

"The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page."

St. Augustine (lived from 354 to 430 AD)

Getting up the courage to change your life around, jump into your RV and hit the road full-time is often the hardest part of starting a new life of adventure and travel. Once you've set up camp a few times in your rig, though, new patterns begin to get established, and eventually the new lifestyle becomes routine. But taking that first step, saying goodbye to all that is familiar and comfortable, can be truly frightening.

On the road to your dreams

STAY THE COURSE

By Emily Fagan #99408

Before we started RVing full-time in 2007, I used to sit in our house and gaze out the window and wonder how in the world we would ever be able to leave home and go live in a trailer. A life on the road sounded so thrilling, but in many ways it seemed so impossible to achieve. I felt our house “needed us” to keep everything running right. Would tenants trash the place? Also, our friends and family were all staying put. Would our relationships survive the long distances and time apart? And most important of all, we had so much stuff (nice, stuff!). Would we regret letting it go?

Heading Out

As we sold off almost all of our belongings and put the rest in a shed behind a friend’s house, a mixture of terror and excitement filled our hearts. When we drove out of our neighborhood the last time, we headed 1,000 miles east with all of our remaining worldly possessions in the back of our truck. We were on our way to pick up a new rolling home that we had purchased online, sight unseen, and we were both utterly thrilled. But at the same time, a tiny

voice inside my head whispered, “What have we done?”

When we arrived at the RV dealership outside Dallas, we discovered our brand new trailer had been sitting on the lot for a year and was full of black mold under the fridge. Holy cow! That tiny inner voice started screaming: What had we just done?

On our first trip to a laundromat, my husband, Mark, looked at me glumly. “So this is it from now on,” he said. “Laundromats. I used to have a really nice washer and dryer of my own!” Oh dear, that inner voice said sadly. What in the world have we done?

We can look back at those early days now and laugh. In the end, the dealership was upstanding and replaced our trailer with a perfect, fresh-off-the-line unit. We gradually got used to laundromats, and now we enjoy doing three (or four or five) loads of laundry simultaneously.

Returning Home

As for our house, after four years on the road, we returned to our home to check it out between tenants, and in just 10 days of painting and repairing,

the place looked better than when we had lived in it ourselves. After six years on the road, we returned to it once again to do the same thing, and had the same result. Maybe our house “needed us,” but apparently only in small doses.

But what a lot of panicky feelings we went through on the way to those happy endings.

Hold Fast to Your Dream

I think mixed emotions and rocky beginnings are common among many new full-timers. Emotions run extraordinarily high as you force yourself to let go of almost every material thing you have ever held dear, often for 10 cents on the dollar (or less) at garage sales. It’s hard to see your precious things get snatched at a yard-sale.

Yet, if you don’t hold fast to your dream and march through these transitional days with strong resolve, you can’t ever open yourself to the new life that awaits you on the other side. If your heart soars at the idea of driving off over the horizon, pursuing that dream will ultimately, by its very nature, push you out of your comfort zone. Only by accepting that kind of

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Witnessing stunning sunsets from our fifth-wheel trailer has become a beautiful and welcome routine in our lives.

Photo by Emily Fagan #99408.





Left: Downsizing can mean getting rid of favorite possessions. We had to give up our kayak when we couldn't squeeze it into our fifth-wheel basement any longer. Photo by Anne Atheling.
Right: Free at last! Photo by Mark Fagan #99408.

shakeup can you escape the “same old, same old.”

If you get scared and give in and give up before you ever get going, you are effectively saying your dream isn't worthwhile. How unfortunate. Dreams are flighty and delicate. They flit around us like butterflies on a warm summer day, hard to pin down and quick to fly off out of sight. Reaching out to catch our dreams can be challenging. But we have to take that leap of faith, and sometimes even suffer a little scary uncertainty, if we want to make them come true.

Downsizing Again

In an odd twist of self-inflicted fate, after nearly seven years of thrilling full-time travel, half in a fifth-wheel and half in a sailboat, my husband, Mark, and I recently found ourselves in the exact same position of fear and confusion a second time around as we rearranged our lives to support a new set of dreams. We had decided to give up cruising and resume RVing full-time. Ironically, even though we had down-sized once before to go from a house to a trailer, we suddenly had to down-size once again to go from both an RV and a boat to living strictly in our fifth-wheel. Where we had felt very worldly-wise and sophisticated in our full-time traveling lifestyle until now, suddenly our lives were upside-down as we packaged up our cruising life for good and whittled it down to just memories and photos.

