



writing for the web

How to find homes for stories that matter

by Candace Rose Rardon

WRITING FOR THE WEB

Table of contents



REWARDS
OF WRITING
FOR THE WEB



WHAT
STORIES DO
WELL & WHY



THE ART &
SCIENCE OF
PITCHING



ONLINE
OUTLETS
THAT PAY

Find homes for your
stories—and get paid.

"I don't know if they explained to you -
you cannot waste anything.

- Buy the feet.
- Give skins to Islamic center/organizations,
or then they will sell to the factories.
- "you will get a better price."

Steam rising off the C
with smoke from the bute
dangling from his mouth
decreasing rate.

"God is great." all

"Everything we do, we
name of God."

adnan:
"it's not a song,
it's a prayer."

arabic has 270,000 words - English,
30,000.

- slit skin by two back feet.
- remove -

In A
this word can only be
used for God. "you
cannot say, this ekker talk."

not on television, or the telly.

the skin pickled in my arms

- slowly remove skin from back legs - a
removing the tail.

PART ONE

rewards and challenges

Klaⁿje, Kurbaⁿ

Arachnifile
in the name
of the allah
a day! as

a massacre! - adnan

below a KIWI VINE.

↓ KOWAN.

"This is a traditional Bosnian family. and
They are all doctors, engineers - you
know what I mean? There are families who
can't afford this, and then there are
those who don't want to do it."

For many writers, seeing their words in print

is the ultimate dream

Nothing compares to the tangible experience of working long and hard on a story, and then holding it in your hands.

However there is much to be said about writing for online publications. From helping you build your platform as a writer to connecting with a wider network of readers, the following points are five rewards of writing for the web.



Reward 1: Establish authority

Your authority and platform as a writer largely has to do with the topics that you love writing about—the things you want to be known for. It's one thing to say that those are part of your platform; you can then begin to show it by writing for other online publications about it.

Reward 2: Write for large publications

Well-known print publications can be difficult to break into, but many of these same publications now have a digital component. Writing web pieces for them is a great chance to get your foot in the door, as well as to gain clips from recognized, established publications.

TRAVEL+
LEISURE

AFAR
WHERE TRAVEL CAN TAKE YOU

Condé Nast
Traveler

Sometimes, writing for the digital version of nationally recognized publications can help you establish more credibility than writing print pieces for a lesser-known magazine or regional publication.

Reward 3: Experiment with form

Writing for the web can also be a chance to experiment, play with form, and do something a little different. While print magazines often have set departments and specific requirements for each one, the web is limitless; you can help shape the way a story is experienced by readers.

A Journey in Which I Travel North, on the Wo

The New York Times is a perfect example of experimenting with form—from [“Snow Fall”](#) to [“In Flight”](#) to the above travel article, [“Norway the Slow Way,”](#) they take full advantage of the web to weave text, photos, videos, and maps together, evoking the story on many sensory levels for the reader.

Reward 4: Share your stories easily

One challenge of writing for print is that in order for a story to be shared, a tangible object needs to change hands. This issue is solved by writing for the web—sharing an online story can happen almost instantaneously with the reading experience. You also never know who might stumble across your story, whether thanks to serendipity or SEO.

Reward 5: Know your readers

You can often see who 'liked' an online story, and the ability for readers to leave a comment adds another layer of connection with your audience. We write stories for them to be read by the world; the web helps ensure you're not writing in a vacuum.



