



Dream of Travel Writing

Article Nuts and Bolts: How to Put Together a Diary Piece

So let's go ahead and dive in. We're continuing our article "Nuts and Bolts Series" that we started actually in February. The diary piece is a very interesting type of article. It's something that you know, inherent in the nature of the diary aspect of it. It's something that we all theoretically can write, that we all theoretically know how to write. And perhaps some of you...but definitely some people that I coach or some other writers that I've met are in the situation where they came into writing in a more travel article setting later in life.

Perhaps they didn't do any writing, maybe they're photographers, or maybe they just traveled a lot. And then by virtue of the machinations of the world, they started writing travel articles, and people are like "Wow, you're so great at writing these articles," and the person says, "Well, I have no idea what I'm doing."

So that often means that you started out with a great diary-style piece because this is something that's very natural to write. You're talking about your own experience and what you did. However, because they're so easy to write, and because so many people are writing them, perhaps on blogs or on Facebook these days tends to kind of replace the old live journal model of keeping a diary for your friends when you're traveling, because so many people write them.

There's also a lot of them out there that are not the quality of what a magazine or a high-level website is looking for. So there's a different bar that you need to clear, even if you're writing the same type of piece, and that is what we're gonna focus on today.

So specifically, what I wanna look at is when I say diary piece, what does that mean? How does that differ from what you might imagine or from an actual diary? And how does that differ from perhaps what people are writing on blog posts, or even perhaps what people are writing in magazines that you might think looks kind of like I went here, I did this, and I did this. But actually isn't what I mean when I say diary-style piece, for what we're gonna look at today.

And then I'm gonna show you some examples. Before we get into the examples of the right thing to do, I'm gonna show you some examples of the wrong things to do, because it's not always fun. And I've made sure that there is no attributions, so you will not know what I'm showing you when I show you the wrong thing to do. But it's one of those things like I said in the email, in the blog post before today's webinar. Usually you know it when you see it, it's often a little harder to know what's the right thing to do.



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But I'm just gonna show you one example of not a publishable diary-style piece, before we get into the real world examples of what people are out there getting paid hundreds and hundreds of dollars to write. So after that, we're gonna take a minute to talk about where to pitch these pieces, what types of outlets they go in, and what you need to say and do, and how you need to position a piece if you wanna write one.

Now I'm gonna mention earlier on the call, what are the different types of publications or outlets that you can publish these pieces in.

So as I mentioned we all are no doubt familiar with the dear diary, today this boy looked at me, and I have been looking at him for months, and I just could not believe that finally, he looked in my direction, type of diary right? We're all familiar with that, whether in a...you know, actually done it ourselves, or you know, we've seen in movies, we're all familiar with that concept.

Even though today, in a lot of ways I feel like the concept of the diary is kind of becoming extinct as people tend to live more publicly online. But we all know this idea which is that it's a somewhat chronological and I say somewhat because people typically start their diary entries with something that they're thinking about, something that's on their mind, and then they talk about that thing. So it's a somewhat chronological relaying of events that have happened, right?

So I have a good friend who I spend a lot of time traveling with. We used to live in Italy together, and she writes these really, really long diary entries. I've never seen them. I've never asked actually. But she writes these really, really long diary entries, and I remember when we first moved back to the U.S. together, we were in a hotel somewhere and I said, "How come you're not writing on your diary? You're just going to bed." And she said, "Oh well, I'm here like there's nothing interesting happening."

So one thing that we often think of as a diary entry, is that you might be writing it only when there's something interesting happening. That's one version of what a diary is. Or you might be writing a diary every day just to capture your thoughts. There's a lot of different concepts of what people think of when they think of diary. So why would any magazine editor be interested in your thoughts? Why would any magazine editor be interested in a step-by-step play-by-play of what you did that day? Or even just the step-by-step play-by-play of the interesting days in your life. Why would that appeal to them? You guys might have some idea, or you might not know honestly why editors are interested in that.



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But the thing is that these pieces are so easy to write that the more important thing then why would an editor ever be interested in that, is to think why would an editor be interested in that from me, about this topic? And when we've talked in the last few webinars in this series, we've looked so far in the last four weeks at postcard pieces. We've looked at guides features, which are where you give a lot of information about a few different topics perhaps in one place, or in a larger area. We've looked at a basket of kittens feature, where you take one theme or one topic, and you find 3, 5, 15, 105 different things that all revolve around that topic.

And we've also looked at a quest piece where you take a trip that you've been on, or a trip that you're going to go on, and you attach an objective to it. I want to wind my way across the Aegean like Odysseus did on his way home from Troy. I want to find the best pizza in New York's Little Italy, and your journey centers around that one thing.

So all of these are different types of feature style articles, but I kept the diary piece for last for an important reason. Because in a certain way, many of the things that we've looked at this month, and many of the different types of articles that you see in magazine, could in a way be something that one, a person might write in their diary, right? A quest piece is certainly something that a person might write in their diary. A postcard which is kind of like an atmospheric, short, descriptive piece that gives a sense of place of a destination. That's something that some people write in their diary. They kind of make these verbal sketches or like written sketches about things, right?

So when we talk about a diary piece in terms of the kind of things that you're gonna see in magazines and websites, what I'm really talking about is a piece which you might think of as a trip report. So somebody has gone somewhere, and in this piece they're essentially relaying what they found, what they did, what they saw, maybe what they ate, in a way that has a sort of recording home aspect to it.

So it kind of feels like you're writing an email to a friend, or perhaps you have gone on a scouting trip for your wedding, or for something that might be happening for work, an event. And you're just writing back this very factual description of what you did, what you saw, and maybe what you thought of it. And the thing is that concept that I just said, a very factual description of what you did and what you saw, is really what we're going for here by and large.

