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## **Lonely Planet travel guide in fraud scandal**

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0804/080415-travel.html>

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## THE ARTICLE

The Lonely Planet travel guide company has been rocked by claims of poor research and low pay. Author Thomas Kohnstamm, writer of nearly a dozen Lonely Planet guides, has 'revealed all' in a book of his own about life as a freelance travel writer. In "Do Travel Writers Go To Hell?" he tells a 'warts and all' account of his three years in South America. He confesses that he made up large parts of the Lonely Planet book on Brazil and didn't even visit Colombia. "They didn't pay me enough to go Colombia," he said. He revealed: "I wrote the book in San Francisco. I got the information from a chick I was dating - an intern in the Colombian consulate." He claims he spent more time chasing women and accepting gifts from restaurant owners than checking on train timetables and menus. He also said he had to sell drugs to make ends meet while on the road.

Lonely Planet's publisher is unhappy at Kohnstamm's claims that many guidebook writers do not check their facts because they have to finish their book before they "run up credit card debts". This seems to contradict the company website, which says: "All Lonely Planet guidebooks are the result of on-the-ground research and draw from the collective knowledge of a global travel community....If it's in the guidebook our authors have been there." Other Lonely Planet writers support Kohnstamm. Britain's Telegraph newspaper reported an e-mail from Jeanne Oliver, writer of the guides to France, Germany and Croatia, who said: "You are begging authors to cut corners ... or to help finance the book out of their own pocket." Lonely Planet said it had reviewed Kohnstamm's guidebooks but did not find any inaccuracies in them.

# WARM-UPS

**1. TRAVEL:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about travel. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your original partner(s) and share what you found out.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*travel guides / poor research / low pay / making things up / dating / gifts / menus / checking your facts / knowledge / authors / begging / cutting corners / inaccuracies*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. INACCURACIES:** What problems might there be if these books were full of inaccuracies? Talk about this with your partner(s). Make a story for one of the books with your partner(s) about something that went terribly wrong because of the book's mistakes. Change partners and share your stories.

Book	Inaccuracies	Problems
a travel guide to Brazil		
a cookery book		
a 'how-to' book on computers		
a car maintenance book		
a book on how to win friends		
a first-aid manual		

**4. GUIDES:** Which of these countries would you like to travel around to research for a guidebook? Talk about this with your partner(s). Rank the countries from 10 (would love to research) to 1 (zero interest). Change partners and share your ideas.

- the USA
- Bhutan
- Zimbabwe
- Peru
- Antarctica
- Kuwait
- Fiji
- Finland

**5. GUIDE BOOK:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with guidebooks. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**6. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A **strongly** believe that guidebook writers should be paid a lot of money; Students B **strongly** believe guidebook writers don't need lots of money because they have a great life traveling. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. A guidebook writer stole lots of money from his publisher. T / F
- b. The guidebook writer is worried he won't go to heaven. T / F
- c. The writer wrote part of a guide on Colombia without even going there. T / F
- d. The writer sold drugs so he could continue doing research for his book. T / F
- e. The publisher knows that authors do not check the facts in its guides. T / F
- f. The publisher says all authors visit the countries they write about. T / F
- g. Other writers are angry with the writer of the travel guide for Brazil. T / F
- h. The publisher checked the Brazil guide and found no errors. T / F

