

Off-road, off-grid: the modern nomads wandering America's back country

Level: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

Look at these different places to live and order them from 1 (where you'd least like to live) to 5 (where you'd most like to live).

car house cardboard box mobile home tent

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2 Key words

a. Match the words in the box to the definitions below.

afford charity divorce nomad rent

1. have enough money to be able to pay for something _____
2. money that you pay each month to live in somebody's house or flat _____
3. a legal way of ending a marriage _____
4. someone from a group of people moving from place to place _____
5. an organization to which you give money so that it can help people _____

community independence maintain mission spousal maintenance

6. an aim that is very important to someone _____
7. money that someone pays to an ex-husband or ex-wife _____
8. look after and repair a vehicle _____
9. when you are able to live your life free from the control of other people _____
10. a group of people living together in the same way or place _____

b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences.

1. After she'd paid _____ for her house, Jan had no money left for food.
2. More than half of Jeff's money went on _____ to his three former wives.
3. Both of her marriages ended in _____.
4. The concert raised thousands of pounds for _____.
5. We need a bigger house, but we just can't _____ it.

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- 1 More Americans are living in vehicles than ever before.
- 2 "When I moved into my SUV*, I had no money. I was really scared," said April Craren, 52.
- 3 April became homeless after separating from her husband. She could not afford the rent for a flat in a nice area.
- 4 It's no surprise that job loss, divorce or a health or financial crisis can make people homeless.
- 5 Bob Wells, 65, helped April to become a nomad and change her life. Now she lives in a minivan she got from Bob's charity, the Home on Wheels Alliance (HOWA).
- 6 Bob lives in a van with solar power and a fridge. His life mission is to help people live well in a car, van or RV**.
- 7 Before he became a nomad in 1995, Bob lived in Alaska, with his wife and two boys.
- 8 Bob hated his job. He worked with people he didn't like and bought things he didn't want. He wasn't happy.
- 9 Then, when he was 40 years old, he got divorced. After paying spousal maintenance and child support, he had only \$1,200 a month. He had to pay \$800 of that on rent.
- 10 One day, he saw a van for sale and thought: "Why don't I buy that van and move into it?"
- 11 Because he didn't have to pay rent, he worked fewer hours and had more time to spend camping with his kids. Bob became happier.
- 12 Bob bought the domain name Cheap RV Living. He posted tips and tricks about living in a vehicle.
- 13 The videos on Bob's on his YouTube channel also make him money from advertisements and links to sales. His most popular video, Living in a Car on \$800 a month, has more than four million views.
- 14 Bob started the HOWA charity in 2018. HOWA helps people who cannot afford traditional housing.
- 15 HOWA has given away seven minivans, two trailers, one school bus and many tents.
- 16 April signed a three-year contract to join HOWA's programme. She had to show she could maintain her vehicle and put \$200 a month in an account until she had enough money to buy the minivan.
- 17 "Most of the people that HOWA help are older women. They're disabled, or retired and divorced, or don't earn enough to pay rent," Bob explained. HOWA helps them keep their independence and to make friends in the nomad community.
- 18 Today, April camps on public land next to Cliff, a nomad who works for HOWA. She eats fresh foods and lives a more active outdoor lifestyle. April's lost weight and feels happier and healthier.

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Glossary

*SUV = sport utility vehicle

** RV = recreational vehicle

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3 Comprehension check

a. Find the facts.

1. Why did April become homeless?
2. Where did April get her minivan?
3. Where does she live now?
4. How does April feel now?

b. Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the article?

1. Bob became homeless after he lost his job in Alaska. **T / F**
2. Now that he lives in a van, Bob does not see his children. **T / F**
3. Bob wants to help other people live a good life in a vehicle. **T / F**
4. The HOWA charity especially helps homeless older women. **T / F**

4 Vocabulary

a. Find seven types of vehicle in the article and write them into the box.

b. Write any other vehicles you can think of in the box.

c. Now use some of the names of vehicles in sentences of your own.

5 Discussion

- What are the most difficult things about living in a vehicle?
- Are people allowed to live in a vehicle in your country?
- What essential things do you have to spend money on each month? E.g. *rent, food*.

6 In your own words

Watch the video from Cheap RV Living: Living in a car on \$800 a month.

Make notes so that you can explain the video to someone who has not watched it.