you do try to pitch a narrative feature before your trip to an editor you haven't worked with before, you're not incredibly likely to get a positive response. And I just want to get that out there because I know a lot of you are perhaps interested in narrative features, and people in the pitch blues have been talking about this a lot, but I want to try to make sure we're clear that if you have not been and you have not worked with the editor, you should avoid pitching a narrative feature, and do it after. If you've been, go ahead and pitch. If you know the editor, go ahead and pitch. But make sure you have one of those boxes checked before you're pitching that feature. So, a postcard is kind of like a narrative feature, well it's shorter.

For a narrative feature it's important to have a transformation, a story line, and characters. A postcard is something that might be narrative and evocative, but it's shorter and it doesn't necessarily have to have that nice, bookended, packaged story arc to it. A personal essay, on the other hand, is gonna be something where you take a question. Essays are designed to be exploring questions. So, I think I had mentioned on last week's call when I was in the Netherlands, the idea of how Dutch people leave the curtains on their windows open, or they don't have curtains in the first place. And you can just walk right by as they're having dinner and look in and see what they're eating, or see on their laptop what they're working on. Why is that? So that's the kind of thing that would be an essay question. And then a service or "how to" piece is when you're talking about something in the second person. So, the object or the main focus of the article is gonna be the reader and how they can have an experience.

Now that we've kind of solidified those couple things, I'm gonna talk about a couple switches for idea types that you might have looking at an itinerary, and other things to consider. But I'm hoping as I put this idea in article format here for you, that this can also help for you to see that some of the things, besides the three examples that I'm gonna give,



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

some of these things you might think about pitching from a trip, are gonna have a hard time finding a home because they just don't fit into the types of article formats that editors are typically looking to publish. Even if it's the type of thing you're looking to put on your blog, it'll be difficult to find a home in an editorial outlet – whether that's on an editorial website, or an editorial publication.

Here are a couple switches that I often see. And some of these come from some ideas that we've been workshoping in the recent palooza, and some are from coaching calls, ones that I see all the time when we do workshops. So, just one venue – so, people are talking a lot about looking for things that are new, and this is one of the things where if something is new it still might not be enough to just write about that venue. And this is the kind of thing where like yeah, maybe it's been open for a little while. I'm not talking about that. This is the kind of thing where just that one venue on its own, it's a restaurant that's new, or it's a hotel that's new. So what? There's already 1,000 hotels, and 20,000 restaurants. Those numbers are totally made up, don't quote me on that. So what if one more restaurant is open? Even if it's from a celebrity chef, why do we care? So, you can say, "Okay, why do we care?" And you can say, "Well, okay. I have to come up with the 'why.'" But the thing is that, that's just a hard sell for an editor – just one restaurant. Okay? And so, it's much better where if you can take that one venue, and you can add some more venues, you can tell a bigger story. You can turn it into a basket of kittens. Just because that one kitten is cute, it might not sell.

This is the kind of thing where I was workshoping with somebody who lives in Dubai, and we were talking about this neighborhood. And we were talking about why she wants to visit that neighborhood, in order for us to figure out what kind of stories we could pitch, what kind of outlets we could match that to, and what she could really do with it. She just kind of had this sense that this neighborhood was up and coming, and there was something there. And so I asked her like, "Okay. Give me some facts and statistics. What is up and coming about this neighborhood?" And she told me about this restaurant was open, and how the restaurant was founded by somebody who had pop-up restaurants all over the city, and then finally opened this restaurant. And while that's normal in most parts of the world, for Dubai or actually it was Agwodabe, that was really rare. Pop-up restaurants really aren't a thing there, and so this was very special. And so I said, "Okay."

That description now that she's told me, tells me so much. It tells me the type of audience this needs to be going to, but also yes, it tells me why this venue is interesting, but it also gives me an idea of how we can turn this into a bigger story. So, we need to do a round up and show not just that restaurant, which is interesting, but that that neighborhood is interesting, is to show other things that haven't been done anywhere else in Agwodabe that are being done in this neighborhood for the first time. So, we came up with a gallery that was similar. We came up with a shop, we came up with a couple other things.



