Photo: Asheil Ramsurrun

CrowdRiff

Short-form Video Editing Tips for Destination Marketers

Step-by-step guide to editing short-form videos with viral potential

Photo: Jonas Verstuyft

What's Inside

Let me just edit this TikTok real quick.

Sound familiar? They're the famous last words of every social media manager and multi-hatted digital marketer you've ever known (or have ever been).

If you've done it once, you've done it enough times to know that editing a short-form video is not the easy breezy process it's made out to be. Managing clips, switching between programs, platforms, and devices, not to mention coming up with a shareable, likable, saveable story. Then there's the actual act of editing: your eyes are blurry, your fingers are twitching, and you've listened to the same six seconds of an audio track so many times it has permanently altered your brain chemistry.

It doesn't have to be like this.

This guide covers all the ingredients of a viral short-form video edit, including unskippable hooks, snappy transitions, trending music, and accessible (and searchable!) captions. But first, we're going to rewind things a little. A great edit happens way before you start chopping and rearranging clips, so we'll also cover the foundational elements of a well-crafted video, from choosing a loose format and honing in on a call to action, to determining the video length and envisioning the shot list.

Welcome to the cutting room floor! Let's get started.

Photo: Strauss Western

PART ONE

Before the edit

Have you been here before? You get a quick flash of an idea, open your editing app, start cutting together your short-form video, aaaaand… your mind goes blank.

Why can't you bring your idea to life? Because ideas aren't plans. To truly flow through an edit, you need to know what you're making and why. Even videos that look like they're "just winging it" take lots of prep. Here's what to think about before you dive in.

Photo: Tiff Ng

Photo: Keira Burton

Photo: Lili Popper

Choose a format

Knowing the loose format of your video helps you frame the story, define the major cuts, and develop a call to action—all essential details for a well-crafted video. Here are just a few formats that work well for destination marketing in particular.

Interviews & Profiles

Take the lens to your local community members, like shop owners, restaurant-going foodies, the local zookeeper—anyone with a unique perspective that helps you share the more personal story of your destination or attraction. You can also tap willing travelers to share quick takes on your destination.

> ☝️ **Tip:**
> Opt for the loose, man-on-the-street style interviews over more corporate looking talking heads. Keep the video short and sweet and let the questions set a snappy pace. You can even cut in clips over the audio.

Photo: Destination British Columbia
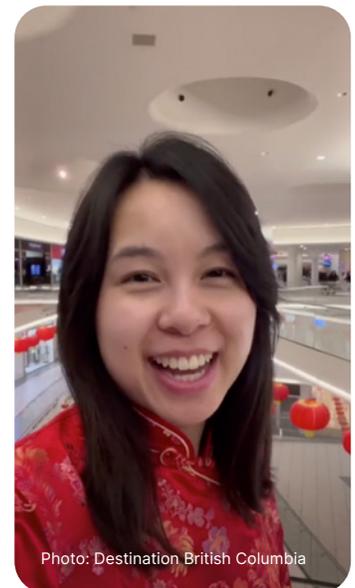
Supercuts

Fast cuts, flying colors, BPM-matched pacing. This is the stuff of supercuts, an easy short-form video format that lets you pack a bunch of breathtaking clips into a short amount of time. The goal isn't information—it's eye candy that inspires wanderlust. Viewers tend to watch supercuts a few times to take everything in, making them a driver for engagement numbers.

> ☝️ **Tip:**
> Add an interactive element, like a caption reading "The frame you land on is your next weekend getaway!"

SEE 2023
WELCOME RECEPTION

Photo: CrowdRiff

Photo: Discover Surrey

Listicles

Does the OG internet content format need any introduction? "10 places you must see before you turn 30." "5 date ideas for Valentine's day." "3 new Toronto restaurants you have to try." These snappy lists offer a glimpse of several locations or attractions at once by combining clips from each.

> ☝️ **Tip:**
> Use captions to deliver additional information like exact location or visitor info.

Photo: Visit The USA

Walkthroughs

Walkthroughs take the viewer around a particular place, like a museum, bookshop, restaurant, cafe, or hiking trail. This narrower lens helps you focus on lesser known spots and hidden gems so they can end up on travelers' itineraries.

> ☝️ **Tip:**
> Show the place through multiple angles and shot types, and make sure the location is clearly tagged!

Photo: Visit Eau Claire

Memes

We won't turn this one into rocket science. Sometimes there's a trending meme or format that works perfectly for your destination. When that happens the goal is speed, so you can capitalize on the trend while it's at its peak.

> ☝️ **Tip:**
> Use a template to make sure you're hitting the right transitions and text.

Visit Eau Claire used this Michael Scott green screen meme to celebrate the return of summer. Is it ever the wrong time to share a meme from The Office?

