



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts: How to Put Together a “Postcard”

Let's go ahead and get started. This week we're getting back into our “Article Nuts and Bolts” series. So we've done four of these so far. We've talked about mostly smaller things that you find either in the very front of the book or in the departments of a magazine. If you're not familiar, magazines tend to have three major sections, sometimes four. There's the front of the book which is also called “The Front Matter,” which means everything that comes before the features. But editors tend to think the front of book sections that are those short kind of newsy maybe calendar pieces as you see as separate from something called departments. Departments are pieces that tend to have a very specific format. They follow the same format every week, sometimes that's a my city-type piece, where a celebrity will tell you, kind of, their favorite places in the city. It can also be an interview piece, or it can be a city guide, something like that. And those departments are followed by the features, which is followed by something called “The Back Matter” or the back of the book, which can also be short pieces or things are similar to the departments that you saw earlier, but they come after the features.

So in the earlier part of this Article Nuts and Bolts series, we really focused a lot on the things that you see in the front of magazines. But this month, we're gonna be leading into some of those things that you'll see in the feature section, and also types of articles that you can write for other places. So right now we're gonna talk about postcards. So I'd love to hear from you guys in the chat box, how many of you are familiar with the concept of a postcard as relates to writing for print? So I don't necessarily mean writing postcards that you get in the mail. I mean, postcards that you'll see in the magazine or online. So drop that in the chat box if you are familiar with that concept before.

I know some places that teach travel writing might have taught you this as well. So the first thing that we're gonna talk about for those of you who aren't familiar, is what a postcard is in this context, and in the context of professional writing as opposed to postcards that you get in the mail. Because there is some resemblance. And we'll talk about that, and we'll talk about what makes up a good postcard piece.

And as we do that, we're gonna to talk about, of course, the structure because that's what we're doing in these articles nuts and bolts pieces. But, I also have some examples for you guys of very different postcards. I've got one which is for more of a newsletter website context, one which is from a newspaper, and one which is from a magazine. And then we're gonna talk about how you pitch these pieces differently and the different types of sections that they appear. So it seems like a lot of you guys aren't familiar with it, so that's great, because I actually wasn't sure whether or not to include postcards in this list of the webinar topics that we're doing for Article Nuts and Bolts series. But I feel like it's a really great type of piece to have under your belt, because it's something that you can do always. You can do



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them for every trip, and you can do them for every afternoon outing. You can really do them about anything that comes up for you, because they’re very minute.

The topic that you cover is very, very narrow. It’s really the extreme end of a slice of life-type thing. So this is really a great tool technique, tactic, for you to have in terms of writing these types of articles, even if you don’t feel like you’re gonna go out and pitch them tomorrow. It’s a really nice type of piece to know that you can write, that it can be written, that it can be pitched.

So today, we’re talking about postcards, but what do I really mean when I say postcard in the context of writing for magazines? I’d love to hear from you guys. I said a little bit in the newsletter proceeding today’s call in a blog post. But I’d love to hear a little bit from you guys. Have you seen something before that you think might count as some of these postcards? Do you feel like you, kind of, have a sense of what it is? Let me know in the chat box.

So Lisa says she thinks she has. And I may have already called out Lisa on an earlier webinar. She’s somebody who’s come to one of our events in the past, and is really, really lovely and hard working. She left and then within just a month or something, less than a month, I talked to her after and she’d already built up like \$2,000 or more of recurring income for herself. And she wrote me the other day that she got a piece in “USA Today”.

So I know she’s been looking at a lot of newspapers, so that might be why she’s seen some. Marilyn says she’s seen some that are usually a large photo with a one paragraph description. That also happens, yeah. That’s something that people tend to think of it as a little more like a photo essay, but it’s like one photo that’s functioning in the photo essay rather than a series of photos. So, great. So I think that’s all the time we’re gonna get on that.

So when I talk about postcards in the context of writing about travel, now, postcards as you’re gonna see, we’re gonna talk about this in a little bit, postcards aren’t something that just appear in newspapers or in magazines, or even just in editorial websites. They can also appear in content marketing applications. And, in fact, that is one of the coolest reasons that I recommend people who really like to write, but will also care about money, get into content marketing, because there’s actually a lot of space to write these really beautiful pieces. But the thing is that a postcard as a piece is, like I mentioned earlier, an incredibly narrow slice of a destination on the one hand.



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So you have to think of something very specific, something very narrow, but it's also has to be very atmospheric, very descriptive, very evocative. Evocative is really the word that I think of when I think of postcards. They need to be something where in a tiny space, in a small space, not a lot of words, you get people to feel something, you get people to picture something, to imagine something, to want to be somewhere. So like I said, we're gonna talk about how this relates to the obvious postcards that we think of, right? Which are the postcards that you put in the mail, the “Wish You Were Here” type things.

Now, it's interesting, because obviously, this type of piece is called a postcard for a reason. And it's called a postcard because it does have a lot to do with the postcards of yore. I mean, I know people sometimes who still send postcards. So they're not an entirely, you know, extinct species, just a little bit endangered. But, I want you to think of postcards, maybe that you have received in the past, or postcards that you might see in a museum. You know, sometimes we go to these museums that historic museums. For instance, I went to the Titanic Museum, and they had a whole exhibit on the post office in the Titanic and how they were handling mail being brought across the country, and also how they deliver mail to people who are on the ship.