And so one way to think of that is that it's almost like a guidebook in narrative form. So I know guidebooks are a little bit less commonly used now, folks tend to use blogs more so than guidebooks in terms of giving themselves destination guides. But how many of you



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guys have used...let me know in the chat box. How many of you guys have in some point in your life, used an actual physical guidebook to guide yourself around a destination?

When I first started traveling a lot I used to go to the bookstore a couple nights a week, or maybe like you know, two, three months before my trip, and I would just camp out in the guidebook section. I would just kind of read through different sections in all of them and figure out not just which guidebook had the most information about where wanted to go. For instance, one time I was going to Northern Spain, and only one of the five different guidebook companies that I looked at even covered the city that I decided I wanted to go to.

But I would read them all and try to figure out which voice was the type of traveler that I felt like for that trip. Which spoke to me? You know, if I was going India was it gonna be the person who's going to a lot of parties? Probably not. Was it gonna be the person who wanted to go to every single temple and museum? Probably not. But here's somebody who's you know, here's a guidebook writer, a guidebook voice that's kind of interested in food, gives you a good historical background of things, you know, has not too inexpensive but not too expensive places to stay. And I was like aha, this is the guidebook for me.

So these diary pieces function in a similar way. We can sometimes look at a guidebook and just think of it as the textbook rather than the guidebook. As in you know, it educates you, it has you know, an index, it has what you need to know to get around. However, a better way of thinking of guidebooks and in turn this slightly more narrative version of a guidebook which is the diary-style piece, is that they have a voice. They have a voice. They have a slant. They have a personality. But that shows through very slightly.

It shows through in choices. It shows through occasionally in little you know, commentary in the words. It shows through in the type of history and the amount of history that they choose to include. But by and large the writing is very factual. It's very to the point, and it's very reportive. Now this...what I just said reportive, is one of the big differences between the diary-style pieces that don't fly for print, and the diary-style pieces that do.

So tell me in the chat box if you...besides what I just said about being reportive. If you were to think about a diary-style piece in the way that I've just explained. So somebody has gone somewhere who's blog posts can also be reportive, right? Somebody's gone somewhere. You know, they've done this turtle walk on the beach. They've done a sailing trip. You know, they've done a clam bake, and now they're writing up that trip report. What are gonna be the differences? Let me know in the chat box you think between that piece on a blog post, and that piece in a print out of like a newspaper.



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Marilyn has chimed in with, “A blog entry would be much more informal wouldn’t it?” And I find that choice of words really interesting, right? Much more informal. And I think that’s definitely one way to think of what we commonly conceptualize as diary, right? You’re either speaking to yourself, or perhaps you have a certain thing that you think of when you write your diary. Like you know, maybe you’re writing it to a person, or maybe you think that you’re gonna give to your future yourself or something like that, right. But that concept as a diary is quite private.

And I feel like when people write on their blogs even though of course, you’re writing for a public audience, I think a lot of folks have this idea that they’re just writing to one reader, the reader that they know very well. And so it does inherently feel...if not casual then more familiar I think would be great way to think of that. Yeah, and informal can also come into play perhaps with this concept of being reportive that I talk about.

So Kirsten’s got another one, “Maybe a blog piece is more personal and a print piece is more universal.” And Lisa said, “A blog post might be more personal and biased.” I think that’s a really interesting point that Lisa said about being biased. And you know, with travel more so than with other types of journalism, and I have to check which Lisa this is, if she’s... no, so I don’t know this Lisa’s background.

So with travel more so than with other types of journalism, I find that the pieces tend to apparently be a bit more biased, because the writer is showing their opinion of the destination. And that’s a lot more important to the sense of the destination perhaps than in other pieces where other types of journalism where having you know, such a lack of bias that you wouldn’t even take with a bottle of water from the place you’re visiting because that would be viewed as bias.

The line is more towards personal or biased in travel writing, because that’s what allows you to understand a place. How that place relates to the person who is writing about it. But Kirsten had this point about being personal versus universal. And for those of you that joined us for the last couple of webinars that we’ve done about features, having something that is both personal and universal is actually a really an important and inherent part of something like the quest piece that we looked at last time.

So I think the diary pieces have a lot of these characteristics. They do seem personal, but they should touch on universal. They might seem to have some bias because it’s the person talking about their specific trip, but they only have their own eyes, their own experiences from which they could possibly look at the trip that they’ve been on.



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So as we talk about these diary pieces, have lots of different types of types of trips. They could be quest pieces. They could be where you're city hopping. There's all sorts of different formats that some things feel like they fall into this diary piece, whether it's a different type of itinerary or a different type of piece. But what happens really is that diary style pieces, I find these different things that we talk about whether it's personality versus bias or informal, universal, those things can vary a little bit with the type of outlet that they're on.

But what really separates a diary-style piece from, you know, print publication versus a blog, I think is a lot of what might be called puff, or fluff, or filler is a good way to look at it. So there's a really excellent slide that I've asked so many different people, and no one has quite been able to find. Which is from the Travel Blog Exchange Conference maybe five or six years ago. And it was by Robert Reid, and he took a diary-style piece from a major newspaper, and a diary-style piece from a blog, and he put them up on the screen next to each other.

And he highlighted different types of writing. He highlighted descriptive writing. He highlighted historical background information. He highlighted quotations. He highlighted action. And there was one more thing that he highlighted, it was talking in the first-person. And he had them side-by-side and you could see that the piece that was a blog, had so many sentences that started I this, I that, I this. I that. And the other piece had a lot of what you think of as reporting.

And I've pulled up for you...and like I said, I cut off where this is from, and the text is a little small, so hopefully you won't be able to type it out and Google it. But I wanted to read a little bit for you from this, which is from blog, and then we'll go back and talk about how this plays out in the different outlets. But this piece begins...and this is actually really diary-style in terms of it says day one, day two, day three. And I just took two paragraphs from it, and I don't know that we actually need both paragraphs. But here's an example of more of the blog style.

