



Dream of Travel Writing

What Types of Articles Should You Be Writing?

This week we're going to be talking about something a little different. We don't often look at the writing part of travel writing so much and there's a big reason for that. It's because if you can't pitch, if you can't get that assignment, you're better off not practicing your writing. You're better off not writing in a vacuum to your own specifications of what a story is without having an editor, without having the framework of a magazine article to work within because you're going to pattern that type of writing that's not publishable.

That's why we talk so much about pitching and how to write pitches and how to analyze magazines and how to come up with good ideas. Because if you don't do that first, if you don't start with the idea, then you end up with writing that doesn't have a home and writing what's not publishable, and writing that is hard for people to read or follow.

This week we are going to talk about what types of articles you should be writing. If you got either the email newsletter or read the blog post connected with the call today, you'll see that we talked a little bit about this first point here already in those two things. We talked about why it's important to start brainstorming your article ideas with the shape, the section, the format of the article in mind. That is why we are going to look at all of these formats today.

I am going to talk a little bit about what we talked about in the blog post but also say some new things on that. And then I am going to go through the main types of articles that you're going to come across. And this isn't travel and travel-related magazines specifically. There are some other types of features and short articles and different things like that that aren't very prevalent in travel that you might have become familiar with if you have a journalism background or have been to journalism school.

Then we're going to look at specific examples from that easyJet magazine for each of these article types and we're going to go backward. We're going to look at the article and talk about how you would pitch this and why you would pitch it that way for the specific article type. That's what we are going to look at this week.

Starting with the shape and format section of the magazine before you formulate any more of your pitch ideas, so to speak, is really fundamental. It's because that's one of the biggest problems I see with most pitches that I get.

It sucks that I was just looking at one this week where, forget anything else that was going on with the pitch, but I look at it and when I have my editor hat on and I look at these pitches, my immediate thought is "Can I use this?" Because that's what an editor is thinking. Then, "Do I trust this writer to write it?" But first, it's, "Can I use this idea," or "Is it even valid?"



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Often, editors get pitches where they simply can't use it and it's for a very clear reason. So, I wanted to share this quote from Julia Cosgrove with you. She's I think now the Executive Editor of *Afar*, she's been there for quite a while. At least since 2009 or something and she's changed roles a couple of times, but she's kind of the head honcho.

In an interview that was pulled from MediaBistro, actually, she named one of the common things that editors complain about, which is that they get a pitch about a place rather than a story. She says, "I'm going to Peru. Would you like an article about my time there?" That's the kind of message that gets a swift and immediate delete. She says, "It needs to be a story, not a topic or an idea."

And what we looked at in the blog post and the newsletter today was: what does that mean? When an editor says that you need to have an angle or a storyline, what does that mean and what are they actually asking you for? What do they mean by a story? But the problem is that I get from a lot of you—and I'm sure we're going to hear this weekend in the Pitchapalooza that I'm up at the retreat house setting up for—what about these pieces that are like a front-of-book piece or an interview or a roundup? Does a roundup have a point? Does a roundup have a story?

That's why I find this advice that editors give. I understand from their standpoint, but it totally doesn't make sense to writers. So what Julia goes on to say is important and I want to share this with you. She said, "We have a very specific take on travel, so really do your homework and familiarize yourself with what makes us different." And I'm going to get back to the end of her quote in a second, but one of the things I think that a lot of writers miss in looking at magazines is this concept of, "This looks like something they did in the past," or "I think this is something they would cover."

For instance, *Afar* has a very specific taste on travel as Julia said. Which is that they cover very authentic experiential travel. It's become more high-end than it used to be, but essentially authentic experiential travel. So a lot of times you'll do something, and you'll think demographically. Like if you're the type of person that reads *Afar*—you read *Afar*, you are that type of person. This is the kind of thing that those readers are interested in.

But the issue is that what makes a magazine different isn't just that. And as writers who haven't been magazine editors and haven't been on that side of the desk, this is really easy to forget: that for the magazine, for the publisher, for the ads, for the staff, what makes a magazine different is the way they present the information: The visuals, the formats, the length.



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For instance, the magazine that we're going to look at today is very infographic. A lot of their articles have a minimal amount of text, but it's sliced up in different ways.

There are boxes here, there are photos there, there are maps here, and it's a very long magazine. That's why I was saying—If you've joined us late, the magazine is in the handout section. It is the May 2017 issue of easyJet Traveler. This is a long magazine. This is 168 pages. In part because they make it so visual, but that's part of their style.

They are going after a young audience, they're going after an audience that's also probably using their phones or other devices on the flight, and so they are competing for that attention and they know that to do it they have to be incredibly hip and entertaining.

As a reader you'll think, "Oh, easyJet Magazine – this is for people who fly easyJet. EasyJet goes to these destinations. I went to this destination, this might be the kind of thing that would fit in easyJet Traveler."

But, to those editors, it's not just the content and it's not even just the tone, it's the format. It's, "Is this something that I can make visually interesting? Is this too much text? Is this something that's first person? Because I tend to write things that are in second person. Besides even third person, which is descriptive." These things about the format really have a lot to do with familiarizing yourself with what makes the magazine different as Julia says here.

What she continues to say is, "We get a lot of pitches that might fit better in other magazines." And I see this all the time. I was on a coaching call yesterday where—and I wasn't looking at full pitches—the individual had sent me a big list of ideas I had requested matched to magazines that she wanted to break into.