The transition from boat-and-RV to RV-only seemed monumental. For

starters, we need to sell everything we bought for the boat, and sell the boat, too. For over a month, we held a daily “Cockpit Sale” aboard our boat in San Diego and sold off piles of wonderful cruising gear. How hard it was to let all that great stuff go for pennies on the dollar. It wasn't quite as hard as getting rid of a 25-year accumulation of stuff like we did when we first started full-timing, but it entailed the same mixed sense of loss—and of growing freedom.

Back Home Again

To make things even more complicated, at the same time our tenants' lease on our home ended and they moved out. We like to choose who lives in our home, so this wrinkle forced us to dash back to our house to tidy up the place and find new people to live there. Putting the daily “Cockpit Sale” on hold, we ended up living in our old house for 10 days, sleeping on an air mattress and using paper plates and plastic utensils as we cleaned and repaired little things around the house so we could show the place to prospective tenants.

Even though our voices echoed off the empty walls, the familiar sounds and smells of our long-ago home suddenly enveloped us in memories. In an instant, all of our incredible years of travel evaporated. Stranger still, I found myself gazing out the windows of our former home, wondering how in the world we would ever get from here, perched in our empty house with a sailboat loaded with gear and house-

hold goods waiting for us at the dock, and move forward into our next phase of life in our trailer. I could envision it, but it seemed worlds away.

Stay the Course

The key, I think, both for first-timers and for folks like us that make a major midstream adjustment to their traveling lifestyle, is to stay the course. I've said this to lots of people who have contacted me in a panic in the last weeks before they launch their full-time RVing lifestyle they have dreamed of for so long. Now it was time for me and Mark to remind ourselves of this important message, too. The Dream needs to remain front and center throughout the transition towards it.

When we were going through our initial big sell-off the first time, before we moved into our trailer, my mom asked me how I could part with so much of my personal memorabilia. In a way, purging all that stuff was like clearing out a place in my own soul. Only by letting go of it all could I make room for new memories, new experiences and new thrills. If I clung too tightly to my past, I wouldn't have room for the future.

And so it was this second time around, as we watched people walk away from our boat with our fins, our cruising guides, our kayak, our dive tanks, our cool portable VHF radio, our entire galley and our dinghy. Each item held precious memories, both of choosing the gear in anticipation of our cruise and of putting it



Left: Our travels have taken us to famous (and infamous) places. Photo by a fellow tourist.

Right: It was dreams of moments like this—making music in the desert—that motivated us to keep downsizing until we got there. Photo by Emily Fagan #99408.

to use while sailing Mexico, and in each item I saw a younger and more innocent me who had embraced our cruising life with such enthusiasm.

Now it was time to let it all go.

We could try to keep all that stuff, we might use some of it again, but our new life was going to be on the road, and there was absolutely no room for any of it in our already full fifth-wheel trailer. If we needed any of it in the future, we could buy it again.

These thoughts swirled in my mind as I sat between our home's bare walls, waiting for new tenants to come by. I realized that I had to dig deep for the faith that not only would good new tenants actually show up, but that our transition back to our trailer would one day be complete.



ing how it would all come together. I knew that one day I would look back and remember how, beneath my nervousness, I was also full of anticipation, expectation and hope.

If you are working towards a dream of escape, and you are putting together the many pieces that will go into a new life of travel, remember: stay the course. When things get a little emotional, and you question your own sanity, and you wonder if giving up your current life for a fragile dream will be worth

it in the end, have faith in your vision.

If you are like us, with wanderlust and adventure in your soul, imagine yourself in your final years. Which will be most fulfilling to reminisce about: a lifetime of possessions or a lifetime of experiences? When you fear your dream may not work out, believe with all your heart that your innermost yearnings and your deepest desires are truly right for you. You will cherish the days when those intangible longings have become the very essence of your day-to-day life. 🏠

Emily and Mark Fagan have completed their transition back to living in their fifth-wheel trailer, and they are now happily traveling in their rolling home. Since 2007, they have chronicled their journey with photos and stories (and lots of tips about the full-time RV lifestyle) on their blog: roadslesstraveled.us. They have also published over forty magazine articles about their travels.

Live the Dream

I have come to realize now that a big part of having a dream and pursuing it is also having the faith that all the pieces will fall into place and allow it to come true. Also, I now know that this uncertainty and soul searching are all part of the process of preparing to "live the dream." They are the small toll we have to pay to transit the gate to where our dream lifestyle takes flight.

Having been through this transition once already, I knew that eventually I would look back on these days of garage sales, Goodwill drop-offs and chaos and remember this younger me who gazed out the window wonder-



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