

TOURISM
BUSINESS
ESSENTIALS



TRAVEL MEDIA RELATIONS

*The essential guide for BC tourism businesses
on how to attract and host media.*

Destination
British Columbia™

Travel Media Relations

This tourism guide explains how travel media relations work on a provincial and regional level and how tourism operators can engage with media to generate business at the local level. Tourism operators will learn about the various traditional and non-traditional types of media available to the BC tourism industry together with their reach, marketing tools specific to media, and best practices in hosting media on press visits.

Copyright

Third Edition, July 2013

© 2013 – Destination BC Corp. All rights reserved. No part of this guide may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without permission in writing from Destination BC. This guide is produced to provide information to assist tourism operators in British Columbia. Destination BC Corp. does not endorse, recommend or assume any liability for any of the operations or organizations referenced in this guide. Super, Natural; Super, Natural British Columbia; HelloBC; Visitor Centre; Tourism BC and all associated logos/trademarks are trademarks or Official Marks belonging to Destination BC Corp.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | Introduction to Media and Public Relations..... | 3 |
| 2 | Introduction to Destination BC’s Media Relations Program | 4 |
| 3 | Understanding Media..... | 5 |
| | Newspaper Journalists and Editors | 5 |
| | Magazine Writers and Editors | 5 |
| | Website Writers and Bloggers..... | 6 |
| | Guidebook Authors..... | 6 |
| | Radio Broadcasters | 6 |
| | Television Crews..... | 6 |
| | Staff versus Freelance | 7 |
| 4 | Your Target Media..... | 8 |
| 5 | Communication Tools..... | 9 |
| | Press Releases | 9 |
| | Press Kit..... | 11 |
| | Photography | 11 |
| | B-Roll..... | 12 |
| 6 | Hosting Media on Press Visits..... | 13 |
| | Choosing and Qualifying Media..... | 13 |
| | When the Media Approaches You | 13 |
| | Working with Tourism Partners | 14 |
| | Ethics of Hosting a Press Trip..... | 14 |
| | Timing is Tricky..... | 14 |
| | Press Trip Size | 15 |
| | During Media Visits: Tips for Hosting..... | 15 |
| | Hosting TV Crews | 16 |
| | Know Your Nationalities | 16 |

Table of Contents

| | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|----|
| 7 | After the Visit: Keep in Touch..... | 18 |
| | When Stories Come Out..... | 18 |
| | Evaluate the Results..... | 19 |
| | When Stories Don't Come Out..... | 19 |
| 8 | Stories from the Industry..... | 20 |
| | Appendices | |
| | 1. Glossary..... | 24 |
| | 2. Recommended Reading..... | 26 |

Special Thanks

Destination BC would like to thank [Tom Ryan](#), Production Manager and Travel & Location Photographer, for the use of his many incredible “behind the scenes” photos as seen on the front cover and throughout this guide.

1

Introduction to Media and Public Relations

If you ask a media relations professional to describe their job, they'll probably answer that they help create awareness about a destination, business or client: their goal is to influence public attitudes, enhance their company's or client's reputation and, hopefully, encourage consumers to visit the destination or purchase the product. While such activities are difficult to quantify, there's no question that **media relations** can be a cost effective way to introduce your business or destination to travellers; after all, a single article can reach hundreds of thousands of people at the same time, 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 activity, with no promises of quick fixes. If you and your organization are committed to finding ways to share the unique aspects of your business with media, you'll likely reap rewards well into the future.

In large organizations, the task of media relations is often assigned to a specific staff person or department. But in small companies, the task of managing media relations may fall to individuals with very broad responsibilities. The goal of this guide is to prepare those individuals with some basic information about working with media, and to outline the opportunities – and the potential pitfalls – of getting your organization's name in print.

Before you call or write to journalists to tell them about your product, you need to have a plan in place. It helps to start asking yourself some basic questions about what you are trying to achieve: Who is your audience for

the information you want to share? What is the key message that you want to deliver? Why would a journalist be interested in writing about your destination – what sets your destination or travel experience apart from others? In order to productively work with media, you need to have well-thought-out answers to these questions or neither you, nor the journalist, will benefit from your interaction.

The term "Media Relations" is no accident: at the heart of working with media is a relationship. Relationships develop from a number of factors: mutual trust, respect and helpfulness, and are maintained through two-way communication. In working with media to achieve your goals – most often these goals are increased attention to your business – you first need to understand their goals. For media to do their job properly, they have some specific needs: they require accurate information; they 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.

Much of working with media is common sense. Do your research, and understand what the writer has covered in past articles, while ensuring that what you have to present is a good match. Be truthful and realistic: don't oversell what your organization 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.

