

**HARVEY
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The World of Work

Nitin Savant '08 navigates the world while working remotely.

10 BIAS IN THE SYSTEM

24 INTO THE FIRE

30 CLEAR FOR TAKEOFF

39 2015-2016
ANNUAL REPORT



WORKING OUT

TRAVELING WHILE WORKING REMOTELY
CAN BE HECTIC AND LIBERATING

Written by Chris Quirk

IN A 21ST CENTURY TAKE ON THE WANDERJAH, NITIN Savant '08 signed up for a world tour with a twist. During June 2015, he set off on Remote Year, a 12-month, 12-city excursion where participants work remotely at their home jobs or pursue their own projects while traveling the globe. "I heard about Remote Year, and I was hooked. I knew it was for me," Savant recalls.

Just before hearing about Remote Year, Savant found himself dissatisfied with his career path. An engineering major at Harvey Mudd, he earned a master's degree in electrical engineering from Arizona State University then took a position at Laserfiche, a Long Beach software firm, where he stayed for five years working as a solutions engineer and program manager. "I actually got the job through Harvey Mudd's career website and really enjoyed it for the first three years. But after that point, the path I was on didn't lead to the kinds of challenges and growth I was looking for."

With the gig culture continuing to permeate—some would argue plague—the American work scene, those in creative, technology and other sectors are increasingly able and sometimes compelled to fashion customized work arrangements, and *Forbes* magazine predicts that, by 2025, 92 percent of millennials will prefer to work remotely.

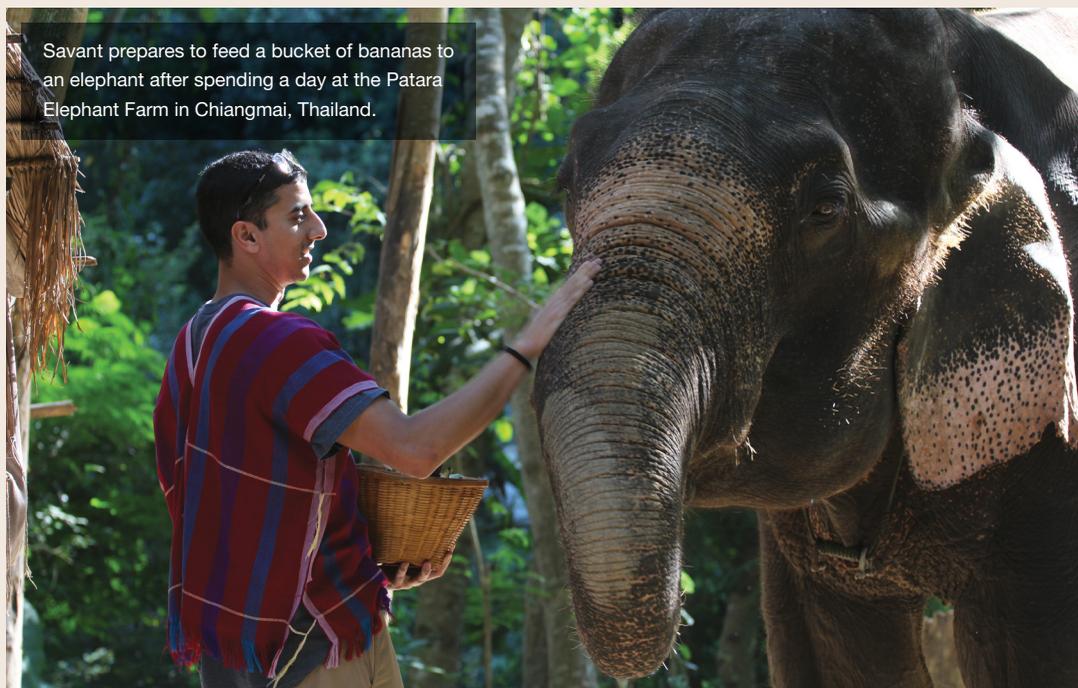
Savant was part of Remote Year's maiden voyage, which coincidentally included Mudder Joyce Lin '12 among the 75 intrepid souls selected from 25,000 initial applicants. The grand tour touched down in three continents, and included a month each in Prague, Istanbul, Hanoi, Kyoto, Lima and seven other cities.

For Savant, Remote Year offered an optimal blend of travel, community and a focused work environment. While many of Savant's fellow travelers worked for companies back home, Savant used the time to develop his coding and design skills, with the intention of breaking in as a web developer when he returned to the United States.

Reading the itinerary is enough to induce a case of the travel bug, but the reality of moving to a new country every month combined with the necessity of staying productive was grinding. "I think the impression you get from Remote Year is that it's a year of vacation, but it's not really that at all," Savant attests. "Seeing new places, people and cultures is amazing, of course, but the constant change can be challenging. In addition to getting accustomed to a new culture and language each month, we had to figure out how to eat, exercise, work and get our laundry done, among other little things. Just when you're feeling comfortable in your new routine, it's time to leave and start over."

As Savant worked independently, other participants reported struggling with time differences—with workdays from Asia sometimes beginning at 10 p.m.—as well as connectivity and other hurdles. Finding an equilibrium between achieving work goals and enjoying the immersive travel experience was discombobulating for some of the participants. "The nature of the trip made it difficult to keep a routine. We all wanted to get things done, but the constant travel took its toll."

Among Savant's signature moments on the tour, some were more understated than others. A tango lesson while in Buenos Aires was a natural, especially for an athlete like Savant, who was on the Claremont-Mudd-Scripps basketball team for four years. A wordless encounter at a solitary dinner at a small restaurant on the Croatian seaside, which Savant described on the blog he kept during the trip, evinced a more nuanced facet of what it means to explore another culture. "I discovered



Savant prepares to feed a bucket of bananas to an elephant after spending a day at the Patara Elephant Farm in Chiangmai, Thailand.

“ I discovered a new way to live in and interact with a city. I figured out what I wanted and didn't want out of a city. When I move to a new city, I plan to spend much more time outside of my apartment, participating in and getting to know its unique culture. ”

– NITIN SAVANT '08

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Savant is on the move again, recently relocating to Minneapolis to start the next phase of his career. He continues to develop his coding skills and has begun looking for work in web development. "If my life had ended a year ago, I would have felt I had missed something vital. But now, I feel more fulfilled than ever, knowing that I've taken advantage of the unique opportunities that I'm privileged to have. I've begun making decisions less out of fear and trusting that things will be OK." ■



▲ After driving to Valparaiso, Chile, and exploring the colorful port city known for its bohemian, artistic vibe, Savant and friends enjoy the evening.