

How to Become a Digital Nomad

Imagine waking up with the rising sun and allowing the natural flow of light and energy to empower your productivity. Is this a life you've always dreamt of? The best part is that you can make it your reality. You can become a digital nomad and have the freedom to work from anywhere, whether you work for yourself or remotely, the best part is that the choice is all yours.

Assess Your Skill Set & What You Do Best

If you don't know exactly where to begin, but you feel like this lifestyle is calling you, start by looking inward. Make a list of what your skills are in terms of a career. Referencing your resume and taking notes is a great place to begin. Think of how you can translate these skills into a remote setting. For example, if you are great at building a community, you can be someone who creates events or Zoom meetings to develop workplace culture.

Making Your Income Portable

The most traditional way of taking your income and detaching it from a fixed location is finding a remote job. Since the pandemic, remote work has become invaluable as people are getting priceless opportunities (getting to see their child's first steps, healthier lifestyles, etc.). Of course, there are more non-traditional ways of obtaining income such as turning your passion into a business project or investing in real estate to have a passive income.

Budget for Your Transition

Planning the months leading up to you leaving your traditional job are imperative in determining the trajectory of your success. Sit down with yourself and document what your monthly expenses are. Typically, having 3-6 months of your monthly expenses saved up is safe enough to transition out of your old role. It is easier said than done, but saving and being financially focused is the only way to safely make this move.

Downsize and Declutter

Detaching yourself from your possessions is just as much emotional as it is physical, so allow yourself the time to process. Maybe you can afford to have a small storage unit, or have a loved one who will store the non-negotiables for you. However, by and large, you are going to have to comb through all of your material items in order to free up your attachment to things that might keep you from experiencing true nomadic freedom.

The Document Side of Being a Digital Nomad

If you plan on leaving your home country, you will almost certainly need to obtain a work visa. Now, there are ways to work around this pending how long you plan on staying in each new location; however, it is always best to do your homework. You should study what the cost of living is in the places you intend to live, because your monthly expenses in NYC will be vastly different from Bali. You want to make sure that you can comfortably live wherever your heart takes you, while still making rational financial and economic decisions.

Always Do Your Homework

Research the items you need before traveling to have a smooth transition. For instance, in Europe (and many other places in the world) they use a different outlet than in America. So buying a plug adapter would be smart. If you're going somewhere with different terrain, it would be wise to purchase whatever supplies necessary beforehand.

Internet is Everything

This isn't as much of a problem anymore considering so many people have transitioned to virtual work; however, without the internet, you can't work. Make sure that you identify places that have a reliable connection to wifi prior to travel. Thankfully, a lot of fast food places (like McDonald's and Starbucks) typically offer free wifi. Another great place to look is communal working spaces or libraries.

Get Connected with Other Nomads

Social media allows us to get in touch with other communities from miles away. If you're someone who enjoys community, go out of your way to look for groups of people online who are doing the same thing as you. This not only gives you the opportunity to network professionally, it also gives you a chance to make life-long friends and visit other parts of the world. Even if you are more introverted, finding people that you can relate to will make you feel at home no matter where you are.

Routine is King

Optimizing your time for when you are most productive is rewarding. Time-blocking tasks for yourself as if you were at a 9-5 job will help you efficiently maintain work-life balance. If you are a night owl, operate your business from 2-10pm rather than waking up and starting your day at sunrise. You have the flexibility to position yourself in a way that will produce great results, you just need to lock in a routine and establish habits.

Customs and Culture

Becoming familiar with the culture you are entering is another small way you can give and gain respect of those around you. This is a fantastic way to enrich your travel by learning and networking. For example, in the Middle East, some cultures are offended if you point the bottom of your feet toward one another because it is seen as disrespectful and unclean. You wouldn't want to be disrespectful simply from negligence to educate.

Coworking Spaces and Coffee Shop Connection

Outside of the digital community, it's important to have in-person connections as well. Nothing beats face-to-face energy. Coffee shops and coworking spaces are a great way to meet other people and stay productive. Collaborating your ideas out loud can spark creativity for your business and could provide the opportunity to expand your friend network as well.

Travel and Health Insurance

Though most of your items will be within an arm's reach, it is important to look into what kind of insurance options are available for you as a traveler. You won't be able to get anything done if you aren't healthy. Consider health/medical insurance, vision and dental insurance, and life insurance. Not all of these are dependent on your location, and you could use a family member's home address if you need a place to send permanent mail. Some countries have free healthcare, but not all of them apply to travelers and would require your visa documentation.

Manage Organization with Helpful Tools

There are a plethora of digital calendars or notebooks that you can keep to make sure all of your tasks are written down in one place, some as simple as a Google Calendar. Since you will likely be working for yourself, you don't want to have to depend on someone else to provide you with organizational material. Keep all of your items for your projects in labeled folders to optimize your productivity.

Embrace the Good, Bad, and the Ugly

Adapting to the changing environment around you and learning to be flexible will be your two biggest skills moving forward. Unfortunately, not everything is in our control, so learning how to roll with the punches along the way is vital. Whether this looks like getting a therapist, reading self help books, meditating, or managing stress better, the goal is still the same — to always show up as your best self.

Self-Care and Well-Being 101

You can not pour out of an empty cup. That being said, you need to ensure that you are taking care of yourself to preserve your sanity while away. Mental health is something to be taken seriously, and being in a new environment can be lonely and stress-inducing. Going for a walk in the sun, drinking water, eating nutritious meals, and exercise are ways to boost dopamine and put yourself first.