2 Introduction to Destination British Columbia's Media Relations Program

Destination British Columbia and its Regional Tourism Associations have a well-developed program to work with media to create exposure for BC as a travel destination. Working with cities, communities and individual businesses, the goal is to create both proactive opportunities to introduce media to story ideas, press releases and information about BC, and be ready with information and resources when media approach with **assignments** and travel plans already in hand. You are encouraged to work with a local team to maximize your opportunities through partnerships. For more information on each of the regions, as well as Destination BC, visit www.hellobc.com/travelmedia

it's more advantageous to work together rather than duplicate efforts. It is important to realize that when you sell your tourism product, you are selling the destination; by introducing 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 regional destination marketing organization, is their connections to both credible media and other tourism operators.

Small and medium-sized tourism businesses often get their introduction to the media by being part of a trip that their **regional** or **provincial** tourism organization has arranged. If you haven't yet participated in a media trip, contact the Travel Media Relations departments in these organizations and let them know you are amenable to hosting media.



3 Understanding Media

The media landscape is changing dramatically. Traditional media – newspapers, magazines and even some television stations – are changing operations to focus on online activities, while online media are becoming more competitive and an increasingly

popular source of information for audiences. Before working with 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 has.

Newspaper Journalists and Editors

These writers gather diverse stories for their publications: destination articles that give an overview of a locale; stories that focus on a specific activity or attraction; first-person experiences that vary from pampering spas to soft or hard adventures. Travel sections often have one large feature and, depending on the size of the edition, a number of short, sharply focused and often related articles. Many journalists take their own photographs; others rely on the destination to provide photography. Some newspaper writers are syndicated, so their articles or column appear in a wide variety of papers. Newspapers generally have a short **lead time**, meaning that the time it takes to produce a story and see it in print can be as little as a week or less.

Before working with a newspaper writer, it's important for you to evaluate the geographic range of the newspaper (where it is distributed) and the circulation size of the publication (how many are distributed), to ensure these demographics match your business's target demographic. 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, *USA Today* for example, can have over 500,000 daily readers.

Magazine Writers and Editors

Magazines often have a more targeted audience than newspapers, covering one topic in depth – specific magazines for men or women and special interest magazines such as food, cycling, politics, travel, 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 ones at 1,500-3,500 words. A professional photographer may arrive with the writer, or at another time. Magazines have a long lead time and often plan their issues as far as 18 months ahead. For example, a writer might visit a garden in spring, with the story scheduled to appear in the magazine a full year later.

There are two types of magazines – consumer and trade; consumer magazines target the general public while trade magazines are designed for members of a certain industry. An example of consumer travel magazines are those found on newsstands, such as *Travel + Leisure Magazine*, *Explore Magazine* or *Canadian Living*. Trade travel magazines are directed to travel agents and tour operators. Examples include *Canadian Travel Press*, published by Toronto-based Baxter Publications. As with newspapers (or other media outlets) it's important for you to understand the demographics of the publication and decide if they match your business's visitors.

3 Understanding Media

Website Writers and Bloggers

Online travel writing is a burgeoning market. A site that deals specifically with travel, such as www.worldhum.com, will have a variety of feature articles in the 1,500 word range, as well as shorter items that include travel tips. Online booking engines, such as SmarterTravel.com, sometimes also include editorial content on the destinations they are selling. There are also

general websites showcasing travel as part of their lifestyle category such as www.canoe.ca. A number of writers have personal websites or blogs, which can range from very small to very large and influential audience sizes, with bloggers such as Johnny Jet and Gridskipper seeing considerable numbers of visitors to their sites.

Guidebook Authors

Guidebook authors are on a mission to provide as many details as possible to their readers. Be aware that the **lead** time on books is as long as one year; all facts and figures should stand the test of time.

Radio Broadcasters

Radio journalists may broadcast live or tape interviews for broadcast later. They will be interested in interviewing individuals as well as experiencing activities they can pass along first hand to their audience. These journalists prefer one-on-one interviews rather than

groups as the voices sound more clear on-air. Since they deal in sound, it's not unusual for a broadcaster to look for a unique background sound for their broadcast. Often, they will broadcast live while "on the road".

Television Crews

Typically, a TV crew consists of a producer, presenter, camera operator and sound technician, who stay on location, five days to a week. During this time they need transportation, accommodation and some meals. Because excellent light conditions are imperative to good visuals, scheduling is often difficult. When Tourism BC works with a film crew, they assign an experienced coordinator

to work closely with the TV crew, tourism boards and local tourism operators to ensure the filming goes smoothly.

If you are working independently with a television crew, ensure that you have a dedicated staff person to assist with any special requests, as filming a great program can be extremely labour intensive and challenging.

