



Dream of Travel Writing

What to Expect on Press Trips

Thank you all so much for joining us this week and we're going to talk this week about what to expect on press trips.

So specifically, what I want to discuss this week, we have a couple different webinars coming up breaking out other parts of the press trip experience. And in the past, we've talked about how to get on press trips, the basics of sponsored travel, the different types of trips, how to set up your own individual trip for somewhere that you want to go, and how to apply for different group trips. So, what we're going to talk about this week is specifically, the act of going on the trips, preparing for the trips, all the things related to your correspondence with the PR people and other people on the trips step by step by step.

And then in upcoming weeks, we're going to talk about how you can prepare as in how you can make sure that you are going to get the most stories from each trip. And then the following week, we're going to talk about how to act when you're on the trip. So not just etiquette, but also how to, on the ground, get as many stories as possible from these trips.

So, what I want to go over today is quickly talking about the different types of press trips and how expectations differ in terms of what your actions on the trip are like, what the pre-trip process will be like, and how the post-trip production differs between these different trips. And then we're going to walk through the things that happen before you get on the trip step by step. And then we're going to talk about all the things that might come up on your trip and we're going to look at some sample itineraries.

What is a press/fam/hosted/sponsored trip in the first place? As I mentioned, there's a lot of different names as I said here on the slide, but there's also a couple different flavors of these trips. But at its core, it's a group tour unless you're going on an individual fam or individual sponsored trip that is. So, incumbent in the fact that many of these press trips are group tours are a lot of different issues. So, first, I'd love to hear from you guys in the chat box. How many of you have been on some sort of leisure group tour, not necessarily for work, but a leisure tour where you maybe and your family or you on your own have paid money for whatever it is in a package setting. Perhaps you — even cruises in a way, can be group tours when they're small cruises, but you are staying in a bunch of hotels that are pre-arranged by somebody else, you have an itinerary of tours that are going to be in different places, some afternoons you're on your own, some afternoons you're going to be doing one of a selection of options. You might be doing some crafts and other activities.

So, the thing I think a lot of us encounter when we become travel writers is that we became travel writers because we want to travel independently. We want to travel on our own and dig up interesting things. Somebody here in the chat box said something that's so on point. She



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says she's been on a group tour, but it's probably not my first choice of travel style, but it's good to see a bunch of things that may not have been seen otherwise. And I was just chatting with my husband the other day because we were driving around the Netherlands and this is actually where I came on my very first trip ever out of the country and it happened to be a tour. So, I used to play field hockey and I was in the Olympic Development Program for Field Hockey and they brought a bunch of us here to the Netherlands and to Belgium and to the U.K. to play field hockey because it's very big here, especially in the Netherlands. There's a lot of field hockey pitches or sort of — not exactly a field, but a turf field in parks and it's a really big sport here.

So, we came with the dual purpose of playing field hockey in these different settings and doing some workshops, but also to see Amsterdam, to see London, to see Brussels. And so, my very first ever international travel experience was on a group tour, but like I said, with this dual purpose. And what I found a mentor because everybody, even if you didn't know each other, you had a unified reason for being there. That ends up being very different than the type of group tours that some of us may have been on as a leisure traveler.

So, I noticed some of you are saying that you've been on fam trips that are with groups as well as independent tours and some of you are saying that you've been on leisure tours that are group tours. And the thing that you may have noticed if you've been on both is that in a leisure group tour there's naturally a bit of a congregation of people around personalities and interest areas and things like this. And that also happens on press trips. And this is one of the really interesting things about being on press trips that I think a lot of people don't consider before they go is that what you experience day-to-day on that tour and what you can get out of that tour will have a lot to do with the personalities who are there. So, it might be that you go somewhere and you're supposed to have a tour of a museum with a very experienced tour guide, but because one person on your tour is very bent on asking questions, on having every single one of their questions personally answered, that you don't end up getting as much information even though you have a very professional experienced tour guide.

So, it's important to remember that anytime you're going on a group trip, even if it is a fam trip and we'll talk about that in a second, or a typical press trip that you're going to have this additional layer that might be impacting, perhaps in a negative and perhaps in a positive way, your experience on that trip both as a person and as a professional journalist. So, I'm sure if you have been on leisure tours you have some funny stories. If you've been on a lot of press trips you probably have funny stories about all the people that have been on the trip or things that may have gone wrong because of people organizing or because of people on the trip.

And all these things are a huge factor in the press trip experience and the reason why I'm really spending a little while talking about this is that the best laid plans, the best constructed



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itineraries, can be completely waylaid by these things. And that's why as we're talking about expectations, what you can expect on your press trip, it's incredibly important that that is the first thing on your approach, that's the first thing you're thinking of. How many people are going to be on this tour with you? What other types of people are on this tour with you? Are they researching a similar type of story with you, something very different that will mean every time you go somewhere the person giving the tour needs to address all of these different interests? This is a huge factor that isn't present on your itinerary and you can't just know from the description of the tour that the PR gives you how these things are going to shape your trip. But you want to figure out as many of them as you can before you go.

So, let's talk more about these different types of trips that I mentioned. Different types of trips roughly fall into the following major categories. Is the whole trip going to be focused around your interest, your research needs? Or is the trip designed to try to please a lot of people? And when I say please a lot of people, I don't only mean the people who are in your group, who are attendees, who are other writers, bloggers, journalists, on this trip. Trips that are designed for a large number of people inherently involve a lot of compromise on the side of the PR person to get them organized. And so, what happens is that to make sure that your group has somewhere to eat lunch, to make sure that your group has someone to walk you around downtown, the person organizing the trip might need to say to the restaurant "Oh, we have these writers coming. They really want to hear about something" and that something might not be something that any of you would possibly write about. But you're going to need to hear somebody talk about it for 40 minutes over your lunch, despite the fact that you're not interested because that was how they got the lunch sponsored, by telling this venue that you writers were interested in that thing.

And so, there's a lot of push and pull and give and take and sort of horse trading in a political way that goes into putting this trip together before you even see the itinerary. Then once you get the itinerary, if it is a group trip, then the person organizing the itinerary starts to get feedback. They start to get requests from different people and then again, it's back to trying to see how they can make as many people happy in the parameters that they have.

So, somebody's mentioned a great example here and actually I know a couple of you who are on the call today who have probably had similar experiences. What happens if you go on a trip and the journalists are from a different language background? For instance, what if you are on in a trip in Mexico and there's a number of Spanish-speaking journalists there? What if you are on a trip in Germany and the people on your trip are German writers and they speak English, but the tours may be in a mix? They may be in German or there might be people who you visit on the tour who the person giving the tours speaks German and somebody tries to translate it for you in English, but it's not great.



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I had a similar experience to this in Spain a couple years ago for tea bags where obviously, we were there for an English language conference. We went on a tour that was related to the conference. It was organized in conjunction with the conference, but at several of the stops there just wasn't somebody there who was up to the task of doing simultaneous translation for this tour. So, this is the type of things that can come up. So, thanks for mentioning that Donna.

As I mentioned, there's the individual trip which is going to be around your interests and again, we had a webinar entirely devoted to organizing individual trips. So, I don't want to dwell on that too much, but the idea is that you have gone to the Tourism Board with a specific story that you have assigned or some story angles that you would like to pursue and the person organizing the tour has put it together around your requests and you have a lot of leeway to make changes to that itinerary.

Now a press trip is typically a trip that is at least in part, decided in terms of the itinerary or where you're going to stay in advance. And that happens because press trips are designed for people with assignments or who work in house or as regular contributors for a publication. And so, it's meant to be something that has a story produced very close to when the trip runs. So, the idea is that you, as somebody with the ability to publish a story either because you're an editor or frequent contributor and have latitude to design a story around your trip, see the itinerary and you're interested in the itinerary and then you decide to go on the trip based on the itinerary. So, what that means like I said, is that a lot of this horse trading has already happened. So, while there might be some leverage for you if you have an important publication that you're writing for to get something added, it's pretty determined in advance and they're going to expect the story to come shortly after that.