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

If you have just one venue, you need to do two things with it. You need to tie it into the trend. And when I say trend, I don't mean like a fashion trend. I don't mean, you know, like sea buck thorn, or foam on your desserts. Those two are appearing on every menu together in like every country that I've been going to recently, which is a Nordic thing if you don't know. That's why it's appearing everywhere. But the thing is that you need to take multiple things that are related, yes, but then you need to explain why it matters. That's what I mean about trend. So, for instance, it's important that these things, which are happening everywhere else in the world but haven't happened in Abu Dhabi, are starting to happen there, and why that's happening, and why it shows Abu Dhabi opening up culturally to western influences, and different things like that.

It's not just that we're taking this one venue, and then finding a couple other things that are like it. You can't just stop there. You have to find some of the things that are like it that tell a greater story, that have some impact, and have some lesson to take away. Shelly says, "Find the pattern." Totally true, and I love it. I'm trying to think of another good example. So, the opening party of this convention I'm here for, this tourism convention, was at a restaurant on the water. Montreal is a waterside city, not the biggest thing, but at a restaurant that was serving new Canadian-small plate fusion, and I was kind of like, "Okay." Is that really interesting? Is that really a thing?

Then I was like, "What does new Canadian mean?" And then I looked at the menu, and I was trying to figure out, and I realized that, you know, Canada I think in some ways, perhaps more so today than the U.S. is really made up of so many different immigrants from all over, but also from specific places. And if you go to Toronto or here in Montreal, you know, there's like Chinatown, and Indiatown. You know, but then there's different African foods. I went to a restaurant that's like a Mauritanian – I think I'm saying that right – yeah, it's from Mauritania in Africa.

There's a lot of global cuisine that's now shaped Canadian culture, which is now being mixed with the local ingredients in the same way that Nordic cuisine celebrates sea buck thorn, and things like that. And so, that gave me the idea of like okay, who is really doing new Canadian cuisine, and trying to define that as something on the global scale. So, that would be how you could take one thing, which is a restaurant for instance, and then say, "What can we add to this to make this a round up that's interesting that I can sell somewhere?" You know, and now that has become something that I'm not just writing about one restaurant, and particularly if it's a restaurant that's been open for a little while, but I can go to American Way (the magazine of American Airlines) and they have a part of the front of their book. It's extensively called simply the "Dining Section" I believe, but they actually are looking to highlight a specific city, and a trend that is happening in that city and why it's going on the



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

food map. So, now I've gone from one restaurant that they want us to write about, and I'm not sure why to how I can actually turn that into a story.

What do we do though with a single venue story on something that's not new? As I mentioned this can be really dangerous because the PR people who are pitching you on this trip, or the PR person from the venue, they're gonna hand you this packet when you walk in and it's gonna have all their press releases, and it might have story ideas. Typically I look at the story ideas, and I think these are great ideas to write blog posts on your own blog, but they are not something somebody else is gonna write about. And good PR people will actually give you do this work that I'm doing right now for you, but the majority won't. And they'll just give you things that they should be writing about internally, or who are already visiting them. But they aren't things for people who aren't visiting them to start. So, this is what we want to look at: how do we look at something and find that point of inertia for the "not yet" visitor, and surpass that with something interesting enough to make them say, "Hey, I have to go there."

For example, case in point: the Tourism Australia presentation that I was just talking about. He said that even though they have huge social shares, they're like this award-winning market and everything, he said what they struggle with is overcoming that thing of "I want to go to Australia someday, and that's an expensive flight, and I don't have the budget for that right," to "this has to be the next place that I go to. I need to figure out how to get there." And you need to think about that with everything you're pitching. So, if something isn't new and we can't simply tie it into a trend, whether it's like a trend trend, or it's just something you know we're pulling together, how do we write about that? How do we do justice to our press trip itinerary and get a story out of that? And the way to do that is to figure out what is unique about that venue or its owner.