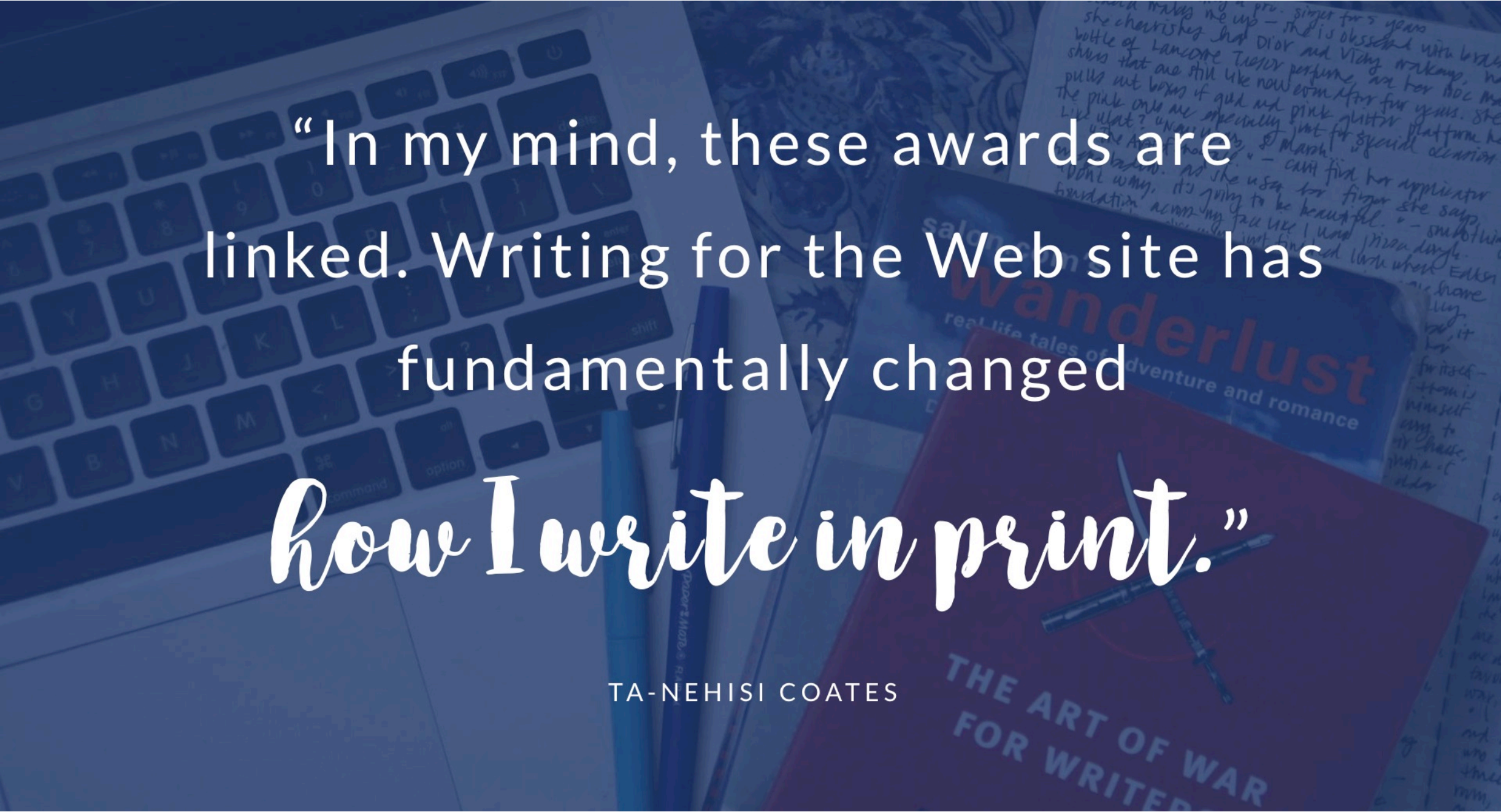
Case study:
TA-NEHISI COATES

*Award-winning writer, journalist, and
national correspondent for The Atlantic.*



When Ta-Nehisi Coates began writing a blog for The Atlantic in 2008, the comment section and its community of readers were named The Horde and became renowned for the quality of their comments—so much so that in 2013, when The Atlantic won the National Magazine Award for best website and Coates won the NMA for Essays and Criticism, he linked the two awards.

Takeaway: *How can your online stories impact other writing projects?*



“In my mind, these awards are
linked. Writing for the Web site has
fundamentally changed

how I write in print.”

