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## HIDDEN GEMS, INSPIRING TRIPS & UNIQUE STORY TELLING

### COME TOGETHER WITH “ASK A LOCAL”

Personal recommendations always make a visit unique, because people make the place. Brand USA is asking you to share your destination’s stories to inspire amazing travel experiences to, through and beyond the gateways.

- Is it real, honest and unscripted? (We want it.)
- Silly or quirky? (Yep, want that too.)
- Family fun and adventure? (Of course!)
- Full of pride and emotion. (Do you even have to ask?)
- Something you wouldn’t find in a travel guide? (Now we’re talking!)
- Does it make us want to get on a plane right this instant? (Yassss.)
- Is it warm and welcoming? (That’s the whole idea.)

“Ask A Local” ([link here](#)) utilizes a fast-paced documentary style with simple, warm and welcoming stories delivered from the heart. All we need from you is video, images and a narrative of personal stories. We’ll do the rest.

So, how can you participate?

*Let’s start with the format options.* There are three ways to work with us.

#### WITH A FILM CREW:

Find a photogenic location free from logos that is quiet enough to film and record audio. Select a location that offers a sense of place that best represents your state/city. Have your subject speaking directly to the camera, using a lavalier or boom microphone. Send this video to us with any “b-roll” footage and photography that illustrates your local recommendations. This could include landscapes, specific locations, food, cultural activities, flora and fauna, music clips and footage, etc. Please upload the following to the Brand USA DAM:

- Video format: H.264 for the video codec (compression method).
  - o **Frame rate:** usually 29.97, but 24 and 25 are accepted as well
  - o **Size and bitrate:** 1920×1080 for 1080p HD video, 10Mbs – 20Mbs bitrate
- Audio format: AAC-LC (Advanced Audio Codec)
  - o **Sound sample rate:** 48 kHz
  - o **Audio quality:** constant bitrate f 320 kbps.
- Model release ([link here](#))
- Content release ([link here](#))
- Location release ([link here](#))



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## 2. WITH A SMARTPHONE (AND IDEALLY, A PLUG-IN MICROPHONE)

Record video interviews on an iPhone 6 or higher (or equivalent), with the phone held sideways in landscape orientation. If you can plug a lavalier microphone into the headphone jack and clip the mic to the shirt collar of your subject - that's even better to record sound. Hold the camera steady, or position it on a tripod at eye level. If you can, send us some video footage and photography that illustrates the places, food, music, or other details discussed. The more, the better! Please upload the following to the Brand USA DAM:

- Video format: try to record in HD, and send the largest file available when you export
- Audio format: whatever your phone recorded
- Model release ([link here](#))
- Content release ([link here](#))
- Location release ([link here](#))

## 3. IF YOU DON'T HAVE VIDEO RECORDING EQUIPMENT

- Use your phone voice recorder to interview the subject and upload to the Brand USA DAM.
- Or send us a script and we can record it for you with your provided video and images.

## HOW TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

Interviewing non-actors can be a challenge. Here are tips to get the most authentic stories from your subjects. We don't want these to sound like commercials, so whatever you can do to make the interview feel conversational, definitely do.

1. Interview subjects away from an audience. The fewer people watching, the less self-conscious the subject.
2. Ask your subject to look directly into the camera when speaking, as if they're skyping with a potential visitor.
3. We shouldn't hear the interviewer in the film, so be as quiet as possible when your subject speaks. Resist the urge to say "yeah, uh-huh," or to interrupt them with encouragement. Nodding enthusiastically can help assure the interviewee if your silence seems weird.
4. Very important: Since the audience won't hear the interviewer, be sure your subject answers your questions in a complete statement that provides context. For example, if you ask what color the sky is, and your subject answers, "blue," the audience would only hear "blue." That would be confusing. If they were answering in a complete statement, your subject would say, "The sky is blue." This helps make it crystal clear.
5. Don't be afraid to do multiple takes to get it right. It's great for us to have options. When in doubt, do another take.
6. Have water available to drink.
7. Even the best conversationalists get nervous on camera. If your subject freezes up, remind them this is just a conversation. They don't have to worry about being perfect: that's what editing is for. We just want their personal recommendations!
8. If your subject is taking the interview a little too seriously, and it's starting to feel like a segment from *Good Morning America*, remind them that this should feel like they've just met a new friend who's visiting from out of town. Ask them what they'd say to that new friend in real life. It should feel upbeat, casual and fun!
9. If you are a state DMO and want to create an "Ask a Local" video for the entire state, please reach out to Mark Lapidus ([mlapidus@thebrandusa.com](mailto:mlapidus@thebrandusa.com)).



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## WHAT TO ASK

### *Interview*

1. Introduce yourself, and tell us where you're from/where you live.
2. Describe the place.
3. What's the most unique thing about this place?
4. What is your very favorite thing to do here and why?
5. What are the people like?
6. If an international visitor is only here for a day or two, what's are the few things they should do? Why?
7. What's the craziest thing you can do here? Describe it in as much detail as possible.

## TIPS

1. Remember "Ask A Local" is about visiting the USA – not living here.
2. Talk to your subject about what they're going to wear. They should appear informal, but a ripped, or stained t-shirt probably isn't a good idea.
3. Make sure your subject isn't squinting into the sun.
4. Listen to your recording before you leave the area to make sure it's clear and that it has little background noise.
5. Watch the recording to make sure nobody has walked behind your subject, while they're talking.
6. This isn't a commercial and shouldn't sound like one. If you utilize a professional voice-over actor, discuss the approach with them.
7. Have your subject sign a release form.
8. Keep the narration between about ninety seconds and three minutes.

## WHERE TO SEND YOUR STUFF

Please upload your "Ask A Local" content to our Digital Asset Management (DAM) system.

If you do not have a Brand USA DAM account, please register for one [here](#). Once you've been approved, you will receive an email with instructions. Our "DAM Starter Kit" will provide upload Instructions and a tagging/keywords guidelines.

If you do have a DAM account, upload your footage, audio and signed releases to the "Ask A Local" folder. Please complete all required information, geo-tag with your destination name (e.g. Minneapolis, Minnesota) and the tag "Ask A Local." Detailed tags (names of points of interest, attractions, local food, and content contained, or referenced in your submission) will help us locate your assets and insure we're accurate when editing.

Should you have any questions regarding the DAM, please be sure to contact Justin Pile at [jpil@thebrandusa.com](mailto:jpil@thebrandusa.com).



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Note that Brand USA retains final approval of “Ask A Local” and will use submitted assets at our sole discretion.

Have questions?

Please contact:

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