

## IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Defining what a digital nomad is
- » Discovering more about who digital nomads are
- » Busting digital nomad stereotypes
- » Figuring out if the digital nomad lifestyle is for you

# Chapter **1**

# Getting a Taste of the Digital Nomad Lifestyle

*“Man started out as nomadic, it may be the most natural state for human beings.”*

— CRAIG O. MCCAWE, QUOTED IN THE BOOK, DIGITAL NOMAD

In 1997, a full decade before Apple released the first-generation iPhone, *Digital Nomad* was published. In it, authors Tsugio Makimoto, a former Sony executive, and David Manners, editor at the UK’s *Electronics Weekly*, prophesized the future of work with impeccable accuracy.

*“Technology does not cause change but it amplifies change. Early in the next millennium it will deliver the capability to live and work on the move.*

*People will be able to ask themselves, ‘Am I a nomad or a settler?’ For the first time in 10,000 years that choice will become a mainstream life-style option. That is the message of DIGITAL NOMAD.”*

It was more than 20 years before the predictions in *Digital Nomad* came true. But the term has since stuck. It’s a fitting way to describe someone who can roam the

world with a remote office in their pocket. Portable technology, affordable travel, and lightning-fast Internet networks have transformed life as we know it — and opened limitless ways to live.

The idea of being a *digital nomad* —someone who can live and work from anywhere — resonates for a reason. It’s the ultimate form of personal freedom, a way to blend what you do for work with where you want to live and the types of experiences you want to have. It’s never been possible before and the world will never be the same again.

While I believe that anyone can become a digital nomad, breaking free from the status quo is hard. There’s a steep learning curve as location independence is a new concept. Before “taking the leap” from a traditional lifestyle to a nomadic one, you want to know what to expect.

In this chapter, I help you get started in the digital nomad lifestyle. You get familiar with the many paths to becoming a digital nomad, as well as the pros, cons, and costs. I also introduce you to the different interpretations of location independence, debunk common misconceptions, and explain how digital nomads make money.

If the idea of becoming a digital nomad seems like a pipe dream to you, this chapter shows that digital nomads are just like everyone else. And you can be one too.

## ALL HAIL THE MICROCHIP

*Digital Nomad* was inspired by the concept of Moore’s Law. In 1965, Intel co-founder, Gordon Moore, calculated that the number of transistors on a microchip doubled about every two years as the cost of the technology dropped in half. At the time, the only commercially available computer on the market was the DDP-116. It operated on slot cards rather than microchips, weighed 500 pounds, and cost about \$260,000 when adjusted for inflation today. Not very practical for a nomadic lifestyle!

But Makimoto and Manners foresaw that increasingly faster, cheaper, and smaller computers with more memory and storage would change the way humans lived and worked. Whereas the first integrated circuit was made up of a single transistor, Apple’s 2022 M1 Ultra chip has 114 *billion* transistors, making it the most powerful personal computer chip in the world at the time of writing this book. It would be hard to imagine life without microchips today, as they are used in almost all forms of technology and electronic devices, from smartphones to spreadsheets, video games, cars, banking, weather forecasting, navigation, medical equipment, and more.

# Defining the Digital Nomad

*“Digital nomads defy a single definition.”*

— MBO PARTNERS

Digital nomads are hard to define because, as you find out in this book, they come in all shapes and sizes. At a basic level, a digital nomad is someone who can work from anywhere using the Internet or other technology. Not all nomads work, however. Some live on income from pensions, investments, and other recurring revenue streams they can access remotely.

Digital technology has all but erased borders for business and communication. Just as a remote company doesn't have a physical office or central headquarters, a digital nomad doesn't necessarily have a fixed place of residence. Your home can be wherever you are (or wherever you find Wi-Fi).