"I've just arrived in Paraguay." No comma by the way. "I'm already really experiencing the culture! I've hailed a cab after I got off my plane, and while the radio was on, I got to listen to some authentic Paraguayan music. Luis Alberto del Parana was the one singing, I found out from the driver. He was a singer in the 50s, and is now a national musical icon in Paraguay because he was the most famous musician to originate from here. It was pretty interesting to find out. I did some research later and also found that he had played with The Beatles and The Rolling Stones on stage before! One of his albums sold 30 million copies, so he was a pretty big artist back in the day. I hadn't known that Paraguay ever produced any musicians.



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However, when the driver switched the station, I was surprised to hear ethnic Latin music on the radio! I had assumed that the popular music in Paraguay would consist mainly of English pop songs and only a few occasional Spanish songs. In countries like France, Germany, and Spain, the music is often mostly North American. It was very refreshing to see that not every country played the same music as the next.

However, the pop genre is still prevalent in Paraguay, just like in the rest of the world. Spain has put its own spin on it, however. Pop can sound very different in Spanish than in English. Some Latin musicians that are popular in Paraguay include Enrique Iglesias.” This is even too small for me to read. “Alkilados, Ivan Zavala and Los Verduleros. However, as far as I know, there weren’t any famous Paraguayan born musicians other than Luis Alberto del Parana. It was a little disappointing to learn.”

So this is one of those things like I said with the quote about pornography from the Supreme Court justice, where you know when you see it. But what are those things that allow us to know when we see it? But this is more of that informal if you wanna call it that, casual blog-style piece. A couple things, so sentences was like, “It was pretty interesting to find out. It was a little disappointing to learn.” These are things that I occasionally see in people’s pitches, just the short versions like “This was very interesting, or I thought this was very interesting.” Those creep into pitches even.

And these are the type of sentences that make editors...editors in this case...I mean of national magazines, national newspapers say, “I don’t care if you think it’s interesting. Show me that it’s interesting. I want to say that it’s interesting. I don’t want you to tell me that it’s interesting.” So in this case, we can see that the author here did include some research, but as they discuss the research...like I mentioned from this excellent slide from Robert’s Reid’s keynoted all of presenting that research seems to have started with I.

So they hailed a cab. We never really need to know that you hailed a cab. We never really need to know that you walked out of your door. We never really need to know that you sat down at the cafe. Those are not pertinent things in a diary-style piece that’s occurring in print, okay. And she’s saying, “Luis Alberto del Parana was the one singing. I found that from the driver.” So this is passive, right? Why can’t she say the driver said, or the driver explained, right? It’s couched as her. And then she goes on saying, “He was a singer in the 50s now a national icon. It was pretty interesting to find out. ”

“I did some research later, and also found out.” We don’t need to know when she did the research this is another thing that when you’re writing diary-style pieces the time needs to transpose. So you will be writing things in your diary-style pieces with a research that you



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did later, a research that you did before you got there. But things that explain cultural concepts or the history of the destination, without you needing to tell us when or how, of the circumstances of which you found out that information.

So we see this happening again lower down. The author was surprised to hear this. The author had assumed that the popular music, and then she has a sentence that's not assuming right. "In countries like France, Germany and Spain, the music is often mostly North American." Now even though we're looking at a diary-style piece, right, where it does matter you know, what we think or what happens to you, a sentence like this should be qualified somehow.

So either like we don't know how much time this person has spent in France, Germany, or in Spain, what authority they have to say that, right? So you know, as it continues the writer says some Latin musicians that are popular in Paraguay include blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. According to who? Where did that come from? So one of the things that you notice in this piece, is that in this more blog-style diary pieces, there's a big question of authority on a lot of the facts that are transmitted. But you really don't know where the person heard this information, if this information is reliable.

And so that's really a big piece here that separates the type of diary-style pieces you would see in these publications. I'll go through each one in its own time. But is that authority. that reported facts, that sense that the information contained within the piece has some kind of weight on the outside world, and is not purely opinion. So when there are things that are opinion, they should be used sparingly, and they should be used to a fact, okay?

So these are the four main different settings in which you are gonna see a diary-style piece today. Now they used to be a lot more prevalent in print settings before blogs. And then what happened was there was less need for editors to pay people to write first-person, non-narrative, non-quest, not highly reported pieces, because there were so many of them out there already. So there wasn't so much of a need for them to publish them.

But what happened was...I'm sure you guys have felt it. People get round up fatigue. People don't just want to have information thrown at them in an entirely third-person setting. People like the first-person voice. They like to follow along someone else's trip. And not every trip can be a quest, not every trip can be a Don Georgian [SP] personal essay. Not every trip can be a beautiful story-structured feature with a transformational moment at the end where you have an epiphany about life. Not every story ends up being like that, and not every writer wants to write those.



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But editors still need trip reports from all sorts of places in the world, and they're happy to pay for them, and this is where. So newspaper travel sections. We're gonna look at a few of these in a little bit. Actually because these are one of the really great places still today to find these type of articles. And I know that people often think...and I think part of this is because we tend to look at newspapers online. I know people often tend to read clickbaity type of things.

So I have the "Dallas Morning News" up, and let me pop over to there, we'll leave the slides for one second. And what you're seeing is that if you just look of the homepage, if you look at what they have loaded up there, there is definitely this sense that there is a lot of...Oh no we lost the ability to switch to the next screen. I'm just gonna jump in.

Oh-oh guys, all right so I'll tell you what I see in "Dallas Morning News" while I try to get this functionality back. I'm sorry, were having some trouble with this slides today on the web platform. Okay great here we go.

So what you go to whether it's "Dallas Morning News" "HuffPo" or even bbc.com, which we're gonna look at later, is that on the homepage, like when you first look there tend to be these things that seem very clickbaity. They really seem to be like those you know, typical headlines that are 17 ways to do this, or very servicy oriented things. You know, like blah, blah to do with your dog, that kind of thing. And the reason for that is that the metrix the folks are tracking do tend to be you know, what gets the most clicks, okay great, let's put that on the homepage, and we'll just keep looking at that.

