

2024 Mark Twain Travel Journalist Contest Awards

Thank you to our 2024 Mark Twain Travel Journalist contest sponsors!



Newspaper Domestic

1 – Diana Lambdin Meyer, Park staffers love your likes, *USA Today*.

Meyer chooses a clever angle on the classic travel experience of our treasured national park system, considered through a digital and social media visiting experience. Obscure, but compelling examples draw readers in with a renewed sense of wonder for the intimate details that can be discovered even by those who never step foot on the sites.

2- Amy Lynch, Mirror, Mirror, *Chicago Tribune*.

Lynch's writing style engages readers in an accessible way while interspersing bits of history and context that readers may never have even thought to wonder about. A clever photograph centers a well-written description that sings on the page.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/2023/10/11/louisville-is-using-its-disco-ball-history-to-put-a-new-spin-on-tourism/>

3- Mary Bergin, Peace, Simplicity and a sense of mystery, *Chicago Tribune*.

From the lyrical headline to the closing graph, Bergin cleverly organizes her Amish-themed travels to set our expectations by state and curate a shopping list of sweet, savory and practical purchase ideas.

<https://www.chicagotribune.com/2024/03/06/peace-simplicity-and-a-sense-of-mystery-exploring-amish-communities-across-the-midwest/>

Newspaper International

1 – Terri Colby, Romance Railway – *Porthole Cruise & Travel*.

Vivid details describe the destination using all the senses and depict the unique cultural experiences visitors can anticipate. The historical significance and deeper context included in the story provide a foundation to help travelers deepen their understanding of the sites.

2-Katherine Rodeghier, Floating through a fairy tale – *Daily Herald*.

First-hand accounts of not only the author's experience, but also of fellow travelers and staff helps to transport readers into both the social setting of this river cruise and also the culinary and cultural treats they can anticipate.

<https://krodeghier.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Rhine-Moselle-cruise.pdf>

3-Jackie Finch, Special events commemorate 50th anniversary of Picasso's death, *The Herald-Times*

Lesser known insights about the famous artist's life draw readers in from the startling lede to the intricate details throughout the piece. Finch features compelling details about the artist's life with destination details about this hometown and other nearby sites of relevance.

Magazine Domestic

1-Rich Warren, Blues Buffet, AAA.com.

Warren's authentic respect for the destination's history, music and cuisine brings his Mississippi Delta personal pilgrimage to life for readers. Each stop is described with the perfect details needed to convey the sights, sounds and tastes that await travelers across the eclectic experience described. No doubt many will follow in these footsteps.

2-Damaine Vonada, Set Course for Huron, *Port of Call*.

Vonada shines a light on a lesser known waterfront destination with illuminating photos and a diverse set of historical, cultural and recreational options that inspire but don't overwhelm readers looking for a fresh take on a classic summer style getaway.

3-Damaine Vonada, Christmas bells are ringing, *Ohio Cooperative Living*.

Focusing on a singular season and featured attraction helps this piece sparkle. Vonada acknowledges the copious competing options available during this widely celebrated holiday and quickly makes her case for our attention to the subject of her sensory-rich selection.

<https://lakelandboating.com/set-course-for-huron/>

Magazine International

1 – Randy Mink, Ancient Ruins, Bustling Bazaars and Desert Landscapes...[Jordan offers colorful slices of the Middle East], *Leisure Group Travel*

Indeed, it is the simple things we remember most. And opening with this travel writer's account of a clifftop picnic invites readers into an exotic destination using a familiar experience. Little details like descriptions of food containers, wandering cats, and laundry flapping in the breeze paint a vivid picture that makes the faraway subject of this piece seem close to home and heart.

<https://leisuregrouptravel.com/jordan-travel-highlights/>

2- Erika Ebsworth-Goold, Oh Happy Day! How Denmark Became a Hotbed of Gospel Music, *Fodor's Travel*

Connecting an American tradition with a faraway land, this piece weaves together culture, history and pure joyful noise into one smooth narrative when these two worlds collide.

3-Randy Mink, Centuries-old wonders await... *Leisure Group Travel*

Mink gives us new vantage points on a Spanish side trip by highlighting this lesser-known destination around a theme of "heights" that adds a memorable angle on this vivid piece.

<https://leisuregrouptravel.com/hitting-the-heights-in-cuenca-spain/>

Culinary

1 – Terri Colby, Cheese Lovers in Paradise, *Motorcoach Living*

The perfect blend of pastoral photography, food beauty shots and joyful social scenes set the tone for the comprehensive food-based travel journey descriptions. In addition to Colby's culturally-infused story, the callouts give readers some inspiring tips on more ways to set a course for cheese-based adventure.

2- Susan R. Pollack, Start Chopping, *Anchors Away*.

Using participant stories and vivid descriptions, Pollack makes the interactive cooking class experience feel exotic and accessible at the same time.

<https://www.miblue.com/issue/summer-2024/>

3-Amy Lynch, Persimmon Pudding, *Garden & Gun*.

Few things are better than a culinary piece that blends instructions on how to celebrate a native food, find it prepared locally and make a homemade version all served "under a dollop" of sweet maternal memories.