Digital nomads can work from anywhere with an Internet connection, and often do. In my years as a nomad, I've worked from the beaches of Bali, the rainforests of Central America, and on a cruise ship floating across the equator. The world has been my remote office for more than fifteen years, and it can be yours, too. Whether you want to work from an Airbnb or an RV, technology makes it possible. You're only limited by your imagination, and perhaps cellular data networks.

Digital nomads have all types of different jobs. They can work for themselves or someone else. They can work part time, full time, or on a contract basis. They can even *stop* working if they develop ways to live off automated or passive income streams.

Digital nomads can include:

- » Home-based remote workers who can technically live anywhere but choose to remain in one city or country.
- » Partially nomadic people who keep a home base and travel part time.
- » Fully nomadic people who don't have a fixed address. They may have sold everything they own or keep a storage unit and travel year round or without an end date.
- » Temporary nomads who are fully or partially nomadic sometimes and static sometimes. Some folks also live like nomads for a few months or years before returning to a traditional lifestyle.

Table 1-1 goes into detail about the different types of digital nomads.

**TABLE 1-1**

## Types of Digital Nomads

Type of Nomad	Description
Remote Employees	People who work remotely on a salary for a company or organization.
Online Freelancers	Self-employed, independent contractors who offer services on an hourly, per-project, or other basis.
Online Business Owners	Entrepreneurs, startup founders, and anyone who runs a virtual business of any size.
Influencers and Content Creators	People who earn a living through social media, publishing online content, and leveraging their personal brand.
Passive Income Entrepreneurs & Investors	People who have achieved financial freedom through investment income or automated income streams.

## A NOMAD BY MANY NAMES

The term, *digital nomad*, has become a buzzword. But, as with gender or sexual orientation, digital nomads can choose to identify with another term or kick labels to the curb altogether. Other ways to self-identify under the digital nomad umbrella include:

- Digital Freelancer
- Digital Entrepreneur
- Expat (or Techpat)
- Location-Independent Professional
- Nomadic Professional
- Online Entrepreneur or Solopreneur
- Online Professional
- Perpetual Traveler
- Professional Wanderer
- Remote Employee
- Remote Worker
- Technomad
- Wandering Professional

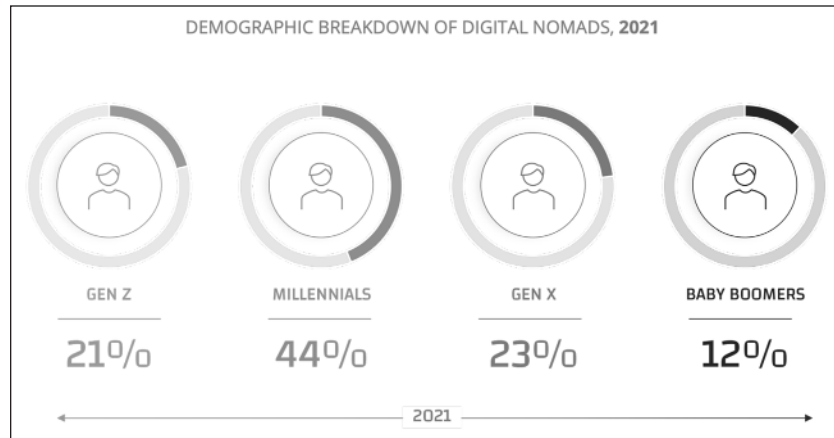
These are just a few examples of the many ways that people choose to describe their lifestyles.



Remoteness is a sliding scale. Just as there are hybrid organizations, there are also hybrid nomads. You can combine different types of jobs and income streams to create a lifestyle that suits you. Chapters 5 and 6 give more examples.

## Seeing Who's Adopting the Nomad Lifestyle

In this section, I dig deeper into digital nomad demographics. You find out where digital nomads are from, what they do for work, how old they are, and how much they earn. An overview of the U.S. digital nomad population is shown in Figure 1-1. Do you see yourself represented here?



