

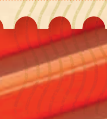


LONELY PLANET'S  
*Guide To*  
**TRAVEL  
WRITING**

EXPERT ADVICE  
*From The*  
WORLD'S LEADING  
TRAVEL  
PUBLISHER

~ DON GEORGE ~

VIA AIR MAIL





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# LONELY PLANET'S

## GUIDE TO TRAVEL WRITING

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# INTRODUCTION

**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 café, 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, it doesn't get any better.

## TRAVEL WRITING & YOU

Every year a few dozen people around the world make a living travelling 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 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 traveller 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 traveller. 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, as you are on the lookout for trends, unique places to visit and hot spots, you gradually build up a store of knowledge, becoming more and more of a travel expert.

When you are on the road, travelling 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, shop 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 travellers 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 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.

## A (VERY) SHORT HISTORY

Travel writing is an ancient impulse: people have been sharing accounts of their journeys ever since they first began to wander. The earliest wall paintings present the prehistoric predecessors of Bill Bryson and Paul Theroux recounting their adventures in the larger world. The Greek historian Herodotus is generally credited with writing the first travel book, *History of the Persian Wars*, with its vivid depictions of exotic sites, rites and fights, in 440 BC. Through the ensuing centuries, traders and explorers from Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus to Henry Morton Stanley and Charles Darwin wrote diaries and dispatches describing their adventures and discoveries in far-flung lands. In the 20th century, travel writing came into its own as a flourishing independent genre with the emergence of such extraordinary writer-travellers as Patrick Leigh Fermor, Wilfred Thesiger, Eric Newby, Colin Thubron and Jan Morris.

Travel writing has continued to evolve in the past quarter-century in the work of such masters as Paul Theroux, Bill Bryson, Pico Iyer, Tim Cahill, Stanley Stewart, Kira Salak, Anthony Sattin and Rory MacLean. Now, a new generation of 21st-century 'content creators' is pushing the boundaries ever further, merging text, audio and video content in inventive creations.

What this means is that travel publishing today presents an unprecedented wealth of mentors to learn from, outlets to target and platforms to construct.

## PUBLISHING OPPORTUNITIES

The world of travel publishing has experienced a kind of accelerated evolution over the past two decades. The technological development and popular expansion of the internet as a publishing platform has profoundly affected its media siblings. Traditional publishers have adapted their print publications to fit the age of the internet, in most cases expanding their presence on the web, re-designing and re-formatting their content for publication on tablets and a range of other mobile devices, and cutting back on their printed pages. At the same time, the network of web-only publishers has expanded exponentially. This online proliferation has mirrored the historical evolution of media: starting out with text-centric websites, the internet is now extravagantly abloom with the contemporary equivalents of radio (podcasts) and TV (videos). Where this media convergence/divergence, expansion/contraction is heading is unclear. But it is clear that today's travel writers can choose from a greater range of potential subject matter and a more extensive and varied range of publishing opportunities than ever before. Here is a brief overview of these possibilities; we will cover them in detail in Part II.



## **Newspapers**

Many newspapers in the UK, US and Australia publish separate sections devoted exclusively to travel. While some of these, particularly in the US, have shrunk substantially in size over the course of the decade, they continue to represent a significant market for both beginning and established writers. In the US, major newspapers' travel sections are usually published on Sunday and range in size from four to 20 pages. In the UK most quality newspapers have travel sections of between four and 24 pages on Saturday and Sunday, and some also feature travel during the week. Major Australian newspapers also feature separate travel sections on Saturday and Sunday, ranging from four to 24 pages. In addition to these, local newspapers often include some travel coverage.

## **Magazines**

While the magazine world has confronted serious challenges to retaining readerships and revenues over the past decade, publishers continue to produce beautifully designed glossy publications that focus on travel, and lifestyle/general-interest magazines also regularly include travel coverage in their pages. In addition, virtually every airline has its own in-flight magazine, which publishes articles about the destinations to which it flies, and niche publications focused on specific subjects, activities or regions often feature travel pieces. Subcategories within the travel world have also developed audiences and publications of their own, including family travel, business travel, gay and lesbian travel, and adventure travel.

## **The Internet**

The internet is the Brave New World of travel publishing. This sector has experienced explosive growth over the past decade, and its opportunities are limited only by your imagination and technological sophistication. From traditional articles to blogs to photo galleries to podcasts to videos, more travel content is being created and disseminated now than ever before. Making money through internet publishing is still a challenge, but as the medium expands and evolves, opportunities continue to emerge and develop.

## **Travel Literature**

Many major publishers produce works of travel literature on a regular basis; these tend to come from writers with already established reputations, but some newcomers break into the ranks every year. Smaller publishers represent much better opportunities for writers who are not already well known. Travel anthologies remain an excellent market for narrative travel writing.

## **Guidebooks**

Guidebooks continue to stretch in scope and speciality, offering writers a range of opportunities, from proposing and writing new books to updating subsequent

editions of already published titles. While guidebook publishers contend with questions of how to complement print and online publishing, they remain vigilantly on the lookout for excellent writers and fresh ideas from knowledgeable travellers.

## Other Avenues

There are hundreds of alternative outlets for the budding travel writer, from product descriptions for a travel-clothing manufacturer to travel brochures for tourist boards to catalogue copy for tour operators. In recent years, the expansion of online options for imaginative and entrepreneurial content creators has been striking; this burgeoning trend promises to keep growing in range, volume and velocity.

All of these opportunities are covered in more detail in Part II.

## THE JOURNEY

Being a travel writer is not all palmy bungalows, Parisian cafés and safari sunsets. It's hard work. But Mick Jagger and Drew Barrymore had it right: travel writing is one of the globe's dream jobs. That doesn't mean it's beyond your reach. The world of travel writing is open to everyone; if you love to travel and you love to write, it's a natural. No one can guarantee that you'll be successful, but it is guaranteed that you'll never be successful if you don't try.

The aim of Lonely Planet's *Travel Writing* is to get you started – wherever you may be and wherever you may be travelling. The book is divided into three parts:

Part I focuses on the art of good travel writing. It aims to give you the strategies and tools to identify your best story subjects from your travels, and then to evoke each of those subjects in a transporting and compelling account. Part II focuses on the craft and business of travel writing, presenting hard-won advice on how to make sure you get your stories in front of as wide an audience as possible – and get paid for them, too. Part III provides an extensive compilation of UK, US and Australian resources, from publications and publishers' groups and websites, reference books and travel literature classics.

Throughout the book you'll also find a treasure trove of tips and tales, including interviews with prominent UK, US, Canadian and Australian travel writers and editors, and examples of exemplary travel articles, to guide you on your journey.

One last point about that journey. This book is intended for writing travellers of all kinds – from aspiring professional travel writers to postcard scribblers and journal jotters, blog-abonds and tome raiders. In the end, you don't have to make money to profit from travel writing; sometimes the richest rewards are in the currency of experience. The goal of this book is to reveal the varied possibilities that travel writing offers, and to inspire all travellers to take advantage of those opportunities. That's where the journey begins; where it takes you is up to you.