

# LIFE ON THE ROAD



# THE BUSINESS OF TRAVEL BLOGGING



# LIFE ON THE ROAD

## THE BUSINESS OF TRAVEL BLOGGING



T.W.ANDERSON

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>A QUICK WORD</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>RESPECTING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>LANGUAGE IMMERSION</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>THE BUSINESS SIDE OF TRAVEL BLOGGING</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>LOCAL CONSULTING AND FREELANCING</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>BUILDING A BRAND</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>VISAS AND INCOME REQUIREMENTS</b>
	<b>HOBBY BLOGGING VERSUS PROFIT BLOGGING</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>PITFALLS OF LONG-TERM TRAVEL</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>THE MYTH OF CONTENT GENERATION</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>BASE OF OPERATIONS</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>DIGITAL CONTENT MARKETING AND ADVERTISING</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>IMMERSION TRAVEL VERSUS BACKPACKING</b>
<b>19</b>	<b>BRAND BUILDING 101</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>SPONSORED TRAVEL AND HOUSESITTING</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>WHY SOME PEOPLE WILL NEVER BE ENTREPRENEURS</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>SOCIAL MEDIA REALITIES</b>
	<b>BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>SOCIAL MEDIA TIME COMMITMENTS</b>
	<b>BUILDING A BRAND</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>CURATING CONTENT FOR YOUR BLOG</b>
	<b>THE RULES FOR SUCCESS</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>SHARING OTHER PEOPLE'S CONTENT</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>WHY SOME PEOPLE WILL NEVER BE ENTREPRENEURS II</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>PRESS KITS AND PROPOSALS</b>
	<b>THE STARTUP MYTH</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>IN CLOSING</b>
<b>33</b>	<b>TYPES OF TRAVEL</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>BEFORE YOU GO</b>
<b>37</b>	<b>A NEED FOR INCOME</b>		
<b>41</b>	<b>THE MYTH OF PASSIVE INCOME</b>		
<b>45</b>	<b>RESEARCHING YOUR DESTINATION</b>		

# A Quick Word

This book will take you an hour or two to read, and you can read it for free.

But here's the thing: I hope that once you have read this book you will find it so valuable you will **WANT** to pay for it to recognize its value.

Should you feel that way, please do two things. First, share it with others so they can benefit alongside you and other readers who are doing the same. Second, go to <http://www.marginalboundaries.com/pay-what-you-want/> where you can pay what you believe this book is worth to you and your business...it could be one dollar, it could be \$5,000 – you decide.

# Introduction

The Internet is awash with plenty of “show and tell” list posts going into “ways you can make money with your website”. Heck, I even have one from early in 2013 called [Top 5 Ways to Generate Passive Income for Full-Time Travel](#).

But let’s face it: this type of content doesn’t really serve readers beyond giving generic, generalized tips, enough to whet the appetite and inspire people to follow along, sign up to the newsletter and eventually buy other products.

**Every. Single. Blogger. Does. This.**

Not that I’m singling her out in any way, shape or form (*I love her blog and I’m only using this quote as an example*), but Jennifer from [Jdombs Travels](#) left a telling comment on [this article at our site](#). *“Travel blogging is not the endless vacation that many people seem to think that it is. Though we do create that image for ourselves as **most readers do not want to actually read about the behind-the-scenes and less glamorous parts of the job. They want pretty pictures and travel advice, so it’s very easy for them to forget that you aren’t on an endless vacation.**”*

**There is an issue on both sides of the fence.** The first side is the armchair reader. That is, the reader who will never actually travel, never actually leave their home, but instead simply “lives through

you” by reading your blog posts. They have no desire to actually explore the world, nor do they want to read about the nitty-gritty details. They just want to see the polished, final results.

The flip side are the writers (*myself included*) who have continued to fill the Internet with a bunch of re-hashed content. Each post is certainly written from a unique point of view, but you can only write so many “travel the world and make money/beach/restaurant/adventure tour/destination” posts before someone else is doing the same thing...before or after you.

Long-term readers have seen me slowly making the transition: I have zero desire to continue writing for armchair readers and throughout late 2013 into 2014 I’ve been moving into more “serious” content as opposed to “fluff” content.

We launched our [Innovators Program](#) in January of 2014 (*we have 9 annual subscribers as of this writing*), we ran six people through our [brand boot camp](#) in 2013 (*the next one is April of 2014*) and I’ve been presenting on social media and blogging throughout the Riviera Maya since September of 2013, not the least of which was my keynote presentation at the Last Tuesday event on [January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014](#).

Now, we have this new book, and it’s all about providing the behind-the-scenes details on building and running a successful, for-profit, professional travel blog. Not a hobby blog with vanity traffic. **An actual blog that makes a livable income.**

Consequently, **this book is for people who take blogging seriously.** It is not for the armchair readers, nor is it for those who only want to read fluffy “feel good” travel blog posts.

This is the nuts and bolts, the sweaty 6 a.m. until 10 p.m. grind, the morning edits, emails, social media routines, article planning, drafting, editing, photo shoots, video shoot planning, scheduling, proposals, press tours, press kits, meetings, presentations,

negotiations, film shoots, editing film and photos, cutting and splicing, processing and uploading, sharing and networking, public relations and beyond.

**The 9-to-5 of the professional travel blogger, right there in the open in all of its sweaty, ugly, boring glory for those of you who are interested in going from hobby blogger to professional blogger in 2014.**

# The Business Side of Travel Blogging

If you are one of the armchair readers of the world, you may think travel blogging is some sort of lucrative party gig, lounging beach-side with cocktails and bikini (or speedo)-clad deviants while you sip mojitos and your articles rack up thousands of hits while your social media platforms receive thousands of clicks and likes and shares and companies around the world pay you tens of thousands of dollars to travel the world on the company dime and your books sell tens of thousands of copies while you simply lay there, writing a few words here and there and taking a few photos.

The reality is that while you can certainly have all of those things, and there's absolutely a lot of perks that come with the job, it takes a lot of hard work to get to the point where you start receiving comped trips, sponsorships and perks, and until you get to that point (*and even after*) travel blogging is a job just like any other, which means there's a lot of hard work, long hours and strategizing involved, not simply lounging around and watching the views come in.

The vast majority of travel blogs that people read for entertainment are nothing more than hobby blogs. That is, they are platforms for travelers to write about their journeys around the world, but without actually earning any actual, livable income from said blog



to pay for said travels. Behind all but the most successful of blogs is a truth that no one really talks about: **hobby bloggers make the bulk of their income from other, non-travel-related jobs.**

We've covered some of these bloggers in our [Secrets of My Success](#) series here at the website, talking about the variety of income sources that people use to fund their travels, from freelancing to day-trading to having an Airbnb property that they rent out back in their home country to running drop-shipping businesses and beyond. **Everyone needs an income source to travel full-time.** That's simple fact.

Another simple fact is that a professional travel blog - that is, one which brings in enough income to pay for said blogger(s) to travel the world full time without needing an outside source of income - **is a business**, and like any other business it takes time, money and, more importantly, passion in order to make that business into a thriving platform that pays for itself.

**Businesses are not born overnight.** As a general rule, if you want to start a successful business of any kind, you need working capital and a good two to five year plan. If you want to build a 100k a year restaurant, you need to be prepared to spend 15 to 20k up-front on kitchen equipment, staff, supplies and, most importantly, advertising and promotion in order to get the word out that you have a new restaurant so you can get people in the door to help you recoup your business expenses.

[\*\*View Video Here\*\*](#)

A travel blog is no different. It takes a year or two (as a general rule) to build up a following of loyal readers as well as the traffic needed to land sponsorships and press trips; that is, companies who are willing to pay you to travel on their dime or tourist boards/

tour agencies who are willing to pay for your trip in exchange for the publicity you offer them with your blog.

And how do you earn those followers and the traffic necessary to woo investors, advertisers and sponsors? By footing your own bill for the first year or two and paying for your travels, your transportation, your entry fees to ruins and museums, entertainment fees for scuba diving and hot-air balloon rides and camel treks and spelunking, your camera gear, your website hosting, your advertising to bring in the traffic and the viewers and so on and so forth.

For most “budget travelers”, that means spending 15 to 20k a year to cover the costs of travel, as well as the time it takes to write and publish blog posts, edit blog posts, take thousands of photos that are weeded down into the 10 to 20 that are used in a blog post, shoot hundreds of hours of video that is cut down into 3 to 5 minute segments, time spent learning how to code and run a WordPress or other type of website, basic Photoshop and other technical skills and beyond.

Blogging is a full-time job, or at least it is if you want it to turn into anything remotely resembling profitable. If all you want is a hobby blog where you post once a week just for the fun of it and you never expect to make money from the blog, that’s all well and good, but to build a profitable business with your blog you have to be willing to invest both time and money into the business.

If it takes two years for you to reach the point of earning sponsorships and press trips, that means potentially 30 to 40k of your own cash, time and effort into building up the business until you start seeing a return on your investment. That is, income from book sales, advertising, press trips and sponsorships which then fund your travels.

**It’s simple business 101.**

I don't know of a single professional travel blogger (*someone making a livable income with their blog and brand, not hobby bloggers who have an outside source of income*) who magically snapped their fingers and was suddenly making 60k+ a year within the first couple months of starting. The vast majority spent at least a year or two traveling on their own dime, putting in 30-40 hours a week minimum while creating high-quality posts and working the social media gamut and building up a reputation, before they started seeing an ROI.

Speaking from our own perspective, and for the sake of full disclosure, we make a full-time income through the brand. But that took a full year of working for free (*investing my own time + money*) before I saw an ROI. I spent 2011 building the platform in my spare time, writing the three city guidebooks, filling the site with content and blog posts, launching the social media platforms, before ever taking it public just before Christmas of 2011.

I then spent all of 2012 putting in 80+ hour weeks continuing the blog, writing and launching [The Expat Guidebook](#), working on social media, investing in advertising, press releases, networking and beyond, all while continuing to freelance with [Complete Writing Solutions](#), where I had been working since founding the company in Bulgaria in January of 2008.

Then in 2013 we launched [the brand boot camps](#) in the early part of the year [after my brother's suicide](#), I published [Beyond Borders - The Social Revolution](#) in April, and over the course of the year we've continued to build up, earning sponsorships and press trips, teaching gigs within the Internet marketing & social media industry, more and more individual and brand [consultations](#), marketing our [social media advertising](#) for travel partners, as well as offering [social media management](#) through the brand, and working on commissioned projects.

There's also side ventures that have sprung up through the brand, such as Cristina's apartment finder service, which eventually reached a critical mass point where there was enough business coming in to warrant the launch of its own brand and website: [Cancun Apartment Rentals](#). That's her part-time job apart from her Spanish-language duties here with Marginal Boundaries. And we have our fingers in a lot of other pies here in the Riviera Maya with presentations and more, all within the startup and blogging/social media/travel/tourism communities.

It's also grown from just myself, to now including my wife Cristina, and my friend/personal assistant Devlin, who works as my graphic designer (*he designed [our press kit](#) and the [10 Steps to Brand Domination graphics](#), for example*), social media assistant (*he handles the bulk of our Pinterest, Twitter and StumbleUpon*) and WordPress hacker who handles the code side of things. And helped reduce my own hours from 12+ a day to 6 - 8 hours a day. (*By the way, he's always on the lookout for graphic design gigs and social media management clients. You can reach him through his [Dream In Reality](#) brand*).

Running the blog is by no means a walk in the park. I'm passionate about it, and it's more than just my work: it's my life. Which means I enjoy the hell out of what I do and I never get tired of it. But there are a lot of man-hours that go into running a profitable blog.

Such as: writing and editing two to three blog posts per week; shooting, cutting, editing and post-processing (adding music/graphics/etc.) two to three YouTube videos per week; shooting hundreds (*if not thousands*) of photos per week to be used in blog posts + social media photo albums; running the social media; consulting; managing our own PPC ad campaigns via Facebook, StumbleUpon and other outlets; managing the PR for the company (*which includes writing press releases as well as continually seeking out new opportunities*); sending out proposals for press



trips; answering emails; answering comments on social media outlets; researching and investigating for new articles; working on new content for future books and other products; working on the social media advertising for other clients (*ads which are ran through the Marginal Boundaries social media network of 10,000+ readers and 1,000,000+ monthly views*); creating infographics; creating Pinterest uploads and fliers and posters; and much, much more.

Bottom line, **running a travel blog is a full-time job**. And while yes we get free meals, free accommodations and free tours from partners within the industry...in order to get to the point where we had enough traffic and the loyalty of our reader-base to be able to earn sponsors and advertising, we had to pay our own way, work our way up, and put in a lot of hours. And we still put in a lot of hours.

And even though there are beach-side days with mojitos and ceviche and plenty of eye candy, the whole concept of “passive income” and toes-in-the-sand-while-I-rake-in-millions is mostly a marketing myth promoted by people trying to promote the dream of a four hour work week. Even Tim Ferris spends full-time hours every week managing his online empire, whether it’s signing new contracts and book deals, to working with his assistants and team to create new products and campaigns, to flying around the world so he can promote his lifestyle through pictures, video and new content.

**A successful brand is not a magical money-making dream-come-true.** There are a lot of working parts that need to be regularly oiled, and it generally requires a team of people working together to achieve the greatest levels of success. That’s not to say that a single individual can’t make it on their own, but there does come a point where if you want to achieve greater levels of success, you have to have other people helping to manage the work load that is associated with content production, press,

social media management and beyond.

**A profit-earning travel blog is not a hobby. It is a brand. It is a business.** And like any functioning business it requires hard work and active management to function. While a certain portion of your income may be passive (*such as long-term book sales beyond a book launch based on residual traffic over time*), the vast majority is (*in my opinion*) based on your ongoing, active management of the brand...as the face of the company, as the head officer and so on and so forth.

# Building a Brand

## Hobby Blogging Versus Profit Blogging

These days, blogs are a dime a dozen. Anyone, anywhere, can pick up a Blogger or a Tumblr or a WordPress account and start jotting down words, posting photos and creating content. Or pay 15 bucks and purchase a domain and install WordPress or Magento and go.