She had done it. She put together 20 ideas matched to magazine sections for 20 different magazines. I was so impressed with how much work she had done. And the thing is that for some of them I had no comments whatsoever, which is very rare. Any of you who know me know it's rare for me to have no comments on a pitch idea. So that was great, but some of them I looked at and they just weren't.

I could see how she would say, "Oh, this is what the magazine section would look like," but it just wasn't a fit for that magazine. And that is the kind of thing that you need to get a better sense of. If you're struggling with your pitches, if you're not getting as many assignments as



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you'd like, or if you're just not getting assignments for the magazine caliber or the website caliber you want to be writing for. It's all about familiarizing yourself. And that means looking past the content, and looking more at the formats.

Let's get into that. There are a couple different types of articles that I want to look at. I say a couple because some of them are variations of the same kind of thing. I'm going to look at them and show you how they're different.

The news brief that I have here, there's a reason that I have just the news brief, but I don't have anything else that's brief or short. And that's because a lot of these formats can work in different lengths. They can be 200 words, they can be 2,000 words. They really can vary with a couple of exceptions here. And those two are the narrative feature and the postcard, which are two sides of the same coin but are only different in length. Let's look at these in sections.

News brief. This is really something that the story, the what's going on, the why, is that it's new. So, this is really important to remember because I have people tell me articles that they want to pitch to a magazine front-of-book section where they're covering things that are new, and the things that they want to cover have been open for a while. And when I say a while, I mean 6 months, a year, seven months, something.

This is not a news brief anymore. Anytime something is not opening in 6 months, as in when the magazine is coming out that you have your article appear in, it's not going to be new enough. It's not going to be the now. By then it will be open for a while, and it's old. So, anytime you're doing a news brief it's really important to keep that in mind. The news part is paramount. That's why that item exists. So, if the news part isn't paramount, what else can you do? If it's a restaurant, a shop, there's so many other things that you can do with that. The article can't be about just that this thing exists, because it's not new anymore.

Then you move into this second section here. This interview, business profile, and person profile. The reason that I think of those as the next step from the news brief is that these are what you do with an individual place that you want to cover that is not new enough to be a news brief. So, if you have visited a museum, a store, a restaurant, an artisan, fashion designer, anything that you think is really great and deserves its own little something, it's not necessarily a feature. You want to write just about that thing, almost in an encyclopedic capacity. Just about, you know, how it started, why it's there, what they do.

Then we're moving into this section. Now we're into profiles. Profiles essentially take two tracks. An interview, in a way, is a profile, but you're using the exact questions and words—



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though they've been edited of course—that you exchanged with that individual, whether you're actually profiling a business or their business or that person. They're kind of two sides of the same coin.

Whereas when you're doing a profile, that's you writing in third person and incorporating quotes, but there's a lot more molding of the storyline going on and there's also a lot more external research as well as details.

One of the big things that I find that sets interviews apart, and this is really important to remember, is you're choosing interview subjects and that interviews just have to stand on their own. They have perhaps a tiny 50-word introduction, but besides that the words that this person is saying need to be interesting enough and the article interesting enough for the editor to publish and for the editor to assign you to do.

This can be tough because we see a lot of celebrity interviews and it doesn't seem like they have anything in particular to say. The reason that they work is because people are curious, and they want to know what the celebrity thinks about things. So, if you're proposing an interview, and it's not with a celebrity, why do people care? The person probably needs to have some sort of expertise. This can work if they're an expert in some sort of subject area, but that subject area can also be a destination.

You can do an interview, for instance, with a chef who lives in a certain city about their favorite things in that city. Because people care, because people want to know what to eat there and they want to know what's new in the city, but you're giving an extra layer that they are hearing it from an expert and they're not just hearing it from you.

You can add a couple of questions to establish the background of that expert and then you move into their recommendations. But this is really important because there's a big differentiator between pitching interviews and business profiles. In fact, there's probably far fewer interview sections out there for this reason: because they're a bit harder to make interesting. Whereas in a profile, you as the writer can have an interview where you can tell that the business is interesting, but the person isn't really saying interesting things or they're not very quotable. You can still write a really great article about it, because you can talk to different people, you can visit the venue yourself, and you can pick up a lot more details that are illustrative and interesting about that person or that business.



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The next step up from there, so to say, is a roundup. I like to think of a roundup as essentially where we take a number of news briefs, or a number of business or individual profiles, more so business profiles, and we put them all together.

There are a couple different flavors of that. One is where they're all similar, as in each item that you've included in the roundup. Roundup is a noun for the verb. It's a noun that means you've rounded up a bunch of things and put them together and now you have a roundup. So, in the roundup, which is similar, which we refer to as a basket of kittens, you have a bunch of things that have something in common but that are also different.

For the person who's interested in the common theme, there's a wide variety of interesting options. And for the person who doesn't particularly care about the common theme, but maybe they care about a certain part of the world, or a certain type of music, or a certain type of food, they can also find something between the different items in your basket.

A destination guide, on the other hand, is going to take a lot of different types of things and the only relation is that they're all in this destination. So, it's going to be a mix of attractions and hotels and restaurants, and places to walk, or festivals and annual events. In the destination guide, the only commonality between these different things is typically the city. Otherwise they are quite diverse. So the roundup is taking a bunch of news briefs or a bunch of profiles.

The next step from there is that you're not only describing things—you're not presenting the encyclopedic view, so to say, of something—rather you are giving the editor this “coveted” story. What does that mean? When you are giving an editor a story, it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. And part of why it has a beginning, middle, and an end is not because it's chronological, but it's because something happened in the middle that makes the end different than the beginning.

