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|| TRAVEL SMARTER ||



Remote Control

More digital nomads are swapping the office for the open road. Here's how to kick-start your new life working abroad.

BY DIANA HUBBELL

EVER WANTED TO QUIT YOUR JOB AND TRAVEL? A new generation of the workforce is heading off to distant lands without quitting at all. Thanks to an ever-more connected world, employees in the tech and creative sectors are hanging onto their sources of income while exploring the beaches of Borneo or the tea plantations of Sri Lanka. According to FlexJobs, the number of available remote positions worldwide rose 36 percent in 2015 from a year earlier, and while global stats are still shaky, Freelancers Union estimates that among Americans 53 million already do some form of freelance work—a number that's expected to rise to half of the workforce by 2020.



Claiming the corner office in (clockwise) Thailand, Peru and Vietnam.

"There has been a massive shift towards remote productivity in the last few years. Cloud technology paired with collaborative tools such as video conferencing frees many jobs from being tied down to a physical location," explains Greg Caplan, cofounder and CEO of **Remote Year** (remoteyear.com; US\$27,000 per year for transportation, housing, activities and workspace with Internet), which sends 75 professionals to 12 different destinations over the course of a year. Since the inaugural run in June 2015, more than 150,000 consultants, business owners, artists, lawyers and freelancers from 30 countries have applied. Participants on the most recent trip enjoyed like-minded company in places including Kuala Lumpur, Saigon, Koh Phangan and Phnom Penh. As usual, the Internet generation is leading the way: Millennials, Caplan says, are "putting more value on experiences over ownership of material things, which leads them to seek out remote jobs that allow them to travel and work."

Like anything else, remote working, sometimes dubbed "smart working" or "workshifting," is not without its pitfalls. Your boss may be less thrilled with the idea than you are, and if you're planning to travel across Asia, long-term visas and red tape can be tricky to negotiate. Still, many professionals are finding that it is not only possible, but also potentially more productive.

"We find that the best work is done when people are inspired, feel connected and are mentally stimulated. Traditional offices don't provide these kinds of environments. If anything, they discourage exploration of new people, places and ideas," Caplan says. "By ditching the cubicle, you gain the freedom to choose where you work, when you work, and in what environments you work most effectively."

Sound tempting? Here's what you need to know to get started.



Phone it in from Bali, at Hubud. BELOW: The super social Spaces, in Sydney.



COOL CO-WORKING SPACES

Tempting as it might be to loaf around in PJs all day, a structured work environment can do wonders for your personal productivity. With supportive communities, excellent networking opportunities and thoughtful extras, these co-working spaces all over Asia offer far more than a desk with Wi-Fi.

CHIANG MAI | SIMPLE SPACE

Curved mirrors and industrial furnishings make this newcomer stylish. Bonus: the low monthly membership comes with 10 free drinks at the cutesy eatery. fb.com/simplespace.in.th; from Bt990 per month.

BANGKOK | ONEDAY FOREWORD

Casa Lapin, a perennial hipster favorite, is behind this handsome space in the heart of the popular Phrom Phong neighborhood. You'll join because it's open 24/7, but stay because your "office" Instagrams of perfect flat whites on wood furnishings will make your old coworkers jealous of your new digs. onedaybkk.com; from Bt6,900 per month.

SINGAPORE | THE HUB

High-powered entrepreneurs congregate at this branch of a global network with

more than 15,000 members. Fundraising workshops, networking events, and mentoring programs at The Hub help members get down to business. singapore.impacthub.net; co-working plans from S\$345.

SYDNEY | SPACES SURREY HILLS

Regular events, lecture series, state-of-the-art meeting rooms, and an airy, minimalist interior set this ambitious Amsterdam export apart from the crowd. spacesworks.com; A\$350 per month.

UBUD | HUBUD

Innovators of all stripes call this gorgeous bamboo space amid rice paddies home. Blazing-fast Internet and expat services make this 400-square-meter Balinese dream especially enticing. hubud.org; from Rp800,000 per month.

MUMBAI | SOCIAL

What if your after-work drinks were at work? This hub lives up to its name in the evenings, when it offers deconstructed Moscow Mules and other clever cocktails. socialoffline.in; Rs5,000 per month with access to all affiliated spaces in India.

HONG KONG | THE HIVE

In Wanchai, The Hive caters to out-of-the-box start-ups. The sprawling facility has a library, sun deck and free coffee to keep the creative juices flowing. thehive.com.hk; from HK\$2,800 per month.

CEBU | A SPACE

Free-flowing coffee, a friendly community and the effortless aesthetic of a designer boutique make this a haven. [aspace manila.com](https://aspacemanila.com); from P8,000 per month.

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◀ **NEKTECK 20W SOLAR CHARGER**

"My battery died" isn't going to fly with your employers, no matter how far-flung. If you're partial to working in places beyond the reach of extension cables, invest in an eco-friendly solar-powered charger like this one to keep your devices fully loaded. You'll have extra incentive to select sun-drenched "office" spaces—Langkawi, perhaps? nekteck.com; from US\$55.

GADGETS AND GIZMOS

Sure, your trusty laptop will get you far, but these techie toys can keep you, and all your gear, powered up and connected, wherever you may be.



