



## **The Perfect Pitch**

5 tips to a query letter that sells your articles to magazines,  
newspapers + blogs

by

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## Fly Away Travel Writing Class

Hello Travel Writer:

Ah, the pitch letter...it's how we writers sell our travel stories to publications. For the most part, it's the only way in. Sure, we can dream of editors calling us to send us off to a remote location (which can happen, yes), but the way in the door is via a query letter that we send off to an editor.

But how to stand out from the hundreds of letters that editors receive each week? There are tips that will help with two things: not getting deleted from an editor's inbox + that will help you stand out. Even still, it's a numbers game...the more "queries" we have out there, the better off we'll land a story. A writer I knew years ago always had 5 pitches out a week. She was quite a success.

Though it's a numbers game, it's also a mix of talent + perseverance, which you either have or you have to foster. Equally important is "getting in the door," which I mentioned above. Hence, the query letter...the all-important ticket to getting your stories published. Editors don't want entire stories right away; they want to know the idea you have and to see a sample of how you write. So the pitch letter is an important part of your job as a travel writer. If you can perfect the art of the pitch, then you'll surely be a success!

Please enjoy these 5 tips to writing a stellar pitch that will get you noticed—so you'll be on the road to getting your story published + off jetting around the world.

xo

Tracey

[The Busy Hedonist](#)

## **5 TIPS TO A GREAT QUERY**

### **1. Do your research**

What comes first is the research.

What kind of story do you want to write?

Once you've determined that, then find an appropriate outlet. Editors loathe when they receive a query letter that's not a match for their publication. So please browse through and read a few stories of a publication that interests you. On the masthead or via a search\*, find the appropriate editor to pitch.

This is one part of the puzzle but an important one: **knowing where + who to pitch.**

It might seem obvious and yet editors receive ludicrous pitches all the time. So please don't send a story on traveling while single to a wedding publication or a luxury cruise to a budget travel magazine or a back-packing story to a high-end magazine...you get the idea. Spend time at the bookstore and read through travel magazines and travel sections of newspapers. Discover what kinds of stories they write and if something resonates with you or sparks your interest, then write this down in your notebook. (As a travel writer, please keep a notebook with you...you never know when an idea will come to mind!)

*\*On my blog I have a list of almost 200 editors and their contact info; it's a resource I use all the time and is a big time-saver.*

## **2. Set the scene**

The opening of your pitch is incredibly important. This is where you draw the reader (in this case, the editor) into your story.

Make sure your opening is enticing...and will make the reader interested in reading more. Having that will ensure the editor will either:

- a.) Buy this story from you
- b.) Keep you in mind for future stories
- c.) Remember you the next time you pitch a story

The first paragraph the editor reads will actually be the first paragraph of your story. Therefore the writing must be strong.

These are the actual beginning of pitches to The Boston Globe Travel Section:

*1. I am about to make a dinner reservation, except that I don't know where I'll be eating. I've been told that once I book a table the location will be revealed. What is certain: I will be eating at one of the "puertas cerradas," or closed-door restaurants, that are the rage here [in Buenos Aires]. These quirky, underground "anti-restaurants" are where many chefs serve their best dishes.*

*2. I am sipping a Pisco sour, a popular Peruvian cocktail made from a native grape brandy, and nibbling on plantain chips and shrimp with sauce made of cocona, a local fruit. While I have come to see monkeys, blue Morpho butterflies, pink dolphins, and the lush, mysterious rain forest, it was the chance to taste Peruvian food in a luxurious setting that lured me here. I am on an intimate cruise (only 24 guests per trip, maximum) along the Peruvian part of the Amazon. The popular chef Pedro-Miguel Schiaffino is leading not only the kitchen of Aqua Expedition, but also his country's rising culinary scene.*

Do you see how these "set the scene?" They draw the reader into an experience. The editor bought these stories based on these opening paragraphs. So set the scene and make sure you have a great hook, which I discuss next.

### **3. The hook: The crucial sentence**

What is your story about? The gist of your story must be boiled down to one, yes ONE sentence.

From the above paragraphs I shared with you, can you tell which sentences in each are the hook?

Here they are:

1. *These quirky, underground “anti-restaurants” are where many chefs serve their best dishes.*
2. *While I have come to see monkeys, blue Morpho butterflies, pink dolphins, and the lush, mysterious rain forest, it was the chance to taste Peruvian food in a luxurious setting that lured me here.*

### **The hook is the gist of your entire story.**

Once you have your “hook,” the rest of the story will flow from this one sentence. Getting to the “hook” can take some work and practice, but once you have it, crafting the rest of your story is a breeze.

Can you think of some stories you’d like to write? What’s the hook?

Start reading other travel stories and when you do, be on the lookout for this crucial sentence. These will help you craft your own.

#### **4. The details**

There are some details we may overlook or forget when we're sending off our great story ideas!

But after you write your opening, which includes your hook, you'll want to make sure you let the editor know:

- **When can you turn in this story?**

If you've already gone on the trip, let them know you can "file" the story right away. If not, let them know exactly when you're going and when you can send it to them.

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- **About how many words will it be?**

Letting the editor know a range, like 800-1200 words is fine. Most of the time, they're going to tell you how many words they'd like.

- **Will you include photos?**

If you're also a photographer, then you're in luck. you'll also get paid for your photos.

The editor may write back with additional questions, such as if you're offering first rights to the story and whether or not you've been compensated for any of the trip (many publications frown upon this while others don't mind at all). We'll discuss this and more during [Fly Away Travel School](#).

## **5. Bio, contact info + clips**

A short 1-2 sentence bio at the end of your pitch lets the editor know a bit more about you.

Things to include:

Where you live

Do you have published stories?

Have you written about travel in the past?

Anything interesting about you that relates to the story?

...and so on

At the close of your email, make sure to list your phone number in case the editor wants to call to discuss the story they want to assign you. On occasion, the editor might want certain information included in your story and will want to discuss.

It's important to list 2-3 relevant links to any travel stories you've written. If you haven't written any travel stories (not yet anyway), then you can certainly link to other stories. If you don't have any at all, then find a way to convince the editor that you are the perfect person to write this story.

During [Fly Away Travel School](#) I'll discuss how to land your first travel story and how to convince an editor that you're **the** writer for the story you are suggesting.

I hope you enjoyed these tips—and I look forward to helping you soar as a travel writer.

**Bon Voyage!**

**Tracey**