**FIGURE 1-1:** The demographic breakdown of digital nomads in 2021.

Source: MBO Partners, *The Digital Nomad Search Continues*, September 2021

### Generations: Z, Millennials, X, Baby Boomers

You might think that a digital nomad lifestyle is more suited to younger generations, but research shows that people of all ages dabble in digital nomadism. One Facebook groups study calculated the average age of digital nomads to be 40 years old, with the oldest nomad in the study being 72.

In 2021, Millennials made up the largest segment of digital nomads, with 44 percent, followed by Gen X, Gen Z, and Baby Boomers.

Although only 12 percent of digital nomads were Baby Boomers in 2021, according to MBO and FlexJobs, they made up a third of the population two years earlier. Researchers believe this decrease was temporarily attributed to COVID-19 concerns in high-risk groups.

## People from many parts of the world

Although most of the data on digital nomad demographics comes from U.S.-based research, the digital nomad population is global. A survey of English-speaking nomads in Facebook groups recognized nomads from at least 39 countries. In a 2018 Fiverr survey of Anywhere Workers, 57 percent of respondents were from the United States, with the rest representing countries such as Kenya, Myanmar, Slovakia, Canada, Colombia, Romania, Venezuela, Indonesia, Australia, India, and the Philippines.

To estimate how many digital nomads there are worldwide, it's assumed that a certain percent of independent contractors and remote workers alike will experiment with a nomadic lifestyle at times.

In the most comprehensive report on digital nomads to date, MBO Partners found that 15.5 million Americans (or 10 percent of the U.S. workforce) described themselves as digital nomads. The number of U.S. digital nomads increased by 20 percent during 2019–2021, as the world adopted remote work on a mass scale.

The United States wasn't the only country with people working from home, of course. In 2021, China's flexible work population reached 200 million people. The government has since released a five-year "Digital Economy Development Plan," encouraging citizens to seek Internet-based employment. Currently, only 11 million Chinese identify as digital nomads. But if 10 percent of the Chinese workforce went nomadic, that would be 140 million people!

Other countries have taken similar measures to encourage remote work. In 2019, Costa Rican president, Carlos Alvarado, passed a work-from-home law regulating telecommuting for the first time. The following year, Chile's government passed a Distance Working and Teleworking law. And in 2021, Ireland passed the Right to Request Remote Work Bill in an effort to normalize flexible working in Irish society.

Governments from Angola to Belgium and beyond have passed or announced some form of remote working legislation for their citizens. That's on top of the 40 plus countries offering remote work and digital nomad visas for foreigners. The more remote work is regulated throughout the world, the more companies will adapt to such legislation, freeing millions of people from the office in the process.

## Meandering men and wandering women

The reported male to female ratio of digital nomads has varied widely over the years. In the Anywhere Workers study, 63 percent of respondents were men and 37 percent were women. However, FlexJobs estimates that 70 percent of digital nomads are women. And the 2021 survey among digital nomad Facebook groups uncovered an even split of 49.81 percent females and 50.19 percent males.

## Folks at every career stage

Digital nomads span all generations, industries, backgrounds, and careers. From the present day and beyond, many high school and college grads will never step foot into an office. They may be the first generation to start their careers as nomadic workers from day one.

The digital nomad lifestyle doesn't discriminate, however. Plenty of people transition to digital nomadism mid-career or in retirement.

## Employees from an assortment of industries

Nomads come in an array of fields. The one thing nomads have in common is that they can do their jobs online or earn an online income. The rest is up to you! Some of the most common industries where you'll find nomads include (according to MBO Partners):

- » 19% Information Technology
- » 10% Creative Fields
- » 9% Education and Training
- » 8% Coaching and Consulting
- » 8% Research
- » 8% Sales, Marketing, and Public Relations
- » 8% Accounting and Finance
- » 30% Other Fields

# The have-lots-of-money, the have-some-money, and the have-little-money sets

Because digital nomads represent a diversified mix of the global population, their income is as varied as their job titles.

