

Bay Area Travel  
Writers

Member Handbook

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A Professional Organization of Travel Writers and Photographers

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## BATW Quick Reference

**Legal Name:** Bay Area Travel Writers, Inc.

**Address:** P.O. Box 460222, San Francisco, CA 94146

**BATW Hotline/Telephone:** (415) 267-6176

**Website:** [www.batw.org](http://www.batw.org)

**Meetings:** Held at 10 A.M. on third Saturday of each month, except December.

### Annual Calendar:

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| January  | New Board term begins on January 1.<br>New Member Directory available to members.   |
| August   | Membership Renewal Packages mailed to members.  |
| October  | Active members declare their intent to run for Board of Directors.<br>Last day for members to make Directory Changes is October 31. |
| November | Deadline for Membership Renewal is November 30.<br>Elections held for Board of Directors.<br>Election results announced.            |
| December | Holiday Party is usually held on the second Saturday of December.<br>Rebecca Bruns Award is announced.                              |

**Listserv:** The BATW Listserv allows members to send broadcast announcements and messages to other members via e-mail. Please note new procedures here and in the Listserv section under Benefits of Membership. To join, send a blank e-mail to [BATW-subscribe@hasbrouck.org](mailto:BATW-subscribe@hasbrouck.org) . To be taken off the list, send a blank e-mail to [BATW-unsubscribe@hasbrouck.org](mailto:BATW-unsubscribe@hasbrouck.org) .

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## **1 Introduction**

**Bay Area Travel Writers, Inc.**, based in San Francisco, CA, is a not-for-profit association of travel writers and photographers, and professionals in the travel, tourism and hospitality industries.

BATW Active members travel and report locally and around the globe. Some specialize in specific destinations, others specialize in activities such as food and wine, active travel, travel for singles, families, or seniors, educational or eco tourism, while still others specialize in guidebooks or in photography. Each writer or photographer seeks to present the world in ways that enrich, inform and fascinate, and to expose their readers to the people, culture, arts, and nature of each destination.

Aspiring journalists may join as Provisional members and avail themselves of the educational benefits, including mentorship. Travel industry professionals are invited to join BATW as Associate members.

Monthly meetings, held since 1985, provide a lively exchange of information among our widely traveled colleagues and a forum for travel industry representatives from regional and international tourist organizations to keep us abreast of changes in the travel industry. Speakers and panel discussions provide professional development opportunities on a wide-range of topics from marketing techniques to book publishing, technology and other areas of interest.

BATW strives to promote high professional standards within the field of travel journalism.

## **2 Mission Statement and Goals**

BATW is an organization of professional journalists committed to promoting excellence among its members in the practice of responsible travel journalism.

Among our activities, we strive to:

- 1) Support the development of members' professional skills;
- 2) Advance members' access to publication, career and business opportunities;
- 3) Promote a love of travel along with respect for the cultural and environmental integrity of the places we visit, write about and photograph;
- 4) Provide a dynamic, collegial forum for members to exchange ideas and information;
- 5) Encourage the exchange of ideas and information between the traveling public and the providers of travel services and products.

### **3 Code of Professional Conduct**

Bay Area Travel Writers aims for the highest standards in factual reporting and unbiased evaluation in travel journalism. Membership in BATW means acceptance of professional and ethical accountability. Failure to comply with the following standards will result in loss of membership:

- Members are expected to act in a professional, courteous and considerate manner, and to show awareness of and sensitivity to the environment.
- Members should accept press trips only if they have a genuine professional interest in the destination and the prospect of subsequently publishing an article, book or photo that includes the destination or event venue.
- In presenting an accurate and comprehensive picture of a destination, members realize their primary responsibility is to the public, not to their sponsors.
- A member's attendance at luncheons, receptions and other hosted events carries an obligation to gather information and act in a professional manner.

### **4 Organizational Structure**

**Legal Status**—BATW is a not-for-profit corporation organized under California law. As a not-for-profit Mutual Benefit Corporation, BATW was formed solely for the benefit of its members.

**Organizational Structure**—BATW's governing body is the Board of Directors elected each year by the Active members. The board consists of the officers of the corporation, President, Vice President, Secretary, and a Chief Financial Officer who is designated the Treasurer, and up to seven other directors who serve as Committee Chairs or as "At Large" members performing other board duties. Board members receive no compensation.

**Elections**—Each active member is entitled to one vote on each matter submitted to a vote. Associate, Provisional and Emeritus members are not entitled to vote. Voting at duly held meetings is by voice vote. Election of Directors is by ballot each November. The new Board begins its term on January 1 each year.

