

RESOURCE GUIDES

Starter's Kit

THE BASICS OF TRAVELING



AN ADVANTAR PUBLICATION

**Healthcare
Traveler**

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Is traveling right for you?



If you like meeting new people, can handle short-term situations, and would enjoy opportunities to expand your clinical expertise, the open road could be calling your name.

Bobbi Harrison

Perhaps you have met or worked with travelers who told you about their adventures and the amazing places they've visited. Or maybe while flipping through nursing journals, you've come across staffing company ads that speak of competitive salaries,

generous bonuses, and free health insurance. If either scenario rings true—and you're like the countless clinicians who deal with hospital politics and burnout—your immediate reaction to the notion of a mobile career was probably something like, “Where do I sign up?”

Before you jump in with both feet, however, determine whether traveling

would satisfy your personal and professional ambitions, as well as your lifestyle. By carrying out a self-assessment, identifying your objectives, and conducting a little industry research, you can make an informed decision. Not sure where to begin? Read on for a detailed plan of action.

Self-assessment pointers

The first step to confirming you have what it takes to be a successful traveler is to establish your strengths and weaknesses. In addition, think about your interpersonal communication skills and present way of life. Then, ask yourself several significant questions. *Am I resourceful and organized? Would I be able to quickly and comfortably acclimate to different and changing circumstances? Am I a problem-solver and a critical thinker? Do I enjoy varying my routine and networking with new people? Am I independent and self-confident?*

You should also consider your clinical knowledge and expertise. Do you meet the minimum requirements for practice? Is your level of competency above average? Do you have at least one to two years of current experience in an acute care setting? Be candid when evaluating your proficiencies and professional limitations. By accurately gauging your skills set and abilities, you will not only be able to verify the kinds of assignments you are eligible to accept, but also those that would be most beneficial to you.

Reviewing goals

If your self-assessment provides you with positive reinforcement and intensifies the urge to pack your bags, you undoubtedly have the fundamental qualities and spirit of a traveler. Still, prior to signing a contract, you should be clear about your motives for hitting the road and what you expect to achieve through this career alternative.

While aspirations are undeniably personal and bound to change from one individual to the next, when it comes to traveling, numerous mobile providers share similar needs and desires. Many are interested in discovering the advantages of living in distinct cities and practicing at renowned institutions or within specific settings. Some simply want to receive greater compensation, while others look forward to experiencing different parts of the country seasonally. Whether you have one or several objectives, you can be sure that you'll reach your goals if you remain flexible and focused on the factors that are most important to your happiness and wellbeing.

Travel company comparisons

As a traveler, you'd realize an array of job opportunities, incredible benefits, and financial rewards. To make sure you register with a staffing agency that can offer you solid service and support, collect employer information from a range of companies. Talk to recruiters to ascertain their firms' corporate philosophies, and request to be put in touch with nurse managers or unit directors at their contract facilities for a peek at diverse practice settings. Likewise, it would be prudent to ask these

company reps to connect you with travelers who share your discipline and specialty since they could offer a bird's eye view of the lifestyle.

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After discussions with industry experts, you could further narrow your search of potential placement agencies by taking their reputations, available assignment locales, and benefit packages into account. It's essential to evaluate organizational policies, financial condition, and size of recruiting staff, as well. A larger company might present a broader spectrum of destinations while a smaller firm may afford a more customized service. Is health insurance offered from day one of a contract? Would you receive free private housing? When could you expect travel reimbursement? Are licensure fees absorbed by the agency? Other factors to examine include contract lengths, shifts,

guaranteed hours, mandatory on-call, floating, and overtime.

Understanding the reasons a company's contract facilities call for travelers could be central in your decision-making process, too. In some instances, hospitals need to fill temporary vacancies; in others, assistance in managing high census is the incentive. Then again, a facility may require supplemental staff if it's coping with a strike situation. Should these variables matter to you, it would be wise to mention any concerns up front, before putting pen to paper.

Pondering the options

If you decide that the mobile alternative is right for you, get introspective, explore the opportunities, and reflect on the possibilities. Thoughtful examination of your desires, abilities, goals, and prospective employers will go a long way to ensure a positive and fulfilling travel experience. **HT**

REFERENCE

Lederman, P.S. (2001, May/June). Starter's Kit. Deciding to travel. *HT: The Magazine for Healthcare Travel Professionals*, 8(6), 28-29.

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