



Digital Nomad

My daughter is a 'digital nomad'! When I first heard this, I imagined her plodding across the desert with a laptop perched on the hump of the lead camel, guiding the caravan to the next oasis. She had enjoyed Kenya on a couple of visits, at one stage spending a day in a Samburu *manyatta*, but this was taking things a bit too far.

Then I was brought back to the here and now, when I discovered that a digital nomad is someone who works remotely, away from a fixed base, using modern technology, serviced by the internet. More often than not they're male (so my daughter helps to buck that trend) and under 35 years old (which definitely counts me out!). My immediate response was to become insanely jealous!!

But then again, I myself had explored an analog form of the digital-nomadic lifestyle, by carrying a kit-bag of printed images, videos and artefacts into school classrooms, spread across four diverse countries - Australia, India, Kenya and the UK – and far away from any office desk. I'd arranged that work, in part, to support my thirst for travel, and getting to know other cultures. In a way she was doing the same thing, just thirty years on, with considerable assistance from Apple-Mac and google.

To get yourself into this lifestyle, you first of all need to inhabit the right line of work; it would be a hard row to hoe if you're a plumber, or a policeman. My daughter had developed a career in areas of project management and communication. This was office-based for five years, but then she took the plunge (something many people find hard to do), resigning the permanent post, and leaving London on *Eurostar*, with just a pack of personal items on her back. After four months in Central and South Asia, the adventurous young lady decided to backtrack to Istanbul, renting a small apartment there and securing an online job with a UK company. Recently she decided to re-visit Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, staying in a range of homestays, with a laptop as sole support.

Many cities around the world have now embraced this digital phenomenon, by opening their doors to the nomads it sustains. The island of Venice is one example, whereby cheap rentals are made available for newcomers, as an attempt to replace the empty apartments left by residents fleeing the tourist onslaught (the local population having decreased to less than 50,000).

But it takes courage to join the nomad fraternity, and of course, there are a few downsides. For starters it can be a lonely life (as any *Tuareg* might tell you); okay for a few months, but then distance from family and friends begins to bite. You also need self-discipline, to ensure a 40-hour working week means what it says: no interminable lunch breaks, and not too much downtime after wild nights. In addition, there can be animosity from locals objecting to high-rollers from afar invading their space, and pushing up prices.

It's fortunate my daughter can handle the lonesome life (she spent months crisscrossing India alone in her teens) but she's well-aware of the pitfalls, and has gathered a wide-ranging group of Istanbul inhabitants around her for support. The foreseeable future all looks fine. Let's see if it turns into a longer-term lifestyle ...and career.

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