



## **DIGITAL NOMADS**

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## ABSTRACT

Digital nomadism, living nomadically and relying on technology to work, is considered to be the future of working, replacing the traditional 9-5 working in an office. The general advantages and disadvantages of teleworking have already been researched and examined, concluding that this new way of working can provide several positive aspects to the life of digital nomads, but there are also barriers in this way of life. With the help of several articles and statistics on the subject, we manage to compare and evaluate on the appropriateness of Greece for digital nomads, a country that is making efforts to attract more of them. Despite its low economy, it was concluded that Greece can actually provide digital nomads with several positive aspects but there are still some disadvantages.

## Introduction



Digital nomads are people who live a nomadic lifestyle and are location-independent, relying on technology to do their work. Telecommuting rather than being physically present at a company's headquarters or workplace, digital nomads work remotely. Several technologies have enabled the digital nomad lifestyle, including content management tools, low-cost Internet connectivity through WiFi, and smartphones for

contacting clients and employers. The term "Digital Nomad" was originally just a neologism invented by the creators of the 1997 book of the same name (Makimoto & Manners, 1997). Long-distance employment appeared far-fetched at the time, but with the evolution of technology, it is becoming more and more feasible. Job, technology, and travel have evolved in tandem to broaden the opportunities for highly skilled professionals who would perform their professional activities anywhere in the world. These days, digital nomadism is an internationally recognized concept that has received considerable media exposure due to its innovative operation. Based on recent statistic research, the number of digital nomads in the United States has more than doubled in the last two years, rising from 4.8 million in 2018 to 10.9 million in 2020. Also, 49 percent of digital nomads reap the same (or more) than they did in their previous office careers. Lastly, when employees work remotely, 85 percent of business owners state their company is more profitable. Telework is not well known in Greece. While research on the incidence of telework is restricted, some studies suggest that as little as 1.1 percent of businesses use the method. While the social partners have a relatively favorable view of telework, labor unions are concerned about the existence of telework deals, and employers are concerned about the development of telework. However, Greece is making an effort to attract more digital nomads, by speeding up procedures for the launch of a special visa. Aside from entry procedures, the latest model would provide digital nomads with details on all potential problems that will arise during their stay in Greece, such as insurance, housing, taxation, infrastructure, and so on. In a try to attract digital nomads and under the proposed scheme, the current tax rate in Greece, which is 44% for annual earnings over €40,000 (\$47,000), would drop to 22% for seven years.

## Advantages

Digital nomads' way of living is one of the fastest-growing lifestyles we have today. Research has shown that by 2035 there will be 1 billion digital nomads on earth. This occurs because being a digital nomad has many benefits. First and foremost, digital nomads have the benefit to work when and where they want as their jobs do not require them to work in an office and do not force them to work at an exact time. In other words, they can plan their work around their life. In this way, they have more freedom to do whatever they want. For instance, let us say that a digital nomad wants to go on vacation to France. He will not have to plan when it is his break or when he has time to go. He will just have to book the tickets and that is it. Also, digital nomads travel most of the time to different places around the world. In this way, they meet many different people from different cultures and get to know their cultures better. They broaden their horizons and are exposed to new experiences. Furthermore, a digital nomad has a better quality of life. This is mostly because they can choose where to work, which gives them the ability to pick the place they are mostly attracted to, offering them the best quality of life. What's more full-time travel is a reliable source of adventurous experiences and memorable moments. There are many activities that a digital nomad can experience, such as hiking around volcanoes and rafting in huge lakes. Being a digital nomad will also enhance your personal growth. This will happen because a digital nomad is constantly being exposed to new situations, challenges, and ideas. Thus, you get more open-minded, confident, dynamic, and better at organizing things. All this will by any doubt help you later in your life. Lastly, by being a digital nomad you can see many economic advantages. Living in places like China can be way cheaper than in places like the USA or Europe. However, in places like China where the

cost of living isn't that big, there will be many clients willing to pay a lot. In this way, you will be able to save money on things such as accommodation and food and at the same time earn a lot of money from clients.