Now very different than this, is a familiarization trip. So, a familiarization trip is designed for when you don't really know the area and you're going on this trip to get story ideas. And so in that vein, it's more accepted that the story is going to come later. It's more accepted that you're going to have questions about the itinerary and perhaps ask for some things to be added. And familiarization trips also won't always be composed entirely of writers. Familiarization trips are very common for travel agents and so sometimes you'll see a mix of the two on one tour. But they're typically designed to present a wide array, a menu, a very people-pleasing assortment of different things to choose from.

So, this is going to be the kind of case where there's a lot of things that you might have on your itinerary that really don't have anything to do with you and you have to go along with them. When I was doing some background research for this call today, I was looking at some things that people say about press trips and it's a little — the things that people say about press trips tend to be one or two things. How to get on press trips or oh my God, press trips



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are horrible, you don't really want to go on them, here's how to figure it out or here's how to get to the point where you're going on individual press trips as much as possible.

And thing is that — well, I also think that going on an individual trip is going to be like I said, the best way to get your interests served. It's not always something that you can do right away. You typically need to start your process of going on trips and getting stories from trips. From going on trips that exist already, whether that's a press trip, a familiarization trip, or a blog trip or conference tour. So, the thing that's different about a blog trip rather than a press trip is it's inherently aimed at bloggers and that changes quite a few things.

You'd think that the itineraries would be somewhat similar, but they end up catering to not just a different audience because I wouldn't really say that's exactly the issue, but it's more that they end up catering to a different style of travel. A trip that's set up for people who are bloggers tend to be designed with the idea that you will be blogging as you are on the trip as opposed to just when you get back from the trip. And I say "tend to be" and this is said in contrast to press trips. When you're on a press trip with people who are more writing for magazines or for print, they're typically not tweeting during the trip, they're not going to be writing posts on their blog every night after the trip. They tend to be working with something that they're going to write when they get back from the trip. They don't typically consist of people actively working on their story on the bus in between stops on the trip.

So, blog trips in theory, should have more available technology. It's more likely that your itinerary will include the Twitter handles of the different places that you're visiting. I've seen some really nice ones around this recently where actually on the back of the name tags they have the Twitter handles for all the places that you are visiting. They often tend to have Wi-fi on the buses that you're going to be on as you go around the trip. And more importantly, as you are out visiting destinations things go a bit slower because people are taking a lot more pictures.

On press trips people are often taking some pictures, but they might be using pictures that are furnished by the destinations or the venues of shop people or they have a photographer with them who's dedicated to that. And in addition to taking those photos, they're actively posting them as you go along. So, that really slows down the pace quite a bit.

Now, kind of related to blog trips but also to press trips, is conference tours. Conference tours are a type of fam trip that will happen when you are going to a travel conference and they offer tours of the area where the conference is to attendees of the travel conference. So, two travel writers. And these are a really great way to get started if you're new to the whole press trip process and particularly to getting assignments in order to get on a press trip, but they



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can be very, very, very different than these other trips for one reason: the people organizing them have a lot of trips on their plate.

This is not the kind of thing where you are going to Milwaukee for a very big, very important golf tournament and Visit Milwaukee has organized for a group of golf-oriented travel writers a slate of things to do around this event. This is a city that's hosting some number of hundreds of travel writers for a conference and organizing 5 – 10 dozens of tours for these writers to be going on. So, these tours tend to be less — curated isn't quite the word, but they tend to have less time dedicated to each one individually than your average press trip. So, what that means is that you're less likely to have a handler, have a person who's with you all the time who is from the destination. You might have someone from one hotel that's hosting you or an external tour guide that's leading the trip, but you have less connection with the Tourism Board of the destination or the hotel that's hosting you specifically.

So, these can be great entry points, but they might become more difficult to get stories because there's a little bit less of a security blanket there of somebody who's there all the time to make sure that your needs as the travel writer are met in terms of making sure you can talk to somebody that you want to get an interview from, that you get your questions answered, and that you get the content of the tour translated for you, for instance. So, in that vein, something that I read that I thought was very interesting and even the writer at the time said she had heard this from someone and she wasn't sure that she 100 percent agreed with it, was characterization of press trips as “A bus full of ladies looking at jam.” And what was meant by this quote is that there are often a bunch of people together, non-decrepitly, who might not necessarily have shared interest, who are looking at things that they also are not necessarily interested. And like I said, the dynamics of the groups that you are with on your press trip are very important. That the dynamics of that group pushed up against an itinerary that might not be the best fit for what all of you cover is also very important.

So, what that means is that while a group tour is an itinerary of things and you know in advance when you pay for the tour that this is what you're going to be seeing on each stop, a press trip or a fam trip can be a much more amorphous experience as in the itinerary pretty much 100 percent of the time. I don't think I've ever seen or heard of one remaining intact. The itinerary of the final trip will not be the itinerary that you agreed to when you signed up for the trip. Often, days have been changed or shortened. Entire destinations or excursions have been subtracted or added and so, it's very important before your trip to make sure that you're following the itinerary and what's going on at every step of the process.

And like I said, there's different types of trips that have different expectations. And some trips simply won't have an itinerary ready for you in advance. They'll just have a short description and this is often the case with conference trips. They tend to be something that



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you might agree to based on just a short one paragraph or maybe even two paragraphs of saying what they're going to do. So, in those cases, it's very likely that what they said would be on the trip won't end up in the final itinerary.

On fam trips and press trips and blog trips they tend to relate more closely to what happened originally and you have more of a leg to stand on if you're saying "Well, I agreed to go on this trip because this thing. This thing isn't there I no longer have a story." So, let's just talk very quickly like I said, we have some other webinars available on this, about the different ways that you can first come in contact with these trips and secure your place on them.

So, trips can be available because they have been advertised again, by typically a small paragraph, sometimes by the full itinerary on an outlet for a writer such as Blogger Bridge which again, is more for bloggers, Media Kitty is a mix, but I would say it's more for journalists and these are two ways that you can hear about trips. Travel writing associations such as SATW, The Society of American Travel Writers. I always get this acronym wrong, The International Food Lion and Travel Writers Alliance advertises quite a few. The North American Travel Journalist Association doesn't have quite as many. There's other ones in Britain and Australia and Canada as well.

So, the travel writing associations do have some. Media Kitty really has a lot of them and Blogger Bridge also advertises them quite regularly. You can also get on one of these trips by reaching out individually and you can also get these trips at conferences. So, I talked about blog trips or conference trips that you might go on attached to a conference, but there's a lot of conferences like, not necessarily just a TVax or a Travel in Words or a Book Passage type of conference that you would go to learn about travel writing, but there are conferences and expos that are designed entirely around you meeting with destinations. So, Canada Media Marketplace is a big one for that. On alternating years, they come to San Francisco and New York, a bunch of representatives from different destinations in Canada to meet with American travel writers and that type of event is mostly around you setting up future press trips, either group press trips or individual press trips with those destinations.

And then, the other main way that you can hear about these is just getting them through your email and that's the kind of thing where this is one of the reasons you need to have a writer's website that says very clearly, not only that you are a writer and that you have clips, but the types of things that you cover so that people looking to invite writers on press trips know that you are available for those opportunities. So, you've applied for a trip or you've spoken to somebody about a trip. You've been accepted. Now, what happens?



