

## Living the Dream

I've been travelling now for 128 days. None of this was planned. My work permit in the UK expired so I jumped on a plane and found myself in America with a few weeks to fill. Those weeks have stretched into months.

I remember a few years ago meeting a fellow Australian on the road. My three month trip was coming to an end. She was half way through a nine month trip. She confessed that she was a little envious of my return home. I was envious of her onward travels. Now I think I am starting to understand how she felt.

It is not that I am not enjoying my travels. Every day is an adventure. I am meeting wonderful people, eating tasty food and seeing new places. Perhaps it would be different if I had planned to be away this long. Since I didn't I am torn between my love of travel and my desire for a 'normal' life. You know, a life where you sleep in the same bed most nights, cook in your own kitchen and have friends that you've known for more than two days.

A couple of people have commented that I am 'Living the dream'. Really? I think they are underestimating how difficult travel can be. Travelling to a country and staying for a week or two is a doddle. You plan most of it before you go. When you arrive you enjoy the plans you have put in place. Some might change but you have some clear ideas on what you want to achieve. You can't do that once it becomes months. You also can't plan a round trip when you don't know how long you have.

I spend about a third of my time planning and replanning. I am couch surfing, so I am constantly sending out requests and reading the details of member's profiles so that I can weed out the nutters. I have learnt that when I let this slip I end up in some odd and slightly

uncomfortable situations like my recent experience of staying with a chain-smoking alcoholic. If couch surfing fails I pour over multiple accommodation sites from Air BnB to Expedia to Priceline. Once I have places to stay I need to work out the logistics of getting there. This involves searching rail, bus, ferry and trail sites, comparing times and fares and weighing up whether my desire to go somewhere outweighs the difficulty of getting there. I worry about costs as my outgoings exceed my incomings.

At times, even when there are people around me I get lonely. I feel lost and aimless like I am drifting and I wonder if I disappeared whether anyone would notice. I get confused when I have to fill in forms and put a home address.

For now though, this is my life. It is by no means bad. I just wouldn't say I'm 'Living the Dream.' Perhaps I just have different dreams. My dream would be someone else doing all of the planning and paying, under my direction, leaving me with only the fun parts. It would be nice to have a partner in crime too.

Today there is another trail to ride. Picture me riding my bicycle into the sunset.

The End.