## Disadvantages

Arguably the most important downside of digital nomadism is its lack of consistency. For those who partake in self-employment, wages are never guaranteed. Income ebbs and flows as business changes, and month-to-month digital nomads may receive varying amounts of money. This makes it difficult to plan for the future effectively, as the amount of money one can allot towards rent or necessities may quickly change. Although office jobs may not grant complete flexibility in work hours or location, one can be assured of a paycheck every two weeks. This is not the case for self-employed digital nomads. For company-employed digital nomads, such as those who telework, paychecks and income are more stable, but this does not necessarily mean consistency. Constant

traveling has its downsides, as one must deal with different tax rates, insurance policies, local laws, and more from location to location. It's rare for digital nomads to feel completely settled, as even seemingly minor issues, such as weak internet connectivity or uncomfortable seating, may cause dysfunction over time. Another issue that can't be overlooked is the inability to develop lasting relationships. Whether workplace or personal, connections between people require contact and time, two things that digital nomads often lack. Physical separation from coworkers of any kind means that it is difficult to establish workplace connections. Friendships that so often bloom as a result of shared workplaces cease to exist, and important connections that can help people boost themselves forward in the job market are hampered. Outside of the workplace, digital nomads may struggle to make friends or find partners due to constant travel and language barriers. Although digital nomadism is often paraded as a great opportunity to meet new people, the nomadic lifestyle makes it exponentially more difficult to form truly important lasting connections. Finally, although a seemingly minor issue at first glance, digital nomads often find themselves struggling with motivation. Working a 9-5 in an office every day is certainly routine, something that digital nomadism strives to be the opposite of, but this practice ensures the completion of important work. This is not the case with digital nomads, as work can often take the back seat when surrounded by beautiful scenery and unique culture. Many digital nomads start on their path because of their love of travel and want for new experiences, but what some come to realize is that opportunities to truly live out their passion are limited by the many hours their job requires - especially when nomadic jobs can often call for more than the 40-hours traditional jobs require. Digital nomads can find themselves stuck in a limbo where they must choose between completing the work that they have to, or fully

exploring the location they reside in. Digital nomads must be extremely disciplined, or many can find themselves falling behind in their work, a surefire recipe for disaster.



## Advantages in Greece

Having considered the general strengths and limitations of digital nomads, it is crucial to now focus on the evaluation of such nomads in Greece, specifically. Despite the weak economy, Greece has slowly been turning into a top destination for digital nomads, so there are bound to be advantageous reasons to explain this trend. Firstly, Greece has a rising start-up scene with networking opportunities, Facebook groups, and several meetups where digital nomads can connect with like-minded individuals. On the mainland, there are also regular events to bring together the digital nomad community. As for coworking spaces, there are a few in the main towns and cities, though they can be rare and expensive which could be an opportunity for a digital nomad to work from home and save money for

later traveling. Otherwise, coffee shops, of which there are more than plenty, can be used as an alternative to coworking space. Thanks to Greece's late-night culture, there are coffee shops still open after 7 pm for evening workers. The digital revolution has transformed the world of work in Greece, which means Wi-Fi access is gradually becoming more available throughout the country. If the internet is only used to browse and download, the setup in Greece is quick and efficient. According to Normadlist, internet connectivity ranges from nine MBPS (in Patra) to 13 MBPS (Santorini and Mykonos). Next, Greece has one of the lowest costs of living in the EU, though Athens is generally considered more expensive. This means that accommodation rent (e.g. Airbnb), utilities, groceries, public transport are reasonably affordable compared to many other European countries. Moreover, the costs of living can vary between different areas which allow a nomad to find the pricing that best suits his or her income. For instance, the cost of living in Santorini, which is expensive, will be very different from the cost of living in Crete. Hence, there are options a digital nomad can consider or rule out if budget is important for them, in which case they might start by researching the cost of living for different parts of Greece before thinking about anything else. Another price influencer in accommodation is the season. Greece, being a top summer destination, can raise its prices in August and throughout the summer while still attracting the desired amounts of tourists. So, a digital nomad can easily move to Greece off-season, even just a month later in September, and find that the cost of accommodation will be less than half of its August price. Additionally, one of the best parts of living in Greece is being able to travel and explore the beautiful country – both its well-known and undiscovered areas. After all, digital nomads, by definition, are travelers! Transportation means can range from island ferries to car rentals, well-connected buses,

the metro, taxis, or, in many of the islands, one can get around by foot. Finally, Greece is idyllically geographically located with quick access to three continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa). This, combined with the regular ferries between the main ports of each country or the well-connected airports with plenty of direct flights (even in the islands), makes Greece the perfect temporary settlement for a digital nomad who, after Greece, wants to continue traveling.