Let me say that again: a story, for the purposes of narrative journalism, is when there's a beginning, middle, and end, but something in the middle has made the end different than the beginning. This is very important. And this is the reason why the types of first person narrated blog posts that people write and that are often derided by journalists don't fly as narrative features. Because it's not clear or there just isn't any change between the beginning and the end. There's no alteration in the person that they discuss, or their perception of the place or of the place itself.



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This is really important, because I mentioned earlier how, except for the news brief, everything in here can be different lengths. So, what this means is that a lot of these features aren't narrative features, and that's completely fine. A lot of features are business profiles or person profiles, or perhaps interviews, or perhaps roundups. Narrative features aren't the only kind of feature out there.

This is really important to remember. If you feel like you are the kind of person who looks through the Travel Magazine Database and sees these features and things you should be pitching them, but you don't feel confident about it, it probably means that narrative features aren't for you at this moment. Believe me, you'll work up to them because I used to feel like that myself.

What that means is that the features that are better for you are features that are roundups, or features that are profiles. This is really important to check back on what Julia Cosgrove said. She said, "Don't give me a topic, give me a story." So if a narrative feature is a feature that has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and something has changed, what happens when you want to take a profile and turn it into a feature?

You need to add a little bit more of that story element. You need to think a little bit more about that story element, and that it's not that your whole feature is going to become a story. You might be writing about a business as your profile, and the story so to say – the beginning, middle, and end – is that first there was a person who had an idea, and now it's a business. And in the middle some things happen and that's what you're going to talk about.

But the change is that first there was a person and now that person has a business. So, the change doesn't have to always be some glorious thing, like you went to work in a refugee camp for Syrian refugees on an island in Greece that's next to Turkey for eight weeks and had an epiphany about life. That's not always what a feature is. A feature can be a profile, but it is important that you consider what's the change between the beginning and the end once your pieces get longer.

When your pieces are shorter, you can still do something a little bit more encyclopedic as long as you keep in mind what the point is. Why does the editor care, and why do their readers care? So, even though right now we're talking about article formats, I just want to keep in mind that you can't just write an actual encyclopedia article. You can't just read the about page of a company as a business profile. There still needs to be some sort of sense of movement or narration, but not to the extent that you are using in a narrative feature.



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You're introducing new characters that you've met in a destination, or you're introducing characters that are guiding you through the destination. And that you as the narrator, as the protagonist, experienced an internal change or a shift in what you think about the destination. So that's for the narrative feature.

But if you take a profile and you turn it into a feature, you still have to have that same beginning, middle, and end element. Any time you're looking at pitching a longer piece, even if it's not technically a narrative feature, keep that in mind.

How does it extend if you have a roundup that's become a feature? This is a really interesting point to consider. If you're doing a roundup, which is long, then what makes the beginning, middle, and end might be the things that you choose to show. It might be something that you explain basically briefly in the preface in that short one or two hundred-word thing in the beginning of the roundup before you get into it. But you still need to establish why you are talking about this place by showing that it's interesting, and that's typically done with its beginning, middle and end.

When we look at the destination guide, the one that I've chosen to show you is a couple different pages long and you can pull it up as well in the background in the PDF. But, the idea is that they're showing a destination that you may have thought of in one light, and they're showing you how to explore it in a different light. So, the beginning, middle, and end in this case is that you as the reader had a certain perception about this place and then as the roundup is showing you different opportunities and different things to do in that place to explore it more deeply, then your perception as the reader changes.

What makes the longer roundups different in the narrative features or in the business profile is who the subject is. If we have a long business profile, the thing or the subject that has changed is the business or the person who started the business. If you have a long roundup, this thing or this person that is changing is the reader. It's their perception. If you have a long narrative feature, what's typically changing is you as the first-person protagonist. Or if there's a different protagonist, then it's probably a person profile.

I know that's probably kind of a lot in terms of story and everything, but I wanted to make sure that I get that out there. Because as we start to look at the examples a little bit, I know that the things I just mentioned are things that kind of trip people up. So, I wanted to put that out there so when we get to questions, you'll understand how the accordion of changing the lengths on profiles versus roundups versus narratives works out.



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What that takes us to is the postcard, which is essentially the mini version of the narrative feature. What that means is that it's even past a short story. A short story is typically some pages that's actually longer than a narrative feature. The postcard is like if you stuffed a short story into three or four hundred words. The postcard is like a snapshot more than it is a postcard. It's like a moment from a trip, a visual almost, that's meant to show you so many other things.

A postcard is a super difficult thing to write when you're just starting out, and they can be very lovely to perfect. But, I don't necessarily recommend going after them unless you have other writing training. Because, it's about doing a lot, really a lot, of setting a scene, projecting a message, giving a sense of place, in a very tiny amount of space. But, we're going to look at one to give you some examples.

Now, the last two that I have on here are different both from the rest, and also from each other, but I've kind of put them together for this reason: that both of them are lesson-oriented. So, they're not necessarily meant to convey information, as much as they're meant to teach something.

The personal essay, or just essay, is meant to teach through example. Just so you know, if you want to write essays you need to write them in advance. You can pitch them, but they will always be assigned on speculation. Because essays are the kind of thing where the editor needs to see the finished piece to know if it works for them or not. These are all about the actual text, not the idea, and here's why: Because an essay is inherently an explanation. What a good essay does is that it starts with a question and then it keeps asking more questions, and more questions, and more questions about that question, and hopefully you'll eventually arrive somewhere, which might be nowhere in theory, but the idea and the mindset of the author has changed by asking these questions.

