

Become a Freelance Travel Writer in 10 (not-so-easy) Steps by Leyla A.

Whats not so easy about becoming a travel writer?

You travel, write down everything you see and hear, sprinkle in your incredibly funny personal experiences, and send an article off to a dozen editors. Someone will buy it, right?

Oh so very wrong!

Travelers with personal stories are a dime a dozen - but good writers with a strong story are as rare as a Christmas heatwave in Montreal.

How do you beat the odds to become a travel writer? The following 10 steps wont necessarily make you rich and famous, but they will increase your chances.

1. Match your story to your audience.

Writing a story about Paris will be different if youre writing for a family with small children or a romantic young couple. Both are in Paris - but the stories will be different. Make sure youre clear on your target.

2. Make sure your story is well written.

Travel writing is no different than any other writing - you need good grammar, flawless punctuation, active voice, flowing style, and unerring accuracy. Edit yourself. Cut, cut, cut. Keep it tight. If your writing is a bit weak, practice by submitting articles to web article directories. And read good writing.

3. Give editors what they want.

Read writers guidelines closely. A common beginners mistake is to think they know what a magazine wants more than its editor does. Follow guidelines scrupulously - if theyre looking for a piece on Bulgaria from a seniors point of view, thats what you need to give them - or go somewhere else with your story.

4. Have an angle.

Switzerland is a destination, not a story. The decline of yodeling and cow running is a story. The best, worst, highest, cheapest, furthest, newest hotel/restaurant/attraction is a story. Someone doing something different is a story.

5. Know your stuff.

That means doing your research before you go - know your facts, the rest will follow. Take copious notes - on what you see, hear, smell, feel, spend. It may not seem important right now, but those details will give your story texture when you sit down to write.

6. Use interviews.

Quoting experts or everyday people will lift your story off the page. Having the baker tell you how he gets up at three to start mixing dough is far more compelling than coldly describing how a baker gets up at three... Its all about voice - use those around you.

7. Provide visuals with your piece.

Photographs will help your story sell. Make sure you check the writers guidelines - if they want slides, dont send them digital. If your package isnt as requested, an editor might not even get as far as reading your story. Shell just throw it out. There are plenty of writers out there willing to deliver exactly what she wants.

8. Always query.

Editors have their preferred ways to be queried or pitched - by email, phone or post. Dont pitch the same story elsewhere - until they decide whether they want it. And that can take weeks or even months. Only submit simultaneously if the markets dont overlap - for example newspapers in different cities, magazines in different regions.

9. Expect rejection.

This is inevitable and often has nothing to do with your writing. Your story may be about winter and the magazine is prepping for summer. When you least expect it, youll get an assignment.

10. Hit the road.

Armed with your assignment - GO!

Leyla A. is a development professional and former journalist with a love of travel writing. Visit <http://women-on-the-road.com>, her imaginative and offbeat web resource for women who love to travel on their own.

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