

A person's hands are shown typing on a laptop keyboard. The laptop is open on a wooden desk. In the background, a world map is visible, overlaid with a semi-transparent grey layer. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor setting with natural light.

The No BS Guide

TO AFFILIATE MARKETING

FOR TRAVEL BLOGGERS

by Christina Guan

HAPPYTOWANDER.COM

Table of contents

Introduction	3
Part 1: Why affiliate marketing is a struggle for travel bloggers	5
Part 2: How to turn travel blogs into real money makers	8
A note on “selling out”	9
Understanding the Reader Buying Cycle	10
Identifying and solving unique problems	14
The potential of diversification	17
Part 3: Profitable programs and content ideas	26
Affiliate programs that you should join	27
Profitable post ideas	32
Part 4: A step by step blueprint for affiliate marketing	37
Conclusion	62
Resources	63
To-do list	65
Become an affiliate	67

When it comes to monetization, travel bloggers have it rough.



I mean it's true... From the glossy surface of Instagram, bloggers in the travel niche appear to have it all: comped hotel stays, adventurous tours and a glamorous lifestyle of jetsetting and strategic posing by waterfalls.

This is all fine and dandy until you have the inevitable realization that *you can't buy groceries with complimentary hotel bathrobes.*

Hence the shift in every travel blogger's mindset: the sudden ambitious desire to monetize... and even make a full time income. For many of us, this is the exact moment when we spiral into a sinkhole of confusion and panic monetization, spamming our sites with AdSense, sponsored posts and oodles of self-loathing.

It wasn't until a month and a half ago that I learned about affiliate marketing... and in this short period of time, I've gone from making a few bucks a month off my blog, all the way to over \$1300 in 30 days.

Woah.

You guys should all know by now that I don't like secrets, so in this

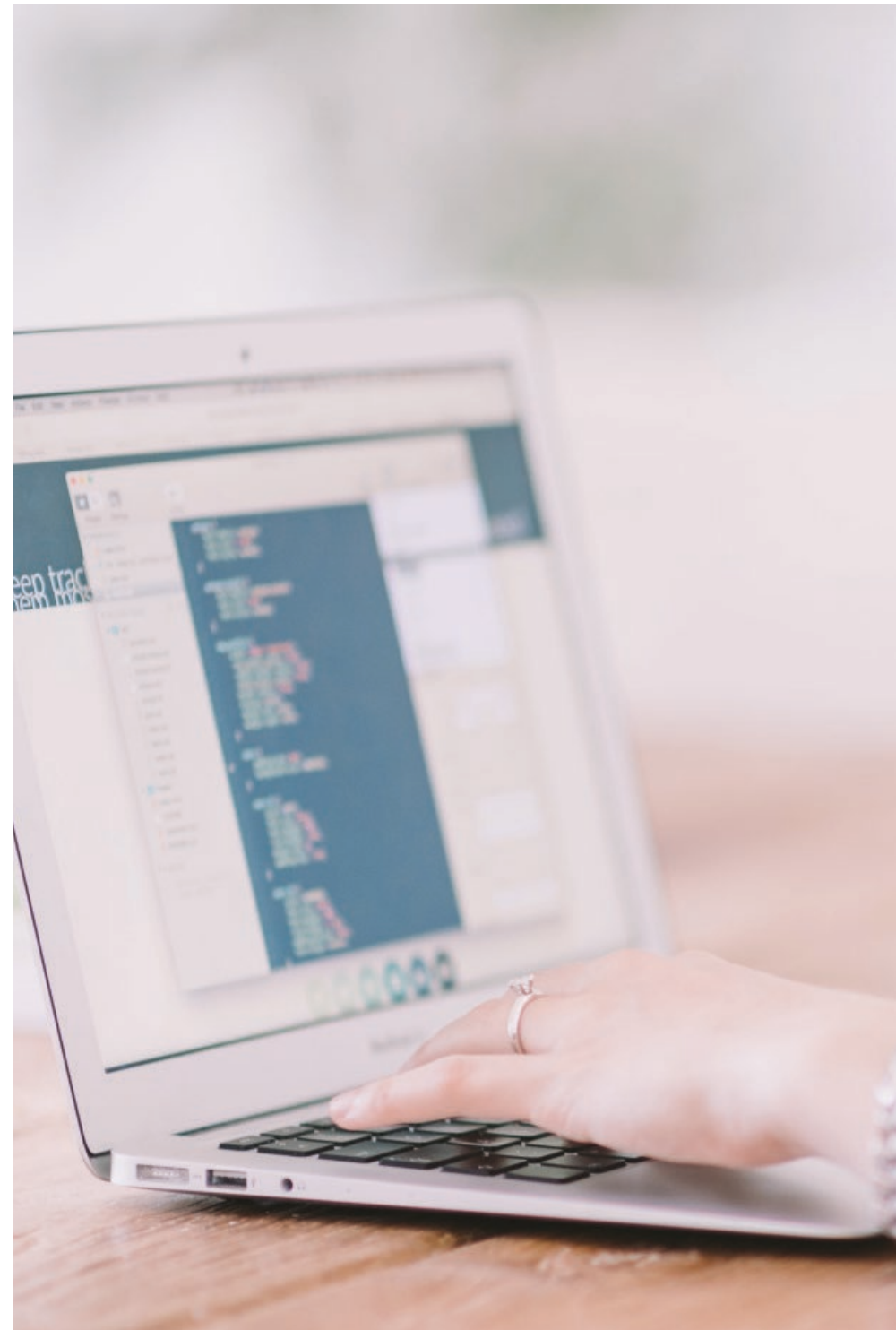
book, I'm going to share with you how I achieved that growth.

One realization I've had in this past month is that affiliate marketing for travel bloggers is a **very** unique beast to tame... and accessible resources out there for us travel blog folk? Almost non-existent. So I did what I always do: I sat down with an IV drip of caffeine, taped my eyes open and birthed one stupid long resource that will melt your eyeballs off.

This eBook hopes to address some gaps in available affiliate marketing resources by providing specific strategies, programs and tips for those working in the **travel blogging niche**. The focus will be on helping you break through that rut of making zero to limited affiliate sales, and show you the actionable strategies that you can use to turn your blog into a moneymaker... without selling your soul to salesy content and spammy advertising.

Throughout the book, I will assume that you have a basic understanding of how affiliate marketing works. If however, you are a complete beginner, I recommend checking out the [Making Sense of Affiliate Marketing course](#) by Michelle Schroeder-Gardner. This was the course that started it all for me, and helped get me started on this wild path of affiliate income. You can read more about my experience with the course [here](#).

So pour yourself a glass of wine, grab a Toblerone, and get ready to kick some serious affiliate marketing butt.





WHY

*is affiliate marketing
such a struggle for
travel bloggers?*

Before we faceplant into mountains of fresh dollar bills, we need to firstly understand the bumpy road that we have ahead. This section discusses some of the unique challenges that travel bloggers face in affiliate marketing,... before we promptly destroy them :)

The struggles of affiliate marketing in travel

When you read income reports from big name bloggers who boast 6 figure salaries every month, it's easy to be sent on a downward spiral of envy, panic and stress eating. But haven't you ever noticed that these bloggers rarely operate in the travel niche? We'll begin with a brief pity party discussion as to why affiliate marketing in travel is especially difficult.

So first thing's first: I have to be straight with you. Compared to other niches, travel blogging isn't the friendliest arena for affiliate marketing. Here are two main reasons why:

1. Travel is a commitment.

People think a lot harder about the decision to purchase a trip vs. something small like lipstick or a tank top. Because of this, readers are less likely to make immediate purchases, which therefore means they're less likely to buy straight from your affiliate link/recommended retailer. Even if you inspire someone to go somewhere, it's not likely they'll book tickets and a hotel right then and there (unless they're hyperspontaneous zillionaires).

2. Travel is a luxury.

As travel bloggers, we often take travel for granted. Because it's such a big part of our lives, we forget that it's an unattainable reality for many people. Again, this means that we have less potential buyers than smaller products like cooking ware or cosmetics.



Now, before you ugly cry and throw in the towel...

Not all hope is lost!

Affiliate marketing as a travel blogger may be tough, but it's not impossible. I could bombard you with 10 Pinterest boards' worth of inspirational quotes right now, but instead, I'll settle for a mini pep talk about where I was a few short months ago.

In September, I was making literal pennies in affiliate income.

It seemed like nobody in the world besides my mom was clicking on my product links... I mean, how *dare* they?! After relentless pursuits in selling lame things like packing cubes and towels (no joke, I was really bad), I was ready to hoist my white flag and admit that maybe, I wasn't cut out for this whole affiliate game.