**But content alone does not = a business.** And for those of you who are interested in building an actual for-profit blog, you need to understand that there is a difference between hobby blogging and profit blogging. **A very big, livable-income difference.**

Let's start off with [The Business of Travel Blogging](#). You can also read the same content from Sebastian from Off the Path over at his [How to Become a Professional Blogger](#). In both cases you'll see that professional, for-profit blogging is a labor-intensive project; it is not something that is done on a whim, nor is it something that can be done part-time, in your spare time, in between other projects.

If you want your blog to bring in an income, it takes a lot of hard work to get it to that point. [Passive income is largely a myth](#), a marketing ploy created by the geniuses behind best-selling Amazon titles designed to lure the middle-class sucker into believing that they, too, can live a life of luxury on the beaches of

X country while pulling in tens of thousands of dollars per month in income, all while working a mere two to four hours per week and outsourcing your grunt work to third world underlings.

But I digress. The point I want to make is that a profitable blog, one that makes a livable income for the person (or persons) running it, is a business. Not a hobby. And as such, it has to have a business plan behind it. Which means an overall business strategy, market research and development, public relations, press, publicity, social media marketing and management, graphic design and, most importantly, actual money utilized for marketing and outsourcing, if you don't plan on doing the grunt work yourself.

A hobby is, [as per the Wiki](#), defined as *a regular activity done for pleasure - typically during leisure - e.g., collecting themed items and objects, engaging in creative and artistic pursuits, playing sports. Continual participation in a hobby can provide substantial skill and knowledge about it. **Anyone who does an activity solely for fun is called an 'amateur' (from French for "lover of") or 'hobbyist'; whereas anyone who does an activity for a reward is a 'professional'.***

**Let's take a moment to analyze that statement. Anyone who does something for fun, simply for the pleasure of it, without earning a reward or income, is a hobbyist. A person who is earning an income (see reward) from their time is a professional.**

In the travel blogging industry as a whole, the vast majority of travel bloggers I know of and read on a regular basis fall into the hobby blogging category. That is, they have a blog, they write content, they post photos, they have social media channels, and they have readers. But they don't make an income with their blog. Rather, they have an outside source of income which is funding their travel.



And there's nothing wrong with that. That's what they are comfortable with. It's their hobby. It's what they do for fun. In their downtime. For leisure.

On the flip side, I know of very few professional travel bloggers; I can count them on two hands. I'm sure there are more, but I'm talking about the ones I know of. Several of them are mentioned in this book.

These are the ones who actually make a livable income from their blogs. They receive sponsored travel, they sell products, they sell advertising, they go on press trips, and they generate actual revenue with their content and their platforms (*website, social media and beyond*).

**The primary difference between hobby bloggers and profit bloggers? An actual business plan for their brand above and beyond simply producing content.**

## The Myth of Content Generation

*“If you write high quality content, traffic will eventually come and you will magically rise to the top of the search engine”.*

This is the biggest, most bald-faced lie I know of when it comes to building a brand. Especially in light of the [Freshness Factor](#) and the whole social interaction tracker that is built into Google Analytics, which basically tracks social engagement across the entire Internet and then ranks your website in the SERPs based upon your number of engagements, date of engagements, and whether your content is fresh.

Combine that with Google's Post-PRISM move [to make all](#)

[searches secure](#) (apart from ad clicks) and move people into paying for access to stats for keyword research, [Google+ Authorship](#) and [Authorship Ranking](#) and you have a reality where SEO is of little to no importance above and beyond titles.

Instead, Google is checking a number of other stats to determine whether or not your content is “relevant” and thus worthy of being promoted in the search engines. First and foremost, they check the freshness factor. Then they check social engagement. And your Authorship. And then any associated Google Maps, tagged locations (*I was here via Facebook, Foursquare, etc.*) and so on and so forth.

**Not text links. Not keywords within an article.** But rather the overall information of the piece and its relative correlations with other pieces of content, such as local businesses and social media platforms and YouTube videos and geo-tracked data such as Google maps and photos.

Which all boils down to this: **if you don't have a content marketing strategy in place to ensure that your content is getting blasted out to the masses via social media, syndication, press releases and beyond, your blog will sit there collecting dust** even while you spend countless hours writing content with the hopes that it will eventually boost you up to the #1 position of Google.

Imagine a hermit living in a cave. He's the best painter that the world has ever seen. Better than Picasso. Better than Leonardo. Better than Rembrandt. Than van Gogh. Than anyone.

Problem is, he's a hermit. He never showcases his work to anyone. The only creatures who even know his paintings exist are the rats and the bats which populate his cave alongside him. And considering they can't talk or spread information about his paintings to anyone...no one will ever know that his paintings

even exist, much less are the best the world has ever seen.

If you don't have a content marketing strategy for your brand, you are the hermit living in the cave. [It's Lemonade Stand Marketing 101.](#)

## Digital Content Marketing and Advertising

The number 1 difference between hobby bloggers and profit bloggers is a content strategy. Part of which includes a marketing and advertising budget.

Which no hobby blogger I know of uses. And every professional, for-profit blogger I know of actually has and leverages.

Coca Cola, Toyota, National Geographic and any other multi-billion-dollar company you can think of have advertising budgets. Why, when they are household names known around the world that are instantly recognized and “trusted” for the value they have provided over the years to billions of consumers? **Because that's how they continue making billions and ensuring that their products are purchased by new generations of users.**

Content marketing is advertising. Make no mistake about it. And if you don't have an advertising budget and a content marketing strategy in place, you can expect to see little to no returns on any investments you make, including the time it takes to build up your brand and your blog.

A smart business budgets 20 to 30 percent of its income towards marketing and advertising. If you are a small business generating 100k a year, that's 20-30k of operating capital, or 2000 - 2500 a month, more or less. If you are 50k a year business, 1200 a month

is a good mark to shoot for.

Now, if a hobby blogger is satisfied with their hobby blog and has no desire to make an income with their blog, there is no reason to worry about a marketing budget or generating traffic to view the content written on the blog, because it's done purely out of enjoyment. As a pastime. A hobby. Something done in leisure, for fun.

**A hobby is not meant to generate income.** Building model trains, planes, sculpting wooden scraps into flutes or small figurines are perfect examples of hobbies done simply for the enjoyment of the person doing so, and there is zero reason to have a marketing budget behind that pastime.

Which leads to me this point: **if your blog is simply a hobby and you do it for fun, you have no ground to stand on when you throw a hissy fit because Facebook and other social media outlets want you to pay to use their services to market your content.**

At the end of the day, social media outlets are advertising and content marketing platforms. They are not charities. They are not run by volunteers. And they have every right to charge for their digital real estate, to keep the servers going, the developers working, and the wheels turning.

Just as much as you would pay for a full-page spread in a magazine, or a header ad on Yahoo's home page, or a sidebar ad on YouTube, or a logo placement on a YouTube video or a producer's credit in a film, **social media outlets are advertising platforms that have every right to charge for the space you take up when you publish content via their platforms.**

In the last few months (as of this writing) there has been an outcry from the hobby bloggers of the world that "it's not fair" that Facebook is now charging brand pages for their content to



be promoted in the news feeds of followers. “We’ve lost over 80% of our traffic”, some of them cry.

They stamp their feet. They groan and mumble. They cry out, “We are going to stop using Facebook because it’s not fair they are charging me for traffic!” And at the end of the day it’s for nothing. Why? **Because they are hobby bloggers, and the traffic coming into their blogs from Facebook (and other sources) is nothing more than vanity traffic. It’s “feel good” traffic.**

Since a hobby blogger’s traffic is purely vanity traffic and does not serve an income purpose, they have no reason to be paying for said traffic. An advertising budget = pointless for a hobbyist, because a hobby is something done for free, in your leisure time, for fun and your own personal enjoyment. It is not a business.

**An 80% drop in traffic for a hobby blogger = absolutely no change whatsoever on the functioning of said hobby blog.** It has no negative impact on the hobby blogger’s income or their blog’s value in the eyes of investors...because they have none (*income or real-world value*) They aren’t a business. They are simply hobbyists, tinkering with something in their spare time, for fun.

Profit bloggers, on the other hand, are running a business. They have advertising budgets. A content marketing strategy. One that includes setting aside 20 to 30 percent of the working capital to use towards paying for advertising space on other people’s websites, for [paid StumbleUpon ads](#), for [paid Google+ advertisements](#) as part of the Google Display Network, for paid [Instagram and Pinterest ads](#), for [Facebook advertising](#), for [press releases](#), [sponsored posts](#), [social media advertising](#) and beyond.

Profit bloggers have income strategies in place from day one to ensure that the traffic coming into the website isn’t just vanity

traffic. They have eBooks and other products, consultation services, social media management services, freelance services such as content generation, website development, photography and graphic design. There is a business plan in place so that when traffic comes to the website, it's not just there for simple enjoyment; there are numerous pathways for the reader to take once they arrive at the website, and all of them end in a for-profit action at some point or another.

Profit bloggers have numerous income strategies in place at their blog to ensure that their advertising spend is compensated by revenue (*ROI, otherwise known as a return on investment*). They don't have a problem paying for advertising and content marketing, because they are generating income with their sites; **they are professionals, not hobbyists.**

And lastly, but certainly not least, profit bloggers are not hermits living in caves. They are social butterflies who use every single tool in the shed to guarantee global saturation of their content to ensure maximum readership and, ultimately, income to keep the blog functioning, the light bill paid, food on the table, and a roof over their heads.

## Brand Building 101

A brand is a business. And any good business, regardless of how large or small, needs working capital. An initial investment. I like to use the 15 to 20 percent rule. That is, any business out there needs a 15 to 20 percent initial cash infusion to get off the ground.

For a travel blog, that means one to two years of “building up” until you have enough traffic to generate a livable income. Nobody starts off with 50k followers and 10k a month in sales. It means paying for content marketing and advertising as part

of your marketing strategy. It means paying for press releases. Sending out proposals. Press kits. Answering emails. Managing your social media. And so much more.

A hobby blog can become a profit blog. All it takes is the understanding from the person behind the blog that in order to generate a profit the blog must: A) Have an advertising budget; and B) Have income-producing products and services at the blog to guide readers to once they arrive.

For travel bloggers, one of the easiest ways to generate a profit is with advertising. That's what our blogs are: advertising platforms. They are beachfront real estate in the digital marketplace. Hotels, restaurants, tour agencies, governments, other businesses and beyond understand how advertising works. That's how we get press trips and sponsored travel and free meals and tours; we trade advertising space for those perks.

But there's so much more than just sponsored travel. You can use any of the examples talked about above to start generating an income for your blog, but you have to be willing to invest in your business in order for it to become an actual business.

Professionals are not cheapskates. Professionals are not afraid of change. They are not afraid of spending money to make money. They don't fly by the seat of their pants; they plan and practice, fail and succeed, learn and move on.

Professionals have an advertising budget. They set aside 20 to 30 percent of their income to market their blog, their content, their services. They don't complain about the costs, because running a business isn't something that can be done for free.

Don't have the money right now to advertise and market your content? Go back to the drawing board until you do. Work a second or third job, like everyone else did before their blogs started making money, and save up enough cash to actually build

a business. Because until you do...you don't have a business. You have a hobby.

As Adrienne Graham said in this brilliant piece for Forbes, [No, You Can't Pick My Brain. It Costs Too Much](#), when her friends and potential clients have mentioned, "You know I don't have that much money", her reply is **"SO WHAT! That means you either have to delay your plans or come up with the money to fund your dreams. Period."**

**You get what you pay for, and if all you are willing to put in is zero, that's all you will ever get back in return.**



# Why Some People Will Never Be Entrepreneurs

Fact: some of you will never get your businesses off the ground and you will never become successful entrepreneurs. Not because you lack the hopes, the dreams, the ideas and the aspiration...but because you lack the one characteristic that successful business-owners have: **the willingness to sacrifice and do whatever it takes to achieve their goals.**

*Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary. - Steve Jobs*

## Building Your Business

Imagine you want to start a restaurant. You need a minimum of \$30,000 in capital to buy the location you have your eye on, remodel it, pick up kitchen equipment, buy tables, chairs and utensils, hire a chef and kitchen staff, fill the freezer and fridge with food, the wine cellar with wine and pay for press releases and advertising to get word of mouth out so you can fill the restaurant and make your investment money back.

Problem is, you don't have the capital on hand and in order to

get your business off the ground you have to find someone who is willing to loan you the money. You have two options: private investors or the banking system. Both of these options require you to present your business idea along with a business plan on how you will earn the money back...but more than that you will be asked to provide proof of your intent, proof of how serious you are about your business.

[View Video Here](#)

**This is almost always 15 to 20 percent of the total amount you are asking for**, either in cash or in the form of collateral, such as putting your vehicle up, or putting your house up.

This collateral is proof that you are serious about your business venture, that it is more than just a pipe dream or a wisp of smoke. It's also an insurance policy should your business fail, allowing your investors to recoup the money they invested with your company at the get-go.

If you have the 15 to 20 percent cash on hand, you won't need collateral, but regardless of which option you work with the bank or the investors are going to want to see that you, the owner, have already done your due diligence and put forth the hard work and initial monetary investment to make your dreams a reality.

No money or no collateral = no business loan to start your business. Why? **Because you aren't serious about the venture.** All you have are pipe dreams. Hopes. Aspirations. You've not done any hard work, you haven't laid any foundation, you haven't put forth any effort and you haven't sacrificed anything to actually make your dreams a reality.

# Building a Brand

It's no different when it comes to building a brand online. If you are expecting to build a \$60,000 a year business, expect to put at least 15 to 20 percent of that total amount into the business before it reaches the "breaking even" point, or the point where it's actually making you 60k a year.

In other words, **expect to invest a minimum of 9k to 12k of your own money to get your 60k a year business off the ground.** That money will go towards professional web development, copywriting, press releases, a social media manager...or if you are going to be doing it all on your own, to pay for the books, the programs, the courses, the newsletter subscriptions and the retreats you will read, study and attend over the next year or two while you build up the know-how to run an online enterprise.

