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What jobs do digital nomads do?

Some jobs seem tailor-made for a nomadic lifestyle. If you are already set on jetting around the planet, becoming a travel blogger and writing about your journey seems like a no-brainer. But plenty of other jobs and trades slot neatly into the location-independent lifestyle. The key criteria for digital nomads is being able to do the actual day-to-day work from wherever you happen to be in the world, via the medium of a high-speed internet connection.

CREATIVE ENDEAVOURS

Blogging isn't the only creative activity that can fund your travels. Many digital nomads turn to other kinds of writing – from on-message travel writing to more prosaic scribing such as writing advertising copy, authoring manuals for appliances or writing training materials for office tasks you've actually left far behind. Don't forget editing, one of the most portable professions around. Then there's the visual sphere: graphic design, videography, photography, layout. If you don't have to be in a specific place when you do it, almost any creative activity can form the foundation of a digital nomad life.

A WORLD OF CODE

Travel blogging may have the glamour, but plenty of digital nomads make better money, and fund a more luxurious lifestyle, by being part of that select group who speak the universal language of computer code. Freelancing is the cornerstone of the software development business, and travellers who can code in desirable languages, such as Java, Python, C++, Javascript and SQL will find their skills are in demand wherever they happen to be in the world. And did we mention web design? Or did you think that the person who designed your website was working from an office in Dunstable?

TAKE YOUR JOB WITH YOU

Many of the day-to-day tasks that keep a business going don't actually have to take place in the office. Managing projects, supervising social media, doing the accounts – all things that can be done from a pavement cafe with a fast wi-fi connection. Even one-time face-to-face jobs, such as working as an office assistant, have moved into the virtual sphere. In fact, almost anything that can be done in an office can now be done remotely if you can find a client willing to pay you for the service.

TEACH THE WORLD

Remember the days when the only way to learn something was to traipse into a classroom or pick up a 'Teach Yourself...' book from the local library? No, neither do we. In the digital age, a huge amount of what we learn takes place in the digital space, from online music tutorials to workplace subconscious bias training and videos to improve your knowledge of SEO. With a fast web connection and a quality webcam, you can impart your knowledge to paying students almost anywhere in the world.

START FROM THE GROUND FLOOR

Launching a start-up might seem like a big step, but household names such as Uber, eBay and Facebook all began life as one person with tech experience and a smart idea. If you've got a model for an online business that could revolutionise the way we live our lives, you'll be one of a growing contingent of digital nomads pursuing the same dream. Moving in a world of co-working spaces and networking meetups, you'll have plenty of encounters with fellow entrepreneurs, and the opportunity to share ideas, forge new business relationships, and perhaps even build the dream team who go on to become the next online superstars.

TEN TOP DIGITAL NOMAD JOBS

- 1 Software developer**
Remote working is a standard part of development, so it's a small leap to being a coding nomad.
- 2 Web designer**
A perfectly portable profession, where what matters to clients is results, not where you are based.
- 3 Travel Blogger**
Writing about your travels to pay for your travels is a perfect partnership.
- 4 Language Teacher**
Thanks to distance learning over the internet, the world is your classroom.
- 5 SEO Specialist**
Learn how to optimise content for search engines and make money helping companies up their game.
- 6 Social Media Expert**
Managing social media accounts is a business that works from anywhere.
- 7 Technical Support Representative**
You don't have to be physically in the room to keep tech ticking over smoothly.
- 8 Virtual Assistant**
Companies need remote support in everything from accounts and invoicing to project management.
- 9 Freelance Writer**
Writing is one of the most portable ways of making a living, whether you blog about wellness or write manuals for microwaves.
- 10 Graphic Designer**
Some simple tech can transform your laptop into a portable design studio.

Visas & paperwork

The traditional digital nomad model is based on something of a legal loophole. Most governments have strict rules governing who can visit and work in the country, but the vast majority of nomadic remote workers travel on tourist visas, bypassing the normal rules and regulations for working in a foreign country.

WORKING ON A TOURIST VISA

In theory, tourist visas are for holidays only, and anyone working overseas needs a business or work visa. If you were caught working for a local company on a tourist visa, the penalties would be severe. However, most digital nomads work for companies outside the country they are visiting, so the authorities are unlikely to be aware of your business activities unless you draw attention to yourself.