Not necessarily what is unique about it like I said, it serves new Canadian cuisine, okay? But you want to dig in and say, "Okay, why is it serving new Canadian cuisine? How did this person come up with it? Does this chef have an interesting backstory? That they have been all over the world, or better yet that they have cooked in the kitchens in, you know, absolute Northern Canada, in research stations, and in wildlife parks, and had to learn what local people cooked in those places previously, and how to make do with the ingredients he had, while bringing in his cooking experience from his school in France, and Italy, and all those other places." That's a story about why this person has opened this business in the first place.

I went to a museum in this very random part of Massachusetts on this trip a few years ago, and I was really intrigued because I had gone to school in Western Massachusetts, in Boston for several years. And I couldn't – it just blew my mind that there was an entire, beautiful, hypermodern museum dedicated to Russian iconography in this kind of no-name town, in the



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

kind of belt, former factory area of Massachusetts. And it turned out that this guy was kind of an industry magnet. He owned some of these factories back in the day, and had made money for doing that. And his passion was Russian iconography, these paintings – some of which are large. They're often on wood. You see them in Eastern Europe, in churches and often museums dedicated them as well.

They're painted by hand, and they have this gothic look to them, and the tiny ones are painted with brushes that are only a single hair wide to get the detail on the tiny, tiny icons. And he was fascinated with these and started collecting them, you know, as a wealthy individual collects art, and at some point his wife said to him, "You have to stop, or you have to open a museum because these can't stay in my house." And he was like, "Okay fine. I'll open a museum." So, he put together this amazing museum and it acquires these collections of icons, you know, that are 20 or 30 icons in a cycle that these museums wouldn't be able to acquire because they just don't have the resources to have that much Russian iconography in their collection. So, here's this place, which you know it's like to just write a story about the museum and its offerings and the icons, might be a little esoteric for a lot of publications, who would be like, "Well, I don't know if my readers would be all that interested in Russians icons." But the story, the story about the guy and his passions, and how that grew into this thing, and what it says for the community – that is something you can do in a lot of places because it's universally applicable. And that's the kind of thing you can do for a story for an airline magazine as a feature, because airline magazines are often looking for this business angle because a lot of their frequent flyers are business owners, or business people. Another sort of mistake trap that I see a lot of people looking for their press trip pitches to fall into, is this one of, "Well, I'm just gonna write a whole story about my trip. Like, I'm gonna write one story for everything I did on my trip," and they're not necessarily setting out to do it in an "I did this, I did that way." They are setting out to write an interesting story, but they want to tell every single thing they did in that trip in a one person story.

The problem is there's not a home for that except on your blog, and other low paying, if they pay, websites that publish that same sort of thing, and they don't pay, or they pay very little because they're essentially just trying to just fill their pages as much as possible with whatever stories people will give them. It's not a good clip for you to have, and that's really kind of the last resort that we want to have. We want to keep that as an "in case we can't publish this anywhere else, and we've tried our absolute hardest, and we've asked Gabby to critique or query letters, and we still can't figure out why this isn't getting published" place to place your stories. We don't want that to be our aim for where we put every single piece of information for our trip because once you publish something, whether it's on your blog or another person's blog, or whatever, once you've covered those things from your trip as far as a print outlet is concerned it's published, and they don't want it anymore. So, you need to start with the heavy hitters of the most interesting stories when you go on your trip, so that you don't ruin your opportunity to get those things placed later.



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

The way to take this narrative piece, or this full trip story and make it publishable and pitchable, is to do one of two things: you can either take all the different of the things you did, and turn it into a itinerary piece.