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. rocked                          | a. woman       |
| 2. revealed                        | b. mistakes    |
| 3. freelance                       | c. themselves  |
| 4. chick ( <i>informal slang</i> ) | d. independent |
| 5. make ends meet                  | e. go against  |
| 6. contradict                      | f. shared      |
| 7. collective                      | g. stunned     |
| 8. finance                         | h. told        |
| 9. out of their own pocket         | i. survive     |
| 10. inaccuracies                   | j. pay for     |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |                                       |                               |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. rocked by claims                   | a. account of his three years |
| 2. 'revealed all' in                  | b. their facts                |
| 3. he tells a 'warts and all'         | c. meet while on the road.    |
| 4. I got the information from a       | d. corners                    |
| 5. he had to sell drugs to make ends  | e. a book of his own          |
| 6. guidebook writers do not check     | f. credit card debts          |
| 7. run up                             | g. pocket                     |
| 8. the collective knowledge of a      | h. of poor research           |
| 9. begging authors to cut             | i. global travel community    |
| 10. finance the book out of their own | j. chick I was dating         |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The Lonely Planet travel guide company has been \_\_\_\_\_ by claims of poor research and low pay. Author Thomas Kohnstamm, writer of nearly a \_\_\_\_\_ Lonely Planet guides, has 'revealed all' in a book of his own about life as a freelance travel writer. In "Do Travel Writers Go To Hell?" he tells a 'warts and all' \_\_\_\_\_ of his three years in South America. He confesses that he made up \_\_\_\_\_ parts of the Lonely Planet book on Brazil and didn't even \_\_\_\_\_ Colombia. "They didn't pay me enough to go Colombia," he said. He revealed: "I wrote the book in San Francisco. I got the information from a chick I was \_\_\_\_\_ - an intern in the Colombian consulate." He claims he spent more time chasing women and \_\_\_\_\_ gifts from restaurant owners than checking on train timetables and menus. He also said he had to sell drugs to make ends \_\_\_\_\_ while on the road.

*dating*  
*dozen*  
*visit*  
*account*  
*meet*  
*rocked*  
*accepting*  
*large*

Lonely Planet's publisher is \_\_\_\_\_ at Kohnstamm's claims that many guidebook writers do not check their facts because they have to finish their book before they "run up credit card \_\_\_\_\_ ". This seems to contradict the company website, which says: "All Lonely Planet guidebooks are the result of on-the-ground research and \_\_\_\_\_ from the collective knowledge of a global travel \_\_\_\_\_ ....If it's in the guidebook our \_\_\_\_\_ have been there." Other Lonely Planet writers support Kohnstamm. Britain's Telegraph newspaper reported an e-mail from Jeanne Oliver, writer of the guides to France, Germany and Croatia, who said: "You are begging authors to \_\_\_\_\_ corners ... or to help finance the book out of their own \_\_\_\_\_." Lonely Planet said it had reviewed Kohnstamm's guidebooks but did not \_\_\_\_\_ any inaccuracies in them.

*draw*  
*cut*  
*unhappy*  
*authors*  
*find*  
*pocket*  
*debts*  
*community*

## **LISTENING:** Listen and fill in the spaces.

The Lonely Planet travel guide company \_\_\_\_\_ claims of poor research and low pay. Author Thomas Kohnstamm, writer of nearly a dozen Lonely Planet guides, \_\_\_\_\_ book of his own about life as a freelance travel writer. In "Do Travel Writers Go To Hell?" he tells a \_\_\_\_\_ of his three years in South America. He confesses that he made up large parts of the Lonely Planet book on Brazil \_\_\_\_\_ Colombia. "They didn't pay me enough to go Colombia," he said. He revealed: "I wrote the book in San Francisco. I got the information from a chick I was dating - \_\_\_\_\_ Colombian consulate." He claims he spent more time chasing women and accepting gifts from restaurant owners than checking on train timetables and menus. He also said he had to sell drugs \_\_\_\_\_ while on the road.

Lonely Planet's publisher is unhappy at Kohnstamm's claims that many guidebook writers \_\_\_\_\_ because they have to finish their book before they "run up credit card debts". This \_\_\_\_\_ the company website, which says: "All Lonely Planet guidebooks are the result \_\_\_\_\_ research and draw from the collective knowledge of a global travel community....If it's in the guidebook \_\_\_\_\_ there." Other Lonely Planet writers support Kohnstamm. Britain's Telegraph newspaper reported an e-mail from Jeanne Oliver, writer of the guides to France, Germany and Croatia, who said: "You are begging \_\_\_\_\_ ... or to help finance the book out of their own pocket." Lonely Planet said it had reviewed Kohnstamm's guidebooks but did not \_\_\_\_\_ in them.

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'travel' and 'guide'.

