

On the road with digital nomads

Experiences with Oscar-winner, Coworking-Space and flu epidemic



Picture: #the360nomad

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Inspired by my son Dominik, who has already taken an instructive and inspiring cruise in the Mediterranean with the digital nomads, I started the Nomad Cruise 9 in Barcelona in November with the Sovereign - a cruise ship for around 2500 passengers - and immersed myself in the world of the digital nomads while crossing the equator, got inspired by them on the tour to Brazil and tried out the new form of work myself in a coworking space in Brazil.

It is the ninth Nomad Cruise of the long-time digital nomad Johannes Völkner, who has been successfully organizing cruises with digital nomads and "sedentary" people for several years now - a mixture of seminar, workshops, meetings, leisure time at the pool and evening parties. Simply booking is not possible: Every newcomer applies with a short job description.



I sent my job description: Engineer and technical journalist, actually recently retired, but who continues to work for the fun of the job. I am a digital nomad on a part-time basis, because although I work mainly from Gelsenkirchen, I am constantly on the road because of my work for publishers, industry, associations and the Fraunhofer Institute. I especially appreciate writing on the train, in AirBnBs and hotels. The job description arrived: I was allowed to come along.

Act 1: immersion in the world of digital nomads



Research for a book: I am co-author of a marketing book for a US publisher and received during the Cruise seminars and Meetups among other things: a book and valuable making-of tips from a US American, numerous links and hints. I also collected journalistic "material" for the book, during interviews with a Polish start-up entrepreneur, a German content manager and a very successful entrepreneur from the USA. I also received a lot of feedback from them on content and marketing - wow, what a community!

Alfonso Sponsoro and PhD Michael McKnowledge: So, what?



I wasn't successful in offering a course in improvisational theatre, only one interested party came: Wolfram, 65. However, together with me, the 66 year old reporter Nikolaus, we spontaneously decided to make the best of the situation. We applied as the oldest duo on Cruise at the casting of the talent show and won. I appeared in the fluffy red ship theatre in front of around 300 digital nomads as Alfonso Sponsoro, presenter of the TV show "So, what?", who had the widely travelled, omniscient scholar PhD Michael McKnowledge answer a question from the audience. But the PhD alias Wolfram only spoke the improv language Grummelo, which I

understand as the only TV presenter in the world. His astonishing answer about the causes of climate change: "We eat too much meat, and gas develops inside us, which then changes the climate as carbon dioxide. Hence his wish: Stop

the consumption of meat! Later we found out that our performance was so well received by the predominantly young digital nomads because they have older freelancers who are still on the go.

Fireside chat without a fireplace: Oscar-winner Skotchdopole



The "Fireside Chat" was surprisingly attended by Oscar winner James W. Skotchdopole, who reported on his life as a film producer (among others: Birdman) in an almost two-hour talk round in the evening. He accompanied us for a few days on the cruise, because he also sees himself as a kind of digital nomad.

"I always do my best"

I learned two exciting things: That even successful Hollywood stars know the fear of failure, but deal more relaxed with the possible flop according to the motto: "I give my best. If it doesn't work out: Kismet!" Secondly, despite the dazzling character - I could already see on the book-title "exclusive interview with Oscar winner". But after a test question during question time, I decided not to interview him about content marketing.

- Writing workshop: Together with other Cruise participants I attended two rounds of a writing workshop by Bill Hinchberger, a well-known journalist from the USA and a long-time expert on Brazil, who had written a special issue on Brazil for National Geographic. People who write both professionally and privately met at his meetups for casual rounds, where among other things I got to know the 30-minute session, in which we examined a topic in totally different styles. Ten minutes per text - wow, I'll never make it! But it worked, I got an interview, a yellow press story and a poem on the topic "The Monkeys of Gibraltar" in English. Curious? OK, a little sample: "Ape, ape, ape - you are a poor boy, because you can't escape!" The resonance of the native speakers and authors: "Your English is excellent!" Fishing for compliments, I don't know?

Conversations about journalism and the ugly German language

Conversations with Bill: Later I had some conversations with Bill at the bar about specialized journalism and about a book by Mark Twain, which I had taken by chance. In it, Twain uses German text examples from fairy tales to describe why he found learning German a terrible experience. Title: The awful german language. Reading tip: Still available at Amazon for around ten euros or used. Ghastly German? Reason enough to pay us German copywriters a lot of compensation - sorry fee - for our work.