TA-NEHISI COATES

11 October 2013 - Restoran Knez. ^{three nights} is not enough.
well, a later - much later - start than planned
- hoped - 11 am. yikes. But here we are, and I
am not begrudging that. sketching is a funny thing -
I'm thinking about what mom said. that she
can't wait it to ever become a chore - that I
wouldn't LOSE THE JOY.
at being able to get outside
concern - but now that I
spend all today. I'm
unfolding in my
intuition, maybe the fun
returning to do with it -
need to remember a
star was an extreme.
we had been enough.
residue. Just like bricks
insist on being so hard.
all around of tension in my chest, and I know
I'll be able to tell when it clears up. I've just decided
will go to sell 12 - if only for the chance to meet
the kids. That thought occurred to me while sketching
yesterday afternoon - that I haven't seen anyone under
the age of 65 in past 12. I think I'm also feeling
overwhelmed about work - about how I feel I can't

mirjana -
"I'm going fishing. It's my hobby to relax."
Lunch at Saturday
Stogodina - 100 years
27
60
66

PART TWO

what does well
on the web and why

2013
Honey wine - Istria wine?
Leaving - I'm still working on my sketch when
Riza comes upstairs and yells at me for being late

why are we to
my 'cheers'!
you the
was training
anywhere?
20 years ago, you
would have had
can't have had a sp
now, you just
don't have
anymore.

Is there one kind of story you are most drawn to tell?

Maybe your heart as a writer is with narrative pieces, or perhaps there's nothing you love more than putting together a photo essay. Here are four kinds of stories that do well on the web, with examples to inspire your own storytelling.

1. Narrative stories

“A travel narrative is the crafted evocation of a journey, usually written in the first person, that is structured as a sequence of anecdotes/scenes, and that presents a quest that illuminates a place and culture.”

— Don George, for Gadling

A narrative is more than just a play-by-play of scenes from your trip; the key to narrative stories and essays is that they have a focus, a theme, an angle—and you use that focus to hone and craft your experience into a meaningful journey for the reader.

Examples:

- “Finding Peace in 21st-Century Kyoto” by Don George
- “The One Game-Changing Sonoma Winery You Can’t Miss” by Laura Itzkowitz
- “The World’s Most Charming Mailbox” by Tawny Clark

2. Listicles

“In journalism and blogging, a listicle is a short-form of writing that uses a list as its thematic structure, but is fleshed out with sufficient copy to be published as an article.”

— Wikipedia

Popularized by websites such as BuzzFeed, the easily digestible format of listicles can also be effective in the world of travel writing. As you formulate stories and craft pitches, consider that shaping your story as a listicle could be a helpful approach, if it's done smart and well.

Examples:

- "50 Reasons to Love the World" by BBC Travel
- "14 Things You Need to Know Before You Use AirBnb" by Jo Piazza
- "99 AMAZING Things to Do in Norway" by Andrew Evans

3. *Service articles*

“These pieces provide useful and important information to help readers make decisions about an upcoming trip and what to do with their time while on a trip.”

— Bruce Garrison

With a service article, there is less emphasis on a story arc than on the straightforward *where*, *when*, and *how's* of an experience. This could appear in the format of a listicle or a more narrative article, but the focus is on providing practical, tangible advice for the reader.

Examples:

- “Why you want a balcony cabin on your next cruise” by Fran Golden
- “Wireless plan erasing Canada and Mexico borders” by Spud Hilton
- “The nerd’s guide to Hawaii’s Big Island” by Pam Mandel

4. Photo essays and slideshows

“Photo essays should have a strong narrative arc, telling the story through images and informative captions.”

— BBC Travel author brief

“At their best, I see [slideshows] as a kind of horizontal storytelling. They are a tool you can deploy to tell certain stories.”

— Alexis Madrigal, for The Atlantic

Just as a narrative story is “a spoken or written account of connected events,” so does a narrative photo essay tell the story of *connected events* through images. Furthermore, these pieces do well online given how visual storytelling is now something we expect from the web.

Examples:

- “15 Scenes from Brazil’s Gorgeous, Underrated North” by Yahoo
- “Slideshow: The Under-the-Radar Cool of Portugal’s Comporta” by Maura Egan and Martin Morrell
- “Where sea gypsies settle” by Candace Rose Rardon



Case study: LILY GIRMA

Lily is a guidebook author passionate about Caribbean travel. She drew on her knowledge of Belize to write a round-up of chocolate-making classes for *Rachael Ray Magazine*.

Takeaway:

How can you adapt your story ideas for different forms?



Lily's piece, "Be Your Own Willy Wonka," in the October 2014 issue of *Rachael Ray Magazine*

PART THREE

The art and science of pitching

Pitching can seem like a daunting endeavor. But a pitch is simply “a form of words used when trying to persuade someone to buy or accept something.” A pitch, then, is just our initial contact with an editor, persuading them they need our story—and usually addressing four questions.

