

CBS News

America's "modern nomads" give up their homes for life on the road in RVs¹

Transcript

TV host: A growing group of Americans is redefining its vision and its version of the American dream by leaving their homes behind. *The Washington Post* reports one million Americans are embracing a "modern nomadic lifestyle" by packing up their things and living out of their RVs.

TV hostess: Many say it has improved their lives and even their marriages, and others say that you can even bring your kids with you.

So, Heather Long is an economics correspondent for *the Washington Post*, and she joins us now.

Heather, give us a little bit of background about this trend. What do you think makes this so attractive to people?

Heather Long: Well, a lot of people that I spoke with... At first it sounds like a crazy idea. I mean, you go from living in in some cases two-thousand-squarefoot² homes, very nice, you know, several bedrooms, to suddenly living in two-hundred squarefeet to four-hundred squarefeet³, so smaller than most studios, even in New York City. But I think over time, what really attracts people to this lifestyle... and a lot of people said, you know, "I just thought I'd try it for a few months and here I am several years later doing this and never wanting to move back to my suburban home".

And the key reason... There are two key reasons. One is travel, meeting people, seeing America, seeing America not just between the coasts, you know, but all across the nation. And, and the other one is people. You learn to live with less, you learn to shed some of this consumerist lifestyle that we've all embraced. And you focus instead on experiences, and on relationships and, in many cases, on bonding closely with your family.

Host: You know, Heather, you wrote a really fascinating article for *the Washington Post* about this, and you profiled several families who have done exactly just that. But I always love reading comments sections. I don't know if you do that. Some reporters don't like to do that because... but I don't think for an article like this it gets that heated⁴. And it's interesting to read what some people say because it does sound sort of enticing and a lot of fun, but then people are like "Wait, what about all those kids?"

¹ recreational vehicles: autocampere

² two-thousand-squarefoot: ca. 185 m²

³ two-hundred squarefeet to four-hundred squarefeet: 18 m² til 36 m²

⁴ intenst

25 What about health insurance? What about... ?” You know, so some of the things that might seem appealing to some people, the hard reality, I think, makes you think twice about doing that. But what did some of those folks tell you?

Heather Long: I think you’re absolutely right. Health insurance is probably the biggest hurdle for a lot of people. You know, many still have to have some sort of, quote, “home base”. And just in order to
30 open a bank account or in order to get health insurance through one of those state exchange programmes⁵ that are offered. So, I think you’re right, there are some practical hurdles.

The other one that somebody reminded me of, I put in the article because I thought it was a good reminder... It’s not like you are just travelling around, you have no worries. There’s probably more maintenance to do on an RV than there is on a typical home. So yes, there’s still a lot of chores to be
35 done around the house. Let’s put it that way. Whether you have two-thousand squarefeet or two-hundred-and-fifty.

Hostess: And, and what about work? I was simply... You know you hear this fantasy about people who are working from home. I don’t know any of those people who can just work from a laptop unless they are, like, Instagram entrepreneurs⁶ and they are, like, selling their lifestyle on Instagram. And what do
40 these people do for a living?

Host. Yeah, yeah.

Heather Long: It’s a huge mix of things. A handful of people are able to work remotely... those lucky people... I profiled one, who was a contractor who was able to log in from her RV, wherever she is in the United States. But the bulk of the people that I met are doing what you might call gig-work⁷. So,
45 they’re helping to clean out the bathrooms at a campsite in exchange for some money, or they’re working in an Amazon warehouse to a seasonal programme that they have there called “camperforce”, where they hire people from September through December. They help through the peak-package deliveries season⁸. So... or security guard is another popular one. You can do it for a few weeks and... and then, you know, move on to the next place. And, there are like a lot of people I met, they are
50 earning way less than they used to. Most people I talked to, this lifestyle, maybe they’re earning around 20,000 a year so they are going, perhaps, from, a middle-class life to a much reduced life, but the point that people kept stressing to me is, you really don’t need as much money as you think, if you cut back on those expenses and on, you know, buying all these goods that we stuff our homes with.

(2018)

⁵ *state exchange programmes*: sundhedsforsikringsordninger, som kræver bopæl i den enkelte delstat

⁶ iværksættere

⁷ småjobs

⁸ *peak-package deliveries season*: højsæson for pakkelevering