But what happens...I'm so sorry. It's still not showing up. But what happens is that they're publishing a lot more content than that. And that content is still being found in search. That content is still going out in their newspaper, and also in their newsletters to subscribers. And that's the type of content that I know that you're all more interested in writing, rather than this. I don't know why they've got such a horridly lit photo on the homepage of dallasmorningnews.com's travel section, but "What Are Your Pet Peeves When It Comes To Hotels?" As in your pet peeves about your pets.

I know this is not what we all aspire to write, and a lot of people come and tell me everyone is only publishing this, this, and that. But I can tell you because I look at physical copies of these stuff all the time, that this is not what is in the print issue. Okay this is very different than what you see the print issue.



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So we can see here we've got some very newsy pieces. "Book this swanky cottage." so that's basically like they went on Airbnb and they found something interesting, and they wrote a story about it. This one is just probably a] "This storied Aspen Hotel is a Dallas favorite and now it's expanding." We got "Southwest plans to open four more flights." We've got very, very straight news. "Five tortured bodies in Cancun," quite serious, and it takes us quite a while again news, news, advice, flying style. Where is the actual destination content, right? You gotta go way far down before you get that.

We've already gone...let's see this is the style section. This is the tab. We've gone two folds and we don't see that. And so it's very easy to think that outside of service that these pieces aren't out there. But the thing is that nothing could be farther from the truth, because what you're seeing on there is what they are publishing, they're highlighting, on their website.

And it's been really great to see how many sections in newspapers are super easy to pitch, that writers just don't know about because you don't really see them on the newspapers websites, so they're not easy to find. They're often highlighted in the newsletters. They go to newsletters subscribers, but they are not gonna be right there on the homepage.

And so what that means is that being newspaper travel sections...and like I said, we're gonna look at some of the diary-style pieces in newspaper travel sections in a bit. There's tons of opportunities for these first-person diary-style pieces because if you are picking up the print version, you're much more interested in spending some time reading some stories, rather than getting quick tips. Or hearing about Texas's power outlet and how that's gonna affect your flight. You would read about that online. But when you pick up the print version, you're looking to follow some sort of narrative. You're looking to follow someone else's story.

And newspapers come out way more than magazine guys. Newspapers come up 52 times a year with the exception of one or two weekly magazines. There's no magazine opportunities out there for you to come out that frequently. So if you get in with a newspaper editor, even if they're paying you know, 30 or 50 cents a word rather than a dollar a word, you still got four times the opportunity to get published with that editor. So your bang for the buck in terms of the making that relationship is huge.

Now I just wanna say a little sidebar about how many newspaper travel sections are out there because we've really done a lot of digging into this lately. So there's about five U.S. newspapers, pardon me, that have dedicated travel editors, dedicated travel sections. And those "The New York Times" of course, "The Washington Post" does some travel but also "The Wall Street Journal," and "The San Francisco Chronicle" actually there's two different



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travel editors. And “The L.A Times” not only has a travel editor, but they also have staff travel writer.

“The Dallas Morning News” has somebody who edits travel in a couple different sections. And “The Chicago Tribune” does publish some travel, but it’s pretty much entirely comes out of press releases, and off the wire, and out of syndication, and some things like that. So there’s really those main five, but you will still see travel pieces in “The Denver Post,” in the newspaper I’m going to nominate “The Newspaper of Sonoma.” I’ve picked up newspapers in Sarasota Florida, they had some coverage.

So don’t discount the newspapers that are city newspapers and you know, tier two or tier three cities, or even a smaller areas than that, because those can be really nice places to put diary-style pieces. And the next question of course, is what do they pay? Because this is always a question for newspapers. And the national newspapers that I was talking about, those do typically pay 50 cents a word and up.

But these small newspapers they might not pay so well, but there’s a great thing here in terms of getting more bang for your buck for trip. Which is that these diary-style pieces are so easy to write and when you have a clip from a trip that really displays a lot of what you’ve done on that trip, that gets placed in the newspaper, that’s really great for you to show the next time that you’re looking at going on a press trip somewhere.

PR people really value newspaper clips, and so it gives you a really nice in to say “Well you know, I’m not sure I made a business trip yet, but I’ve written for this newspaper before.” That really is a good way to get yourself on press trips if that’s something you’re interested in.

So let’s look now...taking away from newspapers for a second, let’s talk about the type of websites that are publishing these more diary-style pieces. Now, obviously we talked before about blogs, and we talked about those in different types of pieces and what we’re looking at today. But there are several editorial outlets...and I say editorial outlets rather than just websites, because these are really magazines...or sorry yeah, essentially they’re really magazines that take place online. And so “BBC Travel” is a really great example.

There’s one websites but I have several you have written for which are called “GoNOMAD.” They also take these diary-style pieces, but they only pay \$0.25 a word, they have some of the full piece on spec. So please, please, please, do not leave this webinar and go pitch your



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diary-style piece to “GoNOMAD.” Because you can pitch to “BBC Travel” and get paid 10 times as much, actually more than 10 times as much.

So “BBC Travel” is one of these, “Huffington Post” can take these, but you may have heard “Huffington Post” pays some people but not all people. So if you’re just looking for the cred from having published on “Huffington Post,” you can do that, but I wouldn’t necessarily recommend it. Because besides “BBC Travel” which everybody knows it publishes really a lot of stuff there’s also things like CNN.

There are magazine websites that are also publishing these types of things. “SAVEUR” and “AFAR” which are the two magazines that I know a lot of you guys love, they both publish diary-style pieces on their website as well. And that’s actually a place where they like to put things that are of that nature that they like. They like the trip, and they like the writing of the author, but they can’t just can’t figure out exactly what to do with those pieces in their print magazine.