Airline magazines are often good for these. But, they do have them in other places. Sunset, for instance has one that's called "A Perfect Day," and because Sunset is a regional magazine that has different issues in different geographical areas, they need something like three or four "Perfect Days" for every issue, for the different issues that come out in different geographical areas. So, if you are trying to, or struggling to come up with a different feature idea an itinerary piece is a great way to go because then what you can do is: say for West Jet, you do Montreal four ways, and you do Montreal as a music lover, as an art lover – Montreal has an amazing art scene if you didn't know – as a food lover, and as an outdoor lover. You can still do a 48 hours in Montreal piece for the telegraph, or for somebody else. So, that's a good way to keep so even though you have done a piece on you know, here's essentially like an itinerary for Montreal, you can do it for a different audience with a different rights distribution, still as well because it's not a 3,000 word piece that really kind of exhausts everything you can possibly write about.

The other way to do it is as a transformation tale. And what I mean here is actually a narrative feature, but I put transformation tale in here because I want you guys to remember that any feature story of a narrative capacity that you're pitching, really needs to have, not just a point or an angle, but an arc. That's difficult to kind of get your head around if you don't have a fiction, or other, writing background. So, I think of it as transformation: something needs to have changed and the protagonist (which, if it's a first person story, is you) is the arc. So, you start out into Australia, not knowing that the food is interesting, thinking that it's just gonna be like British food, that it's gonna be relatively bland, and then finding out that they have avocado farms that you can visit and have avocado toast that's fresh, that's just been picked off the tree. And it makes you realize you never knew what an avocado tasted like. And you may have said that in before, and now you're gonna do kind of, at some point in your story you're gonna jump back in time to the first time you had a farm-fresh tomato on the farm. And you're gonna talk about how that changed your perception of a tomato salad. And then you jump back, and you talk about how the avocado farm works, and then how in Australia they have these different tropical products that we don't even think of that you can get as farmers, and how that's changed Australian cuisine as the farmer table has become more prevalent, and so forth. And so, that is your story of transformation, and so it's not just "I went to Australia, and ate all these things." It's "I went to Australia, and realized this, and this is how it changed what I thought before the trip." So, these are three main types of, "I think I can pitch this after my press trip" stories that just don't work, and how to change them.



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

The second roadblock I see in people are putting together the story that they're gonna pitch for their press trip, that I want to make sure they clear off is audience. This is a huge one, and it's one of the things that every time I do a conference talk, about pretty much any topic, I really, really drill down on because one of the things that really holds us back – whether we are we are pitching to get travel content marketing, or local tour companies, or we're pitching magazines, or we're just working on our own blog – what holds us back from an fast, easy and quick success is not having a 100% clear idea of who we are writing for, and so you know, there's a lot.

We have a whole number of lessons on this in Pitchapalooza, but we talk about what an editor's day is like; what an editor needs from you, why editors even bother to work with freelancers if so many of their pitches are off base, why do they bother? And it's because they need ideas that they, sitting in their little cubicle office in New York, and never leaving concrete island, would never have. They would never come across this information. That is why they need you. So, in that case it is very important to highlight to that editor that you are bringing them something that they can't get their hands on, that you are trying to write it and that you really do know it well. So, in the case of what stories we're gonna pitch from a trip, the place where people typically go wrong is not actually considering who goes to this destination. This is something that I see when people are like, "Oh, well I want to pitch, you know, this story based on this trip." And I say, "To who?" And they don't know. And it's not necessarily that they don't know, but it's that they're pitching to an audience that's not themselves, that's not the way that they travel, and they haven't really thought about how that person travels So, for instance when I do travels with tourism boards, as you may have heard on the recent calls, I start by saying, you know, "What kind of people come to your destination? Who is your destination best for? Or what's the best way for someone to take advantage of your destination?" Because that helps me to understand who their target audience is, even if they're not clear on it.

By knowing from them who shows up, even if they're actually trying to market to somebody else, it allows me to see who that's a fit for, because you know, you can market to your heart's content to one type of traveler. You know you can market to the young millennial, but if you've got a lot of multi-generational families showing up, that's who your pitches should be going to because that's the type of travel the reader, the editor is going to know lines up with your pitch, because they know it lines up with your readers. So, what that means is we need to find some ways to figure out: what is the audience? It's not for specific ideas, it's because we're not there yet, we're ahead of ideas, we're before ideas right now. We need to figure out what is the audience for the destination.