**Volunteers**—As a volunteer organization, BATW requests that members provide at least three hours of their time to the organization each calendar year. Volunteer jobs include: supply refreshments to non-hosted meetings; help with special one-time projects; take responsibility for specific tasks related to the BATW Awards Contest; act as meeting greeters; proofread documents as needed; assist with high school travel writing contest; organize a monthly meeting program; act as a mentor for less experienced members; take minutes at member meetings; and more. To volunteer, members should contact any board member.

## 5 Membership

There are four categories/sub-categories of BATW membership: Active, Provisional, Associate and Emeritus. All Members are required to submit an annual renewal membership application package by November 30 demonstrating that they continue to meet the membership requirements. The yearly membership runs from January 1 of each year. All members receive a directory or will have access to one online.

### Member Categories and Requirements

**Active Member**—During the 12 months immediately preceding application or renewal, current Active members and applicants for Active membership must have been published, meeting one of (or in a combination equivalent to one of) the following:

- Two feature travel articles or five short travel articles or 12 travel photographs in consumer or trade publications. Alternatively, one travel book or travel video from a recognized publisher; or independently published travel book approved by the BATW Board of Directors.
- Web contributions, if; 1) the published work is clearly editorial; 2) the site has more than 30,000 unique hits a month; and 3) the site pays writers at market rates. Minimum editorial requirements are: the equivalent of two travel features (of at least 1,000 words each); or five short travel articles (of at least 300 words each).
- A self-published travel website will be considered if it consistently has a minimum of 25,000 unique hits a month; if the site contributes to the applicant's income in a demonstrable manner; and if the site contains informative and independent editorial content that is clearly separate from advertising and advertorials.
- Publication in other media such as public presentations, exhibitions or contributions in a form recognized and approved by the Board of Directors.
- Agreement to abide by BATW Code of Professional Conduct.
- Applicants must include hard copies of their clips that include each publication's name and the date the material appeared, the nature of the publication, audited circulation figures for the publication; and the editor's name and contact information.

Each Active member receives a press card.

**Provisional Member**—Applicants for Active membership who do not meet the above requirements, but intend to do so within a two-year period, may apply as Provisional members. Applicants submit an application form and a 300-word travel essay as a gesture of good faith and to show suitable travel-writing skill. On acceptance, a Provisional member receives a welcome letter. No more than 15 Provisional members may be BATW members at any one time.

Provisional members may become Active members immediately upon meeting the minimum requirements as listed under Active Members, above. At the end of a two year period, a Provisional member not meeting the minimum criteria to qualify for Active membership will be unable to renew membership in BATW. Such members may reapply in the future, should they then meet the requirements. Provisional members who switch to Active membership are required to provide hard copy clips for two years after qualifying as Active members.

**Emeritus Member**—Emeritus Members are former Active members with a minimum of seven years membership in good standing, and who have contributed significantly to BATW. Emeritus membership approval is at the discretion of the Board. Emeritus members are listed in the BATW directory and newsletter, and may attend all BATW monthly meetings and social events. Unlike Active members, however, Emeritus members are not required to publish. Consequently, they neither attend press trips nor have a BATW press card. Emeritus members apply for Emeritus status as part of the annual renewal process.

**Associate Member**—Bona fide members of the travel industry such as staff of CVBs, travel and tourism offices, and public relations professionals with travel destination or venue clients, may be accepted as Associate members. Upon acceptance, Associate members will receive a BATW directory.

## Membership Renewal Process

The Board of Directors administers the renewal process, which consists of the following:

- Renewal notices are e-mailed to eligible members each November. The renewal notice requires members to declare they meet the qualifications for continued membership. The membership fee may be paid by credit card online through the BATW website or by check through the mail.
- The annual renewals deadline is November 30. Renewals received after this date must include a late fee. Completed renewals must be received by November 30 for the member to be included in the directory. A completed renewal includes all membership fees, any late fees and (for Active members) a pledge form. Active members who do complete renewal by this date will not be included in the directory, even if all fees are paid. Membership deadline is December 31. Membership expires on this date. Members who do not complete their renewal by this date will be dropped from the BATW membership roll.

## Member Rights and Standing

All members may attend meetings, are listed in the BATW annual directory, and agree to abide by the BATW Code of Professional Conduct.

- Members who fail to meet BATW's membership standards or abide by the ethical guidelines (See Section 2) will be reviewed by the Board and may be asked to relinquish their membership in the organization, including all rights and privileges.
- Provisional, Emeritus and Associate members may not attend press trips.
- Provisional, Emeritus and Associate members do not receive a press card.
- Only Active members may vote in the organization.
- Members who join after July 1 of any year, pay half dues for that year.
- Membership Forms and Requirements may be found at [www.batw.org](http://www.batw.org).

## Member Responsibilities

Active members who participate in BATW Press Trips undertake an obligation to make every reasonable effort to publish stories and/or photos about these destinations. Clips from these published stories should be sent to the Clippings Coordinator at BATW, P.O. Box 460222, San Francisco, CA 94146.

