

# A LIFE REDESIGNED

*Long-Term Travel  
Options in a Digital Age*

LIMITED PRINT, FIRST EDITION

By Gary Hawkins

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Visit our family travel website at [www.ourgiftoflove.com](http://www.ourgiftoflove.com)

I dedicate this book to my darling wife, Yafei, and my beautiful daughter, Xaria.

Yafei, you've listened to my many plans and have been brave enough to brainstorm and consider alternatives.

Xaria, you came into our lives and changed them forever.

I love you both.

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Finally, I'm grateful to everyone else who has participated in this project and helped us prepare for our move from road warriors to digital nomads. It's tremendously exciting to be ready for our extended traveling adventure with our daughter, Xaria. Even though we're only at the beginning of our journey, I know it will change our lives forever. And, ultimately, that is what this book is about – looking at alternative lifestyles and enhancing our existence as human beings on this fascinating planet of ours.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1871578386412090/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.paulinenolet.com/>

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# Introduction

While it could be considered immodest to say this book will change the direction of your life, it actually might! Perhaps that's too bold a statement, but reading the initial drafts has caused several of my content editors to think hard about their futures! This reaction is exciting as an author, and partial validation of the path we have chosen! Whether this pans out, only time and our family blog, **OurGiftOfLove**,<sup>3</sup> will tell.

As you start on these opening paragraphs, let me state that my goal is to present the possibility of an alternate lifestyle, and the tools to start it. So what does this mean? Today, the majority of us, including our family until recently, lead the same traditional lives. One or both parents working, often in 9-to-5 jobs, living in a home, raising a family, kids growing up and attending school, and going on vacation once or twice a year. Most of us do this from a pretty young age until we retire – typically in our mid-sixties. Yes, some of you may well have taken a year off to travel at some point, but invariably we all gravitate back to this scenario.

If you live in the USA, this is what most of us think of as the *American Dream*. Few of us question whether this is the best path, or if there are viable alternatives. We live our lives in this way because

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<sup>3</sup> <https://ourgiftoflove.com/>

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it has become the norm in society. It's what is expected, and people find it hard to break with tradition. But there are alternatives, and, in fact, there are a surprising number! I'm going to present one of these alternate lifestyles that has come about through the intersection of the sharing and gig economies. It doesn't matter whether you have heard these terms before – they will become clear soon enough. This alternative lifestyle that I'll discuss centers on extended travel. Many of us have journeyed in this increasingly small world. We travel for work, to go on vacation, to visit family and friends, or we live vicariously through the experience of others. How many times have you caught yourself flicking through a Facebook or Instagram feed, wishing you were there too!

For the time being, all I ask is you keep an open mind to what I'm about to propose. Don't be scared off by words like *change*, *alternative lifestyle*, or *breaking with tradition*. I'll present my ideas and the tools our family is using to start on this new path, and I'll leave you to ponder whether this is a possible fit for your family. I want only to plant seeds for your consideration; it's up to you to determine if you cultivate these seeds, pick a different packet, or continue on your current path. Rest assured, there is no right or wrong answer here. I'm offering something to consider; I'm not saying it's right or advocating you should do it. That's for you to determine, and whichever path you choose will be the correct one for your family.

### *My Parents*

My ambitions around travel did not start as extended travel goals; they began as a retirement goal, and my parents inspired this idea. Born in England in the thirties, my parents worked hard and never spent money they didn't have; the only debt they ever incurred was the mortgage for their home. Dad was quick to see a business opportunity and not afraid to pursue it. Besides his full-time job as a welder in a tire factory, he ran a scaffolding business. From an early

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age, my brother and I got used to hauling scaffold frames all over South West England. Dad also bought and sold items he came across at bankruptcy auctions and estate sales. He would purchase vanloads of stuff, repackage it, and sell it on for a profit. One day, he came home with twenty thousand aluminum baking trays of every conceivable shape and size in the back of a removal van! We made a profit after selling the first two thousand.

Our house in rural England had a two-acre garden, although you'd never have guessed this when viewed from the road. For years this served as a large vegetable plot before being sold for housing development. We built Mom a full-sized market garden greenhouse acquired from a distressed business! If you're familiar with English TV, my childhood was like living in an endless episode of the seventies TV sitcoms *The Good Life* and the brilliantly funny *Only Fools and Horses* all rolled together! If you've never heard of these TV programs, check out YouTube<sup>4</sup> and enjoy a bit of good old British humor. My father was a bit of a Del Boy!