◀ **BOSE QUIETCOMFORT 25**

There's nothing like the rumble of passing motorbike taxis or chatter of gossipy café-goers to wreck your concentration. Keep your cool with these noise-canceling headphones, which will either channel your favorite soothing tunes or deliver conference calls over the oceans with crisp sound. bose.com; US\$300.



WACACO MINIPRESSO ▲

A steady supply of caffeine is essential to getting anything done, and after a few months your French press may not cut it anymore. When you decide to indulge your inner addict, this bullet-shaped portable espresso maker can give you your fix when you can't make it to a café. With an average pressure of eight bars—just a hair below the standard nine that your barista wields—it packs a serious punch in a petite 360-gram shell that will fit in any carry-on. wacaco.com; US\$59.

IOSAFE RUGGED PORTABLE SSD ►

Travel can be rough on appliances and you can't afford to risk losing work en route to your next destination. MacGyver-proof your data with this ultra-tough 1TB external hard drive that can survive three days of total immersion in water or an hour in diesel fuel. It's also crush-resistant up to 1,100 kilograms of pressure, functions like a dream at high altitudes, and has a formidable Kensington Lock in case of theft. In other words, nothing will break this bad boy. iosafe.com; US\$1,120.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF NEKTECK; COURTESY OF WACACO (2); COURTESY OF IOSAFE; COURTESY OF BOSE

VIRTUAL TASKMASTERS

With no clock to watch and no boss bearing down on you, it's more important than ever to stay focused. Load up your devices with these handy apps to stay on-task and on-track.

THE TEAM PLAYERS

Everyone has coworkers, even if they don't share physical desk space. In addition to industry staples such as Google Docs and Skype, these programs are built to help all of you work together despite the distance.



MindMeister

Creativity seldom happens in a vacuum, which is why this collaborative brainstorming tool is such a boon. The web-based program allows your group to share ideas in the form of colorful, instantly comprehensible graphics. mindmeister.com; free basic version, with tiers up to a professional business version for US\$90 for six months.



Trello

Generate and share Pinterest-esque boards for any kind of task with team members anywhere in the world with this visual aid. Trello can set specific deadlines for jobs and will automatically notify other users in the crew with updates. trello.com; free.

THE TIME MANAGERS

When you're billing clients by the hour, knowing how long you spend on each project is essential to effectively charging and multitasking. Stick to a realistic schedule and streamline your workflow by enlisting a little outside help.



Toggl

This indispensable tool not only tracks your work on specific tasks both on and offline, but also converts the data into pie charts. Show this easy-to-read data to clients when sorting out the budget for longer projects. toggl.com; free basic version, with tiers up to an advance professional model for US\$49 per month.



Cushion

Simple yet elegant, Cushion's schedule offers a visually appealing alternative to the traditional to-do list. With one click, zoom out and view your monthly or annual workload, so you can keep everything in perspective. cushion.app.com; from US\$8 per month.

THE ANTI-PROCRASTINATORS

Social media's seductive siren song is about to become your worst enemy. Avoid the endless stream of click bait with these lifesavers.



WasteNoTime

When willpower isn't enough, this app sets limits for certain websites and guilts you into productivity with cheeky quotes like "I do my work at the same time each day—the last minute" when you exceed them. It also tracks where you spend your time, so you know exactly how much of your life you've frittered away on Facebook. bumblebee.systems.com/wastenotime; free.



Write or Die

Writer's block? This tough-love program forces you to put pen to paper—or fingers to keyboard. Once the countdown clock hits zero, it will start deleting your work if you haven't made progress. For positive reinforcement, it'll play soothing background music or show you a graphic of your choice (puppies?) when you get down to business. writeordie.com; free.

THE FINANCIAL PLANNERS

With multiple income sources and varied payment schedules, freelance finances can quickly become a nightmare. Rather than shelling out for a personal accountant, use technology to stay on top of the situation.



Harvest

Trouble keeping track of expenses? Just snap a photo of your receipt and Harvest will file it away for future reference. Keep forgetting to send invoices? It'll file them and accept payment from a variety of sources online. getharvest.com; free basic version, with tiers up to US\$99 per month for an unlimited professional version.



Wave

All your hard work will be in vain if you don't manage to get paid for it. Wave is accountant and personal assistant, rolled into one electronic genie: it invoices your clients, organize your books, and keep tabs on tax-deductible expenses, so that nothing slips through the cracks. waveapps.com; free.

Insuring Your Success

Before you and your laptop can lounge beneath palm trees, sort out the basics. Unless your employer offers you coverage, buy private health insurance, even if you live in a popular medical-tourism destination like Thailand or Malaysia. Countries still have wildly varied laws—many Japanese clinics, for instance, won't accept private insurance—so, thoroughly investigate the rules of your new home base. Although Asia lags behind the U.S. and E.U. in terms of organized options for freelancers, a few start-ups in the region, such as **Horsepower** (horsepower.ph), a Philippine-based company with plans from P999 per year, offer more affordable options. Not all insurance plans will provide coverage if you leave your main country of residence. If you're heading out of town or have a penchant for extreme sports, sign up for a short-term travel insurance such as **World Nomads** (worldnomads.com), which is valid in more than 150 countries.