Although Fiverr found that more than half of “Anywhere Workers” were freelancers in 2018, the ratio of salaried to self-employed nomads is evening out. MBO’s research suggests that the number of salaried nomads tripled between 2019 and 2021, with many remote employees being “high earners.” 44 percent reported earning at least \$75,000.

Previously, Fiverr’s Anywhere Workers study found that 57 percent of nomads earned less than \$50,000 per year, with 10 percent earning \$100,000 or more. That number could be on the rise, though. FlexJobs asserts that 18 percent of nomads make six figures or more, with 22 percent making between \$50–100,000.

Remote working women tend to earn less than men, though, with more than one study finding that “the gender pay gap has no borders” (Fiverr’s Anywhere Workers study).

Either way, there’s no limit on how much money you can make in the digital nomad lifestyle, especially when you combine multiple income streams. You can also save a lot, too. Many remote workers engage in geo-arbitrage, earning a high income while living in rural areas or developing countries with a low cost of living.

Fortunately, freedom doesn’t have to cost a lot. 21 percent of nomads earn less than \$25,000 per year, per MBO Partners. But regardless of how much money digital nomads make, 85 percent are happy at work and 79 percent are satisfied with their income. It just goes to show that money doesn’t necessarily buy happiness — so long as it buys the ability to travel!

## Why roam?

A better question might be, “why not?” Being a digital nomad gives you ultimate freedom and flexibility. Not only do you decide where you live and what you do for work, but you also control how you spend your time. What you do each day is up to you, without a boss looking over your shoulder and telling you what to do.

Being a digital nomad gives you options. You can change your mind at any moment about where to travel, when to settle down, and which country to pledge your citizenship to. There are few restrictions on the digital nomad lifestyle other than how you want to live and what you can afford.

## Why now?

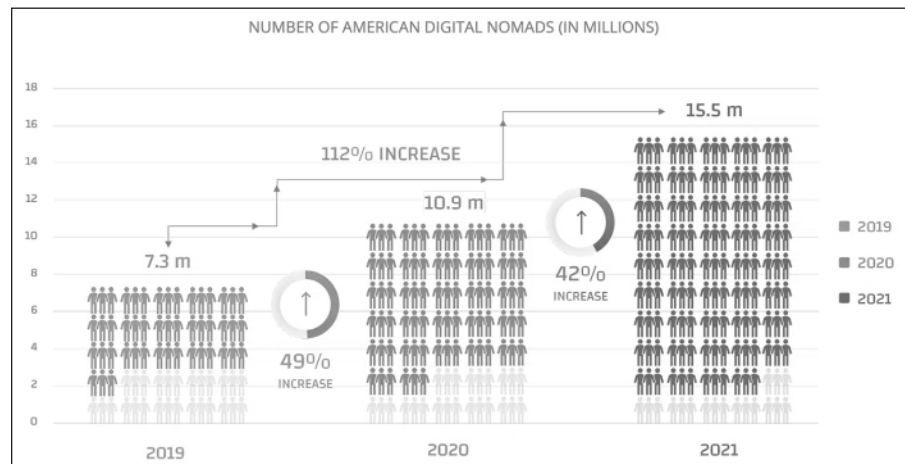
There's never been a better time to become a digital nomad because there's never been another time in history when it was possible.

In 1997, Makimoto and Manners said that digital nomadism can go mainstream “when three things change: attitudes, technology, and communications.”

The previous barriers to becoming a digital nomad — clunky technology, expensive communication, and corporate resistance to telecommuting — have all but disappeared.

In 1997, it wouldn't have been so practical to travel with a desktop computer. Most businesses weren't online yet and Internet speeds hovered around 30Kpbs. But in 2022 and beyond, laptops have shrunk to the size of smartphones. Fiber optic Internet speeds and 5G networks are plentiful. And many people don't need a computer to work at all if they have a device with an Internet connection.