What this does mean is that most digital nomads are operating in a grey area of the law. Immigration rules are generally set up to protect local workers and make sure that visiting workers from elsewhere pay their taxes, and if the authorities discover you flouting the rules, you could be deported and blacklisted. On the other hand, the risks of anyone noticing that you are working are small, unless you become legally resident, in which case you'll become liable for local taxes like other residents.

TOURIST VISA CONDITIONS

Most tourist visas are set up to make it as easy as possible for travellers to visit, so there are usually few restrictions. Many countries offer visas on arrival, often for free, and some offer visa-free travel for tourists. One condition most countries insist on is six months' validity in your passport beyond the date of entry; if your passport is close to expiry, get a new one before you set off. The website Visa List (www.visalist.io) details which countries require a visa; for specifics, contact the embassy of the country you're going to.



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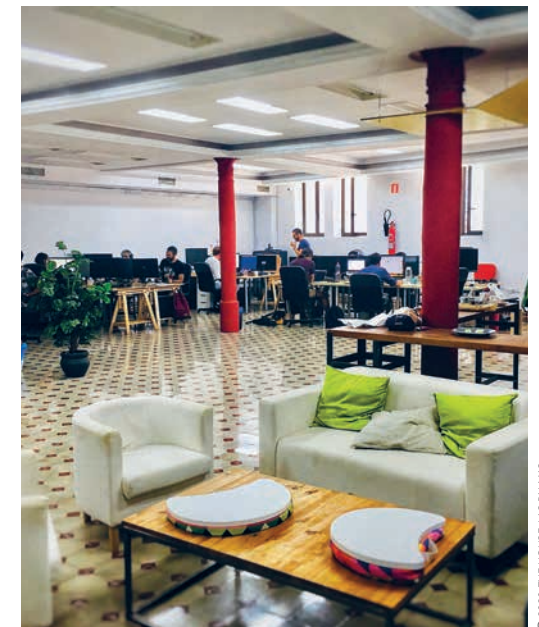


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ONWARD TICKETS

Another thing border officials may ask to see is an onward ticket, as proof you intend to leave the country at the end of your stay. Some people travel on return plane tickets, but never use the return leg. Others buy a cheap plane or ferry ticket to the nearest onward destination, and then cancel it for a refund once they have entered the country; the US site for Expedia (www.expedia.com) allows free cancellation within 24 hours.

Making fake tickets in Photoshop (believe us – people do it) is not recommended, and the same goes for websites that promise to knock up a convincing fake ticket, but sites such as Best Onward Ticket (www.bestonwardticket.com) and One Way Fly (www.onewayfly.com) let you 'rent' a ticket from travel agencies for a short period, proving that where there's a will, there's a way.



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FIFTEEN ITEMS EVERY DIGITAL NOMAD SHOULD CARRY

Some pieces of technology you can find almost everywhere. Other things can't be had for love nor money. Here's a list of essential tech that should be part of every digital nomad toolkit.



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A universal travel adapter plug (or several of them) – locally made adaptors often wobble in sockets like a loose tooth.



Surge-protection – the last thing you want is a power surge that fries all your tech in one sizzle.



A multiplug or power strip – if your room only has one plug socket, you're still covered.



An external hard drive, USB stick or memory card for critical back ups.



A 1m ethernet cable – co-working spaces should have them, but there's no harm having your own.



Spare USB leads – carry spares of leads with the right connectors in case of broken wires.



A spare laptop power supply – finding a charger for a specific laptop can be surprisingly difficult.



Noise-cancelling headphones – instant meeting-room quiet, whenever you need it.



A battery power pack – essential kit for keeping your phone or tablet alive when you can't find a socket.



An unlocked, back-up phone – even a calls-only phone can keep your business moving.



Earphones with a microphone – for Skype and WhatsApp calls on the go.



An external mouse – if your trackpad goes down, your business doesn't have to.



A folding keyboard – you won't want to use it every day, but it's a useful fallback.



A portable laptop stand – you won't have HR emailing to remind you about your posture.



Universal card reader – for getting photos off camera cards, and data from memory cards.

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TEN GREAT WAYS

TO OVERCOME LONELINESS

No matter how great your travel experiences, or how well your digital business is flourishing, no man – or should that be nomad? – is an island. Here are some tricks for beating loneliness as you travel the information superhighway.