As a last ditch effort, I [enrolled in a course](#) for the first time in my life and that changed everything. To crowbar a Disney quote in here, I was shown a whole new world - the shining, shimmering splendid world of affiliate marketing. Since completing the course only a month ago, **my monthly affiliate income has skyrocketed from \$2 to over \$1300 in the span of 30 days.**

Now, I'm still far from one of those 6 figure per month bloggers, but through trial, error and plenty of groddy research, I've finally been able to determine what works for us *aspiring travel blogging affiliate marketers* (#mouthful). Thinking back to only two months ago when I first started, there was so much information that I wish I knew. SO much information that explained why affiliate marketing wasn't working for my travel blog. Today, I'm passing that information onto you so that the crazy struggle can finally end.

As always, my goal above all else is to keep things real and of course, void of bullshit. Get your business hats on, folks and hang tight for this wild ride on the real talk train.



#2

HOW

*can you turn your
travel blog into a
real money maker?*

Now that we know what we're working with, it's time to dive into how exactly we can sidestep those challenges and turn our travel blogs into badass money makers. This section will detail three major steps to get you there.

But first: a note on “selling out”

Before we start with this section, I want to take some time to remind you of your #1 goal and priority as a travel blogger, and that is to provide value to your readers,

Monetization is often a scary word in the blogosphere, not only because of its million layers of mystery, but because of its connection to the idea of “selling out”.

Remember this: if you’re still creating badass content that’s valuable for your readers, then you’re not selling out. The fact that you’re able to do this while earning a few bucks is just a bonus (and pretty much Class A wizardry). You have to be careful while treading this line though. Once the money starts coming in, it’s easy to get obsessed with earning more and more. So, remember that your top priority will always be your readers, and use the advice in this Ebook simply as a guide to optimizing the affiliate content on your site... *not* as a guide on how to write ALL your blog’s content.

In sum, don’t go insane with affiliate marketing on your blog. Use it sparingly, tastefully and only in cases where you’re providing genuine value to the reader. If you publish content for the sole purpose of making a quick buck, readers *will* notice, your loyalty *will* decrease and I *will* cry because you didn’t listen to me.

Now let’s begin, shall we?

Understanding your readers' buying cycle

If I were to pinpoint the #1 reason why affiliate links don't sell on travel blogs, I'd say it's because bloggers aren't understanding the different phases of their readers' buying cycle. This section will detail what that means and how you can use this knowledge to create more profitable affiliate posts.

To your right is what I mean by your **readers' buying cycle**. You'll see variations of this in every marketing textbook out there. I've stripped it down to the three basic stages that you're concerned with (hence why it's not a cycle... haha whoops). It's a pretty intuitive concept but to briefly explain it: Every buyer (in this case, your reader) can be placed on a different phase of a buying cycle in which they're moving through their decision to make a purchase. Depending on where they are in the cycle, they have drastically different needs. Understanding the distinction between these phases is important, because knowing what phase your readers are in will help you create messaging that effectively sells to them.

Awareness stage: Readers are just learning about a new product, destination, service, etc. They might have never heard about it before and at this point, are just getting some more information about it.

Evaluation stage: The reader is considering the purchase of a product or service, maybe comparing prices, deals and features with comparable alternatives.

Purchase stage: Click. Add to cart. Done! The product has been purchased.



... but what does this have to do with affiliate marketing?



Well, I believe that one of the most common mistakes being made by travel bloggers in affiliate marketing is that they don't recognize that there are these different stages. Too often, they place links and try to sell products in the Awareness stage, which is much less likely to work. A more suitable route would be to get readers at their Evaluation stage in order to finally coax them into the final Purchase.

Think about it this way: if you're bored on a Sunday evening, scrolling through Pinterest for travel inspo, how likely are you to book a hotel off of a "Reasons why you should visit Bananaland" post?

Not very... because you haven't even decided you're going there yet!

On the other hand, what kind of stuff do you Google when you're looking for a hotel to book? "Best boutique hotels in Bananaland", right? So if you found a roundup post reviewing the best options, then it's far more likely that you'll make a booking from there.

This is the difference between targeting someone during the Awareness stage vs. the Evaluation stage.

Understanding this distinction is important, because it helps you realize where you should concentrate your efforts. Adding a million Booking.com banners to your "Travel Inspiration" posts is likely a futile effort, so you'd be much better off focusing your efforts elsewhere. Remember, it's not about quantity necessarily. Sure, you could try cramming affiliate links into as many posts as you can with a blind hope that they will sell, but it's far more strategic to create posts that are designed to convert.

Applying this strategy: an example

For the following scenario, please indulge me and pretend that you're writing a classic and cliched piece called - "Why GuacamoleTown Should Be on Your Bucket List".

If you want to add some affiliate links into this post, what would you do?

Most people would link to different hotels/accommodations, tours and activities, maybe even guidebooks or packing list items that would be perfect for GuacamoleTown. This could maybe work, but remember: because readers at this point are more in the Awareness stage than anything else, the likelihood that they'll purchase one of these recommended products is not very high.

But suppose instead of spamming that post with links, you created a new set of posts all about GuacamoleTown, ones that targeted readers in the Evaluation stage. Examples of these posts are reviews (e.g. The Best Family Activity in GuacamoleTown: Guac Food Tours Review) or roundups (e.g. The best mid-range hotels in GuacamoleTown). These ones, because they attract readers actually evaluating a purchase, are much more likely to get clicks and sales.

We'll be discussing more profitable post ideas later in this book, but first, let's discuss another amazing way to attract readers in the Evaluation stage: presenting solutions to unique problems.



Buying cycle brainstorm

Use the space below to evaluate three of your top performing blog posts. Identify which phase of the buying cycle they speak to. If they are in the Awareness phase, brainstorm a few ideas of supplementary content that would target the same audience, but in the Evaluation phase. If in the Evaluation phase, brainstorm some ideas for affiliate links or products you could organically incorporate into the post.

BLOG POST

PHASE OF BUYING CYCLE

IDEAS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY CONTENT
(OR POTENTIAL AFFILIATE LINKS)

1.

3.

3.

Identifying and solving unique problems

Another common mistake I've observed is that travel bloggers frequently try to sell the same products and publish very similar affiliate content... to the point where it all gets boring and samey. One good strategy to step up your affiliate game is to identify/solve unique problems. We'll discuss this tactic next.

If Yahoo Answers is any indication, the Internet is the world's go-to resource for solving super weird and random problems.

In a world where people have asked questions like "how can I safely look at a picture of the sun?" and "my printer won't print gifs properly?", you best believe that there's unique problems that are desperately in need of solutions.

And when you're able to provide a solution to someone's desperate problem, then that's an easy peasy way to make a sale.

To illustrate this, I'll use an example from my own blog. One of my most successful posts conversion-wise is called "[How to create a self-hosted Wordpress.org blog for free](#)". Many of you might be surprised that this was even possible. The popular opinion out there is that having a Wordpress.org blog is synonymous with paid self-hosting, but this isn't necessarily the case. One of the best perks of my (not so well known) web host is that it allows you to create a self-hosted



Wordpress blog for free, plus a bonus vanity URL on the house (co.nf). While the free version is severely limited, it's perfect for newbies who are scared of taking the plunge with self-hosting... and through creating an in-depth tutorial around it, my blog post has presented a solution to their nagging problem: wanting to try the benefits of a shiny self-hosted blog without the scary price tag and hefty financial commitment... Boom. Need served! *throws confetti*

The reason why this post has performed so well is because I'm the only one offering this information. Genuinely, no one else has a tutorial of this sort, so when people Google this specific issue, I'm the eager face that pops up! Herein lies the power of identifying a unique need/pain point.



NOTE: the commission for a "free sign up" is literally 10 cents, so yay I've been able to buy extra slurps of coffee... but down the road, if these bloggers decide to commit to pro blogging and upgrade their plans, my commission rates become \$65-\$100 per referral. Despite it not being my most profitable post, it's by far the one with the highest conversion rate and search engine traffic, which is huge. Picking unique problems to address is a very good shortcut to ranking well on Google.

SO, how can you use this knowledge to improve your affiliate marketing income? I suggest sitting down and thinking of unique problems that travellers might come across in your niche, but have not yet been addressed in the mainstream blogosphere. Use the next page as a space for brainstorming!

These are some random ideas (which I think a few people have written about, but should give you an idea of how specific you should get):

Ideal products to pack for travellers with Invisalign invisible braces

The best portable charger for hot, desert climates

The best travel shoes for women with oversized feet

... anddd you probably get the point. These might sound extremely specific, but think about it, if you're someone who's Googling one of these problems, odds are you're ready to pay for a solution. Plus, beyond just the financial benefit, you're helping to connect someone with a solution they desperately need. Wins all round!

