



# The Wanderlust Workforce

Jonathan Kalan and Allie Silver, both 28-year-old millennials from Weston, Conn., and friends since childhood, have grown up to become entrepreneurs, clocking thousands of miles across the furthest reaches of the globe. Captivated by their lives, neither one of them is coming home any time soon.

Dan Hymowitz, from Park Slope, Brooklyn spent seven of the last eight years overseas. The majority of his time was spent in Liberia, one of the poorest countries in the world, working in public policy for the first female President on the continent. Most recently he helped craft the comprehensive response to the Ebola crisis that swept the nation.

Jon Fichman, 29, is from Pittsburgh, PA, but now lives in Berlin. He moved to Germany while working for Kayak, and just accepted a

digital marketing job for Airbnb, a company he calls a “Superbrand,” which, in the language of millennials, means a really coveted job.

They are each ferociously bright, ambitious, young adults who have decided to leave their country and their families in search of a life which melds career opportunity with global adventure. They are not alone. Millennials, the children born between 1980 and 2000, are making the decision to push aside ever weakening global boundaries, for work, for adventure, for social action and for some, a last fling before growing up and getting that first serious job.

According to a Boston Consulting Group study, more than 59 percent of millennials say they would move overseas for work. The largest collective student debt in history has placed pressure on their generation to find work wherever they can. The



ability to support themselves without asking for parental assistance seems to be easier to achieve living outside the country. Facing declining corporate opportunity, prohibitive rents, and the cost of health care, millennials have discovered that overseas opportunity offers a tempting alternative. Those with

facile computer skills can find tech jobs in emerging markets all over the world. Newly established companies, many cobbled together by optimistic entrepreneurs, offer the promise of job experience and a dash of adventure, an intoxicating mix.

Information is rife throughout the Internet, and this generation, the first to be fluent in digital technology, has no trouble exploring cyberspace to find the information they seek when considering a new job, planning a trip, getting cheap airfare, and engaging with others who enthusiastically endorse their experiences on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Travel blogs, with breezy promises of thrills and sunsets, add to the lure.

Many have travelled extensively already with their families as well as study abroad programs in college. Many grew up in homes with parents who instilled in them a sky-is-the-limit optimism, a sense that anything is possible. They have been taught that they should challenge themselves, seek joy in



**JONATHAN KALAN** IN PETRA, JORDAN IN 2013. HE SPENT FOUR MONTHS IN JORDAN OVER THE COURSE OF TWO YEARS.





American artists. In the past three years, Free Radical has produced and managed over 18 international tours in nearly 20 countries throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, South America and the U.S. at some of the most prestigious venues and festivals worldwide. Allie was recently profiled on [mobileofficelife.com](http://mobileofficelife.com)

“Travel is my first love, music is my second. So any way that I can incorporate travel into my job and work life, and be earning a living doing what I love and exploring the world at the same time, is when I am happiest,” she said. “I am eternally grateful to live in the *‘digital nomad’* and *‘mobile office’* era, where all we need is a computer and Wi-Fi

their work, and make the world a better place.

Baby boomers, the parents of this new global generation, say they are extremely proud of the accomplishments of their children. They also confess the difficulty of being separated by thousands of miles.

“Communication is not the problem,” said Lynn Abramson, whose daughter Samantha works for Apple in China. “We communicate all the time via Skype, iPhone, or texting. It’s the distance, and knowing that you cannot get there quickly if there is a problem.”

Jonathan Kalan is an accomplished photojournalist, entrepreneur, social activist and self-confessed digital nomad. He is happiest when on his way to the next frontier. His love of adventure was honed by his parents, George and Cheryl Kalan, travel enthusiasts since their youth. When he was six they took him on a family trip to Papua New Guinea, a remote and tribal part of Indonesia. He attended the University of California at Santa Barbara, where he spent a year abroad in India.

Since graduation, he has hardly been home. For the last four years he has lived mostly in East Africa, shooting photos and writing stories for the BBC and the Associated Press. “I am a global nomad. I’ve chosen a life style that allows me to live in a lot of places. People in my generation who are involved in media, tech, and innovation are globally connected and can do that.”

Jonathan has the complete support of his parents, who say they miss him, but are thrilled at his success. “I really like that he is a citizen of the world,” said Jonathan’s father George Kalan. His mother agrees, but said they did worry when he was covering the Arab spring in Egypt; several people he knew were killed in the violence there.