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So, once you get that your spot on this trip is secure, a number of things start happening. The first, very first one is the perennial question: Are flights included? I've been hearing this question a lot and this is something that's changed dramatically in recent years. And I'd love to hear from those of you who are here on the call who have gone on quite a few press trips. In your experience, if you're still finding trips with flights versus not finding trips with flights included because I've actually seen that while it is less common for you to have your flights paid for by the destination or otherwise included in your trip, it hasn't entirely gone away. And the thing that has changed I think more dramatically, is how the flights are being funded.

So, it used to be that a destination might go to an airline or have a partnership with the airline and the flight itself would be comped by or would come out of the budget of the airline. They now tend to be more paid for by the organizing party which is what's made it a bit more difficult for writers to get those flights included because it's something that the party organizing the press trip might just not have the budget for. Because depending on who's organizing it, the trip might be entirely constructed out of comps from different people. So, comp means complimentary if you're not familiar with that term, and the comps might be coming from a number of different hotels and restaurants and attractions rather than one budget. For instance, the budget of the Tourism Board which is being used to pay each of these places for your stay and your meals and your tours and so on.

So, it's most certainly something that you want to ask and clarify upfront. In our Monday Mail Bag, we had somebody who recently got a very obtuse invite from a tour company to write about what they had. They didn't really say if they wanted her to come experience it and write about it, they didn't really say if they just wanted her to write it up on her blog for publicly available information, and she's thinking "Well, if you want me to come, you'd better be paying for my flight because I'm not paying to go to Greece for two to three days." And this is a really huge thing is that often, these trips are not very long because somebody, somewhere, somehow is covering those hotel nights and so they want to get as much stuff done, they want to put as much stuff in front of you as possible with the fewest number of hotel nights. So, what that often means for flights is that you might be flying somewhere quite far away for a very short time. And I don't know about you, but for me there's a big jet lag no-no and I prefer to not bounce across the world for two days, but there's a good way to handle that and it's asking for extra days.

So, the deal with asking for extra days is you can always ask if they're doing your flights, you can always ask them to tack on extra days on either side. And obviously, you should mention that if it changes the price of the flight dramatically, to let you know and you can cover the difference or you can decide not to do it. But, where it becomes an issue is if you're asking for extra days and you're asking for them to cover the lodging for those days as well.



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But if you just want to ask for some additional time on your own in the destination, not only is that something you can do, but if your budget allows for you to do that on your own or if you are interested in organizing those additional room nights on your own, it's something that I highly recommend.

And the specific way that I recommend doing it is to do a day or two or whatever you can manage upfront before the trip and a day or two, again whatever you can manage, after the trip. And this is so that before the other people on the trip arrive you are able to get a handle on the destination to check out anything that you wanted to do that's not included on the itinerary and specifically, to rest up and get over your jet lag. And at the end, that's the time you use for anything that you visited on the trip, but it was just too quick. It was too brief, you didn't your photos, you didn't get to ask enough questions, or you were supposed to go to this venue and they had to cut it out of the itinerary that day because the itinerary was too crazy.

As we were talking about extra days, it's really something that's great to do if you can manage the extra days, but you need to be cognizant that they have the budget that they have and that they might not be able to set you up with the accommodations. However, what you can always do is that say the itinerary for your trip is being organized by the Tourism Board. You can ask them if there's any hotels that aren't included in this itinerary that would fit what you cover, that you should check out, and if they can connect you with that PR person to set up your own stay. If it's a trip that's already an individual trip, then it's relatively easy for you to just see where you're going to be staying and reach out to some additional properties.

If it's a trip that's organized one hotel, this is increasingly common that press trips are organized by a hotel to bring people into the area and obviously stay at their hotel and tour their hotel, but also to get out into the surrounding area and see what there is to do there and write about the whole experience of the destination while featuring the hotel. If your itinerary is organized by a hotel, find a different hotel. Reach out to that hotel. That other hotel might not know that there's writers in the areas. They might be very happy to have the opportunity to also get in your story or get some attention while you're in town to cover the first hotel. Is that something that you should tell the first hotel? I would probably keep that to myself, however.

Now, as you are getting your pre-trip ducks in a row. As I mentioned, depending on what kind of trip you're doing, you may or may not have an itinerary. Now, this might not be an issue. I have seen some times when it's not an issue. But when it most certainly is an issue is when they have told you, whether they're upfront about it or they just think they've told you, that they want you to have a story come out very soon after the trip, but they don't give you an itinerary. Now, this is where expectations become a very large issue and it's not



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uncommon for the press person or for the owner of the hotel if it's a small hotel to think that you will be able to sort of turn a story around afterwards even if they haven't provided you with an itinerary in advance.

This is something that is very useful for you to be educating those PR people or those owners or whoever is the organizing party about that in order for you to secure a story, you need to have 100 percent clarity and confirmation of what you will be seeing while you are there in order to be able to sell those stories in advance to an editor. So, what I like to do with this confirmed assignment catch 22 is that anybody that wants a confirmed assignment had better give you a confirmed itinerary and it had better be confirmed and it had better be given to you in advance. Not the day before you leave, the week before you leave, but in advance like as close to when you are accepting the trip as possible, if not before.

Now obviously, if they're giving you the itinerary when you're accepting the trip, it's subject to change in terms of times and things like that. But you need to get, if they want a confirmed assignment, you need to get more or less in writing just because everything's happening over email, but you need to get their word that these things will actually happen on your tour. This is the kind of thing where I've seen a lot of people organizing trips be a bit squishy about this confirmed assignment thing where I've had people say "We're doing this trip and we only want confirmed assignments" and then weeks go by and nobody that they've reached out to has confirmed assignments because they haven't provided the itinerary or something else like that. And then they come back and they're like "Oh, are you still interested in going on the trip? We have spots."

This is something that happens. You should basically just expect it that you'll have to play a little hard about the itinerary or put your foot down that you won't potentially get yourself in hot water with an editor by getting an assignment for a story that you can't produce, but just make sure that you are 100 percent continuously clear with the PR representative about what you are able to deliver. And so, what that means is making sure that when you reach out to the venue or when you apply to get on a press trip you aren't communicating that you will be publishing a story as in you will be publishing, you confirmed will be publishing a story with a place that you just have a contact at or an editor that you've pitched once or twice. If you're saying that you might be able to place a story, then you say "I might be able to place a story here" or "I'm in communication with an editor at such and such and I will discuss a story about your destination with them."

So, the best way to tow this confirmed assignment catch 22 is to just be 100 percent clear upfront and transparent about what you are able to promise. And we'll get back to follow-up later because that's when this comes up again. Now, asking for changes in the itinerary, I've had some people ask me about this like "Can I ask for changes in the itinerary?" and the



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answer is always yes. There's never a time when you can't ask. If they can give it to you or not is another story, but there's a way to do this. So, every time you have something in the itinerary that you want to ask for you need to show them what is it in for them. What are they getting out of your ask? What are they getting out of making that change? And not even just taking the time to look into that, but the person who you're asking probably has to go to somebody else to try to negotiate this change. So, the more ammo that you can give them, the more likely the change that you want to see will come to pass.

So, whether that's adding something that's not on there, perhaps you say "This is something that I can do on my own during the break that you have scheduled between this and this time" or "This is something that I can do on my own on this morning when the main itinerary doesn't start until 10." That will make it a lot easier for them because it might just be a function of them getting up a little early or themselves driving you in the middle of the day to go to this place. Saying that "Having this thing will help me to sell a story or an additional story about this destination" is always great because the whole point of these trips is for them to place stories. So, if you're saying "If you make this change, it will help me help you", that's always great. Just saying "Can we do this?" or "I'd like to do blah" is not enough ammunition. You have to bring it back to what it has to do with your readers or your editor and how that is going to help them get more coverage.

