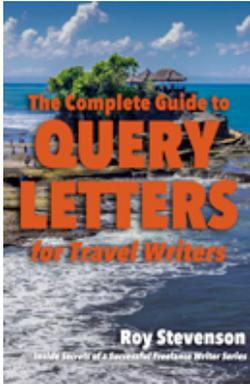


The Complete Guide to
QUERY
LETTERS
for Travel Writers

Roy Stevenson

Inside Secrets of a Successful Freelance Writer Series



The Complete Guide to Query Letters for Travel Writers shows you everything you need to know to craft compelling query letters. Well-written query letters convince magazine editors that you have an exciting travel story their readers will absolutely love. Knowing how to sell your story ideas opens the door for press trips to almost any destination in the world.

The Complete Guide to Query Letters for Travel Writers

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Finally, use your own wisdom as guidance. Nothing in this Guide is intended to replace common sense, legal, or other professional advice.

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The Complete Guide to Query Letters

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Introduction

My Story and Why I Wrote this eBook

I started freelance writing in 2007, after attending a three-day travel writing workshop. Since then I've had 800 articles published in 190 different magazines, newspapers, websites, in-flights and on-boards. I have a stack of magazines and newspapers six feet high to prove these claims.

Within three months of starting freelance writing, my stories began appearing on the national magazine racks without interruption. When I go to my local and big chain bookstores, I can always find several magazines with my articles in them. My work has appeared in magazines and newspapers in the United States, Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

I've had more than thirty cover feature stories. I contribute regularly to more than a dozen magazines and speak at writer's conferences around the U.S. I've been featured in *The Writer* and *Writer's News* magazines, and I write for several writing magazines and websites about the keys to my success.

I have yet to hear of any other freelance writer who has approached this sort of productivity, although there must be others out there. There have been times when I've had as many as 32 articles stacked up to write, and these days I seldom have fewer than ten assignments on my desk. It is not unusual for editors to email me asking if I will write something for them, and fast.

It was only in 2009, when I attended a travel writer's conference that I realized how quickly I had advanced in the freelance writing game in such a short time. This revelation came to me when a professional travel writer on a panel, told us how proud she was to have been published in 100 magazines in ten years. I remember thinking, "Ten years? What's the big deal? It took me only 25 months to do that."

Then, in discussions with other veteran freelance writers at conferences, several were astonished to learn that I'd had such a prolific number of bylines in such a short time.

You might be thinking that my writing success is all because I'm a superb writer. The fact is, my writing is good, maybe above average, but definitely not fine prose.

I don't have a degree in creative writing. Nor do I have a market on great story ideas. I don't teach writing at an Ivy League University.

In fact, my graduate degree is in a field completely unrelated to writing. I started out as a physical education teacher - definitely not a professional group known for its writing. Then I studied to be an exercise physiologist. I taught exercise science at the community college and university level for many years.

Yet, despite my humble writing credentials, I'm clearly doing something right.

Most freelancers are pleased with a 10% to 20% acceptance rate for their stories. When I pitch a story idea I know there is a 90% chance it will be picked up for publication in a magazine or two somewhere around the world.

I'm not writing of these successes to feed my own ego or to brag about my success. The reason I'm telling you my story is so you know that:

if you want to write and get published successfully, and if you have average writing ability, you can sell your articles to dozens, even hundreds, of print and online publications.

I'm a teacher, at heart, so I want to teach other people how to do the things I've done. I've published a detailed marketing manual with my entire sales process explaining how I do what I do: ***Marketing Your Magazine***

Articles: Inside Secrets of a Successful Freelance Writer. Information about how to purchase this manual is available at the end of this eBook.

The eBook that you're reading now, ***The Complete Guide to Query Letters for Travel Writers***, is about one critical aspect of marketing - your query letter. It's your first step to understanding how to successfully get published.

So let's get started...

How to Sell Your Travel Stories

Query Letters – Why You Need Them

A Query letter pitches your story idea to an editor and requests the opportunity to write the story for them.

Query letters used to be mailed to editors (with a stamp and envelope).

These days, the vast majority are sent by email.

When you're starting out in freelance writing, a full, detailed query letter is a requirement. The query letter explains your idea enough to intrigue the editor, and points out where the story might fit into the magazine.

Your query letter shows the editor that you've thought the story through and gives you a chance to show your writing skills. This is your sales pitch.

Then you back up your pitch by demonstrating that you can be trusted to write a good story and deliver it on time by showing your credentials.

Your query letter is framed to offer a coherent and concrete idea that matches the magazine's content. And, you want to convince the editor that you're the right person to write the story.

That's a lot to expect in one or two pages!

Eventually, as you become more established as a writer and build your bylines, editors will get to know you. Some will call you and assign stories. Some will be willing to take shorter pitches, and you won't have to work as hard at selling your story ideas.

But that's later. Starting out, just think of a query letter as your sales tool.

Can I Send a Written Article Instead of a Query?

This is a question I hear from many aspiring writers. Some beginning travel writers believe that you go on a trip, then come home and write a story about it. Then, you send the story off to a magazine or newspaper editor who magically accepts it, and publishes it a few days later.

This doesn't happen.

The reality of travel writing is quite different. Writing an article before selling it to an editor is a formula for disappointment and is a classic beginner's mistake.

This is where the query letter enters the picture. A query letter is your sales tool. It helps you get your story idea accepted before you book your airfare, take the trip, or write the article.

Selling your article before you write it saves time for everyone involved in the process. Most importantly, you won't waste time writing an article that no one wants. Write the query letter before you write the story.

Think about it. What happens if you spend a few days writing your article, and then no one is interested in buying it? You've wasted your time, and you'll feel rejected.

The generally accepted, and much easier approach, is to write the query first. After you've written a few dozen query letters, you'll find that it doesn't take long to crank them out. If you have all your research materials handy it can take you as little as 15 minutes to write one. Some may take longer if they require a great deal of research.

Often I send out the same query letter to ten or fifteen magazines at the same time. Known as simultaneous submissions, it still only takes me another half hour to do this. This is a much shorter time commitment than writing a whole story.

A query letter also gives the editor a chance to see your idea and recommend any changes that he or she would like to see when you actually submit the story later on.

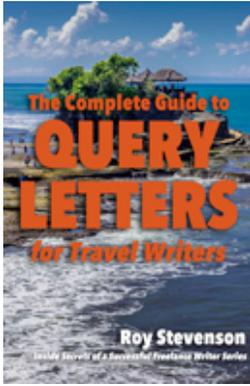
Then, with feedback from the editor, you can fit your article perfectly to the magazine. Perhaps the editor would like your story to be longer or shorter than you suggest, and maybe he wants some interviews or a focus on a different aspect of your story.

Occasionally, an editor might suggest an entirely different topic about your destination. Since you haven't written the story yet, this isn't a problem. You can do it.

So always query first, before you write your story. This will save you so much time and heartbreak later on.

I also believe in writing query letters and getting assignments before you take the trip. There are many reasons for this, and I've elaborated on this topic on my website. Not everyone does this. But, for me, it's the most proactive approach to travel writing. Have a look at my website if you want to understand more about why it's best to do it this way:

<http://www.pitchtravelwrite.com/presell.html>



The Complete Guide to Query Letters for Travel Writers shows you everything you need to know to craft compelling query letters. Well-written query letters convince magazine editors that you have an exciting travel story their readers will absolutely love. Knowing how to sell your story ideas opens the door for press trips to almost any destination in the world.

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