

Never too late

In Part 2 of our Ageing Well series, Nicole Thomas looks at making the most of retirement by hitting the road and exploring new horizons.



Lately there's been a new trend in travel. Flocks of retirees are saying goodbye to their lounge chairs and hitting the road. Dubbed the grey nomads, these senior wanderers are embracing their retirement and taking the road, sea and sky by storm.

And if you look at the facts there's no reason that retirees shouldn't get their travelling shoes on: we're living longer, thanks to better public education and breakthroughs in medical treatments, and we have greater mobility than ever before. On top of this (and in part due to this), Australians are also retiring later in life. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that two-thirds of those surveyed aged 45 and over intend to retire at 65 years or older. Reflecting this trend, last year the Productivity Commission, an independent body employed by the government, recommended increasing the pension age from 65 to 70 years.

Australians are working harder and living longer, so retirement offers the chance to ditch the briefcase for a backpack (or cabin bag, of course) and make the most of it.

BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS

There are myriad mental benefits to packing up and going rogue.

"Travel challenges the brain and opens us up to new experiences, new environments and new relationships, all of which benefit our mental health," says Dr Stephen Parnis, President of the Australian Medical Association, Victoria.

Most travel also includes some form of physical activity – whether it's walking or swimming or more strenuous activities – which is a proven mainstay in any healthy lifestyle.

"As we get older, staying physically and mentally active has enormous benefits. It lowers the risks of heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes and many cancers. It also

improves a number of brain functions, such as memory and executive function (decision-making)," Stephen explains.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

So now you know the perks of travelling you just need to pick the best option, and there's something out there for everyone. Here are a few options to inspire your wanderlust:

'Glamping' is a great middle ground between embracing the great outdoors and maintaining your creature comforts. You don't need to cook, pitch a tent or do anything domestic; instead you get to enjoy nature and then retire to a deluxe tent at the end of the day.

If glamping appeals but you want to take it up a notch, a cruise might be right up your alley. With all the activities and comforts you can poke a stick at, you also have the option to be as social (or not) as you like.

For seniors who want to get out and about, walking holidays are a great option. Besides getting a whack of fitness in, these walking tours are a great way to meet like-minded people.

NEED SOME INSPIRATION?

Turn to our PLUS Program spread on page 6 to view a fantastic travel offer, perfect for the modern-day grey nomad!

And, of course, there's the great road trip. Whether you choose to travel by motorhome or car, this option requires quite a lot of organisation but it's the ideal way to explore the country at your own pace.

BEFORE YOU HEAD OFF

Planning is paramount to a successful trip, especially as we get older. Stephen recommends ticking off this checklist before embarking:

- Visit your GP. Make sure all pre-existing medical conditions are well managed and acquire enough of your regular medication (along with a signed doctor's note detailing your prescription details) to last the entire trip.
- Research where you're going by checking if there are any specific health risks in the area and whether you can safely drink the water. It's also important to know where medical facilities are.
- If needed, be sure to make arrangements for wheelchairs, guide dogs and seating needs well in advance.
- Australia has reciprocal healthcare arrangements with some countries; check with Medicare for an up-to-date list of participating countries. Travel insurance is an important consideration as well.

When planning your itinerary, make sure you schedule plenty of breaks. It also wouldn't go astray to get a flu shot before you set off. The last thing you want is a pesky lurgy getting in the way of a grand adventure.

So what are you waiting for? Time to get healthy, get packing and get going! 🚀

HELPLINES

Painaway Arthritis Cream (70g \$22.99, members \$18.39) **Arthro-Aid Direct Cream** (114g \$24.99, members \$19.99) **Faulding Epsom Salts** (1kg \$8.49, members \$6.79) **Body Assist Arthritis Gloves Medium** (\$24.99, members \$19.99) **Voltaren Osteo Gel** (75g \$21.99, members \$17.59) **Homedics Hand Held Percussion Massager** (\$79.99, members \$63.99)

Always read the label. Use only as directed. If symptoms persist, see your doctor or healthcare professional.

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TRUE-BLUE GREY NOMADS

Becoming a grey nomad (typically defined as a retiree who travels across their homeland for long periods of time), is an increasingly popular option for Australian retirees. In 2011 there were approximately 2.6 million trips taken by 55 to 70-year-old domestic travellers in campervans, caravans, tents and cabins; an impressive 90% increase on the statistics from 2000.



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Safety tips

- ✓ Check your smoke alarms every month by pressing the 'test' button to ensure the battery is working
- ✓ Replace the 9V battery at least once a year with Energizer Max
- ✓ A working smoke alarm should be supported by a home fire escape plan