Staff versus Freelance

Media Staff versus Freelance

Working with media from all of the previous categories, you will encounter both staff and **freelance** writers. Staff are employed by a publication or TV station and work only for that particular company or network. If a **staffer** has agreed to cover your story, you will receive coverage in that one specific publication or on that particular station, often through one large, impressive story – in the case of a newspaper chain, the story may be picked up by other papers across Canada or even worldwide. Once your story is covered, staff writers move on to other stories.

Freelancers work for themselves, selling articles to any number of media outlets. In the case of an experienced freelancer, you may see results for as long as two or three years. As one public relations expert put it, *“Freelancers who sell one story to a number of publications, or media who are syndicated, can often offer the best value for coverage.”*



4 Your Target Media

Think about where your visitors live, work and how they travel. Now think about the media you are targeting: does the geography, audience size and demographics match the profile of the potential visitors you want to reach? Next, think about the kind of story you want to feature, and what kind of format it requires. If it is breaking news that is very time sensitive, you will want to inform news outlets including radio, television and online. If you have a longer, feature travel story, you will likely want to target lifestyle magazines or newspaper travel sections. Once you've compiled your list of media, you'll need to research which journalists cover similar stories within each medium. Your research begins by becoming familiar with the travel and 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 trends.
- Pay attention to the 'by-lines' – 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 sites such as Facebook and Twitter to follow conversations of interest. Many journalists – and potential travellers – use social media to research potential destinations.
- Check out travel-oriented websites and blogs. See what is being discussed, and by who.
- Work with your local, regional and provincial tourism partners. Many likely have experience working with media and they can assist with introductions or advice.

From this kind of research, you can begin developing your list of media contacts, which you can continue to add to through networking opportunities or other connections. The next step is to get in touch with the media and provide them with information about your business that would interest them: ideally using one or more of the communication tools discussed in the next section.

5 Communication Tools

Before even considering hosting media at your destination, you need to develop written materials that will help them understand what you have to offer – and what sets your product apart. These documents may be used by journalists as succinct research pieces that will help them understand the details of what you have to offer visitors, and provide statistics and information that might not be of interest to the average visitor, but will assist the journalist in writing his or her story.

Before you begin writing, start by defining your key messages. Your key messages should be short, concise and encapsulate the overall position or goal of your project or organization. Think of it as an introductory sentence: if you needed to describe the essence of your business to a potential client over a handshake, what would you say? Your key message or messages then become your guiding statement, and information that you include in your [press kit](#), [press releases](#) or other media materials should support that messaging.

Press Releases

Press releases can be an effective way of spreading news. But press releases, when overused, can be ignored, or worse, seen as annoyances to media already deluged by information. Prudent use of press releases 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.

In terms of basic formatting, 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, and as the text progresses, include more detailed levels of information. The release should end with the name and contact information 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 calls in the hours and days after the release is distributed: if that person is travelling, in

meetings or otherwise unable to be reached, it’s unlikely you’ll see any results.

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 and/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, or Listel Hotel’s art gallery approach – then it’s likely that the story will arouse a writer’s curiosity. Similarly, stories that link to a larger trend – girl getaways, boutique hotels, etc. – may be a good fit for a journalist to include in a “roundup” or “top 10” article. Trends can be tricky though, so make sure you’re ahead of the curve and not behind it.

Depending on the subject, this may be a good time to flex your creative muscles. *“A good release should tweak someone’s imagination and make them curious about what is to follow. Try to have fun with it. This is the tourism industry – it’s about entertainment and relaxation,”* advises Jill Killeen, Director of Public Relations for Shangri-la Hotel Vancouver.

5

Communication Tools

Press Releases

Most press releases are distributed by email, although if you have an announcement that is particularly time sensitive, you may choose to use a wire service such as Canada News Wire. Keep in mind that email is just one format for delivery. In order to reach your target media in an appropriate way, take advantage of the most effective communication conduits you have available. You may want to make your press releases and other communication available through an RSS feed.

Another option is to set up corporate accounts on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other social media sites. Remember, communicating with media should be a conversation – instead of focussing 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 ones you are presenting.

RSS

Most commonly expanded as Really Simple Syndication, RSS is a family of web feed formats used to publish frequently updated works – such as blog entries, news headlines, audio, and video – in a standardized format. Web feeds benefit publishers by letting them syndicate content automatically.

For immediate release:

Jill Killeen, Director of Public Relations, Vancouver
Fairmont Hotels
Tel. (direct) 604-443-1809 / E-mail: jill.killeen@fairmont.com

DOGGONE-IT... FAIRMONT WATERFRONT DOES IT AGAIN INTRODUCES NEW K-9 AMBASSADOR TO HOTEL

March 13, 2002 - Vancouver, British Columbia – The Fairmont Waterfront has gone to the dogs...again. For a second time the hotel has included on its payroll a handsome, playful and four-legged employee to act as hotel Ambassador.