Dad retired from full-time work at the age of fifty-two. Mom devoted herself to the family and running a part-time and very active daycare in the village where we lived. I never asked them who gave them financial advice, or for that matter who was making their investment decisions, but whoever set them up on their retirement plan did a great job of matching their financial means and their retirement expectations. Three decades later, they were still financially on track when Mom passed shortly after their sixtieth wedding anniversary. With a modest net worth, they had enjoyed an extended retirement, which involved some overseas travel, many road trips around the United Kingdom, and much time pursuing gardening and other hobbies.

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<sup>4</sup> Search "Good Life TV Show" and "Only Fools and Horses" respectively.

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The significance of seeing my parents retire at such an early age, with such limited means, was not lost on me. I grew up trying to embrace the same values they had – work hard, take your opportunities, don't spend what you don't have, don't live beyond your means, and save money for the future. I wanted to achieve what they had done – retire early.

While I did not retire at fifty-two, it became clear approaching the half-century mark the possibility was getting close. I left the full-time workforce, having suffered another redundancy at the age of fifty-four. While disappointing at the time, this ultimately turned out to be a blessing. It allowed me to focus on our future, travel plans and writing. Now, our family has embarked on a new and exciting adventure – this alternative lifestyle!

### *Regrets We Might Have When We Get Old*

When thinking of the *American Dream*, most people conjure up the image of having a good job, raising a family, and owning a house in a desirable neighborhood. There's nothing fundamentally wrong with this picture, and tens of millions strive for this every day. But that wasn't strictly what was in the mind of James T. Adams when he coined the term "American Dream" in his 1931 book, *The Epic of America*. Adams dreamt "of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement." He added, "It is not [merely] a dream of motor cars and high wages." Whether Adams knew it or not at the time, he had foreseen what many consider now to be a culture of consumption. A world where too often your worth is gauged by your wealth. A world in which work is central to our lives. A world where keeping family needs and work balanced is a daily struggle. And a world where many families are only truly together during a few weeks of vacation each year. For many, the American Dream has become the pursuit of material prosperity – people working longer and longer hours for

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bigger cars and fancier homes. How much is enough? Should the American Dream have less focus on financial gain, and more emphasis on living a simple, fulfilling life?

Don't get me wrong – I firmly believe in the necessity for hard work. My parents taught me not to expect something for nothing. If you want to get on, don't hope someone will hand it to you on a plate. Work hard, ensure your own success, and for thirty years I've done this. But consider for a moment that we spend most of our adult life on this planet working! Most of us do this out of the requirement to put food on the table, keep a roof over our heads, pay the bills, and put the kids through school. But the bigger question is, are you also doing this because of the cultural expectation of keeping up with your neighbors?

We all like larger houses, new cars, all the latest cool gadgets, and a big-screen TV in every room. But do we honestly *need* these things? Sure, these material things are desirable (who doesn't want to drive down the street in a striking red Ferrari?), but do they bring us health, happiness or fulfillment? Do they allow us to enjoy more time with our families? Are you there to see your child perform at the Christmas play?

In the consumer culture we now live in, we don't use items until they wear out. We discard them when they bore us, fashion changes, or the neighbor next door comes home with a new one. I'm sure you've heard the phrase "*Keeping up with the Joneses.*" This ethos is not just an American phenomenon; it's happening all over the developed world. So, ask yourself carefully, is this the way I want to live my life? Think about the alternatives. Whatever your answer to this question, it will mold you and your family's future path.

As I alluded to earlier, for some, aspirations of what makes for a *well-lived life* are beginning to broaden beyond the confines of the traditional meaning of the American Dream. People are recognizing that working so hard and for so long has led them to miss out on

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many other aspects of life, like spending time with family and friends, traveling, or enjoying hobbies and sports. And we all know that life is a finite commodity. It does not last forever; we are mortal beings. How many times have you heard of people dying prematurely in a tragic accident or of those who retire only to pass shortly afterward? How often have you heard someone say, “*If only I had more time?*” or “*It’s a shame they didn’t get to enjoy more of their retirement?*”

A post from *UpVee*, which went viral on Facebook in early 2018, addresses some of these thoughts while speaking to regrets people have in their later years. Their Top Ten list<sup>5</sup> was:

1. *Not traveling when you had the chance;*
2. *Staying in a bad relationship;*
3. *Caring too much about what other people think;*
4. *Being afraid to say, “I Love You”;*
5. *Working too much;*
6. *Not playing with the kids enough;*
7. *Not spending enough time with your parents;*
8. *Never taking a big risk;*
9. *Not quitting a terrible job;*
10. *Not realizing how beautiful you are.*

With over forty million views (I wish we could get that many for one of our blog posts!), some of these direct and indirect travel-related reasons underscore why people want to, or in my opinion should at least start to, consider travel or retirement earlier than is traditional to do so. I say, “*If you have the opportunity to do something new, why not consider it?*” It’s interesting that few of these regrets depend on your financial means if your expectations are correctly set.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://upvee.co/top-10-things-will-regret-youre-old>

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There's nothing in this list about owning shiny cars, a big house, a large-screen TV in every room, or keeping up with your neighbors.

I've already mentioned there are a surprising number of alternative lifestyles out there, and one that has been around for a while is living on the road in a recreational vehicle (RV). A Facebook post by RVer Gary Dolese caught my eye. Gary wrote:

*As I sit here going over our taxes, I realized how rich we actually are. Not because of any money in the bank or investments. We don't own a home, and we still have bills to pay every month. We all but live retirement check to retirement check. We are rich because we are doing what we want to do, not what's expected. We have a grand total of 399 sq. ft. and we love every inch. We hear it all. "I could never give up my house." "What if something happens?" My question is, what if you never try? We have friends from all over this continent we have met because of this life. We have traveled to places we never thought we would. But most importantly, after 29 years I'm still married to my best friend. That makes me rich beyond belief!*

What an excellent commentary. It made the hairs on my arms stand up when I read this. Gary and his wife might not be rich in the bank, but they're certainly rich in their hearts and rich in their life. They are living a new American Dream that focuses not on financial gain but living a simple and meaningful existence.

I encourage you to think and talk about what is important to you and your family. To quote a well-used phrase, consider whether you, "Live to work, or work to live?" Ask yourself, "What makes for a life well-lived?"

### *Target Audience*

When I started writing this book, I thought my target audience was pretty much the demographic in which we fall as a family – that

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is, a middle-class couple within ten to fifteen years of what we all consider to be retirement age. But as this book has come together, and having spoken to many individuals, couples and families traveling around the world, it's become apparent that the potential audience is much broader and covers a wide variety of financial circumstances. Consider the information presented in the following pages as a giant smorgasbord and pick the dishes that apply to your situation. There's information for individuals and couples early in their lives, for those working who might be considering taking a sabbatical, for families like ourselves who are partway through their working career, and finally those in, or close to, retirement. The common thread with all these folks will be the desire to travel, a willingness to think outside the box, the ability to be open-minded, and the belief of working to live, as opposed to living to work.

When I referenced an alternative lifestyle and extended travel earlier, I was foreseeing undertaking this for years rather than months. But even if you end up contemplating a shorter journey, there is much information that you'll benefit from knowing. For example, the section on digital security applies equally to any traveler. In fact, in large part, it pertains to us all.

Further, I hope you don't read this book just once. As your life changes, you'll be able to re-examine the presented concepts, selecting the pieces that now suit your changing circumstances. Consider the case of a young couple who wants to travel today. This book will help them achieve this, and it will also provide ideas for how they can arrange their finances so that they can undertake extended travel later in life, perhaps this time with their family.

While this book provides detailed information most pertinent to those living in the United States, the general principles apply to those in other parts of the world. Just as you would skip over a buffet offering not to your liking, feel free to skip over topics not relevant to your circumstances.

*Notes on the Text*

I'll set your reading expectations now. The travel strategy described in this book can be tailored to meet the needs of a wide range of people, but it's not going to be for everyone. The key is a sound financial base, and considerable time will be devoted to developing a sustainable plan. With this in place, you'll set appropriate travel expectations, so you don't have a nasty surprise halfway down the road when funds start to run out. Even if you do find your spending more than expected, you'll have the tools at hand to identify the problem quickly and adapt your travel plans accordingly.