Again, like a postcard, it's not something you'll want to necessarily dive into if you don't have a writing background. But, because you have to submit them on speculation anyway, it can be nice to play with on their own for a little while.

It's much easier to do, and a much better way to grasp the service, or "how-to" piece. Now, I'm sure you guys have all seen several hundred thousand service or how-to pieces on BuzzFeed, or on the cover of Women's Magazine or things like that. It's "how-to" this, or of course the typical example is how to have, or like eight different ways to have a better orgasm on the cover of Cosmopolitan magazine or something like that. So, we're all familiar with what a service or how-to piece might look like.



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But, here's the interesting thing. In journalism generally, not even just in the internet age, but also in the pre-internet age, a how-to piece is quite different than when you just might think, "Oh, of course I can just sit down and just write that." A how-to piece in journalism, particularly in travel journalism, and particularly today, has to be super backed up by experts. If it's not your "Five Best Ways to Enjoy Athens," it is "The Five Best Ways to Enjoy Athens," and each one has three different quotes from three different local people who are experts to support why that is the best way.

If you're interested in writing travel service pieces, this is very important to remember: is that if you should never pitch an editor a service piece that you're just going to write in a vacuum, without getting additional quotes. Forget about just research, but additional quotes. Because otherwise that's something they can very easily do themselves in-house, in like 15 minutes. So, just don't pitch it unless it's going to be a reported service piece. I'm just putting that out there.

I've pulled out examples of every single one of these, and I am going to walk through them all one by one.

As I'm telling you all these things and part of the reason that I chose this particular magazine, is that easyJet, as I mentioned earlier, is extremely long. It's a 168-page book, the one that we're looking at right now, and part of what makes it so long is its front-of-book. I think that the front-of-book, these short uncategorized pieces that sort of come before the feature, I think there's about 80 pages of them or something. It's very, very long for a book.

I remember when we were putting it in the Travel Magazine Database, I said to the writer, "There's got to be some recurring sections in that enormous front of book right? I mean they have like 25 different articles there." And she said, "I took a bunch of different issues and they're really different every time."

I just thought that was crazy. How can these editors have 25 different articles that they just do from scratch every single month? This is a 12, 12-month a year publication. How can they do all of this without any sort of rubrics, or any recurring columns? As an editor I'd kill myself! That sounds horrible and they must have a lot of people working on this.

But the funny thing is that they don't. They work with quite a lot of freelancers, they also write some of them in-house. Like I said, a lot of them are very visual, but part of the thing is that they can take anything. They can take an interesting art exhibit they heard coming up,



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they can take a random idea about what's new in travel and they can pull together a basket of kittens around it, which means a lot of opportunities for you as the writer.

I have a lot of people come to me and say that they want to pitch features, and I look at the pitch and then I'm like, "An editor is going to look at this and say, 'This is 200-word story; there's nothing else here. It's just a profile. It doesn't even need to be that long, so this would go in the front-of-book if anywhere.'"

That's the thing. A lot of these places that you've gone, things that you've seen, that you're not quite sure what to do with, they probably do belong in a front-of-book somewhere, but it can be hard to know where. The beauty of front-of-book sections is that we're going to dive into is that they're often quite a bit amorphous.

When I do the Pitchapalooza that we have going on this weekend, the live Pitchapalooza, I sit here with our enormous collection of magazines and as we do the lessons, we all grab a magazine, and we flip through and we identify what's in the front of the book. What's by freelancers? How is it different? What typically happens is that they're all amorphous, especially airline magazines. But that's kind of the point, is that they're a grab bag of things.

You can very easily take a story idea that you've been sitting on, and that you've been having trouble placing, and find a home for it in a front-of-book because they are a catch-all. The way to do it is not to tell them you're going to Peru, like Julia Cosgrove said. Or that you've been to Peru. It's to tell them that you went to Peru, and while G Adventures has been partnering with these textile makers near Machu Picchu for years and they've done very well, there's a new homegrown startup, which is actually not near the tourist area. It's in all these other areas that have banded together to get their items distributed in the airport, to get themselves exposed to visitors, and here's how they did it.

You have to approach them with a very specific idea, but also with the format. This is very clearly a business profile, and it's got a story. Which is that one group was having success, they weren't because of this partnership, and you're going to tell how they managed to become successful and how they managed to get their stuff in the airport.

The front-of-book is like a secret stash of all sorts of interesting articles that editors have figured out what to do with. And, part of the way they get more of your stories published is to help the editor see why your story fits there. Which is why we are going to talk about some of these formats.



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I'm going to see if I can just show you quickly on the side. If you have not already, then open up the magazine now. Like I said, this is going to be the May 2017 issue, and it's a very, very long magazine. This PDF actually has 100 pages. If you start on just page one of the magazine, and you scroll past all the ads, which there are many, because the magazine is very successful, and the editor's letter, then you're going to get to the manual. This is what they call their front-of-book section.

As you can tell, it's got a lot of stuff going on, and it's organized by numbers. As I pull things up on the slides, then you can find them here in the numbers in the magazines, because I've had to take them a bit out of order from how they are in the magazines because I need to keep them in the order of the sections as we discuss them. So, let me flip back over to the slides now. But, that's how if you have the magazine pulled up, you can follow what we're doing. Of course, the first one that I've chosen doesn't have the number on it. This is one of the very first ones in the magazine.

