



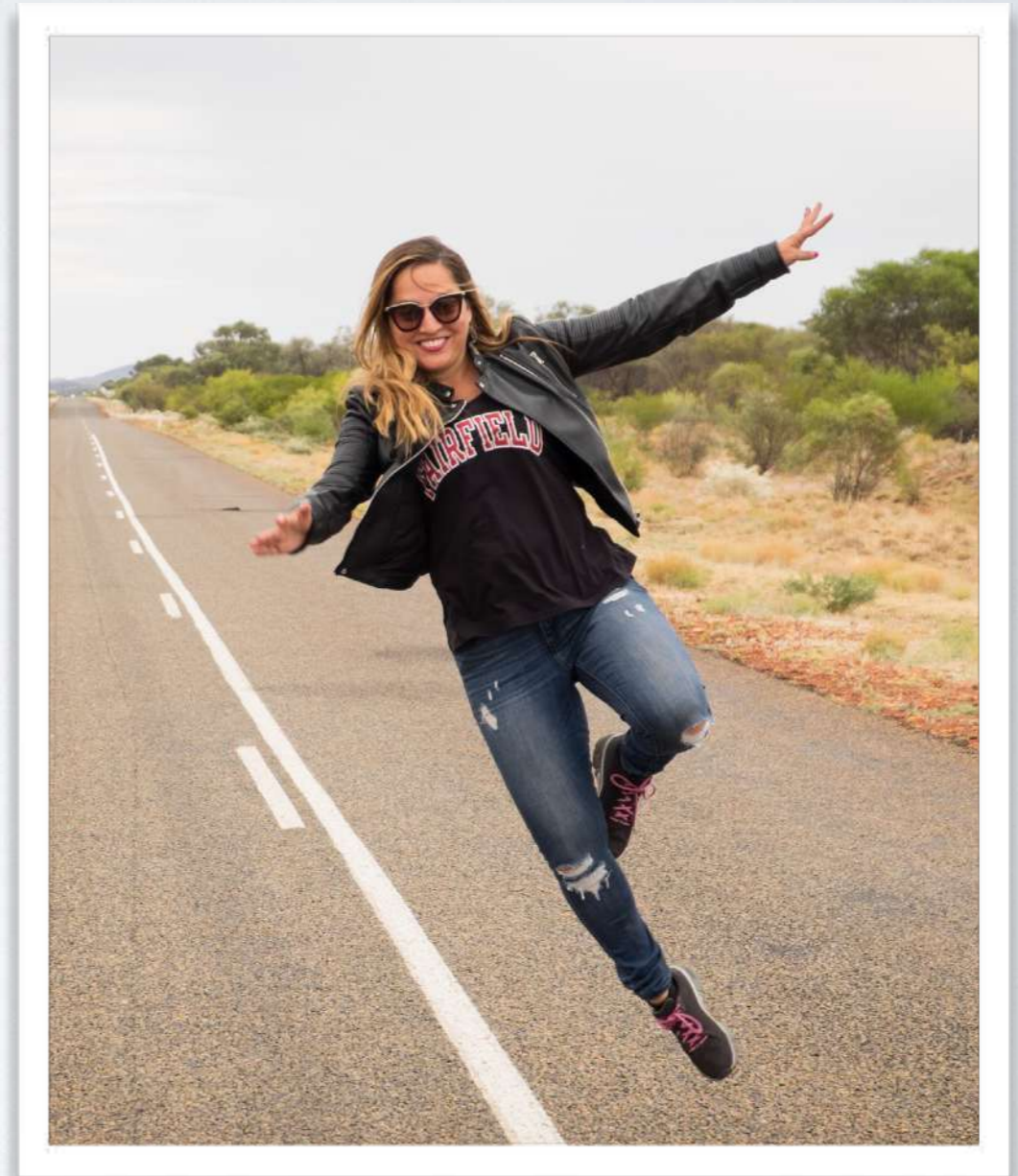
# HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL AS A PERSONALITY BLOGGER

Kate McCulley  
@adventurouskate



# MEET ADVENTUROUS KATE

- First travel blog to specialize in solo female travel
- Blogging since 2002; blogging as Adventurous Kate since 2010
- 74 countries and 7 continents visited
- Moved to New York in 2016
- *Forbes* Top 10 Most Influential Traveler, 2017



# PERSONALTY BLOGGERS ARE DIFFERENT

- We started for fun, without a business plan (and some still don't have one)
- Blurry boundaries between real life and blog life
- Monetization isn't as obvious
- Easier to pivot into another niche
- Readers overly invested in our lives



PART I:

WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?