And this idea of letter-writing or postcard-writing from back more like in the 1800s or the early one 1900s or something, right? People used to write these letters and postcards where they were really trying to convey to their reader, to their friend, to their family, to whoever that they were writing to, where they were, or what it was like, what they were feeling. And they had this small space, usually bounded by whatever postage they were gonna pay, because who knows how far this thing was going, and it used to be the postcards, because they were kind of just one-sided and flat had a lower postage rate than letters.

So people used to use these postcards, or even as well letters, to really try to convey to the recipient in as little space as possible what the place is like, how they felt about it, all of these things. And for those of you, I know Alana who just chimed in in the chat box also has a degree in literature as well, for those of you who have a literary background, these are things that you might have read as part of literature. Like there's a lot of books that I like to read about Italy in different places which were originally letters that the author wrote to somebody, or that had that vein. They wrote it as a letter. And this type of writing is called epistolary writing. I'll write it in the chat box, because it's a really weird word, epistolary writing. I actually took a course on this when I was younger. So writing in the form of a letter, that's called epistolary writing.

So when I talk about postcards for us as a journalistic technique as a type of writer, I'm not specifically talking about epistolary writing. I'm not specifically saying that your piece at the top should says, “Dear so and so.” But I want you to imagine that it has this sense that if you



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were to tell somebody who was very dear to you what you love about a place or what most struck you about a place, what would that be? And I feel like we write these less to the people that we know today, because we tend to be sharing things on in the setting of like a Facebook or something like that, or perhaps we just have an album somewhere where we upload all of our photos and our family can check them out. Maybe it's on our Facebook, or maybe we're using Snapchat or something like that.

So I feel like today people tend to convey to their friends and family what's going on with themselves in their place and their travels through photos, right? And so, a couple of people had mentioned that they've seen sections in magazines where it's like a photo and then some text underneath. So that is kind of in line with the old fashioned type of postcard that you'll see here on the screen, right? Because they have these photos, like here's this photo of the beach or the pineapple or of the high grade. So it used to be that when you sent a postcard in the mail, somebody would have a picture, and then the text will accompany it.

And in some cases, in postcards today, you'll still have that. Like if you're writing for a newspaper or something like that, then you'll have a photo and you'll have text to accompany it. But I remember I was in a writing workshop a few years back, and they asked us to share a piece of writing. And I shared a postscript, a piece that I had written, that had already been published in the newspaper. It wasn't something that I was working on. And I remember the lead, sort of, instructor saying... not necessarily that he didn't understand but asking a question, kind of, related to something way back up at the top in the very beginning of the piece. And I said, “Oh, well, there's a photo there. There's a photo that explains that.”

And he said to me, “Okay, but you have to write like there's not a photo. You can't assume that there's a photo with the writing.” So the way that I like to think of postcard pieces, as you can imagine that you are creating both the photo and the back that goes with your postcard. So you're creating that descriptive depiction image and that's usually the first thing they see, when people get your postcards, right? Is they look at the picture, the check out the picture, they have thoughts about the picture, and then they go and look for your explanation about it.

So that's what we're trying to achieve with postcards here, is that we're trying to include both the picture that we draw with our words as well as what we would write on the back of the postcard. So I mentioned this a little bit earlier, but I wanna talk for a minute about where you can place these stories, because you might be really surprised, because these seem, as I've heard a lot of people say, these seem like literary writing, kind of, like in quotes, like “highbrow literary writing,” right, because they're very atmospheric, they're very descriptive. I've heard a lot of you that I have interacted with in the past, including some of you that I know who are on the webinar right now, say like, “Oh, gosh. Like I can't write. I



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don't know how to do travel writing. Like I'm a trained writer. I write for my current career, like I wanna get into travel writing, but I just don't know how to do that kind of thing.” And when I ask them what they mean they say that descriptive, flowery kind of thing. And I tell them, “Well, that's great, because I spent all sorts of time trying to get people to stop doing that.”

But postcards are the one place where you do, or where you do really kind of dive into that description. And so for those of you that feel a bit nervous about that, I have good news which is that it's actually much, much easier than you think, and we are gonna look at a few different examples. I've got three examples for you guys of different pieces, but you'll see that the description that goes in these postcard pieces, it's all talking about something that's in front of you. And you don't have to, and you probably shouldn't use these big words, right? Because a lot of, you'll see this in websites that you might write for, you'll see when you're writing in Microsoft Word, people care about the reader level.

So a good description isn't necessarily gonna be something that uses great big evocative words, which the word in and of themselves has a complex meaning that conveys all these things. It's about the details that you choose to share. Adding colors, adding sense of smell, adding sounds, that's what creates this evocative type of writing. So who publishes that? Right? So I've mentioned newspapers a couple times, and I mentioned them in the prelude to today's webinar. And that's because newspapers are one of the best places still today for this type of writing with some caveats.

