



DESTINATION  
BRITISH COLUMBIA®



# TRAVEL MEDIA RELATIONS GUIDE



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# INTRODUCTION TO TRAVEL MEDIA RELATIONS

Destination British Columbia has a well-developed program to work with travel media—journalists, outlets or social media influencers who specialize in telling travel and lifestyle stories—to create exposure for BC as a destination of choice. Travel media relations is an essential marketing channel to tell our brand story, build awareness and encourage travellers to visit BC.

Cultivating relationships with travel media across the country and around the world, Destination BC and our partners create both proactive opportunities to showcase BC's tourism stories, and in turn are ready with information and support when media approach with assignments and travel plans already in hand.

This guide will help you to prepare your destination or tourism business to engage with travel media to tell your story, while outlining both the benefits and the potential pitfalls. A [travel media glossary](#) is available to assist you.



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# WHO ARE THE TRAVEL MEDIA?

The media landscape is wide. Traditional media includes: newspapers, magazines, radio and television—all of whom also produce online and sponsored content. Digital media includes: bloggers, social media influencers (or content creators) and podcasts. Before working with travel media it's important to understand the format of different media types, their preferred method of researching a story and how to evaluate the potential audience reach that a journalist or influencer has.

## NEWSPAPERS

Newspaper travel sections often have one large feature and, depending on the size of the edition, a few short, more sharply focused articles or travel news round-ups. Many journalists take their own photographs; others rely on the destination to provide photography. Some newspapers are syndicated, so an article or column can appear in multiple outlets and markets. Newspapers generally have a short lead time, meaning the time it takes to produce a story and see it in print can be as little as a week or two.

Most daily newspapers have a circulation of between 100,000 and 300,000. Smaller regional newspapers may only reach 20,000-50,000 readers once a week. The largest newspapers in North America, The Wall Street Journal, for example, has a circulation well over 500,000 and 3.5-million daily readers. In Canada, Postmedia Network owns and publishes most of the newspapers in the major cities across the country. Unfortunately, there are very few newspapers in North America who still have a dedicated travel editor and virtually no one has travel writers on staff. Editors commission freelance writers to produce content or will publish syndicated stories off the news wire.



## MAGAZINES

Magazine editors and writers often have a more targeted audience than newspapers, covering one topic in depth i.e. specific magazines for men or women and special interest magazines such as travel, food, outdoor adventure, and any number of other interests. Magazine writers often take more time than newspaper journalists gathering information and searching out a unique focus; features are usually longer than newspaper articles at 1,500-3,500 words. A professional photographer may travel with the writer, or at another time. Magazines have a long lead time and often plan their issues as far as 12-18 months ahead. For example, a writer may visit a destination with the story scheduled to appear in the magazine a full year later.

There are two types of magazines: consumer and trade. Consumer publications have circulations that can range from 50,000 to as high as one million or more, and target the general public. Trade publications have a circulation of 10,000-40,000 and are designed for members of a certain industry. Examples of consumer travel magazines are those found on newsstands, such as Travel + Leisure and Conde Nast Traveler. Travel trade outlets are directed to travel advisors and tour operators, and are mostly digital. Examples include Canadian Travel Press and TravelAge West.



## GUIDEBOOKS

Guidebook authors are focussed more on service journalism rather than story telling. They are on a mission to provide as many details as possible to assist their readers with where to sleep, where to eat and what to do when in a specific destination. Be aware the lead time on books is usually one year in advance of publication so all facts and figures should stand the test of time. As media outlets have evolved online, the major guidebook publishers, such as Lonely Planet and Frommer's, also publish digital content so working with a writer to post a story on a guidebook's website is a possibility.

## RADIO/PODCASTS

Radio journalists may broadcast live or tape interviews for broadcast later. A radio interview typically airs as part of a larger news report or more general broadcast and attracts a wider, less targeted audience. Podcasts are pre-recorded and tend to cover a set genre only discussing stories that involve that particular topic, such as travel, that appeal to a targeted audience.

Radio journalists and podcasters will be interested in interviewing individuals as well as experiencing activities they can pass along firsthand to their audience. They prefer one-on-one interviews as voices sound clearer on-air. Since they deal in sound, it's not unusual for a broadcaster to look for a unique background sound for their broadcast i.e. a bird call for a birdwatching story or a train whistle for a story on rail journeys.



## TELEVISION

Typically, a TV crew consists of a producer, presenter or host, camera operator and sound technician, who stay on location for approximately a week. Because excellent light conditions are imperative to good visuals, scheduling is often difficult. When Destination BC works with a TV program, they assign an experienced coordinator or “fixer” to work closely with the crew, local DMOs and tourism businesses to ensure the filming goes smoothly. If you are working independently with a TV crew, ensure that you have a dedicated staff person to assist with any special requests, as filming a TV program can be extremely labour intensive and challenging. Destination BC primarily works with international TV crews as the coverage they produce often reaches audiences in the millions; Asian networks can be in the billions.



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## BLOGGERS

Digital media outlets and blogs are a mainstay of the media landscape. Examples include Daily Hive and The Daily Beast. A number of travel writers also have personal websites or blogs, which can range from very small to very large audiences, with bloggers such as Johnny Jet and Everything Everywhere seeing considerable numbers of visitors to their sites. Online travel agencies and review sites, such as Expedia and Tripadvisor also include editorial content on the destinations they are selling. Of course, every traditional media outlet whether newspaper, magazine, radio or television, also posts content online and many have their own blogs. Every media outlet supports and cross promotes their content with their social media channels. Some media outlets will use the same content in print and online while others will produce original content for each medium. Established digital outlets or blogs should have in the range of 50,000 to 100,000 unique monthly visitors to their site. The lead time when working digitally can often be a very quick turnaround.