So these diary-style pieces like I said, with newspapers you’re gonna be getting about 50 cents a word, on editorial websites there’s probably gonna be a flat fee and it’s gonna be somewhere between say like \$250 and \$400 if you’re doing it on a good website. If you’re doing it on a smaller website that’s not gonna be like BBC level, you should still be looking at minimum, minimum, minimum, minimum \$150.

Don’t give away a diary-style piece which is talking about your entire trip for less than that, okay? Because once you have written that piece and you’ve covered all those different things from your trip, you’re cutting yourself off from a lot of other different options, in terms of where you can publish that content. So don’t take that first to a small place because what you’re doing is you’re just depriving yourself of income, writing about that same trip for somewhere that would pay you better either for one small slice of it or for a whole diary-style piece, okay?

So another one I put in here I think this is gonna probably be a surprise for a lot of you. So how many of you guys...let me know in the chat box, and I won’t pause for this, but please do let me know. How many of you guys have heard of trade publications, have heard me talk about trade publications, have some sense of what trade publications are, and what they do? Because this is actually one of the coolest and easiest places to put diary-style pieces is in trade publications.



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So trade publications are magazines that you can't buy on the newsstand. They aren't handed out, but they are distributed on a limited circulation basis, for people who work in a particular industry. So in the case of travel, those can be travel agents, they can be people who book travel in a corporate setting, they can be people who plan conferences, they can be...we have really interesting weird ones like people who are...it's like hotel interior design and things like that.

So there's a lot of trade magazines out there, but there's some that that are less specific and they're more for everybody in the travel industry with all sorts of different jobs. And "Travel Weekly" which is also available online, but "Travel Weekly" is a good example of that. And these trade publication do tons, just tons of diary-style pieces. Because what's happening is that these trade publications are for people or work in the industry, obviously they're traveling a bit themselves, but they can't be everywhere, they get everywhere.

And they wanna know what's going on in a certain destination. It's new but they might be thinking about going to. So they just wanna hear what it's like. They wanna essentially the Trip Advisor slash Yelp version of it, but from a repeatable source. From somebody who works in the industry. They want it to be recorded. They wanna know that it's reliable information. But what they really want is a trip report from a vetted source, okay?

And so what happens is that "Travel Weekly," and other trade publications like this, are often sending...and when I say sending I really do mean they will put you on a plane. They will pay for your ticket, and they will send you there. Someone that I coached went to Maldives the other day. Sometimes though they're working with International Visitors Bureau or the Tourism Board to send you there, but they are often sending you. It's not like with the "The New York Times" where you have to get there on your own dime and you have to assume your expenses.

So these trade publications they're sending you places to check it out and then do the trip report for their audience, of other people who work in the travel industry with what you saw, what you did, and what you thought. And these are some slam-dunk easiest, fastest, diary-style pieces to write, and it's really lovely because the trade magazines don't compete with consumers.

So you can write that diary-style piece for a trade publication and then turn around and sell a slightly different version of it to the trade publication or chop that trip up and lots of different pieces and sell it out. And you're not conflicting with the story that you already wrote.



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Now, I mentioned, when we were talking editorial websites, I mentioned the magazines that have websites that are publishing this type of stuff. And you will also however occasionally see diary-style pieces in print magazines. And it seems so weird that somebody would get paid \$3,000 to go stay in a villa in Tuscany for a week, and see what it's like to stay in a villa and get to paid \$3,000 that and all their expenses, but it happens.

And it happens for the same reason that I was talking about that you see with the people writing for the trade magazine, which is what they are travelers who just wanna know what something is like. Maybe they're considering going there. Maybe they are just armchair travelers who wanna stay home and hear about what it's like. But they want to know first and they want to know...not from Yelp and not from Trip Advisor, and they don't have any friends down there, and they wanna know from a trusted source. And that's why you're still gonna see diary-style features out there even in the highest level of print magazines, okay?

Again, a good way to remember the bad version of these pieces is that it would be the email that you write home to your close friends and family, that now might be that post that you'd put on Facebook for everyone to see. But the good version is going to have reporting. What it isn't gonna issue though is that sense of I went here. I did this. I did that, but the writing will be better. Not every sentence is gonna start with I. Not every single thing on that trip is gonna be included, but a lot of it will. And there's gonna be more reporting.

Now something that reporting will come in the guise of actual dialogue and quotes from people who were met along the way of the trip. And sometimes that reporting will come in the form of data. But they tend to follow a structure that you'll find very familiar whether you've been following our other webinars on features and we've done on quest pieces and things like that. Or you just heard about the three paragraph essay when you were in school. Which is that they do tend...but not always...but they do tend to have what I call the three key steps and then the rest.

And so what happens is that the pieces often begin with the author getting reporting very quickly saying where they went and why. How did they end up there. And sometimes that has to do with something that the place is known for. So it's not gonna be a quest piece where they're specifically looking for the best Chilaquiles in Phoenix Arizona. I'm in Phoenix right now so that was all off the top of my head.

But they might mention I came to Phoenix looking for the best south of the border food north of the border, but then the whole piece isn't gonna be about that. But they're just explaining to you why I had the idea to come here. And it's often pegged to something that the location is known for. And then when they start giving you background on the location this what



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makes it different than a quest piece. Is the background that they're giving you isn't gonna be just about Chilaquiles or green chilies or whatever the case might be.

The background is gonna be more general background on the city, in terms of who lives there now, the history. What type of background they give tends to depend quite heavily on the audience of the publication at hand.

Now, like I said the three key stop sections is not a must. It's not always there. It makes them much better diary piece when you do that little kind of intro, you give some information of a place, and you talk more in depth, a little more expansion about some of the stops that you went on, to paint more of a picture of the place. Before you get into the more laundry list of all the things that you did slash that are available to do there.