At this point I'm sure there are some of my travel blogging peers out there who are claiming, "That's not true! We built our blogs and our brands up from scratch and we didn't pay a dime to get them to the point where they are making 60k a year".

I call bullshit on that one. **No one starts off with a built-in following of readers.** It takes time to build up readers who garnish you the traffic that either generates money from book sales, or generates enough interest for you to land sponsors and advertising.

And what did you have to do in order to generate that following? You had to travel for at least a year or two, blogging about your adventures as you went along, paying for your plane/train/bus tickets, hotels, adventure activities, dinners out, cameras, smartphones and all the other little things you put up on your blog and your social media platforms.

**And how did you pay for those adventures that earned you the followers and the traffic and the sponsors and advertisers who now make you 50/60k+ a year? With money. Your investment capital.** The minimum 15 to 20 percent that is required to get a functioning business off the ground. There isn't a single travel blogger out there who magically started up one day and had enough followers and advertising/sponsorships from the first day to generate a minimum of 60k a year of income.

You either invest in your brand up front, or you invest in your brand over time, but the idea that you can start a business online for free without ever paying any money or investing any time into the venture is a false one.

**You get what you pay for.** And if you aren't willing to pay for anything, you will never be an entrepreneur.

## The Rules for Success

As mentioned in the introduction there is a single virtue that successful business owners and entrepreneurs have that separates them from the masses: the willingness to **sacrifice anything and do anything** to achieve their goals.

No excuses. No half-measures. Full-on dedication, commitment and hard work. They invest everything to make it happen. And sometimes they fall flat on their ass. But rather than give up they learn from those mistakes, pick themselves up, dust themselves off and move on to the next venture, using what they learned from the first go-around to hone and refine as they go.

**Professionals invest money.** They are willing to spend thousands to get their venture off the ground, not make excuses why they can't afford a \$30 eBook, a \$1,500 event, \$500 a month

for a professional social media manager, \$100 a month to join a guru's monthly newsletter or \$500 a year to join a successful mentor's online program. **60k a year business = 9k - 12k a year minimum investment (or business expenses/cost of doing business).**

They sacrifice the extraneous to find the extra money even if they don't have it at first. No more Starbucks when you can have coffee at home. No more cigarettes. No more dinners out when you can cook at home. No more movies out. No gym membership when you can work out at home. No more Netflix subscription. Saving every penny, at least until your venture is making you the money you want and need it to.

Think you can't save up enough cash to get a venture going? Think again. Start here with this article on [Ten Ways to Save \\$25,000 or More](#), either for a life of full-time travel or for a career break to get your new career off the ground, or for a retreat event or a copywriter or a social media manager or a trip to study under your favorite mentor.

**Professionals invest time.** They spend four, six, eight hours a day or more on their venture, even if that means working those hours apart from their full-time job. They sacrifice what it takes to find those extra hours; their favorite TV show, their weekend dance class, their Sunday football. They get up early and go to bed late. They do what it takes, no matter how many hours and how much blood, sweat and tears are required.

Everyone is familiar with the 10,000 hours to become an expert concept. Basically, if you work at something long enough, spend enough time on it day in, day out, you will eventually become an expert at that something. But in order to get to that point you must invest. Time, primarily. Money, secondarily.

**A pianist doesn't become a maestro of the instrument by hoping and dreaming.** They, or their parents, pay for classes.

They buy him/her an instrument. They send their child to the best schools, or that individual pays for himself/herself to go to the best schools, to study under the greatest masters, to continually learn and push themselves higher. They spend countless hours and countless thousands, day in and day out, until they achieve that master status.

They don't sit around wishing, hoping and thinking about it. They sacrifice what it takes to get it done. They create their own reality through conscious thought and manifestation, through hard work and commitment.

**Are you ready to sacrifice? What are you doing right now in your life to make your dreams a reality?**



# Why Some People Will Never Be Entrepreneurs II The Startup Myth

Fact: some of you will never get your businesses off the ground and you will never become successful entrepreneurs. Not because you lack the hopes, the dreams, the ideas and the aspiration...but because you lack the one characteristic that successful business-owners have: **the willingness to sacrifice and do whatever it takes to achieve their goals.**

What defines a startup? According to the [Wiki](#), a startup is: *company, a partnership or temporary organization designed to search for a repeatable and scalable business model. These companies, generally newly created, are in a phase of development and research for markets.*

A startup is an actual company, partnership or organization, somewhere in a state of development and marketing, even if newly founded. The term “company, partnership or organization” means that the startup in question is an actual, functioning professional entity. Not an idea. Not a concept. **An actual, breathing, professional organization of some type, with real money and professionals behind it.**

An actual startup has a minimum 15 to 20 percent of its planned value already invested by the founders, and one to two years of time already on the line developing the platform. If you haven't

invested the time or finances in your so-called “business”, how can you expect anyone else - from potential partners to investors to employees and beyond - to take your “business” seriously or professionally?

What does development mean? Development means that the startup is, in fact, an actual business that is currently functioning and is in development stage. It is not in a concept stage. It is not an idea. It is not a theory. **It has a solid foundation already laid and the people who built that foundation are currently tweaking that development towards their eventual goals.**

What does research mean? Research means that the people behind the startup are actively researching potential markets for their startup, and they are continually developing their company towards those markets. They are not ideas. They are not concepts. **There is an actual, physical business platform behind the marketing, one that is being researched and marketed to potential investors.**

As a general rule, a startup has 15 to 20 percent of the funds they are asking for already on the line, **minimum**. They’ve already spent a year or two building up the platform, working their fingers to the bone, putting together the foundation layer of the idea they are looking to go public with. **And they are prepared to spend at least another two to five years continuing to work until they start seeing a return on their investment.**

**Any monkey with diarrhea can shart out ideas.** Ideas are not special. Ideas do not have merit. Only when those ideas are honed into something valuable do they offer any sort of real-world value. Therefore, **a startup is not:** an idea, a concept or a puff of smoke. A startup is an actual business with an already-developed platform that is in continual development and the founders are looking for funders to help take the company to the next stage of development, or to go public.

**A startup is not:** a person who wants to hire a social media manager or a Facebook analyst or a graphic designer or a content developer or a consultant or a Kickstarter campaign manager, but then uses the terminology “I’m on a startup budget so I have limited funds and can’t afford to pay professional rates”.

*Inc.com has an excellent article on [Seven Startup Success Stories](#). Adventure Life started with 3,000 for a laptop + brochures, then another 11,500 in advertising during their first year, and another 33,500 in advertising their second year. Johnny Cupcakes spent 7k in startup costs and another 10k for a trade show. Tokyo Joe put 300k+ on the line. Sweet Leaf Tea needed about 10k up front to get going. Paragon Space Development put over 75k on credit cards up front. Tarte Cosmetics put 18,000 on the line for makeup cases and containers. Edible Arrangements put 100k on the line.*

*None of these startups got off the ground with merely ideas and good intentions. **The people who founded these companies put their own time, effort, hard-work and their own funds into their passions and worked hard until they succeeded.** In other words, they put their money where their mouths were, and in return, they garnished investors because their passion and hard work showed.*

Can’t afford to pay professional rates to professionals to develop the idea you want to eventually generate 100k a year or more in income for you? **Go back to the drawing board.** Work a second or third job for a year or two until you have the funds together to **actually pay people to help build your company. Prove that you have a serious business venture,** not simply a brain spasm.

Show proof to your investors and/or the bank that you are more than just a sharting monkey by actually having the stones to work and build your company by **putting your own time and money on the line, at least 15 to 20 percent of the value of what you**

**expect to build and at least a year or two building up the platform that you are trying to sell.**

**That means if you plan on building a 100k a year business, you need to have 15 to 20k of your own money on the line to pay for professionals to develop it.** To hire a social media manager, graphic designers, coders, campaign managers and beyond. To actually build the platform that you will then use to shop to potential investors as your in-development, actual company.

Not an idea. Not a concept. Not a puff of smoke. An actual company or organization with an actual, physical platform that has had at least one to two years of time put into it, and at least 15 to 20 percent of the value of that company poured into it through the personal coffers of the founders.

**“No money or time invested in your business? You aren’t a startup. You are a sharting monkey with diarrhea of the brain.**

Especially the professionals you are asking to spend the time to help you make your idea into reality. You know...the founders who are going to help you build an actual, physical platform over the next year or two until you have an actual, viable company or organization to shop to potential investors and to the public.

Consequently, this is why the vast majority of crowdfunding ventures fail, because sharting monkeys think that they can just post an idea up on Kickstarter or Indiegogo and they will magically find people who want to invest in that wet little puff of vapor and misty particles.

**Wrong. People invest in results. Not pipe dreams.** The most successful crowdfunding ventures are almost always put together by serious players who have either already spent a year or two building up their venture before going public with it, **thus showing their passion and their seriousness at making their**

**dream a reality**, or they have a reputation for having developed similar concepts in the past, enough so that they have the trust of the public enough to warrant people investing blindly in their next venture.

The average monkey who holds up their latest turd and expects it to be seen as the Holy Grail of ideas winds up with exactly what they offered in the first place: nothing but shit in their hands. Because that's all ideas really are: concepts. Puffs of smoke. Pipe dreams.

Want your idea to become successful? **Work at it!** Spend a year or two putting your own money, your heart and soul, your passion, your time, your blood, sweat and tears, into the project. Can't afford to pay a professional designer? Learn how to design on your own. Watch 100+ hours of YouTube videos and learn how to code, how to use InDesign, AfterEffects, video editors and beyond.

Don't want to invest your own time or money in your ideas? Get used to having your hands covered in shit, because that's all you have to offer to the rest of the world...and that's why you are doomed to failure. Real success, real startups, the ones which find investors and make it into the real world as actual, viable companies, have real people working for real money on the project...not hopes and promises and the wafting scent of offal.

# Types of Travel

In the days of yesteryear, full-time travel was a gift enjoyed only by those wealthy enough to afford being on the road, or for those lucky enough to have a job that paid them to jaunt around the world on their employer's dime. The concept of location independent was in its infant stages at best; most people were tied down to a brick-and-mortar job of some type, requiring them to be on-site for 50 weeks out of the year.

Then came the Internet. The moment of singularity. Leaps and bounds of progress. Suddenly it wasn't a requirement to be tied down to a physical location for work. Email and Skype videos and Google+ Hangouts have allowed for instant communication to happen no matter where a person might be located in the world, allowing anyone, anywhere, to potentially transform themselves from location dependent to full-time traveler working out of cafes, apartments, hotels or coworking spaces anywhere in the world.

But despite these technological advances, it can still be a confusing maze of options when it comes to determining exactly *how* to take your life on the road. Everyone is familiar with the budget form of traveling, backpacking from hostel to hostel, and most people realize that hotel living is out of their price range unless the company is footing the bill. So how is it that those of



us who travel for a living make it all work out at the end of the day?

[View Video Here](#)

The simple reality is that in today's age there are many different types of travel. If your budget can afford it, the hotel option still exists, and for many working professionals it is the better choice due to high-quality Internet, room service, daily maid service, pool and gym access, business centers and beyond. But what about the other, more budget-oriented options?

If you are the backpacker type of traveler who doesn't mind spotty Internet, the occasional cold shower, and mingling with others in a shared kitchen, the hostel route is the best choice. While not all hostels are created equal, many of them do offer private rooms with ensuite bathrooms to keep you out of the crowd, and they are generally the most affordable of the traditional routes to choose from.

Full-time road warriors like myself tend to opt for fully-furnished, long-term property rentals. The best part about this is you can generally find accommodations in countries around the world for a fraction of what they charge in the United States or the United Kingdom. As a general rule, I've found that a 1 to 2 bedroom place runs in the 400 to 600 USD a month bracket (including all your utilities/Internet), and you have all the comforts of home, as well as the added security of having a "home away from home" where you can lock your gear away, go out for the weekend, and come back to your own place.

One of the advancements of the Internet is [Airbnb](#). If you haven't heard of it yet, you need to know about it. It's a mixture of hotel, bed and breakfast with long-term rental, since you can book by the day or rent by the month, and you'll find a wide

variety of properties available in just about every city around the world. The platform is continually growing since its launch, and they have provided a springboard for anyone, anywhere in the world to quickly and easily find a middle-of-the-road priced accommodation without the need for contracts and leases and down-payments.

But if you are a serious budget hunter, you can do one of two things. The first is [Couchsurfing](#). It's a social media platform designed for people who enjoy traveling around the world and shacking up in other people's homes...for free. The downside is that you can really only stay a night or two, or sometimes up to a week if it's a generous host, but people around the world have made their homes available for travelers to use as stepping-off points for destinations. It's a great way to make local friends and find yourself with a personal expert for whatever city you happen to be visiting.

The second (and more long-term) option is house-sitting. This is something that has been around for years, but the Internet has made it more accessible. The basic concept is that you watch someone's house for them while they go on vacation or business, and in exchange for trimming the grass, feeding the dog/cats and keeping the house clean, you stay for free. The contracts vary and you are sometimes stuck in a single location without the ability to get out and site-see more than on a daily basis (such as if you are watching pets), but it's a great way to find a place to hunker down and get some work done without a lot of distractions while enjoying a basically free cost of living in destinations around the world.

And finally, you have the sponsored travel option, which is really something that is only available to long-term, full-time bloggers who have built up a reputation and a following with their blog. The general idea behind press trips with sponsors is that in exchange for blog posts and publicity at your social media channels, you

can earn free hospitality, food, tours and even transportation depending on the depth of the pockets your host has, and what kind of arrangement you can negotiate.

At the end of the day it doesn't matter where you come from or what your budget is. Anyone can travel the world full time, it's just a matter of determining which type of travel suits you best. From backpackers to working professionals, there's a little slice of the world out there for everyone; it's simply a matter of choosing which one tastes best for you.

# A Need For Income

If you take a look at the vast majority of travel bloggers, they generally have some type of a “job” apart from their blog and travel brand. While many leverage their travel blog as a means to earn more, most start off with some type of location-independent income source: graphic design, freelance writing, consulting, an Airbnb property back home, day trading; the list goes on.

