

Travelling with a powerless passport

adapted from an article by **Aileen Adalid**

- 1 As a Philippine citizen I can only visit a few countries visa-free, and I was brought up to believe that world travel is a luxury meant only for the privileged, the rich or the retired. Yet, in my early 20s, I've visited more than 15 countries in two years, all while building a profitable and stable online business that funds my lifestyle and enables me to work less than three hours a day.
- 2 When I was 21 years old, and working for a big investment bank, earning very little money as a new graduate, I met three strangers who asked for directions to their hostel. We started chatting, and ended up talking for the rest of the night. They were full of travel stories, and I was captivated by the way their eyes lit up as they talked about their adventures. They had an excitement for life and a confident aura that I hadn't previously encountered – they seemed to believe everything was possible.
- 3 That same year, I quit my job to travel the world. I had little to no money, definitely not enough to travel through wealthy European countries or in the US. On top of that, I had to convince my family and friends that I was not out of my mind; I'd been brought up to believe that a corporate life was the only way to secure a future. I also knew that getting visas would be a challenge. But I wanted to prove to others and to myself that our life circumstances should never hinder us from going after our dreams.
- 4 With meagre funds, I knew that I had to make smart decisions right from the start, so I spent two months doing groundwork before handing in my resignation. I brushed up on my knowledge of graphic design, web development and online marketing. Once I was confident about my knowledge, I searched for clients on freelancing platforms to set up my own business. I managed to ensure a steady cash flow for the first year. Passion can push us to do amazing things, but without the right skill set, it can prove futile.
- 5 Worried about my Philippine passport, I started off by visiting visa-free destinations. Thailand and Hong Kong were my favourites, due to their dynamic culture. I kept records of my recent earnings, savings and tax documents to prove financial independency. And I used proof of my



previous and future travels to establish that I wouldn't be at risk to overstay in the country.

- 6 After 12 months, I launched my travel blog, iAmAileen.com, to share my adventures and to garner opportunities through partnerships with tourism boards and travel brands. Next, I started work on a budding online business idea, Adalid Gear, selling outdoor and travel products online. The online realm made me a citizen of the world instead of a girl from the Philippines. By freelancing online, I was able to compete with my global peers and so I managed 31, which gave quite a boost to my income. And by building my business online, I was able to expand rapidly in a short amount of time.
- 7 Today, I am no longer working for anyone else, and the way I see it, I have truly secured my future. I have built my own dream, regardless of the obstacles!

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