And if any of you were with us for the webinar that we did previously which was on the guide style piece, what I said in that webinar was that you tend to have paragraphs which might list of many as 8 or 12 different things that we can do in one place per paragraph. And that is what starts to happen after the two key stops here. Especially when you're reading a newspaper pieces these are quite long, and that's one of the reasons that getting 50 cents a word can be great. Because a magazine space is a huge, huge premium. Magazine pages are small. They've got about half the pages are ads and half the pages are content.

But in newspapers, there's a lot more space for text. I was skimming through with someone who writes for the database for us, and we were figuring out how to start putting newspaper in the database. We were looking, and there was just like 3,000 words of article there. So if you're getting paid 50 cents a word for your diary piece, that's 1,500 bucks a pop and you get to write those you know, even if it's only like every eight or 10 issues, that's a pretty nice take home that you're getting from that newspaper. And part of what fills in that space is this mini round-up of the extra things.

So for instance, I was just at a conference in the Washington State's wine country, and I went on a post-trip which is more around beer and cider and types of different kinds of drinks. But we did stop at some wineries, and so for that round-up style piece I couldn't include all sorts of different wineries that they have and what they're known for, and the different grapes that grown things and like that. It really has a bit of a laundry list element to it.

And then something that you'll see to these diary-style pieces is that they typically have some kind of resolution after that laundry list. But it usually feels a bit weak, and that's because they haven't set up an arc to the story. There's no conflict like we talked about last



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week with the quest pieces. So let's take a look at some of these. So I'm gonna have to switch the slides here, so we're gonna look at the "Dallas Morning News," and let me see if I can get this up, an issue for you, there we go.

So these is "Dude Ranch, Fishing And More: Colorado Is A Great Outdoor Getaway." So I'm gonna pop this in the chat box, you guys can open it along with me if you're interested. So you can tell from the title that this is a real general piece, right? They don't even talk about a specific part of Colorado, and it's not even just about Dude ranches, so how does it start?

"For a midsummer trip last year, my partner and I wanted to experience something both "outdoorsy" and "out West." So that's why right? That's the why they got to do this, okay? Why Colorado? "At the top of our list of activities were horseback riding, fly fishing and river rafting, and we found all we yearned for in west-central Colorado."

Now, I know a lot of you are saying "Wow this paragraph does not blow my mind like how is this so different than a blog post?" So then we get in the part where you start to see more of the reporting aspect of it.

"The trip started at a unique spot called the Smith Fork Ranch. Nestled on 350 acres in the fabled West Elk Mountains of the Gunnison National Forest, Smith Fork has been a working dude ranch since the 1930s."

Now these are things that I wouldn't always see...these are the kinds of things that when you write for print, you just have to spend maybe like 30 minutes on that paragraph looking up all these things to make sure you get the names right. So he's got you know, everything capitalized, everything correct titles, exact number of acres. He didn't say why the mountain were fabled, but I guess kind of sense of these West out mountains, in the national forest and how long he's been working at Dude Ranch.

"When Marley and Linda Hodgson purchased the ranch in 2000, the old log cabins that served as the principal lodging and dining structures were in serious disrepair. Instead of tearing down and building new, the Hodgsons decided to carefully rebuild the ranch, log by log, keeping it pretty much the way it was."

So you'll see here that this does not start with I even though it's about the writer, and the writer's partner. This does not start with I, even though it is the top their list of activities. The writer could have said, we found or we yearned for from our list of activities, but they started



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at the top. So you'll see that this is one of the key differences, there's not a lot of I as the focus here, even if I is the subject of the sentence.

And as we get into the background of the place we've seen it goes right into reported information. So let's go down and see what are their examples. So they talk more about the reconstruction the preservation and more...you know could almost PRA information, but more description of the ranch. This is something that you see a lot in these diary-style pieces where it almost seems like there's more description of each element. And that's what I told you way back in the beginning of the call, to think of this as something more like a guidebook in kind of narrative form, right?

They're giving really a lot of information here about not just the lodge itself, but also the family who created the well-known Ghurka Bag line of luggage. So they continue on talking about what's special about the ranch. And then if you keep scrolling past these ads that don't display because I have an ad blocker we're gonna get to the last of the text. Sorry, I'm not sure you can see text. Now I have this time to open this and waiting for you guys for a while because it doesn't like that I have too many browser windows open. Let's see if we can get the rest of this. Then I can go over to a different piece. But I really wanted to show you guys this thing. Let's give it one more try. Okay, I'm gonna just flip over and show you this in a different browser. Sorry, I can't go to a different browser because I'm doing webinar in. But let me just try one more time guys.

So someone asked if "The Dallas Morning News" will be in the database soon. Holy shit, if you would like to send us a copy then we'll add it very soon. But until I can get physical copies that's really the hold up for us in terms of adding any newspapers to the database. So if any of you guys have a newspaper that you would like us to include in the database, you need to have two or three weeks of physical copies. So that's why it takes us a little while to get the new papers going, because it's hard to collect physical copies from places that you don't have somebody based.

So all right, so here were back, okay great. So as I said, there were four whole paragraphs of description about the ranch. And then finally, we get into more of this what I did content. So this is when I was saying how newspapers have a lot of expansive space, that's often filled with this description and background of the different places.

So the author says, "I spent my mornings waking as the sun first peeked through the dew-covered scrub oak trees." Is this flowery writing? No, he's giving description about what it looks like. So it's observations. It's facts. "Hiking to one of the many ponds or small rivers on the property and casting for brown and rainbow trout. After this relaxing morning ritual,



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I'd join my partner for a steaming pre-breakfast coffee and muffin on our porch, as the sun burned off the morning chill. During the day, we'd hit the arena to work on our horsemanship or join some of the other guests on trail rides throughout the property."

Now you'll notice something curious here, in the little bit of detail where he's talking about the type of trout and the trees, a lot of these stuff is pretty vague, right? He doesn't say where the coffee was roasted, he says some other guests, he doesn't give them names and the occupations of the other guests. He says "The resort also offers skeet shooting, mountain biking, hiking and breathtaking views of Needle Rock a majestic volcanic pinnacle that sits atop to the property."