Unique problems brainstorm

Use the space below to jot down some ideas for unique problems and solutions that you can write about within your niche, alongside what affiliate products you might be able to promote with them.

The potential of diversification

For the reasons mentioned in the last section, successful affiliate marketing as a pure travel blog is... pretty tough. It's not impossible, of course, but my job today is to make your life easier... so here's one last tip for successful affiliate marketing: branching out and diversifying your content.

The beauty of having our own blogs is that we can write about whatever the heck we want.

... and there's a lot of power in that.

Remember, in the blogging world, you're your own boss, so why would you pigeonhole yourself into a single topic?

One great way to immediately expand your potential in affiliate marketing is to diversify the range of your blog's content. Some bloggers out there prefer to maintain their status as a "pure travel blog", and I respect that, but I feel there are several compelling arguments for blog diversification, and as long as you continue to provide valuable content to your target audience, then I believe that you are doing your job. Here are some reasons why I think branching out (i.e. integrating other topics into your travel-themed blog) is a good idea:

#1

It helps differentiate you from other travel bloggers, and helps establish your special niche of expertise in the blogging world. (E.g. Building your reputation as the "travel blogger who's also a fearless fashionista")

#2

You open yourself up to a wider range of brands who might be interested in working with you. E.g. If you become a travel/food blogger, then more restaurants, food tours, etc. will be keen to partner up.



Travel blog diversification examples

1. Travel and fashion

As many successful bloggers have found, travel and fashion make a for a match in blogging heaven. Not only are they a natural fit (this is based on my assumption that you do in fact wear clothes when you travel), putting a stronger focus on fashion within your travel blog means plenty of affiliate opportunities which genuinely bring value to your target audience. If your readers are fashion-conscious, then photos of your outfits and styling won't bother them - it'll be something that they genuinely look forward to. By providing fashion/travel inspiration to those who seek it, you're providing value while simultaneously bolstering the potential revenue coming from your affiliate programs.

Potential post ideas:

- Packing lists
- Garment/gear recommendations
- Product reviews
- Outfit inspiration posts
(w/ a "Shop This Look" section)





2. Travel and photography

If photography is your strongsuit, you could potentially make a great deal of affiliate revenue through recommending cameras, equipment, accessories and more. For many of you, photography would be a natural extension of your blog because of how reliant on visuals travel blogs tend to be. Especially if you're a great photographer, it's quite likely that your readers will also be interested in how to capture beautiful photos for themselves.

Potential post ideas:

Review posts for specific products/gear

Comparison posts

(e.g. this camera vs. this camera)

Roundups like "Best cameras for travelling under \$500".

Photography tutorials

(e.g. how to take amazing long exposure photos -> can then recommend a good tripod or remote)

Photography resources page

3. Travel and cooking

Food blogging is among the most lucrative niches in the entire blogging world. Not only are they a magnet for big sponsors, but when recipes require a special tool, pot, etc. then it's an easy sell. If you are a passionate cook, integrating food and travel together in your blog isn't as hard as it sounds! You could easily focus on recipes from around the world, recipes to create while on the road, etc. By creating recipes and tutorials that rely on particular products, you position yourself very well for potential affiliate income.

Potential post ideas:

Recipes

Cooking technique tutorials

(especially ones that rely on a specialized piece of equipment)

A resources page

(e.g. Here is where you can get International spices for cheap online!)





4. *Travel and Personal Finance*

Personal finance bloggers are among the highest earning bloggers out there, simply because they know how to connect their readers with valuable tools for which they happen to earn a commission. There's a wide range of programs geared towards this niche, like deal websites (e.g. Groupon) and cashback sites (e.g. eBates). The potential for affiliate income is huge in this niche, and ties very well with travel if you're working more in the budget travel space. By taking these concepts and tying them into a travel-centric lifestyle, you create a lot more affiliate opportunities for yourself.

Potential post ideas:

Resource list for your favourite travel budgeting tools

Resource list featuring great ways to save money (e.g. you could recommend Ebates, Swagbucks, etc.)

Travel hacking tips

(e.g. reviews and comparisons of hotel/airline rewards)

5. Travel and Blogging

There's a reason why most top bloggers have a "How to start a travel blog" post somewhere on their blog. The truth is: selling blogging resources is incredibly lucrative. E-resources more than anything else are likely to garner high commissions due to the low incremental cost of producing them (vs. a physical product for instance). To get a little perspective on this, web hosts will pay \$50-100+ per sign up that you refer. If you have a lot of readers interested in starting their own blog, that's a whole lot of extra income headed your way. 40% commissions are also quite standard for products like eBooks and eCourses, which means if you turn blogging into a side topic that you cover, you're able to potentially cash in on affiliate income from recommending helpful resources as well.

Potential post ideas:

How to start a travel blog tutorial

My favourite tools for blogging

How to increase traffic with [insert product/tool]



Blog diversification brainstorm

#1

Besides travel, what are you passionate about? Make a list in the space below.

#2

From the list on the left, pick one that you consider yourself an expert in (or have potential to be).

#3

Write down a list of potential ways to tie this topic into your travel blog.

Turning Your Blog into a Moneymaker: Summary

1. Understand your readers' buying cycle.

When readers land on your site, they are at 1 of 3 stages of their buying cycle: 1) the Awareness stage, where they are simply learning about a new place/product and gathering information, 2) the Evaluation stage, where they are considering the purchase of a product or service (e.g. comparing prices, features, etc.) and 3) the Purchase stage, where the actual buying takes place. To capture the highest amount of sales and clicks, you should focus your affiliate links on articles targeting the Evaluation stage (e.g. Top 10 Luxury Hotels in Burritoville) because at this stage, readers are more ready and willing to buy.

2. Identify and solve unique problems.

Rather than compete with all the other bloggers out there who are pushing the same products in the same way, a smarter strategy is to identify very niche and unique problems that your readers may have, and then providing a solution to that problem. Taking on unique problems will increase the likelihood that your blog post shows up on

Google (due to less competition) which helps you reach new readers who may not necessarily be loyal followers of your blog, but are seeking an urgent solution to the problem they're researching.

3. Harness the power of diversification.

There are two very compelling reasons to diversify your blog content and write about more than just pure travel. 1) It helps you carve out a unique niche where you can become an expert authority and 2) it widens the range of brands that might be interested in collaborating with you. Through diversifying your content of course, you also expand your possibilities for affiliate products to recommend.

Here are some ideas for diversification:

- ◇ Travel and fashion
- ◇ Travel and photography
- ◇ Travel and cooking
- ◇ Travel and personal finance
- ◇ Travel and blogging



#3

WHICH

*programs should you
join and what kind
of content sells?*

Now onto the good stuff! In this section, I'll be explaining the best affiliate programs that every travel blogger should join, alongside ideas for travel blog content that will help you generate income, *without* losing the trust of your readers.

Affiliate programs that you should join

Here's what you've been waiting for - the list of programs to join! It's surprisingly hard to secure a good list of these for bloggers in general, much less for the travel blogging niche specifically. Luckily for all of you, I'm a bit of a research nerd, and so have spent many a dull hour looking into different programs to join. Here are a few that I think every travel blogger should look into.

Amazon Associates

Amazon is the biggest online retailer in the world, which makes it a natural choice for beginner affiliate marketers. In addition to their impressive catalogue of goods, one huge advantage of [Amazon Associates](#) is that it's easy to get accepted, and their affiliate interface makes it very easy to find product links to add onto your website.

Now, that said, Amazon is not my favourite for a few reasons. The first is the low commission rates. With Amazon, your commission percentage is based on the number of products you sell, the lowest tier being a measly 4%. I haven't had a lot of success with Amazon, mostly because it hasn't been my focus, but compared to the 40% commission of say, eCourses, you can see why Amazon isn't my highest priority at the moment. Secondly, Amazon is tricky when it comes to global audiences. This is because Amazon.com is separate from Amazon.ca, which is separate from Amazon.co.uk and Amazon.de, etc. etc. There are some plugins you can download that automatically redirect readers to their appropriate country site, but not all countries have affiliate programs, and also sometimes a product that exists on the American Amazon site isn't available on say, the German site. This then leads to "product does not exist" links which don't help anybody. All in all, Amazon hasn't been my best friend, although many bloggers do make good money from sales with them, especially when targeting unique niches and needs (as we discussed in the Unique Problems section).

