

GROUP C/D source: B2+ Gold Experience Pearson 2020

TRANSCRIPTS

L1.1

I'd been writing my travel blog for a couple of years before I decided to try taking it up professionally. It all started when I decided to go travelling in my gap year between school and university. I was backpacking around south-east Asia having these amazing experiences and seeing the most wonderful sights. Naturally, I wanted to share what I was doing with my family and my friends I'd left behind back home. I found that the most effective way to do that was by posting photos and keeping an online journal of my adventures. Later, when I finished university, I still had the travel bug, so I hit the road again. This time, though, I had the idea of hopefully earning some money from my writing. There are thousands of travel blogs out there and the beauty of the internet is that it's relatively straightforward to set your own blog up. The sad thing is that many of them never get read by more than a handful of people. There are various reasons for this, but the main one is bloggers failing to identify their audience. Of course, your friends and relatives are probably going to follow your blog, if they've got any interest in you! But, there has to be a good reason for other internet users to want to follow you. You need to ask yourself two questions; 'Who's going to read my blog?' and 'Why should they want to?' The majority of travel blog readers are looking for an escape from their daily routines, so they're not going to be very interested in your package tour to Spain. They'd probably rather hear about your adventures in the Amazon rainforest or your road trip across the United States. At the same time, if they're planning to make a similar trip themselves, they'll probably be keen to pick up some travel advice, like where are the best places to stay or to eat. Not only that, but a lot of people have a limited attention span when it comes to reading things online. That means you have to get your message across as clearly and simply as possible, which is why each of my posts is never more than a couple of paragraphs long. I also tend to include loads of photos because, as they say, 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. If you're lucky enough to eventually attract a large following, then it's possible to make a reasonable living from your writing. Most of my income comes from advertising on the blog, but I also make a little from being a guest writer for other travel blogs. Another way I benefit is by getting sponsorship from different companies. Some of them are eager to be attached to trendy travel blogs, and some of the things they've provided me with are outdoor clothing and even plane tickets. In return, I'm expected to mention their products in an article or make sure they're on display in one of my photos. I know people might disagree with this sort of advertising. But, I don't think it's any different from sports stars wearing their sponsors' clothes or driving a particular company's cars. The hardest part about my job is undoubtedly being on the road all the time. I get to visit some fascinating places and some of the experiences I've had have been out of this world. But at the same time, I do get homesick like everyone else, and sometimes I really miss my family. The trouble is that this is my job now. If I were to stop travelling or writing for a while, my readers would go somewhere else. As a result, I only get to spend a couple of weeks of the year at home. Fortunately, it's easy enough to make video calls, even from the most remote places, so I try to call my family at least once every few weeks. Just seeing their faces can help me overcome the most difficult moments. If I had to give some advice about starting a travel blog, I'd say the most important thing is to just try it first. It might be tempting to chuck in your job or studies and have a go at being a professional blogger. But, it's not for everyone. Firstly, you have to be an enthusiastic traveller who's going to inspire their readers. Travelling can be hard and you're likely to encounter lots of difficulties, but if that comes across in your blog, you won't inspire anyone. Secondly, you have to be extremely well-organised if you want to write regularly. Apart from time spent planning transport and accommodation, you'll also need to spend several hours a day updating your blog. If you find that you've got those qualities after travelling for a few months, you may have a future as a professional travel blogger.

L1.2

1. I'd been thinking about taking up an outdoor activity for some time. We live right on the edge of a massive lake so there are tons of water sports to choose from but I hadn't done anything about it. So, when my mum said she'd pay for me to have paddle board lessons, I jumped at the chance. The thing is, it's actually a very solitary sport, which isn't quite what I had in mind. My main reason for taking up an activity was to meet new people, but instead I just spend my time on my own in the middle of a lake!

2. I've been a member of a hiking club for about two months now. Even though I live near the mountains, I'd never done much walking before that. It was actually a mate of mine who convinced me to go. He'd just joined a hiking club and felt nervous about not knowing anyone. I only went to keep him company but I'm glad I did. I'd never really appreciated how beautiful and majestic those mountains were. Being up there is the perfect way to switch off and experience true peace. Few people are as fortunate as me to have this right on their doorstep, so I aim to make the most of it!

3. At first, I was unsure about taking it up because I'd never been a particularly strong swimmer. The thing is, my friends had heard about some marked out routes along the coast, especially designed for swimming. Not wanting to admit that I could barely swim a length of the pool, I just tagged along with them. Luckily, you're obliged to wear a buoyancy aid on those routes, otherwise I wouldn't have made it. Since then, though, I'm pleased to say my swimming has gone from strength to strength. I've swum loads of routes up and down the coast. Being out there in the open sea leaves me energised and ready to take on new challenges. I can't get enough of it!

4. I'd never been into sports of any kind and I'd always preferred doing more geeky things, like taking apart electrical equipment. However, a friend of mine gave me his old mountain bike. There was quite a lot wrong with it but I spent the school holidays fixing it up. Of course, the only way to see how well it worked was by taking it out on a test run, and that's what got me into mountain biking. It was nothing too extreme, but I was quickly taken by the exhilaration of zooming down steep paths and splashing through streams. It's an amazing sensation, despite the occasional fear of crashing! I must have taken my bike out every day since then. It's funny really because I never would've imagined myself taking up such an energetic sport.

5. When I was a kid, I was never allowed to have pets at home because my dad said I wouldn't look after them. He was convinced that I would lose interest after five minutes. However, I was determined to show him that I could do it, so when I was 16, I got a part-time job at a horse stables. I wasn't so keen on cleaning up after them but I was allowed to take them out whenever I wanted. Over time I've built up an amazing bond with some of the horses, even the most difficult ones. I think the owner was surprised by how patient I am with them. He says I'm a natural and now my nickname at the stables is 'the horse whisperer'