Attitudes toward remote work are also changing for the better. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the mainstream adoption of remote work overnight. Many companies since have announced permanent remote work or work-from-home policies. As a result, the number of digital nomads tripled between 2019 and 2021, as shown in Figure 1-2.



**FIGURE 1-2:**  
Number of digital nomads in the United States.

Source: MBO Partners, *The Digital Nomad Search Continues*, September 2021

# THE HISTORY OF TELECOMMUTING AND REMOTE WORK

Humans have been working from home or in nomadic tribes since the beginning of recorded history. Over time, the workplace shifted from homes to farms to marketplaces and international trade. The Industrial Age was a turning point, however. The number of cities jumped from fewer than 1,000 in 1800 to more than 34,000 by 1950, attracting jobseekers by the masses.

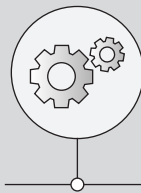
Technological Age of the 1970s brought a shift from factory work to knowledge work, paving the way for the digital nomads of the future.

1760–1840: 1<sup>st</sup> Industrial Revolution (coal)

1870–1914: 2<sup>nd</sup> Industrial Revolution (gas)

1969–1999: 3<sup>rd</sup> Industrial Revolution (electronics and nuclear energy)

2000–Today: 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution (Internet and renewable energy)



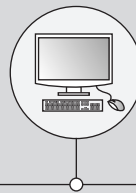
## 1784: Industry 1.0

Mechanisation,  
steam power,  
weaving loom



## 1870: Industry 2.0

Mass production,  
assembly line,  
electrical energy



## 1969: Industry 3.0

Automation,  
computers and  
electronics



## Today: Industry 4.0

Cyber Physical  
Systems, internet of  
things, networks

In 1976, a NASA engineer named Jack Nilles released a book called *The Telecommunications-Transportation Tradeoff*, suggesting telecommuting as a new way of life. But, despite the logical arguments for remote work, employers were resistant to change. Organizations such as HP and IBM tested flexible work policies in the 1980s–90s, only to retract them in the early 2000s.

Of course, the Internet era changed everything. In 1997, *Digital Nomad* came out, predicting the return to a nomadic lifestyle. In 2007, Tim Ferriss's *The Four-Hour Work Week* became a digital nomad “bible.” And In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic finally tipped the global scales toward remote work.

The World Economic Forum attributes remote work as “one of the biggest drivers in the workplace,” while IHRM thinks that it will have a bigger impact on the way we live than artificial intelligence.

Although working from anywhere has been possible since the 1970s, it’s finally become the new normal. The digital nomad revolution may be a bit late to its own party. But either way, it’s arrived.

If one in three independent workers becomes a digital nomad, there could be 1 billion nomads on the planet by 2035, according to the founder of Nomad List. 90 percent of remote workers say they’ll never go back to an office. You can be one of them.

Flexible work is now a workplace demand rather than a perk. This reality has emboldened millions of people to quit or change their jobs between 2020–2022, a period which is known as the Great Resignation or Great Reshuffling.

Travel is also faster and more affordable than ever before. The first transatlantic flight between New York and France cost \$375 in 1939 — nearly \$7,500 when accounting for inflation. Today, you can fly the same route for as little as \$200 one way.

