

Columbia Gorge Magazine

www.columbiagorge.com

Insights from Editor Larry Dill

1. How do you characterize your readership, your audience?

Our audience is comprised of residents of the Columbia Gorge and visitors to the region. The magazine is heavily circulated at hotels in the region and placed in the rooms of many of them.

2. Who writes for your publication? Where do you get your stories?

The majority of the copy is produced by a stable of regular contributors, particularly contributing editors. I generally write two or three of the articles in each issue. The remaining copy is written by writers whose proposals have been accepted.

3. If you were to give one or two bits of advice to a freelancer hoping to break into your publication, what would you say?

As any freelancer would know, the most important thing is to be familiar with the magazine and the type of articles we publish. The focus of our publication is the Columbia Gorge region, and queries should reflect how the article will be of interest to our readers and how they have a particular focus on our unique circulation area.

It's obvious when writers not familiar with the magazine pitch stories that simply are not appropriate for our focus.

Impress me with a good query and samples of your work. We are always looking for something we have not covered in the past five years; however, many of the story pitches received are simply rehashes of material we have already covered. I rarely consider articles that have been published previously.

4. What is a mistake you typically see new writers (or writers in general) make?

Generally it's the pitch that doesn't really fit our focus. We are a lifestyle magazine, as opposed to a travel publication, and I'm really not interested in first person narratives of the author's grand adventures, for the most part. Park your ego at the door and deliver articles that focus on the topic at hand, not your point of view.

5. Speaking specifically of travel articles in your magazine, what kinds do you look for? Can you tell me a little bit about your own needs? How would you characterize your publication's travel coverage?

As I said, we are not really a travel magazine. Our focus is on the Columbia Gorge and its offerings for resident as well as visitors. The emphasis should be on the topic, site, activity, service, etc.

We do run a section called "Beyond the Gorge," which is a feature about an area of interest outside of the Columbia Gorge. It is generally about an area/place that is relatively close in the Pacific Northwest or the West Coast. Since we are a quarterly, these slots are generally scheduled far in advance, and we rarely have the need to consider or solicit stories from freelancers in this category.

6. What, in your view, separates an OK travel article from one that's truly inspired?

I look for something that is going to make readers want to consider visiting an area or location and that captures the spirit of the place being discussed. The "okay" article is broad

and general, and it's obvious when the writer is pumping out mundane copy that could have been produced just as well by scanning the Internet. It's pretty easy to tell when an article is little more than a homework assignment.

7. Do you have any pet peeves when it comes to travel writing?

First person, present tense. Like I said earlier, park your ego or don't bother. Also, I can't stand the articles that try to make it sound as if the writer is the best friend of every chef, restaurateur, and bartender in the place he/she is writing about. The best way to lose me is to talk about a "barista" and refer to him/her by first name only. Just tell the story and don't bother trying to be hip or super cool.

Writers Guidelines

Columbia Gorge Magazine is the Columbia Gorge region's premier magazine, with an annual distribution of over 84,000 nationwide. The quarterly is complimentary at more than 250 strategic locations regionally, and available at newsstands in states from Oregon to Montana to Michigan. Visitors to the area tend to want to take a little piece of the Columbia Gorge home with them. Columbia Gorge Magazine celebrates the lifestyle of its residents. We tend to be outside a lot here; we work hard but not to excess; we nurture creativity. We value good food, good times and good people. Most of us are involved in at least one sport, whether it's windsurfing, hiking, skiing or climbing. Many of us hunt, rodeo, or fish. We all make an effort to enjoy the best of every season.

REGION OVERVIEW

The Columbia Gorge includes counties on both the Oregon and Washington sides of the Columbia River, from Troutdale/Camas to Biggs/Maryhill, in the nation's only National Scenic Area. The region has always seen a lot of action. First, it was a commercial hot spot for the members of various Chinook tribes, who acted as "middle men" between coastal and inland peoples. For the last hundred or so years, the area has predominantly served sheep and cattle ranchers to the east, and farmers and orchardists to the west. Many inhabitants have only recently discovered this dynamic area and decided to call it home, while others come during the summer to help with the harvest and then return to their native countries.

Beginning in the early 1980s, the area began its transformation into a sports and nature-lovers' Mecca. Hood River is the unofficial capital of this land of outdoors enthusiasts, a small town with an increasingly urban sensibility. The landscape of the Columbia Gorge is as varied as the people in it, from near-rain forest to high desert, from Class V whitewater to 11,000-foot Cascade peaks. Through it all runs the mighty Columbia Riverfreight highway; recreational paradise; environmental concern.

QUERY PROCESS

Most, but not all, of our writers reside in the Columbia Gorge. If you would like to write for us, please submit the following: cover letter, resume/list of publications (optional); and one to three clips. The cover letter should include a brief description of the article/s you'd like to write and why you're the best person to do it. When possible, the clips should reflect the tone and/or subject matter of your proposed article. You may send your query package electronically or by mail.

Before you submit a query, please familiarize yourself with the magazine. Sample copies are available by mail for \$5. We try to balance quality with accessibility. We are decidedly not snobbish but still find it important to write concisely and compellingly.

The Ultimate Travel Writer's Workshop - Denver, Colorado - July, 2009
Publications Expo

While we may fact-check your article, it is incumbent upon you to submit correct and up-to-date information. You may be asked to provide contact information for your sources.

The first story you write for us will be "on spec." That is, we will not guarantee to run or pay for your article until we've seen it. We do this to safely gauge the amount of attention your work requires during the editorial process. We pay on acceptance. Please allow four weeks for a response. If you haven't heard from us, please call 541-308-0308 for an update.

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