For instance, if you are asking let's go back. Let's go to extra days and asking about changes. So, let's say you're asking about extra days and you want them to organize it for you. You want them to add an additional hotel and set that up for you, you don't want to contact them yourself. You can say, you know, "I have a website that I write hotel reviews for and I can do multiple reviews about your destination, but I need to be staying at different properties and I know that during the main days of the tour we're only staying at property x and I would love to also review property y because our website has a readership of high income readers who typically spend this, this, and that and travel this many times a year and come to this destination more than once a year or three times every five years" or something like that.

So, when you put statistics in there, especially about your audience, it can really help them sell those things. And in terms of even getting the itinerary in the first place, this is something that can be, it can just be mind-blowing how many times people can tell you that they're going to give you the itinerary and have it not appear. And like I said, there is a certain level of being sensitive that they are working to set up these trips. However, they do always know who they're working with or what they're working on.

So, if they're telling you that they aren't able to get it or they've said that they're going to get it to you and they haven't gotten it to you yet, then what you can always do is say "If you don't have the day-by-day or hour-by-hour itinerary at this moment, I just need to know what



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the stops are” or “I just need to know what days we’re going to be in what cities” or “I just need to know what restaurants are included.” That might be something that’s much easier for them to get to you.

So, we’ve done our pre-trip stuff. We’ve, hopefully, received an itinerary in some form. We’ve gotten on the plane or the bus or the train and now, we are on our trip. So, I had mentioned in the blog post and the newsletter leading up to this webinar that, especially if you’re traveling individually, but I’ve seen this happen with groups as well. You might not get the red carpet, whether red carpet in the luxurious way or just red carpet as in you are journalist going to this place to cover it, welcome that you’re expecting. And, you know, if any of you guys have interesting stories about this in the chat box, I’d love to hear it over here on the side.

But the story I had just relayed was about a writer who had an individual assignment for a noted luxury publication to do a review of a brand-new hotel and she got the assignment from the editor and the editor asked her to go on the trip, got it set up, got the flights, got there, nothing. No schedule, no one waiting for her. No interviews, no handler. She had her room and that was it and the thing is for some people, that would kind of be an invitation to do nothing and I’ve definitely seen this happen, but for most of us, we want to get our stories. So, then we’re going to go bust our butt and figure out who is there somewhere, whether it’s a concierge or a manager or anybody who has an office who can tell us what to do and help us get that organized. Somebody’s got a great thing over here in the side bar.

I once had a trip that the organizer had forgotten to advise us about it being cancelled and she only found out after she arrived. This kind of stuff happens that you show up somewhere and there is no trip. And so, as much as you have planned, as much as you have tried to do your due diligence, as much as you have tried to wrangle, if needed, the person who is organizing your trip to make sure the trip is happening or the things that you have said that you need to cover on the trip, all these things are happening, sometimes you show up and they just aren’t happening. Or you show up and no one is expecting you.

I had a trip and this was a conference trip which made it almost a little weirder because there were so many trips going that you’d think that people in the area would know we were coming, but I had a trip where we had a self-driving driving experience with other people we didn’t know which on its own was a little nerve-wracking if you ask me. So, we were supposed to fly both ways and a day or two before, they changed it that rather than flying up there, so at the beginning of the trip we were going to be taking an overnight train. So just imagine that you’re going on a self-driving trip with a bunch of people you don’t know and you arrive by overnight train.



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And so, I happened to have flown up there separately before the trip and because I was already there, somebody connected me with the rental car. I literally don't even know who met us at the train station, but they kind of took my license or something and scribbled something on a paper and then magically, we had a rental car. They didn't tell us if we needed to fill gas, where to drop it off, when to drop it off, any of these things and then for the next three or four days, we had an itinerary that somebody had given us that had weird things like leave at 8:00 a.m. to go to some place and then several hours later, longer than it took to get there, tour of blah, blah, blah venue. We didn't know who we were supposed to meet. We didn't know if someone was expecting us. We didn't know if it was a guided tour. We didn't know if there was somebody that was actually going to be giving us a tour.

So essentially, every morning we got up, the four of us, the day before and we'd be like "Okay. What are we supposed to do tomorrow?", "Is this stuff really happening?", "Do we want to do this stuff?", it was like "Where do we think we're actually expected?", and we tried to sort of figure out what we were actually supposed to do with this information that we had been given. And thankfully, it was not one of these horror stories where we were just on our own and we had to pay for all of our meals and our hotels even though they were supposed to be included. It ended up that when we got to places there were people expecting us and so all the groundwork had been laid, but the issue was that not only did we have no way of knowing that because had no handler, but the people we had been communicating with before the trip similar to the person that I mentioned in the blog post and the newsletter today, was on vacation during our trip. So, this trip had been set up and then all of the contact numbers that we had were not working. They were not reachable and nobody was getting back to us.

So, it doesn't only happen on individual trips. You can be on a group trip where you get there and things aren't ready for you. People aren't expecting you. Or you go somewhere and people are expecting you, but they're expecting you for three or four hours and you're supposed to be somewhere else in an hour and a half. And sometimes you'd have a handler, but your handler is actually making the situation worse by telling people to keep talking, or to tour this, or to show you this, and things like that. So, it's really on you, and this goes back to what I was saying with the group, on the consensus of the group and the needs of the group to make sure that you are holding up to that itinerary as closely as possible to make sure that everyone's needs are being met because the thing is if you're on a group itinerary, it's not just you, right?

Like you might, as I mentioned quite earlier in the call, you might be on a tour with somebody who really wants to ask all their questions and get all their questions answered at the expense of the schedule which means that the thing that you needed to cover or that somebody else needed to cover which was scheduled at the end of the day, needs to be



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missed. So, it's really important to figure out as soon as possible how you fit into the group, get the pulse of the group because it might be the case that there is somebody who is essentially the anchor of the trip. They have the most important assignment, the most important outlet, the most important story, and the person setting up the trip, perhaps for a hotel, got that person and then just couldn't get other people of that caliber or other people that were similar to that person and filled the trip with other people that were interested and available.

And in that case what's going to happen, is that what that person on the trip wants is going to be the preference of your handler or the person creating the schedule or the person deciding when you move from point A to point B. You might be that person. There might be a bunch of people on the trip who are very similar in level, but all have very diverse outlets. Maybe somebody writes about traveling with pets, somebody writes for travel trade, somebody writes a very popular food travel blog, and somebody else has a mom travel blog. So, people have very different interests both in terms of what they want to do on the group as well as the type of writing that they actually end up producing.

And so what happens in these instances is at the beginning of the trip, both you and the others who had these will gauge everyone else by asking the dreaded questions and I call it the "dreaded question" because if you have shown up on a trip and you feel like you got there in some way by the skin of your teeth or you feel like the other people are "real journalists" because they are on staff or they're contributing writers and you are a blogger who's trying to break into print, it's very easy to get sort of stumped, stuck, or otherwise intimidated by the question of "Where are you going to publish after this trip?" or "What are you publishing?" or "What stories are you working on?" or "Who do you write for?"

And so, this is one of the reasons that the blog trip has evolved as its own separate thing is that originally, there would be, when blogs first started to become something that people organizing press trips would include in their inwrite pool, there would always kind of be the odd blogger out. Like you would be on a tour with a bunch of journalists and they would be like "Ugh, you're a blogger?" even if your reach was significantly larger than the regional newspapers of the people who are on that tour. And so, it's changed because like I said, the needs of bloggers on a trip are very different than the needs of journalists on a trip.

