

THE *Nomadic Life*

This issue, Emma Truscott discovers that 'family' has a way of finding you, even when you don't have a fixed address.



"Would you like to join us for dinner? I'm making a pasta bake," reads the text from my next host. I've been living in strangers' homes while building my freelance writing business since 2022 – I'm a house-sitter. I have no fixed address, no office and no local pub. I work from kitchen counters, spare rooms and, on one occasion, the floor of a house with no tables.

Dinner invitations are, sadly, quite rare. Most hosts leave a key in a lockbox or under a stone in the garden, trusting me to let myself in and figure things out without us ever crossing paths. But when I do manage to meet them, I'm always welcomed like family.

After two portions of the cheesiest pasta bake I've ever eaten, my host takes me on a tour of her London neighbourhood. We

tick off her favourite ice cream place, the nearest underground station and, crucially, where Waitrose is. At the pub around the corner, she tells me it was once frequented by Lord Nelson and Lady Emma Hamilton, then excitedly shows me the women's toilets, named "Emma" after her.

We end the orientation at an Asian supermarket, where we struggle to pick between a huge selection of mochi flavours. We agree tiramisu is the best choice. On the way back to the house, we chew our Japanese snacks and chat about our love for travel, Pilates and whether we believe in ghosts. It's easy, like we've known each other for far longer than a few hours. Then she asks me the question I've heard more times than I can count: "Aren't you lonely?"

Freelancing can already be a solitary way to work, but add solo travel to the mix and you remove most of the default ways people build connections. No colleagues, no routine, no family nearby. If I don't make an effort, it's possible I won't talk to another human all week. I like my own company, but I notice when I've had too much of it. I lose



momentum, the creativity dries up and I get slightly irritated by everything.

The good news is, after years of being a digital nomad, I've realised that family has a way of expanding. Whether you live alone or move around like I do, it's entirely possible to build genuine connections with strangers that feel meaningful – you just have to go out and find them.

One of my favourite ways to meet new people is via Timeleft, an app that matches you with strangers for dinner. You do a short personality quiz, get assigned a restaurant and turn up to a table of new pals. More often than not, I leave with plans to see at least one of them again. After one dinner in Paris, we met up days later for a pizza picnic in the Jardin du Luxembourg. In Edinburgh, I dragged a group along to see Sh!t-faced Shakespeare at the Fringe. In Dublin, we discovered that none of us could sing at karaoke.

There are plenty of other platforms like this. If you're looking for a women's adventure community, try Adventure Queens. Want to socialise without anyone staring at their phone? Look up The Offline Club. You could join a Parkrun or check Meetup.com and Facebook

groups for everything from craft clubs to language exchanges and wild swimming meetups.

Of course, some of these connections are fleeting, which can be special in their own way. But some days I need more than that. The familiar faces I see week after week through *Freelancer Magazine's* coworking sessions have given me something that travelling can't always provide – consistency. They are people who know what I do, what I'm working on and notice when I'm not there.

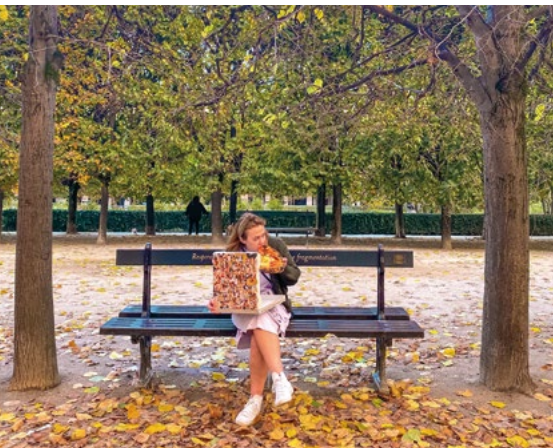
So while my standard answer to "aren't you lonely?" is usually a breezy deflection – "How could I be? I've got three cats back at the house!" – the short answer is no. Freelancing can be lonely if you let it. But it can also be the best excuse you'll ever have to get out there, meet people who inspire you, challenge you and occasionally feed you a very delicious, very cheesy pasta bake. ●

Connect with Emma:

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Field notes

"Help yourself," my hosts often say. Spices, drinks, snacks. Everyone is always eager to make me feel welcome. It's lovely. In Switzerland, I didn't hesitate to help myself to some ice-cold water from a glass bottle in the fridge after a long, sweaty journey. Imagine my shock when I realised it was homemade sugar syrup.



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Issue Twenty-Two

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BALANCE, BOUNDARIES, AND
THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE IT
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