If you flip through, one of the very first articles that you're going to see, it has a very beautiful picture in the background that I've cut off, so you can see the text. But it is very clearly a news brief. It is about an installation of an art exhibit actually, that only goes for eight weeks. So, do you know how I know it's a news brief? Because at the end it says, "Until the 11th of June."

This is a really, really clear indicator that something is new, and that there's a specific date. Any time you're looking through a magazine to see if they do have new briefs, look for a specific date, because nothing else in a magazine is going to have a date on it, because editors don't want their publications to be dated. They want them to be things that people can continue to use. So, there's just a couple things you'll notice here, this is quite short. Just looking at it I would say that it's maybe 150 words. These are the type of articles that are hard for editors to get, because people who have been writing them for awhile are not super keen to use what they already have in to an editor to just get \$150 if it's \$1 per word, or if it's \$2, or whatever that pays. They would rather use the connection that they have with the editor to get longer, juicier stories.

What that means is that universally—somebody even told me that she's not with Travel Asia anymore, but that when she was there—Amy Farley edited the front of book and she was always desperate for front-of-book pieces. And, don't harp in on the word desperate; this is just something that I heard from somebody. But, my point is that even the very large magazines have a need for these things.



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Now, the difficult thing then becomes, how do you pitch them? How do you pitch something that's going to be going at the time that the magazine is published in advance, and get it picked up, assigned, written, and edited, photographed, and into the publication just at the moment that it's going to come out? This is hard, right. But, a lot of the press releases that you would be able to get your hands on, the editors can also get their hands on.

The best way to do this, is to always be asking people what is coming next. Do you have something new coming soon? Like, "I know this thing is vacant. Do you know if there's something else that's going in here?" Or, "Is that going to be a hotel?" Or if you're in a museum, "What exhibits do you have coming up a year from now?" So, the best way to find these news things that editors don't know about and won't know about is to just constantly be asking questions when you're on the ground about the future, and to take notes on those, and to pitch them very, very specifically in terms of the lead time.

The lead-time in parts of the magazine is different. The lead-time with different magazines is different. This is something we've talked a lot about before in a couple of different webinars, so I don't want to spend too much time on it. But the lead-time is the number of months in advance of when the article would appear in print that you need to be sending your pitch to the editor.

The thing is that with the front-of-book, that the lead-time tends to be less, and that's for a couple different reasons. Features can be assigned like two years out, even for small magazines, a year out for features and sometimes even departments, is not uncommon. But front-of book things tend to be, even in very large magazines, like six months out or something. Because, they follow trends.

They don't want those things to be too far removed from when they're going to go to print because they want to make sure they're relevant and that's hard to do. So, if you have something that has a specific time peg, like you know a really great installation is going to be going, you can pitch it early. You can pitch it as soon as you know. The worst thing that an editor is going to say is, "Well, I'm not assigning that yet, but I'm going to be assigning it in this month, please contact me again then." Great! Now you're already on the editor's radar.

As soon as you have done your digging, and have asked about what's new and isolated something that's interesting enough for the editor to care, and you're prepared to potentially travel there, go ahead and pitch it. Like I said, the worst thing that's going to happen is that the editor is going to give you a very specific timeline on when they will be assigning that issue. That's news briefs and how to pitch them. Let's move on.



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Interviews. I talked quite a bit when we were on the types of articles slide about interviews and their various drawbacks and why you see fewer of them than profiles. But in large magazines, I think for the most part, you're still going to find at least one, because people like them. Typically, like I said, they're going to be about someone famous, but the thing is that famous is relative.

I have quite a few friends who, in their circles are rock stars, but you may have never heard of them. I have a friend who has I think five New York Times best selling books, and I think that on his last book tour Warren Buffet was on stage with him at one of his book tour stops. But, most of you would never have heard of him. So, this is really important to keep in mind. Famous is relative. Famous does not mean a household name or movie star. For some magazines it might, but not for all of them.

We had someone in Pitchapalooza who is working on an interview pitch around this guy who is a Canadian comedian, who is quite renowned there, and she was pitching it to a Canadian magazine, and she was really amazed they hadn't done a profile on him yet. That is just the right amount of fame for that publication. That's all you need. They need to be famous enough for the setting.

If it's an airline magazine, you can pitch people who are famous in the destinations they fly to, but that most of the readers might not know. But, that's the exactly the kind of thing that airline magazines would be looking for. The most important think to keep in mind when pitching interviews is that you have access. I know this is obvious, but don't pitch an interview without getting permission to do the interview. This is a huge red flag for editors, and this is always the very first thing that they will ask you. So, never ever pitch an interview without getting permission first.

How do you do that? We've talked about this a couple of times in past webinars, but it really comes down to, if you want to interview somebody, and you don't have the assignment yet, you ask them if they would be included if the article is accepted. This gets harder with bigger famous people if you don't have a very personal connection, and that's why it's good to choose famous enough people.

When you pitch an interview, it's usually pretty standard in terms of the space in the magazine that they typically allot for it, and that they'll get back to you about what that length is. And, you can always get back to them and say, "In the past how long have people done the interview for to get the type of text you're looking for?"



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Always make sure that when you're doing interview assignments, double check in advance, before your interview, what the recording requirements are, because some publications will automatically expect that for an interview you will not only furnish them with the recording of the interview so that they can double check the quotes, but so that they can also make a transcript of it. So, make sure that you check that with them before you get the assignment – what they will need for fact-checking your interview.

Like I said, related to interviews are the business profile and the personal profile. Let's see if I can zoom this in and have you all see the zoom as well. This is a screenshot that I took from the feature, which is actually a roundup in the magazine that you guys have which is something like, "50 Reasons to Visit England Now."