WHEN YOU SAY

“I’m not a political person.”

I HEAR

“I don’t give a shit about people less privileged than me.”

# YOUR CHOICES MATTER

- It's too late to stay ignorant on major issues.
- Every decision you make will be amplified by readers who follow in your footsteps.
- As a member of the privileged class, you have a responsibility to help the less fortunate.
- As someone who works in the travel industry, you have a responsibility to educate people to make good choices.



# PROBLEMATIC COUNTRIES

- USA: police-sanctioned murder of black Americans
- Qatar: slavery conditions for migrant laborers
- Israel: occupation of Palestine
- Russia: murder of LGBT people
- Myanmar: genocide of the Rohingya

# OPTIONS FOR VISITING PROBLEMATIC PLACES

- **Visit independently**
- Pro: Spending your tourist dollars with people who need it. Editorial and financial independence.
- Con: Some readers will object to your visit no matter what you do.
- **Visit while hosted by an independent business (hotel, tour company, etc.).**
- Pro: Free trip, promoting a worthy business while not working with the government.
- Con: Your readers may see this as tantamount to working with the government.
- **Visit on behalf of the country's tourism board, paid or unpaid.**
- Pro: Free trip; experience you couldn't ordinarily afford; possibly getting paid.
- Con: You are working to promote a problematic government's agenda.



# DECIDE YOUR DEALBREAKERS

- Using Airbnb without checking local laws
- Any activity involving interaction with animals
- Any activity involving short-term volunteering with children
- Climate change and the number of flights you take each year
- Attending conferences with a history of unethical behavior
- Partnering, promoting, or overlooking the unethical behavior of fellow travel bloggers

THIS IS HARD.

BUT IT'S IMPORTANT.



PART II:

VARYING YOUR CONTENT

# KINDS OF BLOG POSTS

- Moneymakers
- Expertise Builders
- High Value Content
- Prestige Pieces
- Bonding with Readers



# MONEYMAKERS

- High traffic: SEO- or Pinterest-driven
- High earners: affiliate and/or display income; promoting your own products
- Targeted at late-stage purchasers
- Update often — at least quarterly
- *Example: Finding The Right Purse for Travel*

# EXPERTISE BUILDERS

- Showcase your expertise in your niche OR specialty
- Build a large directory of themed content
- Build a standard outline and repeat in a variety of destinations or topics
- *Example: Solo Female Travel in Thailand*



# HIGH VALUE CONTENT

- Not every helpful topic drives lots of traffic or makes money
- If it helps people, write it anyway
- Your readers will come to you first to see if you wrote about a certain destination, regardless of how it performs in Google
- *Example: Visiting Russia Without a Visa on the St. Peter Line Ferry*

# PRESTIGE PIECES

- Posts that showcase outstanding writing
- Posts that showcase outstanding photography
- Exceptional experiences and journeys
- Consider submitting these for awards
- *Example: Antarctica and the Traveler's Ego*