And so, what happens here like I said, is that you do sometimes get mixed itineraries. They can often be separated, but you might find yourself in a situation where some people are only interested in one thing on the trip and they're going to be the Negative Nancy the whole rest of the time and be like "This is boring", "Can we move on?", or some people might have a blog where they can actually write five or ten articles about all of the different things that you're doing on a trip and they're going to perhaps be dragging because they're trying to get



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maximum information about each of those stops. Another thing that happens is the person who just takes too long generally that I've mentioned a couple times, and we've got a question from Larry about that I'm going to ready for you.

Larry says "Do you have any suggestions on how to handle the person who's putting everyone behind schedule with lots of questions or picture taking? Can you suggest that you get the guide's email or phone number to ask questions later on or" — I can't quite understand this question, but — "Ask where the group can get high resolution images of whatever you're looking at." So, this is a real question of whether you have a handler or not, so I'm going to move on to the next slide because that's involved with this slide.

So, when you are on your trip you may have somebody who's with you throughout the whole trip, goes from the hotel or the PR agency that represents the hotel or the destination or from the Tourism Board directly. And in those cases, when you have a handler who is with you throughout as opposed to just tour guides in different venues, it is the handler's job to intervene with that person. And I say "that person" because that tends to be, you know, you say "that person" and everybody in the group knows what you're talking about. So, it is the handler's job to intervene with that person if there is a "that person" and if there is a handler, but the thing is that there isn't always a handler. So, if — and the handler can sometimes not be very aware that this one person is dragging down the rest of the group and sometimes, as I mentioned, the handler can be catering to the needs of that person because that person has the most important outlet.

So, it's important first of all, to gauge if there's nothing you can do because that person is the priority person, but the other thing is if the handler hasn't noticed and you tell the handler, it might be that nothing happens. So, if the handler hasn't done anything about it, you typically need to have more than one person who's on the trip approach the handler and make it clear that this is negatively impacting the experience of the other writer because if just you tell them, they might kind of be like "Oh, well you know, I'll keep an eye on it", but if it's really clearly already a problem, it's good to have a proper intervention about it.

Now, what if there's no handler? What if you are completely self-guided like I talked about how we were on that self-driving trip? What if you're completely self-guided and there's no handler, but there's a person? In that case, doing an intervention might cause them to get defensive. Doing it on your own might cause nothing to happen. So, the best ways to deal with that person in situations like this where there's no one who has the authority to do it for you and it seems like doing it on your own or in a group might not have the desired result, is to try to manage around it.



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So, what that means is — Larry had a great point about, you know can you ask the guide or the representative from the museum or the venue where the group can get high-resolution images. That's great. Can you ask for the email or phone number so that people can use it later, but if this person's really not self-aware and there's nobody to really step in, what you really want to do perhaps, is to go to the guide at the beginning of the tour and say "Hey. Just so you know, there's a person on our trip who tends to ask a bunch of questions it doesn't allow the other people to ask questions or it slows down the tour and we collectively would love if you could try to make sure that the tour moves along." So, you do kind of have to go around them in those cases. So, you either need to go up or you need to go around. So, I talked in answering Larry's question about a couple different guided situations that you have.

So, the main things that happen on your trip and I apologize, these ones down here should've been further out. So, the main things that your trip is composed of is going to be different types of tours which may be guided or not, types of meetings, interviews and presentations and I'll explain what I mean more about that, meals — and I say dinner here, but I really mean meals, and excursions or activities. So, I want to talk first about tours because a lot of what you'll do on these trips is tours of different kinds. And sometimes you'll have professional guides who are certified.

For instance, in Italy you need to actually have several master's degrees and very a high-level knowledge about a specific city in order to be a certified guide in that area and you legally cannot guide there. So, foreigners who are leading a tour group need to work with local guides on the group in those cities. In those cases, the guides will be, whether they're certified or they're just general professional guides, they will be really good at this type of crowd control and things like that and you can more or less rely on them to be keeping the tour on track in terms of time as long as they know what the time constraints are. So, it's good to remind them if you don't have a handler. Keeping the tour on track in terms of time as well as keeping people in line and tailoring the tour to what you guys need to know.

Now, the other thing that can happen is that you have types of guides who are not actually guides, but they are the person who is there to show you around a certain place. Sometimes this is the owner of the venue and sometimes it's just whoever was available. I think I have actually seen like the brand new, just started two days ago admin leading tours in some places who doesn't know the answer to your question and has no idea how to do tours and so on and so forth. In these cases, it can be both incredibly boring because you're being told things you have no interest in and it can be difficult to get information that you actually need.

So, this is the case where if you have a person who is leading your "tour" you need to get the contact information of somebody else and circle back later if it's something that you really need to cover, but what can also happen is that you have a very skilled guide who is guiding



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you around something, typically a hotel or other type of venue that you have absolutely no interest in. Like you're staying in a hotel, but do you really need a 45-minute tour? Do you really need to see five different types of guest rooms, and the restaurant, and the meeting rooms, and the gym, if you're not writing a hotel review? The answer is no, but as I mentioned earlier on in the call, the PR people have had to play this up to the hotel in a certain way so that they can get you the room and part of that is that they can showcase what they have.

So, that's why you get these walkarounds where everyone is on their phone not taking notes, but actually doing their emails and never really looking up because they don't want to make eye contact and get the spiel to continue any longer. So, in the cases where you're not covering those things, it's really best again, setting expectations, to say to the person giving that tour at the beginning "Thanks so much for showing us around. I just want to let you know I'm doing a hotel review specifically. I'm going to be mentioning the hotel in a greater look at things to do in the area. So, I really appreciate you showing us these things, but I just want to let you know that I personally am not going to be covering too much about the specifics. So, if you notice me doing something else during the tour, that's why."

So, the thing is you might lead other people who are on the tour to do the same thing. And then what happens if everybody said they're not going to do that? What can happen is that the person says "Oh, okay. Well, we do have blah, blah, blah which is actually interesting", like they keep bees on the roof and they use it in the kitchen or something like that. This is can be a great way to actually unearth something besides just touring the rooms of the hotel and looking at them and going "Oh, thank you."

So, another thing that can happen is when you have self-guided tours and personally, I hate these. Not because I don't like exploring on my own but I really don't like when you are on an itinerary and they just let you loose in the museum for 45 minutes with nobody to tell you about it. I find it to be a huge waste of time on a tour, but it does happen. So, in those cases, and Carrie and a great point about this, you want to do your research in advance. But it can be hard to know from the itinerary sometimes if you're going to have a guide in a certain place or not and so in these settings, I think it would be really great always to have internet on your phone when you travel. If you're going to be somewhere that you don't have internet, at least check out the venues that you're going to be visiting for the day before you get there because even if you do have a guide, when you get there you'll be able to speak with more authority and ask better questions. And if you don't have a guide, you'll at least be able to figure it out on your own.

So, as I mentioned, there's a couple other types of things that you might encounter on your itinerary and one of them I've grouped together as meetings, interviews, and presentations.



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And meetings can take a lot of different forms, quite honestly. I've been on press trips where I had several, several, several in a one-day press trip, time blocks let's call it, where it was like 45 minutes with one person in a venue in a destination. Like maybe somebody who is the economic development coordinator for the city or somebody who is the program director for a theater or something like that and I just had 45 minutes with them.

And so, I've differentiated that from an interview because I didn't explicitly say I want to talk to this person about this topic and then prepare questions in advance. I was essentially told "You will be meeting with this person between this and this hour." So, what happens when you're told you will be meeting with somebody, and that can be you individually or your entire group, is that you have a bit of an expectation that the person or people involved has an agenda, that they have something that they want to talk to you about, that they want to inform you about, perhaps that they're launching something new. And that can happen and then we get into the area of presentations, but it doesn't always happen. Sometimes it's just kind of an information gathering session.