Affiliate networks

Affiliate networks are awesome because they allow you to join a lot of different affiliate programs at once and check your earnings from one convenient place. Here are a few of my favourite ones:

CJ Affiliate

Formerly known as Commission Junction, [CJ Affiliate](#) is one of the most popular affiliate networks out there. With over 2500 advertisers, its selection is really diverse, and I love it for its clean interface and many relevant advertisers.

For example, CJ Affiliate has a bunch of great travel-related programs including airlines (Air France, Emirates, etc.), rental car companies (e.g. Budget, Avis, etc.), hotel chains (e.g. Best Western, Accor, etc.), tours (e.g. Contiki) and booking agents (e.g. Expedia, Booking.com, Priceline, etc.). Besides travel, they have a lot of programs fitting any niche, from big name fashion retailers and fitness products, all the way to web hosting and design.

Applying often takes just one click, and advertisers tend to respond really quickly to requests!

Rakuten LinkShare

[Rakuten LinkShare](#) has a lot of great travel programs as well. For example...

Big hotel chains like Starwood, Hilton and CitizenM
Group travel companies like Gecko Adventures and
Intrepid Travel

Booking sites like Orbitz and Booking.com
Car rentals like Sixt and Enterprise

I also love it for its great selection of programs in other niches. For me, Udemy, the eCourse site, has been a huge earner, especially because they frequently have good sales that you can pass onto your readers.

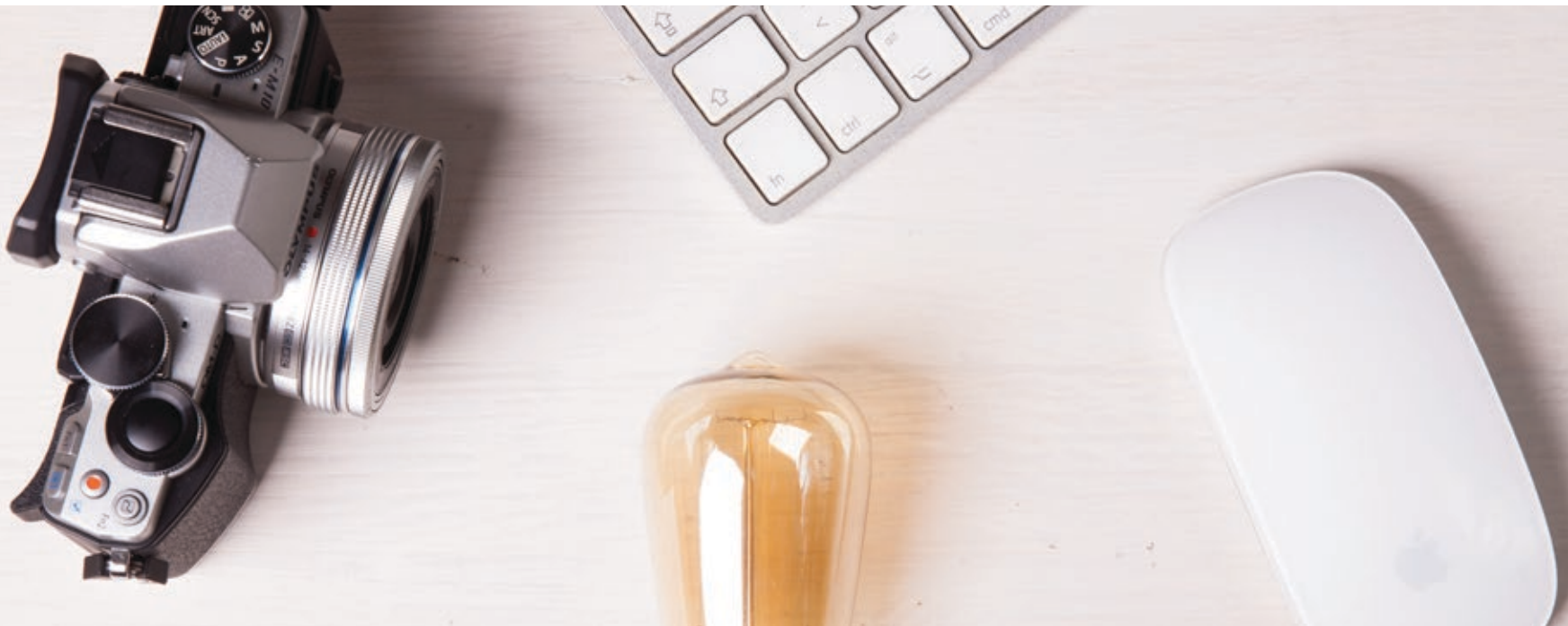
Another example is for those in the beauty niche, because LinkShare has a great range of big name makeup and clothing retailers. I highly recommend joining this one for not only its program selection, but also its ease of use.

Affiliate Window

[Affiliate Window](#) has several good programs suited to the travel blogging niche. For example, through it you can manage programs from Booking.com, Momondo, Agoda, Eurail and Lonely Planet. I also love that they showcase a “Deal of the Week” on your dashboard, so it’s easy for you to find good deals to share with readers. Another big program on here that I love is Etsy! Through it I’ve been able to recommend travel-related goods like handmade crafts, prints and even digital downloads like media kits.

ShareASale

[ShareASale](#) has over 4000 programs, which can be a bit overwhelming to sort through. In terms of travel-related programs, I feel like their selection is weaker than the other three I mentioned, mostly because the programs they do offer are quite niche (e.g. smaller hotel chains, local tour operators, etc.) Some big ones though include Viator, CityPASS Agoda (which is also available on Affiliate Window),





WorldNomads

Travel insurance is one of those big, important purchases that every traveller should be looking into. That's why being an affiliate for insurance is great, because you're recommending a service that your readers genuinely already need.

The [WorldNomads affiliate program](#) in particular is awesome, not only because you get a 10% commission, but it's also available in 150 countries. Plus, they offer a great deal of support to their affiliates as well, often checking up with them over email and providing them with marketing collateral to use on their sites. Having used their insurance before, I also am a firm believer in the quality of their product, which means I am more than happy to promote them (guilt-free!)

Web Hosting

Again, there's a reason why most blogs have a "How to start your own blog" article, and that's because web hosts pay good money for you to refer new clients to them. I'm talking a range from \$50 USD to over \$100 USD for a single referral! Here's the ultimate shocker: really big name bloggers can rake in tens of thousands of dollars each month from web hosting affiliates. The potential profit here is insane, so you would be equally insane to not at least try it.

The crazy thing is you don't necessarily need to be a client to become an affiliate, which means you could be an affiliate for multiple hosts at once. You might be wondering why would you recommend a service you're not using... Well, for me, I like to give people a few options. I of course recommend my own host, but because it's small and not so well known, I also offer another big name hosting company as an alternative. Ironically, I've netted sales from the alternative but not my own host! Other websites have great success offering "comparison" articles where they discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each option, which could be another possibility.

Hosts like [Siteground](#), [BlueHost](#), [HostGator](#), [Biz.nf](#) and many more have affiliate programs that pay \$50+ per referral.

RewardStyle

Once your blog and social media profiles are more established, I recommend applying to [Rewardstyle](#), which is commonly touted as the go-to network for fashion and lifestyle bloggers. They work with over a million brands and are the geniuses behind [liketoknow.it](#), which is a really neat platform that makes it easy to make affiliate income off Instagram. The catch is they're invite-only and you have to apply to get in. Since you need to fork over all your social stats, analytics, etc. in this application, it's best that you wait until you have a good audience before applying!

iTunes

Yes, [iTunes](#) has an affiliate program! This means that you can link to helpful apps that you use or music that you love and earn a commission if your readers make a purchase. They offer a lot of resources for their affiliates (because duh, they're Apple) and promise to review your application within five business days.

eBay

With over 800 million listings featuring new/used goods, [eBay](#) is a great choice of affiliate program to join. The commission you earn depends on the type of product, but according to their website, you earn 40-80% of eBay's revenue. One big advantage is that their minimum payout is only \$25, plus they're offering double the commission for your first three months!



Profitable post ideas

Alright, now that you've shamelessly signed up for a million programs like an absolute maniac, you might be wondering how you can take your links and make them into money earners for your blog. Here are some examples of posts that are a natural fit for affiliate marketing, while still providing value for your readers.

Packing lists

Admittedly, these are very dry posts to write (and read), but packing lists are a phenomenal resource when you need them. That's the key here, because people usually won't be reading packing lists until they've booked their trip and are now looking to buy what they need. This is important, because it is much more likely that you'll make a sale here vs. in a "10 places to visit next year" post. While packing lists aren't great content for a random follower of your blog, if you perform proper SEO and Pinterest wizardry, these lists can end up being very helpful to those who need it (when the occasion arises). In terms of affiliate marketing, packing lists are a great way to fit in different clothing affiliates and travel products.





