

# Going places

**D**uring all my travels I, like many others, would faithfully record every memory into a journal, capturing the essence of the destination whilst there. However, once I returned from each trip I would consign the journal to the bookshelf, only occasionally reading it and bringing my memories back to life.



**MARK  
DAVIDSON**

As the diaries and photograph albums began to pile up, I read other peoples' travel articles in magazines with envy, thinking I would like to get published in a similar vein. But how should I begin? I searched through web pages and writing magazines for inspiration and came across a travel writing course at a local college. On completion of the course, was I a travel writer? Well no, I still had to get published and felt no nearer to that than when I had started. The hard work was about to begin...

I had been toying with the idea of writing about my climbing exploits, namely Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and Mount Kinabalu in Borneo. Despite having Cerebral Palsy I'd never let my disability get in the way of travel. One evening I started to write, until I had my thoughts well and truly down on file. However, I still had to sell my work and I sent the article, with a disabled theme, to the magazine *Disability Now*. No response was forthcoming. I felt it was the end of my writing career, almost before it had started.

Nine months passed until, suddenly, I received an e-mail saying that the magazine would like to commission my work. Once I had had my acceptance, I thought the offers would flood in and yet it would be many months before my next article would be published.

I had to look at ways of getting regular articles in print and the value of contacting holiday companies that I'd travelled with couldn't be underestimated. Many have newsletters that document travellers' tales as a way of advertising the best aspects of their holidays to potential customers. I also felt that with my disability it provided an angle which would interest others.

Whilst holding down a full-time profession I explored the possibility of writing for the in-house newsletter that the company distributed to all their employees. Despite not reaching the public domain, it was an invaluable way to get published, following the mantra 'get published where you can, when you can'. More importantly, it was helping to build up my portfolio.

As well as writing I am able to supplement my articles with photography. Not only can pictures depict a travel story better than words alone, but this can have the added benefit to editors of being more cost effective than buying images from a photographic agency.

When I travel, my eyes are often cast in a different direction to others as I look at wheelchair access. Viewing every trip as a source of a travelogue, I try to remember all the details and nuances of a particular location; not only sights and sounds but how entrances and steps might affect those who require additional facilities, including those with visual or hearing impairments.

Travel writing can lead to subsidised trips. A number of editors have been keen for me to explore not only destinations but how to get there, and some travel companies will provide assisted travel, hoping they are going to be portrayed in a good light. The same can apply to accommodation – hotel owners can see it as free publicity.

As my articles are used both in mainstream and specialist publications, I tend to write the main body of the article from an able-bodied perspective and without any reference to my own disability. At the end I add a section detailing accessibility and try to show what can be achieved by those with impairments.

Mark's website is: <http://www.markdimages.com> ●