Allie Silver, 28, is an American expat based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She is the founder of Free Radical Productions, a music management and consulting company specializing in South

connection and can set up shop anywhere from a nature park in Mexico to a guest house in India surrounded by monkeys.”

Her parents are in awe of her adventurous spirit and accomplishments and at the same time, wistful that their daughter has chosen the life of an expat.

Kristy De Leon is a licensed marital and family therapist and life coach who frequently works with millennials in California.

She says the traditional family comfort of having children nearby is fading. “Families are reorganizing to accommodate to the realities of the employment and financial state of our country.”

De Leon cited a client who moved to London through an au pair agency to actualize her dreams of traveling to Europe, but also out of frustration after applying to several jobs at home that paid next to nothing because she only had a Bachelor’s degree in child development. Although her parents missed her dearly, they held onto the hope that she would return one day. Communication via Skype allowed her parents to still feel close to her and remain included in her life.

After a year, she called to say she had fallen in love with a young Englishman who had a son from a previous relationship, so moving back home was not an option. Amy chose to stay in England with the man of her dreams. Because of visa complications, she did come home for a short while so that her fiancé could meet her family, whom he had already met virtually. They had a small wedding ceremony, since Amy’s family was not in a financial position to travel to England. Although her parents missed her, they found comfort that she had a well paying job and found happiness in her personal life.

Of course, some people experience devastating heartbreak when they travel overseas and meet a person from a completely different culture with whom they fall in love. One young man who



JON FICHMAN AND HIS FRIEND MEREDITH  
AT BRANDENBURG GATE IN BERLIN


declined to give his name, worked in Japan where he met a young Indian woman he wanted desperately to marry. Ultimately they separated because neither could envision raising the children they both wanted in a distant world without their own families present in their lives.

Isabel Hirama, a millennial from Virginia, works in Malaysia

travel the world? Now you don't have to abandon your career to see the world. And you don't have to abandon the skills you need and have worked hard to create."

Many graduates are unsure what profession they want to pursue, and opt for overseas programs where they can teach English as a second language to foreign students. Demand is high and

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**SAMANTHA ABRAMSON**  
AT A FAVORITE SHANGHAI  
RESTAURANT, DIN TAI FUNG.



for Jobbatical, an Internet search firm that matches people with one-year jobs in Malaysia and Italy. "We have work for software developers, web designers, graphic designers, and positions in business sales and marketing, mostly with startups around the world. Our opportunities are real jobs, not vocations. Salary levels reflect the cost of living in the country.

"Up to now," said Hirama, "it's been a choice. Do I quit my job and

experience is not required. They can earn enough money to live in the countries in which they work and satisfy their ambition to travel as well. All one has to do to find those programs is Google ESL and the options abound.

"The availability of information on the Internet makes access to these programs simple," said Kristy De Leon. "Many boomer parents endorse the concept of a year away, exploring new worlds with a touch of responsibility. They encourage their children to go. They also travel to see them. If someone relocates to China or Japan, it also meets the parents needs to live vicariously through their child's adventures."


Diana Edelman, 36, lived and worked overseas for several years, trying to find a satisfactory path to her life. When she graduated from Towson College in Maryland she worked in public relations in Atlanta, but found the work underwhelming, and the hours long. She felt she was missing out on life, tied to a Blackberry, doing work she hated. She wanted to travel, but felt she would disappoint her father if she was not on an established career path. Finally her mother, a psychotherapist who had seen too many unhappy adults trapped in jobs they hated, encouraged her to explore opportunities overseas. Diana found a job she loved in Thailand, at Save Elephant Foundation. She began raising awareness of the plight of working elephants, traveling widely, promoting responsible tourism, visiting places like Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Kuala Lumpur, Myanmar. After that she moved to Europe, working as a digital nomad, writing blogs that earned

her subsistence pay. Ultimately, she returned to the United States much happier and now works in a public relations firm.

Laura Mandala of Mandala Research, is a sociologist and travel expert who researches trends in the tourism industry. She says, "Millennials are writing a new chapter. There is no template to help us understand how it is going to end and what the implications are for them, their parents and extended family. We don't know the end of the journey. Maybe they move back home. Maybe their helicopter parents move closer to where they have relocated." Anything is possible! \*

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Bonnie Adler is a writer and long-time local reporter in Westport, CT.



**ADAN HYMOWITZ**  
WITH LIBERIAN PRESIDENT ELLEN  
JOHNSON SIRLEAF AND OTHERS  
FROM PRESIDENT SIRLEAF'S TEAM  
(MONROVIA, LIBERIA)