Set a target length

Instagram Reels can be up to 90 seconds, YouTube Shorts up to 60 seconds, and TikToks can be a whole 10 minutes long! (Did you know long-form video is back in a big way? Read about it in our [2024 Trends Report.](#))

Now comes the golden question: how long should your short-form video be? Well, it depends on the content. Sometimes your goal is to hook your audience fast. Sometimes you want to slow it down enough to build anticipation for a stunning payoff. Sometimes you want to be cruel and save that payoff for another video ("follow for part 2!").

It's a good idea to commit to a video length right off the bat, based on the format, story, and whether you already have an audio track selected. This will keep you on top of your story, help you make decisions about cutting in the edit, and keep you away from tangents that kill your video's energy.

As a general rule of thumb, short-form videos between 11 and 17 seconds hit the sweet spot for most audiences. That doesn't mean there isn't room for shorter or longer videos. Short videos under 10 seconds can offer quick hits of entertainment that users want to rewatch over and over. Look no further than Travel Oregon's best performing Reel of 2023—only 6 seconds long!
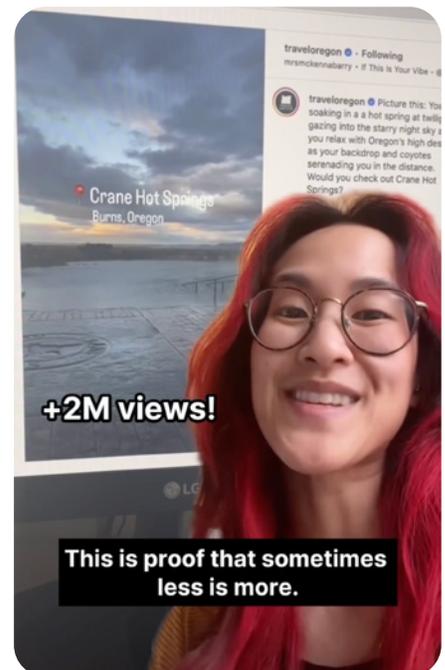
Don't you want to watch this [short but enchanting Reel](#) over and over? That's how engagement numbers skyrocket! (P.S. a CrowdRiff Creator made this 😉)

Prepare your editing process

You're in the middle of an amazing edit. Everything is falling into place. You remember you have the perfect clip from another shoot. You go to insert it, but... it's stored locally on another device. Goodbye, creative momentum.

What you need is short-form video mise en place. Whether you go for a quick Airdrop, a cloud-based tool like Google Drive, or a Digital Asset Management platform like CrowdRiff DAM, we can't stress this enough: have all your files accessible in one place before you start editing. This won't just make editing faster, but will also make the switch between desktop and mobile less of a hassle.

> 💡 **Tip:**
> Make file management one of your daily to dos. Use a platform like CrowdRiff so you can access UGC and your own digital assets in one place and implement smart tagging and cataloging features that makes searching for clips a breeze.
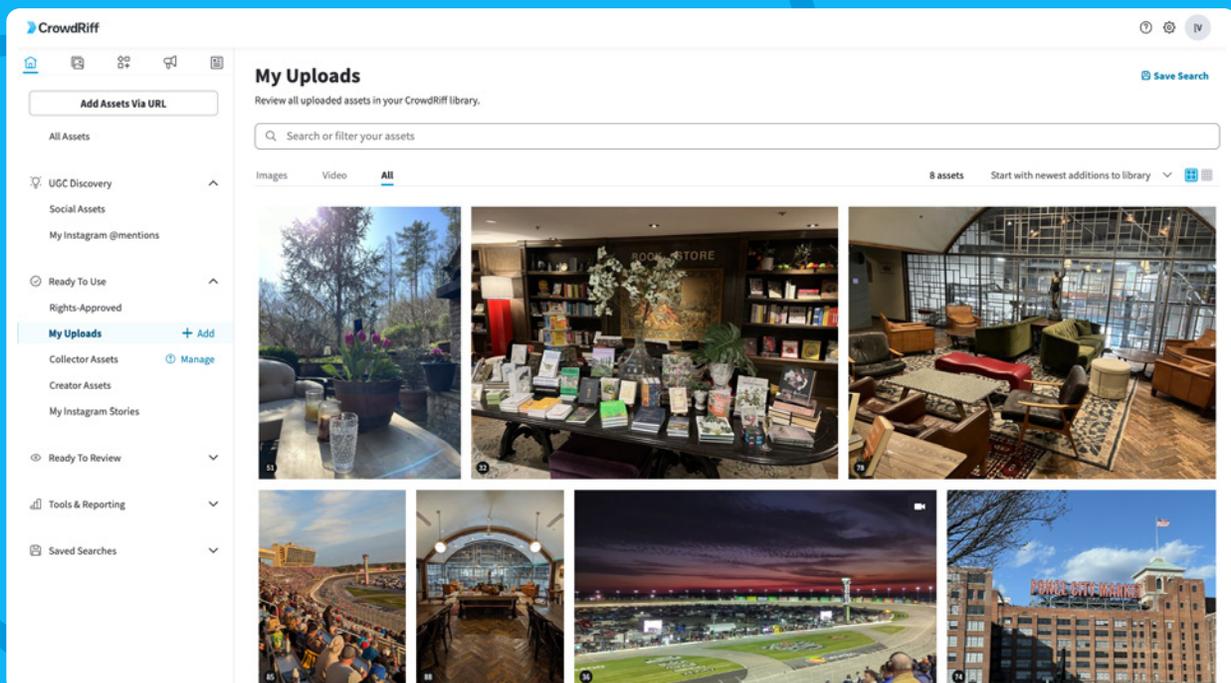
Pick your editing tool