This is a profile about a pub. It's really interesting, because as I was breaking down this magazine into things to use in the class today, its headlines kind of suck. Its headlines, like the internal headlines for things in roundups and stuff like that, this headline is something you would never see on a front-page headline. But they get away with it because airline magazines are designed for sort of captive readers as they call it, people who are sitting on the flight and don't really have a ton of choice if they don't have a device with them, besides reading this magazine.

When I first kind of glanced over this, I was like "The English Pub is Still Kicking? This must be a trend piece," which we didn't talk about because trend pieces tend to fall into these other categories that we're looking at in terms of being roundups or being business profiles. This is a really good example of something that is at once a profile of a specific business while talking to a greater trend. And that greater trend is the "why." That was the hook – that why do the readers care, why is the editor interested, that the writer who pitched this story would have used to get the assignment to write about this specific pub?

In this case, they're talking about how obviously pubs are a huge part of English culture and English traditions, but that they're kind of chain pubs and that it can be hard for small business owners to stay in business because rents rise and things like that, and they're using that trend, that beginning, to talk about how this pub has pioneered a completely different model to become successful and remain alive, and that's the end.

This is how you can take something – and I'd say this is about 250 words—and still have a beginning, middle, and an end, and also have a why, which is in this case is speaking to a larger trend in a tiny, tiny, number of words.



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I had somebody ask me yesterday about writing their pitches too long. It's really important that anytime you are pitching something that's short, that your pitch does not exceed the number of words that your final piece would be. Just eyeballing this it's about 250 words, so this is something that you would need to be pitching in about 100 words or maybe 150 words. Some of those words are going to be about you, and some of them are going to be about the story. The words that are about the story are going to be about half the final piece.

This is a short business profile. They can also be done much longer, but what unites both of them is that they've taken the why, which in this case is the trend, and they've then told a story about how the business is successful. Pretty much all business profiles, the story that you're telling—and I just made air quotes—is that there was a need and this enterprising person started this business to fill it.

In pretty much every business profile, that's the story. That's the structure of your article, just cut and paste. Here's the need, here's the person, here's how they filled the need. Beginning, middle, end.

How does that translate to a person profile? Which is the other part of this kind of triad of person profile, business profile. This is a very, very short person profile. I was trying to find a longer one, but that issue that we're looking at has every other type of article but doesn't have very robust person profiles unfortunately.

What I will say is that usually, the profile of a person is going to be more in line with what I was talking about in that business profile. They're going to be talking about how there was something, perhaps there was an injustice, or perhaps there was something like the individual person had injustice, or there was community injustice, but there was some sort of problem. This person came along, and in this case, there are two, and they kind of devised this solution, and now they're the heroes.

That's the difference between the person and the business profile. Like I said in the business profile, the hero is the business itself. Whereas in the person profile, the person has done something and they themselves are the hero of that story. In this case, it's a really good example of the three parts of the story, like I was telling you.

It says that the founders started an app that finds quirky trips, and you're like "what is 'quirky trips'?" Basically they're looking for things for people who didn't want to do a package trip, but they didn't want to book the flight, and the stay, and the activities all separately. It's like if you're typically an independent traveler and you don't want to do



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things in a package, but you don't want to do all the research, what do you do? That was the problem. And then they put it together in just nine months, and they launched it last year. That's the middle part. They saw this idea, they knew there was a problem, and they sat down, and they just banged it out.

In this case, the person profile and the business profile are kind of related. And this goes back to what I said about how this is kind of two sides to the same coin. You can do a business profile about a restaurant, and you can do a person profile about the chef of that restaurant. And this is really helpful, because you can take that same exact experience, that same visit, that same place that you want to cover, and do it as both.

You can do it as a person profile for one magazine, and then a business profile for another. It becomes a different article, and you can sell it twice. So, that's one of the really great things about this triad, that interview profile, business profile, person profile, because you can also go sell that interview somewhere else. So just one awesome thing can become three different articles that can go to three different publications, and then you can do those three articles slightly different for different audiences.

Whether it's a magazine that's published in the UK versus here, or a magazine that's for families versus a magazine that's for seniors or for couples, so this is how you start to slice things: Is that you begin with the format, and then you say, "Okay, now I've got this topic and I can fit it in this format. How can I then translate this topic into a different format for a different magazine, and then to a different audience in the same format?"

Let's move on to our next set of article types. This is the roundup, so I'm going to zoom back out to normal zoom here. In the roundup, I'm going to show you a couple different flavors of roundup, but I wanted to start with the really vanilla, "Ten Things Worth Getting on A Plane For."

I have all of them here because it was a couple pages long all the different ten things. This is a roundup, which you're going to notice, has dates. There's May to June, August to September, and June here. This is ten things worth getting on the plane for this summer.

It's got "go now" versus "book now" and it's got all these other things. They've got culture and outdoors, they've got all these different slices that they've put on here, and the only unifying factor and the only commonality they have here is that they're ten things worth traveling to. It's something that only happens for a limited time, and you should get your butt



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off your couch and on a plane, so you can go see it. That's really the only unifying factor here.

This is really like a top ten things, it's really like a "Best things to do this summer" or to book now to do in the fall. But they don't call it that. It's very diffuse. This is the type of roundup that's really common, but hard to pitch.

I want to point out, you'll see here at the bottom of the page that this is by one, two, three different people. I recognize Florence, I think works for the magazine. So, this might be done entirely in-house, and there's a reason for that. It's because these roundups have a lot of moving parts that are always slightly related, and there are a lot of editorial decisions that need to be made about that. So those tend to be done in-house.