A tutorial that requires a specialized product

Tutorials on their own are already great ways to sneak in some affiliate products, but imagine a tutorial where your guide depends on a special product.

Kachiiiing!

Take for instance a tutorial on how to take amazing solo travel pics, but to do so required a very specific tripod or remote control. If the content of the tutorial was really good, and results of the photos are deemed Instaworthy, then it's likely that readers will buy that product to get the same results. This would probably be more effective in generating sales than say, a "my favourite tripod for travelling". When you position the product as an indispensable/irreplaceable need, then that makes readers far more likely to buy.

As I mentioned earlier, one of my most popular affiliate posts is called "How to Create a Self-Hosted Wordpress.org Blog for Free". The thing is, my advice can't be followed unless the reader signs up for a Biz.nf account. Without the product, the tutorial would be (well, crazy for one thing) but also completely useless... which is why conversion rates for this post are higher than many others.

Roundup posts

Roundup posts are a nice sneaky way to put a bunch of affiliate links together. Moreover, they can be a great way to showcase products that you haven't necessarily used yourself. Now, while I firmly believe in the fact that you should only endorse products that you genuinely love, I see no problem with 'aspirational' roundups as long as you're honest in them. What do I mean by that? I'm talking about "10 Travel Products I'm Dreaming About" or "10 travel books I can't wait to read" etc. This is very different than deceptively endorsing a book when you've never read it, or advertising/praising an eCourse you haven't even done. Honesty, again, is of utmost importance here.

As an example of this tactic, I penned a post recently called "Ridiculously Beautiful Travel Prints from Etsy". In it, I made it clear that these were prints that I loved and found through an Etsy browsing session. I never lied about owning these prints in real life, or what good quality they are, etc. For me, this post made sense because my readers tend to be interested in design, décor and DIY, so I knew that this post would be relevant for them. Remember that the content you produce (affiliate or otherwise) should still always have the best interest of your readers in mind.



Programs and Post Ideas: Summary

As a travel blogger, here are some affiliate networks/programs that you should consider joining:

Affiliate networks:

CJ Affiliate
Rakuten Linkshare
Affiliate Window
ShareASale
RewardStyle

Separate affiliate programs:

Amazon Associates
WorldNomads
Web Hosts (Siteground, BlueHost, HostGator)
iTunes
eBay



Profitable post ideas include:

Packing lists
Holiday gift guides
Specific reviews
A resources page
Tutorials that use a specialized product
Roundup posts



#4

WHAT NEXT?

*A step by step guide
to successful affiliate
marketing*

For those of you who have not yet passed out from information overload, this section will take you through the steps I followed to increase my affiliate sales by literally 71,438% in one month.

But first... a note on the importance of building trust

Okay, imagine you were walking down the street and some scraggly stranger emerged from the shadows and was like “BUY THIS BOOK”.

What would you do?

Call the cops, run, bust out the mace, etc.

In contrast, if a good friend of yours sat you down for a nice cup of coffee, and casually mentioned a really excellent book they recently read... then what would you do?

At the very least, you'd be curious about the book, and open to the option of buying it.

The Internet world is very much the same. The likelihood of you buying something off a new blogger's recommendation (or a blogger you've never read anything from) is not as high as if it were a blogger you've been following for ages, and learned to trust.

This is why building trust is so crucial.

So, before you start selling and going hard with your affiliate marketing efforts, make sure you are offering valuable content on your website and interact with your followers on your blog (through comments) and through social media. Your ultimate goal is for followers to see you as a trusted friend, and cultivating this kind of relationship does take time. Don't be discouraged if you aren't raking in a lot of sales at first... Over time, as your readers get to know you and trust your opinion, they will be more receptive to

any products you recommend.

But being seen as a friend is only one part of the puzzle. After all, I'm sure we can admit that *some* friends out there are simply not cut for giving advice (yep, questionable life choices and all that)... So how can you establish not only that foundation of trust, but also give yourself an air of expertise?

It's important that we answer these questions, because I truly believe that as travel bloggers, our success in affiliate marketing hinges on our ability to establish both trust and authority. Being bloggers, trust is our currency, and also our biggest asset moving forward in this crazy world of monetization.

We are now going to discuss my blueprint for affiliate marketing success. Please remember: there's an infinite number of paths that you can take in monetization. What works for one blog may not necessarily work for another. I'm providing this step by step so that I can show you exactly how I went from making a few cents a month to over \$1300 in only 30 days. I'm sure many of these principles will hold true in various situations, so take notes ;)

Of course, trust and authority formed the basis of my strategy. Throughout this section, I'll be using my own efforts as an example to show you what exact steps I took to make this growth happen.

So, step by step, here is how I skyrocketed my affiliate income over 70,000% in only 30 days.

#1

Make your blog as squeaky clean and professional as you can.



This may be common sense to most of you, but it's important to realize how crucial a professional presence is. If your blog looks like the ghost of a bad Geocities site, then it's unlikely people will take you seriously, no matter how great your content. Very briefly, here are a few changes you can make to ensure that your blog's appearance is up-to-scratch:

A domain name: Fact: bananablog.com will always be taken more seriously than bananablog.wordpress.com or bananablog.wix.com.

A nice, clean blog design: Splurge on a premium theme, be cohesive with your colour choices, and get yourself an eye-catching logo. [Fiverr](https://www.fiverr.com) might be a good option for those of you wanting a quick logo on the cheap side.

Nice photography: At the very least, your 'About me' photo shouldn't be a bathroom selfie. Make sure there's a good "headshot" type photo of you in nice natural lighting, and make sure your blog is free of really bad photography (e.g. blurry photos that are too dark).



Decide which topics you want to have authority in.

Now that you look the part, it's important to ask yourself "what topic would I like to be a badass expert for?"

If you're anything like me, you've probably just melted into a pool of sweat and tears. Us self-deprecating folk often devalue our own worth. Literally all the time. You might think "I'm not an expert in anything", but that couldn't be farther from the truth. It's helpful to think about what you're an expert in relative to the non-blogger population. The problem is, being online all the time means we're constantly comparing ourselves exclusively to other bloggers, which, let's face it... is terribly destructive for our egos. It's not until you speak to someone who doesn't know what an AirBNB or hostel is that you realize: "holy smokes, I'm a travel expert."

And I'm sure there's plenty of other things you're an expert in too, whether it's general like how to style yourself on a budget, or weirdly niche specific like how to cut up old t-shirts and make them fashionable [no joke, a friend of mine has built a wildly successful YouTube channel on this].

So, even if considering yourself an expert makes you uncomfortable, it's a hurdle you need to get over, because you need to give people a reason to read your advice and more importantly, believe in what you have to say.

In deciding what topic(s) you want to be an authority in, remember to also consider what sort of products you would ideally like to recommend and sell. If you want to make affiliate income off clothing, then you need to establish yourself as a stylish traveller, perhaps through a stellar Instagram presence or solid posts with good outfit suggestions. Or, if you want to think big and sell hotel bookings/flights, then you need to establish yourself as an expert trip planner who knows what they're talking about.

Use the space below to brainstorm what topics you would like to be an authority in, and some of the related products that you could sell based on these topics.

#3

Showcase your expertise through free, value-packed content.



After you've decided what you'll be an expert in, it's important that you prove to your readers that you know what you're talking about.

Some might be tempted to create an eBook or course right away. Foaming at the mouths, we see this opportunity and go "moneyyyy\$\$%#!" but this is the wrong way to approach things. Before you reach a level where people will confidently pay for your knowledge and expertise, you need to provide value for free and show the world that you aren't, in fact, full of crap.

I know that giving knowledge away for free might sound counterintuitive, especially if at the end of the day, you're hoping to monetize, but trust me – when you show that you have genuine knowledge and skills, this will really grease the wheels for reader trust... and down the line, their willingness to buy products recommended/created by you.

HOMEWORK: Brainstorm free and helpful content ideas based on your authority topic.

Use the space below to brainstorm potential content ideas that are valuable to your readers and fit within your chosen authority topic.