So these paragraphs where he talks about what he did the writer himself, there's not such reported detail here. And that goes back to what I was saying is that the I, the specific things that this writer did, are not the focus here. So what is?

"Meals are a highlight at Smith Fork Ranch, and the resort prides itself on using locally grown organic foods whenever possible. Nearby North Fork Valley, once rife with fruit orchards, has evolved in recent years into Colorado's 'bread basket,' with 'organic' being the operative word. The resort's creative and eclectic young chef also oversees a large organic garden on the property and designs his menu around what is fresh and in season.

The resort complements its homegrown cuisine with a wide selection of locally produced wines. Vintner-entrepreneurs (and some adventurous souls looking for a quieter life) are using the region's rich soil and sunshine to produce delicious pinot noirs, pinot gris and other varietals and blends."

So this was another interjection, right? He talked a little bit about what he did, but then he went back and expanded more about the details of his stay.

"After our stay at Smith Fork Ranch, we decided to change it up a bit and mix a little fly fishing with rafting at nearby Gunnison River Farms." So you noticed it seemed like in the beginning this piece was gonna be just be all about that one specific place that he's stayed. However, now they're somewhere else. And this is one of these things about this diary-style features that I said right up front, there's no objective, and there's no clear connection between the places that are being mentioned. And that's okay, that's how these pieces work, they don't necessarily have a thread except that this is what the writer did, okay? So the writer continues.



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“The resort is tucked into an old fruit orchard on the banks of the Gunnison River with cathedral-like canyon walls as a backdrop. Here, you can fly fish right in front of your private cabin or join a guide for single or multi-day float-fishing trips through legendary Black Canyon Gorge. Fishing or not, rafting this gorge was one of the most magical and beautiful experiences of our entire trip.”

So you’ll see here’s like an opinion and as I mentioned, opinions in these type of pieces tend to fall flat, so you need to sprinkle them very sparingly. The writer continues.

“Our guide, Ben Magtutu, grew up in the region fishing with his father, who was one of the first guides to take guests down Black Canyon Gorge. Magtutu has a wealth of local knowledge. He also teaches high school science; so, in addition to mastering our fly-fishing technique, we learned pretty much everything about the gorge, from hydrology to geology.

After visiting Gunnison River Farms, we stepped up our rafting game and took a weeklong trip down the mighty Colorado River ... sans guide! This may sound a bit insane, but the Ruby Canyon stretch of the Colorado is not only amazing and breathtaking, it’s also rather calm (class I-II rapids, maximum). The many campsites along this 25-mile stretch of the river are situated at the mouths of long canyons that stretch inland and provide amazing hikes up to breathtaking vistas.”

Now this one of those things where you’re like, well this is a little vague, inland amazing hikes, but then the author gives you something specific, okay.

“One of these memorable hikes, Rattlesnake Canyon, ascends to a ridge where there are nine towering, windswept sandstone arches. Bring plenty of water and avoid the middle of the day — it can get mighty hot out there.

After all this outdoor action, we settled into the state’s capital city, Denver, which is experiencing a renaissance of chic new bars, restaurants and hotels. We stayed at the recently opened Maven Hotel, located in the ‘Dairy Block.’ Once home to the Windsor Dairy company, this ultra-hip new mini-district is in the heart of Denver’s fashionable “LoDo,” or Lower Downtown, area

The Maven is right across from the city’s big-league baseball park, and as it just happened to be the Fourth of July, we not only caught a game but also got to enjoy an awesome post-game fireworks display while resting in the cool grass of the baseball diamond.”



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And here's that sentence like I said, it doesn't quite have the same weight as a lot these features because there's not an arc. So the writer ends, "Not a bad ending to an epic summer holiday." So there's that little bit of resolution but it doesn't really have that transformation, that epiphany type moment. So just going back up a little bit you'll see where we got out of our three things.

So we began with the lodge, talking about the lodge itself, and then the writer doing fly fishing there at the lodge, and then the meals at the ranch. And then we started to get more vague, right? So we talked a little more about this fishing with the guide and then suddenly, they're on the Colorado River. And then suddenly there's hiking, and then suddenly they are in Denver, then there's this hotel and then there's a baseball game. And that's where it starts to get like it's really coming pretty fast, and here is maybe a sentence or less per item.

So that's the trajectory that diary-style pieces take. And I'll just drop a couple more in the chat box for you. Let me see if it follows me when I switch tabs, there we go. So I'll just drop of a couple in the chat box for you so you can see some of these other ones. So you can map out the same trajectory that I talked about in all of these pieces. Where they begin very quickly, very directly why is the writer there? What is the writer telling you about?

And then they get right into these three slightly more fleshed out examples on what they did on their trip. And then they start dropping in that round-up style bit where they are just here and then they're there and then they're there. And you don't necessarily know how they got them from here to there, but there's just names, and there's museums, and there's attractions, and then there's hikes, and then there's hotels. That's how these pieces end.

So speaking of endings, I know we're already over time, so we let me get back to slides, and we're gonna talk about pitching. So any question about pitching that you guys have been holding on to very graciously because I asked you to hold on to them, now it's time to pull those up. Because I'm gonna talk about pitching and like I said, there's a bit of a delay. So this is the time for you to mention your pitching question to the chat box, see if I can weave them in a slide about pitching.

But here's some examples and like I said, in the chat box other diary-style pieces that you can take a gander at after the call, and you will see that same structure that we talked about. And those sentences where when the writer writes about him or herself, you feel like air go out of the piece a little bit. You can feel it because of the juxtaposition between with the description and talking about a place and the place being subject. And then suddenly being, "I went here, I went here, I did this."



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But the writer is saying I did this, and I did that, is what causes some action to move the piece along. Because if it was just all the background about that ranch then we would just start to feel like it was marketing copy at some point. It would just feel like we were reading the website of the ranch. So the connective tissues of the trip is, “I went here. I did this.” But the muscle, what really does the work is those descriptions of the different places.