<b>travel</b>	<b>guide</b>
---------------	--------------

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• claims</li><li>• own</li><li>• account</li><li>• pay</li><li>• intern</li><li>• ends</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• facts</li><li>• run</li><li>• result</li><li>• support</li><li>• corners</li><li>• reviewed</li></ul>
--	---

# STUDENT TRAVEL SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about travel in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.



# TRAVEL DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the word 'guidebook'?
- c) Do you always use a guidebook when you travel?
- d) What do you think of the Lonely Planet's writer Thomas Kohnstamm for making up parts of travel guides?
- e) Do you think Lonely Planet should sue him for dishonesty?
- f) Have Thomas Kohnstamm's actions changed your mind about how reliable guidebooks might be?
- g) Can you understand why Thomas Kohnstamm did what he did?
- h) Would you like to research a country for a travel guide?
- i) Would you like to read Thomas Kohnstamm's book?
- j) Do you ever struggle to make ends meet?

*Lonely Planet travel guide in fraud scandal - 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2008*  
More free lessons at [www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com](http://www.BreakingNewsEnglish.com)

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# TRAVEL DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) Do you believe everything written in a travel guide?
- c) Do you think publishers need to pay their writers more to get accurate facts?
- d) Do you ever run up a credit card debt?
- e) Do you think Lonely Planet needs to change its policy and check that its authors actually visit the countries they write about?
- f) What are the best travel guides available in your country?
- g) When was the last time you cut corners?
- h) What country would you like to write a travel book about?
- i) What questions would you like to ask Thomas Kohnstamm?
- j) Did you like this discussion?

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# LANGUAGE

The Lonely Planet travel guide company has been rocked by (1) \_\_\_\_ of poor research and low pay. Author Thomas Kohnstamm, writer of nearly a dozen Lonely Planet guides, has 'revealed all' in a book of his own about life as a (2) \_\_\_\_ travel writer. In "Do Travel Writers Go To Hell?" he tells a 'warts and all' (3) \_\_\_\_ of his three years in South America. He confesses that he made (4) \_\_\_\_ large parts of the Lonely Planet book on Brazil and didn't even visit Colombia. "They didn't pay me enough to go Colombia," he said. He revealed: "I wrote the book in San Francisco. I got the information from a chick I was dating - an intern in the Colombian consulate." He claims he spent more time chasing women and accepting gifts from restaurant owners than (5) \_\_\_\_ on train timetables and menus. He also said he had to sell drugs to make ends meet (6) \_\_\_\_ on the road.

Lonely Planet's publisher is unhappy (7) \_\_\_\_ Kohnstamm's claims that many guidebook writers do not check their facts because they have to finish their book before they "(8) \_\_\_\_ up credit card debts". This seems to contradict the company website, which says: "All Lonely Planet guidebooks are the result of on-the-ground research and (9) \_\_\_\_ from the collective knowledge of a global travel community...If it's in the guidebook our authors have been (10) \_\_\_\_." Other Lonely Planet writers support Kohnstamm. Britain's Telegraph newspaper reported an e-mail from Jeanne Oliver, writer of the guides to France, Germany and Croatia, who said: "You are (11) \_\_\_\_ authors to cut corners ... or to help finance the book out of their own (12) \_\_\_\_." Lonely Planet said it had reviewed Kohnstamm's guidebooks but did not find any inaccuracies in them.

## Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.

- |     |                |             |              |            |
|-----|----------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| 1.  | (a) clams      | (b) clamps  | (c) claim    | (d) claims |
| 2.  | (a) freelance  | (b) freebie | (c) freed    | (d) freely |
| 3.  | (a) accountant | (b) account | (c) accounts | (d) count  |
| 4.  | (a) down       | (b) in      | (c) up       | (d) out    |
| 5.  | (a) checker    | (b) checked | (c) checking | (d) checks |
| 6.  | (a) during     | (b) while   | (c) between  | (d) along  |
| 7.  | (a) to         | (b) in      | (c) for      | (d) at     |
| 8.  | (a) run        | (b) jog     | (c) sprint   | (d) walk   |
| 9.  | (a) sketch     | (b) draw    | (c) paint    | (d) doodle |
| 10. | (a) in         | (b) going   | (c) to       | (d) there  |
| 11. | (a) beggar     | (b) begs    | (c) begging  | (d) begged |
| 12. | (a) pocket     | (b) collar  | (c) cuff     | (d) lapel  |