And so, this goes back to what I mentioned about the tours that you want to make sure that you're always done, even if it's just in the morning over breakfast, a little bit of research on these places that you're visiting because you might unexpectedly find that you are somewhere, either individually or in a small group, with someone who expects you to be asking them questions and you weren't specifically informed that that was going to be happening. Now, a related thing about meals is that you might sometimes have a combination meal and meeting. And I've seen these happen for sure on individual trips. If you have an individual trip, you can pretty much 100 percent expect that you will have a number of, if not all, meals that area actually meetings because it's a good way to pair you up with somebody who can tell you about something. But these also happen on group trips. It can be sometimes as simple as your tour guide from a certain venue is joining you for lunch so that you can continue to ask them questions about the museum that you just visited or something like that.

And in general, meals I see become a very difficult moment on group trips. There's the typical, you know, somebody's vegetarian, somebody can't eat this, somebody get that, that can slow up the whole process. Especially if people haven't been asked about that in advance or haven't mentioned it in advance or the meals weren't announced it seemed like it was going to be a trip to North Carolina about food and ends up just being a trip to North Carolina about barbecue and this person is vegetarian and they weren't expecting that.

So, there tends to always be a bit of tension that comes up at meals. Either because of something situation, circumstantial like that, or because there's a "that person" who is now taking over the whole meal or who you get stuck sitting next do because you went to the bathroom when you went to restaurant and you came back and that was only seat left,



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surprise, surprise. So, meals however, are things that you have to go to. And this is something that came up when I was doing some pre-research for this call is that if you've never been on a press trip, it's really important to realize that these itineraries, like I said, are grueling. They're packed, they're trying to get you to do as many things as possible in as few hotel nights as possible and you are expected to do each and every one of them.

So, I've had trips where we were scheduled literally, from 8:00 in the morning until 2:00 a.m. at night. I've had trips where we were in Hawaii during, not even specifically a heatwave, but kind of a hot time for there, and we were outside in the sun more or less with no lunch all day, multiple days in a row. Like, literally no lunch, like we were driving back from one venue and the PR person who was actually with the PR agency that represents Hawaii said "Oh, do you guys want to eat something because there's a couple shops and a mini mall over here. We can pull over and you can go get something."

So, not only are meals fraught with things, but it's important to remember that if you're not a breakfast person, you might still be expected at breakfast and in fact, there might be a presentation/meeting from the person who owns the inn that you're staying with at breakfast. Lunch is not a time that you can pop back up to your room and check your email. It's probably going to be something where the spa director is going to be telling you about their new spa program which is organic and they customize each salt scrub to your aromatherapeutic interest.

So, this concept of meeting with interviews and presentations, it ties into meals, but it's important to remember that you never really know when it says on your itinerary a meal exactly what is going to be happening during that meal. So, I've had a lot of trips where we had a meal that was at a restaurant, but then they also had a brewer from a brewery come in and then they also had a chocolatier. So, for instance since we had the meal, the food comes out, the chef comes out to tell us about the course, the brewer comes out to tell us about the beer that's being brewed with that course, and then the chocolatier comes out in the middle of the main course to do a discussion about their process, and then they come back when the desert is served.

So, there might be just no time to talk or think during your meals or you might have no handler, no supervision, and just be left in a restaurant with your group and somebody's bringing you food and you have no idea what it is and you just have to figure it out. So, meals are one of the points in itineraries that are often the least clarified and can create the most tension as a result.



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Now, I didn't spend too much verbiage on our excursions and activities because they really, really depend on the destination that you're going to and also the type of trip that you're on. Some trips, especially active adventure trips, will have a lot of activities introduced into the itineraries. Other itineraries will have very few activities that are there included on the itineraries, but they'll have a block in the afternoon which is "free time" that you can choose from doing a couple different things like ziplining or seg-waying around the property or different things like. But a couple type of activities to look out for are ones that aren't available to the public yet that they are Guinea pigging on you. So, this can be figured out with a very quick Google search and any time you see an activity that's not on the market yet that's included in your itinerary, you need to prepare yourself because it's probably going to have some hiccups. It might take much longer or much less time than they've said. They might say that there's going to be food and there's not actually going to be food there and they might say that there's going to be somebody doing a traditional dance and then there doesn't end up being somebody available to do the traditional dance.

So, anything that's not public and open and proven can be a wild card. It can be not interesting. It can be not ready, but the things that you need to watch out for in terms of being interesting are what I call the things they think you'll be interested in. So, I've had times where we were in Turkey for instance, and we were on an eco-tourism trip and they took us to a waterfall. It was a grueling hike, but it was a long hike. It was the middle of the day and we had driven from somewhere else at a distance to go to this waterfall and it was just a waterfall. It wasn't particularly long, it didn't have a big pool at the bottom, it didn't have a big cascade. There wasn't anything particularly notable about it for people coming from the U.S. and Canada and also Japan and Africa about this waterfall.

So, this is one of the things that you can check on your itinerary in advance and you can ask "Oh, could you tell me why this thing is here? I'd love to have some more information about it before our trip" because sometimes you won't even be able to find the things that they've mentioned online because they're so not notable. So, that's another thing to look at as you are getting your itineraries planned. Speaking of itineraries, I hope you've all grabbed the handouts and I want to just peek through and again, the handouts are yours to keep and look at more at length later. But I want to peek through and highlight some of the different things again, for you to notice, look out for that can happen while you're on your trip.

So, we're going to take the great exciting leap of trying to find our itineraries. Okay, I've now pulled up the handout on Experiencing Dubai. Let me know if you can see that on the screen. So, I've included actually pretty much all of the itineraries that I have in the six-figure travel writing roadmap in that handout that you have because they all show different things. So, I want to point these out to you and again, like I said, you can look at these more



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at length later on, but there's certain things that I want to point out to you. So, I'll just go over why they're different in the beginning and then I'll circle back with some specifics.

So, this Experiencing Dubai one that I have in here, this is a hotel-organized press trip. So, this is notable because it's done by the Oberoi and the point of the trip is for you to cover Oberoi and in order to give you more things to help you cover that, they've included some activities. So, the next trip, this is a conference trip and it's also a fam trip. And this is an area that nobody that was going on the trip had any knowledge of in advance and it was chosen by the people on the trip on the basis of various activities in the short description that were said to be included in the itinerary, but we didn't have the itinerary in advance.

The next trip, like Paul said, this is a press trip and this is in also a hotel-organized itinerary, but this is more of an example of an also individual itinerary. So, we were there as a group, but this is very similar to the type of thing that you would get if you were going somewhere by yourself with assignment and they gave you some things to potentially do. This next one is a very straight press trip. All of the people who are on this trip had assignments or places that they wrote for regularly or they were an editor, but what's particularly noticeable about this trip is that it is around a subset of travel. So, a lot of the other itineraries on here are a bit general. They might luxury or they might be a little food, but they're really trying to cover a lot of bases. Whereas this press trip is really tightly, narrowly aimed at a certain type of publication of people who write for a publication and the types of things that you would need to know in that setting.

And then the last trip I've got in here, this is a fam trip that is very much a straight fam trip. In fact, there were even quite a number of travel agents that were on this fam trip. And what's particularly notable about this itinerary is that it was organized by someone who has never organized an itinerary before for a press trip, but was very excited. And so, I think we were there for about two days and you see we have something scheduled practically every five minutes, and when I say every five minutes, I mean there five minutes in between some of the things on the itinerary on the second day. So, just to go back through quickly, a couple things for you to take note of.

