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Session 6A: Marketing Content

Travel Writing



Sarah Riches

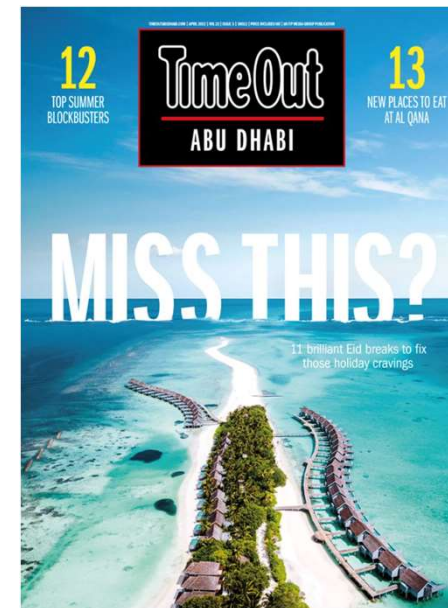
World of Cruising

Wanderlust

National Geographic Traveller

Time Out Abu Dhabi

Culture Smart! Britain



What makes a story?

- New
 - Surprising
 - Topical
 - Useful
 - On trend
 - Purpose
-
- Trade / local news
 - Trend forecast sites
 - Cultural organisations
 - Film releases



Structuring a story

- A catchy heading
- A strong introduction
- History
- Lively quotes
- Linked paragraphs
- Case studies
- A punchy ending



CRUISE REVIEW

LEFT Sailing the Nile aboard a traditional felucca near Aswan

Ancient WONDERS

On a cruise down the River Nile, **Sarah Riches** discovers that Egypt's pharaohs still have the power to amaze

It's Sam – still dark and cool – as boys tug at my elbows, bodies jostle against mine and men shout instructions in Arabic above the roar of flaming gas. This is a rude awakening, not the tranquil hot air balloon ride I'd anticipated.

But the chaos dissipates the moment we drift upwards into the sky – a moment I almost fail to notice as I'm so distracted by the beauty of my surroundings.

As dawn breaks, casting a glow like burning embers over the land, our basket soars 600m above the Valley of the Kings.

Like Egypt itself, this valley to the west of Luxor is bisected by the world's longest river, which shimmers in the early morning sun. But here the Nile isn't the star of the show, as it's fringed by sugar cane and alfalfa fields draped in a veil of mist and ancient temples emerging from a dusty, barren plain.

The pilot, Mohamed Aboud, points to the ruins of a necropolis and a temple cut into the limestone cliffs. "Look," he says. "You can see Medinet Habu and the Temple of Hatshepsut."

My ears pop as flocks of great cormorants fly over farmers' fires, the smoke curling like incense into the sky. I too have a birds' eye view, and I glimpse a horse and cart, clothes drying on the roof of a whitewashed house and motorbikes scurrying along desert tracks like ants.

It's a truly memorable experience, and definitely one of the highlights of my 11-night Pharaohs & Pyramids cruise with Viking, which begins with three days in Cairo.

CAPTIVATING CAIRO

As the world awaits the opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum – which is 11 years overdue – we peruse the existing Egyptian Museum, home to more than 170,000 ancient artefacts. You could spend days here, but to avoid feeling overwhelmed we dip in for just a few hours.

My Egyptologist guide, Yomna Salama, does a good job of focusing on a handful of exhibits, such as a golden sarcophagus and a seven-centimetre statue of Khufu – the pharaoh behind Giza's great pyramid. We also inspect a 20m papyrus scroll – the longest ever found – which depicts

the ancient Egyptian belief in the journey to the afterlife.

"You can see the earliest form of Tupperware too," jokes Yomna, pointing to vessels used to store food. "And did you know the Egyptians also invented camping chairs and taxis?"

Three days is enough to explore Cairo's museums and markets, see the pyramids and have a camel ride. Then we fly south to board the ship at Luxor.

