



*Dream of
Travel Writing*

Article Nuts and Bolts: Putting Together a “Postcard”

by Gabi Logan, founder of Dream of Travel Writing

A blurred background image of a coffee shop setting. In the foreground, there is a white cup of coffee on a saucer. To the left, a smartphone is visible. In the background, there is a vase of purple flowers and a white napkin. The text "Today, we're going to talk about..." is overlaid in the center.

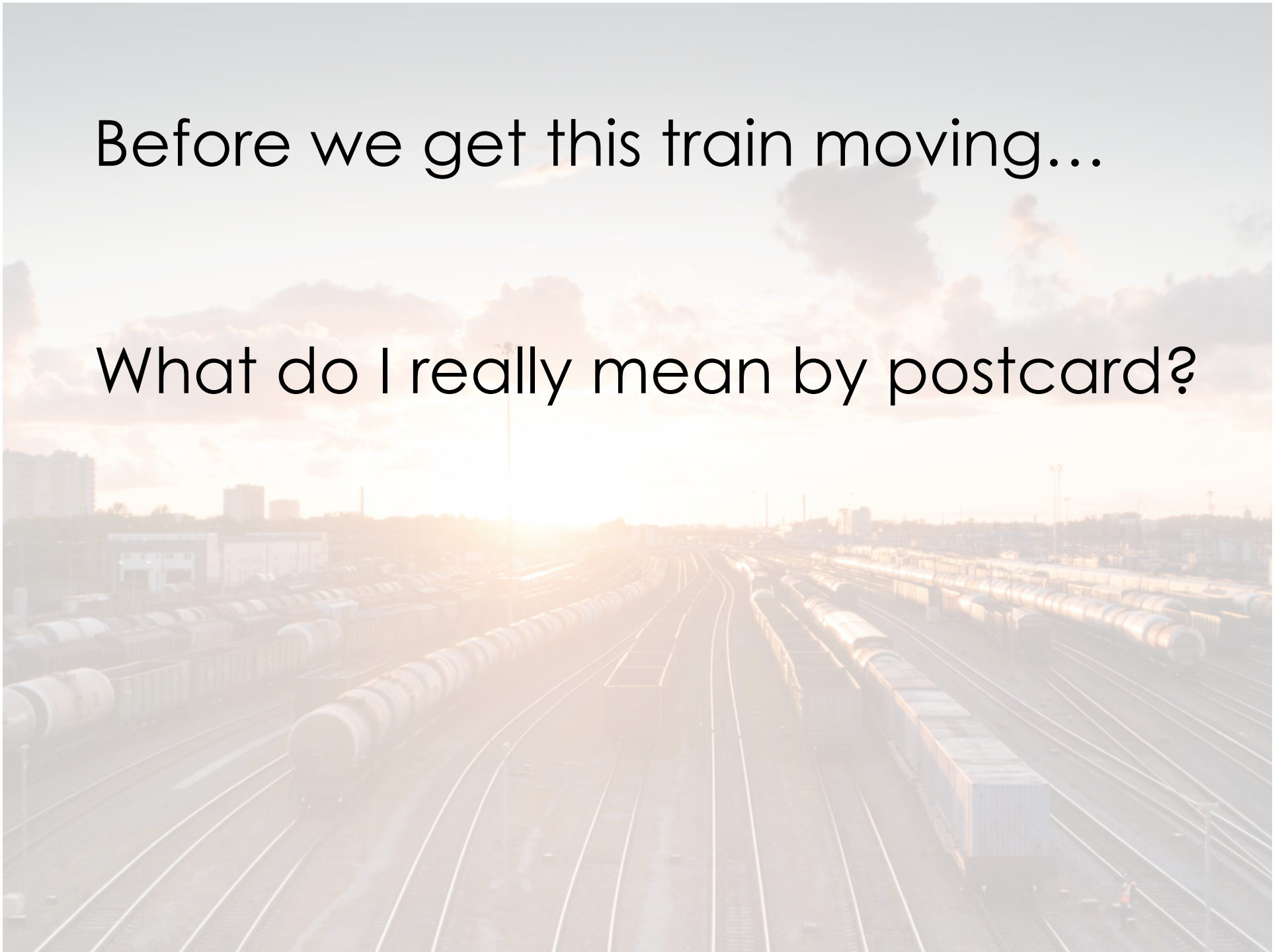
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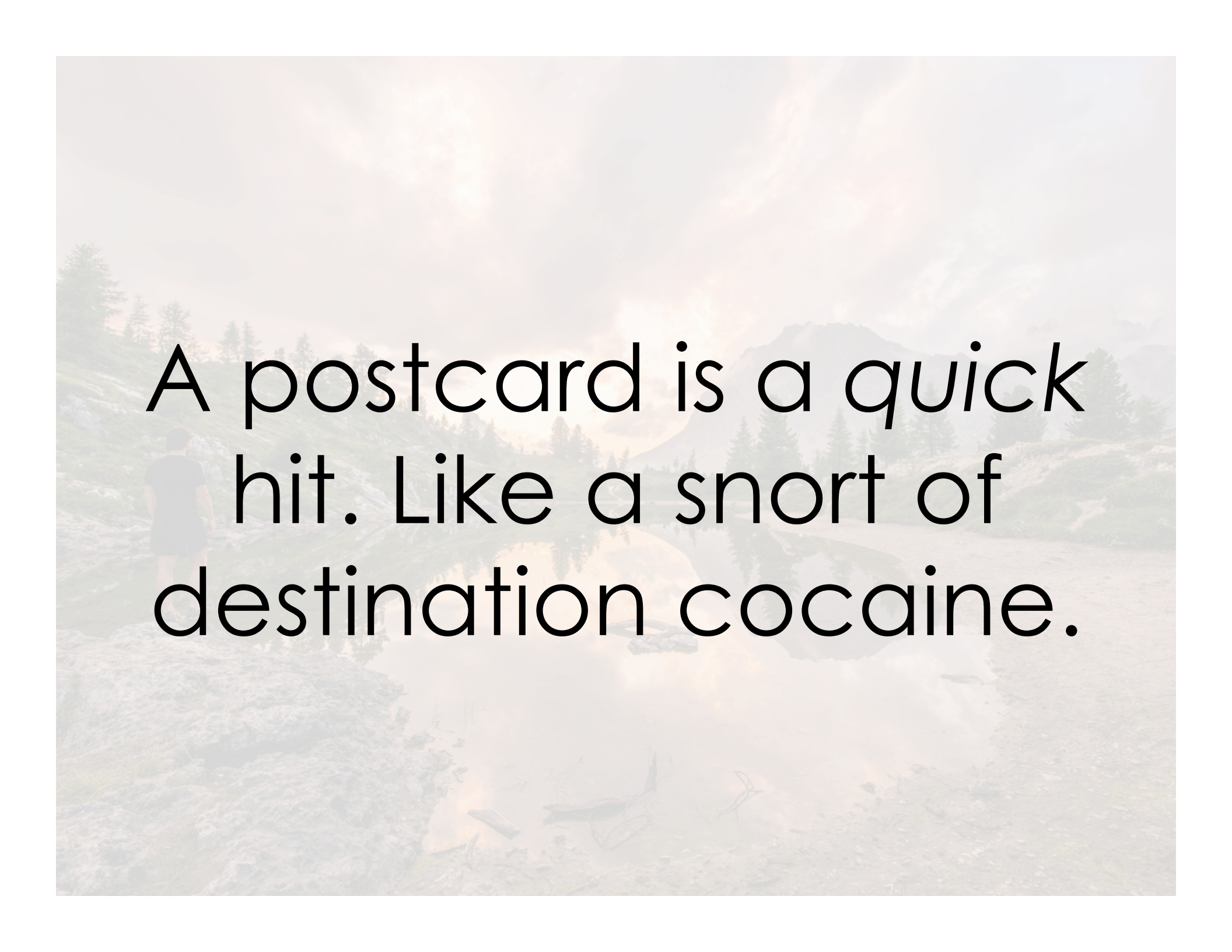
1. What is a postcard really in the writing context?
2. The typical structure of this section and how to create one yourself
3. Real examples of different postcards out in the world
4. How to pitch these pieces