Digital nomads - live and in white color

The facets of the mindsets and life concepts were so enormous that the experiences with them could fill a book. Rumor mill sayings such as "These are just tax evaders who offer services at dumping prices and yet just lie lazily on the beach" quickly proved irrelevant. Among them were millionaires with several employees as well as lone wolves, frequent travelers with more than 70 countries visited, searchers with permanent employment, an SAP consultant traveling with a motor home, Google marketing experts, and Panama-Jim, who deals in real estate and, thanks to clever credit card poker, takes free cruises and advertises with it.



So I heard a lot of stories about people who, like me, had found their way to happiness and who, like me, always leave the comfort zone to try something new. Sometimes fate helps them to do so. One example: A woman told how she lost her house, her entire possessions, but not her courage because of Hurricane Kathrina in New Orleans. She used the disaster to make a fresh start. This moving story affected everyone of us - also with regard to our own "little" ailments, which we like to complain about so much.

The ugly side of a cruise: The tour to Brazil was a so-called position cruise of Pullman-Tours, who bring their ships to South America in winter, where they "winter" at a lower cost. These tours are uninteresting for typical crusaders because only a few ports - in this case three - are called at. Therefore, they are bargain tours with cabin prices starting at 450 Euros for the 13-day all-inclusive Atlantic crossing, and rumour has it that the last-minute prices were only 250 Euros (about half of a typical one-way flight to Brazil). In return, there is plenty of food, drink and entertainment - including cocktails. The business model now apparently envisages compensating for

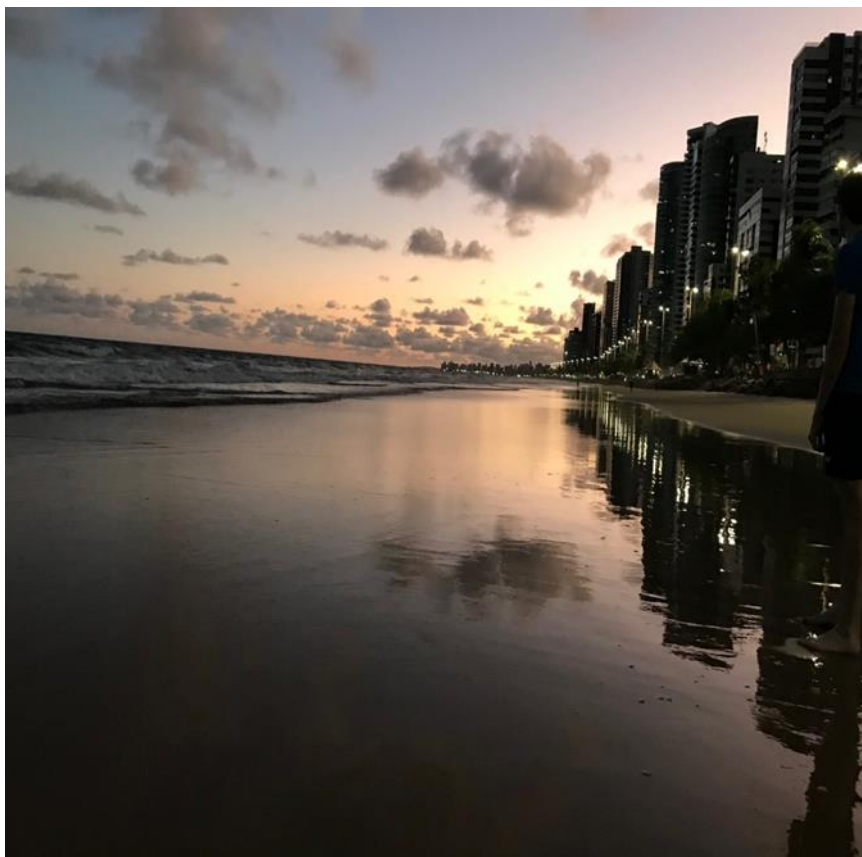
these certainly not cost-covering prices with absolutely excessive fees for all extras. Practically speaking, there was a flu epidemic during the tour, apparently spurred on by the exaggeratedly icy air of the air conditioning, which caused full capacity utilization at the medical station. In a fast-track procedure - my consultation lasted less than ten minutes - the chief physician decided that I had to go to the cabin with mouthguards for 24 hours.