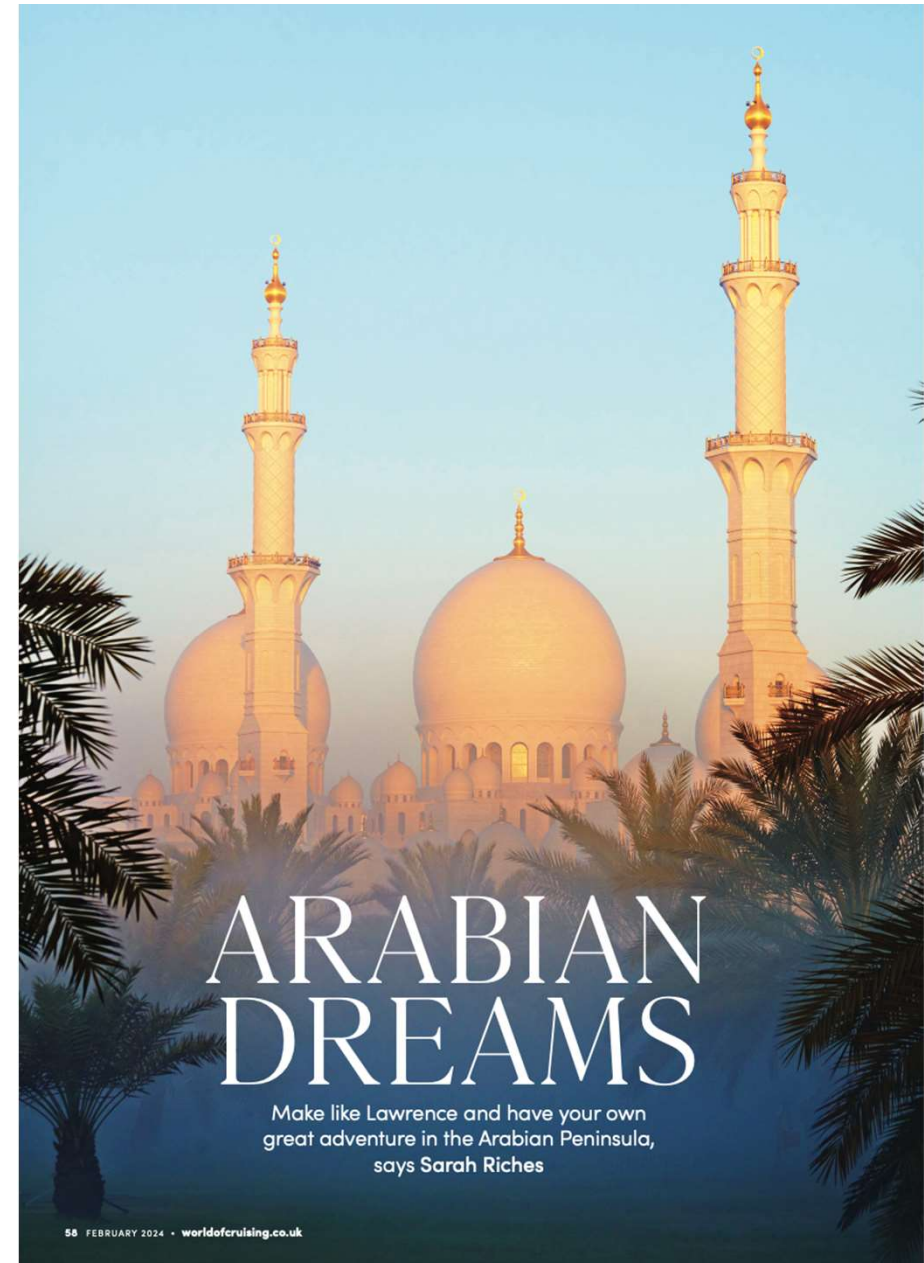
ATON, THE SUN GOD

Named after a sun god, *Viking Aton* is the line's newest ship. With its passenger capacity of only 82 – and just 62 on my trip – I'm soon on first-name terms with many of the guests. There's Paul and his partner Gwyn from South Africa, who graciously allow me to gatecrash their romantic dinners each night; Robert Davidson, a solo traveller who regales me with stories of the 90 countries he's visited; and the family of four from Portland, Oregon, who get on so well that I can't help wondering if they're really related at all.

Viking Aton's Scandi-chic decor reveals the line's Norwegian heritage, with a palette of wolf grey and sky blue that lets the floor-to-ceiling windows take

Introductions

- A shocking statistic
- Ask a question – or three
- Paint a scene: “Women embellished with *mehndi* tattoos as delicate as lace float into a café dressed in *abayas*. Men in floor-length *dishdashas* share shisha as a mosque’s call to prayer ricochets around the neighbourhood”
(*World of Cruising*, Arabia)



Introductions

- A quote: “On 23 June 1984, I was attacked” (BBC Travel, tigers)
- Create mystery: “I am being watched... a fierce gaze burns into my back” (*Oceanographic*, whales)
- Be risqué: “Chatting away with a stranger as we sat starkers in a piping-hot *onsen* was not how I expected my night to begin” (Adventure.com, hot springs)



Introductions

- Be humorous:
“To be clear, Kazakh national dress
isn’t a fluorescent mankini”
(*The Telegraph*, Kazakhstan)



What makes a strong quote?