While you can go on the road with little or no preparation, developing a plan is undoubtedly going to help, and in our case, planning was essential. In fact, it's accurate to say my wife and I have been preparing for a number of years for reasons you'll soon understand. That being said, you will meet others who have uprooted almost at the drop of a hat, emphasizing the fact that no one travel solution is going to fit all. As you'll see later, my wife and I considered multiple approaches before finally settling on our current travel strategy. Even now, I can't say with total confidence we've selected the ideal method for our family, but you need to start somewhere, or you'll never start at all!

You'll also find some topics covered in several places in this book. I make no apology for this; many items are so intertwined that it's impossible to avoid repetition. Finally, I am not advertising specific services and products. My intention is only to describe the services and tools to use. Most of these are ones we have already successfully exploited ourselves or ones I've heard sufficiently positive reviews about that I'm confident should be considered. However, it will be your choice what you use, and your responsibility to determine if these are the right tools for you. Also, while every effort has been

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made to ensure the hyperlinks provided are accurate at the time of publication, we all know that web addresses change with time. If you come across a broken link, please accept my apologies, and please take a moment to let me know so I can correct it for the next edition of the book. Also, please note that longer web addresses have been shortened using **bitly**.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <https://bitly.com/>

# Living in a Digital Age

Whether you realize it or not, demographic, economic, social and technological shifts are transforming the way we live. In this rapidly developing digital age, two economic changes are expanding the possibilities relating to extended travel and a travel-based alternative lifestyle. The first of these changes is known as the sharing economy, sometimes referred to by the term *collaborative consumption*. The second is the development of the gig economy. Both are causing profound alterations to the way we live and work.

## *The Sharing Economy*

The term *sharing economy* has been widely used since 2010,<sup>7</sup> although interestingly it's a bit of a mystery who came up with the phrase. Not only does the term not have an owner, but its definition is open to some interpretation. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the sharing economy as “*activity that involves individuals buying or selling usually temporary access to goods or services especially as arranged through an online company or organization.*”<sup>8</sup> According to Wikipedia, academic definitions tend to be narrower, “*limiting the*

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<sup>7</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharing\\_economy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharing_economy)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sharing%20economy>

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*sharing economy to peer-to-peer transactions,”* and sometimes further restricting these to relate to “*the temporary exchange of physical goods.*” What does this mean? Simplistically, it means that people are sharing goods to make better use of them. There’s nothing new in this; people have been sharing things for thousands of years. The difference now is there are highly effective ways of facilitating this sharing of goods that have created some billion-dollar business sectors.

I would argue that the term *sharing economy* also instills a sense of sustainability – the notion of making better use of resources, perhaps even a move towards minimalism and being eco-friendly. The definition of the sharing economy provided by Dictionary.com reflects this notion, “*a system in which people rent, borrow, or share commodities, services, and resources owned by individuals, usually with the aid of online technology, to save money, cut costs, and reduce waste.*”<sup>9</sup>

Central to the exponential growth now seen in the sharing economy is the technology implied in the Merriam-Webster definition with the words “*online company or organization.*” The “technology” consists of the internet, the almost ubiquitous access to the internet via high-speed data communication networks, and cheap and abundant computing devices (most importantly handheld devices like smartphones and tablets). This technology ecosystem is known as the Internet of Everything or the Internet of Things. I worked with these technologies for over twenty years, helping design and build the telecommunications networks that enable the connection of people, places, and devices. Later, my career focused on assisting cities and utility companies to harness this ecosystem to become smarter – that is, to operate in more optimal and sustainable ways.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/sharing-economy>

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Enabled by this combination of technologies, many new companies are transforming consumerism, business, and the way we live. These companies provide shared access to goods and services, often obtained from nontraditional sources. We have entered a new era that will dramatically change the way humans work and play. Examples of sharing economy offerings include ride-share services like **Uber**<sup>10</sup> and **Lyft**,<sup>11</sup> car-share services like **Zipcar**<sup>12</sup> and **Car2go**,<sup>13</sup> RV and travel trailer sharing through the likes of **Outdoorsy**<sup>14</sup> and, of course, accommodation-sharing services like **Airbnb**.<sup>15</sup> Whether at home or perhaps more importantly on the move, you can access these services anywhere, anytime. In defining the sharing economy, Merriam-Webster goes on to say, “Arguably the biggest sector of the sharing economy is travel. People are renting their beds to out-of-towners (Airbnb and **Couchsurfer**<sup>16</sup>), leading them on guided tours (**Vayable**<sup>17</sup> and **CanaryHop**<sup>18</sup>) and hosting meals (**Voulez Vous Diner**<sup>19</sup> and **EatWith**<sup>20</sup>), sometimes for free but on most sites for a price.”<sup>21</sup>