So newspapers are kind of the Wild West. Let me know in the chat box. Have any you guys tried to pitch newspapers before? I'm really curious about this. So we're actually...one of the things that I'm meeting today in London about is starting to add newspapers to the travel magazine database, and how that works, and how you guys would go about pitching newspapers and what you need to know about that. And I have actually just had a request from one of the main travel writing associations to use our database for their readership, to sort of make it something exclusively for them. And one of the first things that the guy asked for was about newspapers. And it's so interesting to me, because I'm seeing a lot of you guys say, no you haven't pitched a newspaper. Somebody said, “Yes, without success.” Somebody says yes, she's pitched a local one. A lot of people just don't think about pitching newspapers.

Stacey, who I've been interacting with for a few years says, yes, she's had success pitching newspapers. Somebody say they won't take anything from a press trip. That's very, very, very true. And there's somebody who follows us but I don't know if she is on the webinar today, who has written for quite a while now for “The Wall Street Journal”. And then she just asked them a question one day. She had been invited on a press trip, she'd never been invited on a



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press trip before. She didn't know, kind of, what the protocol was, or if she could go on it or anything. And so asked the Wall Street Journal, she said, “Hey, I received this invitation. Like, is this allowed? Like how does this work or something like this.” And they basically ghosted her, actually.

So newspapers, as someone very astutely mentioned, tend to be very, very, very skittish around the topic of press trips. People may have famously heard that the “New York Times” doesn't work with anybody who's taken a press trip before, and the specifics of that is that it doesn't work with anyone who's taken a press trip within the past three years. And they run a background check, and I'm not quite sure how that reveals if you've been on a press trip, but they also don't work with people who have a history of regularly taking press trips before that.

The “LA Times” also take things from press trip. There's varying policies across different newspapers. I think that the British publications are fine with press trips from the people that I've talked to, but I think a lot of people don't not pitch newspapers because of this press trip thing. I think people don't pitch newspapers because they don't think about them really as viable places for stories. They don't really know what a newspaper is looking for, and they've heard that you have to, for newspapers, write the whole piece in advance and submit it rather than pitching. And they don't even know if newspapers really pay anymore.

So, there's a lot of reasons that newspapers, or that people, freelance writers, wouldn't be pitching stuff today. And Lisa has a great one here. She says she was told there was no freelance budget. I remember a few years back, there was this really lovely editor of “The Toronto Star” for several years, and I happened to email her about something, and he told me that he was leaving. And so I emailed the new person who was taking his place, and he looks like... What's the guy that runs the Virgin Airlines? Richard Branson. This guy looks like Richard Branson and he's got this like sassy, long, white hair flowing in a picture of his head shot, which looks like he's got a fan in front of him. And he was telling me, “No, no, We don't pay for freelancers anymore.” And then very shortly after that, I saw that he posted on a site looking for writers for stories. And I said, “Hey, you just told me that you don't pay for freelance pitchers. Like what is this thing are you paying for?” He said, “Oh, yeah, that's advertorial.”

And so, then, trying to be a good little journalist pitcher, I went and looked at what they had had in their advertorial in the past, and I looked at how they couch it to the people who are paying for the advertorial, and then I came back and sent him some pitches. And or I, kind of, told him like, you know, “Are you looking for something like this?” And he said, “No. We want heart. We want drama. We want...” He was like, you know, a director in a bad movie about like a play all gone wrong, like with the directors like hopping around acting out the



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roles for somebody. So in newspapers, just like with other content marketing, which we’ll talk about, there is a place for these type of pieces on the editorial side, but also surprisingly and interestingly, on the content marketing side.

So, someone said typical newspaper editor. So I’ve met some really savvy, very, very cool newspaper editors. I think most people these days are very down to earth, because they’re fearing for their jobs all the time. But in terms of the cool things that are happening with newspapers on the non-editorial side where you can write these nice postcards, there’s just some very cool stuff coming out of their, I think call them content studios usually. “The Washington Journal” has a big content studio now.

And the idea that brands have, when they come to a newspaper or a magazine, or particularly newspapers is that they know that their advertising works like advertising, and that they’re not looking for advertising. They’re looking for a story that readers will really get into and really love, that often has a very, very, very little to do with the brand. I heard about a really amazing one, which isn’t exactly travel-related, but I can’t remember if it’s a fridge or freezer, but the brand is called Sub Zero, and they did this huge project all around food waste. They had like this amazing reported piece and infographics, I think they also did a video. And you don’t think of that as being an ad for a freezer.

So there’s often a lot of quite well-paid opportunities to do advertorials, but as a postcard, not as this really boring, kind of copywriting, content writing type thing. But there’s also opportunities for postcards in newspapers as stories. And newspapers do not pay as little as you would think. I would say, “Don’t be expecting necessarily a dollar a word, but don’t be expecting less than 50 cents a word if you’re looking at a newspaper with national distribution.” So in each country the newspapers that have a national discussion are bit different. But if you’re looking at a paper, which is either like the local alt magazine that’s actually on newsprint, or you’re looking at, someone had mentioned like the “Courier Journal” has their freelance budget now. These regional papers that are smaller, that don’t have like national distribution, those ones tend to have very little/no freelance budget. So that’s not a place where I would be looking to pitch these stories.

