



The Travel Editor SPEAKS

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As long as there have been stories and books, men have related their travel adventures in glowing terms, inspiring the "stay-at-homes" to see for themselves the many wonders of this world. Poets and artists, using words, paints, and (more recently) photographic film, have tried to portray the beauty of Nature's majestic landscapes. Troubadours have sung and continue to croon of the far-away places. The desire to travel does not have to be aroused in the average person, and certainly not in the average American. This Nation was developed by pioneers who could not rest until the entire country had been explored. It is hard to find an area where some intrepid soul has failed to penetrate and report on the people, climate, scenery, flora, and fauna. And always somebody reads or hears the description and says to himself, "Boy! This I gotta see!"

That's where travel writers enter the scene. Their stories furnish the information and inspiration for the inevitable trips their readers will make. Remember how difficult it was to discourage "unnecessary" travel during the war years? Now we have swung to the opposite extreme in an attempt to boost the travel industry.

Over my desk each day comes a flood of publicity releases, photographs, and manuscripts, which are always welcomed. But each day it becomes more apparent that someone is missing the boat. Many writers approach a travel article from a bloodless guide-book point of view. No attempt is made at colorful writing. Most of these manuscripts are no more entertaining than a geography lesson, and certainly not as accurate.

Don't Be Afraid

Unless you are writing for newspapers, don't be afraid of adjectives, humor, use of dialogue, and the adventure angle. Try to find subjects that have not been worked to death, or write about locations that have much to offer but have not been widely publicized. Do begin and end your story in an interesting fashion. Don't rely too much on an editorial re-write. Try to think up a catchy title. Don't use language that is too technical. Use historical data only to highlight modern-day attractions. Be specific and accurate in travel directions, descriptions, and spelling of names.

Know your publications and their requirements.

Check length and type of story wanted and don't send "fillers" to magazines that never use them. Don't send bus trip stories to trailer magazines. If photographs are required don't write about locations where none are available. Submit seasonal material far enough in advance to be used. Don't say "for details write to . . .". Such details should be in the article. Skip the fascinating characters you met among the tourists. They won't be there for the next fellow. Give accurate details on prices, accommodations, transportation, souvenirs, what to wear, and special attractions for each member of the family. Above all, mention what is free. Most vacationers are on a budget.

Get Unusual Pictures

Huge sums are expended annually on publicity photographs, but only a small percentage of these can be used to promote travel. We believe our readers like to identify themselves with the people in the illustrations and for that reason we want pictures showing some evidence of human activity. Photographs of deserted gardens, empty streets and parks, and lonely country roads may be artistic, but their value is limited. This also applies to cheesecake art. Try to get unusual shots. Be sure prints are sharp and clear enough for good reproduction. Each picture should be fully captioned, and carry information about credit lines, model releases, and your return address. Captions are very important, although they will be re-written to conform to space requirements. Don't submit snapshots or picture postcards. Black and white glossies (8 by 10 inches) are best. Do package photographs carefully to guard against breaking and tearing. Indicate whether pictures are free or payment is expected.

Give the editor a break. Present your material in the best possible form. Supply return postage and a self-addressed envelope with unsolicited manuscripts and pictures. Give all the information required. List potential sources of additional photographs.

A travel editor is only human and usually sadly overworked, with no time for voluminous correspondence. He will be glad to use your material if it is interesting. His job is to promote travel—not prevent it.

And who knows? You may even be able to influence his next vacation . . . if he ever gets one.