Value-packed content example

Partway through September 2016, I decided that the content of my blog needed a major overhaul. After some blogger soul searching (aka pensively eating chocolate), I decided to devote myself to creating only badass content that I was proud of. I decided to reconfigure my strategy and establish authority on two fronts:

Firstly, in the travel sphere: I adopted a new rule in my content creation that I would only write on topics if I could a) provide a unique spin on it or b) make it bigger, better and more comprehensive than whatever else was out there. This is how my psychotically long-form posts were born, things like [99 Ways to Save Money for Travel](#) or [99 Awesome Things to do in Munich](#) (which has been shared on social media over 5000 times since I published it 2 months ago). This was also how I found my new unique blog voice – the one key differentiator that set me apart from other blogs... hence leading to ridiculous article names like “The lazy girl’s guide to packing light and not looking like a slob”. This kind of content began to connect me with my ideal reader – those who enjoy their travel tips with a personality-packed twist... and it has done wonders for growing my mailing list (even without an opt-in bonus, which I hope to implement soon).



THE NO BS GUIDE TO

travel BLOGGING



The second branch of Operation Free Badass Content came in the form of blogging content (diversification, remember?!). A few weeks before I decided to take affiliate marketing more seriously, I developed the idea for a month long series on my blog featuring the very meta topic of how to travel blog. Instead of just re-iterating the same wishy washy advice that haunts the internet however, I wanted to put my own spin on things: a fun, no BS approach to secrets and strategies that most other bloggers seemed to guard with their lives (or at least, within the walls of their paid resource libraries). I was pretty fed up with the unsubstantial and unhelpful advice out there, so sought to fill that gap myself. My Blogtoberfest series was then born, featuring 5 posts throughout the month of October on various aspects of creating a successful travel blog. Many of you are here reading this because of that series, but if you haven't, [here's Part 1](#).

I poured countless hours into developing those resources, and provided them for free at the time out of a genuine desire to just help other bloggers. From that though, there was a very positive side effect that I didn't realize would happen: people began to trust me... a lot. Most of the people who came to my blog for Blogtoberfest were completely new to it, yet through writing really sharp and helpful content, I had emails from people who were tremendously thankful, asking me to create courses and one or two people even compared me to a blogging version of Beyonce.

Yeah what seriously?!

So that's the lesson, you need to give a lot to the community before you can get anything back, which is something I'll emphasize again in this next step...



Be genuine, transparent and always overdeliver

This is SO crucial. You won't establish reader trust by writing short 400 word guides that sound like they were taken from Wikipedia. Likewise, you won't establish any trust if your posts are a clear sales pitch aimed at stimulating affiliate sales. In order to build reader loyalty, you need to not only provide really quality content, but you need to do so in a way that speaks well to your target audience. For me, it's through humour, taking jabs at myself and breaking things down in a simple way. This isn't the way you would reach everyone though, so think about what your ideal reader looks for.

One important thing to remember is that you should never be salesy.

I genuinely hate overly salesy pitches because more often than not, I'm left woefully disappointed by them. From experience, they tend to constantly underdeliver on their promises. One time, I watched a 1 hour video promising me 3 secrets to affiliate marketing success, only to have them say at the end that I had to register in order to gain access to that knowledge.... I was a bit miffed, but registered, at which point I was directed to a Paypal page with a \$60 checkout to confirm my "membership" in their program. UH ex-squuuuuueeze me? I x'd that page quicker than I could say "hell no".

The point of this anecdote (besides explaining why I now have trust issues) is to remind you that when it comes to selling online, being transparent and genuine is more important than anything else. Sure, you could dupe people into buying crap once, and maybe make some money, but odds are: those people will never buy from you ever again. I believe in creating content that overdelivers (like psychotic 7000 word blog posts) and being as helpful as I possibly can, because the more generous you are with your readers, the more they will respect and trust you. So remember to go the extra mile, and I promise it'll be worth it.

Use the space below to brainstorm how you will supercharge your free, helpful content so that it blows readers away. Ex. Create free printables or checklists to go along with your post, create long-form posts that far surpass any existing resources, etc.

A note on the importance of value

When you begin to produce content solely for the purpose of making a few bucks, trust me, your readers will notice.

This tip is crucial: don't recommend things just for moneys' sake.

At the end of the day, your goal shouldn't be to create content around your affiliate links... rather, you should be aiming for helpful and valuable content that works seamlessly with affiliate links. For example, if you pull a BuzzFeed and fill your site with a non-stop flood of "10 products to buy on Amazon right now", then that can quickly alienate your readers, especially if you used to be focused on travel guides and diary posts. Think about how much value a post like that brings into your readers' lives, vs. a post that details "How to choose the best travel insurance". The latter is actually relevant and helpful, and any affiliate links included are actually ones that solve a problem/fulfill a need that your reader has. This approach is much more organic and less likely to make enemies out of former fans.



Hold onto your most loyal readers by creating a segmented email list.

One of the most overused sentences in online entrepreneurship is that “the money is in the list”.

... and there’s a reason people say that. After flying solo without a mailing list for two years, I finally created one and honestly, I would sell multiple organs to travel back in time and harass my former self into creating one earlier.

Building up an email list has been a massive gamechanger for me. Think of it this way: when you have an email list, you have a list of people who genuinely want to hear from you and believe in you enough to let you BE IN THEIR INBOX. Surely a sacred privilege that should not be taken lightly.

Fact: your email list is made of people who like what you have to say, making it the perfect marketing channel. Another bonus is that an email is far more likely to be seen than a Tweet or Facebook post. How often do you completely miss an email? Probably not that many... compare that to how many times a day you miss a Tweet or Facebook post. Thousands! Having a good mailing list is dynamite for not just affiliate marketing, but your blog in general.

HOMEWORK: Create a mailing list (I use Mailchimp, which is free for up to 2000 subscribers) and think about how you can incentivize readers to join your mailing list (freebies, printables, etc.)

Use the space below to brainstorm some ways that you can hook readers in and get them to join your mailing list. Some ideas include content upgrades like downloadable checklists, printables and other freebies.

In addition to having a mailing list though, it's very helpful to create a mailing list that is segmented too.

What does this mean? Well, as much as we all strive to have “an ideal reader”, the truth is there are likely several different ‘types’ of people who are visiting your blog. If you blog about budget adventure for example, there are probably those who lean more towards the budget travel part, and others who read your blog for adventure inspiration. While these two groups are likely to have overlapping needs, it's a sure bet that they'll have different needs as well... and when needs are different, that means you'll need to recommend different solutions to their problems in order to effectively convert and sell.

So take my blog for instance, there are two distinct groups that stop by. 1) The folks who are looking for travel advice and inspiration and 2) The bloggers who are interested in my guides. If I were to start emailing Group #1 with deals on blogging courses and eBooks, then it's not very likely that they'll find my emails helpful. Likewise, if I'm inundating a bunch of travel bloggers with basic tips on “How to plan a trip”, then they're probably going to hate me and hurl tomatoes at my door.

One of the most common strategies used by marketing pros is audience segmentation. The more you segment your audience, the better able you are to speak specifically to their needs. Translated to the blogging world, this could mean having separate mailing lists for the distinct groups that visit your blog. Again for me, I have one general mailing list for all my travel lovers (simply Happy to Wander subscribers) and then I have a second mailing list for all the bloggers who follow me (who I affectionately call my Blogtoberfest bosses). Having these two separate lists helps to ensure that my blogging content is reaching the people I need it to, and not annoying those that it's not.



Segmented mailing list example

One of the smartest strategies to ensure you better serve your readers is by making use of a segmented mailing list. Here is an example of how I created mine, to ensure that the right messages were reaching the people that I wanted.

My current mailing list setup is very basic, but it works.

I have two separate lists: one meant for my general travel audience and one for the travel bloggers who visit my site for blogging guides.

To segment my lists, I made use of different opt-in bonuses. On all my blogging-related posts for example, I'll have a subscribe button/ mailing list mention. Subscribing through here puts people in a different list than those who opt in from my sidebar for instance, or from my pop up box. I haven't had time to create a sign-up incentive for my regular travel readers, but when I do, that will be another way to sort people into the segments I want. Those who sign up because they want my free Blogging Resources List will be signed up to my Blogtoberfest list, whereas those who sign up for a free travel planning guide (for example) will be sent to my general list.

You can apply this to your blog in loads of ways. Let's say

you have an international focus (because duh, you're a travel blogger), but also you do detailed guides about your expat life in a certain city. The needs of your expat readers will likely be different than the needs of your general readers. Your expat reader would probably LOVE tons of articles about your city, whereas your general readers would get pretty pissed off at seeing "SANTIAGO CHILE" in their inbox all the time. Alternatively, if you have a fashion/adventure focus, you could segment based on those who want your fashion tips vs. those who want your adventure tips. The possibilities are endless. This allows you to send the appropriate affiliate content/deals to the right readers when the opportunity arises.

Note: the way that I do my segmentation is not terribly sophisticated. This is something I have only recently begun doing, and I am sure there are more efficient ways to do it via paid resources. At the moment, I'm working with Mailchimp's free version and it's working fine for me, but do look into other options to determine what works best for yourself!