Before we get this train moving...

What do I really mean by postcard?



A person stands on a rocky shore, looking out at a calm lake. The lake's surface is a perfect mirror, reflecting the vibrant colors of a sunset or sunrise over a range of mountains. The sky is filled with soft, golden light, and the mountains are silhouetted against it. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic, typical of a postcard image.

A postcard is a *quick* hit. Like a snort of destination cocaine.



Where Can You Place These Stories?

- The four outlets:
 - Newspapers
 - Some in specified sections
 - Indie magazines
 - These are inherently grab bag publications for the most part
 - Content marketing
 - This is one of the coolest place for these pieces today!
 - Editorial websites
 - International Living specifically publishes these as postcards, but there's many others

The Basic Structure

- These are very short, rarely more than 400 words
- Trajectory
 - Scene
 - Background
 - Scene
- And sometimes there's not even background

That's really it!

SANTA LUZIA, Portugal — Strolling down Santa Luzia's promenade one evening in search of the perfect plate of octopus, I was paralyzed. Which one of the 14 polvo plates at Casa do Polvo Tasquinha should I order?

When my "octopus filet" arrived at the Casa, it was not what I expected. The plate held four tentacle chunks, each at least 1 inch thick and 2 inches wide, delicately breaded in a panko-style crumb and fried to a golden hue that mimicked the sun setting in front of my table.

Furthering my confusion, the "filet" was threaded onto two parallel skewers like a roast luau pig.

When I bit in, I realized the advice I'd gotten from Tamar Welti, founder of nearby Quintamar ecolodge, was dead right. Though I'd come to Santa Luzia for an eco-getaway in the hinterland of Portugal's Algarve coast, spending days by the eco-friendly swimming pond or on the coastal Ecovia Litoral do Algarve bike trail, I had stumbled into octopus paradise.

Octopuses are highly intelligent creatures, but their inquisitive nature lets fisherman entrap them using simple clay jars. Octopuses peek in looking for food or a good nesting or mating area, and they can't slither out.