But, anyway, it’s better click for you if you’re pitching these to like the “SF Chronicles” and “LA Times” and “New York Times” or “Wall Street Journal”’s of the world. So I have definitely been paid, I would say in the like 70 or 80 cents a word section for newspapers. And one thing to keep note of though is that even though you actually can pitch a story to a newspaper before you write it, having them pay for your expenses is a different animal. So newspapers are not necessarily a place where you can pitch them before a trip and get the pitch approved and go on the trip and come back. Everything that you submit to a newspaper will be on speculation, which means that they’ll have to see it and then tell you if they can



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publish it. And I found a really, really well-reasoned argument about this from the very fantastic editor of the “LA Times”.

So what she basically said is like every day for her is like a fight, and in the, she said she never knows what’s going on bureaucratically and administratively. But she can’t have people who are not employees of her paper who have signed their code of contact, who, you know, they’re liable for going around and right saying and representing themselves as writing for her paper. For her, it’s a big legal liability issue about how the brand is being represented or if something happens to that person on a trip, it reflects on them. So she can, no matter how much she likes, you know, no matter how well she knows you, or no matter how many of your pieces she published in the past, she can tell you like relatively shortly, like, yeah, that sounds great. Like go on the trip, write it up, and spin it to me when you come back. But she cannot give you an actual assignment before you go, before you file the piece. So this is something that newspapers just work differently, but it’s not that they don’t pay, and it’s not that they don’t have call for your stories. And the last webinar in April, we’re gonna talk about another type of story that’s really great for newspapers besides postcards.

And, like I said, we’re gonna start adding those to the database as well. So if you’re interested in getting into newspapers, there’s a couple more ways to learn about that. But let’s get back into the specifics of the postcard pieces we’re talking about today. So I know some of you who are here in the webinar today either have the travel magazine database, or you have had it in the past. But let me know in the chat box if you’re familiar with what I mean when I say independent magazines. And I’ll explain a little bit more right now while I’m waiting for your responses about how these postcard pieces work for independent magazines. But in the meantime, let me know in the chat box if you know what I mean by independent magazines and then I’ll explain in some more detail.

So independent magazines, as you may have seen in the database, function really differently from what I talked about at the top of the call. At the top of the call, I talked about how magazines have this front of book, and then they have the features, they have back of the book. And as part of front of book, they have these departments that are very specifically outlined sections, that are the same every month, they follow the exact same format.

Now, independent magazines, by and large, I would say, gosh probably only three or four that I’ve seen that are quite structured. So independent magazines tend to just be all features. They might have a couple different types of features that they do, but they tend to just be filled completely with these “features”. But what that really means, and we break out each of these different articles types in the database when we talk about them, what that really means is that they might take photo essays, they might take first person stories, they might take third person reported stories, they may take stories that are more essays and features.



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They tend to have some different types of stories that they take. And one of the things that I've seen that was really surprising is that even though a lot of these magazines think of themselves as all features, they also do have a number of pieces that run like 500 words, or maybe shorter, or maybe 700 words, where they're expecting you to get something, let's call it feature caliber from their viewpoint, out. But what they're really looking for is a postcard. So independent magazines for those of you who aren't familiar, these are magazines, they tend to be on very thick paper, like really, really, lovely beautifully laid out publications. They don't usually come out monthly. They typically come out either quarterly, sometimes every six months, maybe annually. But they're just stunning and they have really fantastic storytelling, and they're started by people who are really passionate about telling a specific type of story.

And some of them don't pay at all, because they're quite new and they're trying to figure themselves out, and some of them do pay and they pay quite, you know, well for what they do in terms of, I think that there's two that are published in the same place that I know that pay about 700 words for a piece that's like 1200 or 1500 words if I'm not mistaken. So the pay is not shabby especially because they give you a lot of latitude to write these really lovely stories. And with these Indy Magazines, they are often not things that you would ever know about unless you're lucky enough to live in a city where they have a store that sells these magazines, kind of like an art magazine store.

So we've really made a big push over the last few years to get a lot of them in the database so you have access to them. They're just great places for these types of stories. And so they're great for features, but like I said, they're really great for postcards as well. They've got a lot of these short pieces. Now, content marketing, I know it sounds weird that we're talking about these atmospheric, short, like descriptive evocative literary pieces, and that that's content marketing writing. But secretly, this is what people are looking for. Last night here in London, I was meeting with somebody who has a book coming out soon on brand storytelling. Brand storytelling is such a huge, huge buzzword right now. Everybody wants to tell stories rather than just have content. Everyone wants evocative writing that motivates the people reading it to have a feeling about the brand, rather than just to know about the brand.

So with content marketing in terms of travel, the way to use these postcards is when you are doing work for something like a tour company, or a destination, something that covers destinations. So there's not necessarily a ton of other companies that might be. If this is a product-oriented company, it might be a little hard to do these postcard-type pieces. So this is more reading directly for a tourism board or a Convention Visitors Bureau, or writing for a company that has tours in a certain destination.



