

Top five benefits of being a traveling healthcare professional

Mark Stagen

The news is in, and it's good. The travel healthcare industry has rebounded. According to the official index maintained by the National



Association of Travel Healthcare Organizations (NATHO), job orders for travelers have doubled since this time last year. If you've been toying with the idea of traveling for your career, there may be no better time than now to take the plunge and enjoy the many benefits of temporary work. Here are the top five perks of being a traveling healthcare professional, based on feedback we've received from the field.

Variety. When you opt to travel for your career, you'll not only have the ability to pick and choose where in the country you want to visit, but you can also work in clinics, hospitals, and health systems of all sizes and types. Give some thought to where you'd enjoy visiting and what you would like to learn and experience that might further your career. Factoring in both components, make a "wish list" and then work with a recruiter to fulfill your personal and professional dreams. How about spending the summer at a rural health clinic in Colorado, where you can hike, mountain bike, and go fly-fishing on your days off? Or maybe you'd like to try a teaching hospital in New York City so that you can frequent Broadway, take acting classes in your free time, and enjoy the nightlife? Perhaps you'd like to plan your next assignment around being near your sister when she has her baby. Or maybe you'll request an engagement that will allow

you the opportunity to advance your critical care skills. The possibilities are practically endless when you think strategically and plan ahead.

Flexibility. As a traveler, not only can you work where you want, but also when and how much you want. Have a large financial goal to reach? No problem. Schedule yourself to work full-time in locations that offer the best rates and the possibility for overtime and shift differentials. Need a breather? Tell your recruiter you want a month or two off between assignments for the foreseeable future. If you'd like to stay close to home for a while, check to see if there are assignments available near your permanent residence. Travel engagements are often awarded in 13-week blocks, but that's not set in stone, so talk to your recruiter about your unique needs.

Good compensation. Traveling healthcare professionals often earn significantly more than their stationary counterparts. Let your recruiter know you're willing to work overtime, weekends, holidays, and night shifts, and you'll see an even more attractive paycheck. As you gain experience working in a variety of settings, you'll be able to command top dollar for having acquired specialty skills and expertise, so take advantage of learning opportunities as they arise while you're working in different locations.

Nice benefits. Expenses covered for

traveling healthcare professionals vary by agency but typically include a housing allowance, some portion of travel expenses, and a per diem for meals. Most firms offer health and dental insurance, retirement plans, referral and "loyalty" bonuses, continuing education, and reimbursement for licensure fees. Liability and workers' compensation insurance are also taken care of for you. Bottom line: You don't have to work "full-time" to feel secure.

Low stress factor. Assuming you find traveling enjoyable, as opposed to anxiety provoking, you'll most likely discover that working as a traveler is less stressful than being employed full-time and long-term at one facility. Why? You can easily avoid becoming embroiled in "hospital politics," for one thing, and instead focus your

attention solely on taking care of your patients. If you find yourself working with a difficult colleague or cranky physician, you'll take comfort in knowing that it's only for a few weeks or months. And words like "layoff," "downsizing," and "reorganization" won't mean a thing to you.

As the industry continues to pick up over the coming months, consider the possibility that traveling might be right for you. **HT**

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