How big is the sharing economy? In a 2014 study, the Brookings Institute<sup>22</sup> think-tank estimated that the sharing economy would grow “from \$14 billion in 2014 to \$335 billion by 2025.”<sup>23</sup> Economic

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.uber.com/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.lyft.com/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www2.zipcar.com/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.car2go.com/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.outdoorsy.com/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.airbnb.com/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.couchsurfing.com/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.vayable.com/>

<sup>18</sup> CanaryHop has already gone out of business – companies come and go quickly in this immature market!

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.voulezvousdiner.com/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.eatwith.com/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sharing%20economy>

<sup>22</sup> The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit public policy organization based in Washington, DC.

<sup>23</sup> <https://brook.gs/2ucU6yH>

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numbers are sometimes difficult to put into context, so what does this translate to regarding the number of sharing economy websites that now exist? Well, by early 2018 there were approximately five hundred peer-to-peer organizations offering everything from accommodation, work for lodging, house-sitting, pet-sitting, house swaps, hospitality, ride sharing, tours, gear rentals, RV rentals, auto rentals, boat rentals, flight sharing, food experiences, meeting travelers, currency exchange and delivery! And that number is growing every day.

### *The Gig Economy*

The trend towards a gig economy has also begun in earnest, and it too will have enormous implications in the future. What is the gig economy? It's an employment environment in which temporary positions are commonplace, and organizations contract with independent workers for short-term engagements to supplement a much-reduced full-time workforce. The gig economy is enabled by the same technology ecosystem that is underpinning the development of the sharing economy.

Temporary jobs are nothing new – organizations have utilized contract labor for decades. The difference, however, is the scale at which contract labor is employed, and the ease with which employers seeking such services and employees offering appropriate skills are brought together by apps and digital platforms like **Lionbridge**,<sup>24</sup> **Clickworker**,<sup>25</sup> and **WeWorkRemotely**.<sup>26</sup> “*The gig economy [labor]...is now estimated to be about 34% of the workforce and expected to be 43% by the year 2020,*” Intuit CEO Brad Smith said in 2017.<sup>27</sup> These numbers

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<sup>24</sup> <https://thesmartcrowd.lionbridge.com>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.clickworker.com>

<sup>26</sup> <https://weworkremotely.com/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://cnnmon.ie/2UUzBEa>

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are slightly ahead of what Intuit estimated seven years earlier in their report *Intuit 2020 Report – Twenty Trends That Will Shape the Next Decade*.<sup>28</sup> If this growing shift continues, it's not difficult to imagine a time when contract workers outnumber full-time employees in the USA! There are many reasons why this change is happening in developed labor markets around the world, but most distill down to organizations driving to further reduce operational costs in the face of growing global competition.

The social implications of a gig economy will, without doubt, be significant. Many would argue these changes are not for the better as employers shift the burden of health insurance and retirement savings plans to the employee, and many independent workers may lack access to income security protections like unemployment insurance, workers compensation, and disability insurance that are enjoyed by traditional employees. Then there are the softer implications, like the creeping reduction in worker permanence, the loss of organizational belonging, and the reduction in face-to-face social interaction. Further, current labor and tax laws (built on the Industrial Era assumption that most people have traditional nine-to-five jobs) do not adequately account for those working in contract positions. Laws will need to be adjusted to accommodate this changing makeup of the workforce.

All this said, there are benefits of working in a gig economy for those who seek to work virtually, and particularly for those moving away from traditional brick-and-mortar living to life on the road. With the decoupling of job, location and time, freelancers can select among temporary jobs and projects around the world, while employers can choose the best individuals for specific projects from a larger pool than that available in any given geographic area. In this

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<sup>28</sup> <https://intuit.me/2kMQtMd>

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digital age, the workforce can be increasingly mobile, and much work can be done anywhere and on any schedule.

Through a combination of the gig economy and remote working associated with traditional employment opportunities, I have not regularly worked in an office environment for over seven years. I can attest that while this has its downsides, I find the advantages far outweigh the negatives. I love the freedom it provides; for the most part, I can work when I want. If our daughter has an event at preschool, I can go. I don't waste time getting dragged into endless meetings or superfluous conversations, and I'm far more productive as a result. And by extension, some gig and remote-working opportunities suit those who also want to travel. I discuss these and other work opportunities that suit being on the road in a later chapter.