As writers, one of our ultimate goals is to be read...

Pitching helps make that happen

Question 1: Why this?

In other words, why is your story interesting? What is the heart of it?

“If you can’t get your pitch down to a few sentences, it sends the message that you haven’t thought through your story well enough. You’ll eventually have to write a nut graf that encapsulates your idea, so think of a pitch as a slightly vaguer version of that.”

— Dan Saltzstein*

*Questions quoted from Jordan Teicher’s article, [“What You Need to Know to Get a Byline in The New York Times”](#)

Question 2: Why now?

Why is your story of interest *right now*? Most newspapers and many sites such as BBC Travel will look for a specific news angle or hook—what's called a peg—for your story to hang on. Just as you hang a coat or hat on a peg, they want your story to hang on a timely angle that gives it an extra layer of interest.

Question 3: Why this publication?

Where do you see your story fitting within the publication? See if you can relate your story to previously published works, or if there are any current gaps in their coverage. Explain why your story is the right piece at the right time.

Question 4: Why you?

Finally, why are you the best person to write this story? It could be for any number of reasons—it could be the personal connection you have with the place or with the story; it could simply be because it speaks to a passion of yours; or because you've studied the subject and have a degree in it.

When pitching, DO:

- Keep it short (< one page).
- Stick to 1-2 story ideas at a time.
- Use an editor's name (when possible).
- Be sure to check if your story has already been covered in the past few years (i.e. be familiar with the publication).

When pitching, DO NOT:

- Assume that the destination is a story.
- Send the same story idea to multiple publications simultaneously.
- Send the completed article unless the editor has asked for it.



Case study:

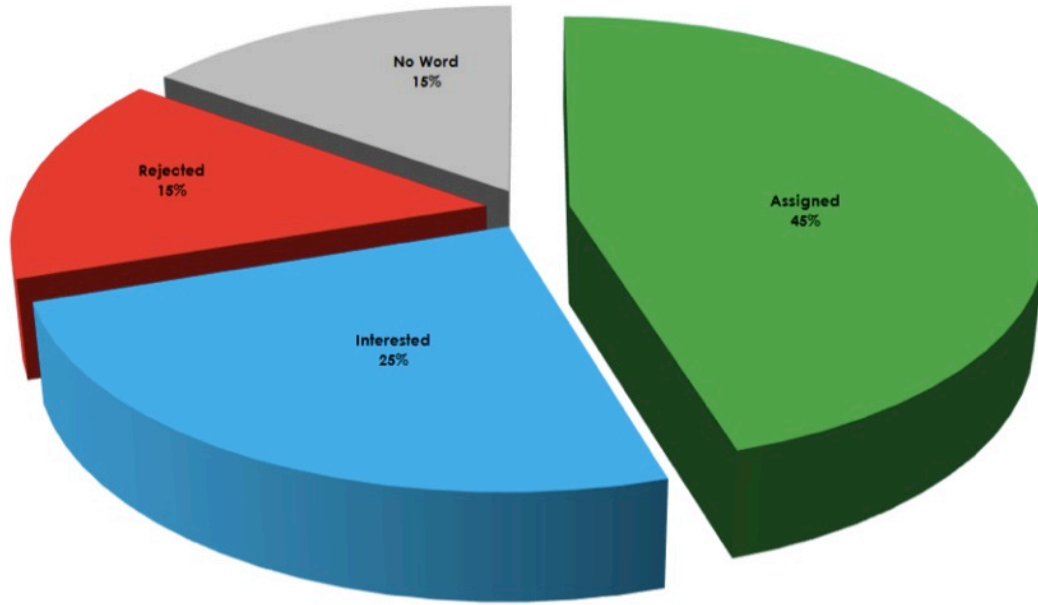
LOLA AKINMADE ÅKERSTRÖM

Award-winning writer, photographer, blogger, and speaker based in Stockholm.