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So, for instance, when I used to do these content marketing gigs for tour companies or travel concierge specialists, something like that, this would be one of the pieces that I would include in my proposal, that once or twice a month, we would do these postcard pieces. And if you have my book, in the back of the book in the appendix there's some proposals for different types of gigs. And you'll see that I propose these postcard pieces, that I propose them as around 600 words. And the idea for a company like that of these postcard pieces is say it's a company that does tours in the Cotswolds, the Cotswolds are this really lovely area, they're called an area of outstanding natural beauty, there's these wonderful little towns.

So you could have, on your blog, on your website, your itineraries of the tours that you do, you could have, you know, top 10 posts of the cutest villages in the Cotswolds. Or at least in addition to that, you could have these short pieces where it's really easy for people to read online, because it's not that long, but it just gives them this compelling sense of place, this incredible sense of like, “Wow, I wanna be there.” And that drives business for that tour company so much better. So that's what I mean about these postcards in this content marketing context.

Now, the other place you'll see these is on editorial websites. So when I say content marketing, I'm talking about when you are writing for a company on its website. But editorial websites, what I mean is more like something in the online magazine category, or something like a blog. So I do know some people who have their own personal blog where they aim to write things that are more, like what you would consider like a magazine feature or a postcard, than what you would think of as a usual blog post.

But there's also websites that commission these type of postcard pieces from people. So one specifically, and I'm gonna show you one of these later, and so that's why you put the name in here. They also use them in their newsletter, and they are quite short the ones that they use, I would say they're maybe between 250 or 300 and like 450 words is “International Living” publishes them in their newsletter. And they tend to have a relatively strong sales angle. At the end, after the postcard that's written by the person.

But ones that you'll see on most websites of an editorial nature won't necessarily be in the email where they say, “Read this email, and then go read our full issue to find out more,” as is the case with the “International Living” one that we'll see later. But they tend to be things more like what I was talking about with the independent magazines. They tend to be websites that are doing just some really lovely destination content. Their goal is just really to be showing that sense of place and atmosphere. And they are looking for these short sections, not necessarily because there's not space but more because of the attention spans of readers and how things work online today.



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So, that being said, what is the subject of...or sorry, the structure of the usual postcard? You hear me mention a couple of different word counts, and one of the ones that I'm gonna show you later, I think it's like 75 words. Postcards can and should be very short for best results. I think the ones that I'm gonna show you today are... this one is like 75 words, one that I think is around 450 and another one which is maybe like 250. So the idea is that in a very, very small space, but not like we do in a news brief, in a front of book thing which is equally short, we're trying to tell you everything about a place. In a very small space, you want to show them how the place makes them feel, or give them a glimpse enough about a place so that they can have a feeling about it.

And the trajectory is much different in terms of how sort of short it is for these pieces than others. And it really relates back to what I told you about that postcard analogy. So usually when people pick up a postcard, they look at the picture on the front, and then they flip it over and look at the back. And on the top of that postcard when they say, “Hey, you know, I'm writing from so and so. Like our trip here has been going this and that and the other thing.” And then there's another bit down towards the bottom of the postcard where they tell you what they think of the place. They tell you how they feel about the place, they say like it's changed their life or something like that.

So that's our trajectory of these written postcards as well. They start with a scene, they give background, and then they go back to the scene and they tell you what the takeaway, what takeaway from this experience. What's the point of them writing you? What do they want you to know? And you'll see, especially in the really short one that I'm gonna show you, that sometimes that background is also not there. But the piece is so short and so concise that they're just showing you something and having you take what they want you to take from it, just from that sentence, just from the text.

So I know this is super tiny, so I'm gonna read it to you, right. So I'm going to pop over my screen and read it from here, so it you won't be able to see the chat box for one second. So this piece is from the “Dallas Morning News”, and like I said, this one is the longer one, this is around 450 words. So I'm kind of going in order with the ones that I'm presenting with you today. So we're gonna go from long to short, so you can see how the things that we talk about start to get crunched over time into a smaller and smaller space.

Okay, so this because it's in a newspaper, it's got this head where it says the specific city and the country. So here's the story, “Strolling down Santa Luzia's promenade one evening in search of the perfect plate of octopus, I was paralyzed. Which one of the 14 Polva plates at Casa do polva Tasquinha should I order? When my “octopus filet” arrived at the Casa, it was not what I was 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



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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 realize the advice I had gotten from Tamar Weiti, 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.”

So you’ll see here we’ve switched. So we had going on about, we had that scene, we had that postcard. So you could almost think, and, of course, because this was a newspaper piece that came with some pictures, you can almost think that the front of that postcard, to continue our postcard analogy, would have the picture of this octopus plate, right? But instead here we’ve done it with words. And we’ve explained a little bit also, you know, about being paralyzed, but there’s a little bit of background kind of slunk in here. But this especially with the description of the octopus filet and how wide it is and breaded, that’s more of that picture, okay?

So then we get it further into the background. So we’ve had a little bit of background about how... sorry. We’ve had a little bit of background about how the author got here, but then we have more background about, again, not the whole destination. That this specific slice, this specific thing that is the focus of this article, which is the octopuses. So it goes on.