Use the space below to brainstorm the potential market segments within your reader base and ways you can funnel them into special mailing lists through different opt-ins.



Create good/strategic affiliate marketing content

Okay, some of you might be rolling your eyes and thinking “duh”.

But it’s important to make this distinction, because even now, many travel bloggers think that affiliate marketing is simply dropping links in your existing posts to products you love.

If it were that simple, I’d be a zillionaire wearing velvet pyjamas right now.

Sadly, judging by the state of my peasant-like Monsters Inc onesie, that’s not yet the case.

By now, I think you should know that this is only one part of the equation. Unfortunately, it’s not enough simply drop links into your blog posts and wait for the dolla to roll in. You actually have to be strategic about the content that you create, and often need to adjust according to the affiliate links you plan to incorporate. I’ve already outlined some profitable post ideas for travel blogs earlier in this book, but here they are again on your right.

REVIEW: Profitable Post Ideas

Packing lists

Holiday gift guides

Specific review posts

A resources page

A tutorial that requires a specialized product

Roundup posts

It's also helpful to remember the following:

- ◇ Ensure that your content is always valuable - there's no room for fluffy sales posts on your blog!
- ◇ Utilize deep links to specific products and pages when possible
- ◇ Always consider where your buyers are in their buying cycle
- ◇ Remember quality > quantity – it's better to have a few strategic affiliate posts rather than inserting random links everywhere (which seems spammy)



HELPFUL TIP: Create ninja resources

It's probably no surprise that affiliate-heavy posts aren't always the most interesting to read. After all, a regular follower of yours might not be keen to read an adventure packing list for females visiting the Southeastern part of Peru in May... but on the other hand, that information could be highly valuable to someone else (not to mention profitable for affiliate income). So how can we balance these audiences?

Easy: rather than regularly publish these niche resources as blog posts (which will probably make many of your subscribers eyeroll), house them in pages on your blog instead (since they don't get published to RSS feeds). Then, use effective keyword choice to increase its likelihood of being found on Google, and seal the deal by promoting it strategically on social media (e.g. Pinterest).

This way, your subscribers aren't bombarded with awkward resources that don't appeal to them, and your resource can still be discovered by those who are looking for it. Of course, being an SEO rockstar is far beyond the scope of this eBook but if you're curious about keyword research, [this free Moz guide](#) is a great start for beginners.



Advertise deals.

One of the best ways to incentivize buying is through advertising deals and letting readers know when these deals come available. To me, this is the best because you're helping readers get a better price, rather than just trying to sell them something. More than any other type of affiliate content, this results in a win-win situation. Keeping track of affiliate deals can be quite simple, because affiliate managers will often email these straight to you. If you're part of many different programs (like I am), make your life easier by automatically sorting Affiliate emails into a special folder. I check this folder once a day for any news of deals, and if I find any that are relevant, I'll promote them either through social media, a quick email, or just an additional spiel in some relevant blog posts. This has been very effective for me, and like I said – it's a great feeling to connect your readers with a sweet deal!

Big sale days like Black Friday, Cyber Monday and Boxing Day are especially lucrative because most people are in a spending mood. If you're able to connect your readers with the kind of deals they're looking for, then it's easy affiliate income headed your way!









IMPORTANT TIP: make sure your deal recommendations are relevant. If you're emailing your entire email list anytime a good flight deal pops up, then that is SUPER annoying because a "NYC to Bali" flight will only interest a small slice of your subscribers. Likewise, emailing all your subscribers about a Blogging eCourse sale won't be relevant to everybody, making it both annoying and ineffective.

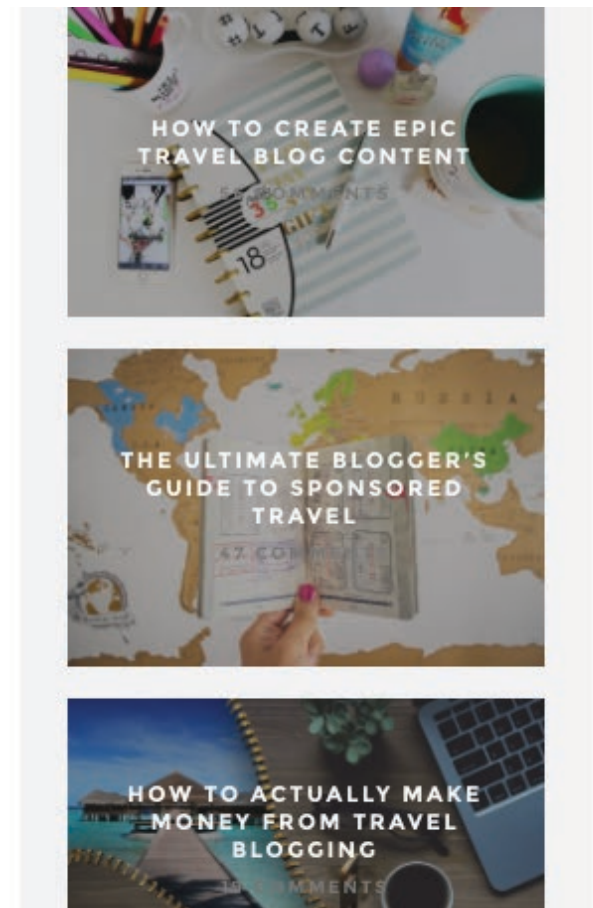
Black Friday Example

For Black Friday 2016, I decided last minute to create a blog post combining the best deals online for bloggers, including big commission items like web hosting and eCourses. The post took less than 30 min to write, and within 12 hours I had netted over \$408 in affiliate income. I hope you can now see the value of promoting deals! I'm kicking myself for not creating one for travel-related deals as well (with hotels and airlines). Oh well, maybe next year!

4. 50% off Themes, Plugins & Blogger Tools at Themeforest

No doubt, now's the time to stock up on things for your blogger tool kit because everything is so cheap! If you've been wanting a Premium theme, but are put off by the cost or need some fresh new tunes for your vlogs (that won't cost you an arm and a leg), Themeforest is doing an epic Cyber Monday sale where you can get TONS of themes, plugins, music, graphic design assets and more for **50% off**. Seriously. [Browse their Cyber Monday deals here.](#)

 Elvira - WordPress Theme for Bloggers ThemeDsgn was 45 now 22	 Bauhaus - Architecture & Portfolio WordPress Theme HighSea was 49 now 24	 Brando Responsive OnePage WordPress Theme themezas was 49 now 24	 Dropout - Creative Multi-Purpose Theme gfxbucket was 49 now 24
 Idylle - Responsive Wedding Theme maskan	 Paperback - Magazine WordPress Theme ArrayThemes	 Photography Fullscreen WP Theme - JohnBlack GT3themes	 Photography WordPress Theme: Panama Peeriso





Update links regularly.

Last but not least, as much as we glorify affiliate marketing as “passive income”, the reality is it does take some maintenance and upkeep. Anyone who’s clicked a link, only to have “Product not found” will know that this is a frustrating thing that happens all the time.

So, you should make sure you go over your affiliate link heavy posts at least once every few months to make sure any mention of prices or deals are up to date. Yes it’s tedious work, but well worth it. I recommend creating an Excel spreadsheet with your “affiliate posts” so that it’s easier to keep track of them.



Blueprint to Success: Summary

1. Make your blog as squeaky clean and professional as you can.

A professional presence is key, so work on your branding, get an attractive theme and logo, improve your photography, etc.

2. Decide which topics you want to have authority in.

In order for readers to trust you and respect your opinion, you need to decide what topics you're an expert in.

3. Showcase your expertise through free, value-packed content.

Hook your readers in and demonstrate that you know what you're talking about by offering amazing content for free.

4. Be genuine, transparent and always overdeliver.

Blow your readers away by constantly overdelivering and building genuine connections with them.

5. Hold onto your most loyal readers by creating a segmented email list.

It's important to have a mailing list so that you can retain your most loyal readers. It helps also to segment them

based on their interests so that you are able to offer targeted messages that are relevant to them.

6. Create good/strategic affiliate marketing content

It's not enough to just drop links. You need to create valuable content that attracts readers at the proper point in their buying cycle.

7. For a boost in sales, be sure to promote deals

Notifying your readers of great (relevant) deals is an amazing way to increase their likelihood of purchasing products you recommend!

8. Update links regularly

Dead links mean no sales. Keep track of your main affiliate links/posts in a spreadsheet and review them every few months to make sure they're still working.