### *Crowdsourcing*

Another upshot of near-ubiquitous high-speed internet access connecting smart devices is the concept of crowdsourcing. Traditionally, most businesses have used their employees to create value for their customers. With crowdsourcing, the idea is to use a large group of nonemployees to generate content, upload information, or even provide their skills to help facilitate the creation of new content or products. Why would people do this, you might ask? Most people will not do something for nothing.

In a crowdsourcing environment, those participating, "the crowd," are willing contributors and do get something of value back. This reward could be a service, early access to a new product, the power to mold the future features of a product, or, in the case of funding, access to investment opportunities that were once restricted only to professional investors. Some of these products or services require input from not just a few people, but thousands or

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even millions. Hence, the need for the internet and users with smart devices that are always connected.

One of the earliest examples of crowdsourcing, the **SETI@home**<sup>29</sup> program, came into being over a decade before the term *crowdsourcing* was even coined. In 1999, UC Berkeley realized they didn't have the computing resources necessary to analyze the data available to them from the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence (SETI) program and looked for help from private individuals. I'm a bit of a science nerd, and as a kid, I was awestruck watching the first landing on the Moon and dreamt of being an astronaut. I love movies like *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Contact*, and *Arrival*. I don't believe we are the only life in the universe, and when I heard of the SETI@home program, I immediately signed up. They enlisted the help of thousands of regular people with privately owned internet-connected computers to process small, manageable parcels of data and send the results back to Berkeley. The process runs when the personal PC is idle, churning through millions of calculations. Results are sent back to UC Berkeley when a run is complete, and another data package is delivered for analysis. The SETI@home program has been running continuously for two decades and has logged over two million years of aggregate computing time.

One of the most successful travel-related, crowd-powered apps is **Waze**.<sup>30</sup> This road navigation tool provides real-time traffic directions that optimally route you to get from one point to another. It will direct you around congestion if there's a quicker way to go, warn you of traffic hazards, and provide information on police activity. Waze crowdsources information by measuring a driver's location and speed to determine traffic flow, and by asking users to report such things as road closures, hazardous objects in the road,

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<sup>29</sup> <https://setiathome.berkeley.edu/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.waze.com/>

traffic jams, stranded vehicles, and the presence of law enforcement. Waze gets a vast amount of user behavioral data that not only powers the app and provides users with traffic routing, but that can be anonymized and sold for a wide range of purposes. Other apps that crowdsource travel-related information include Wi-Fi hotspot programs where users provide hotspot locations and passwords, and travel apps like **TripAdvisor**<sup>31</sup> where people offer accommodation, attraction, and restaurant reviews.

Another favorite non-travel crowdsourced app, one that I've already referenced several times, is Wikipedia.<sup>32</sup> Editable by anyone with access to the internet, this gigantic online encyclopedia has become one of the most comprehensive information resources available today. Even though nonprofessionals generate the content, their enthusiasm and the check mechanisms in place at the Wikimedia Foundation ensure that the entries are generally accurate. It's my go-to tool for starting research on almost any topic. The days of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* on your bookshelf have all but disappeared – although the online version is still useful!

When SETI@home started twenty years ago, there were relatively few personal computers connected to the internet; today there are billions of connected computers and smart devices! Never in history have so many people and organizations been in such easy reach of each other. If a company needs project funding, user behavioral information, ideas for new products, or even marketing content for an upcoming campaign, the crowd is a powerful and cherished resource capable of generating vast amounts of money, content, and information. Crowdsourcing is a business model that is going to be around for a long while.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.tripadvisor.com/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.wikipedia.org/>

*Not All Countries Are Equal*

Before leaving the discussion of the digital age, let me briefly mention unrestricted internet access is not available in every country in the world. Several organizations monitor internet censorship and surveillance, including **Freedom House**<sup>33</sup> and the U.S. State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. This latter organization publishes an annual report entitled *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*<sup>34</sup> that includes a section on this topic. While many countries on the most restricted list aren't going to be preferred travel destinations, a number may be, including China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Russia. China, for example, has some of the most stringent internet censorship in the world, and if you travel there, don't expect instant access to apps and services like YouTube, Google Photos, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram.

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<sup>33</sup> <https://freedomhouse.org/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/>