# HOMework

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out about the Lonely Planet company. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. ON THE GROUND:** Make a poster about the rules that guidebook writers must follow while doing their on-the-ground research. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. INACCURACY:** Write a magazine article about a holiday that went horribly wrong because of wrong information in a travel guide. Include imaginary interviews with the tourist whose holiday was ruined and the travel writer who lied in the book.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to the Lonely Planet travel guide company. Give them three pieces of advice on what they should do to ensure their books contain accurate information. Ask them three questions about their travel writers. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

**6. DIARY / JOURNAL:** Imagine you are a travel writer in a country of your choice. Write your diary / journal entry for one day on the road. Read your entry to your classmates in the next lesson.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. F      c. T      d. T      e. F      f. T      g. F      h. T

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| 1.      rocked                          | a.      stunned     |
| 2.      revealed                        | b.      told        |
| 3.      freelance                       | c.      independent |
| 4.      chick ( <i>informal slang</i> ) | d.      woman       |
| 5.      make ends meet                  | e.      survive     |
| 6.      contradict                      | f.      go against  |
| 7.      collective                      | g.      shared      |
| 8.      finance                         | h.      pay for     |
| 9.      out of their own pocket         | i.      themselves  |
| 10.    inaccuracies                     | j.      mistakes    |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1.      rocked by claims                  | a.      of poor research           |
| 2.      'revealed all' in                 | b.      a book of his own          |
| 3.      he tells a 'warts and all'        | c.      account of his three years |
| 4.      I got the information from a      | d.      chick I was dating         |
| 5.      he had to sell drugs to make ends | e.      meet while on the road     |
| 6.      guidebook writers do not check    | f.      their facts                |
| 7.      run up                            | g.      credit card debts          |
| 8.      the collective knowledge of a     | h.      global travel community    |
| 9.      begging authors to cut            | i.      corners                    |
| 10.    finance the book out of their own  | j.      pocket                     |

## GAP FILL:

### Lonely Planet travel guide in fraud scandal

The Lonely Planet travel guide company has been **rocked** by claims of poor research and low pay. Author Thomas Kohnstamm, writer of nearly a **dozen** Lonely Planet guides, has 'revealed all' in a book of his own about life as a freelance travel writer. In "Do Travel Writers Go To Hell?" he tells a 'warts and all' **account** of his three years in South America. He confesses that he made up **large** parts of the Lonely Planet book on Brazil and didn't even **visit** Colombia. "They didn't pay me enough to go Colombia," he said. He revealed: "I wrote the book in San Francisco. I got the information from a chick I was **dating** - an intern in the Colombian consulate." He claims he spent more time chasing women and **accepting** gifts from restaurant owners than checking on train timetables and menus. He also said he had to sell drugs to make ends **meet** while on the road.

Lonely Planet's publisher is **unhappy** at Kohnstamm's claims that many guidebook writers do not check their facts because they have to finish their book before they "run up credit card **debts**". This seems to contradict the company website, which says: "All Lonely Planet guidebooks are the result of on-the-ground research and **draw** from the collective knowledge of a global travel **community**....If it's in the guidebook our **authors** have been there." Other Lonely Planet writers support Kohnstamm. Britain's Telegraph newspaper reported an e-mail from Jeanne Oliver, writer of the guides to France, Germany and Croatia, who said: "You are begging authors to **cut** corners ... or to help finance the book out of their own **pocket**." Lonely Planet said it had reviewed Kohnstamm's guidebooks but did not **find** any inaccuracies in them.

## LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - d    2 - a    3 - b    4 - c    5 - c    6 - b    7 - d    8 - a    9 - b    10 - d    11 - c    12 - a