



## HOW TO BE A DIGITAL NOMAD

**GEORGINA WILSON-POWELL** DIVULGES HER TIPS FOR LOCATION-INDEPENDENT WORKING – AND WEIGHS UP THE HIGHS AND THE LOWS OF RUNNING A BUSINESS FROM YOUR LAPTOP

**JOBS HAVE CHANGED.** As technology has become more flexible, and wifi almost omnipresent, it's no wonder people are swapping their desks for dreamier locations. In the 21st-century, an innovative way to fulfil both our working goals and our travel aspirations is to become a digital nomad – and work from anywhere in the world.

Increasingly, we are all becoming more entrepreneurial – more of us want to work for ourselves, set our own hours and achieve a better work-life balance. In fact, the number of freelancers in Europe has increased by 45 percent between 2004 and 2013 making them the fastest-growing group in the EU labour market. What's more, successful digital nomad, Pieter Levels (levels.io) who has set up 12 successful starts-ups in 12 months reckons there will be one billion digital nomads by 2035.

Our "always-on" mindset and global outlook means that starting a temporary life in a new location no longer seems like such a stretch. If there's a life skill or creative pursuit we want to explore outside of work – be it training as a scuba diving instructor, or mastering the Italian language through immersion – working on the road and getting to know new cities along the way is a pretty liberating way to earn a living.

PHOTO: GRAHAM SAVILLE



## SO, HOW DO YOU MAKE IT WORK?

You might raise an eyebrow at the term digital nomad, but its ubiquity means there's a whole host of advice for wannabe independent workers. One of the original people to capitalise on independent working as an official lifestyle is e-commerce company Tropical MBA ([tropicalmba.com](http://tropicalmba.com)), whose owners create hugely popular podcasts – with more than one million downloads – discussing topics around running location-independent businesses.

There are endless blogs about becoming a digital nomad and making money remotely. Pieter Levels runs Places To Work ([placestowork.co](http://placestowork.co)), which rounds up the best cities for digital nomads, with details on accommodation and work spaces. And Nomadlist ([nomadlist.com](http://nomadlist.com)) does a similar thing, ranking cities on their attractiveness to digital nomads.

This September, Lisbon will host a Digital Nomad Conference, where freelancers can network and draw inspiration from some of the biggest names in the digital nomad world, including bloggers and independent entrepreneurs such as Natalie Sisson, otherwise known as The Suitcase Entrepreneur ([suitcaseentrepreneur.com](http://suitcaseentrepreneur.com)). Make no mistake, there are people out there making big money out of the “location-independent lifestyle” – there's nothing hippy about it.

Most digital nomads capitalise on a creative or technical skill they can use regardless of where they're sitting. More entrepreneurial types have

launched location-independent businesses, often setting up “automated income funnels”. While this sounds very high-tech, it actually means coming up with a service or a product that people can buy online, and that doesn't need your immediate involvement – a product that, once you've created it, no longer requires you to put in more work to generate a profit. Esther Jacobs, for example, has co-written a book about how to become a digital nomad – *Digital Nomads: How to live, work and play around the world* – which helps her to fund and live that very lifestyle.

## ESTABLISHING A BASE

For a digital nomad, the world's their oyster. But not all cities are created equal when you need both the business benefits and lifestyle perks that digital nomads are seeking. Firstly, while being a digital nomad doesn't mean travelling for a laugh, if you're going to work away from home, you at least want somewhere that offers you a better lifestyle than the rat race you left behind, right?

Cheap accommodation and food, quick, quality wifi and an endless supply of co-working spaces top digital nomads' wishlists.

Certain cities have become hotspots as a result – Lisbon, Hamburg and Brno are all seeing a huge influx of laptops glowing in cafés. Digital nomad Marco Schwartz, who is based in Brno and specialises in online marketing, reckons that the Czech city has a similar cost of living to Southeast Asia. In addition, its fast internet speeds and 100,000-strong student population give it a dynamic start-up atmosphere, especially in the IT and software space.