Fishermen in Santa Luzia have honed their methods, turning their village of just 1,450 inhabitants into Portugal's polvo (octopus) capital.

Santa Luzia is off the tourist path. Even the Ecovia, which meanders along Portugal's southern coast from the Atlantic to the Spanish border, skirts the sleepy town on its way between the Pedras el Ray resort village and the ancient port of Tavira.

Though a small community of British expats has trickled in over the last two decades, the Portuguese have tried hard to keep Santa Luzia to themselves. It's easy to see why.

Days in Santa Luzia revolve around food and sun. To catch the fishermen in action, you need to set out early. Along the combination oceanfront promenade, port and main drag, cafes are happy to welcome you and let you linger over your garoto — strong espresso with milk in a petite glass — for the entire morning. The garoto and a sinfully rich pastry are a steal at barely \$3.

In the afternoon, Santa Luzia becomes a ghost town. After a three-course meal at home or a *prix-fixe* lunch in the shaded back streets for around \$10, locals take a siesta or 10-minute stroll and 5-minute tram to the pristine Praia do Barril beach.

As things cool down, the town slowly awakens. Restaurant owners set up their outdoor tables, arranging each tablecloth, fork and salt shaker at a languid tempo, ignoring early arrivals eager to fill their packed vacation itineraries. Savoring the succulent octopus and the smaller morsels in the rose-tinged risotto underneath, I wished I had more time. Though it's known for its octopus, Santa Luzia is a microcosm of Portugal.

In just one day, you can get a dose of everything: the coast, seafood, intricate tile work, warm hospitality, warmer sun and even fado music. But if you can, don't spend only one day. After all, there are 13 more polvo preparations to try.

Laundry is hanging in vivid, postcard style above bougainvillea-draped walls. Built on one of Lisbon's seven hills, this is Alfama, my favorite Lisbon neighborhood.

Walking through the old *becos*, the slim cobbled alleyways that lead me up and down ancient hills, I hear *fado*, the beautifully melancholic, traditional music of Portugal, from a neighbor's window.

The Portuguese capital is all about romantic views, secret neighborhoods, and faded grandeur. The houses here are clad in intricate tiles to reflect the sun's heat, and it seems as if the city here wears its beauty inside out.

Originally from Texas, I moved into the heart of the old Moorish part of the city at the beginning of 2011, renting a small apartment with a tiny balcony on a narrow street in Alfama. I paid about \$550 a month, and it was the perfect introduction to the city.

Alfama is reminiscent of the North African heritage of southern Spanish cities like Seville and Granada. Lisbon's central neighborhoods sweep down to the old port in elegant boulevards, rebuilt after the 1755 earthquake in an elegant style known as "Pombaline." Into the mix you have late Gothic architecture as well, and the city is home to one of Europe's largest plazas, Terreiro do Paço.

Yellow trams from another era climb slowly past medieval cathedrals, delicious pastry shops, and haphazard stacks of *bacalhau*—dried, salted codfish—outside traditional grocers. My head is constantly turning to take in the rich array of markets and boutiques, esplanades and plazas, *fado* singers and street performers. But there are so many cathedrals around Alfama, around Lisbon, around Portugal—I always know what time it is by the bells.

The city's wild, river-ocean atmosphere has affected the children here so that they never tire, and they rocket up and down these steep hills and stairs, yelling with smiles. Built by the Moors to create natural air conditioning, the buildings in Alfama are clustered together over narrow streets, and the sun has a hard time finding its way into the apartments. Unless you're on the top floor of the building, the interior spaces can be dark.

To combat the lack of indoor sun, locals sun themselves on the *miradouros* ("lookout points"), several of which can be found in Alfama. The people of Lisbon, known as *alfacinhas* ("little lettuces") are proud of the *miradouros* and their cinematic views of the city and the Tagus River. In Alfama I recommend the Portas do Sol, with a nice esplanade and a kiosk selling pastries and coffee.

There is a wonderful rhythm to life in Alfama. Old men gather to smoke every morning at tiny hole-in-the-wall *tascas* ("bar/cafés"). You'll know when you're at an authentic *tasca*—an espresso will cost you just 65 cents



SNAPSHOT

Suri girl, Ethiopia

From the capital, Addis Ababa, it takes three days of hard travel to reach the isolated village of Kibish, in the Omo Valley. I stayed with the Suri people — one of the region's ancient tribes, where piercing, scarification and lip plates are a strong part of the culture. I lived in my tent, under the protection of the tribal leader, and, over time, gained the community's trust and was able to take portraits.

One day, several women and girls came by. One of them was very shy and stood aside. I went to her and said “challi”, which means “hello, how are you?” and took the picture. I didn't ever find out her name, yet in my mind, I still call her Challi.

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How to Pitch These Pieces

- The four outlets:
 - Newspapers
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Thanks so much
for joining us today!

It was a pleasure chatting
travel writing with you 😊

Have a follow up question on this webinar? Email questions@dreamoftravelwriting.com and we'll cover it in an upcoming webinar or in our Monday reader mailbag post on the Six-Figure Travel Writer blog.

