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Travel writer. Those two words are among the most alluring in the English language. No less a luminary than Mick Jagger has said that if he couldn't be a rock star, he'd like to be a travel writer. Drew Barrymore has claimed the same.

It is an enticing image. There you are, lying on a chaise longue on a white-sand beach by an aquamarine ocean, describing how the palm trees rustle in the salt-tinged breeze. Sipping a café crème in a Parisian cafe, scribbling impressions in a battered notebook. Bouncing through the African bush, snapping photos of gazelles and lions, then ending the day listening to spine-tingling tales over gin and tonics in the campfire's glow.

If you love to travel and you love to write, the dream doesn't get any better. But how does it tally with the reality?

The rewards of travel writing

Every year a few dozen people around the world make a living traveling and writing full-time – and if that's your goal, go for it! This book will give you all the information and inspiration you need in order to try to reach that dream.

But you don't have to get paid full-time or even part-time to profit from your travel writing. Whatever your goals as a traveler and writer, the rewards of travel writing – and of approaching travel with the travel writer's mindset – are numerous. First and foremost, you become a better traveler. You arrive at your destination having already learned something of its history, culture and important sites, making you far better able to explore and appreciate what it has to offer. Also, because you are on the lookout for trends, unique places to visit and essential hot spots, you gradually build up a store of knowledge, becoming more and more of a travel expert.

When you are on the road, traveling as a travel writer will force you to pay attention. You will look more closely, listen more clearly, taste more carefully – and continually reflect on what you're experiencing. As a result, your travels will be deeper and richer. In addition, you will often be able to go behind the scenes at a restaurant, store or hotel, to take advantage

of special access to a historical site or museum exhibit, and to speak with intriguing people – from archaeologists and curators to chefs and shamans – whom everyday travelers would not be able to meet.

Finally, after you have returned home – or if you're blogging, while you're still on the road – you will be able to relive your journey over and over in the course of writing about it. And when your account is published, sharing your travel experiences with others – whether in a magazine, newspaper, travel website or personal blog – will further multiply your pleasure, forging connections with others who share your passions. All these effects will broaden and extend the significance and depth of your travels.

These riches come with a corresponding responsibility, of course. As a travel writer you will have a fundamental commitment to your reader to explore a place deeply and fully, and to report the information your reader needs to know by writing an honest, fair, objective and accurate portrayal of that place. Integrity is the travel writer's compass and key.

What do you want to write?

The travel-writing trail is long, and there are numerous destinations along the way, from Just-Blogging-My-Journal and Writing-as-a-Hobby to Trying-to-Make-a-Living and Want-to-be-the-Next-Bill-Bryson. Travel publishing today presents an unprecedented wealth of mentors to learn from and outlets to target.

If your principal goal is to share your travel experiences with others, without necessarily receiving compensation, that's easier now than ever before. You can create your own space online where you can post your writings and photographs. In thousands of blogs, everyday travelers are sharing their wanderings with the world. There are also community websites where you can post your experiences and opinions. If you just want to create and communicate, these options are for you.

If you want some compensation for your creative communication, you'll want to target websites that pay, as well as newspapers and magazines. Starting a blog and building it to the point of making money is an option for entrepreneurial writers, or it can act as a stepping stone to other opportunities. Writing books, whether guidebooks or travel literature titles, is another option.

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Becoming a travel
photographer



On the most basic level, a camera can be used to make a visual record of a place you want to write about later. Use it to take photographs of particular features you may want to remember in detail, and that might figure in an article or story. When writing your piece, you can surround yourself with images of your destination or journey to help transport you back to a situation or place.

Photos can be used to record information you may want to use in your story, such as details provided in a historic plaque, temple marker or store sign, or in the printed explanatory text hung beside a work of art in a museum or gallery – quite simply, they can save you from having to take copious notes. These ‘memory snaps’ can be taken on any light, compact digital camera, or even on your cell phone.

Ideally, however, you want to be taking photos of publishable quality, so that if the opportunity arises you can sell both your words and your pictures to a publication. This is a very different ball game and demands rather more sophistication in terms of equipment and photography skills.