1 REMEMBER YOUR MOTIVATION

You went on the road for a reason, so focus on the opportunities that being a digital nomad brings as a way to beat the travel blues. Make a list of the things that motivated you to leave home, and the benefits you enjoy as a peripatetic professional, as a reminder of why you went on this journey.

2 TREAT YOURSELF

All work and no play is no fun for anyone. Reward yourself for all your hard work with little perks: treat meals, a day at the beach, spa treatments, a cinema trip. If the daily grind starts to wear you down, take a mini-break or stay in upmarket digs for couple of nights to recharge; you'll come back to your work routine refreshed and reinvigorated.



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3 PLAN MICRO-ADVENTURES

Solitude always feels easier when you have a mission. Break up your work time with small adventures – wild swimming, forest treks, climbing to the temple on the hilltop, exploring the local area by moped – to keep things fresh and exciting.



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4 LEARN SOMETHING NEW

Travel opens up all sorts of opportunities to develop as a person, whether that means learning a new language or taking your first scuba dive on a tropical reef. As well as helping you feel that things are moving forward, joining a course is a great way to meet fellow travellers with similar interests.

5 RIDE THE ENDORPHIN EXPRESS

It's easy to let your exercise routine slide when you're away, and lack of exercise can lead to demotivation, lethargy and depression. Take the time to reward yourself with a trip to the gym, a swim or a run to fill your body with natural hormones that help you stay positive and motivated. Being outside can also give you a top-up dose of depression-beating Vitamin D.

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6 TALK ABOUT IT

Talking to people you know and love is the perfect tonic if solitude starts to overwhelm. Nine times out of ten, friends and family would love to be in your shoes, and talking over the highs and lows can help put everything into perspective.

7 SOCIALISE

It sounds obvious, but many nomads get so focused on the mission that they forget to connect with the people around them. Join a club, go on a group trip, talk to the people sharing your co-working space, and you'll soon find you aren't as alone as you thought you were.

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8 CONNECT WITH LOCALS

Fellow travellers aren't the only avenue for conversation. Engage with locals – shopkeepers, hotel staff, work contacts – and all sorts of social opportunities can arise. Even a chat about the weather can be enough to make you feel part of a community rather than a digital castaway, marooned with your laptop. For a novel way to meet local people, join a local-led tour at With Locals (www.withlocals.com).

9 SEEK OUT SOCIAL ACCOMMODATION

A rented apartment or hotel room grants maximum privacy and minimum interaction; many digital nomads prefer to stay in hostels or co-living spaces to meet fellow travellers and plug into social scenes. Bring interaction into your work environment, too – a co-working space will always mean more chances to chat than working alone in your room.

10 TRAVEL POSITIVE

Your body language can have a big effect on how you are perceived. If you walk around with a smile and a friendly manner, you are holding up a subliminal sign that you are someone positive to talk to. Conversely, walking around looking sullen and preoccupied may deter people who would otherwise love to chat.

Planning for your return

At the start of the journey, it's easy to imagine being a digital nomad forever, but a lot can happen on life's highway. You might find yourself missing the friends and stability of home. You might run out of cash. You might meet someone new and fall in love. There are a million different reasons why you might decide you've come to the end of the road, so it pays to have a plan in place for how you are going to exit the peripatetic life.

Money matters

Just as that nest egg came in handy when you started as a digital nomad, you'll need a financial buffer to reintegrate into life back home. Costs are likely to be higher than when you went away, so make your last nomad base somewhere super-cheap with minimal distractions, so you can work longer, be more productive, and spend less of the money you'll need to rebuild at home.

Don't underestimate the time this will take. Saving up enough for a stress-free return could be a three-month, six-month or year-long enterprise, without some of the lifestyle perks you may have become accustomed to. Approach this as a business decision, and stay focused on the goal of achieving a home lifestyle that's at least as rewarding as your life while travelling.

The cost of living

Think ahead about ways to keep costs down until you're in a financially stable position. Finding a job before you fly home is obviously the ideal, but this can take time; you might need to become a non-nomadic digital freelancer while you look for something permanent. As well as facing higher living costs, you'll have taxes to pay and red tape to unravel – be realistic about how much money you'll need.

Accommodation is likely to be the biggest cost, so think of steps you can take to keep overheads down. Could you couch-surf, or move in with relatives while you look for work? A room in a house-share will be cheaper than renting a whole apartment, with the added bonus of people to talk to as you adjust to a world where you can't cure boredom by just moving on.

