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When school's in a caravan on the road to an astonishing world

By Rebecca English, Katie Burke and Naomi Dale

One of the more reported side-effects of the COVID disruption has been the increase in families choosing to educate their children outside of mainstream schools (see the latest [Queensland homeschooling statistics](#) as an example of the growth in families choosing to exit the school system).

While home education, frequently called homeschooling, has seen incredible growth recently ([Moir & English, 2022](#); [English & Gribble, 2021](#)), and received a lot of attention ([Life Matters: RN](#); [ABC: Radio National](#)), one model stands out as a major disruption to our understanding of education.

Worldschooling, or World Schooling, has been in the news recently because of its increased interest and popularity (see [Mannino, 2022](#); [Greenfield, 2022](#); [Scott, 2022](#)). It is sometimes described as homeschooling without the home. People leave the home and travel because they are pushed by internal

forces which originate from intrinsic motivations, such as the desire for rest and relaxation, escape, socialisation and prestige. In the case of educational travel, such as in school excursions and worldschooling, it can be curriculum based motives which may relate to extending or even replacing the formal lessons in the classroom to outside the classroom to encourage experiential or more active learning ([Dale & Ritchie, 2020](#)).

While there is little academic work on the concept, it is generally [defined](#) as a form of home education where the world becomes the classroom, and travel takes the place of the home and the school. The underpinning conviction of worldschoolers is that “travel itself is inherently educational”. It was founded as a business venture by [Laine Liberti](#) who wanted to offer a travel opportunity that combined education with experience.

However, it has since expanded to describe any type of [travel experience](#) that combines education with experience. So, it has expanded beyond its original definition.

Who would be attracted to worldschooling?

Like homeschooling, worldschooling attracts a diverse range of families, for equally diverse reasons. For some, it's an intentional and deliberate choice to eschew “life as usual” and the expectation that families must be “geographically anchored” ; an embracing of opportunity and adventure. For others, it's dissatisfaction with mainstream education and life that leads to the search for alternatives. The significant growth of [worldschool bloggers](#) (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) as just a few examples) highlights the range of families now drawn to worldschooling and approaches they adopt, from those who combine travel with school attendance in various locations, to those who combine homeschooling or unschooling with travel for short stints, or extended periods of time.

Why might they do it?

This lifestyle may also be more available to families than ever before. Covid-19 lockdowns accelerated the move towards flexible or remote work, and the recognition that many have regarding the opportunity to continue remote work has further opened the opportunity to embrace the [life of the digital nomad](#), and with this, the possibility of [worldschooling for those with children](#).

In a recent study, parents who were homeschooling were interviewed. One mother, whose pseudonym was ‘Joy’ talked about how she was unschooling her sons using travel and how her caravan had become her classroom. Unschooling is [defined](#) as any education where “there is no fixed, explicit curriculum”.

She stated:

We just travelled and saw things and we would do things and every other week, we were always going away somewhere, yeah ...we just took any opportunity. “Oh, we need to go in to Broken Hill to get whatever we need to get -” [and] off we go...I could take them to really cool places and teach them stuff that they didn't realise that they're learning. So, like we went to Victoria, we did a whole lot of work about Victoria, and [how it was colonised and mapped by Europeans] and the various expeditions. We looked at [Charles] Sturt's exploration expedition and why it failed, and what they could have done better and all of this.

Even though not explicitly identifying as a worldschooler, Joy's experience reflects the heart of worldschooling, and the sense of trust these families have in the educational potential of authentic

exploration to engage children in meaningful learning.

What are the potential challenges and benefits?

One of the major challenges has to be financial. Not only is it expensive to travel, particularly as COVID disruptions continue to affect the travel industry, it also requires you to travel with your family, to take breaks in your work while you get to your destination or to take a permanent break.

Clearly, this type of education is not open to everyone. Or, frankly, very many people.

However, it doesn't require a huge commitment, you don't need to purchase a Project Worldscool trip to Mexico for \$2,200USD. [The Project's founder](#) has noted that cost is a major barrier to entry for this particular experience.

But, as Joy's story has shown, you can do it in a caravan, you can do it on weekends, you can do it short term while getting on with the rest of your life.



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Naomi is an Associate Professor of Management and Program Director for the Bachelor of Business and the Bachelor of Event and Tourism Management at the University of Canberra. Naomi has been teaching and researching in the Tourism Discipline at UC since 2006. She was the recipient of an Australian Post Graduate Award scholarship and her Ph.D. investigated destination choice by school excursion groups in Australia.

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Tom Worthington

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Queensland previously had an official version of Worldscooling, with the “Queensland School for Travelling Show Children”. Government employed teachers, and mobile classrooms, followed the travelling shows around Australia. I recall one time the school was hosted in the grounds of an ACT school during the Canberra show.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queensland_School_for_Travelling_Show_Children

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