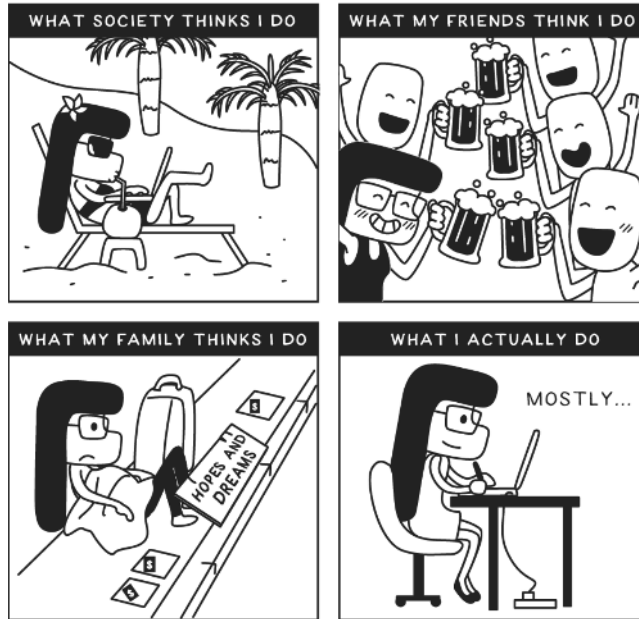
The future is bright for digital nomads. Internet speeds and coverage will continue to increase. More than half the global workforce will be working independently or remotely. And the number of apps, products, services, support networks, visa programs, and tools for digital nomads will continue to increase.

So, get excited. Because there’s never been a better time to make your digital nomad dream a reality. If you’re reading this book, you were born at the luckiest time in history.

## Busting Common Myths and Assumptions

If you’ve always pictured digital nomads as twenty-something-year-old tech workers, you wouldn’t be alone. There are plenty of stereotypes about digital nomads, but that doesn’t mean they’re true. Figure 1-3 gives you a look at how everyone else perceives the digital nomad lifestyle versus the reality of the digital nomad lifestyle. The following sections bust a few of them!

## BEING A DIGITAL NOMAD



**FIGURE 1-3:**  
The myth versus  
the truth of being  
a digital nomad.

© VERYNOMADPROBLEMS.COM

Source: Giang Cao / Very Nomad Problems

## Nomading isn't a job

For most people, being a digital nomad isn't a job in itself. It's simply a way to describe the freedom to be able to work and travel on the go.

Some digital nomad bloggers and influencers make their nomadic lifestyles part of their personal brands, but they are in the minority.

You don't have to apply to become a digital nomad. The only person you need permission from is you (and maybe your boss).

## Age is just a number

You're never too young or old to become a digital nomad. As long as you can earn income from anywhere, you can do it. Retirees can live as digital nomads just as much as high school grads. Want to bring your kids with you? They can be nomads, too.

There aren't many statistics on how many digital nomads there are worldwide. (After all, digital nomads are hard to track down!) The earlier section "Seeing

Who’s Adopting the Nomad Lifestyle” has more on digital nomad demographics, which span across all generations.

The good news for you is that there aren’t any age limits to becoming a digital nomad. You’re never too early or late to start your location-independent lifestyle.

## No tech skills necessary

Some folks assume that you need coding skills or a computer science degree to be a digital nomad, but that’s not the case. In 2018, a FlexJobs survey found that the average digital nomad was a female Gen Xer working in education or administration.

The top ten careers reported that year were in:

- » Writing
- » Education and Training
- » Administration
- » Customer Service
- » Arts & Creative
- » Computers and IT
- » Consulting
- » Data Entry
- » Marketing
- » Project Management

Most remote jobs sites also have a category specifically for non-tech jobs, while remote employers place high value on non-technical skills such as writing and communication. You can discover where to find remote jobs in Chapter 5.

## Nomads aren’t backpackers

Although most nomads tote laptop bags around, they aren’t backpackers. Backpackers are people who travel on a long-term holiday, funded with their savings. On the contrary, digital nomads work or earn money while they travel. (You can still be a “digital nomad backpacker” if you want, though.)

## Nomads aren't travel bloggers

Many digital nomads have blogged about their travels, but chances are, travel blogging isn't how they pay the bills. Even full-time travel bloggers are known to combine multiple revenue streams to make a living. Although digital nomads may travel often, few make blogging their job. If writing is your gig, see Chapter 5 for how to find remote opportunities.

## Nomads aren't tourists, either

From the looks of your Instagram feed, it may seem like nomads are always lounging on the beach or posing in front of a temple. While that's certainly the case *some* of the time, most digital nomads work more than they sightsee. MBO estimates that 71 percent of digital nomads work full time and 29 percent work part time or seasonally.