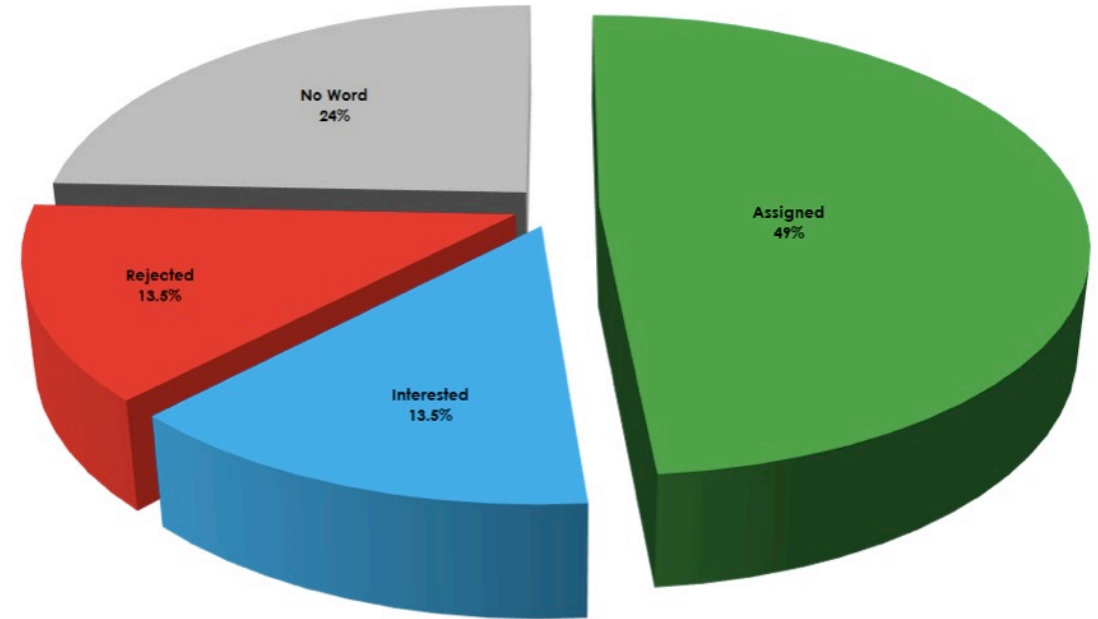
At the end of every year, Lola shares a freelance work update on her blog, which always includes a pitching pie chart. She keeps track of each response from a publication, showing how the greater number of pitches sent helps increase the potential number of stories she is assigned. She has also noted that many of the no-word responses she received were to top publications such as Slate and AFAR, as she continues to aim high for her work.

Takeaway: *How can you keep aiming high while pitching stories?*

2014 Pitching Statistics
Total pitches sent - 53



2015 Pitching Statistics
Total pitches sent - 74



Two of Lola's most recent pitching pie charts from 2014 and 2015

Pitch above your weight

Writing litmus test: Was it difficult to create?*

Pitching litmus test: Was it a scary idea or email to send? Keep aiming high and challenging yourself as a writer.

*Quoted from Chuck Sambuchino



“Action breeds confidence and courage.
If you want to conquer fear, do not sit
at home and think about it.

Go out and get busy.”

DALE CARNEGIE

"I don't know if they explained to you -
you cannot waste anything.

- Buy the feet.
- Give skins to Islamic center/organizations,
or then they will sell to the factories.
- "You will get a better price."

Steam rising off the
with smoke from the but
dangling from his mouth
decreasing rate.

"God is great." ad

"Everything we do, we
name of God."

adnan:
"It's not a song,
it's a prayer."

arabic has 270,000 words - English,
30,000.

- slit skin by two back feet.
- remove -

PART FOUR

online outlets that pay

not on television, or the telly.

the skin pickled in my arms

- slowly remove skin from back legs - a
removing the tail.

Klañje, Kurban

in a day! ^{Arachnife} in the name
of the allah

a massacre! - adnan

work below a KIWI VINE.

"This is a traditional Bosnian family. and
They are all doctors, engineers - you
know what I mean? There are families who
can't afford this, and then there are
those who don't want to do it."

The ultimate challenge of writing for the web is:

*Find homes for your stories –
and get paid for them*

Here are six online outlets that are not only seeking quality travel writing, but also pay more than \$100 per story:

1.



- **What they're looking for:** “New, unexpected and emotionally engaging stories from a global community of editors and authors who provide a trusted perspective on the world of travel”—both feature articles and photo essays.
- **Fee:** \$350-450
- **Editor and email contact:** Anna Banas, anne.banas@bbc.com

2.

