

Travel writing “You write travel articles? Amazing!” This is a typical response when I tell people what I do. Then they often say: “I had a fantastic adventure on my last holiday. Maybe I could write an article about it. Do you have any tips?” In my experience, there’s no magic formula, but here are some helpful ideas which I recommend for new travel writers. A trip is a series of events, but people like to read stories. I’m not talking about writing fiction, and, in fact, I’m very careful not to make things up. I think most readers can soon work out when something isn’t true. The challenge, though, is to decide which events from your trip are worth including, because not all of them are. For example, a description of an old man that you saw may be more interesting than the details of your journey to the airport. To get a better idea of what I mean, I would look through some published travel articles and see how other writers do it. Some trips have a physical objective, like reaching the top of a mountain, while others may be more about discovering what a place is like. In my articles, I tend to use the old travel writer’s trick of choosing an event from later in the trip, and writing about it in the first paragraph. This always works well. Something else that I’m keen on is not telling the reader what to feel. For example, if I write about skiing at high speed down a mountain, I won’t say: “It was thrilling.” Readers can decide for themselves how they want to respond to an experience. If I struggle to write the article, as I sometimes do, I will often include dialogue. Which of these two extracts is more interesting to read? “Look! There! The crocodiles are planning when to attack,” whispered Steve. Or this one: “We could see the crocodiles waiting for a good moment to attack.” I know which one makes me want to find out what happened next. When I’m travelling, I note down exactly what people say and do to help me remember the details of situations like this. One trap that travel writers often fall into is saying things like ‘the view was good’, ‘it was a big market’ or ‘the beach was nice’. Expressions like these have been used thousands of times before, so they lose their meaning and are boring to read. I try to make sure I don’t use them. So, writing good travel articles isn’t particularly straightforward. You may have a natural talent for it, though, so why not have a go?