When it comes to editing software, you truly have your pick of the litter. There's the native social media editors, the mobile-only editors, the pro software editors. Most creators rely on a mix of editing tools to meet different needs.

Here are a couple things to consider when you're weighing which tool to use:

Device - Do you want to edit on mobile or desktop? You might find that the small screen and miniscule controls make mobile editing too fiddly for complex edits. Conversely, getting all your files to desktop might be a pain for quick, simple edits. We suggest you get comfy in both a mobile and desktop tool for different video types.

Level of control - Adobe Premiere Pro might be the gold standard for video editing, but its hundreds of tools and expert capabilities might be overwhelming when you're focused on simple visual stories. At the same time, the basic tools available on Instagram might not support your creative ambitions for a video.

Now that you have a framework for assessing tools, it's time to choose your fighter. We ran a poll on social media to see what editing tools destination marketers prefer. CapCut was the overwhelming favorite with 72% of the vote. Next up is Adobe Premiere Pro, with 17% of the vote. After that, users preferred Filmora, with 7% of the vote.

There's so many more, but there's no need to complicate things. We're proponents of accessible tools like CrowdRiff Studio, CapCut, and the native social media editors that pack just enough capabilities for the average content creator. We think a mix of these three will suit you fine.
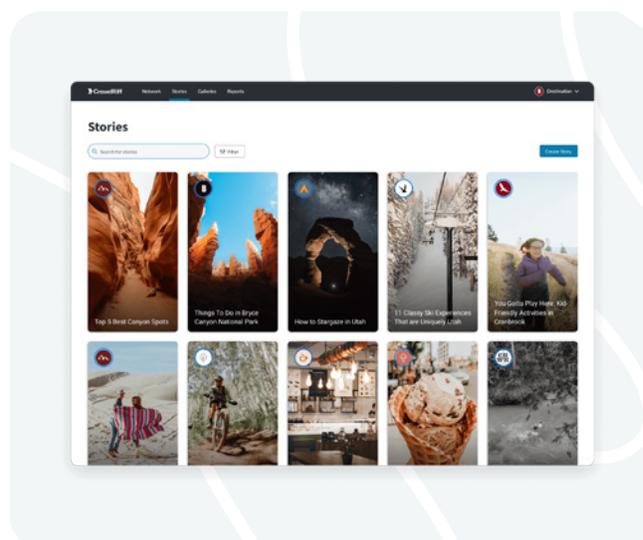
CapCut

This isn't just the DMO community's favorite editing tool—it's pretty much everyone's. CapCut is an excellent tool for both beginner editors and those looking to apply more advanced editing to their videos. It features pro tools like color correction, VFX, audio editing, and background removal/subject isolation, but its biggest draw is its effects, filters, and transitions that make your content look cinematic with a simple drag and drop process. Functional tools, like green screen abilities, auto captions, and teleprompter, guarantee to make your life easier. There's a desktop and mobile version, and it's free!
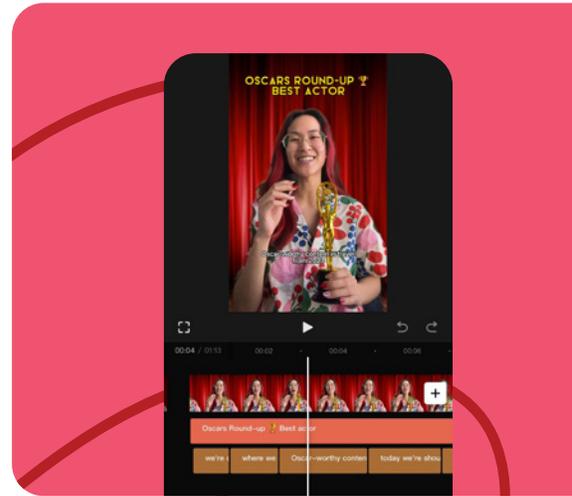
CrowdRiff Studio