The very first-pass on an itinerary that I like to do before putting the other pitches is to figure this out, to figure out the audience. And here are some specific questions to do it. So, the very



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

first one, and I love to know. Do you guys look up what's already been written about a destination that you're visiting on a press trip before you go there? This is something that I think I started doing kind of by accident, but it's incredibly important. And not just for this audience research reason that I was telling you about, but in order to know what's already been covered, what's done so-to-say, and then find the holes and see what hasn't been done so you know what you actually can be pitching. So, if you're not doing a Google, and not just a general Google, but a Google you know, to see what's been written about, and the types of publications and the geographic areas you're thinking about pitching to, definitely start thinking about that. And then what are the area's demographics, right?

I talked about how you can ask the tourism professionals, the tourism boards in that area to see what information they have, and sometimes they'll tell you. And like I said, sometimes they're gonna tell you who they're targeting, who they want to be having showing up, not necessarily who's actually showing up because that's their goal. It's their goal to be getting the types of people that they want. But if you go, pretty every tourism board, there's a few that aren't that are actually destination management organizations which are companies, but the majority of convention and visitors bureaus, or tourism boards, are governmental or non-profit in some way, shape, or form. And so, they have to be putting out reports every year with information on who's coming, how money is being spent.

By the way, if you want to get in trouble with Travel Content Marketing, looking at these reports is fantastic because you can see exactly, for free, you know it's just out there waiting to be found, what money these tourism boards are spending on marketing, and what types of marketing. It has to go on their annual report. So, in their annual report though, is also the people that are coming, how many people. What are the demographics of those people? For instance, in research for my book on Indian weddings, I've been pulling a lot of visitor numbers.

You can pull visitor numbers of what people from different countries are arriving in the US, or Canada, or India, or wherever. So, all that information is out there waiting for you, and it's really not that difficult to get your hands on. And that will immediately cut out a swath of article ideas that you were thinking you might be able to pitch from that destination, and shine light on what is most sellable. What's the best use of your time? Then you can also, ask the destination list this question of what they're looking for in terms of audience: who they're trying to reach, what they're expecting in terms of coverage.

This is something to take into account, but it's not necessarily gonna be the guiding factor on what you're pitching, but it can help give you ideas. And especially if you can get a pitch in an assignment into one of the places that lines up with what you're looking for, that's great because it ingratiates yourself with the tourism board because that helped them tick a box on



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

their annual goals. And that helped them in that report, and look good to the people who fund them, okay? The next question is how do you get there? This is really important because you can't be pitching an idea to, for instance, West Jet magazine for one of these four ways articles that I mentioned if it's a place that they don't fly! The magazine's just not gonna take it.

Furthermore, if you are looking at pitching stories about a destination that's a bit off the beaten path, this is extremely important, not just in terms of just who flies there, but who in terms of risk of travelers, types of travelers would go there. What type of people are looking at going to these destinations, where the infrastructure might not be there, where the hotels might not be as nice. For instance, Bali is known for having really over-the-top resorts where you have your own private pool, and all sorts of things like that. But there's this town Ubud that I had gone to maybe like ten years ago now, and I've gone to more recently and it's changed quite a bit. But this town I always thought was the best place in Bali to be going. It was a place where, you know, you could have the real food. You could sit all day and read books. It wasn't so hot. There weren't all these mosquitoes. It was just the best.

