

## FREELANCE TRAVEL WRITING TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

By Stephanie Jackson

**Question:** *I want a career in travel writing. Any ideas where I begin?*



Nothing is impossible, but becoming a travel writer is certainly far from easy. It's a career path that requires determination and persistence, in addition to writing skills. Vast numbers of travellers, even those whose journeys have been merely a weekend outing, consider they have a tale to tell, so book publishers, and editors of magazines and newspapers, inundated with unsolicited, often poorly written material, rarely have time to look at work from new writers.

The first decision you'll need to make is whether you want to write articles for newspapers and magazines, or are going to jump in at the deep end and write a book

If you intend to write a book, you'll need to have either a unique destination or a truly amazing adventure to share with readers, or be a highly skilled writer with a unique way of presenting information about a well-known destination.

The best way to ease yourself into a career as a travel writer is by compiling articles for newspapers and magazines, although this too is far from easy. The first step, finding a destination to write about, is simple. And you don't need to go on extravagant jaunts around the world to find wonderful places to write about. Look around, and you'll find there are fascinating places right under your nose that travellers in your own region will be eager to read about.

The majority of travel magazines use a considerable amount of material provided by freelance writers, but many newspapers use only material compiled by in-house journalists. Ensure that the publication to which you intend to submit your article does, in fact, accept freelance material.

It is imperative that you study the publication to which you intend to submit your article before beginning to compose it. You must aim to provide exactly what the editor is looking for, and that means providing an article written in the specific style that he/she prefers, and of the correct length. Submitting a 2-3,000 word story to a publication that primarily uses articles of half that length is guaranteed to result in rejection. Your story may be exciting, entertaining, and/or informative, but no editor will waste valuable time cutting text dramatically, however good the overall content may be.

It is also essential to have some knowledge of the publication's readership. If your travel article relates to an African safari during which you slept under the stars and had a near-death experience riding the rapids of the Zambesi River, you may consider that everyone will want to read about it. But if you submit the story to a magazine aimed at readers who prefer a softer safari adventure with nights spent in the comfort of a quality hotel, and waterways explored on board a modern cruise boat, your story will be promptly rejected. You must always write with both the requirements of the editor and the reader foremost in your mind.

If you are serious about becoming a travel writer, you must also have considerable photographic skills, as the majority of newspaper and magazine editors prefer to buy a story with pictures as a complete package.

The road to success as a travel writer is a long and often hard one, but if you remain optimistic, and persevere, despite a deluge of rejection letters, you'll ultimately reach your goal - and what a great time you'll have once you get there.

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