“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 then they can’t slither out. Fishermen in Santa Luzia have honed their methods, turning their village of just 1,450 inhabitants into Portugal’s Polva (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 town 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 garata-strong espresso with milk in a petite glass-for the entire morning. They garata and a sinfully rich pastry are a steal at barely \$3.



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“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 a 10-minute stroll and a 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 fada music. But if you can, don’t spend only one day. After all, there’s 13 more polvo preparations to try.”

So you’ll see that there was that background, like I said, which was the background of how the writer got here, and the background of the octopus. But then, there’s a bit more information about the destination, because this piece, like I said, this is the longer one. So you’ll see what starts to get cut when the pieces get shorter, which is why I wanted to show them to you in this order. So, like I said, we talk about the octopuses, and then it goes into some information about the Santa Luzia town. And it also gives, if you notice, it gives you, kind of, like a 24 hours of what to do here, right? And says, “You start here, you have a lunch, you go to this beach, but it doesn’t say, “Do this, do this, do this, do this.” It’s not kind of set up in that 48-hours, 24-hours, 36-hours format. It’s more through this descriptive lens, designed rather than telling you what to do to help you to imagine yourself doing it.

So, like I said, this is the long-version. And if this was shorter, it would probably wrap up here with, you know, “Savoring this, I wish I had more time. Though it’s known for its octopus, Santa Luzia is a microcosm of Portugal.” It could end right there, but because it’s longer and it has a space, there’s a little bit more of a conclusion here telling you, you know, all the different things that you can get there, but don’t spend just one day, because there’s 13 more preparations to try.

Now, this next one that I have for you, it’s probably gonna be even smaller on your screens. So this one, like I said, I think is about 250 or maybe 300 words. And this one’s just, ironically, these were the ones that I picked, because they were the best examples of this, this one also takes place in Portugal. This one takes place in Lisbon, okay?

So she says, the writer begins, “Laundry is hanging in vivid postcard style...” Sorry that was a funny pun that she also says postcard style, “above bougainvillea draped walls. Built on one of Lisbon’s seven hills, this is Alfama, my favorite Lisbon neighborhood. Walking



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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.”

So you’ll see here that she’s done something interesting that I hear people ask about regularly, which is how do you incorporate foreign words. And in the last piece, in the octopus piece, you know, it said “polvo” is the word for octopus and it made it really clear that it was about octopus, and then “garoto” which was the word for the espresso, and it would say the word and then explain them. So that tends to be how these things are used. But you’ll see later down, she incorporates some different methods for this which is that she puts it in parentheses and quotation marks, and then she starts to reuse some of these words that you’ve already seen without explaining them again.

So she continues, “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 the old part in elegant boulevards rebuilt after the 1755 earthquake in an elegant style known as “Pambaline”. Into the mix, you have late Gothic architecture as well, and the city is home to one of Europe’s largest plazas, Terreiro do Paco.”

Now, I wanted to say, I had mentioned earlier for those of you who are, you know, nervous about incorporating description, or feel like it something that you don’t know how to do or that you don’t know how to choose, you’ll see there’s two totally different styles of description between this piece that we’re looking at now and the piece that we looked at earlier. The description that she’s using here, it’s a very, you might almost say it’s kind of general, it’s almost guide-booky, right?

So she’s saying, you know, that the neighborhoods sweep down, and the boulevards that were rebuilt at this time, there are some Gothic architecture. But that’s because this description here it’s not in the postcard part, right? The postcard part was where she was talking about the slim-cobbled alleyways that lead me up and down the ancient hills. And you’ll see the



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same thing over here. So in the previous piece when the author was talking in the beginning in that picture part of the postcard, you know, there was a lot of specific detail about the breaching and what not. But then, you know, talking about the octopuses, there’s not so much detail here.

You know, it doesn’t say like the purple octopuses with their, you know, four-foot long, tentacles, you know, it doesn’t go into that kind of detail here, because we’ve switched. We’ve gone from the picture painting part to this more background part. And so, the nice thing about that is that if you feel a little nervous about your description, there’s only a bit of these pieces where you really need to do it in super, super deep detail. And then you kind of pull back the lens a little bit in order to cover more ground. And that’s the part that we’re in now.

So she goes on. “Yellow trams from either era climb slowly past medieval cathedrals, delicious pastry shops, and haphazard stacks of bacahau- 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.”

So that’s one of those examples where I was saying that if you wanna add things not just you’re seeing, you wanna add also things you’re hearing, that you’re smelling, that you’re tasting, things like that.

“The city’s wide, 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 Miradoures (lookout points). several of which can be found in Alfama. The people of Lisbon, known as alfacinhas, little lettuces, are proud of the Miradoures, and their cinematic views of the city and the Tagus River in Alfama recommend the Portas do Sal with a nice esplanade and a kiosk selling pastries and coffee. There is a wonderful rhythm to life in Alfama.”

So you can tell now that she’s getting into that conclusion bit, because now she’s summarizing even more. “Old men gather to smoke every morning at tiny home in the wall



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tascas, bar or cafes. You’ll know when you’re at an authentic tasca, an espresso will cost you just 65 cents.”