Morgan, the black Labrador retriever started his job just weeks ago and is already settling in to his new responsibilities. His primary duties include greeting guests outside the hotel lobby and acting as man's best friend, accompanying hotel guests on strolls throughout the city. These duties may sound simple to some, but Morgan has big paws to fill. His predecessor, Teagan, a Wheaton terrier was introduced in April 2001 as a companion for hotel guests. Although a wonderful addition to the hotel, Teagan's first employee performance review described him as too shy for this very sociable, high profile position. His dog days are now spent with one of the hotel employees.

The hotel remained committed to its pet project and the search began to find the perfect K-9 replacement. The British Columbia Guide Dog Services, an organization that trains seeing-eye dogs, recommended one of their overly playful puppies that didn't quite make their final cut, but was more than qualified for the position at the hotel.

.../2

Press Kit

A press kit is a critical element in establishing a relationship with the media and providing them with vital information about your business. It is like an expanded business card and can act as an introduction to your business when sent to the press who know nothing about your business. It can act as a resource when greeting visitors at your place of business, and it can be used as a follow-up or reminder piece for media who recently visited you.

Here is what a press kit would normally include:

- Fact Sheet with details of your company: who, what, where, and when

- Backgrounders detailing unique aspects of your product
- Press releases with news about recent developments
- Any brochures or printed publications of your product
- Business card of your media contact person
- Other discretionary items such as photography.

Press kits can be created as printed folders or booklets, posted online as a media section of your website or loaded onto a memory stick or CD. The medium for distribution you choose is less important; the content – its completeness and accuracy – is most important.

Photography

High-quality photography can be of great value to your business. *“Having great images was key for us. We hired a photographer and had him take loads of shots. We also hired a helicopter for air shots. Then we made high-quality duplicates of the key shots. It was expensive and we put a huge effort into it, but it paid off. These pictures have appeared in papers all over North America,”* says Charles McDiarmid of the Wickaninnish Inn.

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 product with everyday people doing everyday activities; the pictures should tell stories

or compliment the stories you’d like to see written. Advertising shots are staged pictures that still portray your product, but are more relevant to brochures, advertisements and websites. Magazine **art directors** and newspaper **editors** who make picture selections frown upon pictures that seem fake. Good editorial photography will often be the deciding factor on whether or not to publish an article.

Most photographers negotiate each job separately. When you negotiate you should also discuss ownership and copyright with the photographer – make sure you understand what you are paying for and what your rights are with regard to reproducing the photographs.

5 Communication Tools

B-Roll

B-Roll is raw footage usually shot in broadcast-quality high definition (1080pi) and roughly edited without sound or transitions between shots. This type of project is very expensive and can cost about \$10,000 – it should be done in conjunction with other promotional video needs or agencies such as Destination BC or the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC). While this is not something everyone would consider, if it is within your budget, there is a huge 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. Perhaps you have good quality shots of your deluxe spa or fabulous footage of your

oceanfront resort from the air. Chances are, if you let TV stations who cover travel know this is available, they may use it.

For both images and footage, Destination BC maintains an image bank which can be accessed by publications or productions that are looking for footage to be used to promote travel to BC. You can explore the images available to media through this website at www.imagebank.destinationbc.net The image bank does not hold assets that are particular to a given hotel or business; rather, the goal of the image bank is to provide scenic imagery that can be used for a variety of purposes to promote travel to BC.



6 Hosting Media on Press Visits

Travel writing is often a first-person account of a unique trip or vacation. While press releases and story ideas are useful for journalists for background research or short **sidebar** articles, if they are assigned a travel feature article they will likely plan to visit. You too can encourage journalists

to write about your destination by inviting them to experience your business first-hand, thus providing them with more in-depth information to be able to write about. This section describes the steps needed to successfully host media on site.

Choosing & Qualifying Media

If your RDMO approaches you with a media opportunity, they will also be able to provide you with a profile of the journalist or media outlet in question, which will allow you to evaluate if it matches your target audience. 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.

If you wish, you can ask freelancers to provide a letter of **assignment** from an editor. In some cases, this may not be realistic – newspaper

travel 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 writers for recent **clippings** of their work. If they haven't produced in the last year, chances are they won't produce for you. Look at clippings with market awareness; someone may be a great writer but if that person isn't published in your target markets, he or she won't be of benefit to you. For website writers or bloggers, ask for data regarding visitation to their website – they should be able to provide a report from Google Analytics, Alexa or similar web statistics services.