Our short-form video editing tool is made just for destination marketers, so you can easily compile your existing clips into listicles, supercuts, walkthroughs, and more. By linking to both your UGC library and your owned media library, you have access to all of the content you need without switching between platforms and devices. All of your assets are tagged and categorized so you can search for and pull clips on specific topics. And CrowdRiff Studio features the core editing tools you need, including text and transitions. This is a must-have option for crafting engaging destination content at the drop of a hat. (We even held a competition at our last SEE conference where contestants used Studio to make short-form videos in just 5 minutes!)
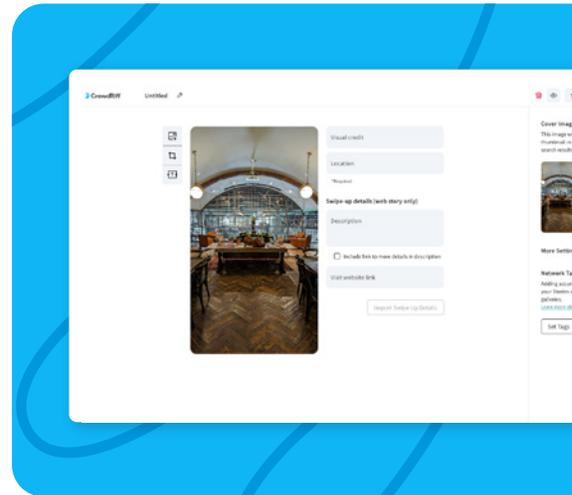
Native Social Apps

Sometimes the easiest option is to just stay within TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube. These apps give you all the basic editing tools, like text, transitions, effects, GIFs, and audio. Plus, you can record your content directly in the app for quick-turn updates or stitches. Ultimately many creators use a hybrid model, cutting their clips together in a third-party app, then adding captions and audio in the native app where they're publishing.

PART TWO

The edit

Photo: Jon Ly

Photo: Nappy

Photo: Johnson Bacsain
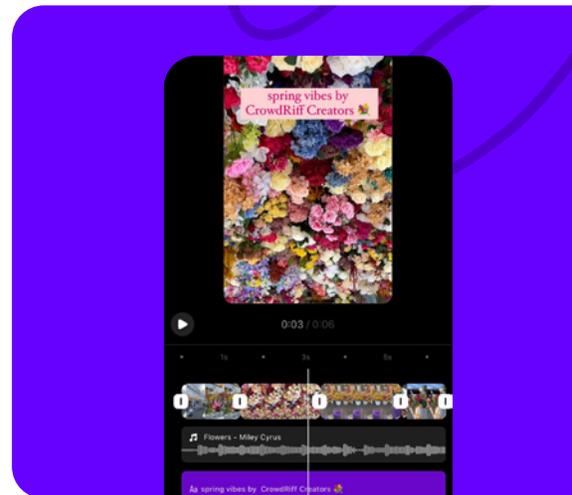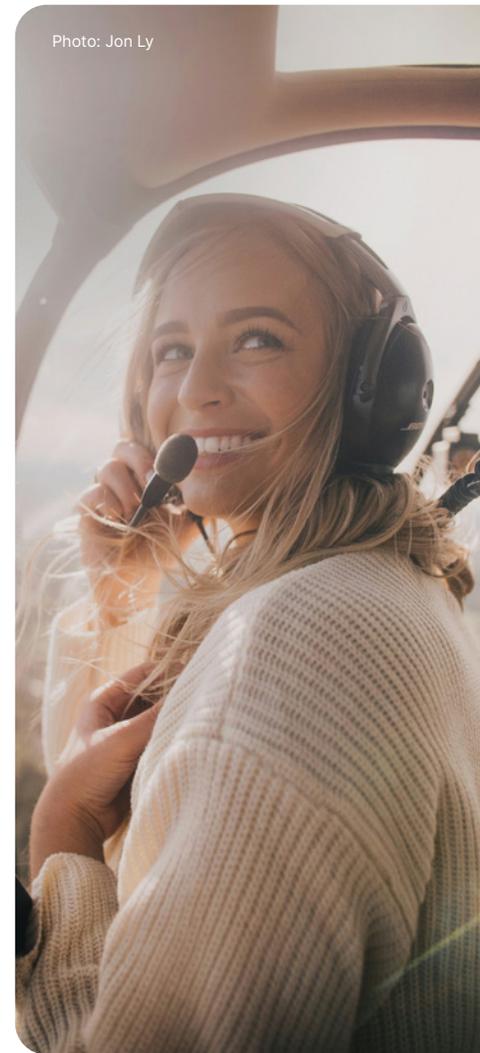
Crafting the hook

General consensus says you have just three seconds to hook a short-form video viewer. Think of your own behavior as you scroll through Reels or TikToks.

Without an interesting visual cue, it's onto the next. But we don't all have cute dogs, babies, or celebrities handy to capture attention. Your best bet is simply using an on-screen caption right up front. The viewer will naturally start reading it, keeping them on your video long enough to actually engage with the content. Here are a few tips for opening hooks:

"This one is for…" Make a connection with the viewer by framing an experience as something personal to them. Any hook that speaks directly to a viewer will play on this principle, e.g. "You need to watch this if you're struggling to find an affordable honeymoon spot" OR "If you prefer 7am hikes over all day beach hangs, then this is the destination for you…"

"Many of our visitors don't know that…" Play on the viewer's curiosity (and FOMO) by sharing an interesting fact, secret, or story. See how Visit Pasadena does it in this CrowdRiff Creator-made Reel.