Back to work

Think about how to describe your time as a digital nomad in job interviews. Presenting it in terms of skills acquired, lessons learned and wisdom gained could put you ahead of those on a conventional career path. 'Be prepared to answer questions about your time abroad,' advises Laura Holden, Communications Executive at Reed Online (www.reedglobal.com). 'Articulate what you gained from the experience and how you can use your skills to benefit your new employer. It's also important to think carefully about why you want to make the transition from "digital nomad" to a more traditional stand-still career. Most employers will want to have reassurance that you're capable of working in this kind of environment, and that you won't get itchy feet anytime soon.'



TOP TIP

'Returning to settled life can be a jolt to the system, so approach coming home with the same sense of focus as when you went on the road. Make sure you have enough funds to support yourself and a clear plan for where to stay and how to go about making money when you get home.'

Joe Bindloss, travel writer,
www.bindloss.co.uk

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Job-search tips

Keep your resume with you on the road and keep it up to date with new skills and achievements as you go, and use your network to investigate job opportunities before you head home

Companies you have freelanced for may have more substantial opportunities for you once you get home, so don't be afraid to ask. Use the full range of online job-hunting tools – industry noticeboards, LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com), job sites such as Reed, Indeed (www.indeed.com), CareerBuilder (www.careerbuilder.com) and Monster (www.monster.com) – and make sure your online and social media presence makes it clear that you are available and looking for work.

Reintegrating

For the first couple of weeks, friends and family will love to hear about your travels and adventures, but be assured that the novelty will wear off. Don't let the celebrity vibe of being the returning prodigal son (or daughter) go to your head. Remember that what everyone else has been doing deserves just as much airtime as your tale of the time you climbed Kilimanjaro.

Be ready for the fact that some relationships may not have stood the test of time. Some people will have moved on, or started a new life elsewhere. Unless you are very lucky, the support network you left behind will not be the same support network you come home to, so be ready to use the skills you honed networking at nomad meetups to strike up new friendships and business relationships.



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Practicalities

Marshrutka minibuses and trains buzz around Georgia and into Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey. To avoid crossing breakaway republic Abkhazia, most people fly to Russia.

Shota Rustaveli Tbilisi International Airport, Tbilisi

Spring (April to June) and autumn (September to October) are the most pleasant times to be here, avoiding the hot, muggy summer and cold, damp winter. But with a year of visa-free travel, many nomads stay 12 months and watch the changing seasons.

From US\$900 per month

LGBT-friendly
No

Tbilisi, Georgia

Former Soviet republics don't tend to feature high on nomad bucket lists, but Georgia is a notable exception. Culturally, the country looks towards Asia as much as Russia, and escape from the Soviets in 1991 kickstarted a process of reinvention that hasn't stopped yet. Capital Tbilisi hums with energy, with fast wi-fi available across the city and a remarkably easy-going pace of life.

Although the local cafe scene leans more towards old-fashioned tables on the pavement than the sleek hangouts more commonly associated with digital nomad culture, the combination of modern tech infrastructure and old-world charm is an enticing package for nomads who like a bit of nostalgia with their high-speed web connections. Picking up a smattering of spoken Georgian will ease your passage into the Tbilisi way of life.

A low cost of living is matched by a comfortable quality of life, and a liberal visa regime – with free, visa-free travel for a year for most nationalities – means you won't have to bother about such inconveniences as making a visa run across the border. What you won't find is quite the same level of networking and support as in more-established nomad hubs. No matter; the food and wine, produced here for nearly 8000 years, provides ample compensation.

Pros & cons

GREAT FOR:

- ★ Visa-free travel
- ★ Low cost of living
- ★ Great food
- ★ The birthplace of wine
- ★ Fast internet

NOT SO GREAT FOR:

- ★ Networking
- ★ Co-working infrastructure
- ★ Traffic
- ★ Bureaucracy
- ★ Urban care

CO-WORKING SPACES

- ★ With a prime location in the fashionable Fabrika development (a Soviet-era sewing factory reinvented as a hub for cafes, bars, concepts shops and the arts), Impact Hub Tbilisi (<https://tbilisi.impacthub.net>) is a nomad favourite, with events and meetups, fast web access and a bohemian lifestyle right on the doorstep.
- ★ Set amid the greenery in Vake Park, Mediathek (www.mediatheka.ge) is a public library with fast wi-fi and plenty of quiet desk spaces for working. A minimal annual fee covers the use of all facilities; there are similarly calm, modernist branches at Varketili and in Veterans Park in Nadzaladevi.



LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Airbnb should be your first port of call when looking for a room or apartment to rent in Tbilisi. Downtown accommodation is expensive, so be ready to set up in the suburbs. Just outside the centre, the gentrifying districts of Vake and Avlabari are on the up and up. Be warned that many apartments have minimal heating; bring warm clothes for winter. For food, dine cheaply on *mtsvadi* (kebabs), *khachapuri* (cheese-stuffed bread) and *khinkali* (dumplings) at local restaurants. Getting around is easy by *marshrutka*, taxi, or local taxi-hailing app Yandex.Taxi (<https://taxi.yandex.ru>).

Previous page:
Narikala Fortress;
Left: Downtown
Tbilisi; Opposite:
Cafe co-working at
Fabrika.

PRE-DEPARTURE READING

- ★
Lonely Planet's *Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan* guidebook
- ★
Bread & Ashes: A Walk Through the Mountains of Georgia by Tony Anderson
- ★
My Dear Son: The Memoirs of Stalin's Mother by Ekaterine Jughashvili
- ★
A Man Was Going Down the Road by Otari Chiladze

NETWORKING

- ★ Tbilisi Digital Nomads (<https://z-m-www.facebook.com/groups/tbilisidigitalnomad>)
- ★ Tbilisi Expats Community (www.facebook.com/TbilisiExpatsCommunity)
- ★ Expats in Tbilisi (www.facebook.com/groups/310444322730567)

INTERNET SPEEDS

Typical public wi-fi download speeds hover around the 10 Mbps mark, but faster connections aren't hard to find, though you might struggle at the top end of the spectrum. Pick up a local SIM for reliable 4G connections.

Ways to unwind

Take a sulphur bath – overlook the eggy odour and plunge into the sulphurous waters of the dozen-odd bathhouses in Tbilisi's Abanotubani district, said to heal skin and soothe aching joints.

Take in the views from Mtatsminda Park – a funicular train whisks people high above the city for giddy views, forest walks and a collection of endearingly dated amusements, including the country's biggest Ferris wheel.


Make for the Caucasus – Kazbegi National Park is just three hours from Tbilisi by *marshrutka*, and opens up the full glory of the Caucasus mountains.






© MATT MUNRO / LONELY PLANET

Practicalities

 Buses connect to Tallinn from across Europe, while trains run to local destinations and to Moscow and St Petersburg. Fast, frequent ferries run to Helsinki and Stockholm.

 Lennart Meri Tallinn Airport, Tallinn

LGBT-friendly
Yes

 Warm days and sporadic showers mark Tallinn's short summer from June to August. Spring and autumn are cooler but still pleasant enough for cafe working. The long, bitter winter is the sting – snow arrives in November and can linger till April.

\$ From €1000 per month

Tallinn, Estonia

Travellers love Estonia's tiny cobblestoned capital for its moderate costs, Unesco-listed old town and stepping-stone position between Eastern Europe, the Nordic states and Russia. For digital nomads, it's the business-friendly attitude and start-up culture that appeals. Tallinn is one of Europe's top three cities for start-ups per capita, beating long-established Eurozone tech hubs.

To tempt overseas talent, Estonia's e-Residency scheme (www.e-resident.gov.ee) allows online businesses to set up here remotely; a start-up visa (www.startupestonia.ee) gives special support to foreign entrepreneurs who set up within the country. This will soon be joined by a new visa aimed at digital nomads, allowing them to live and work in Estonia for up to a year, including for local companies. And EU citizens, of course, can set up here with few restrictions.

While central Tallinn can get busy with both cruise ship crowds and raucous stag party and hen night groups at weekends, the city has nonetheless managed to hold onto its enigmatic identity, and the hordes evaporate as the long, cold winter approaches. Plentiful co-working spaces will keep you warm and connected, even when snow gathers outside, and the sense of community among remote workers is tangible year-round.

Pros & cons

GREAT FOR:

- ★ Start-ups
- ★ Nomad-friendly visa policies
- ★ Support from local government
- ★ Sense of community
- ★ Low cost of living

NOT SO GREAT FOR:

- ★ Cruise ship crowds
- ★ Bearable winters
- ★ Affordable rents
- ★ Budget shopping
- ★ Free public transport (its restricted to residents)