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# Digital nomads: How to travel the world and work online

Tips from four professionals who adopted a new lifestyle as a form of self-knowledge and freedom

Fernanda Bastos, special for 'Estadão', O Estado de S.Paulo  
July 9, 2022 | 5:00 am

A family of three – expecting a baby –, a woman in her 60s, a young man and his pet and a young publicist. In common, these professionals decided to adopt a different lifestyle, in which they can work from anywhere in the world. They are called **digital nomads**.

This more flexible working model, known as digital nomadism, allows people to work remotely, using technology and the internet, while traveling. Around 35 million people worldwide adopt this model, according to Fragomen's Global Migration Trends Report 2022. By 2035, it is estimated that 1 billion people will adopt this lifestyle.

The phenomenon was enhanced by the modality of remote work and “it is here to stay”, says Edna Rodrigues Bedani, professor of Leadership, Personal Planning and Self-development at ESPM. “Professionals carry out their activities regardless of location and are responsible for the results and management of their schedules”, she highlights.

The young publicist Sophia Costa, 27, has been practicing nomadism for some time. In 2016, after finishing her graduation in the field of Social Communication, she received an invitation to exhibit her Course Completion Work (TCC) in **Berlin, Germany**. Through an online crowdfunding, made by colleagues and family, Sophia got the money to make a passport and buy tickets for her first international trip. “I discovered my best version there in those days traveling. I went to Germany and Spain, and I did very well.”



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She didn't stop there. Employed at an advertising agency in **Brazil**, she traveled to other countries and, in 2018, set out on a new destination: a month of volunteering in Mozambique. On that trip, she got a remote job in Business Intelligence and continued traveling around Africa for two months. For the young woman, this was the moment when she realized she wanted to work while traveling and soon went to do a master's degree in Argentina.

In 2020, the first year of the pandemic in Thailand spent, showing the context of the health crisis in the region and also the daily life as a digital nomad. When he arrived in the Asian country he had 4 thousand followers. Today there are about 56 thousand. She currently works with the production of content and courses on her social networks. "It's a normal routine, every day I have to work."

#### **On the road with the family**

That's what Clara Magalhães, 25, also says, who teaches 340 students by cell phone every day. Born in Goiânia, she decided to start traveling with her husband, Bruno Alves, 42, and their son, Bernardo Magalhães, 7, in 2019.



Iara Magalhães, Bruno Alves, and Bernardo Magalhães, 7 years old; couple calculated a monthly average of expenses (camping, fuel and market) and an emergency reserve Photo: Arquivo Pessoal

With an automotive tent in a pickup truck, they sold the apartment and left the coast of northeastern Brazil for the southernmost city in the world, Ushuaia, Argentina. After a lot of rain, cold and the desire to give up, the family arrived in the region and was greeted with snow.

"For Bê, it was the best trip of his life. No matter how difficult the path, we can do it", says Clara, who realized in that moment that traveling and working was the lifestyle she wanted.

With a young child, however, financial and educational planning was needed. The couple calculated a monthly average of expenses (camping, fuel and market) and an emergency reserve.

About Bernardo's school, Clara took over her son's education in the first year. In addition to traditional subjects, she took her son to science museums, arts museums and environmental projects in Brazil. During the first two years of the pandemic, the couple decided to isolate themselves and wait to return to travel. Now, with their son enrolled in an American school that allows homeschooling, they are traveling in a motorhome – a house on wheels – to Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay, to return to Brazil in October, when Cauê is born – Clara is pregnant with five months.

#### **canine company**

Detailed planning is also part of the 25-year-old Giordano Migliorini Estevão travels. The young developer, who was born in Brasília, does not travel alone: he is accompanied by Celina, a medium-sized dog of the Samoyed breed, only one year old. Therefore, in addition to personal expenses, Estevão's spreadsheets also include Celina's expenses,

which makes the budget more expensive.



Giordano Migliorini Estevão; young developer, who was born in Brasília, does not travel alone: he goes with Celina, a Samoyed dog Photo: Personal archive

He also explains that he has a suitcase for Celina, with toys to distract her, a health certificate – renewed every two weeks with a trip to the vet – vonau, brush and a special collar belt for the car. In addition, there are always some precautions he needs to take, such as notifying the place where he is going to stay about the size of the animal.

Estevão works from 8 am to 5 pm or from 9 am to 6 pm during the week. The trips are made on Saturdays, with stops every 3 hours. The current itinerary includes passage through Buenos Aires and has as its final destination the State of Maranhão, in the North of Brazil. “I plan the city, but I like to live, meet people on the spot, see what they like”, highlights the young man, who also seeks self-knowledge on these trips.

“Knowing yourself is important in this process. You have to get out of your comfort zone and know how to deal with unpredictable situations. It takes a lot of mental energy to give the proper answer. It is a quick adaptation and flexibility”, highlights Vanessa Cepellos, professor of People Management at FGV-EAESP.

### **Never is too late**

For Physical Education teacher Marisa Porto, the search for freedom motivated digital nomadism. It was at age 60 that she saw the opportunity to discover new places by teaching online therapeutic feng shui classes. For a while she did this while living in Rio de Janeiro, but she began to receive many invitations from students from all over the country to visit their cities.





Marisa Porto; the search for freedom was what motivated digital nomadism Photo: Personal archive

In 2017, he developed an itinerary in cities where he had students and clients, scheduled classes and courses and traveled throughout Brazil for seven months. "My 2017 season was cheap, I stayed only two nights in hotels, exchanging the payment for the stay for lectures. Every other night of these seven months I slept at clients and family members' houses", highlights Marisa, who says she spends less traveling than when she is at home.

In 2018 and 2019, as it expanded its network of students and clients, it traveled throughout Brazil and Europe. Marisa says that having a safety net and not traveling to places she doesn't know are important points in her planning.

"I always try to make my life easier. Perhaps this is a characteristic of age. I go to countries I already know. It would be much more complicated to go to a country where I don't speak the language and where there's no one I know. I don't want to have any more problems," she emphasizes.

Aiming for her safety, during the first two years of the pandemic, Marisa stayed at home and decided to wait. Today, in 2022, she claims that she only travels in regions close to her home. "I fell in love with traveling alone, my travel company is excellent, I don't get distracted by talking to anyone, I do everything I want and the way I want. My goal with nomadism is to show people that when you get older you can start a new life. My proposal is freedom."

### **digital divide**

Professor Edna Rodrigues Bedani, from ESPM, points out, however, that nomadism is mostly formed by middle-class professionals in Brazil. According to the report "Potential and effective remote work in Brazil: possible reasons for a high gap", by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), about a fifth of employees in jobs that can be done remotely do not have the minimum for working from home: they do not have a computer with internet access or even electricity in their homes.

"There is a very large digital divide in the country. People don't have access to computers, they don't have the ability to use tools or the internet," adds Vanessa Cepellos, professor of People Management at FGV-EAESP. The teacher also explains that it is not only the lack of access to telecommuting, but also the financial difficulty, with the purchase of a plane ticket as one of the first challenges.

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