

# Hidden questions of a travel writer

 By [Phindiwe Nkosi](#)

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I have cradled a dying child - and wrote about it for a magazine. While employed as a newspaper reporter, I saw a man with a gun pointed towards him and heard the sound of a pulled trigger. I have interviewed dignitaries and commoners for the corporate world...

You see, in all of the instances above, there was some form of dialogue, subtly described as "feedback". Nothing, not even scholarly theories, quite prepares one for travel writing. Despite the knowledge that it takes a writer, the rules of engagement are not the same. How does one describe sunrise or the heartbeat of a newborn lion cub beating against yours?

In as much as there are cultural festivals and interviews that often accompany each travel writing brief, there is a whole lot of silence that one needs to embody in an article. There's the stillness between room service when the door is closed and the "do not disturb" sign is up for the sake of taking in the crackling of the fire and jotting together an article worthy of a byline.

It is in one of those quiet moments that this article is birthed. When no one is watching, shortly before submission; here are common secret questions that creep into the travel writer in their solitude.

## Is anybody listening?

It is one thing to find out about the stats and figures of your client's publication, but that's not it. Is anybody *listening*? By that, one is not thinking of it merely being read, but will your tale be an informative source when the reader is making their decision on whether to add it to their road-trip or not? Are you actually making an impact or simply travelling and writing?

## Is this a true reflection of the overall experience?

On the one hand, it is easy to just write about your experience, but then again it may not be "real" to the readers. The reason one can say that is when a travel writer pops in, appointments are made and establishments often pull out all stops to entice the writer. What if one came unannounced, would that be a true reflection?

## Can I say it?

While browsing through a travelling website for a vacation in my private capacity, I was lured by a sparkling blue pool and picturesque views. That tipped me to secure a booking and take a loved one along. The host was welcoming and accommodative, but within minutes of arriving (and throughout our entire stay there), we felt lied to.

The pool was under construction, the Jacuzzi was bubbling with brown ant-infested waters, our bush hike to the waters turned out to be regrettably far away... it was a disaster! Had I been assigned to write about that establishment, could I actually have had the guts to write about it in the article (and possibly chase away their few remaining clients) or rather send them an e-mail?

## What else can one do here?

Rather than just focusing on what you are required to write about, what other related information would the prospective traveler and reader be interested in?

## If I were not paid to come here, would I return?

In short, if this was not part of your job requirement and you were not obliged to be there, would you visit again? That's it! The answer to this question should be clear to the reader, no matter how you choose to answer it.

### ABOUT PHINDIWE NKOSI

Phindiwe Nkosi has a decade of experience coupled by a Masters Degree in Communication Management from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her experience ranges from working as a journalist, international news anchor, travel writer, speech writer, marketing and communications manager, editor, blogger, foodie and ghostwriter. She is also the founder of Travel Anthem and freelances for clients across South Africa, UK, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Zimbabwe and more. Email her at [phindiwe@communicationanthem.co.za](mailto:phindiwe@communicationanthem.co.za) for your writing and blogging needs.

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