When the Media Approaches You

Note that the above planning is pro-active: it is your decision to host media, so make sure you've prepared carefully for it. Reactive planning takes place when a writer contacts you and asks to experience your product. The best case scenario is when a staffer from a magazine or newspaper, or a well-established freelancer with a story assignment calls you and you're comfortable with the results you

expect to see. But if you're unsure, contact your **Regional Media Relations Representative** to see if they're familiar with the media outlet and/or writer, or have any other advice for responding to the request. They may have background information and, if appropriate, be able to assist with organizing the media's visit.

6

Hosting Media on Press Visits

Working with Tourism Partners

Contact your RDMO before you check out media prospects – they will be a valuable source of information for vetting media participants. Hopefully you are already involved with your regional office and are making plans to work together. Remember, from the perspective of a traveller or journalist, the attraction of a travel destination is not a single hotel, attraction or visitor site: a destination is the sum of its parts.

One of the most difficult aspects of arranging a press trip is acquiring transportation from different parts of the country, or the world. Transportation expenses include getting the media to your destination and moving them around during their visit.

RDMOs, City DMOs and the travel industry in British Columbia are eligible for Destination BC's support through the Visiting Journalist program. Destination BC's primary means of support for travelling media is air or ground transportation, with industry expected to provide media with accommodations, meals and activities. In order to be considered for support, the applicant must demonstrate that the media request meets certain requirements (including audience size and demographic information) and that they are also making an equal investment in the press trip. For more information about the program, contact your [Regional Media Relations Representative](#).

Ethics of Hosting Press Trips

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

Some publications, such as the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times*, do not allow staff writers or people on assignment to receive complimentary trips. In these cases, a tourism owner works out the price of the trip and the publication pays the bill. Either way, you should understand you are not "purchasing" copy. Rather, you are devising a way for the media to experience your product. While a trained journalist will check facts with you, you do not get to critique or edit copy before it is printed or released.

Timing is Tricky

When it comes to hosting media, timing is always tricky. With regard to stories being published, a newspaper or website lead time may be just days, while a magazine plans by the year. A television broadcast usually airs three to six months later. The timeline for planning press visits is also varied. Since many good travel writers are booked well in advance, a three-month lead time is an average time frame when it comes to 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.

Utilize the media when it comes to promoting your destination or attraction but realize it will usually be the following season, or later, that this promotion kicks in. There are exceptions – if a ski journalist catches a good day at your resort in November, you may get copy instantly. But if you invite that person for

Timing is Tricky

spring skiing, the story will be out to promote your next season.

Many tourism operators prefer to host a press trip in their off-season. This makes sense from a cost perspective as you probably will not lose revenue by hosting media. But keep in mind the objective is to get realistic stories

and pictures published. If you bring media in late fall to get out stories for your 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.

Press Trip Size

“The best of all worlds is to host individual writers,” says Mika Ryan, Travel Media Relations Manager for Destination BC. *“You can give them individual 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. A group of four to six 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 will prefer to visit on their own.

During Media Visits: Tips for Hosting

Keep the individual needs of journalists in mind. Here are some examples: if a writer is interested in history, make arrangements for that person to meet the local historian. If a writer also takes their own pictures, make sure you allow time for them to take advantage of good opportunities.

As a general guideline, courtesy and common sense apply. Always make sure your media know the schedule of the day, but have some flexibility. When the needs and interests of media change – try to change the itinerary to accommodate. Remember to allow media free time to explore on their own, although it’s good to have suggestions of activities in case they ask. Don’t “hard sell.” After a busy day, dinner should be a relaxing, not promoting, time. 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.

When planning to host media writers, do not confuse their needs with those of travel agents. Travel agents 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.” One example: on a **familiarization** trip you show the variety of rooms at a resort; on a press tour you have the press experience activities that the resort has to offer. Remember, travel media needs to “experience”, not just “see.”

6

Hosting Media on Press Visits

Hosting 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 their regional partners assigns or hires a location manager who looks after everything from the shooting schedule to escorting the crew while on location. In most cases there are many tourism partners involved in this media visit, as most crews come to cover a wide variety of attractions and activities.

Before the crew arrives, the location manager scouts locations, communicates with tourism partners who will be involved in the media visit and puts together a shooting schedule. This is accomplished by keeping in close touch with the producer of the shoot. "Schedule" is used loosely: 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 train chugging through the Rockies, it will be the coordinator's job to work with the tourism partners to try to make this happen.

