

HUMOR

A Travel Writer's Oath

BY LAURA SUTHERLAND

I promise not to use the word *lush* to describe anything green or garden-like ever again. Or *verdant*. Although I might need to use *emerald*.

I swear I will never use the word *boast*, as in, "The gardens boast a beautiful central fountain." I will use the word only to mean *brag*, as in, "If I hear him boast one more time about his airfare bargains, I will slap him with my money belt."

I give you my guarantee that I will use the phrase *air of enchantment* only once during my lifetime, and that will be in an article about honeymooners for a very specific audience, the kind that chooses to ride to their wedding in Cinderella's coach at Disney World.

Snap me with a wet beach towel if I ever again use the phrases *sparkling turquoise sea*, *sun-kissed beach* or *powdery soft white sand* to describe the attributes of a tropical island.

Never will I use the word *warren* in describing a network of criss-crossing hallways or a tangle of streets. I'll use it only if I have an infestation of rabbits in my yard that have created a subterranean village for their own use.

Strike me with 10 lashes if I ever resort to the empty words *wonderful*, *marvelous*, *stunning* or *spectacular*.

Make it 20 for affected words like *winsome*, *beguiling* or *divine*.

And add a 50-mile forced march wearing a photographer's vest, shorts and a Tilley hat for every use of *iconic*, a word that has skyrocketed to the top of the Overused Words List with surprising speed.

You have my word of honor that when describing the interior of a room or building, I will never use the word *appointed*. I'll use it exclusively to mean *to name officially*, as in, "While visiting Paris, my dinner mates appointed me translator since I took a year of high school French, and *zoot alors!*, our first course consisted of baby eels in bowls of boiling oil."

If I ever again use the phrases *achingly beautiful* or *breathtaking view*, I deserve to slip and fall into the deep end of the infinity pool.

And finally, with apologies to Nat King Cole, if I ever once use the words *incredible* or *unforgettable*, take my guidebooks, tar and feather me with their pages, and lay me out in the sun with only SPF 15.

Laura Sutherland is a freelance writer who has published six travel guidebooks. Her travel stories and humor pieces have appeared in magazines such as *Real Simple*, *Disney FamilyFun* and *Parents*, and in the travel sections of newspapers such as *The Miami Herald*.

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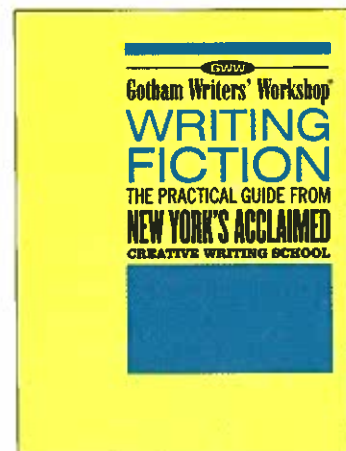
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