Once you've picked your new home city, check out the co-working spot, as networking is key to making a success of your new address. Companies like We Work ([wework.com](http://wework.com)) offer high-design co-working spaces in 15 countries (including London, Frankfurt, Hamburg and Paris). They come with open workspaces, private conference rooms, kitchens with free refreshments and games rooms, with the option to hot-desk by the month.

Next year, Germany's largest co-working and co-living space is set to open in Hamburg, over six floors of a 7,500 sqm disused factory building. Co-working space provider Rent24 ([rent24.com](http://rent24.com)) will be creating co-working areas, offices and “micro-apartments” in the space, aimed to attract international start-ups and individuals seeking the buzz of Hamburg's thriving tech scene.



**The digital nomad lifestyle works well for Georgina – but it has its drawbacks**

## LIVING THE DIGITAL NOMAD DREAM: MY EXPERIENCE

I've worked from all over the world, from beaches in Vietnam to a hospital in Ireland. As a travel writer and editor, my job is always changing. I have regular clients and one-off projects that I juggle as I move around the world. Being location-independent means I can afford to travel for longer and go and stay with friends in other countries without having to

worry about burning through a holiday allowance.

There are downsides, of course. It can be lonely – there's only so far social media replaces time spent with old friend. And you have to be flexible – time differences can mean video calls or deadlines at ungodly hours, or sitting up all night to file work before spending the next 24 hours travelling. And while spectacular sunsets are amazing – as are cheap cocktails – it's amazing how much you miss a homecooked meal, or a night on the sofa after a few months away.



Copass (copass.org) gives you access to a host of different workspaces all over the globe when you sign up for a membership pass. And many cities also have Meet Up groups for digital nomads (meetup.com).

It's never been easier to find the skills or friends you need to start a new life and hit the ground running. But sometimes you'll need to connect with people further afield, which is where video-conferencing comes in. It's worth creating an account with a decent video conferencing programme like Zoom (zoom.us). It's hard to look professional while shouting "what?" at your laptop screen, or freezing with your mouth open.

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**REMEMBER, YOU'RE NOT ON HOLIDAY...**

Don't be fooled – successful digital nomads work hard. If they were all on holiday all the time, they'd all be back home and broke within six months. Living the dream can include a lot of nightmares along the way. For starters, you're entirely responsible for setting your own routine and managing your time. While the upside of this is being able to sneak off for a brisk afternoon hike, or look up from your laptop and admire the sun glinting off azure fjords, to begin with, you might find yourself working harder than you did at home.

**MAKE THE TECH DO THE HARD WORK**

There are a range of apps that can make working remotely easier:

 **Slack**  
Keep in touch with project teams, share documents and track progress with this messaging/file-sharing app that's loved by tech teams. [slack.com](https://slack.com)

 **Duolingo**  
No matter how much English has become the global language of business, it doesn't hurt to learn the local lingo of your new home. Duolingo breaks down the basics and you can practise offline. Perfect for long journeys. [duolingo.com](https://duolingo.com)

 **Wave**  
A free invoice and accounting app, used by a lot of freelancers and small businesses. It can track expenses, issue invoices and helps you keep on top of your income. [waveapps.com](https://waveapps.com)

 **Goals on track**  
Many people new to the freelancing world struggle with implementing a routine. Stay on track of daily or weekly tasks with a scheduling app that helps you work out and stick to a routine. It's especially useful when the sunny days start to blur into each other. [goalsontrack.com](https://goalsontrack.com)

 **Triplt**  
An oldie but a goodie – if you're travelling a lot, Triplt's invaluable. It collates all plane, train or travel references, hotel bookings and car hire codes and pulls them into an itinerary. It will even include maps to help you move from one destination to the next with ease. [tripit.com](https://tripit.com)

 **Air BnB**  
Not just for finding a cheap apartment to rent for a few months, but renting out your home gives you a base income that can help get you started. [airbnb.co.uk](https://airbnb.co.uk)