There's little doubt that hosting a TV crew is time and energy intensive. *"By the very nature of the amount of equipment and people, they can be an obvious distraction and rather high maintenance. The suppliers must expect to deal with the unexpected,"* says one well

experienced coordinator, who uses afternoon tea at the Empress Hotel as an example: *"The director wanted to shoot the presenter being served tea with happy guests in the background. The last thing the crew wanted was a phoney set-up. Television needs real people and real sounds. On the other hand, the hotel didn't want to disrupt its guests and some guests would have objected to an invasion."* This is where a location manager also comes into play. *"I reached a mutual understanding between the hotel and producer. We kept the camera in the background, used minimal lights and, ahead of time, quietly explained it to the guests. Anything is possible but it can be tricky."*

Make sure any interviewees are articulate and comfortable taking questions in front of a camera or microphone; an accent can be fine as long as the person is easily understood. 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, the Canadian Public Relations Association has members who can provide this for you. For more information, visit www.cprsvancouver.com

Know Your Nationalities

When hosting international press, prepare for cultural differences.

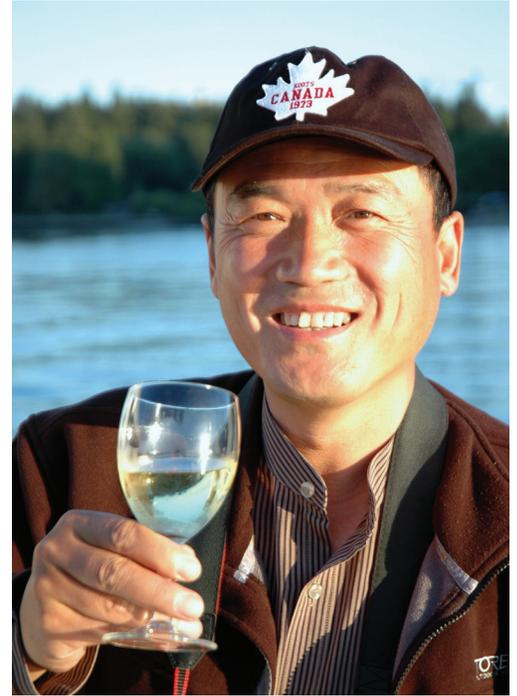
For the record:

- There will likely be smokers in a European and Asian press group. Since British Columbia is largely smoke free, you'll have to ensure your tourism partners are aware of the smokers and provide breaks in places where they can smoke.



Know Your Nationalities

- It is rare for Asian media to visit independently. Destination BC usually hosts a group of six to eight. These journalists prefer to visit mainstream attractions as travellers from their country usually go on tour packages. They often don't speak English very well, so are reliant on a well-organized trip with a translator-guide. Prior to the trip they like to be briefed on the itinerary and appreciate tips on things like what type of weather to expect. After a day of work, they prefer to have dinner on their own so they can relax and speak their own language.
- Asian media appreciate access to their national dishes from time to time. If you are hosting a Korean group, take them to a local Korean restaurant but only if the food is excellent. Be aware that diet changes are difficult for foreigners. Asian journalists don't seem to mind site inspections; North Americans and Europeans do not want to see hotel rooms unless they are trade writers. If you are providing photographs to an Asian media group, note that they prefer Asian faces in some of the images.
- Some nationalities are more outdoor-oriented than others. Generally speaking, the British and German media enjoy adventurous activities. *"The German media seems to always be looking for new and adventuresome events, exciting stories and products and often they look for a local character,"* says an organizer of international press trips.
- Cultural differences may show up in stories. One media relations person noted that British stories often have a different "tone" than a North American story. *"It's something about their perspective, it may border on sarcasm a bit; the British press are a bit less forgiving than some. Once you are prepared for it, it's okay. It can still be a great story."*



7

After the Visit: Keep in Touch

It is normal and appropriate to stay in touch with media after you have met them during a visit to your destination. Like any relationship, this one needs to be nurtured and respected.

It is courteous to thank the media for their coverage. True, they were only doing their job, but everyone enjoys plaudits. A personal phone call or thank you note is appreciated, although not necessarily expected.

Within a few weeks of the press tour, contact each of your media guests to thank them for visiting your destination and let them know you are there to assist them. It's logical to remind them you have photographs, background information, videos and/or tools available should they require them. 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.

Now it's back to business as usual but, in the back of your mind, you may already be envisioning wonderful press coverage. Don't. Listen to the advice of a 17-year public relations veteran: *"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 media relations outreach efforts; in due time the media coverage that your destination is worthy of will come.

When Stories Come Out

Your first indication of publicity may be phone calls and emails. When Tofino Expeditions appeared in a huge spread in the *Globe and Mail* – there was even a picture of kayakers across the front page – owner Grant Thompson says, *"There were dozens and dozens of calls right away. This story was responsible for over 50 per cent of our bookings for the following season."* As often happens, the payback was residual to the now, over a decade-old soft adventure company. *"I'm always amazed at how many people bookmark a story and book two years later."* Many tourism suppliers echoed these sentiments: true travellers are avid readers. When a travel article interests them, they save a copy for when they plan their trip.

