

Tracy always knew that she wanted to travel, but she didn't always know how to make it happen. Does that sound like you?

Now, with more than 100 travel articles published since 2017, she's finally cracked the code. Read on below for her take on what you need to make this the year it happens for you.

Lori Allen
Director, Great Escape Publishing

Venturing Outside the Box to Fund My Travel Passion

By Tracy Beard in Vancouver, Washington

When I was 17, I traveled to the Philippines and worked with 30 other kids constructing church buildings. The adventure was hard but exciting, and I returned home bitten by the travel bug.

Today, I write regularly for several luxury magazines, am published in international, national, and local publications, and am paid for the majority of my writing.

I write about gourmet food, luxury accommodations, adventure, and delicious libations, to name a few topics. My typical workday includes indulging in new spa treatments and staying in luxury resorts and hotels in fabulous places like the Napa Valley and Amsterdam. I spend my days interviewing renowned chefs and my evenings dining on their creations.

Merging travel with writing

My first big job was in marketing communications for a computer software company, and my writing career began there when my boss asked me to author articles for the company's internal and external newsletters.

Then in 2004, I founded A Touch of Hope, an international children's nonprofit where kids raise money to help other kids around the world. There, I used my writing to compel people to donate and participate—but the economic crisis in 2008 forced me to close due to a lack of funds.

I spent the next several years trying to determine what path to take next. Then, in the

fall of 2015, I discovered Great Escape Publishing's travel writing program.

It seemed like a good way to engage with my passion for travel while also inspiring others to pursue their passions. It also seemed like a good way for my husband and me to supplement our income and pay for travel now and going forward into retirement.

Using my resources and networking

I finished the course in early 2016 and began reaching out for work without much success. But things started to change by October when I decided to use some of my networking skills.

I contacted the publisher of a small newspaper whom I knew via a mutual friend. I pitched her a story for the "Out and About" section of her paper and asked if she would give me a shot. She said yes, but told me she didn't pay. I wrote the story anyway, and that was the beginning. My first piece appeared in the November/December 2016 issue, and I have written the "Out and About" column every month since.

After I had three stories published, I began pitching other magazines. I attended a conference, where I received encouragement and valuable information about photography, and made many significant connections. I also put time and effort into making connections on LinkedIn and joined several writing sites.

Since I had attended culinary school in San Francisco many years ago, I also found that I had an authoritative voice about food.

What it took to make it all happen

The keys to my success are hard work, a strong faith in myself, and making the right connections. It's important to connect with editors, PR people, and other writers. Also, be sure to meet deadlines, and be sensitive to editors' needs so you can give them what they want.

Of course, it's also important to write compelling, interesting, and entertaining stories, but it's being reliable and a joy to work with that will help you last.

When I write a story, I believe it's my job to paint a picture so vivid that my readers feel that they are in the story with me. They can taste the food, smell the aromas, feel

the excitement in the adventures, and revel in the luxury—and I love being able to share my travels with the world.

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