Individual results vary, but as a general rule most full-time travel bloggers spent around two years building up their community and the traffic necessary to warrant sponsorships and advertising deals to leverage “free” travel. Before any of us arrived at this point there was a lot of spending involved, especially in relation to transportation, food, accommodations, and the gear necessary to take high-quality photos, record high-quality video and pay for the platforms that host our escapades: websites, social media sites and beyond.

Even if you don’t run a blog to earn sponsorships and advertising and you just want to travel for the sake of it, it still costs money, especially if you want to live a life on the road as opposed to only traveling on vacation in between work sessions.

While every blogger and their brother has their own version of “how to travel the world for next to nothing” and there is a never-

ending barrage of oneupsmanship in terms of who can travel the cheapest, the cold, hard truth is that until you've built up the reputation and the traffic to earn sponsorships and to land housesitting gigs, you have to shell out your own cash to travel.

[View Video Here](#)

While you can temper those costs somewhat with Couchsurfing, housesitting and sponsorships, you'll almost always have transportation, tech and food costs. Unless you plan on living on fruit and ramen noodles or surviving on street food in Asia for a dollar a day, you can expect to need at least 10 dollars a day for basic food costs. Less if you have a long-term accommodation and can make your own food as opposed to eating out; Cris and I, for example, usually spend 200 dollars or less per month on our basic food costs; that's around 6 dollars a day. If we eat out that goes up accordingly.

If you plan on staying in one place and exploring a city for a few months, you can keep your transportation costs down to a minimum. Let's say you plan on visiting Rome for two months and you are lucky enough to have free accommodations. You'll need food + a subway pass or taxi fares to get around and see the sites, which can range from 5 to 10 dollars a day on average.

With just basic food and transportation costs you already need around 400 to 500 to get around and survive. And that's without even adding accommodations to the mix. If you can't find a Couchsurfing place or a housesitting gig and you don't have the social klout and traffic to line up sponsorships, you'll be paying out of pocket for those expenses, and unless you plan on living out of a bug-ridden hostel with spotty WiFi and cold-water showers, you can expect to pony up 30 to 50 a night for 3-star accommodations.

This is where long-term apartment rentals come into play, and it's why Cris and myself choose the immersion travel option when we are doing funding our own travels. When you can rent a fully furnished apartment for three months at around 400 to 600 a month, we end up finding most of our accommodations for around 15 to 20 dollars a day. Add that to our max of 10 a day for transport and our average of 6 a day for food, and we average about 30 dollars a day for a couple, living out of fully-furnished, middle-class accommodations anywhere in the world.

That's not a bad price; 30 a day comes out to around 900 dollars a month, on average. If we are on the ground for a longer duration, the transportation costs can get even lower. Our time in Cancun, for example, has seen our basic total costs per month down around 650 per month for the two of us; even with our friend and my personal assistant Devlin added into the mix we end up around \$800 a month for the three of us to live.

If you want to do vacation-styled adventures, your costs go up exponentially because people charge more money for vacation homes and you don't have enough time on the ground to leverage long-term discounts.

Entertainment is additional, of course; entry fees to ruins, hot air balloon rides, scuba diving adventures; these are all extra. But when we are talking about the basic nuts and bolts of the travel lifestyle, there are always going to be some basic costs associated with the life.

Whatever you do, don't believe anyone who tells you that you can travel the world for free as a blanket statement, because while you eventually can mitigate some of the costs associated with a life on the road, there are a lot of caveats to get you to that point. Considering that most bloggers worked around two years to build up their reputation to get sponsorships, that means they shelled out an average of \$25 to \$30 a day, minimum, without even taking



into account airfare.

As a general rule, it costs between 10k and 15k a year to “budget travel” before you even add in the airfare, which can run 3k to 5k per year depending on how long you are going to be in a destination or if you are jet-setting around the world on a monthly basis. Almost every blogger I know of has spent around 15k to 20k a year in total expenses to pursue the full-time travel lifestyle. Most of them needed two years to get to the point they could get “free” travel, and that’s a 30k to 40k investment.

Which is the same amount you would invest to build any type of 100k a year business, such as a restaurant, supermarket or beyond. So before you run off, quit your job, hop on a plane and ditch your country of origin to live full-time abroad, realize that you need a game plan to fund your lifestyle during those first few years of reputation-building before people are knocking on your door to send you around the world on the company dime.

# The Myth of Passive Income

There are very few of us who make an actual living with our travel blogs when compared to the number of travel blogs that are out there. Off the top of my head I can think of several; Wandering Earl, Nomadic Matt, Nomadic Samuel, Natalie Sisson, Gary Arndt, to name a few. There are more, but the point I want to reiterate is that you cannot travel without an income source.

Let's get one big myth out of the way right at the start: **no one's travel blog started off magically making money, and none of the current "big league" players arrived where they are today without funding their own travels for the first year or two while they built up their business and their brand enough so that they had an established following. Everyone starts off at zero.**

Which brings me to myth number two: **the myth of passive income.** Because let's get one thing straight: building your brand to the point where it is a profitable business and not just a hobby is something that takes time. Lots and lots of valuable time. And effort. And work. And sacrifice. And investment. Not just of the financial type, but also of yourself. **There is no part of brand building that is passive.** It is 100% active income, because you'll be working your tail off the first couple of years getting your brand to maintenance mode.

## [View Video Here](#)

Once you arrive at maintenance mode, you can relax a little bit. You'll still be working, and you'll still have to put in hours, but this is the sweet spot that has been over-hyped through publications such as *The 4 Hour Work Week*. Once you reach this point you can generally maintain your profitability through minimal time investments, especially if you are outsourcing your daily tasks through virtual assistants in all corners of the globe.

It's like a movie star getting ready to do a film. The pre-production phase means that the actor in question is preparing for the role. Spending three to four hours a day in the gym getting into shape. Losing or gaining weight. Growing a beard, or their hair. Preparing themselves mentally as well as physically for the role they will be playing. Learning how to ride a horse, scuba dive, dance, etc. And until they reach the shooting period, they spend three to four hours a day, minimum, every single day, getting ready for the part.

Once the film is ready to shoot, they can go into maintenance mode. They've already lost/gained the weight, grown the hair/beard, gone through the sword fight training, the horse riding training, the dance classes, the martial arts classes, and so on. They are physical and mentally ready for the role and they can then go into the maintenance mode of shooting the film.

Don't misunderstand me. Passive income is a very real thing. It exists. And it's a glorious moment when you reach the point where you have products and services that sell themselves based on referrals, affiliates, residual website traffic and so on. It's nice to know that I can go to the beach and take a couple of weeks to

explore the Balkans or the rainforests of the Amazon or what have you, and check my daily emails and see sales reports coming in.

**But to reach that point, to get your brand ready, it is anything but passive.** It's very much an all-hands-on-deck, hoist-the-mainsail and work your fingers to the bone day in and day out with 10, 12 and 14 hour days and beyond to build the platform, write the eBooks, create the products, hone the services, produce YouTube and blog content, build up your social media presence and meaningful relationships with your global audience so that they trust you enough to buy said products and services.

**Building a brand is a full-time job.** It is not a four hour a week commitment. It is a hands-on, nose-to-the-grindstone, daily effort. **Anyone who tells you otherwise is point-blank lying.** While it's true that you can outsource a lot of things to help reduce your workload, the money to pay those outsourced contract employees has to come from somewhere, and they still require management. And if you don't have the money to outsource, you'll be doing it all yourself, which means putting in a lot of hours and sacrificing until you reach the point

Not a single travel blogger (or any other blogger, for that matter) out there magically started with thousands of sales and tens of thousands of website hits per month. Everyone starts out at zero. And while everyone has a different rate of growth, it's the same process for everyone. If you want to run a profitable travel blog to fund your life on the road, you have to be willing and ready to put in the time and the money to get your brand to the point where it's making you enough money to fund your lifestyle.

If you remember from the last episode, this is usually a year or two for the average blogger. That means hands-on management every step of the way, writing the blog posts, going on location and shooting film and taking photos, editing those photos and cutting the video and so on. Then there is investing the time +

the money it takes to get to those locations, as well as for the gear you need to film and photograph, plus your money for accommodations and food while you are on location.

After that, there's the social media routine and the press kit and the public relations and the networking and the marketing and the day-to-day work involved in running a profitable business. And none of this, not a single aspect, can be considered passive, toes-in-the-sand-with-a-mojito-in-my-hand-while-the-money-just-rolls-in. **It's all very much active, reward-based income that is based entirely on how much time and effort you are willing to put into making your brand a reality.**

# Researching Your Destination

Research. It's so much more than simply hitting Google and looking for the first Travel Wiki or guidebook from Lonely Planet or some other "big name" in the industry. Investigation is the key, and it's the difference between having the best time of your life... or the worst.

As a professional travel blogger, there's only one place I go when I'm looking for reliable information on my next destination: **other bloggers**. Why? Because they are the only ones who have relevant, up-to-date information on the destinations that I'm researching.

While guidebooks from big-name companies in the "travel" industry were the norm for years prior to the advent of global Internet, the largest issue with guidebooks revolves around the fact that their information is always out of date. Always.

At most, print versions of guidebooks come out once a year. The reality is that most of them only publish revised versions every few years or so, and some of them go a decade or more before they publish a new edition.

How many times have you wandered into a hostel in the middle of nowhere and found a tattered old Lonely Planet guidebook shelved alongside dog-eared copies of local guides? Plenty. And



nine times out of ten, that guidebook is at least a decade old, if not more.

**Nowhere near current. Nowhere near reliable.**

Meanwhile, let's take a look at the average articles from travel bloggers. They've got photos from yesterday/last week/a month ago. Google maps. Current pricing. Phone numbers. Current Facebook and Twitter and website links.

[View Video Here](#)

Travel bloggers can tell me what the current political climate is in the country I'm looking to visit. They can tell me what local prices are now...not five or ten years ago. Yesterday. They have relevant links that I can click with my tablet, my cell phone, my laptop... not a tired, old-fashioned print copy that requires me to write down information and hunt down a physical map to find things.

Print versions don't have relevant contact information on the ground. If you try and call the people behind a travel guide from a big name agency, you'll get the 1-800 line; a customer service representative that doesn't know the time of day, much less have the information you need.

Meanwhile, if you contact a travel blogger regarding information on the ground in the destination they were just at, they can refer you to Facebook contacts, Couchsurfing contacts, house sitting contacts, Twitter and Google+ friends, emails of hosts and business contacts and accommodations and restaurants and museums and the local taxi driver who made all the difference during their time on the ground.

Yeah. I'm a little biased towards bloggers. That's because I'm one of them. But to be honest, there's a reason why tourism agencies

around the world are going to travel bloggers for their press, their marketing, their public relations. We are in touch with our readers, and we are in touch with each other, making for an interconnected network that no single guidebook will ever be able to match, no matter how “reputable” the company behind it might be.

But research is more than just finding out the little things. It’s all well and good to find the best hostels, restaurants and public transportation before you get there on the ground, but what about long-term amenities for those of us who are interested in more than just passing through as a backpacker?

What about long-term accommodations? Healthcare for those who have diabetes, children with autism, the elderly who need ongoing treatment for various ailments? What about schooling for children? What about university education for the young adults? What about coworking spaces for the professionally-minded? What about Internet connections, cell phone service, grocery stores, home delivery, babysitting services, information on which areas of the city flood during the rainy season, which areas are safe, which are dangerous, and beyond?

Then there’s weather conditions. Don’t like the tropics? Don’t like snow? Don’t want to deal with giant insects? Easily offended by legal drinking ages as low as 14 in the vast majority of countries outside the U.S.? Offended by legal prostitution? Legal cocaine? Legal marijuana? Teenage weddings? Polygamy? All of these are things you need to research before you ever set foot on the ground so you can avoid having a bad travel experience.

Periodically-updated guidebooks from companies who only send someone on location for two weeks out of the year never have this information. Why? Because it’s impossible to glean that type of info from a corporate sponsored trip where you are staying in a hotel the entire time you are on the ground, eating food on the

company dime and covering what the tourists want to read about.

Meanwhile, bloggers are out there uncovering the nitty gritty, the hidden, the off-the-beaten-path. They travel alone, as couples, with kids, with health issues, on their own dime (and sometimes on the sponsored dime of hotels and tour agencies and restaurants who are trading publicity for services), with their own agendas. Plus, with bloggers you have the benefit of seeing a destination through multiple sets of eyes at once, giving you the chance to review a destination from other trusted sources before you ever step foot in the place.

Some of us live on the ground for months to years, practicing the art of slow travel, or immersion travel as I call it. Living like a local, speaking the local language, earning residency visas, secondary passports, opening businesses, bank accounts, buying real estate, and going so far beyond what the average guidebook covers with its two weeks of on-the-ground research catering entirely to the just-passing-through, give-me-everything-in-English-so-I-can-experience-suburbia-abroad type of traveler.

Not that there's anything wrong with that type of travel. Guidebooks from big name publishers serve a purpose and they certainly have a market with the two-weeks-a-year crowd. But if you are someone who wants real, relevant, recent information for going beyond the pale...you know where to go. And it certainly isn't a 10 year old guidebook.

# Respecting Cultural Differences

It's 5 p.m. on a hot summer afternoon in late July. You've just spent nine long hours trekking through the Rhodope Mountains of southern Bulgaria bordering Greece, and now you are back in the ancient town of Plovdiv. Sweaty, hungry and thirsty, you take a quick shower to wash the grime from the day off and head to one of the restaurants that your local tour guide recommended to you.

The first thing you notice when you walk into the building is that the no smoking section is literally nothing more than a couple of tables near the windows in a small corner of the room. Everyone else is smoking. In the same room. In disgust, you turn around and leave, figuring you'll try your luck at the next stop along the way.

Imagine your surprise when the same situation presents itself. Not once, but three times over the next subsequent restaurants. Determined that you'll find an *actual* non-smoking establishment or room apart from the others, you doggedly trudge on.