"When is the last time you…?"
Ask the viewer a question, making it direct so it feels personal to them.

"X spots that are screaming for a romantic date night…"
Listicles are a natural hook, but add to the intrigue by making the focus more niche, offbeat, or exciting. Visit California gets it with this smart, CrowdRiff Creator-made Reel.

"Hear me out…"
People love controversy, and this hook sets up for a juicy takeaway. Of course, you actually have to deliver a hot take!

Go big.
Use bold, legible, short text that the viewer can read quickly and easily.

Or go small.
Try a big chunk of text in a smaller size, encouraging the viewer to read for longer.

Photo: Visit Pasadena

Photo: Visit California

Selecting audio

It's every social media manager's dream to pick the right audio that sends your video view count soaring.

Instagram and TikTok's algorithms love a perfectly tuned trending audio. As the audio grows in popularity it enters meme territory and viewers become primed to the audio cue. However, the same process that makes trending audio so powerful can quickly turn into a disadvantage. Users get sick of seeing the same format + audio in their feed, and they start skipping. That's why it's important to catch a trending audio at the right moment in its ascent. Most social growth gurus suggest using audios with fewer than 5-10k uses. Some say to go as low as 500!

> 🔥 **Tip:**
> It's clear you need to get in on trending sounds early, but how early? Test trend audios with low (under 1k), mid-range (1k-5k), and higher range (5k-10k) Reel and TikTok counts to see what works.

Destination Example

Destination British Columbia jumped on this trending audio while it was hot, winning them 1M+ views and 165K+ likes!
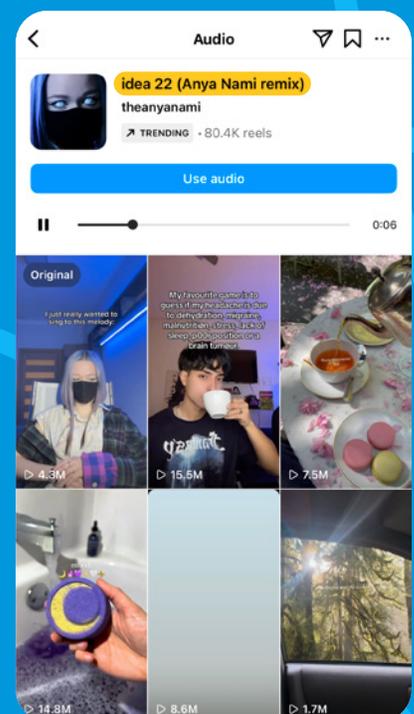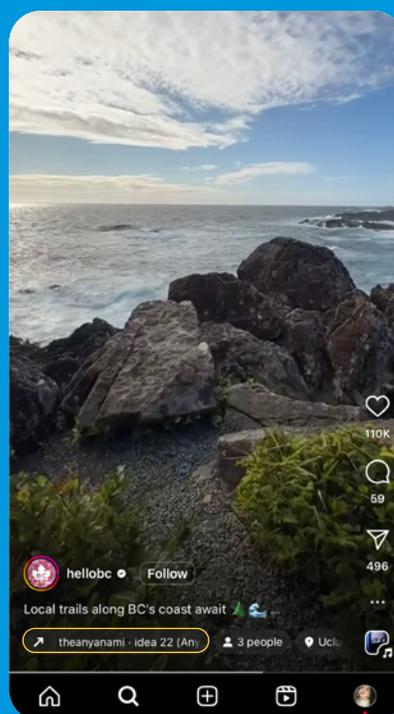
Looking for trending audio in your own feed can take a long time. Luckily, you can lean on experts who curate trending audio for you. Our very own social media manager has Later's Blog bookmarked for its weekly updates on Reels trending audio. She's also fond of TikTok's Creative Center, which shows what's trending in your region. There are also plenty of social media growth and trends accounts dedicated to sharing trending audios, like Mrs. Marketing and Trendbible.

There's more to life than being trendy, of course. Here's a few tips for selecting audio that supports your storytelling:

Don't be scared to NOT use a trending audio

The music you pick sets the tone for your video, and sometimes the day's trending audio just doesn't capture the right feeling. If you're already envisioning a specific track for your video, then it's probably the one. Who knows—you might become the trendsetter!

Try original audio

As opposed to licensed music, original audio is a sound uploaded by you or another user, like meme sounds. These tracks tend to be more unique and meme-able with lots of storytelling potential!