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## SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

The newest addition to the media landscape is the social media influencer or content creator. They create visual content for one or multiple channels, primarily Instagram, TikTok and/or YouTube. They are well-connected with their followers and viewed as trendsetters. They are skilled at delivering messages in a personalized and meaningful way, and can motivate their fans to take an action.

Influencers with a significant audience typically charge a fee to work with a destination or tourism business, in addition to requiring a hosted trip or experience. Influencers should provide you with a written proposal outlining the analytics of their channels, demographics of their audience, and the return on investment they can provide. Software is also available to evaluate influencers, for example, Destination BC uses Modash. If both parties agree to work together, a contract is then developed to outline detailed pre-determined deliverables, including number of visual assets provided (i.e. photographs and/or videos), posts and stories, and frequency and duration of the content on their channels.



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## STAFF VERSUS FREELANCE

Regardless of the medium, when working with travel media you will encounter both staff and freelance journalists. Staff editors or reporters are employed by a media outlet and work only for that particular company. If a staffer has agreed to cover your story, you will receive coverage in or on that one specific outlet, often through one large, feature story. In the case of a newspaper chain, the story may be picked up by other papers across the country or the network. Once your story is covered, staff writers move on to other stories. Freelancers work for themselves, garnering assignments with outlets who will publish their stories, and sell their stories to any number of media outlets. In the case of an experienced freelancer, you may see more than one story published over the course of one to three years.



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# WHAT IS PR?

In simplest terms, public relations (PR) or media relations is sending the right message, to the right audience, through the right channel, at the right time.

PR generates earned media coverage versus paid advertising. Now more than ever, people are looking to trusted sources for information and inspiration. That said, as publications struggle to stay competitive, sponsored content or “pay-to-play” opportunities with both traditional and digital outlets are more and more common.

Before you begin working with travel media, you need to have a plan in place. What is your goal? In tourism, PR is most often used to raise awareness of a destination, tourism business or experience through editorial coverage, and encourage visitation. Start by asking yourself some basic questions about what you are trying to achieve. You need to have well-thought-out answers to these questions or neither you, nor the media, will benefit from your interaction:

- What is your story?
- What is the key message that you want to deliver?
- Why would a journalist be interested in writing about your business or experience?
- What sets your business or experience apart from others?
- Why now?
- Who is the audience for the story you want to share?

Much of working with travel media is common sense. Do your research, and understand what a journalist or outlet has covered in the past, while ensuring the story idea you have to pitch is a good match. Be truthful and realistic. Don’t oversell what your tourism business is or does if you can’t—or don’t—deliver. Remember, journalists are researchers and will quickly discover if any of your claims don’t match common knowledge.

The term media relations is no accident – at the heart of working with travel media is a relationship. Relationships develop from a number of factors: mutual trust, respect and support, and are maintained through two-way communication. In working with travel media to achieve your goals, you first need to understand their goals. For travel media to do their job properly, they have some specific needs: they require accurate information, they often need to meet tight deadlines and they need to present a story that appeals to their audience. If you’re not helping them meet these goals, it’s unlikely they’ll be able to help you in sharing your story.





Working with other tourism partners to reach travel media makes sense—it reduces costs and it’s more advantageous to work together rather than duplicate efforts. It is important to realize that when you promote your tourism product, you are selling the destination. By introducing travel media to a range of experiences you can create a more interesting story to attract potential visitors. A benefit to working with partners, such as your local destination marketing organization (DMO), is their connection to both qualified travel media and other tourism businesses.

While editorial coverage can be difficult to quantify, there’s no question that PR can be a cost-effective way to introduce your tourism business to travellers. After all, a single story or social media post can reach hundreds of thousands of potential visitors, with the same level of influence as word-of-mouth. At the same time, it’s important to note that the investment in media is a long-term, relationship-based initiative, with no promise of quick results.

# HOW TO WORK WITH TRAVEL MEDIA

## CONTACT YOUR DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION

The first step to working with travel media is to contact your community, city or regional destination marketing organization (DMO). These organizations are the essential first link in connecting with the media. The designated travel media representatives can help you determine the options that are best suited to your destination or tourism business.

Before you approach any DMO, be prepared to explain your business and target markets. Not only can your DMO help you as a sounding board with your story ideas, but they can direct you to key media contacts and serve as an extension to your PR efforts. They already have relationships with travel media, and journalists see a DMO as an unbiased, reliable source for story ideas and information.

Your DMO can help to extend your story through their own channels (i.e. newsletters, media events, etc.) as well as potentially include your destination or tourism business in press trips. It is industry standard for your DMO and Destination BC to site or experience your business first hand before in-turn promoting to travel media. Destination BC

also offers a [Visiting Journalist Program](#), which primarily offers flight support and ground transportation, to destinations and tourism businesses hosting travel media to BC.