Often, articles that appear in print also appear online in the web version of the same publication. To keep track of articles as they appear, stay in touch with the journalist writing the story. They can often send you a copy of the article or a weblink to where the article appears.

It can be easy to set up a [Google Alert](#) to notify you when your company or destination is mentioned online. In addition, Destination BC contracts media evaluation services to track travel stories that appear about BC destinations. Notification and copies of the articles are then forwarded to the destinations and companies mentioned in the article.

Evaluate the Results

There are two primary analytics used for calculating the value of an article. One is the comparative advertising value i.e., what would an article, of the equivalent size, have cost if you purchased it in advertising space. The second is number of impressions i.e., the viewership, circulation or number of website visitors who read or watched the story about your destination. Both are useful metrics to quantify the results that the article provides to your business.

It is also useful to know the number of bookings you can attribute to a specific story, although this can be difficult to track precisely. When you receive consumer inquiries, ask where they heard about your product. This will help you track where your bookings are coming from and which of your marketing activities – media relations or otherwise – are driving business to your door.

When Stories Don't Come Out

Publications fold, editors change, a raging 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.

“I’m never 100 percent sure that a writer is going to produce after they have taken my trip,” states one experienced PR firm owner, adding that she always follows up with the media after a visit. Herein lies the secret. 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. A friendly call will be a reminder.

Never give up hope. There have been cases of stories appearing years later. *“I can recall having a journalist take part in our first press trip in 1996; her piece came out in 2001! She was very apologetic,”* recalls one PR firm owner in Vancouver.



8

Stories from the Industry

Businesses that have used media relations to work for them

From **Whitegold Adventures:**

Whitegold Adventures has been guiding summer canoe and hiking trips in the Cariboo Chilcotin Coast region for a dozen years. Based in Wells, we became specialists on the Bowron Lakes canoe circuit which has a very high profile within some circles worldwide, but it offered only seasonal traffic.

The natural progression of guiding summer trips on the world class circuit was to expand into offering winter ski trips. Winter backcountry touring trips are not as widely known or as popular. We knew we were on the right track, but were struggling to fill our openings. Working with our regional destination marketing organization we pitched our story to various media outlets because we understood the possibility of attaining very cost effective rewards that media relations can return. Within a few months a small article was published in Outdoor magazine – a turning point for us, and instrumental in our winter trips becoming a roaring success: we have been fully booked for the past three years, with satisfied clients continuing to spread the word.

We know that if we can show people – and journalists – what we have to offer, the pieces fall in place and the message will finally get out to the public. When our area gets more supporters marketing us, and the spin offs start, it's an obvious benefit to us all.

From **Bella Coola's Mountain Lodge:**

In June 2009 we received an email at our lodge from a relatively small production company called West Coast Adventure TV. Danny Sayson contacted us at the recommendation of Cariboo Chilcotin Coast Tourism Association, to develop a potential program outline for BC's central coast.

Through frank discussion and sharing ideas we soon came up with a short hit-list of three to four unique activities that the Bella Coola Valley region could offer to West Coast Adventure TV viewers. With little more than some time on the phone and email dialogue with Danny and his company, we were able to draft a proposed schedule of events for his film segments that highlighted not only our own operation, but the entire coastal region of Bella Coola Valley for WCAtv's program.

Once the dates were chosen for filming, we made a couple of calls to other regional operators and attractions and we soon had a full three-day shoot arranged. The process was very straight forward and rewarding for those participating, which included three separate operators from our community.

continued on next page

Bella Coola's Mountain Lodge continued...

Since initial airing in May 2010, we have received direct booking inquiries commenting on the episode that featured our lodge and grizzly bear tours, as well as numerous phone calls from past guests and other tourism operators commenting on the high quality representation and unique presentation of this episode.

Considering the relative ease of arranging this opportunity and the immediate response and success we experienced, we have no doubts that this was a worthwhile venture and look forward to the next similar opportunity.

From Northern BC Tourism Association:

To ramp up for the 2010 Olympics, Northern BC Tourism planned a "winter fun" press trip to coincide with the official torch relay, as it passed through the community of Prince George.

To include the sports theme beyond just attending the torch relay, the itinerary included skating at an Olympic-sized outdoor ice oval with the local speed skating club in attendance, a BC Cup cross-country ski race, snowshoeing in the Ancient Forest, and dog sledding. Additionally, the group attended Coldsnap, the Prince George winter music festival, visited the Two Rivers Gallery, and dined in a couple of great local restaurants.