So, this last sentence here, brings home a point that you might not have realized was actually one of her... I know this person who wrote this piece, one of the points of writing this piece, which is that this is related, this is for an outlet that talks about living abroad for very little money. And so, the idea of this piece is to show you the type of experience that you can have for not a lot of money living in Portugal.

And so, it’s not like a super beaten home point, right? She says up here that she pays about \$550 a month for her apartment, and she says that here the espresso was only 65 cents. But that’s something that’s central to the outlet that she’s writing for. But the point of her piece is to show you what it’s like in this place, that this is a place that you should consider living in if you wanna have an inexpensive time abroad.

So the last one... I’ll just see if there’s any questions. Okay, sorry. The Lisbon one was published, this is from “International Living”. This is from the “International Living” newsletter, and the author of this one, her name is Suchi Rudra, and let me see if I can get the word count for you. I might not be able to get it here, so I got it in PowerPoint. Sorry, I can’t get the exact word out for you. I would say looking at it, that it’s probably around 300, but it might be 350. But I think it’s around 300. So this next one though that I wanna show you, this one is from “National Geographic” UK, all right. And this section is 500 to 100 words, okay? Super short, right? 500 to 100 words. And this is something in UK, or “National Geographic” UK.

And this is one of those ones that some of you guys had mentioned, where there’s a photo, and then there’s a little bit of text that goes along with it. So we’ve clipped the photo here to make the text as big as possible, but there was a photo of a woman. And this is a section that is meant to focus on a conversation that you have, in a country that you visited, where you don’t speak the same language of the people, or where you guys don’t necessarily understand each other, but you’ve had a conversation.

So this one is called “Suri girl. Ethiopia” And again, the section is called “Snapshot” So it begins, “From the capita, Addis Ababa, it takes three days of hard travel to reach the isolated village of Kibish, in the Omo Valley.” So even though she’s got 75 words only, these sentences they’re not like, you know, they’re not like something that God wrote on a stone. They’re not like the be all and all of literary writing. Often, the description is just saying what is. She continues, “I stayed with the Suri people, one of the regions ancient tribes, where piercing, scarification, and lip plates are a strong part of the culture. I lived in my tent



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under the protection of the travel 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 saw still call her Challi.” So this is one of those things where, because there’s that photo there, she didn’t start her piece, sorry. I’m not sure if this is a her, it looks like maybe it’s a he. This person, this author didn’t start the piece with that whole description, and that’s part of how he or she is able to get away with it in these few words.

That the piece here in the writing, actually starts with that background part which is in the middle part that we talked about. But then it gets back to the scene. There’s a small scene, there’s an exchange with this person, and it creates this idea that here’s this culture which we think of as very, very different, very foreign, very exotic, we feel like we don’t understand them, we don’t know about how they work or their ways, and she spent all of...or this author spent all this time trying to get to know these people and still up to this time, people wanted to interact with the author, but there’s still that threshold wasn’t completely crossed. And yet those interactions stood out in such a vibrant way that the author still remembers this girl, the shy girl who wanted to interact but couldn’t quite.

So this I wanted to share with you also, because this idea, this goes back to that type of piece that some of you mentioned where there’s a photo with a little piece, but also how I really love in these snapshot pieces, how they don’t explain at the end, they don’t tell you what it is that they want you to take away from it, which they do have to do in a lot of these other types of pieces that you would see, whether it’s online or newspapers. This is more of the kind of thing where there’s a sentence that just ends, and it’s really left for you to figure out what it is that you think about it.

So let me know... Well, I’ll switch talking about how to pitch these pieces in a second, but first just let me know in the chat box if you have any questions about the pieces that we looked at, or how that structure of painting the picture, giving the background, and then going back to the scene and what you took away. Let me know if you have any questions about that before I get on to how to pitch. I think the delay should have caught up by now, but if people have questions that come in, then I’ll answer them as they come in.

So how do we pitch these? So I mentioned a little bit about the newspapers before, which is that you don’t have to send them the whole piece. I don’t recommend sending them the whole piece. You can definitely pitch them an idea before you send it to them, and then if



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they say they’d like to look at it, then you write that up. Patricia’s got a great question, but let me go through these, how to pitch these, and then I’ll answer that after.

So for independent magazines, you would definitely wanna pitch it before you write the piece, definitely, definitely. If you have... I’ve often heard people say that they have a story that they’re sitting on, like an idea, but that they’ve already written up the whole story. I always recommend to not write the story first, but if you do have something where you more kind of wrote it up in your diary or in your notes, or something like, or you had an experience, you had a moment, that was really great. That’s something where you still don’t wanna put that whole moment in your pitch, okay?

So your pitch, even if you’re pitching whether it’s to a newspaper or magazine or website, in your pitch make sure you don’t give away that whole moment, that whole last paragraph, that whole end of your postcard piece. And it can seem really hard. I since have a lot of folks who if they’re pitching pieces that are like 300, 400, words, their pitch becomes like 500, 600 words.

