

# How to Succeed with Travel Writing Competitions!

*by Dr Steve Hanson*

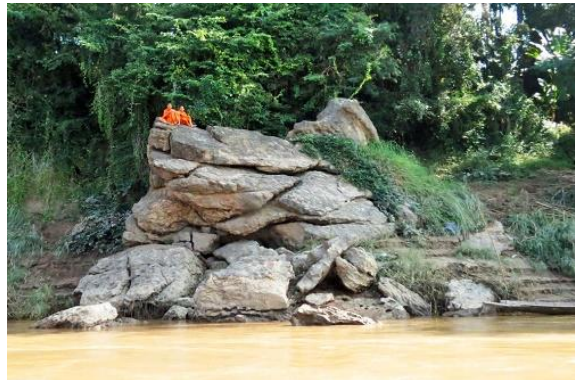
Ten Tips from the founder of the [Senior Travel Expert](#) website

Our Inaugural Travel Writing Competition last year received about 200 entries for a prize of a £100 Currency Card. Out of all those entries, how did the judging panel, of which I was member, decide on one winner and ten runners-up? Well, if you decide to enter a travel writing competition, the following ten tips should help.

1. Note carefully the length requirements. In our Inaugural Competition the rules stated "no more than 1,000 words". Several of the entrants wrote more, in one case over 3,500 words! These entries were excluded.

2. The other way round, although there was no minimum word limit, entrants who only wrote a couple of hundreds words or so, found it difficult to impress the judges in these few words; none featured in the final short-list of eleven entries.

3. Don't be let down by poor grammar and spelling. In our Inaugural Competition, entries were required to be in English. Many entries came from authors whose mother tongue was not English and not surprisingly there were some grammar and spelling problems in their entries. That didn't matter. Several of the entries in the short-list were from such entrants. However entries that were riddled with simple errors that could easily have been corrected using a "Spelling & Grammar" checker, were excluded. I find it useful to run my own articles through a Text-to-Speech application, such as the SAPI5 TTS program. It always finds something I've missed, like duplicating words by mistake, and helps check punctuation.



4. Make certain you write an article according to the stated theme. In our Inaugural Competition it simply stated "relating to travel". Surprisingly, a few entries did not meet even this criterion. In our current [Writing Competition](#), the theme is much more specific, asking for an article

"relating to a City, Town or Village". To be fair to other competitors, we will exclude entries that are about, for example, a region or cover more than one city, town or village.

5. Make certain you are clear about what the judges looking for? In our [Inaugural Competition](#) it stated: "Entries will be judged on which are the most interesting, entertaining and informative." This is the tricky bit, but also your chance to bring out your creative writing skills. Our new competition states: "The winning entry will be the one that is judged to most effectively persuade readers of the Senior Travel Expert website that this is somewhere they really want to visit!" What does that mean? Think about it!

6. Closely related to the previous tip, don't be afraid to use writing techniques. The winning entry in our Inaugural Competition used suspense; the author kept the reader guessing until about half way through the article, as to exactly which place was being featured. Its title was 'Surprise, Surprise!' and it turned out to be about Laos and the Mekong River.



7. Check whether entries should be factual or fictional. Both are acceptable in our competitions, as indeed are a mixture of fact and fiction. This of course means that you don't need to have visited exotic places far overseas. Sit in your favorite armchair and be creative, maybe with some help from Google to fill in the details.

8. Even if you are writing a factual article, it doesn't mean you need to have travelled far and wide. One the runner-up entries in our Inaugural Competition entitled [Northern Lights](#) was about Blackpool. You may know something about a local place that will fascinate readers.

9. Having written your article, get a friend or family member to read it through before you submit; be willing to accept critical comments and act on them!

10. Lastly, a small point, but quite critical - having put in all the effort to produce a brilliant article, don't miss the closing date! We had several entries within a few days after the closing date; all were excluded.

That's enough said about the nitty-gritty of travel writing competitions. In the end it's all about your getting enjoyment out of writing an article and hopefully, if your entry is successful, getting great satisfaction out of others reading and appreciating your work.

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Steve has always enjoyed travelling, both whilst working as a lecturer and researcher in Africa and SE Asia, and when on holiday. So far he has visited 71 countries and travelled round the world twice. His website Senior Travel Expert provides tips for senior travelers based on his experiences - and those of contributors - and on research into how to get the best value for money when travelling.

Visit Steve's website here: [seniortravelexpert.com](http://seniortravelexpert.com)

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