By this point, you've become more than irate; you are starving, your head is pounding, your throat is parched, and the smell of cigarette smoke is forever branded into your clothing. After six more restaurants (and an hour of your time) you finally decide

that it's not worth the effort and you pick the least smoky of the past dozen places you inspected.

Disgruntled, hungry, thirsty and worn out, you discover that the menu doesn't offer anything in English, only in Bulgarian. Fumbling, you point at something that looks good, as well as what you think is a dark beer. Your drink arrives, and as you suck down the blessed sweetness of that first draft your eyes wander the room and lock onto a group of what looks to be 12 or 13 year old teenagers drinking beer at the bar with a couple of mid-20s.

*Of all the...!* Indignation boils up in your veins and random thoughts begin coursing through your head. *"I should report this to the police,"* is the first one that juts in, followed by, *"I can't believe they allow underage drinking in this country! It's no wonder they are culturally inferior to <insert Western, English-speaking country here>. How barbaric!"*

Stream of consciousness follows: *I can't believe they don't have non-smoking establishments. Don't they realize this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century? And no English menus? Don't they realize that English is the mandatory language of the world by this point? And underage drinking? Where are their parents? Why aren't they at home? It's no wonder this country is so corrupt, if they let their children drink in the bars unsupervised. Gods, is my food ever going to get here? My head is pounding from all this cigarette smoke. I'm never going to get it out of my clothing, and I'm going to have to take three showers just to get it out of my hair. Why did I ever come to this hell-hole?*

By the time your dinner finally arrives the food tastes bland, the charming atmosphere of the historical town has worn off, and your entire trip has been tainted by your lack of ability to accept the cultural differences that make Bulgaria such a unique place to visit and live. Forget the fact they have over 6,000 years of recorded history and a rich, cultural landscape of Thracian,

Byzantine, Roman and Ottoman ruins to explore, along with a people who are incredibly inviting, with a food, wine and beer selection that is unmatched (*in my opinion*) by any other country. **None of that matters because they are a country of evil smokers and underage drinkers.**

**You've just fallen prey to one of the most difficult challenges a traveler must overcome in their life on the road: cultural acceptance and respect.**

**[View Video Here](#)**

Firstly, Bulgaria has no technical legal drinking age, although it is commonly accepted as 14, and the legal purchase age is 18. What that means is that as long as they are with adults, regardless if they are family or not, they can drink in a public environment, so long as the adults are buying. Even if they are as young as 8 or 10. Their country, their rules.

Secondly, Bulgaria is a smoking country. It's slowly changing, with more and more establishments in the modern era starting to offer non-smoking options as tourism from outside grows, but as a general rule the vast majority of the population smokes. Their country, their culture, their rules.

Thirdly, you are a visitor on their turf. Just as much as you expect foreigners to obey the cultures, customs, laws and regulations of your own country while they are on your turf (*speak English you damned foreigner, or go home! Stop putting up your damned foreign flag on your front lawn! Pay taxes! Learn how to drive on the right side of the road!*), you are expected to do the same when you are on theirs.

You are a guest, there with the permission of the government. You have no right to vote, no right to dictate law, no right to

discriminate against their culture, their religion, their rules, customs, or way of life. You are on their turf. And when in Rome, do as the Romans do.

The reason this is one of the most challenging aspects of living a life of full-time travel is that most Westerners have been culturally brainwashed since they were old enough to read and write to believe that their country is the best. The best education, the best healthcare, the best language, the best food, the best entertainment, the best culture, the best religion, and beyond. Everywhere beyond the borders of home = backwards, greedy, conniving, corrupt, immoral, uneducated, third-world Communists and Terrorists. Every. Last. One. Of. Them.

**Until you can shed this cultural brainwashing you will find it impossible to enjoy, much less accept, another culture for what it has to offer.** You will never see the beauty of a place such as Iran, the kindness of the people in Iraq, the smiles on the faces of the children as they play in the mud (*just like I used to do when I was kid growing up in the backwoods of Missouri and then in the mountains of Colorado*) in the jungles of Guatemala, the historical sprawl of the Thracian, Byzantine and Roman ruins that dot the landscape of Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Serbia and the entirety of Eastern Europe with their heavy smokers and teenage drinking.

Bulgaria is just one small example, and the lack of a legal drinking age is nothing compared to some of the other cultural differences you will come across in your journeys. You will see teenage marriages, animal sacrifice, human mutilation as a religious practice, legal marijuana and cocaine use, open prostitution, gay marriages, people who eat dog and cats, people who won't eat cows, people who hold cats to be sacred creatures, ladyboys and more.

Until you can accept those people on equal terms, with a culture



that is equally deserving of respect as your own (*regardless if you view it as “right” or “wrong” by your own cultural compass*), you are better off staying at home. Because every country you visit has taken a different evolutionary path along the social highway, and until you learn to accept everyone as a fellow human being, you will find your travels fraught with disappointment, fear and disgust.

# Language Immersion

I've touched on the subject many times throughout my publications: the importance of language for long-term cultural immersion and living in another country. But perhaps it was Nelson Mandela who said it best when he spoke, ***"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."***

Getting in on the ground floor and establishing yourself as a professional who not only respects the culture of a country enough to live there like a local, but also takes the time to learn the language, you go so far above and beyond what the average tourist and traveler is willing to do. And it will come back with karmic blessings tenfold in so many wonderful, unexpected ways.

It's common sense that learning the local lingo can help you negotiate a better rate for long-term apartment rentals, for transport, or at the open markets for goods, services and food, but speaking the local language is more than just a negotiating tool. As Mandela said, it's the back door into a person's heart. **You aren't just talking business when you speak the local language: you are speaking to their culture.**

The respect you give is equally returned in most countries around the world, and there is no greater form of respect than speaking

the language of the country you are in. Think of it as a dog coming into another dog's territory; he knows he's his own dog, but he's also on someone else's turf. The head is usually bowed down, the tail slightly tucked, as a form of deference, and respect. ***Your house, your rules***, so to speak.

[View Video Here](#)

Language is the back door to culture, of that there is no doubt, but what I really want to talk to you about is the ability to leverage your language expertise for your brand, your blog and your business. Because while it certainly opens up a variety of cultural opportunities, it can also lead to numerous business opportunities that would otherwise pass you by.

So many foreigners make the arrogant mistake of believing that simply because they speak English they can magically find work in any country around the world. This is so far from beyond the truth. Many are the misinformed nomad types who have unintelligently packed a bag and set off to foreign soil with the belief that they'll find high-paying work on a whim, only to find they lack a work visa and instead need to scrap for what they can under the table.

Sometimes that might be teaching English lessons for pennies in comparison to what you can make with licensing, and sometimes it's a lucrative tutoring gig for a private business guru. More often than not, it's bartending at one of the local expat dives or sweeping floors and cleaning bathrooms in a hostel in exchange for free room and board.

But with the language under your belt you are not only primed and ready to get a work visa for the country you are living in, but you'll suddenly find yourself a step above the locals in terms of

competition for jobs. Especially if you happen to have a diploma from a Western university or skills relating to a tech-related job, such as social media, blogging, graphic design and website design.

These skills are in high demand in developing countries around the world, but guess what? The work they are looking to complete isn't for the English market. It's for the rapidly developing Spanish market, the Portuguese, the Indian, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, German, French, Arabic and beyond.

But if you can't speak the language you won't find these opportunities being presented to you. Instead, you'll be relegated to the highly-competitive English-speaking market that is still suffering the so-called "global crisis" with a lack of jobs and record numbers of skilled workers all competing for the same jobs.

Meanwhile, those of us with multiple languages under our belt are finding plenty of work abroad, in other countries, both online as well as on the ground at the local level. For example, we've done presentations, consultations, social media management, advertising, classes and more, in Spanish, for a variety of clients. Impossible had I only spoken English.

Latin America is the #1 largest job market in the world as of 2014, with a massive boom going on with digital work. The highest paid workers in Mexico, for example, are freelance graphic designers and website designers, along with freelance writers and social media managers.

Cuing into the local respect factor, when a business finds out that you not only have the relevant skills, but that you've also taken the time to learn the language of the country you are visiting or living in, they are that much more likely to hire you than a local given the simple fact that you've got more experience in the digital world...and you are bi-lingual. Or tri or beyond.

From a business standpoint, it makes all the sense in the world to

pick up an extra language or three...and no sense whatsoever to only speak your native tongue. The more languages you know, the more opportunities you have to make money, to find opportunities to expand your business, to grow and to expand in countries and directions you may never have thought possible in the beginning. It's also a powerful tool in networking, coworking and building up those relationships that lead to working partnerships and beyond in places that you least expect it.

At the end of the day the only person holding you back from your full potential...is you. If you want to be a close-minded, single-language Westerner with a chip on your shoulder about your native tongue...you'll find yourself with limited options. But if you expand your mind, go native in every destination you visit, and choose places where you can maximize your immersion for the benefit of your adventure and your business...well, the sky is the limit.

# Local Consulting and Freelancing

One of the previous chapters focused on the need to “go native” with language immersion in your destination to receive the most benefits from working abroad. But that’s only the first step. Going native allows you open up the door...but once that door is open, where do you go from there?

While you can certainly pursue a work visa and attempt to find local employers looking to hire expats and travelers with experience there’s another route that you can pursue professionally: **consulting and freelancing.**

Freelancing is the easiest and the most common way to make money while living and traveling the world. It can be done from anywhere as long as you have a laptop or tablet and an Internet connection, and there are a number of various options you can choose from.

Really, just about any job in the modern era can be done via telecommuting; it’s only those who are stuck in yesteryear who insist on physical clock-punchers sitting in an office room.

Consulting, on the other hand, is a more advanced option reserved to those with professional expertise. You can’t offer consulting, for example, unless you are actually an expert in something. Working at McDonald’s for five years flipping burgers while saving up

your money for a round-the-world trip does not an expert make. Working as a community manager for an online forum, on the other hand, offers you some real world experience that you can take abroad. *Example only: there are dozens of types of jobs that result in consulting-level experience.*

One of the better aspects about both of these options, above and beyond simply going native and working for someone as an employee, is that you can often times work as a consultant and freelancer without the need for a work visa. **This isn't the case in every country**; some places want you to have an actual work visa to pursue local freelancing, but there are ways around this, such as getting paid cash under the table, or routing funds through a “foreign to the country you are presently in” PayPal or bank account.

### [View Video Here](#)

Better yet, however, is the tit-for-tat style of freelancing or consulting. For example, building a condo-owner's website for them and trading them six month's of living expenses. Running a social media campaign for a local restaurant and trading them three month's of free dinners. Advertising the local gym through social media and email campaigns and trading your membership fee in exchange for the work.

These are all ways to “work” on the local level without any money ever exchanging hands...thus completely absolving you of any fears related to illegally working in the country without a visa... because you aren't technically working for a wage. Personally, it's my favorite way to roll. While I have cash clients on an international level, along with book sales and other gigs, and I work for cash primarily, I try to trade as much as I can.

For example, Cristina and myself rarely just go out and eat at a restaurant. Instead, we are always sending out proposals to local



restaurants; on any given day I send out 25-30 emails to local businesses with our press kit attached. The goal? To advertise our social media management and publicity services and find business owners who understand the value of publicity and are willing to either pay us for an article + YouTube video + photos and social media coverage...or trade us free food for X amount of visits in exchange for the “free” press.

Consulting, on the other hand, can bring in far more money in the long run, especially if you run a value-based service where you charge the client based on the value of your consultation. For example, our most basic consulting generally starts at 750 USD and goes up from there depending on if the person in question is looking for a quick one-off, generic consultation...and from there it goes into ongoing mentorship where the consulting takes place over weeks and months with long-term guidance.

In these cases, we charge 15 to 25 percent of the value of the business we are helping to build, depending on our level of involvement. If it's a 100k business that the owner wants to create, than we charge accordingly; 15-25k, regardless if we are involved for two weeks or two months, because we are helping to build that business into reality.

But you also have to understand that it means sometimes working for less than what we would make working for a Western client, as many businesses in the developing world are operating on a smaller budget.

A local pizza restaurant, for example, in a place like Mexico, might only bring in 30 or 40k a year, so a consultation for a small business such as described here would only be worth 5k or so; not nearly as much as we would make consulting a hotel in France or Germany with a 150k a year income who is looking to bump their social media game up a notch or two.

Flexibility is always key, but more than anything else...you have

to go native to take advantage of these opportunities. Remember, the locals won't always speak English (or whatever is your native language) and the only way you'll be able to earn their business is by meeting them on their own turf. From there, the sky is the limit.

# Visas and Income Requirements

For the vast majority of road warriors who are interested primarily in simply traveling the world and visiting different countries, a passport stay is generally sufficient. That is, most countries around the world permit you to enter their country and stay without applying for a visa.

A caveat for this is that you are always on limited time. If you happen to hail from Western country, this can range anywhere from a single month all the way up to six months, although the average is around 90 days. If you happen to come from non-Western country, it largely depends on the relations your country has with the rest of the world.

Unfortunately, religious and political issues that relate to your government and have absolutely no bearing on who you are as an individual can nevertheless impede your travels to some degree. But what about those of you who want to take your life on the road and actually pursue the immersion travel route?

Immersion travel is also known as slow travel, and to put it simply it is basically living in another country on a long-term basis. Rather than skim reading the destination, you actually take the time to read from the front cover to the back cover; every paragraph, every sentence, and every word on every page. But in

order to stay in a country beyond the initial 90 days or six months or one month, you have to have a residency visa, or permission to stay for a long-term duration.

### [View Video Here](#)

The only way to obtain a residency visa, apart from investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in the local economy or being a celebrity or government official, is to apply for one at the consulate that governs the country you are looking to live in. Bear in mind that student visas can also give you residency, but for the sake of people who want to professionally travel we are generally talking about freelance visas as well as pensioner visas.

At their very basic level, there is no discernible difference between a freelance visa and a pensioner visa since they both require around the same out of money to acquire. As a general rule this is between 2,000 and 3,000 USD per month of income coming into your bank account. Different countries have different requirements, however, and it is your responsibility to check with the relevant consulate and embassy to determine what exactly you will need.