So let me just take this question, a question from Kirsten. So when pitching editors do we actually say to them I’m pitching a diary piece or a quest piece whatever, or are these terms for narrative feature styles that you’re using to help explain them to us, but to an editor we’d actually say, “I’m pitching a first-person narrative feature etc.” You might wanna check out our...we’ve got a replay of our webinar on how to craft travel article features coming I think quite a bit later this month. But we’ve also got the “How To Craft Travel Feature Webinar,” in the webinar library, and I’ll pull up that one for you.

So in the pitch of any kind, you usually say, “I’m pitching an article for your blah, blah, blah section.” And blah, blah, blah can be your journal section, your where to go next section, your...like the local section. But you wanna use whatever is the name of the section that the editor uses. Because editors have been trained differently on it all, and they all have different definitions of things. Whether it’s something from one publication to the next. So like one publication of journal review a teacher section. One publication will have journal be its front of book section.

So even outside of the types of terms that I’m using, editors have competing terms for different things. So when you talk to an editor and when you talk to anybody that you’re trying to sell anything to quite honestly, you wanna use the same things that they say. So here is that webinar that I had just mentioned that talks about how to craft a pitch itself. So when you’re pitching these pieces specifically...that was more of a general question. When you’re pitching these pieces specifically...I’ll tell you the truth, editors are really spooked by writers that they don’t know very well these days and for very good reason.

A lot of writers these days are very flaky. They’ll take on a piece, and then they won’t turn them in. I’ve noticed a lot of editors these days giving new-to-them writers very, very short deadlines, and that’s either because they’re only taking a chance on this writer because the person who originally had the article flaked, or they’re giving you a short deadline to see if you actually pull it off, and if you don’t then they’re gonna assign it to someone else.

So there’s a lot of mistrust on the part of editors these days, and that’s because the people who are out there pitching are not those of you who are super diligent and willing to put time to make sure everything is perfect. Which is why I want you guys all to be pitching more.



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But what that means is that the diary-style piece which really depends a lot on the quality of the writing and how interesting the trip was, is gonna be a hard sell to start with.

You do not wanna pitch a diary-style piece to an editor that you've never worked with before unless there is a section in that person's publication whether it's a newspaper, or online or in a magazine that's really specifically for diary-style pieces and you have a cool destination. You have a cool reason why you are the one who should write this piece.

Maybe you've gone somewhere that's really hard to get to or you've gone somewhere that you have a personal connection to. Otherwise, it's hard to sell these first out the gate to an editor you haven't worked with previously. But the beautiful upside of that...like I said there's a lot of need for these pieces especially in newspapers. And newspapers will take these if you haven't worked with them before because it's what they publish.

So this is more when I say they can be really a hard sell the first time if they don't have a dedicated section, that's more for places like magazines and especially those trade publications, okay? But newspapers and websites like BBC. this is what they publish, so they're very used to getting pitches for these types of pieces. So when you're working with an editor that you've worked with a lot, the great upside of is they are really happy to have you take on a diary-style piece, because they know you. They trust you. They know that they know that they approve of your writing. They approve of your judgment. And that you're not just gonna write something that comes back and they're like "There's just too many things in here that aren't interesting to our audience." Right?

Remember what I said that part at the end which is around up that curation of it. It's like when I was talking about guidebooks before. It comes from the voice. It comes from the discretion and the judgment of that writer whose voice you trust. So if you don't have that relationship yet with an editor they can be skittish to assign it with you. But once you do have that relationship they'll give you a ton of them. And that's why trade magazines are really great, because once they know you they're really happy to give you tons of those destination pieces.

Now the flipside with newspapers though...remember I said newspapers are used to these. Like they're assign them to you first time out, more of you in fact should be pitching newspapers because they're so easy to get into, because not so many people are pitching them these days. A lot of them do still pay quite reasonably compared to what you're getting paid for small magazines and websites.



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However, you cannot pitch a diary-style piece from a press trip to a newspaper. And it doesn't matter whether they have a press or policy or not, it is more because if they do not know you, and you're pitching a piece that's based on a press trip, they can just smell it from your writing. They can just tell from the itinerary all the press trips that are running. So that when writers send them pitches especially when they start seeing like 20 writers sending them pitches at the same time or whatever, or there are many people on the trip, they know that those are all coming from that same press trip. And that those aren't necessarily ideas that the writer had because they were great, because that place was interesting but it's because it was included on the press trip.

So if you have gone on a press trip and you are pitching a diary-style piece, you need to be pitching not just around the itinerary, but you need to be really pitching around the sense of place that you discovered, perhaps if you did a day before or a day after a trip. So Spud Hilton who is the Editor at "The San Francisco Chronicle" said "He'll take a pitch. He'll take a piece that you wrote that's from a fam trip, but he shouldn't be able to tell from reading your pitch that it's from a fam trip." And this is another one of those things like that Supreme Court justice pornography quote. You might say, "How can he tell?" But he knows it when he sees it.

So I'm gonna leave you guys with that.

So Kirsten had one question she said she just wanted to make sure whether or not we should use the actual terms diary requests. "Yes, I'd always refer to the magazine section, which would also tell the editor what style narrative pieces. So maybe my question is that."

And yeah, that's really the thing is that I teach you how to write in these articles "Nuts and Bolts Series," different types of articles, more so that you can see how to do a piece once you get an assignment in terms of the structure, but you have to lay out on top of that structure the specific things that the specific magazine that you're working with does, and every magazine is different. So these structures that I teach you, we look at examples so you can see how it works in real life. But that structure is the important part. That's what you build on top of using the voice of the magazine, using the style of the magazine, but it all starts with that structure.

So thank you guys so much for joining us, and I hope you have a great rest of your week, and for those of you who are gonna be at the Women Travel Summit, I'm arriving tomorrow and I will see you guys soon.