## 6 Benefits of Membership

**Monthly Meetings**—As one of the benefits of membership, a regular monthly meeting is held at 10:00 A.M. on the third Saturday of each month, except December (when the Holiday party is held, usually on the second Saturday). These meetings take place at various locations around the San Francisco Bay Area. Meetings often include professional development panels and speakers on various subjects, sometimes tours of the venues or hosted lunches.

Each month the meeting information is posted on the website [www.batw.org](http://www.batw.org). Official communication about the meeting comes from the Communications Chair in the form of a group e-mail to the membership. Details about the upcoming monthly membership meeting—place, time, guest policy, speaker, availability of public transportation and carpools are provided. This initial e-mail is followed by at least one e-mail reminder closer to the meeting day. Each member who plans to attend must RSVP via the instructions in the meeting announcement. Members who find they cannot attend after leaving their RSVP should call the hotline at (415) 267-6176 and leave a cancellation message or follow the cancellation instructions in the meeting announcement. Messages may be left on the hotline day or night.

**Directory**—Each member is provided the opportunity to be listed in the BATW directory. A copy of the directory will be available online or sent to each member. The

directory lists each member's contact information, publications, honors, travel and destination specialties, professional affiliations and other pertinent information.

**Press Card**—Each Active member receives a BATW press card in January. These cards are used solely to identify BATW members as working members of the press. BATW press cards may not be used to request special treatment or freebies from hosts.

**Press Trips and Hosted Events**—Periodically, BATW arranges sponsored destination press trips or hosted meeting events for its members. Hosts may limit the number of attendees or require that certain standards be met.

As representatives of BATW, members should accept press trips only if they have a genuine professional interest in the destination and the prospect of subsequently publishing an article or photo. In presenting an accurate and comprehensive picture of a destination, members realize their primary responsibility is to the public, not to their sponsors. A member's attendance at luncheons, receptions and other hosted events carries an obligation to be courteous and act in a professional manner.

**Programs**—Many BATW monthly meetings offer professional development programs for members including editor panels, experts on photography, website development and more. Some programs provide opportunities for sharing information among members. At others, members share readings of recent work.

**Website**—BATW's website is [www.batw.org](http://www.batw.org). Here, BATW lists upcoming events, meeting programs, awards, code of conduct, Listserv information, the newsletter, member articles, links to member websites and other useful member information. Members may also update their contact information here.

**Newsletter**—BATW Ink, the organization's newsletter, is distributed by e-mail to all members monthly and may also be viewed on the website. BATW Ink includes general news and announcements, as well as articles and resources useful to professional travel writers and photographers. The deadline for all submissions is the 25th of the previous month (e.g., January 25 for the February issue). Priority is always given to member-submitted articles, assuming they are submitted by deadline and meet the specific editorial needs of the publication as outlined in the Writers Guidelines, available on the website.

The newsletter also regularly publishes directory update information for members, including any changes in address, phone, and/or e-mail. When a member updates his/her contact information in the members-only section of the BATW website, the BATW database is immediately updated and included in the next newsletter.

The current issue of BATW Ink, as well as archived past issues, is available for download on the website.

**Official Communication**—Official BATW communications are sent via e-mail from the Communications Chair. Members should follow the RSVP instructions in the official meeting e-mail, read and respond to special announcements, as appropriate.

**Listserv**—The BATW Listserv is the informal communication used by members. Listserv allows members to send announcements and messages to other BATW members via email. Members who choose to join the list may send messages to the list. When a message is sent to the list everyone who has joined the list will receive the message. Members may join, leave or rejoin the list at any time. BATW member Edward Hasbrouck hosts the Listserv through his website, [www.hasbrouck.org](http://www.hasbrouck.org).

To join, members send a blank e-mail to [BATW-subscribe@hasbrouck.org](mailto:BATW-subscribe@hasbrouck.org). To cancel Listserv, send a blank e-mail to [BATW-unsubscribe@hasbrouck.org](mailto:BATW-unsubscribe@hasbrouck.org).

Listserv permits members to seek advice, notify each other about a travel-related event (including their own bookstore readings, etc.), or offer information of interest to members.

To send a message, address it to [BATW@hasbrouck.org](mailto:BATW@hasbrouck.org). The e-mail is immediately distributed to ALL members on the list. Please note that in 2007, changes were made to how the reply feature works in Listserv. If you reply to the message, your reply will go ONLY to the original sender. To share your reply with everyone on the list, you may “reply all” or reply to the e-mail note link [batw@hasbrouck.org](mailto:batw@hasbrouck.org).

More information about Listserv is available at [www.batw.org](http://www.batw.org).