Mix up your music choice

If you're finding trending audio on your own or your brand's discover feed or FYP, you're probably only hearing sounds from within a specific algorithm. Notice all your Reels or TikToks starting to sound the same? It's time to look outside your algo for new music.

> 🔥 **Tip:**
>
> Want a boost from trending audio, but want to keep your original audio front and center? Add the trending audio and lower its volume all the way down to 1. You'll still reap the algorithm benefits of the silenced trending audio!


Photo: Jakob Owens

Managing narration and captions

Viewers want videos that feel natural and flow easily, but it can be hard to strike that note when you're on screen trying to share very specific information and hit important talking points.

One tool will totally transform your on-screen delivery: a teleprompter! No, you don't need those fancy invisible teleprompters used at the State of the Union or the Oscars—you can simply use an editing tool like CapCut that has a teleprompter feature built in. With this tool, you can input your script so it appears on your screen as you record. This keeps your eyes on the camera and helps you achieve a smooth continuous take instead of multiple awkward cuts.

More important than good narration and voiceover is your video captions. On-screen captions play a major role in short-form video, not only for accessibility, but also for the growing ecosystem around social search. As a general rule of thumb, if there is talking or a voiceover in your video, you need captions. This is crucial for viewers who are hard of hearing, and it also helps out viewers who are watching on public transportation, in the doctor's office, waiting in line at Target—we don't always have our headphones on us! If there isn't talking or a voiceover in your video, you still need captions. They hook viewers into your video, keep them engaged, and assist with learning and memory.
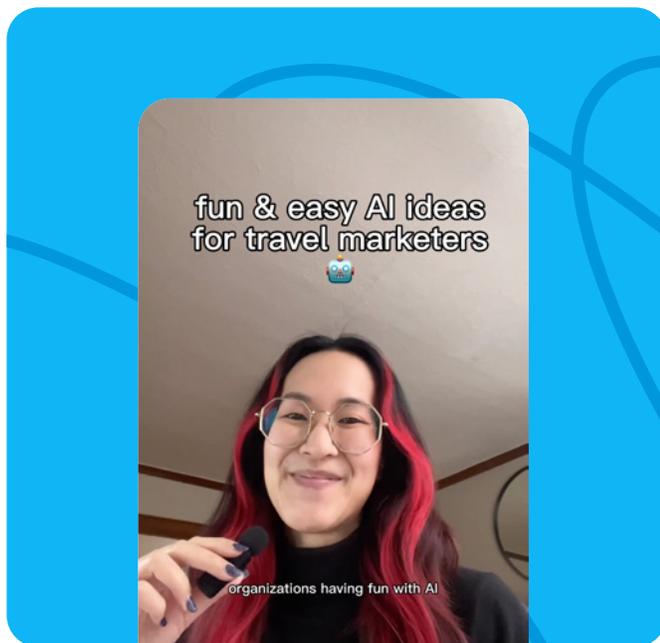
Hey, it's Sennah! Our social media marketing manager implements CapCut's teleprompter for a flawless delivery 💃
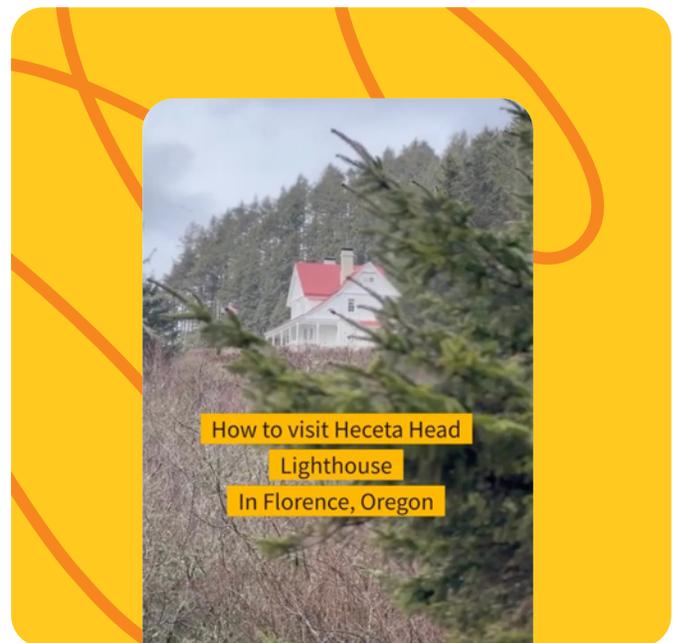
Descriptive AND easily legible captions from Travel Oregon. *Chef's kiss* (Psst, a CrowdRiff Creator made this!)

Photo: Guillaume Meurice

Here's a few considerations for implementing captions on your video:

Auto-captions

All the major short-form editing tools can auto-generate captions from voiceover. Access Instagram's feature through the sticker button in the Reels editor. In TikTok, there's a Captions button right on the editing screen. Whatever tool you use, none will get your captions 100% correct every time. Always be sure to review and edit them before you upload!