Pullman-Tours: Earning money with flu epidemic and overpriced spa visits

This quick service cost me 250 euros including medication and doctor's consultation, my chief physician from a university hospital charges me less as a private patient, but he also examines more closely. The next day, after a quick and dirty consultation (a very short look in the eyes and a short fever check), I was released as completely cured. There was no indication to go to the doctor on land again. Farewell present: a second mouthguard. By the way, I had been to the spa the day before and pointed out my severe cold. There I was told that the aromatherapy with sinfully expensive algae and massage was certainly better than any medicine. And they talked me into two treatments for two times 250 Euros. Because of my illness I had apparently not really noticed this deal. A tablet cure, which according to the South African masseuse would completely cure all my aches and pains (atrial fibrillation, high blood pressure) for a bargain price of only 300 Euros (tax-free!), I could just about refuse with reference to my cardiologist.

However, when I went into "isolation custody" and could not reach the spa and reception because the telephone was not working properly, my son went to the spa and pointed out the isolation: There he was only told: "No, cancellation is no longer possible for contractual reasons. He then had an aroma therapy and massage. I learned that this was a typical practice on almost all cruises. My protest in the feedback form remained unanswered in any case

Act 2: South American premiere between flu, Brazilian improvisation art and new reporter's delight



Filled with medication and still suffering from the flu despite medical expertise, I went ashore on 30 November - but positively replenished with the inspiring mind-set of the 13-day floating Nomad Cruise. I was full of good ideas for my book and the future as a writing troublemaker. First of all, I was not amused about our apartment in the south of Recife in the district of Boa Viagem.

Experts from the digital nomadic scene said it was dangerous there, you shouldn't be out at night, preferably not wear an expensive watch on the beach and and and and... In fact, I saw people jogging on the nearby beach with expensive Bluetooth headphones and young women were out alone - even late at night. A hint, according to our travel companion and digital nomad Tobias, that it is a safe area. The IT expert knows his way around Bulgaria and South Africa, among other places, after longer

stays. A rumour unfortunately proved to be true: There were indeed sharks, so later - after warnings from Brazilians - we only bathed behind protective reefs. The communication was unproblematic: It was said several times: You don't speak Portuguese - oh, that will be difficult. My son Dominik, Tobias and never ever had a problem with that.

Lessons learned: This is how it works as a digital nomad

We worked very well together in our coworking space, that's what digital nomads call their worldwide well-equipped high-tech workplaces with internet, printer and other conveniences. Okay, our internet and my Brazilian sim card did not work properly.



Tobias and I also missed the stuff that nerds need: Coffee! But the convenience coffee machine was missing. When we finally got along with a gas stove and rickety aluminium cans without burning our fingers, the day started at 6 o'clock in the morning at my place with brewing coffee - Tobias had been on his feet for quite a while. I was amazed at how bright the light makes you feel. I was also amazed how I packed my workload despite a bad sleep due to the heat and the breakdown of my home server - including a report in Sao Paolo. We finished our laptop work early: There was enough time to enjoy beach life and the restaurants.

Sao Paolo: Brazilian art of improvisation - spiced with German perfectionism

One Part of my trip to Brazil was financed by a report on a German machine manufacturer. Here I learned that everyone can communicate with everyone else, even if neither of them understands the other's language. Roberto, the company's chauffeur, spoke a little English, a little German, but he understood my gestures and also my Italian words. Later I noticed: Italian is understood by every Brazilian. We even told each other jokes - about women, policemen and football.



After the report, communication worked better during a private tasting tour with Virginia, a lady about 70 years old. Born in Belgium with Austrian grandparents, Virginia emigrated with her family as a three-year-old child, but speaks German because she attended a German school in Sao Paolo. As a former restaurant owner she knows the epicurean scene of Sao Paolo.

She lost her restaurants and catering service during the economic crisis and now survives with a lot of humour (Germans: you can learn a lot from this lady) as a specialist for lucullan food, who guides small tourist-groups to the city's delicacies, explains them and lets them taste them. So we even went to a small exclusive chocolate factory where I selected, tasted and had chocolates made for my wife.

Act 3: The report at the end of a "business trip"

What remains after a month of touring the ship, reporting on Sao Paolo and working in the coworking space? Well, I'm at a loss for words, which otherwise is rather rare. An attempt at a summary in the language of social media nerds: Wow, five stars, lots of likes and smiley faces. Or to put it another way: Please, on the road again - with digital nomads! Pictures: #the360nomad, #nomadcruise9 (Iris Klapwijk, Dora Arvai, Christa Romano), Fecht press agency