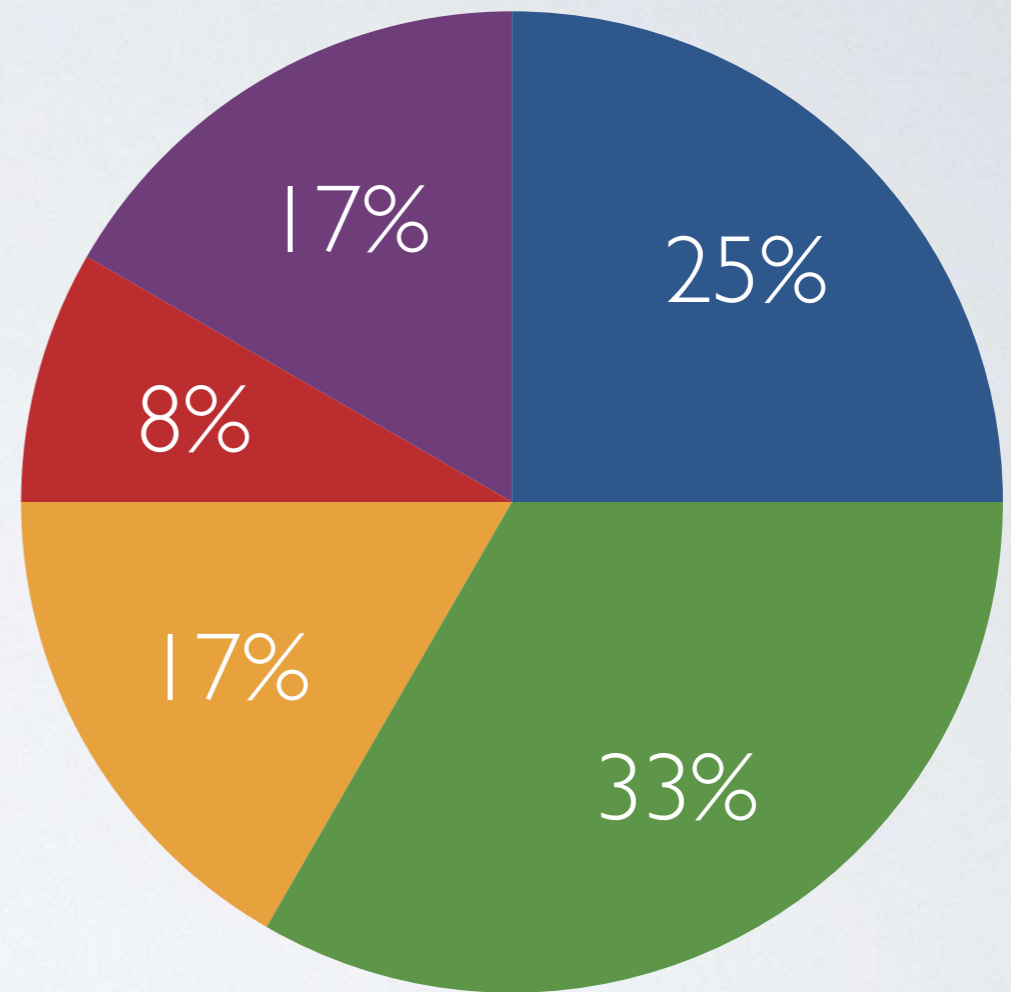


# BONDING WITH READERS

- Posts that allow you to connect with your readers
- Stories from your life and “behind the scenes”
- Showcase vulnerability, imperfection and frankness
- A little goes a long way
- *Example: My Worst Travel Moments of [Year]*

# VARY YOUR CONTENT

- Maintain a balance
- Too much of anything can be a bad thing
- Categories often overlap





PART III:  
BALANCING LIFE AND  
BLOGGING

# PRIVACY

- NOBODY IS ENTITLED TO KNOW EVERYTHING — or even anything.
- There will come a time when you *will* need more privacy.
- Choose where to draw boundaries: romantic relationships, finances, family, personal problems.
- You can talk at length about your emotions and feelings without giving away the details of what you want to keep private.
- Children deserve as much privacy as possible — especially when they're not yours.



# ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

- How often do you respond to readers?
- How do you choose whether to meet with readers?
- How much of your limited time do you spend helping readers one-on-one?
- How often do you say no to your readers?
- Turn off Facebook messaging; ignore most Instagram messages

# SELF-CARE

- Health, fitness, and wellness
- Relationships: friends, family, partners
- Hobbies, pastimes, and other outside interests (that you DO NOT monetize)
- Time away from digital stimulation
- Curb your working hours



# WHAT MADE MY LIFE BETTER

- Moving to the city where my closest friends live.
- Joining a really nice gym.
- Taking long walks in Central Park.
- Political volunteering and organizing.
- No longer working after 10 PM.
- Reading like crazy.
- Learning to crochet.
- Going offline for 12 days in Antarctica.
- Spending lots of time helping my best friend with her new baby.



Money *does* make you happier —  
but only to a point.

Once you don't have to worry about bills being paid, and your needs get comfortably met, earning more brings you progressively smaller dividends.

Plenty of digital entrepreneurs are wealthy and miserable.

Concentrate on building a fulfilling life outside of your business. Nurture relationships. Cultivate creative interests. Get into nature. Give back. Care for others.

It's not just about the money. It's about life.



# ON EVOLUTION

- You will change — it's inevitable. Don't be afraid of it.
- If you're a personality-based blogger, your audience is evolving along with you.
- If something's not working in your life, fix it. Not temporarily. Fix it for good.
- Nobody likes the creepy older dude in the hostel hitting on 20-year-olds.

# ANY QUESTIONS?

- Kate McCulley
- [AdventurousKate.com](http://AdventurousKate.com)
- [kate@adventurouskate.com](mailto:kate@adventurouskate.com)
- @adventurouskate