So, I talk about how this Experiencing Dubai is a hotel trip. It's a hotel itinerary. And so, when you're on a hotel trip, something that frequently happens, similar to the person that I mentioned in the blog post and the newsletters leading up to this call, is that you have a lot of free time. So, on this whole day we arrive and then we go to the hotel and then we are there. Then the next day, we are there and then eventually we do something. So, on hotel trips you tend to have the actual itinerary, like the final itinerary which just has tons of blank time. And this is time where you probably want to be doing things. You want to maybe be going windsurfing or you want to have a private cooking class or something like that and when you



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see big holes like this on an itinerary that comes from a property, you really need to be asking them “What else can I do in this time?” Because I’ve seen way too many people go on trips like this and then they’ve gotten there, they’ve relaxed or whatever, they’ve walked around on their own, and then they find out that there were other activities that they could have been doing and they’re really bummed because now they’re actually packed with stuff to do.

So, anytime you’re on a hotel trip or any trip where they just give you a big blank slate of time, always push the PR person who your contact and ask “What else can I do during this time?” rather than just be at leisure and relax, okay? So, on this other trip, like I mentioned, this is a trip where it was a fam, but it was a blogger trip, so we were all going to write about it, but we weren’t necessarily knowing in advance what we were going to write about and we have been drawn to this trip for a couple different activities. So, one of them was swimming with tuna, so it means the largest tuna in the world. Now, in reality what happened was that this was a totally cloudy day, it was a little hard to swim with the tuna, it was really cold, and they didn’t mention that it took like an hour and a half on the boat to get out there and we really only swam with the tuna for 10 or 15 minutes.

So, this is something that you can read about what that experience is like in advance. You can also ask for a little more information, but this is probably the amount of information that you’re going to get on your eventual actual itinerary. Likewise, this visit to the Apiarian Center where they have bees and they had a really nice internal thing where they showed you the bees’ lifecycle and had different honey you could taste, but then they also had you go out and be with bees. For instance, I’m allergic to bees. If they told me that we were going to go out and be with bees in advance or if it said that here, I would have totally told them. But it just sounds like it’s a very educational thing. So, it’s important to look out for anything on your itinerary that you might be allergic to, unable to do for health reasons or injuries or anything like that.

For instance, this didn’t happen, but it says Discovering the Delta Natural Park. Sometimes, to a PR person, it could be clear that this is kayaking. They could write this and think that it’s 100 percent clear to anybody that you would explore the Delta in a kayak, but they don’t actually ever say “kayak” in here. So, again, this is the kind of thing where it might not say it, but you do need to make sure that anything that you can’t do doesn’t gum up the works once you actually get on the ground.

So, for instance, this bee thing was hilarious. They made me kind of wait by the bus and watch everybody so that I could see it. So, I was kind of looking with my zoom lens from far away and then as they started coming back, they were like “Oh my God, Gabby! Run on the bus, the bees are following us!” So, they were all coming back in their bee suits and I was



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hiding in the back of the bus. So, these things can happen and they can be handled, but it's much better if you can figure them out in advance.

So, someone has a question over here: "How do you avoid going on a trip with many people and those participants stealing your idea or just having many people with the same article idea?" So, let me get to this when I talk about follow-up. But in small answer to that, as you'll see on this itinerary in particular and also the Long Island one, we were here for three days and we did quite a few different things. So, the likelihood that you'll be on a trip with every single person publishing an article either focusing on every single one of these things or who comes from the same geographic area as you — usually when they pick the trip they try to spread these things out to avoid that issue — it's usually pretty small.

So, on this trip for instance to go back to what I was saying about things that you might not know about that you need to look at on an itinerary and ask about before you get there, is like nautical activity. So, here's a time where they said that we're going to, but they don't actually even quite say. They say "One of the elegant ways to enjoy the waters is on the board of a sailing ship, letting the wind do all the work. Allows for an unforgettable panorama view of the Delta." So, does this make you think we're going to be on a sailing ship, that we are going to sail ourselves as in be running the sails, or that there will be sailing involved?

None of them, but in the end, we were just on a boat with the motor running and we didn't actually sail and we went to the mussel bed and had champagne. So, we didn't really get a tour of the mussels. We didn't really actually get to sail, so sometimes there's some really nice marketing writing in your itinerary and that's the kind of thing that again, whenever you finally get your hands on the itinerary, you want to ask as many questions about it as possible to make sure that whatever article ideas you have are in fact, possible.

So, let's skip forward to the Lake Placid one. So, this one like I said, and you'll see this from the concept of suggested evening activities and potential stops at, this is more of the type of itinerary you'd get when you're traveling by yourself in an early stage itinerary no less, of different things that you could be doing during your trip. And what happened in the actual instance of this trip was that we all checked in totally differently and then we were just on our own, similar to the other hotel tour, for a few hours and I think I did take a stroll around this and maybe also go to the main street and then I still had time to spare. And they said "Dinner at Generations" which is the hotel restaurant or another local establish and it ended up that there was a dinner at the hotel, but the time just wasn't listed on our itinerary.

So, this is the kind of itinerary that anytime you get anything like this, it's important to realize that sometimes you do completely have time to yourself like on that Dubai itinerary I



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showed you. And sometimes things have changed and they have actually decided which one of these things is going to happen and just not told you. So, when you see something that's vague like this, it's always important like I said, to be checking in at different stages before you get physically to the trip to make sure that if decisions have been made, they're the decisions that you would've wanted, or that you at least know about them so that you know that you need to show up dinner at 7:00.

Now, this one I wanted to pinpoint again because this is a very different itinerary in terms of including things that are very specific to one slice of the travel industry. So, as you look through this itinerary, you'll see that it's very, very detailed. You know, we get picked up at this time, when we go on our half-day program we see this person at this time, this person at this time, this person at this time, this person at this time. So, this is another really good example of a lot of different presentations/demonstrations or meetings. So, here's where we have a site visit. A site visit is one of these walkthroughs where you're in a hotel, a convention center, a museum, a historic home, something like that and they are showing you, not a tour, not like a historic tour, not somebody who's telling you stories, but they are showing you the venue from the view of somebody who is writing about it as an industry professional as a review.

So, anytime you see site visit, that's what that means. Going through further on this itinerary, you'll see that while the first day had a nice bit of detail, it kind of starts to drop off. So, like we check in we have a site inspection, we can grab a bite or a few bites to eat on the North Shore, explore Waikiki on our own. It starts to get very vague and so when you see itineraries like this where some things are quite specific and some things are quite vague, that can be a bit of a warning sign. It can mean that the person organizing the tour is still in the middle of organizing this stuff and it'll be set up later. It can also be a warning sign maybe that this part of the tour is very funded and this day of the tour is not funded by anybody. It means all sorts of different things, but when you see this kind of waving back and forth in the level of detail and the specificity of where you're going and what you're doing, that's always something that you want to drill down and ask more questions about because similar to the Dubai itinerary that we talked about, these empty spots can and should be filled with things that will help your stories to make the most of your time.

So, this last itinerary. I don't want to spend too much time showing you because I would just love for you to read it on your own so that you can see how incredibly crazy this itinerary was, but one thing that this itinerary does do really well is that it gives lots of great background information about each of the places that we're going to visit, potential story angles, and what's interesting about it. However, the fact that that creates so much space between the different times on the itinerary makes it a little bit difficult to tell just how crazy this itinerary was.



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For instance, anytime there's a 7:00 a.m. and you don't actually need to drive anywhere that far that day, that's a bit of a warning sign that your day is crazy and that they're trying to stuff an unreasonable number of things in there. So, we ended up this day, I think we got home at 11:30. So, we had to skip doing the outlets, all of this stuff got completely pushed back, we went to dinner maybe at 7:00 or 8:00 at this thing that was supposed to be at 7:25 and then we got back at 11:30 because there was also beer tasting going on during the dinner. So, then they pushed the breakfast, they cancelled this theater without telling us they were cancelling the theater, they also cancelled the [ceilings] a bit, and then we went right to this place and we actually had breakfast there. So essentially, this whole thing got cut and they didn't actually even tell us this at dinner. We basically found out when we went to leave the hotel the next morning.