How photography helps your writing career

Photography and writing are two very different arts, requiring completely different skills. However, it does make sense to think about developing your photography skills if you are a travel writer. You are there, in situ; you know what you're going to write about and you're in a unique position to illustrate your words.

If you're writing your own travel blog, you'll probably want to use your own photos to accompany and enliven your posts; and for many online publications the expectation is that you'll supply images along with your story. If you're writing for a newspaper, having relevant photos could help you get published. Your story might be good but not so great that the editor simply has to run it; having compelling photos can sometimes push the editor into deciding to publish your package. Photographs taken by guidebook authors are sometimes published in the guidebook they're writing, particularly if they're researching a remote location or have pictures of unusual or infrequent events (festivals or rituals, for instance).

Glossy travel magazines are very photo-led, and employ a stable of professional photographers who are sent into the field to illustrate middle-of-the-book feature stories. The glossies might occasionally be interested in competent photos for front-of-the-book or back-of-the-book stories, but you have a better chance with more down-to-earth travel magazines. In fact, many tighter-budget magazines actually rely on their writers to provide photos. The better your photos, the better your chances of getting published.

Usually, selling both a story and photos to a publication is obviously more lucrative than selling the story alone. While stock libraries, photo-sharing sites and the opening up of the profession of photography to virtually anyone with a smartphone means that photography rates are not what they once were, it is a way you can potentially boost your income as a writer. If an editor requests photos, always ask if you'll be paid extra (and how much) for any photos that are used.

Choosing your gear

Flip through the pages of camera magazines and websites and it's easy to be overwhelmed by the choice of cameras. Models are updated or replaced at an alarming rate, with every new wave being spruiked as significantly better than the last. You just have to accept that the camera you buy will be superseded sooner rather than later. But it's not as bad as it sounds. Technology has reached a point where the changes are no longer as regularly dramatic as they once were, and the camera you buy today will only need to be upgraded if your interest level or requirements change.

First you'll need to decide between the four types of digital camera that are of most interest to travelers: compact, bridge, compact system cameras and digital single lens reflex (DSLR). Within these categories you'll find cameras to suit every budget and requirement level.

Compact digital cameras, also known as digicams or point-and-shoot, are ideal for taking photos with a minimum of fuss – perfect if you want to travel light. If all you need is an image to publish on your blog, a fully automatic, 12 MP compact digital camera will easily do the job.

Bridge cameras, also known as superzooms or 'all in one' cameras, sit between compacts and DSLRs in terms of style and size; the best of them have feature sets that rival mid-range DSLRs. They may appeal



© Niels Busch / Getty Images

If possible, seek the permission of your subjects when photographing strangers



© Samuel Borges Photography / Getty Images

The rule of thirds is a principle that will help you take balanced, interesting images



© Audrey Smithson / Getty Images

Look for detail that can bring colour and texture to your photography

About the authors



Don George

National Geographic has described Don George as 'a legendary travel writer and editor.' Don has been exploring new frontiers as an author, editor and adventurer for more than 30 years. Currently Editor at Large and Book Columnist for *National Geographic Traveler* magazine, Features Editor and blogger for Gadling.com, Editor of *Recce: Literary Journeys for the Discerning Traveler* (www.geoex.com/blog), and host of the Adventure Collection's blog, The Adventurous Traveler (www.adventurecollection.com), Don has also been Global Travel Editor for Lonely Planet, Travel Editor at the *San Francisco Examiner & Chronicle* and founder and Editor of Salon.com's Wanderlust travel site. Don's stories have been selected to appear in numerous collections, and he has edited nine travel anthologies, including Lonely Planet's acclaimed *Better Than Fiction*, *The Kindness of Strangers*, *By the Seat of My Pants*, and *Tales from Nowhere*. Don has won numerous awards for his writing and editing, including the Society of American Travel Writers' Lowell Thomas Award. His most recent book, *The Way of Wanderlust: The Best Travel Writing of Don George*, was published in 2015. See more at www.don-george.com.



Janine Eberle

Janine sat behind a desk at Lonely Planet for many years, working as commissioning editor and publisher (amongst other things), emerging every so often to research guidebooks from Austria to India. Finally, she succumbed to the lure of the wild and today she's a freelance writer and editor. She writes about her adopted hometown at secretsofparis.com