

WORKCATION: HOW TO BALANCE WORK & PLAY

Contributed by Mandy Enright, MS, RDN, RYT

With more people working remotely since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a trend has been growing: the rise of the “workcation.” Workcations combine work and travel. The concept of a workcation isn’t new, but has become increasingly popular as a result of the rise in remote work. While workcations may seem counterproductive to work-life balance, trend reports show that more remote workers are finding greater benefits and balance by taking their work with them on the road.

Why Workcations are Becoming Popular

A recent survey by Marriott Vacations Worldwide found that 80% of remote workers would consider working remotely from a vacation destination to extend their trip. In fact, half of the remote workers said they would prefer taking a longer trip that involved some work to taking a shorter trip with no work.

Part of the appeal of a workcation is that if you’re going to work remotely anyway, you can be just as productive from a hotel room. Then, once the workday is over, you have a new destination to explore – all without having to use PTO. Workcations have helped people feel less overwhelmed about taking vacations and reduce the guilt of working while taking PTO.

Benefits of a Workcation

In addition to getting a change of scenery and extending time away, remote workers are finding a multitude of benefits to working from another destination including:

- Travel without using PTO
- Meeting deadlines and keeping work on track while exploring a new place
- Reductions in burnout and improvements in work-life balance
- Boosts in productivity and creativity thanks to a change of scenery
- Opportunity to recharge mentally and emotionally
- Return home with a fresh and inspired outlook

How to Take a Workcation

Workcations involve some prep work and communication. Start by determining WHEN you will take your workcation and for HOW LONG. This can help determine your workload, set boundaries, and plan your workdays accordingly. Do you plan to work during office hours or take half-days? Or will you work for part of the trip and then take vacation for the rest? Once you have an idea of your work schedule, you can continue planning your workcation. Here are some tips for planning a productive and successful workcation.

TIP #1: Discuss with Your Supervisor or Manager

You don’t want to get too far in the planning process only to find out that a workcation may not be acceptable – or just poorly timed. Let your manager know your initial plans, how long you plan to be away, and how you can continue to do your job while traveling.

TIP #2: Decide When You are Going

It may not be ideal to be out of town during busy seasons or hectic weeks. Planning around slower times may be more optimal. Plan your travel time for early mornings, after-work hours, or on the weekends so you can be settled and ready to go for the workday. Keep in mind that many hotels won’t let you check in before 3pm and will require check-out



by 11am, so make sure you have a place to work if you don't have access to a room. Remember, it never hurts to request an early check-in or a late check-out.

TIP #3: Location, Location, Location

Make sure you are selecting a destination and accommodations that are conducive to your work. Reliable Wi-Fi connection is essential for working while traveling. Larger hotel chains will have faster and more reliable internet than a vacation rental. Determine if you need the privacy of your room or can work from a public space, such as the hotel lobby. Some people consider upgrading to a larger room if they need more workspace, or if they are traveling with a partner who will also be working while on vacation. Many hotels now have more co-working spaces and small private rooms or booths available to guests on a first-come, first-serve basis. Some hotels even offer day passes to work from a room while having access to amenities like pools and restaurants.

TIP #4: Communicate Your Plans with Colleagues – and Family

Discuss more specific details such as working hours, off hours, and how to best reach you while away. It's also important to let your family know your work schedule so they can plan their days accordingly.

TIP #5: Set Boundaries and Emphasize Personal Time

Make sure you're setting a cut-off time in your day. Consider breakfast or lunch breaks as another opportunity to explore during your workday while traveling. Most importantly, enjoy your time away, even if you are working for part of the day. Once you log off for the day, remain completely disconnected so you can enjoy your new surroundings.

When to Take a True Vacation

Keep in mind that a workcation is not the same as a vacation. While a workcation may keep you on track and avoid burning through vacation time, it is not a replacement for a true vacation. Taking vacations throughout the year is necessary to reset and recharge. They are a time to completely disconnect and avoid burnout while giving you an opportunity to focus on your personal life. Plus, taking a vacation means you can fully immerse yourself in a new place.

We know that not every job and occupation is able to take a workcation, but that doesn't mean you should not take time off. Vacations and PTO time are still valuable for your personal well-being and mental health. Too many people leave unused vacation time on the table at the end of the year, so make sure you're giving yourself appropriate time off to rest, recharge, and disconnect.

Are you considering taking a workcation this year?



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