In most cases you will have to provide at least 12 months' worth of statements proving that you have a dedicated income source. This can be a brokerage account, a bank account, or even PayPal statements. I've even used receipts from hotels who have comped us hospitality in exchange for publicity, and used the average price of the room we were given multiplied against the number of days we stayed, along with any food that was included, as proof of income.

Every country has different requirements. Some governments dictate that pensioners have to have a minimum bank account balance over the course of an entire year, rather than a monthly income coming in, and they need to be able to show that their

pension is from an official source; that is, the same source over many months of time, along with the proof of employment that goes along with the pension to show that it is real.

Freelancers often have an easier time of applying for visas, because all you have to do is prove that you have financial stability and bring in enough income according to the requirements of that particular government. As previously mentioned, you can use a wide variety of income sources to provide proof; all they want to know is that you can provide for yourself financially and won't to be a burden on the country while you are living.

I will admit this, however; not every country will simply accept your proof of income on the first go. Sometimes they will want to have an interview with you to go over the various income sources so that you can explain them to staff who may or may not understand what it means to bring in income from the Internet. Bear in mind that there are still quite a few countries which are still developing in terms of technology and while those of us who hail from Western nations are intimately familiar with PayPal and digital transactions, they are not commonplace in every single country around the world.

Providing proof of income for a residency visa is all about one thing: paperwork and an actual paper trail (or digital trail) that shows proof of income from actual sources. There are some ways around this (which I talk about in *The Expat Guidebook*) that require some outside-the-box thinking, but as a general rule if you plan on living in a different country as opposed to simply visiting, you are going to have to get over your aversion to sharing personal information, because governments will not accept word-of-mouth. They want actual proof of income before giving you permission to stay in the country.

While you can also do visa runs (hopping across various borders once your passport stay is up and then coming back to get another

passport stay) in some countries, obtaining a residency visa carries along with it a number of other benefits apart from simply being able to stay in the country for a longer period of time. Not the least of which is the ability to open up foreign bank account, as well as have the opportunity to stay around long enough to build working relationships and obtain the local consulting and freelancing gigs that we talked about earlier.

# Pitfalls of Long-Term Travel

When it comes to living a life on the road there is one element that can be more challenging than the cultural acceptance, and that is the pitfalls associated with being on the road full-time. Whether it's missing your loved ones back home, wishing you had a permanent base of operations to stash your goods and come back to periodically, or having your own vehicle to drive as opposed to renting one on a daily basis, everyone at some point comes up against something that takes away from the adventure.

Perhaps the most difficult for the vast majority of people is not having a permanent base of operations. This is especially true if you are one of the backpacker types who tends to stick to hostels or CouchSurfing, because you never really have a place to call your own. Instead, you are constantly moving from place to place, living out of a backpack and never really having the privacy of your own abode.

You can reduce this aspect of full-time travel by taking the immersion travel option, which is how we roll. Since you are often staying in places for 3 to 6 months at a time, it allows you the opportunity to have a home base of operations, even if it is only for a few months. House-sitting is another opportunity that falls into this category, since many of the house-sitting gigs allow you to stay for several months of time.



## [View Video Here](#)

One of the challenges for me, personally, is that I am not a big fan of working on a laptop, even after all these years. I much prefer having a 24 to 30 inch monitor, a nice comfortable office chair and an official desk, but it's a minimal pitfall to me, one that I easily mitigate with the adventures that I've been blessed enough to partake in over the past six plus years since I first started this lifestyle (as of this writing).

Something I often come up against when talking to other travelers is the distance from relatives and loved ones, because many people have close family ties that keep them in continual contact. And while Skype and Google+ Hangouts are one way to stay in touch with your friends and family, it's not the same thing as getting together on holidays or for dinners or going out to the movies.

Healthcare is another issue for people who are traveling full-time, because if you have health issues it makes it more challenging given the fact that you need to be close to a base of operations that has the quality and type of medical care that you need. This is especially true for people who have diabetes, or those who suffer from conditions where regular clinical visits are a necessity.

The full-time aspects of travel can also be stressful. Dealing with public transportation that may or may not be late, may or may not be air-conditioned, may or may not break down in the middle of the jungle. Living in a country where the Internet access is not up to Western standards and trying to upload a 500 MB YouTube video that takes a week as opposed to 10 or 15 minutes. Flight cancellations, extra baggage fees, food poisoning, bad beds, noisy neighbors in the hostel who keep you awake at night... all of

these can contribute to the stress factor, and while it's one thing handling it as a solo traveler, for those who travel as a couple it adds another layer of trickiness to the equation.

Then there is the loneliness aspect of solo travel. This is something I personally haven't had to deal with but I know some of my friends have. If you are continually on the go and never really staying in one place more than a few weeks at a time, it's very difficult to build relationships and friendships with people. Sure, you can stay in touch via Facebook, but what happens if you meet someone you are attracted to?

At the end of the day, a life of travel isn't for everyone. There are a million benefits (many of which I've been talking about in the series), but there are also the downsides, and I wouldn't feel honest if I didn't list a few of them. As a general rule the positives far outweigh the negatives, but you do need to realize it's not all toes-in-the-sand-while-sipping-mojitos.

# Base of Operations

Long-term readers know that I am not a fan of living out of hostels or hotels. My preference is for long-term apartment rentals, and there are dozens of reasons for that.

I talked about it briefly in the previous chapter in regards to how not having a permanent basis of operations is one of the downsides to a life on the road. Sometimes it is simply more convenient to have a home base then not.

Hostels are the perfect example of why I prefer to have a base. There is no security in a hostel environment where your backpack and your laptop and all of your travel gear is either stored in a room with a flimsy door separating it from the dozens or more guests that wander through, or in the case of a locker, nothing more than a cheap little padlock or, worse yet, a rusted out locker door or a flimsy piece of wood that can be easily broken.

A base of operations is about more than simply the security of your travel gear. It is also about the stress factor. Having a base of operations means that you have the peace of mind knowing that you can have a place to call home, even if that is only for a few weeks or a few months at a time.

Just because you have a home base of operations does not mean you are not living the location independent lifestyle. It simply

means that you have a place where you can unwind, unpack, store your gear, get some office work done, take a load off, and ultimately use as your hub for future travels.

[View Video Here](#)

A home base in the sense of a life on the road is not a permanent home. Think of it as an outpost for your further explorations. While you can certainly purchase a piece of property to use as at headquarters, rather cheaply as described in the video, those of us who are continually on the road tend to rent long-term apartments for a reasonable fee that we can then use while we are exploring the local area or while we are traveling to new destinations and exploring those.

Since I practice the art of slow travel, my whole format is setting up a headquarters in the area where I want to explore for a year or so, and then using that as a place where I can store my gear, plan my adventures and weekend trips, and also have a fully stocked kitchen, and an actual office where I can get work done, as opposed to relying upon a business centers and hostel Internet connections which may or may not work. Another benefit of having a base is that you can use it as a rental property when you have to go on the road for extended periods of time.

Airbnb is the perfect example of a way you can earn extra money while you are traveling to distant lands, and the more properties you have, the more money you can earn, which either goes towards providing for your life of travel or for your cost of living. As far as setting up the property goes, it's really as easy as renting and long-term apartment or condo in the destination you choose.

As described in the video, long term rentals are very affordable and can generally be found for 400 or 500 dollars per month for

a single individual or 600 to 800 dollars a month for a couple. Families can also rent houses in the six to eight hundred dollars a month range, provided that you speak the local language as we talked about in the chapter on going native. As a general rule, the longer you are willing to stay in one area, better rate you can get on the accommodation.

Anything under 3 months is generally considered to be a case in rental, while anything over 6 months is considered to be a long term rental. Regardless of how long you are going to be in one place, it makes sense to have a headquarters if for nothing else to simply have a place but you can call your own and know your gear is going to be safe without having to worry about strangers, sharing the bathroom, or dealing with annoying neighbors, midnight drunks or all of the other problems that come about from being a backpacker and living out of hostels.

# Immersion Travel Versus Backpacking

Long-term readers of *Marginal Boundaries* have heard me talk about, on more than one occasion, the difference between immersion travel (otherwise known as slow travel) and backpacking. The latter is skim reading the novel and only picking up the basic gist of what's going on, while the former is reading the entire book cover to cover, poring over each line of text and immersing yourself in the characters as well as the lore of the book.

That's not to say that one style of travel is better than the other; some people prefer to go the backpacker route, spending a few days to a few weeks in each destination before moving onto the next. Personally, it's not for me, as I prefer to spend months if not years in a particular area so that I can fully immerse myself in the culture and learn everything there is to know, as well as experience everything there is to experience within the local area.

Going back to the pitfalls of long-term travel, one of the issues long-term travelers run into is burnout. After so many weeks or months on the road continually changing hotels and hostels, living out of your backpack, dealing with missed flights, bad public transportation, cutthroat taxi drivers and the expensiveness of living without a base of operations, you eventually reach a point where enough is enough, and you'd rather take a moment to

breathe.

### [View Video Here](#)

For my own personal experience I can say that if I didn't take my time in each destination and actually explore it to its depths, I never would have met Cristina. Had I only stayed in Cancun for a mere three months, which was my original plan, we would never have met, and consequently I never would've learned all of the secret corners and mysteries that exists here.

The same can be said for my time in Sofia, Bulgaria as well as in Bogotá, Colombia. The friendships, the working relationships, cultural experiences and beyond: none of these are possible if you are only spending a few days in one place.

CouchSurfing is relatively new, and is one of the byproducts of the social media growth of the last half-dozen years, and while it does allow you to lower the costs of travel significantly, you are still beholden to the typical hotel or hostel environment where you only have a few days in each destination.

While some hosts will allow you to stay for a week or so, the vast majority of people are only looking to host an individual for 2 to 3 days. Sure, you can bounce around from host to host within a given city, but you never have time to relax and you will always be packing your bags and moving out of the next hotspot before you've had a chance to really soak in the first place.

At the very basic level, it is absolutely impossible to experience cultural immersion if you never spend more than a few days or a few months in a given destination. It takes months to learn a language, years to speak it fluently, and even more time to learn local colloquialisms, cultural differences, customs and beyond.

Until you truly experience a country and its people, you will



never really understand them, and you will never be more than a foreigner; a guest, passing through on a temporary passport stay, on the way to the next destination and the next adventure.

I personally don't have a problem with doing the backpacking circuit for a short term duration, but after more than a few months of continual travel, I always reach burnout, because I can't stand having to pack my bag every three or four days and move on. The older I get, the longer I enjoy staying in a destination. It used to be that three months felt good, but now I don't reach the point of feeling comfortable until I've had at least six months on the ground; only then can I say that I have truly experienced a given destination. Even then, it's just the beginning; the tip of the iceberg.

Mileage will vary based upon individuals, but it is something to think about if you are planning on taking off for a full-time adventure at a life on the road. This also goes back to the types of travel, because at the end of the day you do have to make a decision about whether or not you are going to be a backpacker or an immersion traveler because it absolutely does have an impact on the overall experience.

# Sponsored Travel and Housesitting

Moving on to “free” travel. This is the golden goose egg that every travel blogger is searching for: the ability to travel the world on someone else’s dime, thus avoiding expenses on your end and being able to see far more than you ever would have on your own budget.

The reason sponsored travel is so lucrative for many travel bloggers is going back to the very beginning when I was talking about the difference between hobby bloggers and professional bloggers. The vast majority of travel bloggers are not making a livable income with their blog; it’s a hobby, nothing more. Which means they are paying for their travels out of their own pocket.

Which makes landing sponsored gigs or doing housesitting assignments so ideal, because it eliminates cost. Or at least reduces it considerably, which helps those bloggers who are only making 1,000 or 1,500 a month float by because they can cushion their costs.

Out of the two, sponsored travel is the more difficult to land, but also the more “credible” in terms of resume padding. Sponsored travel revolves around finding sponsors: people who are willing to foot the bill for you to go somewhere, or in the case of hotels and hostels or adventure tour agencies, are willing to trade you service

for service: that is, you stay for free for X days and in return you publicize the business with your blog, YouTube and social media outlets.

[View Video Here](#)

Housesitting is different because there is no publicity going on. It's a trade of a different kind. You are basically taking care of the home for a period of weeks to months while the owners are out of town on business or vacation. In exchange for free rent you keep the home in the state it was upon their leave-taking: clean, with all the sundries intact, and theft-free.

90% of the time, housesitting gigs have pets attached. A homeowner needs to leave town for three months on a work assignment but can't take their pet with them, so they find someone to live in the house for those three months who can feed and water Fluffy and provide them with companionship.

You might also find yourself doing small yardwork in exchange for the house-sit. Mow the lawn, weed the garden and the like. Or you might need to dust the house, vacuum the floor once a week, sweep the driveway, water the flowers. Bottom line, you are trading some manual labor + time spent watching the house in exchange for free rent.

While it's rare, you will sometimes find owners who want you to foot the utility bill while you are there, but to be honest, the vast majority of homeowners are content to know you are taking care of Fluffy and the home and will trade you fairly. In my opinion, anyone who wants you to cover the light bill on top of everything else is a tightwad and cheapskate and I would urge you to look elsewhere.

Out of the two, housesitting gigs are far easier to land because they don't have any publicity attached, which means it's more about

your social reputation and trustworthiness via recommendations than it is about numbers and traffic and ROI and conversion rates and spreadsheets.

Sponsored travel is far harder to earn. As a general rule, unless you've been on the road for a year or two and have at least 10,000 a month views at your website with a good 250,000+ a month views at your social media platforms, you are going to have a hard time landing any sponsored gigs. Sponsors want traffic, views and exposure, and if you don't have those things you won't be able to find anyone who wants to trade you "free" things for your publicity services.

That being said, sponsored travel can be very lucrative. Gary Arndt from Everything, Everywhere, for example, travels on the G Adventure dime a few times per year doing photography press trips. They foot the bill, he goes and does what he does best, and not only does he earn traffic for his own blog and brand, but he also guarantees exposure for the brand who sponsored him.