So, when you have an itinerary that's unreasonable, what typically happens is that by the second day it's figured out. Somebody, the handler, the driver, somebody has figured out that it's not feasible and some changes have started to be made. And so, this itinerary is great, like I said, for you to just read when you get a chance. You see 10:30 in one place, 10:45 we're leaving, 11:10 we're somewhere else. We visit all these different places. When you see an itinerary like this, like I said, it's great to have this background information, but it means that you should do yourself, the organizer, and everyone on the trip a favor and try to get them to tone it down in advance.

So, let's pop back over and wrap this puppy up for today by looking at follow up. The thing about following up is that there's two sides to the follow-up. There's the follow-up that you do and the follow-up that the PR person and everybody else that you met on the tour does or may do. So, in terms of what follow-up you should do, it's quite simple. Whoever was your contact, thank them, let them know you'll let them know when the stories come out and pass on your regards more generally. If you had really good conversations, if somebody went out of their way to help you on the tour and you have their contact information, then it's great to send them a small thank you note. But right after the trip, that's really the extent of what you need to do is a small, but sincere, especially if you had a good connection, thank you for the trip and let them know that you will let them know when the stories come out.

Now, it is not uncommon, unheard of, or in any way surprising and you will start to get this if you haven't already, for the PR people to be following up with you to an unreasonable, in terms of publication timelines degree. There's people who I have seen follow up in the middle of a trip with print journalists to ask when the story will be out. And not only did they follow up to ask when the story was going to be out, they gave us as two different points in the trip, extraordinarily long questionnaires that they wanted us to fill out about the experience.



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Now, if you're having us as consultants on your trip to evaluate your destination, they we are consultants evaluating your destination and should be paid as such. If you are having us as writers who are there to write about your destination, then that is where you see the feedback unless we feel like we need to talk to you about it in advance. So, if you have somebody who is expecting you to do something that's additional type of work, so to say, on your trip, you need to kind of explain to them that's not what you do, that's not what you're there for, and it's not correct for you to be giving you feedback to them in this way because you're going to be creating an editorial publication and they will find out about it then.

But these days, and you may have heard this, people don't tend to write negative things in travel writing and it's not because of shilling or because things are sponsored. It's because people who are traveling, the end reader, they're not really interested in hearing about the bad things that happened on your trip. They want to be inspired to go places and hear about what they should do places. And so, editors will usually tell you not to even waste your words writing negative things, but what can happen is not only is the PR person following up with you more often than is really prudent/has any bearing on your publication to see if your story is out yet, but you also start to get emails from people on the trip that you've met. Whether it's the owner of the hotel that you gave your business card to or the PR person you gave your email address to or it's the tour guide at the museum or something like that.

I recommend being as clear and as early as you can "Don't call me, I will call you. Thank you so much for this and when there is a story to show you, I will give it to you." And just keep repeating that refrain because the people who are following up with you too frequently are probably doing that with everybody else and annoying the crap out of everybody else and they're not getting repeat visits and good coverage. So, it's a good thing to do for the industry as well as yourself to help these people understand that publications have timelines that you operate within and that you are a freelancer and you are not responsible for those timelines.

Now, a second thing that I just want to touch on really quickly and then I'll let you go, is photos. I had seen this a couple years ago in fact, on that Lake Placid trip that I mentioned, and I really taken aback by it because the person was quite rude to me, that places whether it's venues or destinations are either asking you for the photos that you took while you were there or straight up expecting them. And if any of you guys have had this happen to you, drop it in the chat box because I'm trying to figure out how prevalent this is, but it's kind of become a thing where people will say "Oh, we know that you took such great photos today and we'd love to see them and share them. You can send them to us." And if this has happened to you or if it happens to you in the future, make sure to be really clear that I create content, I create words and pictures and I sell them and that I will be using these photos for publication and if you would like to by a number of them, buy the copyright to them, then



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you may do so. But you can buy the copyright to them and that's not unlimited copyright, it's single-usage.

So, I actually had a person, and this was many years ago on that Lake Placid trip which was really like we might go here and we might go there, you do what you want to do. It was a horse farm or horse training center. I didn't ride the horses, I didn't go near the horses, I didn't do anything with the horses, and she basically demanded my photos because we had been there for an hour and I had to kind of educate her because this was clearly the first time she had ever had journalists come. But this is becoming an increasing thing. And so, particularly if you know you will be taking a lot of photos, if you are specifically a photographer, make sure to clarify this in advance with the venue. You want to let them know that you will be taking photos on the trip, you're not sure if they will include a photographer on the trip, sometimes destinations like the Tourism Board will hire a photographer to go with you on the trip and take photos during the trip that you can use with your stories. And in those cases, they still might ask you for your photos, but it's even more ridiculous because they've paid somebody to take photos for those days and they don't like them and now they want your photos instead.

So, if you know that that's going to be a big piece of what you do, let the person know in advance that you will be taking these photos and they are for your copyright and your editorial use and if they would like to be purchasing those from you that they can do that, but that they shouldn't be expecting that. So, if there's a venue, like I said, that you've gone to along the way, let them know again, and the same thing for editorial use blah, blah, blah and just that you didn't create the itinerary, this was the itinerary that you were given and you weren't told in advance that they would be expecting your photos, but that that's just not possible.

So, don't cave in to this. It's really not a cool thing that people are doing. It's the new type of eroding content rights for writers that deserve to be paid for things. So, don't let them bully you in to having the rights to your photos. If they want to use them in social media, say "Oh, thank you so much. Why don't I post it and then you can re-tweet me?" Period. Make a hard line about it and if any of you feel like you're being really bullied and you can't say no, write me about it. And on that note, I'll get to my email address in a second, but as I mentioned, in the upcoming weeks we've got two other webinars on press trips. Next week, we're going to look at how to prepare for your press trips and not the thing that I talked about today about how to negotiate the itineraries and things like that, but how to set up stories for yourself. How to get that aspect of your press trip preparation done. And because I'm going to be on a flight next week on Thursday, wow that's like two countries from now I can't even imagine, because I'm going to be on a flight next Thursday, we're going to be having the webinar on Wednesday and it's going to be at noon Eastern, 9:00 a.m. Pacific.



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So, mark that down if you want to join us. And then the following week, we're going to be talking about how to do the on the ground work of the press trip. So, we talked about that a little bit. Some folks had questions about how to deal with "that person", but we're going to talk more specifically about how to do those interviews, how to get those stories, how to ask those questions, and how to hip check "that person" out of the way so you can get the photos. I mean, sorry, how to wait patiently and get your photos.

So, thank you so much for joining us and for staying long, so many of you, this week. And again, if someone is bullying about your photos, you write me. This is the hotline just to ask me what to do and I will go lay the smack down from the rest of us on that person.

So, thanks so much for joining us. I'll stick around for questions for a little bit, but like I said, the questions about some of those other topics I'll handle in other weeks and I hope you guys have a great weekend.

And Larry had a great point about the photos. He says "The request for photos is another reason that I always take multiple shots of each things from different angles, even if they are only slightly different. That way I have some that the venue can purchase rights to and still have some that the magazine can use since they normally want more liberal rights for their use of it."

Yeah, and this is another thing about the photos to keep in mind. I've had times where I was on assignment and I was doing the photos for the assignment as well. And often, the magazine and your photo contract might say they're purchasing all rights or some rights to every photo that you've taken during that shoot in which you're under assignment. So, that's another thing to bear in mind as well.