In addition to DMOs, there are many other associations that can help you learn more about the travel media, and meet and build relationships with journalists. Here are just a few:

- Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC) [travelmedia.ca](http://travelmedia.ca), which has a strong BC Chapter
- Society of American Travel Writers (SATW) [satw.org](http://satw.org)
- North American Travel Journalists Association (NATJA) [natja.org](http://natja.org)
- TravMedia [travmedia.com](http://travmedia.com)



## SELECT YOUR TARGET MARKETS

This begins with research. To determine what type of media outlets you want to pursue, you will need to choose geographic markets as well as market segments (i.e. outdoor adventure, culinary or luxury, to name just a few) that are a fit for your story. Don't try to be all things to all markets or mediums; ideally you should pick two or three to focus on. As an individual tourism business, it's best to begin slowly reaching out to a few select journalists rather than taking the "spray and pray" approach where you blast as many media as possible with your pitch and risk being untargeted or damaging potential long-term relationships with the media.

Before contacting the media, it's important for you to evaluate the demographics of the outlets you wish to target. Think about where your customers live, what their interests are and how they travel. The geographic range, audience size and demographics of the media outlets you will target should match the profile of the potential visitors you want to reach. Next, consider the kind of story you want to feature, and what kind of format it requires. If it is breaking news that is time sensitive,

you will want to inform news outlets including radio, television and online. If you have a longer, feature travel story in mind, you will likely want to target newspaper travel sections and lifestyle magazines. And, if your story fits a niche sector like culinary, for example, you'll want to pitch it to outlets who specifically cover food.

Whether you are looking to generate editorial coverage locally or globally, Destination BC compiles and publishes [research data](#) for each of British Columbia's key geographic markets to assist you in determining which regions and countries are a fit for your story. Each market profile includes volume of outbound travel, size of market, traveller characteristics, competition, economic profile and emerging trends. Although British Columbia's markets do ebb and flow, generally Destination BC targets BC, Alberta and Ontario within Canada, and Washington State and California in the U.S. Internationally, we are invested in the UK, Germany, Australia, Mexico and China, and encourage BC destinations and tourism businesses to leverage our investment and align your efforts.



## TARGETING MEDIA

To begin developing your target list of media, you'll need to determine which journalists cover similar stories within each medium. Your research begins by becoming familiar with the travel media community:

- Watch TV and listen to radio shows that focus on travel, and get to know the style and topics covered by the presenters
- Read travel magazines and newspaper travel sections. See what trends might be regularly covered, and think about whether your product fits any of these topics
- Pay attention to the 'bylines'—the names of writers to whom an article is attributed. You will likely start to recognize regular contributors and know their interests and style of writing
- Use social media to follow conversations and travel trends of interest. Many journalists—and potential travellers—use social media to research potential destinations
- Follow social media influencers who specialize in your business sector (i.e. outdoor adventure) or story niche (i.e. food) on their chosen social channels to see what they post
- Check out travel-oriented websites and blogs. See what is being discussed and by whom
- Again, work with your community and regional DMOs. They have existing relationships and experience working with travel media and can assist with advice and introductions

## COMMUNICATION TOOLS

In preparation for liaising with travel media, it is recommended you develop a few basic press materials that will help them understand what you have to offer—and what sets your story or business apart. These documents, which differ from your brochure or sales materials, may be used by journalists as succinct research pieces that will help them understand the details of what you have to offer, and provide statistics and information that might not be of interest to the average visitor, but will assist journalists in writing their stories.

Before you begin writing, start by defining your key message(s). A key message should be short, concise and encapsulate the overall position of your business and what makes your story unique. Think of it as an introductory sentence—if you needed to describe the essence of what you offer to a potential client over a handshake, what would you say? For example, is your offering the first, only or largest? Your key message then becomes your guiding statement, and information that you include in a press release or other media materials should support that messaging.

### PRESS RELEASE

Press releases can be an effective way of sharing news. But press releases, when over or mis-used, can be ignored, or worse, seen as annoyances to media already deluged by information. Prudent consideration of using a press release is advised, and the most important advice includes words of caution: Be careful about targeting appropriate messages to appropriate media, otherwise your news releases can be regarded as 'spam' by editors and journalists who often receive hundreds of other pitches daily. It is imperative that within the text of your release, you quickly and clearly articulate the story that you are proposing.



If you determine a press release is the correct tool for your use then basic formatting standards apply. A press release should be no more than one page, have a short and clear title with an optional one-line subtitle and include the date of release. The body of the text should have an “inverted pyramid” structure: beginning with the most important facts which answer who, what, where, when and why in the first paragraph or lede, and as the text progresses, include more detailed levels of information. The release should end with the name, email and cell phone number of the person to contact for additional information. Although it may sound obvious, it is imperative to ensure the contact person listed is available to answer inquiries in the hours and days after the release is distributed.

At the heart of any press release—or personal pitch to media—you need a good story idea. Recognize that for media, a story that will catch their attention will be timely, unique or part of a trend. For example, information about renovated hotel rooms is not unique. However, if the renovation includes an unusual addition—like Kimpton Hotels’ pet goldfish program—then it’s more likely the story will arouse a writer’s curiosity. Similarly, stories that link to a larger trend may be a good fit for a journalist to include in a “round-up” or “top 10” article. Trends can be tricky though, so make sure you’re ahead of the curve and not behind it.

Most press releases are distributed by email, although if you have an announcement that is particularly time sensitive, you may choose to use a paid wire service such as [Canada Newswire](#). It may be appropriate for you to also share on one or more of your social media channels.