Back then, there really weren't nice or modern, or standard hotel options. And so, that immediately cut out a ton of places to write about it because the Bali experience a lot of other people would want was an air conditioning, a pool, and all of these things. And so now that they're opening those places, I think there's five coming out this year in 2018 and 2019, that opens up writing about that city to a totally different market, a very different magazine, a very different consumer. Once you know those things, oops sorry, then you need to look at the itinerary again. Now you know what you could potentially be pitching, and who you could potentially be pitching, and you need to start thinking about, "Oh great, these are the audiences. These are the options, but what do I personally want to be writing about? What makes sense for me to spend my time on the ground, and in my writing, working on after this trip?" Because if you are trying to take every little thing in the itinerary, and pitch it, and find a home for it I can tell you, you're gonna not put your heart into it, you're not gonna honor that contract with yourself to just pitch until you find a market because you don't really care. You don't really care about that story, and you've obviously decided to go on or are interested in this particular press trip for a reason because there's something there that interests you.

Focus on those things. Don't just say, "Oh, well this looks like it's something I could pitch. I'm gonna pitch that." Take the things that you are really excited about on that trip, and find the places to put them.

If you have the worksheets, you can take a look at this Terre De L'ebre trip. So, I was talking about is making sure to pitch the things that actually interest you because you're gonna have



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

a hard time really pushing yourself to get a story placed on something that you're just not that jazzed about. So, this was a trip that was attached to a conference. So, all of us on this trip, most of us actually knew each other before, and we were like well, of course, this is the best trip ever. Who would pick any other trip? And we were all just wild about this trip. And the funny thing is when I look at the itinerary with having gone, I have such great memories of all of the different things on here, but it's hard to know what specifically drew me to it in the first place, but I know it drew several people on the trip.

For instance there was individual, a couple actually, who run a website that's about eco-travel. They were very interested in this Tuna Tour activity. They were interested because Tuna Tours have been done in a way that's very not ecologically friendly. I know fishing has had a lot of negative publicity about this, particularly in that particular space. And they, not in a hypocritical way, were excited to see this operation because it was supposed to be much more ecological friendly and specifically the swimming portion as well. So, this to them was one of the big reasons to go on the tour.

Another friend of mine, who runs a food tour company in Spain actually, she was really excited about the mussels. Another person was really excited about L'Ebre Delta Natural Park because they had never thought of Spain as kind of a salt water, flat, delta sort of environment. A lot of Spain is very dry and arid, or mountainous, or coastal. This is an entirely different ecosystem, and she's a photographer, and she was just really looking forward to that portion of the trip. So, once you identified the one, or the multiple things about the trip that do excite you – okay, we're gonna try to go back to the slides from before, and hopefully it'll work out.

We were talking about what to do on press trips. Nope, it hates me. Alright, we're gonna just look at it here. Once you've identified that one or several portions of your trip, that you want to be focusing your pitches on, this is just a very random, easy, simple table that I had made for the pitch portfolio webinar that we had done previously. And in this case, what I had done, is I had put the names aspects of the itinerary that I wanted to pitch on the side and then, I thought about the travel style. So, in this case I was thinking, you know, very specifically the types of things that I had mentioned for the West Jet four ways articles before. So, maybe someone's interested in culinary, maybe somebody who's multi-generational, somebody who's more interested in outdoors. So, these are things that tie into this audience. And in this case, I've just broken up audience in terms of demographic versus audience in terms of interest, okay? So, that's what those two different things are. Then I thought about the different types of articles. And then I thought about where magazines I could pitch would be based, and if they're not gonna be in the US, other international outlets that I could pitch those to.



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

This that I'm offering here is just one framework for filling in the market that you're actually gonna pitch that you can try. The thing is that if we go back for a second to this first-pass of research questions, as you're seeing where things have already been written about the destination, it's gonna start to give you ideas because you're gonna see who's covered it, and you can say, "Okay well, you know, if The Telegraph which is a British newspaper has covered it, I wonder if one of the other newspapers in the UK, like The Guardian, might be interested in covering it from a different angle." Or similarly, you know, if The Dallas Morning News has covered a... Or perhaps let's look at it this way: if The L.A. Times has covered it, would The SF Chronicle cover it from a different angle, the same destination?