Sourcing quotations

- Request the most appropriate person, ideally the CEO
- Request original quotes
- Offer guidance – word count

Writing quotes

- Introduce speakers first
- Use double quotation marks
- Evoke the senses, emotions, strong opinions

Avoid

- Intrepid says... / Jill and Craig say...
- Repeating a quote when introducing it
- Being generic: “I’m so excited...”

Linking paragraphs

- Continue a theme
- Use linking words
- Number a list only if the sequence is important, or part of a top 10



“Another locals’ favourite, ‘rundown,’ is an earthy mackerel stew”

(Grenada), Bridgetown (Barbados), Funchal (Madeira), Lisbon and Porto (Portugal), departs on 9 January 2025, from £2,929. [ambassadorcruiseline.com](https://www.ambassadorcruiseline.com)

JAMAICA

The Caribbean's third largest island was settled in the early 16th century by gold-seeking Spaniards, who went on to rule for a century and a half before ceding power to Britain in 1670. Jamaica has survived countless natural disasters over the years, including the great fire of 1704 which gutted its Port Royal City, and a devastating earthquake that tore through the capital, Kingston, in 1907.

Make downtown Kingston's mural-plastered Water Lane – a modern tribute to the country's rich musical heritage – your first stop. And don't miss a pilgrimage to the childhood home and recording studio of Jamaica's first son – the reggae legend Bob Marley. Now a museum, it's just a 20-minute taxi ride east.

For lunch on the go, tuck into Jamaica's most famous street food: jerk chicken, cooked slowly over indigenous pimento wood. Another locals' favourite, 'rundown,' is an earthy mackerel stew simmered in a savoury coconut milk sauce, which can also be made into a vegan 'ital' (food eaten by Rastafarians) version with butternut squash.

Escape the early afternoon heat in the island's cooler rainforest-cloaked interior. Luminous lagoons and cascading waterfalls such as the

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT
A Caribbean woman selling fruit; Dunn's River Falls; the Blue Mountains

55m-high Dunn's River Falls – of *Dr No* film fame – make this as much of a magnet for aquaphiles as Jamaica's 1,022km-long coast.

One of the island's more serene activities involves floating down the jade-green Martha Brae River on a nine-metre bamboo raft, similar to those used to convey sugar to port during Jamaica's prosperous plantation era. The river's course snakes past trees swollen with mangoes, while artisan shops sell homespun souvenirs straight from the banks. And keep your eyes peeled for tailed deer, peacocks and otters.

Close out your day with a soft adventure in eastern Jamaica's mist-veiled Blue Mountains, where some of the world's most prized coffee beans grow at a head-spinning 1,800m. Hiking, driving and biking plantation tours call in at historic estates where you can enjoy a cup of single-origin handpicked coffee, paired with views that stretch all the way to Cuba.

Get on board

MSC Cruises 14-night Caribbean cruise aboard *MSC Seascapes*, return from Miami (Florida) via Puerto Plata (Dominican Republic), San Juan (Puerto Rico), Ocean Cay MSC Marine Reserve (Bahamas), Miami (Florida), Ochos Rios (Jamaica), George Town (Cayman Islands) and Cozumel (Mexico), departs on 15 February 2025, from £1,419. [msccruises.co.uk](https://www.msccruises.co.uk)

Get on board

Celebrity Cruises seven-night Grand Cayman, Jamaica and Labadee cruise aboard *Celebrity Equinox*, return from Port Canaveral (Florida) via George Town (Grand Cayman), Falmouth (Jamaica) and Labadee (Haiti), departs on 22 February 2025, from £519. [celebritycruises.com](https://www.celebritycruises.com)



Linking paragraphs

- Change tack
- Ask a question then answer it
- Repeat words: “Brie goes well with white wine.”

“Muriel Chatel knows a thing or two about wine”



Punchy endings

- Use humour
- A strong quote
- Resolve an issue
- Return to the beginning:
“They may not be a wonder of the world, but I can’t help wondering what their lives were like, 3,500 years ago”



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Viking Atón on the Nile; Sarah dining on koshari; Aswan market

CRUISE REVIEW

If you've been to Egypt, what was your highlight? Tell us at World of Cruising on X, Facebook and Instagram



MY VERDICT

Great for Learning first-hand about ancient Egypt's pharaohs, temples and mummification.