When I was a freshman in college, I told my guidance counselor that I wanted a job that would let me work from a café in Italy. “That’s not a job,” he said, “that sounds like a vacation.” He was wrong! Digital nomads just weren’t a thing yet.

## Nomads aren't always traveling

*If a digital nomad stops traveling, is he still a nomad?*

Although digital nomads are defined by their ability to roam into perpetuity, that doesn't mean you have to *Always Be Traveling*.

As a digital nomad, you can choose when you want to travel, where, and for how long. You can also decide when to *stop*. So long as you can support yourself with a remote income, you can remain location independent forever. Eventually, digital nomads will probably just be considered regular people, because working from anywhere will be part of the status quo.

In that sense, identifying as a digital nomad is a mindset. There's no generally agreed-upon definition on how far, often, or wide digital nomads must travel each year to maintain their “status.”



REMEMBER

You don't have to leave your home country (or even your home town) to become a digital nomad. According to MBO, 52 percent of digital nomads plan to stay domestic rather than travel overseas.

## Traveling is more affordable than you think

At first glance, the digital nomad lifestyle might appear expensive. After all, going on vacation certainly gets pricey. But many people end up saving money when they go remote, by lowering their average cost of living, buying less stuff, and potentially decreasing their tax burden. Find out how to calculate your digital nomad budget and cost of living in Chapter 3.

## Deciding Whether the Digital Nomad Lifestyle Is Right for You

I believe that the digital nomad lifestyle can be right for everyone. After all, who *doesn't* want the ability to do what they want, when they want? A better question might be to ask yourself how nomadic you want to be and for how long.

Becoming a digital nomad doesn't need to be an extreme decision where you quit your job, sell your stuff, and book a ticket to Bali the same day. *Your* version of location independence can follow one of the examples in this book, or it can be something you design.

But, for now, here are some of the pros and cons to help you decide.

### Exploring the potential benefits

Becoming a digital nomad could be the best thing since sliced bread. These are some of the benefits:

- » **Community:** Imagine if your friendship circle included thousands of people from 200 countries — that's possible when you travel the world.
- » **Cost savings:** Digital nomads can save money in many ways, such as lowering their cost of living and increasing their savings rate through geo-arbitrage, buying fewer material things, and changing their tax base.
- » **Creativity and innovation:** Immersing yourself in new cultures and places is a good way to gain inspiration in your work. Researchers have found a correlation between travel and increased innovation.

- » **Earning potential:** Many digital nomads use their newfound freedom, flexibility, and time to build multiple income streams. Many salaried digital nomads are high earners, while freelancers can earn more working for themselves than for an employer.
- » **Family:** Tim Urban, of the website Wait But Why, calculates that by the time you turn 18, you've already used up 98 percent of your time spent with family. But when you're a digital nomad, you don't have to wait until the holidays to see your loved ones. You can visit them anytime! Nomad parents can also spend more time with their children when traveling together and doing homeschool or remote learning.
- » **Freedom:** As mentioned, freedom of all shapes and sizes is the top reason people want to become digital nomads. You have micro freedoms, such as how to spend every minute of the day. And you have macro freedoms, such as changing your country of residence, taxation, or citizenship.
- » **Fulfillment:** Digital nomads are happy campers! According to MBO, 85 percent of digital nomads report being happy and satisfied in their lifestyles. Up to 90 percent say they will never go back to a traditional office job.
- » **Fun:** Being a digital nomad is really fun. Whatever you like to do, you can do more of it when you live a digital nomad lifestyle.
- » **Health and wellness:** With more time and control over your workplace, schedule, and environment, you can make healthier choices as a digital nomad. Eliminating your commute also reduces stress and increases well-being.
- » **Network:** Digital nomads have more opportunities to meet people from different cultures, backgrounds, and industries compared to when they worked in one place.
- » **Productivity and focus:** Researchers agree that remote workers suffer from fewer distractions compared to working in an office.
- » **Time:** Digital nomads can save up to 3,000 hours per year that were previously spent on commuting, meetings, office distractions, and household chores.
- » **Travel:** Undoubtedly, one of the biggest draws of the digital nomad lifestyle is being able to travel. Imagine being able to work with a view of the Eiffel Tower. That's possible when you can work from anywhere!