Another similar roundup to this that people see and say, "Oh! I could totally write that," is like 50 weekend getaways in New York City for the summer. There is never going to be a time when New York magazine or whoever is doing that is going to have one writer write that whole thing. They're going to have different writers that are experts in different areas write the tiny pieces of that article that they're an expert in, and they are going to decide what pieces are included, and they are going to put that together.

Somebody wanted me to review a pitch for that the other day, and I was like, "You can't pitch this, this just isn't a section that you have control over what goes in there." Also, if they would even do the same section again. If they've done the 50 best weekend trips from New York City, they're not going to do that again for 15-20 years. They're just going to keep referring people back to that article that they wrote previously.

What are the articles that you can pitch? Baskets of kittens! Love them baskets of kittens! I saw the first one, and I just died because it's just such a basket and is full of kittens. What I mean by that is that it's about Guns and roses, and their European tour.

What they've done is they've taken places that were important stops on the Guns and Roses tour before, and they have told you about what happened there previously, and when you can see them in that place this year. Like such a weird, weird, topic, but such a perfect example of a basket of kittens.

This is united by Guns and Roses performances that were there before, and are going to be there again. That makes it a short list, but they use it to talk about all these different



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destinations and encourage you to fly there, which is the purpose of the airline magazine. This is kind of short, but you can also see this roundup that is very easy to pitch because editors are not likely to think of these kinds of things.

If you don't already start looking at every interesting thing you visit, in what are some things that are similar to this that I can put together in a basket of kittens, I encourage you to. Because these things are just gold, they're really great and editors love them. It's just so, so unique. And, you need to start training yourself and think, "what else goes to this, what's the bigger trend, and why else do people care?"

The next variation of roundups, like I mentioned, is the destination guide. If you have your magazine and you want to flip to it, this is multiple pages, and this is number 12. So, let's zoom in and have a better look at this. This is really a pure, roundup sort of destination guide. There is a tiny intro, I would say this is maybe 50 words, but it just goes all in to all different, very short, like 20-word items all around this city that it talks about.

This is the kind of destination guide that a magazine like easyJet Traveler loves, because they can make it really visual. This is not the kind of destination guide that you as a writer are envisioning when you pitch that you want to write about this thing. But it's important to realize that when magazines publish destination guides that just talk about, like I said, relatively unrelated places to stay, restaurants, and so on and so forth, they need to make them very visual to capture the reader's attention because it isn't a thread, or a basket of kitten's style commonality that unites all of them besides just the city.

They need to keep calling out interesting things visually to make sure that they drag in people and that just kind of roll over this and say, "Granada...I don't really know if I'm interested in Granada." They use these photos, they use all the different call outs to make people interested in the article and keep reading the magazine, even if they're not specifically interested in Granada.

The next two types of articles are different sides of the same coin in terms of being a bit more atmospheric. I've heard people say they want to write these more literary stories, and I'm not quite sure that's the word I would use to describe it as much as descriptive. A narrative feature.

This part kind of jumps out: "People thought I was from a different planet." It's "I," it's first person, it's her story. But if you look at this feature, I believe it's the second feature after the story about 50 ways to do something in England or 50 reasons England is hot right now. This



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feature is very photo heavy, very design heavy. That is really common. Features go on for 10 or 20 pages now, because there's so many photos included. This is important to keep in mind because that's what the editor is thinking when they see your pitch. They're not just thinking, "Is it a good story?" they are thinking, "How does it look on the page?"

I'm going to flip over and see how this looks on the page. So, we're going to go from the manual and we're going to go forward to features. Now we're in the features, and we see some things about England...and here we go. This is the feature that we were looking at in the slides. You'll see that the text, unlike anything, is maybe a quarter of a two-page spread. I think it's over now. Oh no, it keeps going there's some ads in the middle. This is the most text that I've seen on a page in this feature so far. Okay, this one has a bit more.

But it is so about the visuals. When you are pitching a feature story to an editor, you might be thinking this is a great story and this is a great destination, and they're thinking about the pictures.

A really great tip that I heard the other day for features like this, not just features that are design-oriented like this, but features that are in a magazine that have heavy, visual pictures, is to include pictures with your pitch. Not yours – don't include your pictures. Because if it's a big magazine they are going to source them from a professional, but you should include professional pictures to help the editor imagine what it's going to look like.

The reason I said not to include yours, is that editors have a style for their visuals. They have art directors that curate this. So, even if you already went to this destination and already shot photos, and then they would want you to shoot photos there, they're probably going to send you back to take more. It's very unlikely, especially for a big publication like this, that they would just use out of the box photos. They would definitely have somebody.

See here, it says, "Photographs – Greg White." I have worked with magazines where they just have photographers all over that they work with, that are kind of their stringers in those locations. Even if you have your own photos, and are pitching a magazine that is of newsstand caliber—that would be like a household name airline magazine, or a newsstand magazine, or a major regional that you could buy in the newsstand but only in a certain area—don't send them your own photos.

But what you can do is put together like a Pinterest board, or you can pull some things from Instagram, to show them this. To show them a really stunning photograph and the visibility of the place you're pitching, so they can imagine what it looks like on the page. And this tip, by



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the way, came directly from an editor of a major newsstand publication. So, it is 100% okay with major editors, and she said it was really crucial and helpful for her.

The flip side of this is the postcard. Postcards also tend to be very photo-oriented, in part because of what I said that what the postcard does is it gives you almost a slice of that big long feature. It gives you an image, even if that image is in words, but it is always going to have an image attached because magazines are so, so visual.