Landing sponsored gigs is a full time job in and of itself. If you go back to the business side of travel blogging, I'd say that 60 percent of my time these days is spent sending out proposals so that we can get accommodations, tours, food and other services in trade for the publicity we offer with the blog. That is a direct opposite when compared to my first couple of years running the blog when it was 100% about writing and building up the social media platforms.

If you are just getting started and you want to keep your costs to a minimum, I highly recommend getting started with housesitting. There's a ton of information out there on the 'net about it, and it's not hard to get into. You just need a few references. From there you can travel on the cheap and build up your blog + following until you get to the point where you can ask the big dogs for free gear and comped travel: from there, the sky's the limit.

# Social Media Realities

One of the major mistakes people make is believing that social media is something that can be done in 5-10 minutes here or there. That is *\*not\** the case.

Social media is a job. Not a hobby. Posting a picture on Facebook once a day does not a social media campaign make. Neither does making the random Tweet. A social media campaign is a vastly detailed aspect of the overall success of your brand and your blog and comes with its own set of full-time responsibilities and commitments.

You wouldn't hire a receptionist to pour a concrete sidewalk out front of your business, would you? Of course not! You'd hire a professional concrete crew to come in and do the job, because they know the ins and outs of proper mixing, forms, curing times and beyond, things your receptionist knows nothing about.

The same thing applies to social media. It is not something that can be done with 5-10 minutes a day or as a part-time job by someone whose real job is something else, like answering the phone or scheduling meetings. Social media is a full-time job and commitment in and of itself, and if you don't have the time to do it yourself, you'll need to pay someone else to do it for you.

But it's only half of the puzzle when it comes to brand creation.

The other half is your creativity....and a budget. Which you have to have.

### [View Video Here](#)

Everyone sacrifices differently to get their brands off the ground. Some people stop smoking. Others trade in their Starbucks. Others, their Netflix account. The key is finding your weak spots, your frivolous spends, your non-necessities...and getting rid of them. An extra 200-300 dollars a month can go a LONG way towards advertising your content through the content networks (see social media sites) and generating an income, but it can also get you a long way in terms of having little things done for your company to get it off the ground.

There's nothing wrong with, say, having someone on Fiverr develop you a logo. You can often find high quality work for 25-30 dollars (if you pay for extras). That's a hell of a lot less than freelance outsourcing your logo for 500 bucks or more. And you can take the rough logo you get out of it and enhance it on your own if you like.

I outsource some of the grunt work, like link building. To be honest, this is not nearly as effective as it used to be, but you can still pay someone 10 bucks an hour to go and write blog comments on .edu and .gov sites for backlinks....as long as it's someone you trust. Also article spinning and submission....any type of bulk submissions should be handed off to someone else, if possible.

But when it comes to social media, I do not believe in shopping out on the cheap. If you have the time to learn how to do it on your own, that's your best bet. But if you can't, and you are going to hire out, you **MUST** hire out to a professional. And that's not going to be cheap. Results never are.

And that's something to understand when working with other professionals on content that is not grunt work. **Social media management is not grunt work.** Neither is content curation. Copy is important, as-is the quality of your photos, videos and beyond. Some things you can't trust to the grunts...and social media is one of those areas.

Something very important about social media: advertising spend is SEPARATE from the management cost of social media. If I'm charging 2500 a month to run Facebook, Twitter and G+ for a client...that's my salary. The company also needs to have 500-1,500 a month (my recommended minimum spend is 300 – 500 a month) available for use with paid advertising.

You can think about this long-term for yourself as well in terms of charging clients to run their social media. But first you have to get your OWN social media up there with proven stats and traffic and sales...and that takes TIME to build up.

These days, getting likes on Facebook is no longer about going out there and finding people to follow and getting them to follow you back. If you want your page to be seen, PERIOD, you have to pay...for the likes, for status views, and beyond. And if you don't have that budgeted your Facebook page will go nowhere. It's a powerful tool....but you have to pay to access it.

And if you think the other social media platforms are free to use, that only shows just how little you know about social media and how important it is for you to actually find someone who knows what they are doing to manage your business for you. All social media platforms are going pay-to-play in 2014; Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and Google all experimented with paid advertising options in 2013. Facebook was the first to go live; the others are following suite. [Read this article on Mashable](#) and note point #7: **Social media campaigns will have to be paid.**

It also takes patience and fishing. You have to be willing to spend

money on things that may not work so that you can find out what does and doesn't work and adapt accordingly. If you can't afford to fish...sacrifice something so that you can. What is more important? Your hobby, or your business?

Another vital component in the overall social media strategy is that it is an ever-evolving industry. If you can't afford to be invested completely in it, if you can't dedicate 3-4 hours a day, every day, to stay on top of things and to manage your own campaign...you are better off letting someone else manage your campaign for you.

I gave a presentation on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January 2014 to 70 different businesses in the Riviera Maya. They were supposedly all experts in social media and tourism. When I asked the question, "how many of you know what happened with Expedia on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014?" (the day Google hit them hard for bad SEO and backlinking and they lost 25% of their traffic in a single week), **only one person out of 70 raised their hand and knew what I was talking about.**

That is **not** professional. If you can't keep your head in the game, if you can't stay abreast of what's going on in the world of Google, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube and beyond on a daily basis, if you can't live and breathe social media...hire someone who can and does.

You will do more harm to your business with bad social media than you can possibly know. Spend the time to immerse yourself in it, learn it inside and out, completely, over the course of a year or two...or hire someone else to do your social media for you. End of story.



# Social Media Time Commitments

This chapter we are talking about time commitments when it comes to social media campaigns. That is, successful social media campaigns. The ones that get results and actually bring income to the table.

These are not short-term sprints. They are long-duration hauls. At minimum you can expect to put 3 to 6 months of time into a social media campaign before you start seeing an ROI, because it takes that long to earn the trust of readers and turn from strangers into confidants.

Six months to a year if you really want to talk about creating loyalty. And the only way you do that is by filling the need for information in the lives of your readers. Producing content day in and day out, regularly and reliably. Be THE source of information for your readers....and then remain there in their lives, day in and day out, for the weeks and months until they turn into loyal followers.

[I was interviewed for Tim Leffel's blog in early 2014.](#) If you don't know who he is, he's a "big name" in the print-based travel industry, with numerous publications. He lives here in Mexico as well. He and another blogger are putting together a list of interviews with professional travel bloggers, and I was included.

Wrote a 4k response, took me about three hours, and much of what I talked about in the interview was exactly what we've been talking about in this Life on the Road book.

Time commitments. It's all about time. And money. Just like any other business, you have to be able to invest time and money into building up your brand.

My advice is that any of you who are starting a blog from scratch should wait until you have at least a dozen blog posts up and ready to go before you take your page public. Minimum. You also need a healthy 5-10 pages of website content as well (About Me page, etc.), and if you have time I highly recommend some type of a free product that you can give away to get people to subscribe to your newsletter. Free ebook with photos or etc.

[View Video Here](#)

Or do something creative. Send them 10 bucks for a lunch for signing up. Or 10 dollars for a movie ticket. Don't be afraid to "buy" customers. People want to feel needed...they want to feel like they are "winning" something...otherwise they are reluctant to sign up because they don't want to be marketed to...they want authenticity.

There's also something to be said for CAC, or [Customer Acquisition Cost](#). There's a lot of content out there on the web, but the bottom line is that every customer you earn (we aren't talking subscribers here, we are talking customers who buy your products and services) has a cost associated with them.

That cost is either time-based or money-based. And since time = money, both are really money-based.

One thing you have to keep in mind is that your strategy for

earning new subscribers and customers has to adapt over time. The free eBook or free movie ticket might work for your first 500... but after that you'll have to adapt and find new ways to get your readers to purchase your following products.

Some will have loyalty. Loyalty is built up over time. The more authentic you are, the more dedicated, the more honest, the more loyal. Loyal customers will always buy, because your products hold VALUE.

We have a fairly high loyalty rating with Marginal Boundaries; 25 to 30 percent of our community members, as a general rule, have purchased more than one product. I credit that to the fact that my ebooks, my blog, my online presence...everything I do is 100% honest and results-driven. I don't produce fluff content; I write content that people can actually USE to enhance their lives. And for those readers who actually go the extra step to put things into play....they come back for more because they achieved results.

You have to do the same. You can't just produce empty content at your blog. When you are spending the 3-6 months to get your website ready to be launched public, and then another 3-6 months to start earning customers and building trust, everything you do has to be based on honesty, trust and value. You **MUST** produce high-quality, value-based content that people will be able to benefit from.

And by benefit I'm not talking about walking away with a nice, warm, fuzzy feeling after having read an inspirational blog post. I'm talking about producing actual, valuable content that people can USE. That's why our destination pieces are packed full of links, Google maps, photos and beyond, because I want to make sure that people can USE my blog posts to go find the restaurants, the plazas, the beaches, the city centers, the museums...not merely read about them at the blog, but then actually USE the information to go visit on their own.

And because they found the place through me, used my maps to get there, visited based on my recommendations, and then found the place via my blog...they are inspired to come back and keep reading, because the value was there in the first place.

Fluff = pointless. You **MUST** provide value to your readers. And even then, it takes time to build up the trust and loyalty that turns readers into long-term customers and clients. Nothing happens instantly in this industry. It is all a long-term investment.

# Curating Content For Your Blog

## Sharing Other People's Content

When it comes to curating content, photos are one of the trickier aspects unless you are talking about your own. As long as the blog post you are writing is your own property regarding the trips that you took on your own dime, then you can use the photos in any way the you see fit.

The moment you start using other people's photos for your blog content, such as for generic blog posts, you have to make sure that you source the material correctly. It's just like writing a bibliography in school; you have to cite the source material to give credit where credit is due so that you can avoid plagiarism.

Credit for photos is generally given with via a back link and an appropriately written byline along the lines of "this photo is from such and such person and you can find the original at this link". Other times, credit is given in the brand logo that may be overlaid on top of the photo, or with the watermark.

A blog post is nothing more than a library book in the grand scheme of things. It's publicly available to the search engines, and people can read and check out those books (posts and photos) as they see fit.... So long as they give credit and a backlink back to the original source material, there is nothing illegal about using a photo from someone else's blog... As long as it is not-for-profit.

I personally don't worry about protecting my photos because I'm not a photographer, I use a crappy little 8 megapixel camera (as of this writing), and the pictures are just there to complement my blog content. Some people like to use water marks and logos, and when I'm using an official featured image for the blog posts I will usually overlay some text or sometimes a logo.

99% of the time people won't rip you off; they give credit where credit is due. But there's nothing wrong with protecting yourself if you are a photographer by watermarking or overlaying your logo on every single picture that you upload, not just to your blog, but also at Facebook, Google+, Instagram or anywhere else.

You can also use Creative Commons Content. There are varying levels of licensing available depending on how exactly you want to use the material. The most generous is a free-for-all, use-it-as-you-want, just-make-sure-you-link-back-to-us type of arrangement. There are stricter forms of CCC which dictate that as long as you're using it for free in an open area it's okay, but you aren't allowed to use it for commercial purposes.

There's really no reason to be paying for stock images or stock photos when there are so many Creative Commons websites and images available on the Internet. And the reality is that if you are running travel blog, you are probably going to be working with your own photos the majority of the time anyway. The only time you'll have to worry about other people's photos is if you are writing generalized content or material that is not location specific.

As far as photos go, there's a couple of places you can look. First, you can hit up the Creative Commons website and they have a section right there on the [home page](#) that has a lot of tabs where you can go look for images, media, music and beyond. Great start.

If you just want photos, I've had great luck using Flickr in the

past. Lots of people put up a lot of different photos that you can generally use for free, although you'll need to pay attention to the types of licensing. Very well detailed right there on the [home page](#) to help you figure out how to use them properly.

[View Video Here](#)

**But what about content?** The rule of the day still applies: as long as you credit and include a backlink you are NOT plagiarizing; you are simply borrowing and citing your sources, just like you were taught in school with library books for essays.

**Once a blog post or photo is published online it becomes publicly available for use as long as that use is non-commercial and full credit is given to the original source.** Some people will claim otherwise; there are lawsuits going up left and right from people trying to sue others for «using» their blog posts or videos or photos without «permission».

But here's the thing. Let's say a blogger posts a blog + photos. You take the link, put it into Facebook or Twitter, the social media platforms pull the featured photo and the description text + whatever other text you put in, and then you share it on your social media outlet.

**No harm, no foul, and the author in question doesn't have an issue. In fact, they are happy because their content is being shared across the Internet, thus having a chance to "go viral".**

Now take the same blog post + photo and put it into one your blog posts as a syndicated portion...you add extra text to it, highlighting the sections that aren't yours, and you include a backlink + credit to the source.

**Same. Damn. Thing.**

Now imagine you take that same photo + blog post and put it into a free eBook that you will use as a resource for your own readers. It's a free eBook, publicly available. It's not for profit. Or your public newsletter that is free publicly available, not for profit. Including the primary photo (unedited) and the text of the article + a backlink and full credit.

### **Same. Damn. Thing.**

A large number of hobby/mommy bloggers still don't understand how this works. I had three people in 2013 contact me with lawyer threats due to quoting portions of their work and, in one case, I found a brilliant article that I shared in the Marginal Boundaries newsletter with full credit and the woman still contacted me with her lawyer claiming I "stole her content and was using it for the benefit of my own community and to boost sales of my eBooks."

The ONLY time you are plagiarizing or stealing content is if you use the content WITHOUT citing the source....or if you include that content in a For-Profit book without permission. THAT is stealing, and it's absolutely wrong.

But sharing content for free, with no other intent other than using that piece of content as inspiration for your own content or to share with your readers because it's a good piece of content? If the author has no problems with you sharing it at Facebook, Twitter or any other social media outlet, they have NO leg to stand on if you are sharing it via a blog post or in a newsletter or free eBook...provided you give full credit where it is due.

Sharing content is NOT evil. Just give credit where it is due :)

Consequently, all three of the people in 2013 who threatened me with legal action were hobby bloggers. That is, bloggers who don't make an income with their blog, whose traffic is nothing more than vanity traffic, and generally feel threatened by everyone.