ROADS & KINGDOMS

- **What they're looking for:** “Longform dispatches, interviews and global ephemera daily,” all of which should be “strong stories with a compelling, journalistic style.” Anthony Bourdain also invested in R&K last year.
- **Fee:** \$150 max per feature
- **Email contact:** pitches@roadsandkingdoms.com

3. AFAR

the
WAYFARER

- **What they're looking for:** “We publish fresh, timely, and positive stories that inspire and inform readers, answering the questions: Where should I go next? What's new and interesting? As a regular traveler, what do I need to know?”
- **Fee:** Pay is based on story type/format, length, images, and contributor experience
- **Email contact:** wayfarer@afar.com



- **What they're looking for:** ““We are particularly interested in narrative nonfiction [written by women], essays with a research and/or reporting component, and literary journalism with a unique, compelling voice.”
- **Fee:** \$400 per feature
- **Submissions form:** <https://velamag.submittable.com/submit>

5. **BuzzFeed** *Life*

- **What they're looking for:** "Personal essays as well as 'lists and written articles that offer interesting, reliable, and helpful information on a lifestyle topic that's often misunderstood or that doesn't get discussed enough.'"
- **Fee:** ~\$100-150
- **Email contact:** lifepitches@buzzfeed.com

6.

COMPASS CULTURA

- **What they're looking for:** "In-depth, high-quality articles; we don't publish puff-pieces, round-ups or sponsored articles. We take pride in storytelling and readability."
- **Fee:** \$100-125
- **Email contact:** editor@compasscultura.com

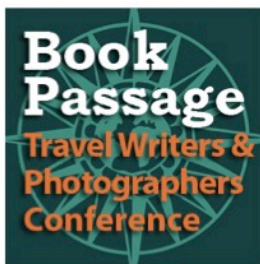


“Stories need to find the
right home, the right audience.

Stick with it.”

CHUCK WENDIG

Acknowledgements



This ebook was originally created for a workshop on building and branding your digital path at the Book Passage Travel Writers & Photographers Conference in Corte Madera, California; I'm grateful to conference co-founder Don George for the opportunity to speak about the topic.



Additional thanks to Rob and Janell Rardon, Brooke Van Groningen, Cara Kozik Brown, and José Bonifacino for inspiration and feedback!

About the Author

Candace Rose Rardon is a writer, sketch artist, and illustrator with a passion for connecting with the world through art.

Her stories and sketches have been published on sites such as *BBC Travel*, *World Hum*, and National Geographic's *Intelligent Travel* blog, and she has been featured in *The New York Times* as a sketch artist and niche travel blogger.

Get in touch with Candace:

candacerardon@gmail.com



Stay connected:



candacerardon@gmail.com



www.candaceroserardon.com



www.facebook.com/GreatAffairTravels



[@candacerardon](https://twitter.com/candacerardon)

they can-
prone as I sit
in the tower,
my trip. open
to raw thing,
no now.

plut,
to Jeff Jordan,
and he speaks with a
mildly menacing
air, as if he
wishes to
with him.

been delayed
then to turn just
along on my face
d for a minute or so,
word dear of the
though. No yet to
the common working
to look over the edge
to thought they were
v; the fighting from
airport, female workers
and blue uniforms
very intoxicating. To
a thrilling place
- my tongue chafed
- and most place.
bright like water.
I feel a sadness in
remembering sense of
he standing on how
up of my body now
at reminds me of how

Wonder fine it is when travel is such a visceral
sensation - when you can literally feel it unfurling
around you. you can feel the connections swirling
like the tides, pulling you through the world. I stood
in the boarding line, glancing at the other coming
departing - for places like Chennai, Denpasar, and
Hanoi. I have been and am soon to
visit. and that is what I see already being a there
of this particular trip - IT ALL CONNECTS.
I wouldn't be going to Singapore were it not for my
connecting to go to
would place
I do
NOT
I the
I in
Every corner
is a piece
that now
my
Ketam (Indo-
China
- San? / Kyo
- RICE pieces as
- ending piece a
Cabaret playing

PR EYEWITNESS TRAVEL
TURKEY
handling

Write stories that matter

who can I
pitch to?
Cambodia, Vietnam?
to Angkor Wat?
between major destinations