You know, you could say, "Well, if this is the angle that this publication has taken, I'm not gonna take that angle, so I need to take a different angle and it looks like that's gonna go to a different audience." So, as you're looking at where things have already been written, it's gonna naturally start to cut out different markets for you. And it's also going to start to present ideas based on markets that are similar, or on markets that are different because you want to take a different market approach to the one that you've already seen.

As I mentioned this table is just one kind of framework that you can use. I recommend, like I said, you start with a few different areas of interest or attractions when you're start filling in markets because if you have your whole trip, if you have 10 stops, 20 stops, 5 stops, 7 stops, if you have too many stops and then too many different things within that stop that you could do a story on, or that the format of the story. For instance, a business profile, and a round up, and you're thinking of like, "Well, this would maybe make sense for a narrative feature, but I'll have to wait and see until I go." Now it's really multiplying, and now you've got 25 different ideas that you're looking at markets for, and not only is that overwhelming, but you're losing your mental focus, and you're losing your ability to be hanging out in the travel magazine database, or in the Barnes & Noble store and seeing a magazine, and being like, "Oh, this is perfect for that idea I'm trying to figure out" because there's too many ideas for you to carry them all in your head at one time. So, what I like to think about is that if you're gonna break out a few attractions, like 3 attractions, 2 attractions – you can even do one – and break that one place into a couple different ideas, and then match those ideas.

Now we're looking at something more comfortable like 8 ideas, or maybe 10 ideas, and we're gonna match those to different markets. These can be the kinds of things, like I said, where we know we like to do stories that are on the full destination, and so you're going on a press trip like that Spain one. So, you've said, "Okay, this is Spain. It's accessible from Barcelona." That has cut out itinerary article options and a lot of airline magazines that don't fly to Barcelona. So, now that's left me with maybe 3, 4, 5 places that I could potentially be pitching this itinerary about this destination to, and then what you do is you arm yourself with those pitch options, those market options when you go on your trip. So, now you've



Dream of Travel Writing

How to Prepare for Your Press Trips

shown up in Spain, and rather than just having an itinerary and some concepts, like you know, “I want to be writing about the Tuna Fish tour, or I wanna be writing about the Delta...” that’s a topic that’s so big, you say, “Okay, I want to write about how to do a day trip from Barcelona out to the Delta, for a section like “Delta Skies Estate,” which is a short piece on how to do something outdoorsy that’s a couple hours, and that’s completely narrows your research because you’re not just trying to soak up every single thing that the guide says about the Delta. You want to make sure you know to get there. You want to make sure you know the best things to see in one day, or in a short trip. You want to make sure that the layout is conducive to people who might be coming on public transit, and so on and so forth.

As you start to narrow down, not just the things on the trip, but your interest in what you’re writing about, but particularly about those things, and then particularly what markets those match to. That is gonna arm you with a bunch of research for when you land and when you’re on the trip, and that is what we’re going to zone in on next week, is how to get that information, how to fill in those ideas and get those potential markets.

So, again after you do these things do you want to pitch before or after? It depends on your confidence level, but it also depends on lead time. I want to circle back on this. We talked about it last week, and I believe it was Taylor who brought it up in the Pitchapalooza as well.

If you are looking at going somewhere that is seasonal, perhaps you’re going to a festival, or we spoke on the Pitchapalooza, there’s a botanical garden in the Netherlands that’s only open for two months out of the year when the tulips are in bloom. So, that’s something that you have to go this year in experiencing it, to write about it next year. And that means that you want to be pitching the editor actually perhaps in advance to when you’re going, even though the stories not going to come out for fourteen months because that editor is slotting in seasonal things for spring, for summer, for winter now for next year because she knows people need to travel now. So, there are things that are definitely guaranteed like the festivals, or the tulips being in bloom, that do make sense for you to pitch in advance because of the time, because the editor’s gonna want to assign it now. They’re gonna want you to know that you have the story, so that when you go there you can get the pictures, you can get the right information.

Again, thanks so much for joining us today, you guys, and for putting up with all of the technical hurdles. I really appreciate it. Have a great week.