Westworld Writer Guidelines

Know Your Market

Westworld magazine is the largest-circulation publication in Western Canada, with approximately 470,000 subscribers in B.C., 570,000 in Alberta, 120,000 in Saskatchewan and 130,000 in Manitoba. The Westworld magazine network includes B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba editions, with four issues published annually in B.C., Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and five in Alberta.

Primarily a travel magazine, Westworld showcases local, regional and international travel stories – with the emphasis on “stories” – along with articles on travel trends, the technical and practical aspects of travel and travel-related issues (such as sustainable travel and conservation) and concepts (i.e., “Is There Anything Left to Explore?”). In addition, the Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba editions feature non-travel articles on issues of particular importance in those provinces.

WW readers are smart, educated and travel savvy – busy people who expect a good read, inspiration, advice and information. As a result, WW editors are always looking for new-to-us writers who have a fresh voice – writers who are curious and knowledgeable and have a unique story to tell or who can put an unexpected twist on the familiar. With each issue, WW strives to surprise and intrigue its audience, to leave readers with a sense of possibility and a greater awareness of – and connection to – the world around us.

Note: Before submitting queries or articles on spec, writers are encouraged to read at least one year’s back issues of the appropriate edition of Westworld for its tone, style, focus and vision – and, just as relevant, for stories and destinations already featured. Queries need to be crafted for the specific editorial departments within the magazine.

No Promotional Gush

WW writers ruthlessly avoid travel-brochure gush, hyperbole (“It is a land of snow-capped mountains, glittering lakes and sapphire-blue skies, where bears roam and majestic eagles soar”), clichés and adjectival excess. WW aims to inform, enlighten and captivate – with facts and strong writing, not fluff.

Writers We Love

WW contributors tend to be full-time writing professionals who have won some of the magazine industry’s top writing awards. We also work with writers who have limited experience yet are excellent wordsmiths with obvious talent. We look for writers who are enthusiastic about the art of storytelling and who have a curious and distinctive voice, who have a fresh take and real insight on a subject and who understand the techniques of good storytelling and magazine feature writing: the compelling anecdote, colourful characters, lively quotes, telling details, flow, rhythm and structure. Note: We will read stories on spec sent by email with a cover note (see “How to Query”).
Story Approach

*WW* readers expect to experience a destination directly – through the words and actions of people the writer encounters as well as through the writer’s personal experience and narrative. Our preferred writing style is thoughtful, unique, often first-person (though third-person can lend a quiet authority to the right subject), usually present tense, sometimes humorous – and always reflects a passion for the subject.

Many *WW* articles work on several levels. For example, an article might be the story of an adventurer’s near-death experience while rafting the Nile. On another level, that same story works as a profile of one of the world’s top explorers. On another level, it opens a window into a world few have seen, with facts and intriguing descriptions of a landscape, a people and a culture that are fascinating to read about. Such stories have depth, complexity and added interest.

Research

Writers need to demonstrate a breadth and depth of knowledge about their subject that is authoritative – to ensure good writing, but also because *WW* readers often plan their own travels based on *WW* stories. Writers must bolster their logic, conclusions, narrative and first-hand experiences with interviews and thorough research. Precision is also important. For example, rather than “backdropped by mountains” write “backdropped by the Coast Mountains.” Don’t write “It was a big horse,” note how many hands it was exactly. As well, identify flora and fauna by name: i.e., “Fields of poppies and buttercups,” rather than “Fields of flowers.” Facts and specifics – not hyperbole – are a must.

We Do Not Publish

Poetry; fiction; why-I-love (fill in the country/province/state); testimonials; accounts of family vacations.

Freelance Queries

*WW* works almost exclusively with freelance writers. Some story ideas are editor-generated, others are writer-generated; most are assigned a year to two years before publication. Writers must usually experience a particular destination in the season that the story will likely run. Note that some columns are written exclusively by one columnist.

How to Query

1. **Before submitting anything,** read several recent issues of *WW* magazine (the appropriate edition(s)). We will not review a query on a destination/subject that we have featured in the last two to three years, in any edition.

2. **No phone calls, please;** we have a small staff. Instead, **email the respective editor** – (see “Contact Us,” below) – with an original, well-composed, carefully thought out one-page proposal that demonstrates your writing style. If you are new to *WW*’s editors, please attach samples of recent, published magazine features and a short bio. Note: Please do not direct editors to websites for writing samples; rather, attach clips as attachments. Queries forwarded by regular mail – with clips attached – are also acceptable. Pitches aimed at specific sections of the magazine are recommended.

3. **A place is not a story idea.** We need a compelling reason to assign an article: a specific, unique angle; news that makes the subject fresh; a writer’s enthusiasm for and familiarity with the topic.

4. **Queries should include** a thorough outline of the proposed article. Show how your subject is timely and appropriate for *WW* magazine. Write a proposed lead, a short summary of the content – noting potential interviewees, research sources, highlights,
anecdotal info, news hooks and special or unique-to-you insider leads into the subject – and a conclusion. If the query is for a column, identify which column it is intended for.

5. **Because of the volume of queries received,** we are not able to respond to all writers who query *WW*. The editors normally follow up **ONLY IF** interested in the story. If no follow-up is received within two weeks of submission of a query, writers are encouraged to find another market for their article.

6. **WW will sometimes buy second rights** for an article that has been previously published.

7. **WW is not responsible for** the return or loss of unsolicited manuscripts and photographs.