Timing

Make sure your captions sync to the right shots and any voiceover, and leave longer captions on screen long enough for someone to actually read them.

Legibility

Pick an easy-to-read font with high color contrast. Most of TikTok's and Instagram's built-in fonts fit this criteria, but some like the super curly Cosmopolitan font can leave viewers squinting.

The good news is making accessibility one of your top short-form video concerns will pay dividends down the line. Short-form video platforms are quickly adapting their algorithms to account for the growth of social search. Those captions you're using are going to drive reach, too. More on that coming up.

Creating transitions

Every short-form video platform has built-in transitions in their native editing apps, but these feel a little bit like Apple's Photo Booth filters from the early 2000s: cute and fun… in an ironic way.

When it comes to transitions, you'll want to go a little more pro to hit the quality users now expect from short-form video. Some of these transitions need to happen in camera, i.e. you'll need to shoot them as part of your video coverage. Other transitions are pure editing. Here's a few of our favorites in each category:

Edited transitions

Cut to music

This technique strings together clips to the beat of the music. If you don't want to manually match the music to the video, most editing apps including TikTok, Instagram, and CapCut have their own features that automatically cut your clips and sync them to the music. Voilà!

Jump cut

A jump cut is where a single video clip is edited down by making cuts throughout it, making the subject appear sporadically through the frame. These can be used to speed up the pace and flow of your edit as well as to signify a shift forward in time. It's a great option to jazz up talking head videos!

Match cut

A match cut is an edit that uses elements from the previous shot to transition the next scene. Think of a ball falling through the air that cuts to a planet, positioned exactly where the ball was in the previous clip. The proceeding scene is usually wholly different from the first scene, but the movement is meant to flow from the first cut to the second cut in a seamless way.

We captured the ultimate jump cut at our 2023 SEE conference. It's easier than it looks—just use TikTok's stop motion effect to do the edit for you!

Filmed transitions

The crash zoom

Just like it sounds, this technique zooms in on a subject extremely fast. A hallmark of homegrown meme videos, it usually plays to comedic effect. Next time you watch a Wes Anderson movie you'll recognize the crash zooms instantly.

The whip pan

Another simple transition, this has you move your camera horizontally over to the subject, from left to right, or right to left. If you make it fast enough, the whirlwind movement can disguise a change in settings by cutting to a new shot while in the middle of a pan, or just add a fun element between talking points.

The jump

Another popular internet edit is the jump. The person on screen jumps in one shot, and their landing immediately transitions to the next shot, usually showing a new setting, outfit, or other difference. This one is practically made for destination marketing.

The snap

If you've ever seen an internet cooking video, you've seen the snap. Simply snap to make something appear on screen. This disguises a cut between shots, or it can be the same shot with a new subject in frame.
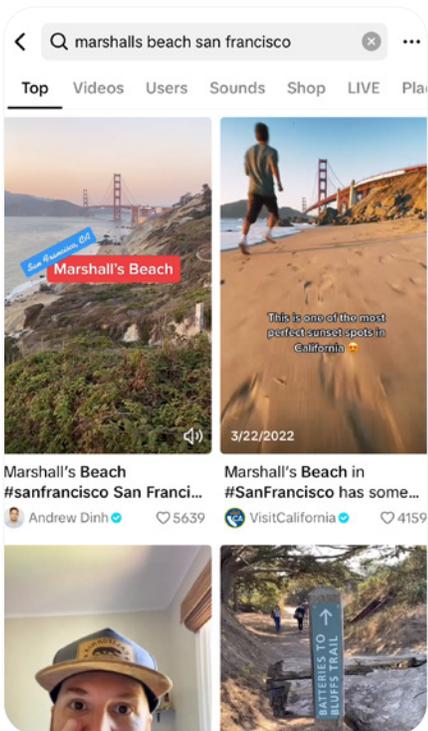
> 🔥 **Tip:**
>
> If scaling short-form video content is one of your marketing goals this year, there's one word you need to remember: templates. TikTok and Instagram, plus CapCut and other editing programs, all feature a templates function that times and trims your clips for you, perfectly cut to music. Who doesn't love a shortcut?

Destination Example

This CrowdRiff Creator synced her bayou adventure to the perfect song with cut-to-music transitions. It became Explore Louisiana's second highest performing Reel of 2023.

Editing for search

If you read our [2024 Trends Report](#), you already know that social media is the next frontier for SEO.

As users across generations spend more of their internet hours on social apps, the searches they would typically perform on Google are shifting to Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Social apps have taken note, and they're increasing search functionality and algorithms to make room for this behavior. Right now TikTok's search capabilities are far superior to Instagram's, but the rate at which this trend is growing means you shouldn't sleep on SEO for either platform.

Search for Marshall's Beach on TikTok and Visit California's video shows up front and center. Now that's good social SEO 💪

Right now TikTok's search capabilities are far superior to Instagram's, but the rate at which this trend is growing means you shouldn't sleep on SEO for either platform. The more you optimize your videos for search, the more potential for reach they have. These are the things you need to think about when you're starting to implement search in your editing process.