**Networking** – Monthly meetings provide time to meet and talk with other members during the 10:00-10:30 A.M. Meet and Greet time before the meeting agenda begins.

## 7 Guest Policy

Members may invite guests with an interest in travel writing or in becoming members to attend a BATW monthly meeting UNLESS a host has restricted attendance to members only. If the host requires payment for guest meals, payment will be required by the guest with no exceptions. These restrictions will be reflected in the official meeting e-mail announcement and on the BATW website. The holiday luncheon in December often has host or space restrictions as do several hosted meetings each year.

Members are required to RSVP for themselves and any guests via the instructions in the official meeting announcement and provide the names of guests so an attendance count can be made and nametags prepared.

Potential new members are welcome to attend monthly meetings. They should contact the Membership Chair to arrange the invitation or RSVP on the hotline and leave a call-back number.

Please keep in mind that potential new members are viewed as guests until official written acceptance into BATW from the Membership Chair is received. All guests and potential new members are required to pay for their meals when requested by a host.

Hosts generally do not permit guests to participate in press trips.

## 8 Awards

**BATW Best Awards**—BATW Best is an annual awards contest to celebrate members' achievements and help them gain recognition from peers, editors and the public.

Submissions are open to Active, Provisional and Associate member categories. Submission categories may change from year to year, but generally, Active and Provisional members may submit in categories such as: Magazine Travel Article, Newspaper Travel Article, Travel-Related Essay/Article in an Anthology, Travel Article/Photography Combination (by one writer/photographer), Internet Travel Article, Travel Guidebook, Travel Literature Book, Travel Writer Website, Newspaper or Magazine Travel Photograph, Internet Travel Photograph, Best Book, and Best Published Travel Photo. Usually, Associate members may submit in two categories: Travel-related Press Kit and Travel-related Website. All submissions must be published as specified in the award's rules, usually a year or so prior to submission deadline. An entry fee is required for each submitted entry.

Each winner receives an awards certificate suitable for framing in addition to a monetary award or prize. Press releases are sent on BATW stationery to relevant Bay Area media. An article about the winners appears in the BATW newsletter, and information is put on the website with links to winning articles and photos. Awards are presented during a regular meeting.

Only members whose dues are currently paid in full are eligible to enter, except for special categories. For example, in the 2008 awards, non-members were permitted to enter one category called BATW Planet Earth Travel Writing.

**Rebecca Bruns Annual Award**—This award began in 2005 when the Board of Directors voted unanimously to give an annual award for excellence and outstanding achievement in the name of one of BATW's founding members. Rebecca Bruns, a gifted and generous writer whose life and work inspired many, had her life cut tragically short by illness. The Board of Directors selects the winner, whose name is announced the Holiday Party in December.

## 9 Community Activities

BATW sponsors community activities during the year. Some examples of these are:

**High School Travel Writing Contest**—BATW sponsors a High School Travel Writing Contest for high school students in the Bay Area. Essays are judged on accuracy,

originality, creativity, proper use of language, syntax and grammar, and humor. BATW members serve as judges. Winners are invited to read their essays at a special awards meeting where they receive monetary awards along with an official BATW certificate.

**Benji**—In 2000, BATW initiated the concept of a traveling goodwill ambassador for our organization. The perfect representative turned out to be a stuffed elephant that was subsequently named “Benji.” Benji accompanies BATW members on their travels and sends postcards to school classrooms participating in the program. Teachers use the postcards as opportunities to teach children about different places around the world.

## 10 How to Get the Most Out of BATW

These tips are taken from the letters that are sent to new BATW Provisional members by the Membership Chair. Additional tips are available on the website.

1. Utilize the Mentor Committee—If you have questions about any aspect of travel writing or photography, feel free to contact one of the mentors listed on the website. (If you don’t hear back from someone on the list after a phone message, send an email and remember, travel writers go traveling so if you don’t hear back for a while, don’t take it personally; just address your question to someone else.)
2. Network at meetings—After all, one of the most important reasons you joined BATW was to meet and learn from professional travel writers, photographers, public relations gurus, tourism hotshots and others. You should also feel free to bring your questions to any Active or Associate members of BATW.
3. Read “Tips to Success”—Many members have contributed to this compilation of tips designed to speed you down the path to publication. Please look for this on the BATW website, where the most current version will always be available.
4. Attend workshops and round tables—Some monthly meetings are given over to learning sessions of one kind or another. Even the most experienced members tend to find these get-togethers valuable and you will too.
5. Read the newsletter—The monthly BATW newsletter often contains useful information about the travel industry, magazine/newspaper markets, the business of writing and/or photography and so on.
6. Get involved—Volunteer to take minutes, set up the coffee at a meeting, be on a committee, or help out with whatever you think might interest you. If you get involved, you’ll end up making friends, which is another reason you joined BATW.