This is a little bit longer than some of those other things we looked at. I think that maybe this is 350-words. But what typically happens with a postcard is that you need to get across a point, and this is actually the headline that first made me realize that this magazine has not great internal headlines. This doesn't tell me anything: "The Chiltrens just got even better for foodies."

I looked at this, and I was like, "What is this really even about? And why is this even in here?" Chiltrens is a really posh weekend getaway spot for Londoners and easyJet Magazine is based around the easyJet airline, which currently flies a lot of places, but it really serves a lot of Londoners, so I would say that's probably their biggest spenders. Even though this is something that you wouldn't hop on a plane for, it's something that is going to be of concern to their readers.

These are people who might already go to this destination for the weekend, so why do they care? They care that it just got even better for foodies, but how? And then, if you dig in a little further, you'll see that he's taken a village pub, a very big chef who's very well known in the UK, has taken a village pub and actually "poshed" it off as they might say. So, this is really actually a business profile, and again, with a trend twist a little bit. But what they've done is they've put in so many details.

They talk about the type of food, they talk about the décor, and they give you this really tantalizing picture. That is kind of what elevates it from being a profile to being a moment. You can also do this with a little bit less of a focus on a single establishment, but it's really hard because you essentially need to show an entire destination in so few words, but still in such great detail, that's it's typically best for the postcard to choose one establishment, one meal, one beach you were on in order to be the focal point of that postcard.

There's a relatively short essay Don George wrote that's in his book of essays, *The Way of Wanderlust*, where he's talking about a visit to a museum, but the only part of the museum that he talks about is when he's standing in front of one painting and all these crazy local



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ladies with their hats and their outfits come up and start having this conversation kind of with him and about him, and in front of him, and around him, and so he talks about the whole city in this place on the coast of France, in the French Riviera, just through this one conversation in front of one picture at a museum.

That's what I mean about the postcard needing to focus in on one kind of business so to say, is that you need to be really granular in terms of the moment that you choose to display.

Let's get to the two that are more teaching-oriented, so essays. This magazine I also chose just not because it's got that big, huge, juicy front-of-book, but because it's got a huge essay section. If you go past the features, you're going to see all these viewpoints. It's got tons of viewpoints on sections. It's got viewpoints on food, viewpoints on drinks, viewpoints on business.

The one that I've pulled out here in particular, and I had a different one here and then I swapped it out when I saw this, is that it's just a very illustrative example of what I talked about essays really being about the question, about taking one question and then just asking more questions, and more questions, and more questions. Here it says, "Alex Pell investigates why Nokia and Blackberry [Who knew Blackberry was even around?] are bringing back classic cell phones, and wonders if it's finally time to let go of the past."

You know, that makes me kind of curious. Again, like I said, is Blackberry still around? Microsoft bought Nokia, but why are they bringing back classic cell phones? Why are they even still in existence? And so, he keeps asking these questions, he intercrosses them with some memories, and at the end, he winds up talking about how, at first, he mourned the death of the iPad scroll, and he's learned to let go: "It's the nature of the beast we call progress."

This is really like life-lessony stuff here, right? That's why I think that a lot of people are scared of personal essays. But I think that if it's something you want to get into, the best that you can do is read them and practice writing them. Remember, they're all in spec, so if you're just spec—spec means speculation—and speculation is like when you're a gold-panner, when you don't actually have the lease to the land that you're speculating on, but if you find something, then you get the profits.

In this case, spec or speculation means that you have pitched an editor and the editor says, "Well let me see the profits. Let me see the essay, and then if I like it we'll go with it." In this case, and like I said there's a lot of different essay examples in there, it's not super travel-



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oriented, but I chose this one because it is a good example of taking something mundane and tying it in to a much larger lesson.

Let's go to the service piece. That front-of-book that I showed you before, that manual section, is chock full of these. As I mentioned, easyJet, this particular publication that we're looking at, is really very "you" oriented, because that's their audience. To say it's millennials and "me, me, me," is not exactly what I mean so much as that they have decided that their tone is really about what's in it for the reader, and bring the reader in, and very oriented into what the reader can do as opposed to an armchair traveler.

This is one of the very first sections in the manual, number three, and it's on "How to Throw an Insect Dinner Party." I picked this one up not because I want us to throw insect dinner parties. In fact I am now at the retreat house where we're in the country where I'm watching bugs crawl by on the outside of the window while I'm talking to you. So it's not the most appetizing sounding thing, but I chose it because it's a crazy idea.

I think we often think of...what did somebody want to pitch in Pitchapalooza? I think it was something about how to disconnect when traveling, like how to do a digital detox. But how many stories like that are there? Like I said, today if you want to be getting a service piece in a magazine, you have to not only include quotes, and here's some quotes from the Nordic Food Lab, but you also have to show something that the editor can't get in house. So, it's not just that you can get the quotes, it's that you have this idea. You have some connections or you have this experience that would really make you the best person to write this.

With that, that is all the different article types I wanted to lay out for you guys today.

I've got one question here about article topics: "Any suggestions on how to decide which of the styles would be best for an idea that you have?" My actual advice is to do all of them, and this is part of the reason I wanted to lay all of these out for you, but if you have an article idea and you're not sure which one it would be, try to find a way to fit this idea into every single one of these, because that's how you're going to sell more stories.

I think that's a good point to end on, and I thank all of you so much.

So, thanks you guys and have a great weekend! Cheers.