Develop a keyword strategy

Insert relevant keywords in both your on-screen captions and in your post caption (including hashtags), as well as in the cover image if it makes sense. You can focus on both short and long-tail keywords in a single video. Short-tail keywords are broad, single-word keywords that translate to top-of-funnel searches. That might just be your destination's name. Long-tail keywords are phrases that get increasingly specific, capturing more nuanced searches. For example, "Toronto museums" is a short-tail keyword, while "kid friendly destination museums" is more long-tail.

Think about search intent

As you're brainstorming the correct keywords for your video, think about the call-to-action and the user intent you want to capture. A video about your destination's top dining spots should feature a keyword like "best restaurants in [destination]." This increases the chances that the algorithm will deliver your video to both locals and high-intent travelers who are looking for travel and itinerary ideas on social media.

Be consistent

Don't throw keywords willy-nilly on your videos. The more content you have around particular keywords, the more ownership you have over it. This helps the algorithm understand that you're a trustworthy and authoritative source on the keyword. Choose a few keywords that match your destination's content strategy and incorporate them consistently across your social content.

> 🔥 **Tip:**
> Location-based searches are also important! Add a location tag to your videos to extend your content reach even further.

This CrowdRiff Creator-made Reel features the high-value keyword "Craft Cocktail Spots in Penticton" plus lengthy captions that add location details and context. It's sure to connect with high-intent BC travelers and locals on the hunt for their next night out.
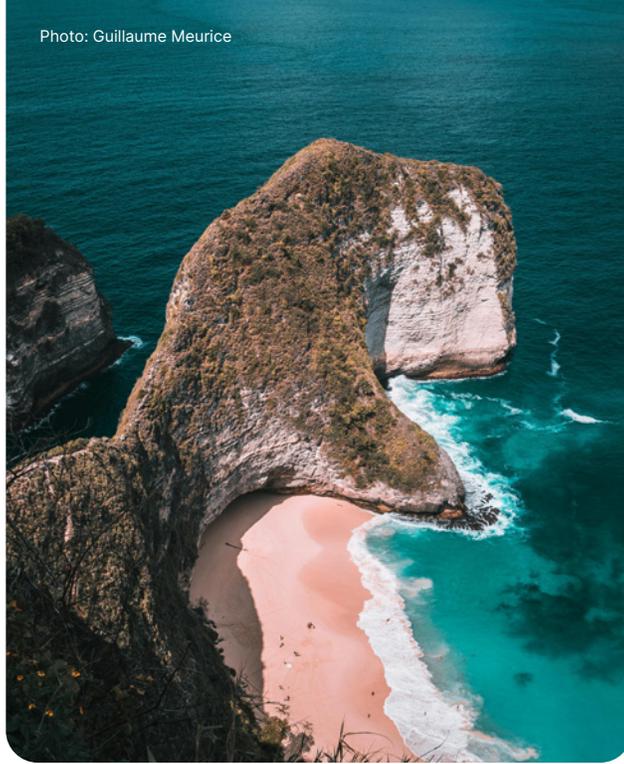
Conclusion

If you're just getting started with short-form video editing, we promise it's not as scary as it seems. The more you do it, the more you'll refine your personal approach into a repeatable process. You just need to remember a few things.

The edit starts before you hit the cutting room floor

Think about the format and length up front, and spend a few minutes gathering clips and setting up your editing tool of choice.

Use editing tools to your advantage.

Features like auto captions, music syncing, and templates will cut your editing time in half. Don't sleep on CrowdRiff Studio, either. Its smart library and quick editing workflow were tailor made for destination marketers like yourself.

Play to the algorithm.

You don't need to make every video an in-your-face viral glitter bomb, but pay close attention to engagement-boosting details like trending audio, on-screen captions, and SEO.

Have some fun—this is technically filmmaking, after all!

Play with fast, dynamic transitions. Capitalize on memes and original audio. Try your hand at visual effects with tools like CapCut. This is what makes your destination stand out!

One more thing—you can (and should!) repurpose your content to infinity and beyond. A "one and done" mentality will quickly kill your creative energy and hamper your efforts to scale social media output. The smartest social media managers are constantly reusing clips, recaptioning edits, and reposting top-performing content.

Ready to start your next edit? We think it will be your best one yet! 😍

Photo: Federico Garcia Lorca

Fuel your content marketing

CrowdRiff's visual content marketing platform empowers destination marketers to source, share, and scale original content that connects with today's travelers.

With tools for user-generated content discovery, digital asset management, and custom short-form video, CrowdRiff supports the most authentic and engaging storytelling in travel and tourism. That's why 900+ brands globally trust CrowdRiff as their visual content marketing partner.

Get in touch with our team today.

Learn More