8. **Plan ahead.** Every issue of a magazine is in production for at least three months prior to when it reaches readers. This means editors are already designing and putting the final touches on the content of the Christmas/winter issue in early September. Stories are generally assigned in season (i.e., ski stories are assigned the previous winter). In general, *WW* editors assign at least one year ahead of when a story will likely be published.

**Postcards**
This is the only column in *Westworld* that is considered only on an on-spec basis. These 750-word columns are short stories with, for the most part, a definite plot line, some kind of tension, a definite climactic moment and a kicker of an ending. They are the kind of travel anecdotes any traveller can relate to, are often humorous or poignant, and should feature facts, social commentary and historic background about the destination in the telling. We generally use one photograph taken by the writer to accompany these columns. Please send complete 750- to 800-word manuscripts for consideration to the respective editor (see “Contact Us,” below). Please put “Postcard Query” in the subject line of the email. Note: This column currently appears in *WWS* and *Going Places* as space permits. Please contact *WWS* and *Going Places* editor Sheila Hansen (see “Contact Us,” below).

**Rates**
*WW* writer fees are competitive within the professional magazine industry, with rates starting at 60 cents per word (85 cents a word in the B.C. edition) on publication of a fully satisfactory manuscript; some stories pay on acceptance at discretion of the editor. Rates vary depending on the experience of the writer and difficulty of the assignment; some departments and features have set rates rather than per-word rates. Contributors receive a complimentary copy of the issue in which their work appears, and will receive additional payment for Web usage and any photos used (see Usage Rights, below). Specific payment details/exceptions are noted on each writer’s assignment letter/purchase order.

**Usage Rights (Including Web)**
*WW* buys First North American rights for the *WW* magazine network – all editions (*WW* may bank a story for one year or more). Payment includes $50 for use on the BCAA, AMA, CAA Saskatchewan and/or CAA Manitoba websites. If second rights are sold, it is expected that three months will have passed before the article first appeared in *WW*. The writer cannot sell second rights to a story until it has run in all four editions of *WW* – unless the assigning editor advises otherwise.

**Fact Checking**
We rely on *WW*’s freelancers to provide carefully researched, accurate copy (please note that we have stopped using freelancers whose copy had significant inaccuracies). *WW* is unable to do extensive verification on stories submitted and writers are expected to be accurate on all counts: spelling of names, historical facts, highway numbers, directions, place names and caption details.
Note: All writers are sent typeset galleys of the final edits of their stories. We ask that writers read these galleys for accuracy of all facts and information in case anything has been inadvertently changed during the editing process. (At the galley stage, wording/structure has already been approved by both editor and writer.) Some stories are also sent in layout format to writers for assistance with captions, etc.

Spelling and Style
*WW* uses the *Canadian Oxford* dictionary; the latest edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* for style issues; *CP Style* for style issues related to uniquely western Canadian points not found in the first two reference books. Some in-house exceptions are noted in *WW*'s house style guide. We also use metric for the most part; imperial when it is an industry standard (i.e., boating). Individuals, after being introduced by their full name, are referred to in subsequent references by surname only.

Photos
Upon story assignment, the assigning editor discusses potential photography needs with the writer. Further discussions are then handled directly by the art director (*WWBC* and *WWS*: Gayleen Whiting, gwhiting@canadawide.com; and *WWA* and *GP*: David Claydon, dclaydon@canadawide.com) with guidelines given (see “Supplying Images for Print” guidelines). Writers with professional, magazine-quality images are paid according to the magazine’s photography rate sheet (available from the art directors). Professional photographers are encouraged to discuss their portfolios directly with *WW*'s art directors.

Previews
Manuscripts are confidential between writer and editor, and must remain so until publication. Please decline any requests your subjects may make to preview your story. If they persist, gently refer them to the assigning editor.

Deadlines
Publishing is a deadline-driven business. Writers who think their manuscript will come in late should contact the assigning editor well in advance. As well, in the course of researching the story, if it is not going the way you thought it would, please discuss with the handling editor well before deadline. We may not want a story that is fundamentally different from the one agreed upon; or, we may agree that the research has uncovered an even better story.

File Format
Send story drafts electronically, via email, to the assigning editor, as requested: Microsoft Word files only. Please use minimal formatting: no caps; no indents on new paragraphs (flush left and separate with one line); no coloured text; same font throughout; single-space only; no footnotes; no special margins or boxed material.

Editing
Fixes and structural and line editing are part of the editorial process. We reserve the right to edit and rewrite articles to comply with our style and the magazine’s writing standards. After a first edit, a manuscript will often be sent back with questions and suggestions before a copy edit is done. Author proofs are usually provided again after final edit, at galley stage. The title of an article and the explanatory “deck” (subhead) beneath it are as important in displaying the article as the layout and design. We welcome your suggestions, though this display copy is ultimately an editorial responsibility. The same is true for captions.
Awards
For the list of awards won by Westworld and WW writers, and for copies of award-winning WW articles, please email an editor: See “Contact Us,” below.

Back Issues
Are sometimes available. Please email an editor: See “Contact Us,” below.

Subscription Services
- BCAA members: Please phone 604-268-5111
- AMA members: Please phone 1-800-222-6400
- CAA Saskatchewan members: Please phone 1-800-564-6222
- CAA Manitoba members: 1-800-222-4357
- All non-BCAA, -AMA, -CAA Saskatchewan and -CAA Manitoba members: Please phone 604-299-2116

Contact Us
Thank you for your interest in Westworld magazine. Your writing and unique way of looking at the world make the magazine possible – and worth reading.

For proposals/queries, on-spec manuscripts, letters to the editor, reprint and website questions, queries regarding back issues of Westworld and follow-up story queries, please contact the respective editor below:

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