<https://gardenandgun.com/recipe/the-lasting-legacy-of-old-fashioned-persimmon-pudding/>

Midwest

1 – Diana Lambdin Meyer, Town has vanished, but not its ideals, *USA Today*.

A piece that challenges us to match the imagination of the preservationist featured in this compelling lede, this article goes beyond describing what visitors can experience now to also paint a picture of what it once was and what it could one day be.

2- Terri Colby – All eyes on Milwaukee, *Chicago Tribune*

Colby uses Milwaukee's political convention moment in the spotlight to expertly highlight the many other reasons why readers should tune in to a Midwestern treasure. Tightly written copy alongside photos and cutlines that concisely illustrate the range of fun twists on quintessential Wisconsin wonders like beer, baseball and beauty.

3- Jackie Sheckler Finch, Ali Center Showcases History of Boxing Legend, *All Things Cruise*

The origin story of a famous boxer is used front and center in both the visitor site and her review. From Ali's childhood and rise to success to the interactive experiences awaiting travelers, the descriptions help readers understand the bigger message beyond sport that this museum can deliver.

Recent Sites

1 – Randy Mink, Flaming Colors Brighten Mammoth Lakes, visitmammoth.com

A comprehensive story that draws readers in with both a visually compelling seasonal travel experience and helpful information on how to connect the destination to other familiar sites.

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/68471746/canadian-world-traveller-fall-2023-issue/10>

2 – Damaine Vonada, Rolland Center for Lincoln Research, *Long Weekends Magazine*

Compelling lede that puts the reader at the center of the destination in their mind's eye. Effectively depicts the immersive experience visitors seek in historical and museum destinations.

3- Amy Lynch, Sweet Harmony, *PATTERN Magazine*

A unique angle to center the story of a new resident while describing an employer's effect on establishing this location as a niche travel destination.

Short Copy

1 – Katherine Rodeghier, Meander the Blue Ridge Parkway, *Motorcoach Living*

The images, body copy and callouts pack key information in a concise package. Expectations for the overall experience are supplemented with historical context and very modern considerations.

2 – Amy Lynch, Roman Relaxation, Long Weekends Magazine

The copy, images and layout set a tone that matches the topic and bridges the ancient origins and the modern manifestation of this sensory-rich experience.

<https://long-weekends.com/articles/springsummer-2024/aire-ancient-baths/>

3 – Cortney Fries, Breaking the Grass Ceiling, AAA Midwest Explorer

A clever headline frames the destination and its significance. The fact-filled piece is bookended by heart-warming quotes that give us an extra interest in cheering on the site and the players it hosts.

Photojournalism

1 – John Handley – Fiji, *Journal & Topics Media Group*

Both the serenity and the exoticness of the destination are conveyed in two compelling images of the island experience described. Two shots that truly transport viewers to the destination.

2- Suzanne Corbett – Basking in the Culture and Cuisine of Spain’s Basque Country, *Gazelle*.

The array of photos allow us to have a bird’s eye view, fully absorb the stunning architecture, imagine a unique experience tapping into the taste of the region, and then pull in to a more intimate angle on the dining experience.

<https://gazellemagazine.com/basking-in-the-culture-and-cuisine-of-spains-basque-country/e>

3- Katherine Rodeghier – Rhine and Moselle, *Daily Herald*

The fairy tale promised in the headline is delivered with a well framed quintessential key image and other interesting angles on the sites and service travelers could expect on the cruise described.

Group/Series Photos

1-Wendy Pramik, Ohio’s Pumpkin Pioneers, *Ohio, the Heart of it All Newsletter*

The human subjects put the intriguing gourds in perspective and also contrast with the creative angles on the water tower shot to create a varied visual story.

<https://ohio.org/travel-inspiration/articles/the-circle-ville-pumpkin-show-an-annual-tradition-notable-ohioan-pumpkin-pioneers>

Digital Alternate Media

1 – Katherine Rodeghier, Cruising in the Footsteps of Lewis and Clark, Porthole Cruise & Travel

Intriguing themes organize this piece that parallels the famous explorers’ and Rodeghier’s adventures.

Descriptions of this river cruise filled with land-based excursions bring this route to life for modern-day travelers.

2 – Rich Warren, Discover the Hidden Charm of Extremadura in Spain, *Go World Travel Magazine*

With a warm and inviting style, this piece makes readers feel they have the inside intel on an undiscovered gem in Spain, with the important added insight of specific sites to investigate. <https://www.goworldtravel.com/hidden-charm-of-extremadura/>

3- Mary Bergin, Houseboats, *East-West News Service*

Bergin guides us to consider a new way to enjoy American and international waterways from the unique vantage point of houseboats that combine the best traits of many forms of travel and recreation.

<https://www.eastwestnewsservice.com/enjoy-your-vacation-on-a-houseboat/>

2024 Travel Journalist of the Year

Terri Colby

Colby describes the cultural and historical significance of destinations while also vividly depicting the sites and delights that modern travelers seek. She guides readers toward meaningful memory-making experiences, both near and far.