Remember, communicating with media should be a conversation—instead of focusing on the number of press releases sent out or the number of emails distributed, focus on creating meaningful dialogue with journalists who cover similar stories to the one you are presenting. Also, [Canada’s Anti-Spam Legislation](#) (CASL) prohibits you from sending unsolicited material.

### NEWSLETTER

In lieu of formal press releases, some DMOs and tourism businesses choose to create a regular e-newsletter, or what’s new sheet, featuring a collection of story starters—approx. 150-word write-ups on new and seasonal offerings, sometimes including accompanying photos. If sending out by email, remember pairing the right message with the right media is still required i.e. do not send ski news to a food writer. Again, Canada’s Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL) prohibits you from sending unsolicited material. A newsletter or what’s new sheet can also be useful when meeting travel media in person, for example, at a media event or marketplace.

## PRESS KIT

A press kit can be a useful tool to provide travel media with vital information about your business. Very rarely is a printed press kit used anymore as a good website can provide the background on your business that may be needed, but having a dedicated section on your website for media or having anticipated information prepared as electronic documents that can be emailed to media upon request is still vital. Here is what a press kit would normally include:

- Fact sheet with details of your company: who, what, where, when, why
- Backgrounders detailing unique aspects of your product/experience
- Press releases with news about recent developments
- Story starters about your business
- Images & Videos
- Maps, if applicable



## IMAGES & VIDEO

Having high-quality photography of your destination or tourism business is essential when working with travel media. Some journalists will take their own photos to submit with their article when visiting your business while some media outlets will send their own photographer to capture what is needed, but most do not have the budget and rely on you or your DMO to provide images. Photos must be in high-resolution and be available online for download.

If you are considering hiring a photographer, do your homework. Contact one who specializes in tourism shots—there is a difference between photographs used in advertising and those for editorial use. Editorial shots should portray your business with everyday people looking natural; the pictures should tell stories or compliment the stories you'd like to see written. Advertising shots are staged pictures that still portray your business, but are more relevant to brochures, advertisements and websites. Magazine art directors and newspaper editors who make photo selections frown upon pictures that look staged. Good editorial photography can be the deciding factor on whether or not to include a photo of your business in an article.

When shooting photography or video, keep your brand and target markets in mind. If you have an experiential offering, you should have visuals of people taking part in or interacting with your product. In addition, if you want to attract an international market, consider the target audience. For example, if you want to pitch Asian media outlets, include Asian models in your images to help the market identify with your product. It is now expected to show authentic, diverse models in imagery. If your destination or tourism business is able to welcome guests with varying accessibility



needs, also consider capturing this in your visuals. For example, a guest in a wheelchair enjoying an accessible trail.

For video needs, media tend to use B-roll—raw video footage shot in broadcast-quality, high definition and roughly edited without sound or transitions between shots. This type of project is very expensive and is cost-prohibitive for most tourism businesses to shoot on their own—it should be done in conjunction with other promotional video needs or agencies such as Destination BC. While this is not something every business would consider, if it is within your budget, there is an advantage to having this material available as it can enable you to garner television coverage. Even though TV stations prefer to shoot their own footage, they often need extra footage on short notice.

Most importantly, ensure you retain the rights to use the visuals for the purposes you intend. Let your photographer or videographer know what you will be using the images for, and ensure you have written permission. Any person appearing in a photo or video must sign a model consent release. You can view Destination BC's release [here](#). Using an image without having the necessary rights can lead to an expensive lawsuit. Repurposing user-generated images from social media without the proper permissions is also not acceptable. You will want to share your images with your community and regional DMO as travel media regularly approach them for images and video.

For both images and B-roll, Destination BC maintains an image bank which can be accessed by media outlets that are looking for imagery to be used to promote travel to BC. You can explore the images available to media through this website at [www.bccontenthub.com](http://www.bccontenthub.com). The image bank generally does not hold assets that are specific to a given tourism business; rather, the goal of the image bank is to provide scenic imagery of BC that can be used for a variety of purposes.

## MEDIA EVENTS

The Travel Media Association of Canada (TMAC) hosts an annual conference as well as a series of BC Chapter events throughout the year for its members. TravMedia hosts IMM North America annually which provides an opportunity for destinations and tourism businesses to meet one-on-one with media during pre-scheduled, timed appointments and networking events. Investment in industry events such as these can provide an effective opportunity to meet with travel media from across North America. Destination BC and its city and regional DMO partners regularly attend these events as well as host their own events and conduct media calls in key geographic markets. This is why it is important to keep them up-to-date on what's new with your community or tourism business so they can carry your stories forward on your behalf, where appropriate.



## TOP 10 TIPS FOR BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH MEDIA

1. Do your homework on the journalist, know what they write about and find interesting
2. If it's your first time connecting with a journalist, introduce yourself and explain who you are and what you do (keep it short!)
3. Always customize your emails, never send a blanket email
4. If possible, request a short, in-person meeting (i.e. over coffee). Face-to-face is more personal
5. Be prepared to talk about your business and your destination or region as a whole
6. Do not pitch the journalist a specific story the first time you meet unless they ask what's new. Spend time asking questions and listening
7. Ask what upcoming stories they are working on and how you may be able to help
8. Always follow-up when you say you will, no exceptions
9. Be genuine and authentic, you are just two people getting to know each other
10. Acknowledge all media inquiries within 24 hours (even to decline a request)

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## PITCHING

After you've determined that your story idea is newsworthy, identified a target audience, and selected an appropriate media channel, it's time to customize your pitch. Usually, journalists are pitched by email. It's critical to note that press releases do not replace pitches. Personalized email pitches are the most effective way to secure editorial coverage. You may attach or link to a press release in your email pitch if appropriate. The format of the email is as follows:

### SUBJECT LINE

- Include a short, interesting subject that encourages the journalist to open the email

### BODY

- Always customize the 'to' name for each journalist (i.e. Dear Peter)
- Personalize the first sentence and demonstrate why the journalist should care about what you have to share
- The body of the email contains the 'pitch,' which is two paragraphs or less
- Include a very high-level overview of the most relevant information (bullet point works)
- Reference or link to other materials you can provide upon request (photos, etc.)
- Reference any attachments
- Always thank the journalist, and include your contact information at the end

### ATTACHMENTS

- Never include anything other than the custom pitch in the body of your email
- Link to documents instead of attaching as they are often bulky and seldom opened
- Ensure any necessary attachment has a clear and descriptive name and is less than 1MB

### FOLLOW-UP

- If you haven't heard back from a journalist within a week, it's appropriate to send a short follow-up email
- Reply using your original pitch email and a short, customized note that: acknowledges they are busy; checks-in to see if there is any interest in or questions about your story idea; or if there's interest in an interview, additional information, etc.
- Thank the journalist for his or her time
- Include follow-up contact information
- Never follow-up with a journalist to ask if they have received or read your press release

## PRESS TRIPS

Destination BC, in partnership with all city and regional DMOs, actively invite travel media to visit and experience British Columbia on press trips, also called media visits or familiarization trips (FAMs). Supporting FAMs is a cost-effective way of creating awareness of your destination or tourism business. This offers an opportunity to have travel media experience your business firsthand and consider including it in their story. FAMs, like all activities working with travel media, rely on long-term commitments. Tourism is a business based on building relationships, and investing in opportunities. Hosting a FAM at your business is an important step in this investment. (See Section 4)



# HOSTING TRAVEL MEDIA

Travel stories are often a first-person account of a unique trip or experience. If travel media have a story in mind or are assigned a feature story as a result of your pitch, they will likely plan to visit BC. Should your budget allow, or with pre-approval from your DMO or Destination BC, as part of your pitch you can include an invitation to journalists to experience your destination or tourism business in person. This will provide them with more in-depth information to be able to cover the experience you are looking to showcase. It is expected that you will cover the cost of the trip or experience for the journalist.

## VISITING JOURNALIST PROGRAM

DMOs and tourism businesses in British Columbia are eligible for Destination BC's assistance through the [Visiting Journalist Program](#). Destination BC's primary means of support for hosting travel media is air or ground transportation to British Columbia, with tourism businesses expected to provide media with complimentary accommodations, meals and activities. In order to be considered for support, the applicant must contact Destination BC before inviting travel media. In doing so, the applicant must demonstrate that the request meets certain requirements (including outlet audience size and demographic information) and that they are also making an equal investment in the press trip.



## PRESS TRIPS 101

### QUALIFYING MEDIA

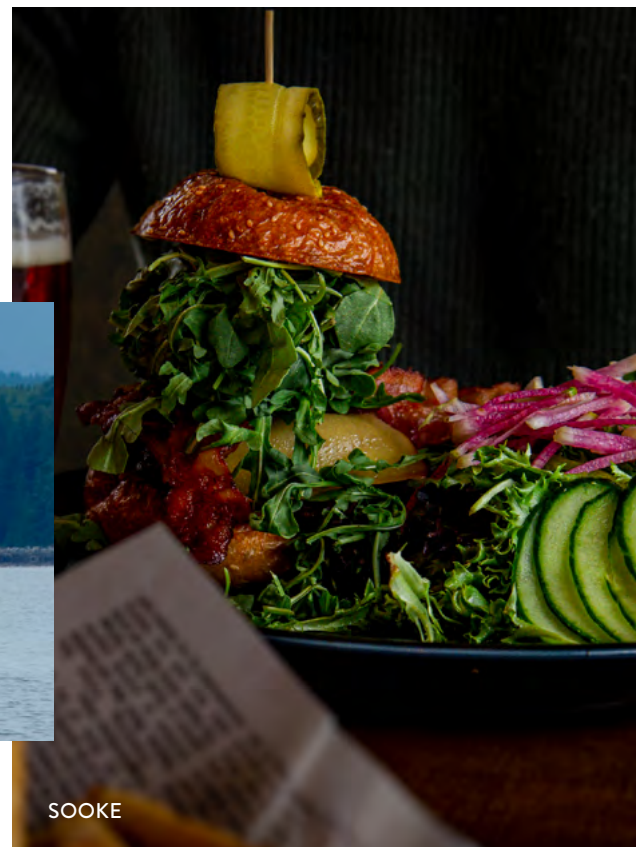
If your DMO approaches you with a travel media opportunity, they will also be able to provide you with a profile of the journalist or media outlet, which will allow you to evaluate if it meets your goals. However, if you are planning to invite journalists yourself, you must ensure you are dealing with bona fide producers. Experts who organize press trips agree this is one of the trickiest and most important aspects of planning. This is where your earlier research to develop a target media list comes in.

The best-case scenario is when a staff writer or editor from a newspaper or magazine, or a well-established freelancer with a story assignment, approaches you and you're comfortable with the results you expect to see. But, if you are approached directly by a journalist and you are unsure about his or her qualifications, contact your DMO to see if they're familiar with the writer and/or media outlet, or have any other advice for responding to the request. They may have background information and, if appropriate, be able to assist with organizing a media visit.

You can also ask freelancers to provide a letter of assignment from an editor (often a confirmation email). In some cases, this may not be realistic—editors often tell their regular freelancers they are interested in an article, but it may be their policy not to provide assignment letters. It is also permissible to ask journalists for recent examples of their work. If they haven't produced in the last year, chances are they won't produce for you. Look at their published work with market awareness—someone may be a great writer, but if that person isn't published in your target markets, they won't be of benefit to you. For bloggers and social media influencers, ask for data regarding visitation to their website and/or social media channels—they should be able to provide a report from Google Analytics or similar statistics services.



CAMPBELL RIVER



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## ETHICS

Travel is an expensive pastime and travel media do not make large salaries. Press trips assist media to see and experience tourism products to produce a better story. But, can a journalist who is being hosted express a true opinion? Well, that depends on the journalist. Experienced media understand that good travel writing means good reporting. While it is more colourful and personal than a news story, travel content must still be factual and paint a true picture for readers and viewers.

As a hosting destination or tourism business, there is a risk that travel media will not have a positive experience at a business and/or may not include a business in their resulting story. **Media coverage is never guaranteed.** When an unfavourable situation takes place, travel journalists tend to omit the business from their story rather than negatively review the experience.

Some media outlets, such as The New York Times and The Seattle Times, do not allow staff writers or freelancers on assignment to receive complimentary trips or services. Instead, the outlet pays their own way directly or may ask the DMO to work out a price for the trip for the publication to pay. In these cases, you should understand you are not purchasing sponsored content. Rather, you are providing a way for the media to experience your product. While some journalists will have a DMO or business fact check their stories, you do not get to critique or edit copy before it is published.

## TIMING

When it comes to hosting media, timing can be tricky. With regard to the lead time needed to experience and produce a story in advance of being published, a newspaper or website may be just weeks, while a magazine plans by the year. A television broadcast usually airs three to six months later. In the case of working with a freelancer, it can sometimes be up to one to three years before you see coverage.

The timeline for planning press trips is also varied. Since many good travel writers are booked well in advance, a three-month lead time is an average time frame for inviting media to visit and making travel plans. When you account for these deadlines as well as seasonal weather changes and other potential scheduling conflicts, choosing dates becomes a balance between pros and cons.

Many tourism businesses prefer to host a press trip in their off-season. This makes sense from a cost perspective, but this isn't always possible. Keep in mind the objective is to get realistic stories and photos published. If you host travel media in late fall to get stories out for the next summer season, they may not be able to take their own photographs. While this is realistic timing for you and for publication dates, make sure you either have photography available to supply to the media or host them when their photography needs can be met.





INVERMERE

### PRESS TRIP SIZE

The best of all worlds is to host individual journalists. You can give them customized attention, be more flexible with the itinerary and assist them in every way to get their story. You also avoid the possibility of saturating markets with stories at the same time with a similar focus. For group press trips, four to six journalists is manageable—this size is also preferred by the media participants. Be aware that writers from large, national magazines will usually not take part in a group press trip, but may prefer

to visit on their own. TV crews will always visit on their own as they have specialized needs that differ from print or online journalists. It is also typical to work with social media influencers separately as they require extra time to set up the perfect Instagram shot or film a Youtube video. Generally, Destination BC does not host media in the summer months as destinations and tourism businesses do not have the capacity. This is similarly true in the winter for ski resorts during peak holidays.

## ITINERARY DESIGN

Creating a written, day-to-day itinerary is standard practice when hosting travel media. Often, journalists will want to know what the itinerary framework includes before accepting a press trip invitation. A draft itinerary should be sent to the visiting journalist(s) as far in advance as possible for their feedback and approval. A final version of the itinerary should then be sent two weeks prior to their arrival.

When designing the itinerary, keep the individual needs of the journalists in mind. For example, if a writer is interested in history, make arrangements for that person to meet the local historian. If a writer also takes their own photos, make sure you allow time for them to take advantage of good photo opportunities. It is paramount that you design the itinerary to include free time for travel media to explore on their own, and provide suggested points of interest or activities for this time. Travel media and especially social media influencers often require time each day to post to their respective channels.

When planning to host travel media, do not confuse their needs with those of the travel trade. For example, tour operators and travel advisors require details that will assist them in selling your products, while travel media need experiences and stories that have some emotion and allow readers to truly “put themselves there.” On a travel trade FAM you would show the variety of rooms at a hotel, but on a

press trip you would have travel media participate in the activities the property has to offer or spend time with any interesting people or “characters” that can help tell your story. Remember, travel media need to experience, not just see.

When travel media arrive to your tourism business, make sure they know the schedule, but have some flexibility. When the needs and interests of media change—try to change the itinerary to accommodate. Don’t “hard sell.” After a busy day, dinner should be relaxing, not time to promote your business. This is when you get to know your guests more personally—remember you are trying to build a long-term relationship with them.

All information provided to journalists should be double-checked ahead of time. If it happens that you or any of the hosts are unsure of a fact, say so and get back to the journalist later with the answer. Remember, what you say may appear in print. It is vital that hosts provide anecdotes—lively, historical stories, perhaps including local characters of interest or a humorous saga about some aspect of the destination—as these are the ingredients that make stories come to life.

Destination BC, and many DMOs, use digital itinerary software (i.e. Travefy) that allows media to access their schedule in real time online and on their phone while they are in your destination. An itinerary created as a written document (i.e. using Word or a Google drive) is also acceptable.



## WORKING WITH TV CREWS

Hosting a TV or film crew often requires a full-time location manager. For TV programs that match Destination BC's key markets and demographics, Destination BC or one of our regional partners assigns or hires a coordinator or "fixer" who looks after everything from scouting locations, developing the shooting schedule, securing permits and insurance, to escorting the crew while in BC. In most cases there are many tourism partners involved in this type of media visit.

By the very nature of the amount of equipment and people, there's little doubt that hosting a TV crew is time and energy intensive. Tourism businesses must expect to deal with the unexpected. If light conditions or weather don't work out, it may mean re-scheduling. If, at the last minute, the producer decides he wants a shot of a cattle drive in the Cariboo or a seaplane taking off from Vancouver Island, it will be the coordinator's job to work with the tourism partners to try to make this happen. Drone usage is often requested, but depends upon the destination's policies and restrictions.

Make sure any spokesperson for your business is articulate and comfortable taking questions in front of a camera or microphone. Also, the most senior position in your business should not automatically be the spokesperson—a long-time employee with interesting stories or a team member with specialized knowledge, like a naturalist on a wildlife viewing tour, may be the best choice.

If you expect that a representative from your organization will regularly take interviews in front of the camera, it's a good idea to consider media training, which provides them with the skills to answer varied questions while still representing your key messages. If you are interested in pursuing media training, your DMO or regional travel media relations representative may be able to make a recommendation. The [Canadian Public Relations Society](#) also has members who can provide this service.





## WORKING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

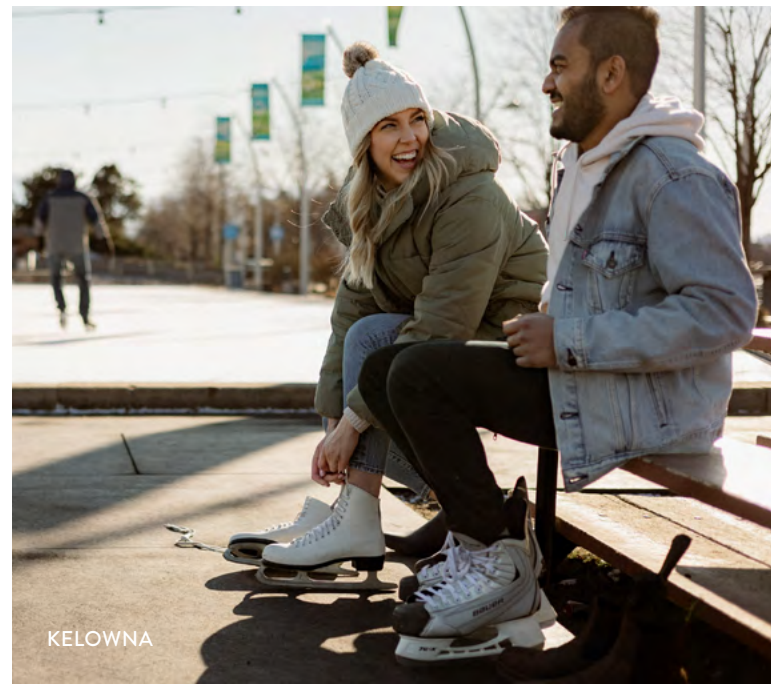
It is common to invite local social media influencers or content creators who live in, or near, your community to an event, festival or opening to generate immediate social media coverage of your destination or tourism business.

In this case, influencers generally do not expect payment for their attendance and will provide coverage on one or more of their channels in exchange for the in-kind experience you are providing them. For example, inviting a food Instagrammer to dinner at a restaurant preview. As the host, look to create highly visual or experiential moments that influencers will want to capture, and provide good lighting conditions. Typically, coverage is limited to one post, story or reel, which will be live for 24 hours versus more permanent coverage achieved through a paid partnership.

If your destination or tourism business is hosting an influencer from out-of-market on a paid partnership, you will agree upon the number of locations, trip length and hosted elements to include. Many of the same recommendations for hosting traditional media apply, but a more fluid itinerary is generally used. Consider providing the influencer with requested photo stops or experiences to be captured, but with no set schedule so they have as much time as they need to capture their content.

Keep in mind, most influencers travel with a partner who serves as their photographer and videographer, so hosting costs double. They also spend considerable time editing their content before posting so rarely will they post in real time, but rather on a later schedule, again, agreed to in your contract.

More detailed resources for working specifically with influencers can be found on Destination BC's Learning Centre under [Social Media Marketing](#).



## AFTER THE PRESS TRIP

It is normal and appropriate to stay in touch with travel media after you have met them during a visit to your destination or tourism business. Like any relationship, this one needs to be nurtured and respected. Within a week of the press trip, contact each of your media guests to thank them for visiting and let them know you are there to assist them. It's logical to remind them you have photographs, videos and background information available should they require. If the press visit was a reactive one—the media approached you with an assignment—it's fine to enquire when the story will be published if this wasn't disclosed in the planning phase. Again, it's important to remember that coverage isn't guaranteed nor is it necessarily going to appear quickly. A media relations program is a long-term investment. Be patient, continue your outreach efforts and in due time the editorial coverage will come. When it does, it is courteous to thank the media for their coverage. A personal email or thank you note is appreciated, although not necessarily expected.

# EVALUATING RESULTS

## WHEN STORIES COME OUT

Some travel media will let you know when their story has been published and send you a link, but more often than not they forget. To keep track of articles as they appear, stay in touch with the journalist writing the story or simply search the outlet online. Your first indication of publicity may be phone calls or emails from potential visitors who have seen the coverage.



It can be easy to set up a Google Alert to notify you when your destination or tourism business is mentioned online. Destination BC invests in a media monitoring service to track travel stories about BC destinations. Media reports for regional DMOs and sectors are available upon request.

Once you have the link to your story, ensure you amplify its reach through your own channels. Share it on your social media channels and tag the journalist and outlet. Ask permission to share it on your website or in a customer newsletter. And, if you did not receive the link by way of your DMO, make sure they have seen it, especially if they or Destination BC, supported the press trip. Also be sure to let them know if you receive any bookings as a result of the story—they love hearing anecdotal success stories showcasing the power of media relations.

## WHEN STORIES DON'T COME OUT

Publications fold, editors change, a devastating storm could hit your region, or a politically damaging news story could appear—all of these things could turn editors off printing your story. There are many reasons travel stories may not be published. You can never be 100 per cent sure that a writer is going to produce after they have taken a press trip. If you are dealing with an extremely busy journalist, perhaps their schedule got jammed and they simply haven't had time to place your story. Often stories appear years later. A follow-up email to the journalist one year from their visit is a natural time to check-in. Again, media coverage is never guaranteed.



HAIDA GWAI

## THE VALUE OF MEDIA COVERAGE

One of the biggest challenges in PR is determining how best to evaluate earned media coverage. There are two primary analytics used in PR for calculating the value of an article.

The first is number of impressions i.e. circulation, viewership, unique visitors per month who read or watched the story about your destination or tourism business. The second, less commonly used anymore, is the equivalent advertising value i.e. what would an article, of the comparative size, have cost if you purchased it in advertising space. You can also track any value-added exposure the story receives through social media i.e. did the outlet and/or journalist share it on their social media channels, how many engagements did it receive. All of these metrics can help to quantify the return on investment the story provides to your tourism business.

Of course, the ultimate success is if a story generates bookings for your destination or tourism business. It would be useful to know the number of bookings you can attribute to a specific story, although this can be difficult to track precisely. It is up to you to put measures in place to help track where your bookings are coming from and which of your sales and marketing activities—media relations or otherwise—are successfully driving business.



## TRAVEL MEDIA GLOSSARY—A TO K

Angle	The point of view taken in a story
Art Director	The person in charge of an outlet's visual layout
Assignment	An editor's confirmation a story will be published
Assignment Letter	A letter from an editor or publisher confirming a journalist will be doing a story on a specific subject
B-Roll	Unedited broadcast-quality video footage
Byline	The credit line for the author of an article
CASL	Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation
Clippings	Copies of articles published in newspapers/magazines/online; also called tearsheets
Comp	Complimentary
Consumer Publication	A general-interest or specialty publication targeted at the general public (for example, Travel + Leisure)
Cutline	The caption describing a photograph or graphic
DMO	Destination Marketing or Management Organization (for example, Destination BC or Destination Vancouver)
Editor	The person overseeing the editorial content of an outlet
Fact Checker	The person who checks details in a story for accuracy
Familiarization Trip (FAM)	A trip designed to familiarize travel media with a destination or tourism experience; also called a press trip or media visit
Fixer	A person who coordinates logistical arrangements for a TV or film crew; often working on-location with the crew
Freelancer	A journalist who works for themselves and produces for a variety of outlets

## TRAVEL MEDIA GLOSSARY—L TO Z

Lede	The first sentence or paragraph of a written article or press release
Lead Time	The time between the conception of a story and when it is published
Masthead	A statement of title, ownership, editors, etc. of a newspaper or magazine. In the case of newspapers, it is commonly found on the editorial page, and in the case of magazines, on the contents page
Media Relations	Working with the media to provide information and news about your product; also called public relations (PR)
Media Visit	A trip designed to familiarize travel media with a destination or tourism experience; also called a press trip or familiarization trip (FAM)
News Wire	An electronically transmitted service providing up-to-the-minute news stories, financial market updates, and other information for media outlets across the country/continent/world to share and publish
Pitch	Presenting a story idea to the media
Press Kit	A collection of information designed for the press
Public Relations (PR)	Working with the media to provide information and news about your product; also called media relations
Press Release	Written information prepared for the use of the press
Press Trip	A trip designed to familiarize travel media with a destination or tourism experience; also called a media visit or familiarization trip (FAM)
Sidebar	Boxed information that accompanies a feature article, often including sources or websites for more information
Sponsored Content	An article or story that has been developed in partnership between the outlet and the featured business as paid advertorial
Staffer	A person who works on the editorial staff of an outlet
Trade Publication	An outlet targeted to a specific industry, in this case, travel and tourism (for example, Canadian Travel Press)
Travel Media	Journalists who specialize in telling travel and lifestyle stories