A fun story about cookies

When people think of affiliate marketing, often they fret about choosing the exact right product, and promoting that product in such a way that the reader will want to click through and buy it.

This is mostly true, but buying your recommended product isn't the only path to success. In other words my friends, do not neglect the power of cookies.

As you know, many affiliate programs will track your reader's cookies for a set amount of time. So let's say you recommended a super cool travel backpack and you put 139829048 hours into crafting the perfect review/marketing copy for your post... I click through and then decide that the colour's kind of lame so I don't want it... but then I'm attracted by one of those "Recommended for you" buttons and get sucked into the rabbit hole of Amazon deals. Whatever I buy from that, whether it's a guide book or vintage calligraphy set, you still earn money!

That's pretty mindblowing isn't it?

And I never understood the power of this until one day I woke up to an extra \$100 in my [Affiliate Window](#) account, courtesy of Etsy. I was really puzzled by this, because Etsy's commission isn't super lucrative, and so I would have had to sell a lot of products to get that \$100... much less overnight. So I put my Sherlock Holmes hat on, and went to investigate how many sales I made.

One. **One sale.**

Some crazy person out there bought a \$2000 item from Etsy... and I was the lucky fool whose link brought them to that purchase.

Let's be clear: I have never in my life recommended a \$2000 product from Etsy! I didn't even REALIZE there were items that pricey on there... so somehow, somebody clicked on my link for customizable media kits (my only Etsy affiliate link at the time), got drunk I assume, and bought some \$2000 thing made of gold and unicorn tears.

So there's your lesson – sometimes, all that matters is the click.

You can use this knowledge in a number of different ways. For one, you can create "bait" links using free content from sites like Amazon. In other words, you could create a roundup of 'best free Kindle eBooks from Amazon for your next long plane ride' or something along those lines in order to get people to click through. And then, anything they buy after that could earn you commission. Obviously this isn't a "sure" way of earning affiliate income, and I haven't personally tested this myself, but it should give you an idea of how to creatively entice readers into clicking your links.

A final word

Affiliate marketing, like any monetization strategy, takes a lot of hard work.

I'm talking the "no-sleep, ugly cry, eat a whole cake" kind of hard work... which is shocking, considering how many people seem to promote it as a passive form of set-and-forget income.

But still, after struggling with monetization for eons, I now firmly believe that if your goal is to make a good income off your blog, affiliate marketing is the best way to do it. Now, I can't be a sugarcoat princess and tell you that it's going to be a simple road to get there... After all, everyone has a different path to success, and it can be hard to keep going when every day all we hear are crazy success stories.

But let's be clear: all those 6 figure a month bloggers are exceptions, not the norm. I hope that you (and me!) can all get to that point eventually, but understand that it takes hard work, and don't get discouraged when you're not at the same level as someone who has been doing it for years!

Embrace trial and error, celebrate your small wins, and know that you're not in the struggle alone!

Enjoy the journey, friends, and best of luck.

 *Christina*

Helpful Resources

My free blogging guides

[The No BS Guide to Travel Blogging](#)

[How to Create Epic Content as a Travel Blogger](#)

[The Ultimate Guide to Social Media Promotion](#)

[Traffic Building Strategies to Skyrocket Users & Views](#)

[A Travel Blogger's Guide to Sponsored Travel](#)

[Get Paid for Travel Writing - a List of Publications that Pay Newbies](#)

Affiliate course I recommend

[Making Sense of Affiliate Marketing](#)

Amazing for beginners to get a grounding in the basics of affiliate marketing. A great bonus is the supportive Facebook group/community.

More Free Resources

[The Beginner's Guide to Search Engine Optimization by Moz](#)

Super handy primer for those new to SEO.

[The Absolute Beginner's Guide to Google Analytics by Moz](#)

Great start if you want to dig deeper into understanding your readers' demographics and behaviours.

[Evernote](#)

Amazing way to stay organized & on top of everything (perfect for keeping track of ideas!)

[Canva](#)

Easy way to create attractive graphics for your blog!

Affiliate disclosure: it should come as no surprise that this eBook does contain affiliate links, which (as I hope you know) comes at no extra cost to you! Thanks in advance for supporting my guacamole habit.



Now it's your time to rock.

I'm officially passing on the torch - or my version of it anyway: a scary long and detailed to-do list! It's by no means a one-size-fits-all path to success, but for those of you who prefer concrete action items, this will help get you started. Use these action items as guidelines and adjust as necessary... I believe in you!

Keep calm, breathe and remember that Rome wasn't built in a day.

Your Affiliate Marketing to-do List

APPEARANCES

- Get self-hosted¹
- Create a recognizable logo²
- Create a consistent brand (colours, fonts, etc.)
- Get a professional-looking theme you're happy with³
- Update blog visuals to be sharp & high quality (photos, graphics, etc.)

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU BRING TO THE TABLE

- Decide "authority topic(s)" (consider diversification)
- Identify subsets of this topic to be an expert in
- Define target audience
- Define blog's unique value proposition
- Define brand voice/personality

AFFILIATE MARKETING

- Write down list of 10 affiliate programs to join
- Apply/join these 10 programs
- Learn how to create deep links and pretty links* for these affiliate programs⁴

CREATING CONTENT/BUILDING YOUR AUDIENCE

- Create a mailing list
- Write down the different segments of your audience
- Create separate mailing lists (or segments in a mailing list) for these audiences
- Create at least 1 opt-in (e.g. free eBook, free checklist, etc.) that targets each of these audience segments
- Create a relationship-building plan for your community (e.g. follow and interact with readers on social media, send them surprise freebies, etc.)
- Brainstorm 5 (evergreen) post ideas with an emphasis on VALUE (i.e. proving your expertise)
- Write these 5 posts (it's ok, it'll take a while)⁵
- Ensure that each post links to the relevant opt-in you have created
- Create a publishing schedule for these posts (consider seasonality, holidays, etc.)
- Create Pinnable images for these posts
- Pin these posts and place them through FB repin groups (list of groups [here](#))
- Brainstorm 5 post ideas aimed at "Evaluation" stage readers with the same themes as your area of expertise

- ❑ Write these 5 posts (again, it's ok, it'll take a while)
- ❑ Create a publishing schedule for these posts (consider seasonality, holidays, etc.)⁶
- ❑ Create Pinnable images for these posts
- ❑ Pin these posts and place them through FB Repin groups
- ❑ Create a Resources page for your blog
- ❑ Look at the list of profitable post ideas and pick ones that work for your authority topic
- ❑ Create a master list of affiliate-centric article ideas (a "to write" list)
- ❑ Create a calendar of special holidays/deals/sales relevant to your affiliates
- ❑ Organize your "to write" list around these special holidays/deals/sales
- ❑ Create a publishing schedule for these posts
- ❑ Mail posts out to the relevant mailing lists as they are published
- ❑ Audit old posts one by one and identify a list of posts suited for affiliate links (e.g. target the Evaluation stage)
- ❑ Place affiliate links in these old posts
- ❑ Shower yourself in champagne and chocolate cake
- ❑ Become an affiliate for this book?! (Details on the next page)

To-do list notes

1 - Site Hosting

I highly recommend [Siteground](#) if you aren't yet self-hosted! I recently made the swap over and their customer support (and prices) are unbelievable.

Here's my affiliate link if you're interested ;)

2- Creating a logo

If you're not tech savvy, you can hire someone on [Fiverr](#) to do it for as little as \$5.

3 - Themes

I love the selection at [Themeforest](#). I personally use the [15zine](#) theme and love it.

4 - Deep links and pretty links

As a refresher: deep links are links that bring you to a specific product page rather than an affiliate's homepage. How to generate these depends on the affiliate program. Pretty Links can be generated through [this free plugin](#) which makes your messy affiliate links look cleaner and more clickable.

5 - Writing Content

Never forget the importance of only producing epic content! [Here's](#) my free guide on how to do that.

6 - Publishing Calendar

[Edit Flow](#) is a nice free plugin for Wordpress that allows you to organize your editorial calendar.

Become an affiliate for this book

As an affiliate marketing book, it would be pretty silly if I didn't offer an affiliate program myself, right?

If you loved this resource and want to help promote it, then I'm happy to pay a 40% commission with a 60 day cookie period. You can easily [register here](#) and as soon as you're approved, I'll get you sorted with your unique tracking link.

Remember: I only want you to become an affiliate if you genuinely believe in the product. If you have any concerns or questions, feel free to [email me](#) anytime!

Contact Me!



Do you have any burning questions from the book, or just otherwise want to tell me how great I look today? I'm always available over email at [hello@happytowander.com!](mailto:hello@happytowander.com)

Connect with me on social media:

