

You don't have to be retired to enjoy the freedom of living on the road. When people notice that my husband and I are younger than the typical snowbird, they often ask, "Did you win the lotto?" The answer is definitely "Not!"



Living on the Road

Not Just for the Rich or Retired

By Rene Agredano #103274

Few people realize that the RVing lifestyle isn't exclusively reserved for the rich or retired grown-ups. When we tell them that anyone can travel the country and live on the road at any age, they're puzzled until we enlighten them about cost-saving measures like "work-camping."

Work-camping is a terrific way to offset the expense of traveling while getting to know a region. It's also one of the main ways we can afford to enjoy life on the road, decades before retirement.

Fill the Gap

In 2007 we embarked on a one-year sabbatical to RV around the country while attempting to figure out "what's next" in our life. We were greenhorn RVers in our early 40s and thought we could see North America in a year—how wrong we were!

After agreeing that we wanted to keep our wheels turning, our little vacation turned into a full-time lifestyle when

two campground hosts near Steamboat Springs, Colorado, raved about the benefits of "work-camping."

Work-camping typically involves temporarily working a certain number of hours for a campground, business or public park in exchange for discounted RV parking. If you've ever seen a campground park host, or person selling Christmas trees, chances are those individuals are "work-camping" and saving money on their rent.

Work-camping can seem mysterious at first, but, thankfully, there's an organization that shows RVers the ropes. It is Workamper News, Inc., which is a membership-based organization that helps RVers find jobs around North America through classified listings. (For more information about Workamper News, Inc., see their ad on page 65.)

Through Workamper News, Inc., you may be guided in areas such as how to create a winning work-camping resume and the best questions to ask potential employers. Workamper president Steve Anderson may discuss the benefits of operating a small business on the road, which

Jim and Rene are Escapees commercial members #667. They document their travels at www.liveworkdream.com and help others follow their dreams at www.agreda.com.



1, 5. Rene work-camping at an organic farm in Florida. 2. Jim work-camping at a dude ranch in Colorado. 3. Work-camping friends Tom and Erin Dykman #97134. 4. Jim work-camping at a hot springs resort in New Mexico. Photos by Rene Agredano and Jim Nelson #103274.

include legitimate tax write-offs and making additional income doing something you are passionate about.

It is reassuring to know that operating a mobile small business doesn't need to be complicated, time-consuming or take up valuable space.

"Sure, there are lots of folks hauling trailers behind their RV and pulling inventory behind them, but in this day and age of the Internet, you really don't need to do that," reminds Anderson.

Many RVers, such as my husband and I, have an office view that can change daily if we want it to. With just an Internet connection and laptop computers, we operate our small business-coaching enterprise in our 24-foot Arctic Fox fifth-wheel trailer. Our business doesn't necessitate carrying any inventory, but some businesses do.

No Typical Work-camper

Honestly, the type of business you can operate is endless. Among our own working-age RVing circle, we know accountants, tattoo artists, jewelry designers and computer programmers—all of whom are years away from retirement age.

"Most work-campers are retired or semi-retired, but more and more young couples, singles or families are pursuing their dream of traveling the country with the season," says Workamper owner Steve Anderson. "(They're) supporting their lifestyle through opportunities that

Workamper News, Inc., advertises in their membership magazine or online daily Hotlines."

Work-campers represent a cross-section of ages and occupations, from full-timing young families with small children to a freelance engineer, to younger baby boomers taking small steps toward full-time RVing.

Whether someone is a "dreamer" (see "www.dreamers.workamper.com") or experienced work-camper, there is genuine camaraderie among work-campers of all ages who share the same desire to lead an unconventional and adventurous life.

Jaimie Hall Bruzenak #19361, author of numerous books about living and working on the road, says one of the most valuable aspects of belonging to Workamper News is that dreamers can "get solid information. They can see that it's attainable, that it's not just some myth they see out there on the Internet."

Tom and Erin Dykman #97134, full-time RVers originally from Blanco, Texas, agree that, "It's a phenomenal way to live." Erin, as a semi-retired career coach, and her husband, Tom, began the full-time RVing lifestyle in 2010 after purchasing a fifth-wheel trailer they spotted in an *Escapees* magazine classified ad.

Change Your Destiny

Work-camping isn't the only way to support a full-time RVing lifestyle, but it's one of the best opportunities full-time RVers and snowbirds have to offset expenses. The daily job listings and expert guidance we have found in *Workamper News* have been integral in locating our most memorable work-camping arrangements, from volunteering at an animal rescue in North Carolina and a hot springs resort in New Mexico to working at an historic dude ranch in western Colorado.

After four years on the road, it's hard to believe that our destiny changed forever because of two talkative campground hosts in Colorado. Had they never told us about work-camping, we just might be living in a stick house somewhere, dreaming about the day we could retire and hit the road all over again. Instead, we're living our dream now, and, thanks to work-camping, life has never been better! 🏡

For more information about Workamper News, Inc., see their ad on page 65. For work-camping opportunities with Escapees Rainbow Parks, contact parks@escapees.com or call them at 800-580-4269. If you are into volunteering, you may volunteer your time and talent and be on the potential staff list for Escapade by e-mailing Molly Pinner, Escapade director, at mpinner85@gmail.com. In addition, there are dozens of short-term volunteer positions that you can sign up for once you arrive at an Escapade.