



#NEVERIDLE JOURNAL // ROADTRIP TRAVEL // STAFF PICKS

From Corporate America To Full-Time RVing

STORY BY ANN GIBSON // OCTOBER 2, 2018

PHOTOS BY ANDREW SLATON

"I'm so happy and fulfilled that I'm like, 'Where do I go from here?'"

It's not a comment you hear everyday—maybe not even in a lifetime—but it's the blissful status quo for [photographer Andrew Slaton](#) and his wife Ellen, two self-proclaimed nature nerds who ditched the conventional life in Dallas over two years ago to become full time RVers.



“As kids, our friends would be inside watching TV while I was climbing trees and Andrew was chasing bugs,” says Ellen. “Now we feel like we’re living out our childhood dreams, spending the majority of our time outside and traveling around seeing new places.”

With 15 years experience working as a commercial landscaper and active lifestyle photographer, Andrew struggled to embrace location independence.

“It was scary because we were leaving our hometown and the comfort and security of staying in one place—family, church, friends, building a business,” Andrew says of the couple’s choice to move away from Dallas. “If Ellen hadn’t been my wife, I don’t think I would’ve ever done this. I would’ve been too scared.”



Although Ellen was ready to leave corporate America, she had to take her thriving Dallas yoga practice on the road and develop a second career in writing. The couple outfitted a 29-foot bunkhouse with a photography studio, christened it Gertie, and set sail in June 2016 with a cat named Colonel Bubba and two Aussies named Islay and Skye.

“It’s changed the way we live, knowing we’re out here on our own,” Ellen says. “We’ve found that security is in our RV and in each other.”



Downsizing has meant that all aspects of life are more closely connected.

“Professional and personal are always intermingled,” Andrew says. “We both can’t get enough of hiking and backpacking, and our hobbies are compatible with our vocations. Ellen writes about mental health and benefits of the outdoors [and] I’m able to shoot for commercial clients while we’re camping.”

Andrew has made a career on the road shooting commercial and stock photography, selling prints, and offering photography workshops.

“I have several pillars of income, so when an area like print sales isn’t selling, another area like shooting images for gear manufacturers is doing well,” he says.



His beginner to intermediate workshops cover technical aspects of photography like shooting in manual mode. “I want to get you thinking and shooting more intentionally, so you know why you’re getting the results you’re getting and you can realize your vision,” he explains.

Workshops in the Everglades, Big Bend, Telluride, and the Grand Tetons also let Andrew share his favorite shoot locations with students. He takes a new-school

approach to teaching. “Lots of great photography workshops are hyper-focused on the technical,” Andrew says. “One of my strengths is the art of photography. I cover the technical side, but [also] spend time training students how to unlock their innate eye.”

Photo by Andrew Slaton.

His Scotland workshop is an all-inclusive tour that hits the country’s highlights. “We spend half the year boondocking, so the other half of the year we’re tour guides,” Andrew says, describing the couple’s lifestyle as full time RVers. “It’s great to see someone experience a destination you love for the first time.”

So back to that original question: What’s next? Andrew and Ellen make it a habit to check in with each other and find ways to continue making a living doing what they love. “We both have the dreamer personality,” Ellen says. “That can get us in trouble, so we find ways to be dreamers and be practical.”



Ideas they’ve tossed around for the future include hosting backpacking retreats, authoring an RV cookbook of plug-in and off-grid meals, and even purchasing land for an RV park. In the meantime, they’ve developed a web series, originally to answer questions from friends and family who couldn’t wrap their minds around the RV life.

“I’ve always had an innate desire to make films,” Andrew says. “Feedback has inspired us to keep it going.” Episodes about making money on the road and backpacking Wyoming’s Wind River Range are coming out this fall.



Andrew’s also working on a photo essay series that showcases his portrait and lighting skills while telling the stories of fellow RV nomads. They set out in 2016 to visit every national park and have now hit the halfway point.

“We’re slowly chipping away at our goal but it’s not a sprint,” Andrew says. “We’re trying to enjoy every park and spend at least a week or two at each one.” The personal goal doubles as a professional project to publish photos from the journey in book form.

“We feel like we want to do this forever,” Andrew says. “It becomes addictive. Once you start acting on your dreams, there’s no turning back.”