For the sake of clarity, I'm 500% fine with people sharing my



content in any way, shape or form as long as credit + a backlink is given and the intent of the article remains true (no cutting out of context).

For anyone who tells you that you should ask permission before sharing: no you don't have to. Yes you can, if you want to. Look at it this way: I don't have to ask you if I want to share your content on Facebook. In fact, you are jumping up and down with JOY when people share your content on Facebook. Sharing it on a blog, in a newsletter or a free eBook is \*exactly the same damn thing\*, so no...I don't have to ask.

**I also don't have to ask permission before quoting from a library book for a thesis.**

This is the reality of the Internet, folks. Freely available information. If you don't like it...you'll have a rough time of it trying to build a successful blog.

# Press Kits and Proposals

Press kits and proposals. That's what we are all about this chapter. So get your goggles on and prepare to buckle down and get your graphic design shit together. Or hire someone to do it for you.

As I talk about in the video, nobody reads text-based kits anymore. Text is boring. It's old school. Nobody gives a shit about it. They want graphically-involved kits that "pop" when being read. Something that grabs the attention and keeps it throughout.

[View Video Here](#)

You can see [our kit here](#); another example is [Jdombs Travels](#). Top-end example would be Gary Arndt, from Everything/Everywhere. It's a few years old (he has well over 100k on Facebook now, not just 50k), but it's a [great slideshow example](#).

You can also go on the simple side, such as [Four Jandals](#). Gets the job done, but it's a little too simple IMO.

If you don't have a press kit, you are dead in the water. Period. Every blogger out there has one. Every professional social media manager has one. It's how you set yourself apart from the competition.

Everyone has a LinkedIn. LinkedIn is boring. It's all stats and no punch. Give the sponsors something to latch onto...a REASON to sign with you above and beyond the numbers. **Showcase your personality, your flair, your niche.**

**A professionally designed press kit can sell even if the numbers aren't as good as someone else's, simply because they might like your style, your face, your design layout, your presentation.**

That's not saying that numbers aren't important; they are. Your [Klout](#) and your other rankings are very important; don't forget to sign up for [The Midgame](#)!

Which brings me to proposals. Some, such as for a press trip, can be done in a day, such as our proposal for the (*now cancelled due to overwhelming workload here in the Riviera Maya*) trip we were doing to take in the Mediterranean in 2014, which went as follows:

*Tim Anderson here, the American half of the Mexican/American travel blogging couple from Marginal Boundaries. We have 10,000+ monthly readers and 500,000+ monthly views at present; that number is constantly growing and will be larger by the time we get to Italy in 2014. You can [view our press kit here](#).*

*Myself and Cristina are not the traditional travel bloggers who only stay in a destination for a few days. You can view our website for more information, but we practice immersion travel; that is, staying in one place for three to six months at a time as a general rule and writing articles, making videos, sharing photos and interviewing local restaurants, business owners and beyond, showing the local life and teaching our readers how to "live like a local" in each destination we visit.*

*I have been traveling full-time since January of 2008 and have lived in Bulgaria (I was there from 2008 into 2010, based out of Sofia; I visited Italy in 2009, although only stopped briefly in the Puglia*

region. I also have some friends who live down in that part of the world and run the [Stile Mediterraneo Italian Cooking and Wine School](#)), Colombia and Mexico during the past few years.

We would be interested in booking an apartment/home for the entirety of the months of April and May of 2014. We were married in October and are planning to head to Spain in March, then Italy for April and May, then on to Bulgaria for June, July and August on an extended honeymoon as well as blogging/press trip. We had already begun our research last month looking for places to go visit, and I happened to see your offer today so it looks like a perfect fit!

Why work with us? Because we'll be doing more than just visiting for a few days and offering you some temporary press. You can see more in our press kit, but we have a very specific plan to create a Mediterranean adventure that will also incorporate some of our followers from the Marginal Boundaries network coming over to hike the coastline in Italy, Spain and Greece along with us, and we'll be utilizing a hashtag program on all the major social media outlets plus working with other hostels, hotels and restaurants along the way, publishing three times per week during the course of the tour.

But more importantly, we'll be focusing on the entire region where you are located, showcasing local businesses (your own included, obviously), restaurants, tourist spots, historical areas and the countryside in the blog, video, Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube and beyond. Not simply showing up for a few days, blogging a single blog post with a few photos and then moving on; you would get extended press from us during the entire two month stay, including 3x per week mentions at the blog, Facebook, YouTube, G+, Pinterest, Twitter and beyond, to an audience of 10k+ readers and 1 million+ monthly views.

We already have friends in Spain where we will be staying for

*March, and presently we are looking to find a base of operations for April and May of 2014. Your bed and breakfast sounds like the perfect fit!*

*We are non-smokers and do not have pets.*

*[Check out our press kit](#) and our current activities, and let us know!*

The above proposal took me about an hour to draft, then I edited it the following day before sending it out to hotels in the regions I was interested in going with Cris. It landed us three months' worth of free accommodations (along with the press kit) within about a week's worth of sending out emails. Unfortunately, we are cancelling the March and April leg of the journey to focus on work in the Riviera Maya.

I also have a different proposal for the clients we line up for social media management here in the Riviera Maya, and another proposal we use for looking for sponsors for our brand boot camps.

Bottom line, proposals go hand in hand with your press kit and help you sell yourself to the client/sponsor. You have to have them, and you can draft various versions to have on hand, which can then be modified to suit the needs of the campaign you are looking to launch.

Now, I also talked about embellishment in the video.

What does that really mean?

Well, it's putting a little shine to your existing statistics. It's eliminating the not-so-great elements of your resume, and putting the ones that really matter higher at the top. It's using your best photos, your best traffic articles, your most shared social media posts, and using those to link to within your press kit + your proposal.

A proposal is all about selling you and your potential. And just as

much as you'll clean yourself up for the first date with someone new, or for a night on the town with your special someone, you want to put your best foot forward and really give your creativity a moment to shine.

Which is why I don't recommend talking about the blog posts that didn't get a lot of traffic, even if they were some of your most brilliant pieces. Clients and sponsors want to see results; they want to know that you can bring it to the table when it comes to quality as well as traffic.

For example, when I talk about our 10,000+ followers...it's not a lie. But it is an embellishment of the overall followers that we have. Many people assume that's website followers or email subscribers, but it's not. That's our combined Twitter, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Pinterest, newsletter, YouTube, RSS feed and other subscribers. While I break those individual accounts down within our press kit, when I'm giving general proposals I always push the 10k+ followers and 500k+ a month views; it doesn't really matter where those come from, just that we have them. If they want to get technical, that's within the press kit.

Remember how I talked about the ability of a good proposal to sell the client/sponsor above and beyond your traffic and numbers? That's because a good sales pitch can work wonders. Especially if it's tied together with all the other pieces, like a graphically kick-ass press kit, high-quality photography and blog posts and beyond.

Something I want to touch on briefly here also is the myth of Page Rank for websites. In theory, people tend to think that a website with a PR 4 is more important than one with a PR of 2. And while technically it means that there are more links (or higher quality links) coming back to the PR 4 website, it doesn't necessarily mean they have an active, engaged audience.

Remember [Travel Blogging Is About More Than Numbers](#) from



last year? This is the perfect example of what I'm talking about when it comes to engagement levels and personal levels of interaction. If you can show your sponsors/clients that you rock the socks off what you currently have, it doesn't always matter if you are rocking 500 followers or 50,000...as long as you can sell your engagement % and your personality.

I hate sales. I really do. But one thing I'm good at is talking to people. I'm a naturally conversational fellow. Especially if I've smoked a joint or had a bottle of wine. And I enjoy giving presentations, something which I only discovered in the last couple of years, which has led to me doing some pretty amazing things here locally in the Riviera Maya, including the [upcoming Last Tuesday event](#) where I was the keynote speaker and presented in front of 70 businesses from the Playa del Carmen area.

I've found that sales come naturally once you approach people on a conversational level. Don't be sales-pitchy. Don't try to sell them a product. Sell them on YOU. You the person, the individual, the one they are chatting to about wine, travel, culture, scuba-diving, bike riding, beers, men, women, thongs, speedos, gyms, Parkour and beyond.

And that's something you have to be able to do. Learn how to be an easy conversationalist. Even if it's something that you don't necessarily enjoy doing. Learn to love it. Because it's the difference between making sales and landing clients...and not.

Sponsors and clients don't want to work with hermits and anti-social recluses and introverts. They want to work with extroverts; people who are naturally chatty, who love to get on video and just yap away, who love to write, who love to talk, to make their ideas heard, to showcase their creativity. Social butterflies = kings of social media.

Which means getting comfortable with your presenting skills. My suggestion would be to start off with YouTube videos. Get

comfortable chatting into the camera as if you were having a conversation with a friend. Then grab your mic and a good text-to-speech program and start transcribing text for your blog posts.... figure out your mode of conversation.

Now take that and fine-tune it for your presentations, your proposals. You can list all the stats and the figures that you want, but it's your personality and your uniqueness that sell the client more than anything else.



# In Closing

Now that you've finished our latest publication, what do you think? Cris and myself are always keen on hearing feedback from the community, so send us an email or leave us a message at one of the social media outlets letting us know!

Better yet, if you are someone who has an existing blog or you are getting your own blog and brand built up, send us a testimonial with a link back to your website and we'll put it up on the book page at the site and here in the book with future updates, giving you a permanent link from our site to yours!

And if you really enjoyed this book and found value in it, please share it with your friends, family and community members, as well as visit the page for the book at <http://www.marginalboundaries.com/immersion-travel/life-on-the-road-the-business-of-travel-blogging/> where you can pay what you believe it is worth to you and your business.

By this point, you have a better idea of just how much work goes into running a for-profit travel blog. But before you think that these rules apply just to travel blogging, they don't! They can easily be applied to any type of blog or brand that you want to build.

If you want to know more, you can always follow along the blog

or our social media channels. They are free and we are always producing new content for our readers. But if you are someone who is ready to take things a step further and move into the big leagues, we have a couple of options.

First, I'm sure you noticed that a few of the chapters in this book linked to videos that have the title "Innovators" associated with them. This content is a sampling of the "premium" content that our [Innovator Program subscribers](#) have access to.

It's twice weekly newsletters, once a week YouTube video, once a month webinar with myself and other guest speakers, and a special members-only Google+ community with ongoing support for your travel blog where you can talk with the other members and ask questions related to business, blogging and travel.

Monthly members have access to all of that, but the annual subscription takes it a step further: if you pay for a full year upfront, you get all of our existing publications included for free, as well as any publications that come out during the calendar year of your subscription included. For example, this book. Our annual Innovators received free copies as part of their subscription. [Click here for more info.](#)

Apart from that are our [brand boot camps](#). These are for those people who are more than just students; they are ready to go professional, ready to spend three months working alongside multiple teachers and mentors who cowork alongside you and help you to build your brand and leverage their existing social media channels to market your new blog to their individual communities and the travel blogging world as a whole.

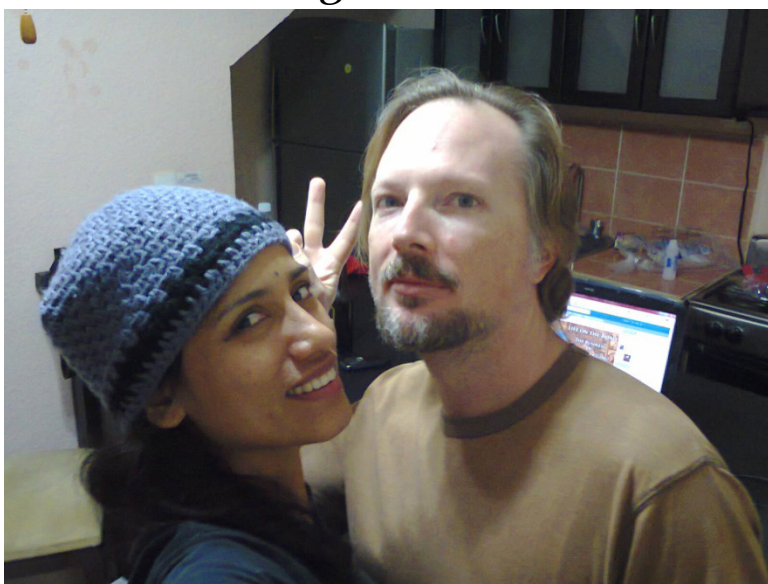
You can attend online via Google+ Hangouts, or you can physically attend one of the retreats. They take place periodically throughout the year, with physical location dependent upon where we happen to be living at the time of the retreat. International students can attend from anywhere so long as they have an Internet connection.

[Click here for more information.](#)

And lastly, but not least, are the publications that came before Life on the Road: [the immersion travel suite](#) of books from Marginal Boundaries, which includes our flagship productions [The Expat Guidebook](#) and [Beyond Borders – The Social Revolution](#). Beyond that, the Live Like a Local guidebooks for specific cities that we've lived in over the years.

Everything we publish can be read on its own and utilized to empower you and your brand, but together they form a multi-layered tool that you can leverage for maximum potential. We've sold thousands of copies to readers from around the world and testimonials abound, so feel free to ask your fellow community members and get their feedback on how our books have helped them change their lives.

[Click here for the full suite of books.](#)



Thanks again for your ongoing support and friendship! Your loyalty means the world to Cristina and myself, and we wouldn't be able to travel the world and do what we do with the blog and the brand without

you, the community members. As always, if you ever have any questions or comments, or you just want to meet up for beers and food while you are on the ground in wherever we happen to be, don't hesitate to drop us a line at [frontdesk@marginalboundaries.com](mailto:frontdesk@marginalboundaries.com).



# Before You Go

Thank you for reading this book. This book was designed to show you what it truly takes to be a Travel Blogger. If you've found this book valuable, please share it with someone you know and visit [marginalboundaries.com/pay-what-you-want/](http://marginalboundaries.com/pay-what-you-want/) where you can pay what you believe it is worth to you and your business.

Until next time...safe travels!

t.w.anderson