Don't miss The ancient medicine lecture, during which you'll see hieroglyphics depicting cataract removal.

Best spot on the ship The shady rooftop, which you might have to yourself.

Value for money International and domestic flights, daily excursions, Wi-Fi and onboard tips are all included in the fare.

Saving the planet The rooftop has large solar panels and you can refill your water bottle in reception. So remember to take one!

Star rating 5/5

as good as your grandpa's. They may not be a wonder of the world, but I can't help wondering what their lives were like, 3,500 years ago.

Get on board

Viking's 11-night Pharaohs & Pyramids cruise aboard *Viking Atón*, return from Cairo via Luxor, Qena, Esna, Aswan and Edfu, departs on 9 October 2024, from £6,945 including all flights. [viking.com](https://www.viking.com)

pockmarked with more than 60 tombs. With no time to see them all, I make a beeline for one – the one with King Tutankhamun's mummy.

Nearby, the Valley of the Queens is the final resting place of more than 70 high-ranking souls. I'm lucky:

I get to see Queen Nefertari's tomb, its walls adorned with hieroglyphics as colourful as contemporary street art, just hours before it is unexpectedly – and indefinitely – closed at midnight for restoration.

THE LAND OF GOLD

After stopping in Esna to see its sunken temple and shop for hand-embroidered *galabeya* gowns at its market, we call at Aswan. This is known as the Land of Gold, and

while you can buy gold in its souk, the two-kilometre market is mostly lined with shops selling rugs, woven baskets and mounds of spices. It's a heady experience, as the scent of dried lemongrass and mint mingles with *shisha* smoke from hookah pipes.

A trip to the nearby 111m high Aswan Dam is enlightening. "It was built in the 1960s to prevent flooding, create hydropower and store water in Lake Nasser," explains Yomna. "But it also led to the loss of silt, a natural fertiliser, which has been replaced with chemicals. Seven temples had to be relocated to avoid being flooded and many Nubians – an ethnic minority in Egypt – were displaced."

The next day, we hop aboard motorboats to visit a Nubian village, West Suhail, spotting buffalo on the banks of the Nile along the way.

We sip hibiscus tea at a local's home – which has a glum-looking crocodile confined to a small enclosure – then visit a school to teach three-year-olds the English numbers one to 10 and learn the Arabic equivalent in return. I sit on a tiny chair next to Malika, who wants to work in a mall when she grows up. The school accepts donations, and I wish I had some notepads or alphabet flashcards to give, too.

The trip comes full circle as we return to Cairo to marvel at the 20 royal mummies in the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation. Dark brown and shrivelled like dates, many still have hair, toenails and teeth



Ship - Viking Cruise; Sarah and Aswan market - Sarah Wilson

Be authoritative

- Research from reputable sources
- Don't assume interviewees are correct
- Check the meaning of words you think you understand



Be logical and clear

- Avoid jargon
- Avoid foreign words: *palazzo*
- Use comparisons readers will understand
- Cover a destination north to south
- List the most complicated item last: flights, drinks and excursions – except submarine trips – are included



Be powerful

- Write with purpose: entertain, inform or both
- Strong, appropriate verbs
- Be specific – detail intrigues
- Avoid this year, last month
- Avoid clichés: “something for everyone”



Be evocative

- Evoke emotions and memories readers can identify with
- Use sophisticated language
- Use metaphors / similes / synonyms
- Draw on the senses / physical manifestations
- Avoid hyperbole!!!!!! superlatives, CAPITALS, even, award-winning



Be concise

- Quantifiers: a lot, some, many
- Adverbs: often, sometimes, slowly
- Adjectives: famous, dense jungle
- Tautology: relax and unwind
- “It’s not only luxurious, it’s also affordable”

Examples

- ~~Both~~ locals and visitors
- Children and adults ~~alike~~
- Your own ~~bespoke~~ itinerary
- During the winter ~~months~~
- Visit ~~either~~ the museum or the gallery

Be accurate

Subbing matters: it's professional, builds trust and prevents legal issues

- Spelling, grammar, punctuation
- Style: ten/10, Majorca/Mallorca
- Tone of voice
- Does it make sense? Is it interesting? Offensive? Is there repetition? Is a paragraph missing?
- Right of reply, children, copyright



Key takeaways

DO

- Have a lively heading
- Have a compelling introduction
- Use powerful verbs
- Use strong quotes
- Be evocative
- Be accurate
- End with punch

DON'T

- Waffle on





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