## Disadvantages in Greece

Greece is a lovely country with good quality food, beautiful beaches, and a wide selection of places to stay, but is it the most appropriate for a digital nomad trying to work from there? Yes, there are positives in living to work and living in Greece such as the weather and climate, the sights and attractions, cheap travel, and healthy food, but there are many factors which make Greece less attractive of a place to work in as a digital nomad. One of the main features of being a digital nomad is that they are not at an office with co-workers, this means that they need to be constantly online to work and communicate with

their co-workers and that they need a good connection to share their work. Despite the provision of new 5G internet services in most places in Athens, quite often the internet still is slow and unreliable. The download speeds are good enough to support scrolling and searching online, but when on video calls it may cause issues. Also, the upload speeds are very bad in comparison to the download speeds, which results in great difficulty when uploading large files to share their work. This is a problem especially in the Greek islands, in which 5G networks are yet to be established, and in many places, the internet connection and service connection are extremely poor. One other issue with working as a digital nomad in Greece, instead of someplace else, is the high tax rates. In Greece, the Value Added Tax is at 24%, which is the highest in Europe. This results in goods being more expensive in comparison to other potential destinations for a digital nomad. Additionally, there is an issue with language barriers. In Athens, most people do speak English, and the road signs have translations on them, but outside of Athens, on other islands per se, this is not the case. In certain islands in which tourist attraction is not as high as others, many traditional, family-run Greek taverns/stores may not know good English and that may come across as difficulty in living there. Another issue that non-EU digital nomads may face is the provision of the necessary visa to stay for a period longer than 90 days and work in Greece. The difficulty does vary depending on the nationality of the nomad and the relationship of that nation with Greece, but it may be an issue and make it difficult to make the transition into Greece. A final issue that has come forth recently is related to the neighborhoods of Greece. Now more than ever refugees and immigrants are a part of the country, and criminality and drugs are very common to find even in the center of Athens. In conclusion, Greece like all other potential host countries has some bad disadvantages compared to other

places, but there also are multiple good aspects of the country as mentioned prior which make it a good destination.



## Conclusion

Digital Nomadism is starting to get worldwide recognition and gain significant prominence as technology is evolving in favor of it. Despite the fact that telework is less well known in Greece, efforts to make Greece as appropriate as possible for digital nomads are being made in order to attract a greater number of them. In general, digital nomadism is growing rapidly due to its several advantages. Working place and time are flexible and dependent on the digital nomads' preferences, providing them with freedom and independence. Traveling and life quality are also important positive aspects of teleworking, as well as personal growth and financial well-being. However, digital nomads face instability when it comes to wages, and this makes future planning stressful and ineffective. Strong and long-term relationships are difficult to be established, due to the constant moving and barriers such as language are making it hard for digital nomads to form

relationships even outside the office. Also, digital nomads may lack incentive, on account of their not working for specific hours in an office and being prone to entertainment rather than working. When it comes to Greece specifically, it is starting to adapt to change needed for digital nomads. Wi-Fi is starting to become more and more available as well as coworking spaces. Greece's low living costs are making it suitable for digital nomads to live there and find appropriate pricing. Specifically, when it comes to accommodation, the cost of searching for a place to live, especially during months with low tourism, is considered low. Of equal importance, Greece is well-known for its landscapes and beautiful sceneries that digital nomads will be able to explore, and combined with the various choices of transportation, they will have the chance to discover the beauty of the country. Greece, however, is made less attractive for digital nomads due to its significant internet and connection problems that arise in several places, mostly islands. Language is sometimes a barrier as in less urban places the chances to find English speakers are not so high. High taxes are also a problem of teleworking in Greece, as well as the high crime rates in specific infamous places. Digital nomadism is a phenomenon that is here to stay, as technology is evolving, and people try to make the best out of their working conditions. Especially in places like Greece, that make a huge effort to attract digital nomads, teleworking will be embraced and effectively enacted.

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