And I can tell you, I tell you not just because I would think this, but I can tell you because I’ve seen responses that people that I coach that have come to our events. I keep seeing these responses where people write long pitches, and the editor writes back in a way where she isn’t just in the piece. I can tell that editor is interested, but she’s nervous that if it took the writer this long to get to the point of what she was trying to pitch in the pitch, how is she gonna accomplish the piece in the 400 words that the section actually has?

So you’re much, much better off when you pitch this to magazines or newspapers, these, kind of pieces, to have just a little snippet at the beginning of that, kind of, description of that picture painting, and then go into your second paragraph where you explain what it is that you’re pitching, where you explain what you cover, rather than continuing to show throughout your pitch. Someone asked you call it a postcard when you pitch? No, you always call it the name of whatever the section is in the magazine, you don’t call it a postcard.

So relatedly Patti asked, “Do you send a photo with your pitch?” This is actually something that I had noticed lately. Those of you who have blogs and things like that and have an email signature, where you got a lot of stuff going on, you’ve gotta cut that out. When you pitch an editor at a magazine, there should not be a single attachment in your email. And I think a lot of people don’t realize that those signatures that they have, even if it’s just all images of Instagram and stuff, those show up as attachments. and editors aren’t gonna open emails with attachments for people they don’t know.



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So, if you have a photo that the story is around, you can put it in your online portfolio, in Dropbox. I always send people things in Dropbox as links if I’m sending files. I don’t necessarily recommend sending Google Drive. It’s much better to do it either in Dropbox or in a photo gallery type thing that you use. Or if you have your own website you can just upload it to your website and send them the media file. So you can definitely attach a link to a photo. If it’s a photo that is so over the top good, that it should be on the cover of a major magazine. If you don’t have a photo that’s that quality, I would not include it with your pitch, because you don’t wanna give the editor another reason to say no. You don’t want them to like your pitch, and then wanna know if you have a photo to support it. You wanna give them the opportunity to ask you about that. So unless your photo is really, really fantastic, I would not necessarily recommend sending it at the pitch stage. Let them know you have photos available, and they can follow up with you.

Marina asks, “What if the signatures have text and link only?” Yeah, I think yours probably looks like mine, and that’s correct. So you wanna have your signature be, you know, like Gabby Logan, freelance, you know, travel journalist and author www.gabbylogan.com. Like that’s what your signature should be when you pitch editors. That’s it.

So I’ve noticed a lot of people have, even someone emailed me the other day, they have the logo of the travel writing association that they’re in. They have that logo underneath their signature. And editors just won’t open your emails like that. It’s not that they don’t want to, it’s they can’t. They have internal policies about spam and hacks and things like that. They just can’t open them.

So the other two on here, “So for content marketing, can you just pitch a company that you wanna do a piece like this?” No, unfortunately, you need to have a full contract with them that you’re doing different types of stuff, and you can suggest this as part of your contract. And I’ve had a couple people that I coach, and maybe like some other people that have done one off calls with me, who are doing content marketing stuff where they kind of like got in with a company through an ad or something like that, but they don’t necessarily have a contract. And I can tell you, it’s really crazy, it’s amazing. When you have a contract from the beginning, the engagement lasts longer, it goes better, like all this stuff.

I’m sitting next to somebody who writes for me right now, and I’m sure she’s gonna be like, “I should get a contract with Gabby.” So for editorial websites, that’s another one that you would send them a pitch. Now, there’s a lot of editorial websites out there that will tell you, “Oh yeah, send me the piece and I’ll look at it and decide if I wanna publish it.” F that. If a newspaper says that, they have a reason, they have a legal reason, and you getting a clip there would be great. If a website says that, tell them, “I’m sorry. I don’t write on spec for whatever your tiny, tiny budget is.” And you can say, you know, like how much would you



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potentially pay for the eventual piece to find out whether it'd be worth your time? But by and large, the websites that don't know enough about how to read pitches to know if they would be interested in your story from the pitch are the ones that are not worth your time.

So Patricia had a great question with the structure that I wanted to come back to. She said, “How do you determine what background to use?” And I love that question, because it's the whole point of this postcard piece is that it should be narrow. So you should only give as much background as space allows, right? That piece on the Portugal, the octopus, that one there was more space to talk about the tone. But the one about Lisbon, there wasn't more space to talk about Lisbon outside of her neighborhood. And she was really talking about, like, the physical things of her neighborhood, the lifestyle of the people in her neighborhood. So the only background that you should include is the background that is needed to understand why the audience that's receiving this pitch should care.

So it has to be tied into your audience, or not this pitch, rather reading this piece. So I talk about this tons and tons and tons in our idea fest program online, which is also in our live events that the audience dictates what you choose to add into the piece. So in the case of that Lisbon one, it was for people who might be thinking of moving abroad and want somewhere with a very interesting atmosphere, a great lifestyle for not a lot of money. The octopus piece was for a U.S. publication where why would these people go all the way there just for octopus? You have to give them some more. You can't tell them just about the octopus, you have to show them what else they can do in that place. So that's why that one had a little more.

Okay, cool. So it seems like there's not any more questions. So I will let you guys get going.

So thank you guys so much for joining me. And I'm gonna get back to chatting about the travel magazine database with my colleague here in London. I hope the rest of you guys have a great rest of your week. Bye.