# Recognizing the potential drawbacks

Every decision in life has pros and cons. (Even eating cupcakes.) For all the benefits of a location-independent lifestyle, there are some downsides:

- » **Burnout:** Although the majority of digital nomads are happy and satisfied with their lifestyles, remote work and travel burnout is still a thing. If burnout is a concern for you, check out Chapter 12 on health and wellness.
- » **Dating and relationships:** Living nomadically can complicate relationships, whether you're single and dating or living with your significant other. Friendships and partnerships at home may suffer the longer you're away. And, although you may meet more people while traveling, you might not see them again. Chapter 14 has more on dating and making friends as a digital nomad.
- » **Being unsettled:** Not having a fixed home can wear on you over time. If you're planning to be a temporary nomad, this isn't much of a concern. But many long-term nomads eventually find somewhere to settle so they have more stability and community.
- » **Loneliness:** Everyone experiences loneliness sometimes, whether you're a nomad or not. But traveling alone and working alone can make you feel even lonelier at times. In a Fiverr study, 30 percent of respondents said lack of community and human connection were their biggest struggles. If loneliness is a concern for you, check out Chapter 12 for tips on how to cope.
- » **Productivity and motivation:** Many digital nomads are self-motivated, with only 7 percent of "anywhere workers" citing motivation as a challenge. However, it's still a factor, especially when combined with occasional loneliness and isolation from working alone.
- » **Risk of failure:** Failing in business in a foreign place can be a scary prospect, especially if you don't know the culture well or have a local support system. It's important to keep a stash of emergency savings in case you end up between jobs or need to cut your adventure short and fly home.
- » **Uncertainty:** Uncertainty is the flipside of the excitement and the adventure of a nomadic lifestyle. There's a fine line between living outside of your comfort zone and living in anxiety. Manage uncertainty by being as prepared and organized as possible. Chapter 11 on travel logistics helps you with that.

## HOW I BECAME A DIGITAL NOMAD

I stumbled into the digital nomad lifestyle when I got the opportunity to study abroad in Costa Rica during college. I fell in love with the idea of living overseas and immersing myself in a different culture. After graduating from university, all I wanted to do was travel. So, I moved back to Costa Rica.

I planned to return to the United States eventually to resume my “real life” in Corporate America. But fortunately, technology caught up with my wanderlust.

After working in real estate in Costa Rica, I started a relocation company to help people move abroad. For the first year or so, I worked from my home office in Costa Rica’s Central Valley. Eventually, I realized that I could technically work from anywhere. So in January of 2013, I sold my car, put my stuff in storage, and bid adieu (or, adios, rather) to my apartment. I set off on a one-way trip around the world with no end date.

I’ve worked online and lived nomadically ever since. As my perspective and worldview widened, so did my career opportunities and online income streams. After experimenting with different business models, I now earn a living through writing, content creation, consulting, affiliate marketing, digital products, and online courses, to name a few. In total, I’ve traveled to 60 countries in the past 20 years, many of them as a digital nomad.

Although I have many years of nomadic experience now, I started my journey like many others — without a passport or any work experience to speak of. I worked different jobs as a lifeguard, surf instructor, waitress, and real estate agent before starting my first online business. I published more than 200 videos before making a dollar on YouTube. And I took short vacations with family and friends to nearby destinations throughout the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean before going overseas. Over the years, I gradually increased my confidence with solo travel and entrepreneurship, expanding my comfort zone and travel radius along the way.