The media on the trip included a TV crew, two newsprint outlets and two social media representatives. The resulting coverage included same-day news coverage of the torch relay on Global TV news, daily blogging and tweets from Miss604, a 1 ½ page feature article in the Vancouver Province newspaper's travel section a week after the visit, an LA Times photo essay, and sharing of professional Prince George imagery in several Olympic social media forums and on Flickr. Additionally, post-Olympics there were three feature stories on Global TV News, totalling over 11 minutes of coverage: one each on dog sledding, another on Prince George's bid to host the 2015 Canada Winter Games and on the Ancient Forest.

Anecdotally, the dogsled operator sold out every weekend for the remainder of the winter, and says her grooming clients still comment on the coverage. The volunteer group who takes care of the Ancient Forest trail was thrilled with the coverage, and plans to use the coverage to help their efforts to improve the site. Both of these are key tourism experiences for the area.

8

Stories from the Industry

From Vancouver Island Tourism Association:

Vancouver Island Tourism Association (TAVI) devised a unique press trip to highlight each region of Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands – a “Pleasure Hunt” press trip with equal parts planning and serendipity.

Upon arrival, the invited journalists and their “navigator” partner were hosted at a welcome reception where they were introduced to participating stakeholders who were providing the transportation (rental cars) and accommodation. After being introduced to all partners, the journalists drew a toy car from a hat which corresponded with one of the Vancouver Island regions they were to stay at the next night, as well as which vehicle type they would drive (i.e sports car, mid-size, SUV, etc). Itineraries were loosely coordinated, mainly focusing on the next evening’s dinner and accommodation. After the initial draw, the remainder of their itinerary (an additional nights’ accommodation) was coordinated based on their general draw locations. Each team was to explore the region(s) and collect as many story ideas as they could, log as much mileage onto the vehicles, and come back with a small presentation on their experiences to share with their hosts during a farewell reception. Each vehicle received a rally package including maps, meal vouchers, a comprehensive list of “roadside attractions”, bottled water, a road tunes CD, snacks, compass, t-shirts, and more.

For their last evening, drivers had to return to a pre-determined location by the designated finish time and record their mileage. During the “Road Kill” awards dinner, each team presented their experience, including skits, a sampling of souvenirs, a slide show, and more. Even the hosts learned about new and interesting products in the Vancouver Island region. The winning team was chosen based on their presentation, the amount of mileage logged (it ranged from 810 – 1379 km) and their enthusiasm; the participants were presented with a memento of their Vancouver Island visit. From such a unique press trip format, the results were considerable – at least eight articles over a 12 month period, and the trip was considered a success by all partners.

Appendices

1 Glossary

Not all of the terms below are used in this guide – but it is important to understand them if you are working with media.

ANGLE

The point of view taken in an article

ART DIRECTOR

The person in charge of a publication's layout

ASSIGNMENT

An editor's confirmation a story will be published

ASSIGNMENT LETTER

A letter from an editor or publisher confirming a writer will be doing a story on a specific subject

B-ROLL

Unedited broadcast-quality TV footage

BYLINE

The credit line for the author of an article

CLIPPINGS AND/OR TEARSHEET

Copies of articles published in newspapers and magazines

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 Management Organization (for example, Tourism Whistler, Tourism Victoria)

EDITOR

The person overseeing the editorial content of a publication

FACT CHECKER

The person who checks details in an article

FAMILIARIZATION or "FAM" TRIP

A trip designed to familiarize travel agents with products

FREELANCER

A media person who works for themselves and produces for a variety of markets

LEAD

The first sentence or paragraph of a written article

LEAD TIME

The time between the conception of an article and when it is published

MASTHEAD

A statement of title, ownership, editors, etc. of a newspaper or periodical. In the case of newspapers it is commonly found on the editorial page, and in the case of periodicals, on the contents page

MEDIA RELATIONS

Working with the media to provide information and news about your product

PRESS KIT

A collection of information designed for the press

PRESS RELEASE

Written information prepared for the use of the press

PRESS TRIP

A trip designed to familiarize travel media with a product

SIDEBAR

Boxed information that accompanies a feature article

Glossary

STAFFER

A person who works on the editorial staff of a publication

TRADE PUBLICATION

A magazine targeted to a specific industry (for example, *Canadian Travel Press*)

2 Recommended Reading

Fletcher, Tana and Julia Rockler. *Getting Publicity*. 3rd Edition. Bellingham, WA: Self-Counsel Press, 2000 (www.self-counsel.com)

Grunig, James E., (ed.), David M. Dozier (ed.), William P. Ehling (ed.), Larissa A. Grunig (ed.), Fred C. Repper (ed.), and Jon White (ed.), *Excellence in Public Relations & Communication Management*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992.

Kudrle, Albert E. and Melvin Sandler. *Public Relations for Hospitality Managers: Communicating for Greater Profits*. Indianapolis: John Wiley & Sons Canada Ltd., 1995.

Destination British Columbia™

